

2020

# Strategies for Business Management Innovations to Improve Competitiveness

Roger George Denousse  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Roger Denousse

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,  
and that any and all revisions required by  
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University  
2020

Abstract

Strategies for Business Management Innovations to Improve Competitiveness

by

Roger Denousse

MBA, University of Mauritius, 2001

B.ENG (Hon) Liverpool John More University, 1989

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

April 2020

## Abstract

Some African business leaders were, in 2019, less competitive because they continue to use traditional business management practices and have failed to incorporate advanced technology. Taking advantage of new management strategies and innovative technology to increase their global competitiveness will benefit African businesses. The purpose of this multiple case study, grounded in Burns' transformational leadership theory, was to explore strategies that business leaders in Seychelles have used to implement management innovations to improve competitiveness. The participants consisted of 5 business leaders from 5 large innovative business organizations operating successfully and based in Mahe, Seychelles. The data were collected through semistructured interviews with the participants and from official company documents. Data were analyzed using Yin's 5-step process of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions. The themes that emerged from the study were the importance of innovative business leaders, the critical role of the Internet and technological innovations for business competitiveness, and why having a competitive business environment contributes to business innovations and success. The implications for positive social change include the potential for business owners to improve organizational performance and create more job opportunities, resulting in a better local economy that provides families and local communities with a better standard of living. When business leaders apply a positive business culture and create an excellent work environment, the social well-being of their communities may also improve.

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## Dedication

First, I thank God for giving me good health and the intelligence, to succeed in this long and challenging course. I dedicate this study to my son, Yohan Raoul, and all my former teachers who supported me throughout my long educational journey. I also dedicate this study to my late mother, Daisy Denousse, for her devotion and love for our family. I share a special thanks to my cousin, Yvette Antat and her family, for their support and encouragement throughout this long course. Without the presence and support of these people throughout my life, I would not have achieved this dream. I thank you all and will forever be grateful for your love, patience, and support. Lastly, I dedicate my study to Seychelles and Africa, where I have been educated, lived and worked.

## Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge all the people in my life who believed in my abilities, as well as supported and encouraged me throughout these four years of disciplined doctoral study. I could have never completed this goal on my own. I am humbled by your sincere support and kindness. I appreciate and thank you all.

I would like to thank my chair and mentor, Dr. Jill Murray, for believing in my potential and for her expert guidance throughout my study. I would also like to thank my second committee member, Dr. Timothy Malone, and my URR, Dr. Diane Dusick, for all their excellent feedback and support during the reviews and approvals of my study. I would like to thank all the doctoral students who were in classes with me for their reviews and helpful feedback. I thank Walden University, especially the faculty of business management and its staff, for the professional and academic support throughout my course. I thank the Walden student support team, for their timely assistance when needed.

I thank my recent employer, the Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture, especially its management team for their full support during my long Doctor of Business Administration course. I thank the Seychelles government, including the Agency of National Human Resource Development, and the Ministry of Education and Manpower and the Ministry of Finance, Trade, and Economic Planning for sponsoring my course. Finally, I must thank the five companies and five business leaders who participated voluntarily in my field research study, which gave me the valuable data to complete this research.

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## Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Major investments and research are being applied in the area of innovative business management strategies. Business leaders are increasingly giving more attention to this emerging approach of conducting business transactions, for competitive business advantage (Foss & Saebi, 2017). The fast development of technology, including information technology (IT) and information communication technology (ICT) and the rapidly evolving Internet are changing global and local business models, with more e-services, e-commerce, and e-payments (Whitmore, Agarwal, & Da Xu, 2015). Business leaders from developed and developing countries need to ride this new wave of business management innovations to remain competitive and sustainable (Adams, Jeanrenaud, Bessant, Denyer, & Overy, 2015). In this research, I aimed to show the importance of applying innovative business management for success in today's business management landscape.

### **Background to the Business Problem**

There is a shift in modern business management from the traditional management practice toward a more innovative management approach, in developed and developing countries. Gomes, Curral, and Caetano (2015) found that for the continuation of innovations in organizations, individuals must be innovative and self-led, and this should be at all levels of the organization, from business leaders to general workers. Researchers have shown that people in innovative organizations communicate well, are open to each other's ideas, and use smart approaches through advanced technology to be competitive organizational leaders (Albino, Berardi, & Dangelico, 2015). Such innovative businesses

provide spaces and processes that encourage interactions, exchanges, fun, and serious play among team members (Horth & Buchner, 2014). Innovations and creativity in competitive business organizations provide hope for continental Africa and its small island states, like Seychelles, to grow economically and bring prosperity to their populations (Byukusenge, Munene, & Orobias, 2016).

African states' business leaders must change the traditional management of competitive businesses to more visionary, innovative, and customer-focused business practice. World Bank's (2015) report illustrated that such poor business performances were confirmed by the business statistical data for continental Africa and Africa's satellite island states. Researchers have showed that the potential of a rising Africa, rests on rapid changes in socioeconomic and demographic factors in local consumer markets, driven by new innovative marketing approaches and supported by increasing cross-border trades (Amankwah-Amoah, Boso, & Debrah, 2018). The Seychelles' gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate in 2016 was 4.6%, showing that more can be done by the private sector to increase national productivity (National Bureau of Statistics Seychelles, 2017; The Heritage Foundation, 2018; World Bank, 2017). The number of firms practicing innovative business leadership is limited in Seychelles. In this study, I aimed to understand this business problem in more depth.

### **Problem Statement**

When business leaders do not implement innovative management strategies, their companies become less competitive and less profitable in continental Africa (Byukusenge et al., 2016). Continental Africa has 30% of the world's mineral resources, raw materials,

and precious metals, yet is still the least developed continent in the world (George, Corbishley, Khayesi, Haas, & Tihanyi, 2016). The general business problem is that some business leaders may not be using innovative business management strategies, leading to less than desirable organization performance. The specific business problem is that some business leaders lack innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore business leaders' innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness. The targeted population consisted of business leaders from four large business organizations who have successfully developed and implemented innovative business management strategies that have enhanced their organizations' competitiveness. The implication for social change is that the results of this study might help to create more job opportunities and may bring a significant contribution to the local tax base.

### **Nature of the Study**

Choy (2014) proposed three research methods researchers may choose, qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions to discover the real situation in the natural setting (Maxwell, 2008). The qualitative method was the appropriate method for my study because I aimed to understand the business leaders' application of innovative management strategies to increase competitiveness. Quantitative researchers use closed-ended questions to test hypotheses about variables' relationships or differences and collected statistical data for

analyses (Teater, Devaney, Forrester, & Scourfield, 2016). In mixed method research, researchers include both qualitative and quantitative elements in the study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). In this research study, I did not test hypotheses or measured association of variables, including the collection of statistical data, and therefore the quantitative and mixed methods were not suitable for my study.

The four most common research designs for a qualitative study are (a) ethnography, (b) narrative, (c) phenomenology, and (d) case study (Stake, 1995). Case study research is carried out on-site, giving an in-depth understanding of the research problem (Yazan, 2015). A multiple case study design, which involved four business organizations, was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to collect the required data and compare my findings among the four participating organizations. In ethnographic studies, researchers describe the shared pattern of groups' cultures (Fetterman, 2010; Yin, 2017). I did not interpret the shared pattern of groups' cultures, and ethnography was not suitable for my study. In a phenomenological study, researchers attempt to understand social reality based on people's experiences of that social reality (Gray, 2013). This study was not about understanding the social reality of the participants; a phenomenological study was not appropriate for this research. In narrative design, researchers analyze individual or group stories (Dixon, 2015). The narrative design was not appropriate for my study because the lived and told stories of individuals or groups was not part of the research.

### **Research Question**

The central research question for the study was: What innovative business management strategies do some business leaders use to enhance competitiveness?

### **Interview Questions**

The following questions were used to collect field data during the interviews:

1. How do you define innovative business management strategies that result in improved organization's competitiveness?
2. How have you implemented innovative business management strategies that have improved the organization's competitiveness?
3. What specific training have your organizational leaders given employees in these last 2 years to support a successful adaptation of innovative business management practice that resulted in improved competitiveness?
4. What barriers have you faced in transforming your organization to support business management innovation strategies that enhance business competitiveness?
5. How have you addressed the business challenges you encountered in implementing innovative business management strategies to improve the organization's competitiveness?
6. How do you measure the success of the innovative business management strategies you have used to improve the organization's competitiveness?
7. What innovative business management strategies have you applied that did not enhanced your organization's competitiveness?
8. What additional information would you like to add regarding how you have



developed and implemented innovative business management strategies to improve your organization's competitiveness?

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory (TLT). The essential principals of TLT are based on the following principles: (a) leadership must be aligned for a collective purpose; (b) effective leaders must be able to make social change; (c) there are two types of leadership, transactional and transformational; (d) leaders must take responsibility for their leadership and aspire to satisfy the needs of the followers; and (e) leaders are neither born nor made; instead, leaders evolve from a structure of motivation, values, and goals (Burns, 1978). Burns' TLT conceptual framework is the appropriate framework for this study, to help me understand how local business leaders transform their competitive organizations from traditional to innovative business management practice. Leaders initiate, develop, implement, and share innovative business management strategies, and they transform their organizations (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). With this study, I aimed to show that business management innovations depend to a large extent on local business leaders' abilities and training. A good understanding of how business leaders initiate, adopt, and learn innovative business applications is critical for the adaptation, transformation, and diffusion of innovative business management practices within competitive business organizations (Rogers, Singhal, & Quinlan, 1996). Through the lens of TLT, I was able to gain a better understanding of the five key attributes that local business leaders may have used. Straub (2009) posited that the five main attributes for

competitive business organizations are having a relative business advantage, as well as the compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability of business leaders when applying innovative ideas, processes, products, or services. Business leaders' learning, adopting and adapting of new management knowledge, may transform their organizations, within an industry and across several industries over time (Coulson-Thomas, 2016).

### **Operational Definitions**

The following definitions refer to specific words and terms used in the study.

*Ambidexterity in business innovation:* The combination of old concepts with new creations to produce completely new and innovative services or products for existing or new customers (Fiset & Dostaler, 2017).

*Business competitiveness:* Companies are said to display more competitiveness with respect to their competitors, when they can produce their products or service at lower unit cost, of higher quality; such firms are able to innovate, while partnering with other businesses within certain business clusters, across geographical regions or through global sharing of new business knowledge online (McNaughton, 2018).

*Competitive strategy:* When business leaders deliberately create a different set of business activities to deliver a unique mix of value for the customers compared with the competitors (Porter, 2008).

*Coopetition:* Competitive and collaborative arrangements firms use to enhance their innovative performance; competition exerts pressure for innovation and cooperation facilitates the necessary knowledge sharing for innovation between rival companies

(Park, Srivastava, & Gnyawali, 2014).

*Design thinking:* A management process business leaders apply using innovative management approaches, combined with latest technology to generate new solutions for existing and future challenges (Liedtka, 2018).

*E-innovation:* A process in which organizations' leaders use advanced technology and Internet connectivity to start online business opportunities for competitive advantage (Ren & Dewan, 2015).

*Diffusion of business innovation:* When business innovation is diffused progressively among several business organizations within an industry and adopted by a critical mass of business leaders over time (Coulson-Thomas, 2016).

*Globalization:* A worldwide phenomenon where every country is connected to one another through the Internet, which allows individuals and organizations to make exchanges of knowledge, goods, and services, including financial transfers, for rapid customer delivery, without the limitations of time zones and physical boundaries (Huebener, O'Brien, Porter, Stockdale, & Zhou, 2016).

*Transformational leadership:* A form of leadership in which leaders increase followers' expectations of capabilities and motivate them to align their personal values with organizational values (Hannah, Schaubroeck, & Peng, 2016).

*Sustainability and business model innovation:* Business leaders strategize to be innovative while ensuring the protection of the social and physical environments (Adams et al., 2015; Foss & Saebi, 2017).

### **Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Assumptions are ideas, concepts or thoughts a researcher makes relative to a research study to ensure that the study is completed promptly, within an acceptable budget and that the research question is adequately answered (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In this study, I made four assumptions. First, I assumed that I would have quick and easy access to the research participants to conduct the study. Second, because I aimed to interview only executive business leaders, I assumed they would be knowledgeable on the research topic to contribute positively to the results of the research. Third, I assumed that participants would answer the interview questions honestly to ensure that the research findings are credible. Fourth, I assumed the conceptual framework I selected for this study would facilitate answering the research question.

Limitations of the research are areas of a study that researchers do not have control over (Brutus, Aguinis, & Wassmer, 2013). This research had four limitations. First, there was limited availability of some participants to contribute to the study, through detailed interviews. Second, the information and data collected from the respective businesses and executives were limited because of business confidentiality. Third, because I was the sole researcher in this study, certain subconscious biases might have arisen during the execution phase of the research, which I may not have had control over. Fourth, because this was a limited case study design, that involved four innovative businesses, the data and information collected were limited and further research may be required to provide a more complete understanding of the research question.

Delimitations of any multiple case study are the boundaries of the study the

researcher can control (Yin, 2017). In this study, the first delimitation was the type of business companies I selected to participate in this study, which were four innovative and excelling firms, operating for these last 3 years in Seychelles. The second delimitation was the interview questionnaire, the main research tool used to collect field data. The third delimitation was the official status of the participating firms, which had to be firms licensed and registered with the National Revenue Commission. The fourth delimitation was that the selected firms for the study had to be operating on one of the three main islands in Seychelles - namely Mahe, Praslin, and La Digue. The fifth and last delimitation was the limited budget and limited time duration that I had' for executing this research.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study may increase local business leaders' awareness of innovative management strategies to improve organizational competitiveness. Valente and Rogers (1995) suggested that innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system. Knowledge sharing among local business leaders is important for the transfer and adoption of innovative business practices over time. Such practice may be the spark to start business leaders' acceptance and adoption of innovative business strategies (Rogers, 2003; Sahin, 2006). Seychelles has an economy led by the private sector, which employed 65.5% of the national workforce in 2016; therefore, the country's economy depends on the overall performance of the local business leaders and their organizations (National Bureau of Statistics Seychelles, 2017). With more awareness of business innovation strategies among the local community's

business leaders, the economy may grow and may improve the tax base of the country.

### **Contribution to Business Practice**

The importance of this research study is its possibility to further provide additional knowledge and awareness of innovative organizational strategies for business leaders in Seychelles. Innovative business strategies may assist organizational leaders in improving profitability and avoiding the losses associated with using traditional and non-innovative management strategies (Prud'homme van Reine, 2017). Mariano and Casey (2015) suggested that business management innovation strategies must be implemented in a well-planned manner to improve business performance and growth. Local business leaders who have been using more traditional and limited innovative business management practices may gain an awareness of proven innovative business management strategies and new practical business approaches that may bring positive changes to enhance the competitiveness of their organizations. Local training in innovative business management strategies may assist in the diffusion of business management innovations among local business leaders.

### **Implications for Social Change**

Bright and Godwin (2010) suggested that more businesses are becoming involved in their local communities and assisting in making a difference in the life of those in need. The possible improvement in organizational performance when business leaders apply innovative strategies may be to create more job opportunities, resulting in a better local economy and a better standard of living for citizens. As local business leaders become more innovative in their business decision making, the businesses'

competitiveness may also improve as well as their profit margin (Jones & Linderman, 2014). These local businesses may increase their tax contributions, a portion of which may be used for important social projects in the local communities.

### **A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature**

The objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovative management strategies business leaders have used to improve organizations' competitiveness. The development of an innovative business culture is becoming a leadership priority to improve organizational performance (Bicen & Johnson, 2014). Researchers must explore other studies in the literature to build new knowledge from existing literature (Torraco, 2016). The conceptual framework for this study was Burns' (1978) TLT. Under the umbrella of the conceptual framework, I reviewed existing literature to understand business leaders' innovative management strategies. I reviewed several sources - mainly articles, books, and websites - that provided information related to the study topic. The databases I used for my search included Google Scholar, ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Complete, SAGE Premier, ProQuest, and Crossref. The keywords I used to search the databases were *business strategy*, *business innovations*, *leadership*, *globalization*, *business sustainability*, *technological innovations*, *business culture*, *knowledge transfer*, and *business management*.

The literature review was anchored by Burns' TLT conceptual framework, and peer-reviewed journal articles provided information on innovative management strategies to enhance business competitiveness. The literature review resulted in 270 references, of which 85% were peer-reviewed and within the last 5 years. The identified themes

included Burns' TLT; management innovations; design thinking, learning organizations, and team creativity; IT and ICT applications; innovative business management strategies; and globalization and business management innovations.

### **Transformational Leadership Theory**

Burns' (1978) TLT was the conceptual framework for this study. The objective was to have a better understanding of how some business leaders were using innovative management strategies to enhance business competitiveness. Burns developed TLT and presented the findings of his research in *Leadership* in 1978. The five essential principles of Burns' TLT are that leaders must (a) focus on organizational goals; (b) harness and encourage social change; (c) have transactional or transformational leadership styles; (d) take responsibility and accountability to followers; and (e) evolve from a structure of motivation, values, and goals.

Transformational leaders influence how their followers perform. They indirectly and positively impact the well-being of their followers (Arnold, 2017). Transformational leaders have a positive effect on their followers' work engagement and attitudes toward work (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2016). Burns (1978) stated that a transforming leader transcends employees' self-interests, including their self-realization. Transformational leaders display more citizenship behaviors, such as altruism, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, courtesy, and civic virtue, as well as expect their subordinates to possess the same values (Williams, 1994). TLT helps leaders to adopt, adapt, and use new knowledge to transform companies' competitiveness for long-term sustainability.

According to Horstmeier et al. (2017), transformational leaders inspire, energize,



and intellectually stimulate their employees. Transformational leaders envision a desirable future, articulate how such a goal can be reached, set examples for others to follow, and show determination and confidence in performance (Nguyen, Mia, Winata, & Chong, 2016). Transformational leaders can be directive, participative, authoritarian, or democratic (Samuels & Sommers, 2017). Transformational leaders introduce and apply innovative management strategies to bring positive change to an organization's productivity (Bass, 1985).

Avolio (2011) claimed transformational leadership is consistently highly effective as a form of leadership style at all organizational levels and across all industries. Avolio emphasized that followers want to stay with transformational leaders. Employees have a higher degree of connectivity and put the effort needed to succeed (Cowie, 2017).

Followers and team members commit to their work through engagement because of job satisfaction (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016; Frieder, Wang, & Oh, 2017). The transformational leadership questionnaire is a modern management research tool to evaluate leaders' and workers' relationship in the workplace (Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999). Transformational business leaders can use the transformational leadership questionnaire to build rapport and gain employees' trust.

**Transformational business leaders.** A significant relationship exists between transformational leadership and employees' innovative work performance (Afsar, Badir, & Bin Saeed, 2014). Transformational leaders encourage their staff to achieve the firms' objectives (Chang, 2016; Nguyen et al., 2016). Chang (2016) stated frontline managers have to be involved in decision making and be accountable for achieving the

departmental target. Good organizational leaders foster organizational innovations (Jung et al., 2003; Phaneuf, Boudrias, Rousseau, & Brunelle, 2016). Phaneuf et al. (2016) demonstrated that transformational leaders improve individual and collective business performance. Transformational leaders initiate and apply organizational management innovations for satisfactory firm performance (Sethibe & Steyn, 2015).

Burns (1978) stated that transformational leaders manifest through specific leadership behaviors. Transformational leaders pay attention to, respect, and care for employees' development and growth. Transformational leaders are visionary and support intellectual stimulation to innovate and challenge the status quo. Transformational leaders exhibit charisma and positive attitudes, presenting themselves as a role model to motivate and influence their employees. Phaneuf et al. (2016) noted the transformational leadership style orientation depends on the internal organizational context and the signals perceived with regards to intellectual stimulation of managers and employees.

Business leaders must make innovative strategic management decisions. Transformational business leaders develop innovative and creative decision-making abilities to enhance organizational performance (Sethibe & Steyn, 2015). Ramchandran, Colbert, Brown, Denburg, and Tranel (2016) found that transformational leaders' brain patterns consist of neuropsychological constructs of cognitive control and decision-making. Electroencephalography research resulted in discovering executive function and abilities in transformational leaders (Balthazard, Waldman, Thatcher, & Hannah, 2012).

Transformational business leaders make innovative business decisions. Transformational leaders have adaptive and self-directed behavior, make executive-type

decisions when confronted with novelty, and apply both tactical and strategic approach in critical decisions making, especially when operating under extreme conditions (Eberly, Bluhm, Guarana, Avolio, & Hannah, 2017; Ramchandran et al., 2016). Executive function is engaging in the planning and decision-making process using purposive action and mental flexibility (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Transformational leaders bring positive changes through innovations in their work environment (Phaneuf et al., 2016). Business leaders need to expand present management boundaries by challenging the current ways of thinking and through innovative solutions within their organizations (Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur, & Schley, 2008).

Transformational leaders bring positive and innovative changes in business organizations (Chen, Zheng, Yang, & Bai, 2016; Horstmeier et al., 2017). Horstmeier et al. (2017) posited transformational leaders shape the followers' self-concept, offer purpose that transcends short-term goals, and focus on the fundamental needs of their followers. The desire to belong, affiliate, and identify with companies' business objectives elevates and motivates employees to excel. Transformational leaders' ideas and decisions resonate with employees, so they feel like part of the organizational culture (Chen, Zheng et al., 2016; Frieder et al., 2017). There is a feeling of shared responsibilities by the team, and the individual members have a sense of self-enhancement and achievements when business leaders engage with employees (Cowie, 2017).

#### **Differences between transformational and transactional business leaders.**

Since 1980, several other researchers have studied transformational and transactional

business leaders' influences within organizations. Bass (1985) focused on differentiating between transformational and transactional leaders. Bass showed that transformational leaders display charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration for their subordinates' interests and problems. Transactional leaders follow a laissez-faire approach and focus on rewards to motivate employees (Burns, 1978). Bass stated that with transformational leadership style, leaders display superior leadership performance by elevating the interests of their employees, generating awareness, and guiding employees to look beyond their self-interest for the good of the groups. Transformational leaders show their employees new ways of looking at old problems and teach them to tackle difficulties through rational solutions (Bass, 1985; Birasnav, 2014).

In transactional leadership, subordinates have to follow the directives of their supervisors to avoid negative consequences (Bass, 1985). Transactional leaders assume that people are always rational and ignore emotional and social concerns of employees (Avolio, 2011; Burns, 1978). Transactional leadership theory was not suitable for my study because transactional leaders often overlook the psychological and social interests of employees and provide little opportunity for employee creativity.

**Other contrasting theories.** A few other theories that could have been relevant to this study topic but that I did not choose are (a) authentic leadership theory, (b) charismatic leadership theory, (c) path-goal theory, and (d) ambidextrous leadership theory. Authentic leaders show self-awareness, relational transparency, and self-discipline; they consult for opposing views, lead with the heart, are ethical, practice solid values, and are admired for sincerity (Lyubovnikova, Legood, Turner, & Mamakouka,

2017). Some people view authentic leaders as masquerading to influence others (Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2017), and for this reason, I did not select the authentic leadership style for my study. Charismatic leadership is similar to transformational leadership. Charismatic leaders are dominant, have a strong desire to influence others, are self-confident, and have a strong sense of moral values (Weber, 1968). Unlike transformational leaders, charismatic leaders are dominant, and followers have little say on what leaders enforce (Northouse, 2017); therefore, the charismatic leadership style was not ideal for the conceptual framework for my study.

The primary underlying assumption of the path-goal theory is that employees feel motivated when they believe they are capable of doing the work, their efforts will be rewarded, and the outcome or reward will be worthwhile (Cote, 2017). Focusing on only motivational aspects to develop innovative management strategies limits the scope of the study, and for this reason, I did not choose this theory to guide my research. The ambidextrous leadership theory was another theory I considered for this study. Duncan first used the term *organizational ambidexterity* in 1976. Ambidextrous leaders focus on enabling an organization's personnel to be creative and adaptable while continuing to apply more traditional and proven methods of business practices (March, 1991). Ambidextrous leaders emphasize traditional methods to accomplish tasks and do not challenge the status quo; in this context, this theory was not appropriate for this study because my aim is to explore innovative management strategies to improve competitiveness.

## **Business Management Innovations**

The new approach to business management innovations has become a priority among business organizations, especially since the 2008 global financial crisis. The financial crisis caused business leaders to realize the importance of management innovations for business competitiveness (Estrin, 2009). The concept of business management innovations is a relatively new concept (Cucculelli & Bettinelli, 2015). Business leaders are paying close attention to this critical and emerging management concept (Wirtz, Pistoia, Ullrich, & Gottel, 2015).

Estrin (2009), defined business management innovation as a process to grow revenue, reduce cost, increase productivity, and to solve customers' problems. Christensen (2011) stretched the definition of business management innovation as looking for opportunities to meet customers' future needs and which may not be useful in today's context. The concept of management innovation is changing as various categories of business innovations are continually taking place such as incremental innovations, radical innovations, and disruptive innovations.

Most business organizational leaders are still learning about innovative business management approaches (Foss & Stieglitz, 2014). Kalay and Lynn (2016) found a centralized organizational structure hindered management innovation, while a formalized organizational structure had a positive impact on management innovation. In an earlier study, Liem and Brangien (2012) demonstrated that there is a need for a well-defined process for innovations to take place in an organization. The process consists of creating plans to convert new ideas into action, use methods to understand and exchange concepts,

apply interpretations and visualization, create prototypes of innovative concepts, and formulating new business strategies based on innovations. The survival and competitiveness of both local and global businesses are dependent on the leaders' creative and innovative management skills. The rapid development of new information technologies has resulted in business leaders using technological tools to develop, test, and implement innovative management strategies.

Modern business leaders have adopted business innovations in its broad spectrum through knowledge development and technological inventions (Lichtenthaler, 2016; Souto, 2015). Business executives have to facilitate the innovation process by applying new knowledge (Johansson & Rusu, 2019; Souto, 2015). Business leaders need to capture and exploit new innovative business opportunities to prosper and grow competitively. Viltard (2016) compared the traditional and new innovative business models and found that emerging business leaders' visions are disrupting the conventional norms, tools, processes, and system-level strategic thinking and resulting in innovative business models. Viltard found that innovative business model is capable of simplifying ways of analyzing complex data and hyper-scaling of information for improving lives, as well as sustaining business growth through globalization, co-creation, and collaborative synergies among global competitors. Transforming business through innovation requires business leaders to build network alliances. Staying competitive, in this digital technology landscape, requires business leaders to build business alliances, transparent collaborations, specialized training, and creative innovations, with excellent social networks (Agostinho et al., 2016).

A leader's decisions have a significant impact on driving organizational change within any industry. Transformational leaders mentor and train their managers and staff to be more creative and remove mental business barriers (Bass, 1985; Grant, 2012). Creativity is essential to improve performance and productivity (Avolio, 2011). Business leaders need specific skills and experiences to successfully introduce and apply innovative changes within their respective organizations (Jones, Cope, & Kintz, 2016). The latest technological developments, such as the Internet, big data storage, automation, smart mobiles, 4G networks, and even social media are accelerating innovative changes within the business environment to unleash the business potential (Karimi & Walter, 2015). Business leaders are quickly replacing the traditional brick and mortar business models with online and mobile business models.

### **Brief Historical Perspective of Business Management Innovations**

In the world of business, managers are witnessing profound changes in the area of management innovation (Greco, Grimaldi, & Cricelli, 2015). These trends in business innovative management thinking started in the early 2000s. Mitchell and Coles first made a case in 2003 for business executives to innovate their traditional business models (Foss & Saebi, 2017). A rapid shift in business leaders' mindset came just after the world economic crisis in 2008, which led managers to realize the importance of innovation management for sustainability (Lambin, 2014). The recent innovative business management approach has gone through three essential stages since 1975. According to Kanter (2013), the first wave of business management innovation started in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with Japanese companies leading with the total quality management



(TQM) approach. The second wave started in the late 1980s, when businesses in the United States were going through mergers, acquisitions, and buyouts, which required financial innovations with venture capitalists, privatization of national companies, and business process re-engineering (Dodgson, 2018). The third management innovation paradigm shift began in the early 1990s, with the beginning of the digital era that improved the manner managers conducted business (Campbell-Kelly & Garcia-Swartz, 2013). During the third wave, the disruptive business innovation practice started with the rapid expansion of the Internet worldwide (Ariguzo, Mallach, & White, 2006; Bongiorno, Rizzo, & Vaia, 2018).

Business leaders are observing the start of the fourth significant wave in competitive business innovation management. In 2019, business leaders are focusing on e-businesses, e-commerce, and social media applications (Council for Science, Technology & Innovation, 2016; Kiss, Horváth, Török, & Szanyi, 2015). The use of big data and cloud computing are becoming acceptable business norms (El Kadiri et al., 2016). Modern business leaders, especially in Africa, need to change their traditional business approach and adopt current management innovative strategies, for business survival, competitiveness, and growth (Nguyen et al., 2016).

Certain business leaders are doing business in small niche markets with traditional business models and are reluctant to commit to new innovative business approaches, which may result in their companies' failures in the long run (Dasgupta, Gupta, & Sahay, 2011; Loebbecke & Picot, 2015). Baiyere and Salmela (2015) stressed business innovations are not optional but essential to remain competitive because competitors are

coming up with disruptive and innovative technologies to dominate the market. Glor and Ewart (2016) found innovative private, nonprofit, and public enterprises were more successful than traditional organizations for the same period. Christensen, Bartman, and Van Bever (2016) cautioned business leaders who are integrating innovative practices since often new innovative business model cannot be molded over old business practices without understanding the business landscape. One reason for some business failures is that the business leaders are not flexible enough to initiate the needed changes for innovative business strategies.

### **Business Leadership for Management Innovations**

Business leaders' decisions have an impact on the organizations' innovative changes and business transformations (Horstmeier et al., 2017). Leadership's style, types, trends, and models determine the degree of innovativeness within organizations (Dinh et al., 2014; Maria Stock, Zacharias, & Schnellbaecher, 2017). Transformational leadership practice is one of the modern leadership styles which result in positive changes within business enterprises (Breevaart, & Bakker, 2017).

**Modern innovative business leaders.** Leaders have a significant influence on driving positive organizational change within any industry (Micheli & Perks, 2016). There is a close link between the use of innovations in technology and techniques, and business productivity (Jones et al., 2016). Business leaders need to introduce innovative changes within their business organizations, invest in novel technologies, and provide technical training to their personnel.

Modern transformational business leaders need to rethink how to improve

essential decision-making capabilities in bringing organizational changes (Christensen, 2011; Coulson-Thomas, 2016). Liotas (2014) studied the necessary skill sets, abilities, attitudes, and nonverbal attributes a leader needs in the decision-making process and found that business leaders could use the Gestalt practice while implementing change. The Gestalt practice concentrates on new training and learning processes, as well as social and interpersonal norms of the groups during the change process. Organizational change goes through four levels of rigor which consists of reaction, learning, behavior, and results (Kirkpatrick, 1994)

Change management in any industry could be very challenging, and business leaders need to be cautious as it can significantly impact business sustainability (Hayes, 2018). Managing change requires leaders to engage followers and gain their trust. Well trained leaders can effectively manage innovative changes. Innovation can improve organizational performance and success depends on the abilities of business leaders to create high-performance teams (Dong, Bartol, Zhang, & Li, 2017; Su & Higgins, 2016). Transformational leaders initiate and effect innovative changes within business organizations.

Cowie (2017) found that innovative leaders across a broad range of industries shared a common trait of building up and supporting the team capable of bringing innovative changes in organizations. Transformational leaders inspire and lead teams even in difficult times and circumstances (Bass, 1985; Breevaart & Bakker, 2017). Identifying business opportunities and threats are a prime responsibility of modern business leaders. Business executives must know how to seize the opportunities before

the competitors and prepare to handle risks relating to business sustainability (Coulson-Thomas, 2016). The business leaders must provide their employees with the necessary training and tools to remain innovative to meet the needs of the markets and their customers. Company's culture provides opportunities for innovation and creativity for employees with diverse backgrounds (Prud'homme van Reine, 2017).

Researchers have focused on business leaders' innovative skills and the critical roles they play to optimize business innovations within their organizations (Chen, Zheng et al., 2016; Oeij, Gaspersz, Van Vuuren, & Dhondt, 2017; Stock, Zacharias, & Schnellbaecher, 2017). Oeij et al. (2017) posited that project managers' tactical and strategic experience and knowledge are essential in solving critical project's problems. The essential factors influencing innovative trends in an organization are an innovation-oriented strategy, leadership, and co-development with customers (Stock et al., 2017).

There is a close affinity between social capital and transformational leadership effectiveness, which influence organizational outcomes. L. Chen, Zheng et al. (2016) suggested corporate leaders should support the building of social capital constituting top management teams to leverage transformational leadership effectively. Stock et al. (2017) noted companies with an innovation-oriented strategy need to support more co-development with customers' growth and need. Companies' leaders practicing reflective and organizational learning models can import innovative business management practice within their business organizations (Dong et al., 2017; Leavy, 2018; Oeij et al., 2017). Business executives are applying innovative management practices from different angles and concepts, and are engaging organizational leaders in improving the companies'

competitiveness.

Innovative business leaders must be observant, alert, and rapid in making creative business decisions. Gilmore (2017) framed observation around organizational culture, the company itself, and business circumstances as a driver of successful innovation.

Companies fail to compete amidst trends in innovation when business leaders have too much self-confidence, rely on past good performances and overlook the market trends (Gilmore, 2017; Zogjani & Raçi, 2015). Becoming successful in innovation requires action from the business leaders at the right time. Understanding the factors that impact business leaders' decisions in introducing innovative business practices in the organization is essential for an organization's competitive advantage. One such important factor is gender bias within the organization. Business leaders should be attentive when making management decisions by allowing women leaders to diffuse innovations in the technology sector and the other economic sectors (Dutta & Omolayole, 2016). Business leaders need to give equal importance on how they lead and guide their women and men managers in information technology sector and other economic sectors (Dutta & Omolayole, 2016; Ruiz-Jiménez, Fuentes-Fuentes, & Ruiz-Arroyo, 2016).

One of the difficult and yet essential decisions chief executives make is identifying talents within the pool of male and female managers. Ruiz-Jiménez et al. (2016) stated that the gender diversity in the leadership rank improves the innovation performance of the organization and gender variety positively influences the connection between knowledge combination capability and innovation performance of the organizations. Business leaders must create policies and culture, which promotes the best

gender-mix of people to guide and lead the innovative activities of the organizations.

Other critical challenges that business executives face daily in the work environment concern internal conflicts, cultural differences and understanding how such conflicts impact the innovativeness of the organizations. Wang and Sung (2016) found a negative relationship between an employee's workplace attitude and the organizational performances. Workers' differences influence the effect of ethical leadership on the organization's culture (Sanders & Pattison, 2016). The transformational leaders need to minimize internal conflicts to increase work productivity. The chief executives need to initiate proper internal communication to introduce and adopt innovative business management strategies.

Kohles, Bligh, and Carsten (2014) analyzed the communication flow from the leaders to the managers and workers, and vice-versa to understand how subordinates envision the organizational goals. Organizational leaders should select, train, promote, and conduct regular assessment of both managers and followers who support organizations' visions and core values (Weigel & Goffin, 2015). Organizational leaders not communicating well may not be able to compete in the emerging global economy because of information asymmetry (Chang, 2016). Introducing innovations within organizations with poor leadership communication may be difficult (Shafie, Siti-Nabiha, & Tan, 2014). The business leaders' communication ability influences the close association between business management innovations and the everyday responsibilities of the business executives (Nica, Stancu, & Stancu, 2017). Business leaders must put extra effort to move the organizations toward innovation through internal

communications that instill creativity (Rao, 2017).

**Design thinking, learning organizations, and team creativity.** Business leaders need to create a learning environment within their enterprises. Learning business environment is a foundation for creativity and innovation. The business environment should include an opportunity to search, discover, acquire, retain, share, and transfer new knowledge on a regular basis for business organizations to remain competitive (Dong et al., 2017). Transformational business leaders should plan and provide for such fruitful working environment by applying innovative new business approaches (Winzker & Pretorius, 2015). In an organizational learning structure, innovative business leaders utilize bright young talents and the latest technology to make the organization an industry leader (Liedtka, 2018). Mickahail (2015) defined design thinking (DT) as a process that organizational leaders implement to improve the success rates of innovation-related initiatives. The DT process helps business leaders develop, test, learn, and adapt new ideas quickly and repeatedly (Beverland, Wilner, & Micheli, 2015).

Design thinking is a strategic approach business leaders use to improve organizational culture and innovation (Micheli & Perks 2016). Effective DT training and leadership is essential for corporate innovations and growth (Calabretta, Gemser, & Karpen, 2016). DT process depends on organizational leaders' ability to improve communication, creativity, collaboration, and internal business culture (Mickahail, 2015). Innovative business leaders build strong organizations and sustain their innovations through new knowledge and continuous training of team members (Laeque, Babar, & Ahmad, 2017).

## **Organizational Cultures and Innovations**

Organizational culture has a direct impact on business innovations. Business leaders create, sustain, and change a company's culture to suit their business objectives. The business culture should support organizational values and principles (Roome & Louche, 2016). When making successful changes in corporate culture to promote innovations, business leaders must ensure appropriate resources, especially the right people, to have successful outcomes (Lukic, Džamic, Knezevic, Alčaković, & Bošković, 2014). Organizational culture is a system of assumptions, beliefs, and values adopted by stakeholders and contains a certain way of doing things (Pietersen, 2017). The organization cultural norms manifest through specific symbols and organizational practices. Yusof, Munap, Badrillah, Ab Hamid, and Khir (2017) defined corporate culture as a gathering of meanings and symbols, which organizations' leaders and members use for building ideas, interpreting experiences, making business decisions, and taking actions.

Organizational culture lies at the heart of corporate innovation (Cross, Arena, Sims, & Uhl-Bien, 2017). According to Martins and Terblanche (2003), there are four primary elements of organizational culture that support creativity and innovation. These four elements are appropriate organizational structure, strategy for introducing innovation, organizational behavior which encourages innovation, and support mechanisms for business innovations. Other researchers have shown the significance of transformational leadership in fostering creativity and innovation through corporate culture (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Urban & Govender, 2017). For business innovations to



take place, leaders need to develop a creative working environment which provides conducive working spaces for managers and staff (Denning, 2017). Creative business environments need three types of support which are having (a) a stimulating, encouraging risk-taking and introducing new ideas business environment (b) leaders who correctly assessing new ideas, and (c) leaders who are recognizing and rewarding creative talents across various units within companies (Kamel, Martins, Pessanha, & Andrade, 2017; Pedersen, Gwozdz, & Hvass, 2016). Business leaders need to encourage innovations by providing creative work environments in which managers appreciate and welcome employees' creativity and ideas (Pedersen et al., 2016).

Teamwork and team members impact the internal culture of an organization. Expósito-Langa, Tomás-Miquel and Molina-Morales (2015) defined the organizational network as inter-organizational relationships between different actors, such as customers, competitors, and suppliers. The relationship depends on organizational support, geographical proximity, and a strong feeling of belonging. Expósito-Langa et al. found a significant correlation between firms' internal exploration capacity and the firms' networking capacity. Networking and sharing of knowledge for innovations are important for organizational improvements and business growth.

Peralta, Gilson, Lourenço, and Pais (2015) conducted two separate research studies to understand the impact of innovation management on firms' performance. The studies included understanding team goal clarity and commitment, team effectiveness, and organizational performance. In the studies, Peralta et al. found firms with weak engagement in innovation processes performed poorly even at the presence of high levels

of goal clarity and commitment. Therefore, business leaders need to develop an excellent internal culture that supports innovation to perform well.

### **Technological Innovations**

With advancement in modern information technology (IT), business leaders must take different approaches to conduct everyday business and in planning long-term business strategies (Watanabe, Naveed, Neittaanmäki, & Tou, 2016). According to Zhang, Chen, Wang, and Ordóñez de Pablos (2016), development in IT was triggering organizational innovations globally. Business executives and decision makers apply innovative business strategies through the use of affordable and innovative technologies (Afuah, & Tucci, 2003; Shin, 2001). In this review, I include different aspects of how technological innovations and inventions, as well as how advances in science and technology are changing modern business management and leadership approaches.

**IT and ICT applications for business innovations.** Before August 1994, commercial organizations were technically forbidden to use the Internet because of the regulations of the National Science Foundation of the United States (Campbell-Kelly & Garcia-Swartz, 2013). Since 1995, conducting business transactions online, known as e-commerce emerged as the fastest growing sector of the United States and global marketplace (Ariguzo et al., 2006). From 2000 to 2018, business leaders witnessed the quick changes in IT innovations, from 5G and big data to cloud technology (Ochs & Riemann, 2017).

Jones et al. (2016) posited how the rapid pace of technological changes is reshaping firms leaders' approaches to business management innovation. Jones et al.

analyzed how practitioners, service providers, and academics are perceiving the future of innovation management. Jones et al. found five broad themes potentially influencing innovation management. These central themes known as the five Ps of innovative business management are partnership, process, position, people, and profession.

The adoption and adaptation of technological innovations in developing countries are possible when business leaders understand, and use clear and innovative business visions, and introduce a new learning culture within the organizations (Hu, Kang, & Wu, 2017). Chang (2016) stressed that transformational, charismatic, and visionary leaders have a technological vision (TV) for innovation in new product or service development (NPD). Reid, Roberts, and Moore (2015) posited that there are intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions to technological vision which involve five important steps. First, the business leaders need to have the technological vision at the start of any radical innovation. Second, the need for early measures is essential in radical innovation. Third, the use of patents in technological innovation is important for opportunities for investments and capitalizations. Fourth, there should be a presence of right infrastructure for the deployment of the technological innovation. Lastly, the leaders should not take the complexities of technological innovation lightly. Reid et al. concluded that technological vision has a significant positive impact on attracting investment capital and early success with customers.

Joshi, Das, and Mouri, (2015) and B. Hu (2014) analyzed the relationship between business technological innovation and organizational learning in various business models. Joshi et al. found (a) efficiency-centered business model design has an

indirect influence on technological innovation performance, (b) novelty-centered business model design has a mixed influence on technological innovation performance, and (c) the influence of efficiency-centered design on organizational learning is stronger than the influence of novelty-centered design. Business strategists must give priority to efficiency-centered designs when planning and effecting innovative business changes. Joshi et al. argued that the combinations of new ideas and new knowledge might result in innovations in businesses.

The role of IT in business management innovation depends on leadership type and the company culture (Laeque et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2016). Leadership style can be an innovation enabler that could spur digital connectivity to leverage communication and coordination among innovation actors to ensure efficiency and effectiveness of innovation adoption (El Kadiri et al., 2016; Kiss et al., 2015). Knowledge diffusion in the IT sector is essential to allow innovations to take place (Aydalot & Keeble, 2018). The decision of using IT in facilitating business innovations is a prominent business decision.

Recent research illustrated the intensity of global competitions in the domain of IT supremacy between the established companies in developed and developing nations (De Souza & Batista, 2017). Global companies from the developed country protect the innovative products and ideas with patents whereas, businesses in emerging economies pay royalties for using such innovations (Zoo, de Vries, & Lee, 2017). Such examples are where Asian firms in the manufacturing sector pay high fees to use technological tools from western countries.

On both local and international fronts, business leaders wishing to introduce

technological innovations face challenges in identifying and implementing initiatives (King, 2015; Lichtenthaler, 2016). Innovative business leaders must make technological innovations as a primary management strategy (Laeque et al., 2017; Singh, 2016). Many business leaders are not maximizing on today's novel technologies and are left isolated by their hi-tech savvy customers (Christensen, 2011; Macy & Coates, 2016; Okin, 2005).

**E-leadership and e-innovations.** The e-business subsector is growing every day, and many business leaders are taking advantage of global Internet networks to position and sell their products and services online (Christensen, 2011; Estrin, 2009). Traditional business leaders need to open up to e-businesses and online operations to do well in global commerce (Broman et al., 2017; Council of Science, Technology & Innovation, 2016). De Souza and Batista (2017) researched managers and entrepreneurs to examine the association between the strategic background, the activities of the business model, and the business performance. De Souza and Batista discovered that business managers should prepare their firms internally to implement online business activities and map how customers and suppliers influence the purchase of their products and e-services. Moreover, executives need to position the Internet and e-business technologies in their management processes, and finally, business leaders must use technologies that are safe and easy to use (Ghanbari, Laya, Alonso-Zarate, & Markendahl, 2017). From 2015 onward, global and local business activities have been more dependent on information systems and emerging technologies for competitive advantage than in earlier years (Bala, Bartel, Hawley, & Lee, 2015).

In 2019, various information technology applications are popular among

businesses worldwide. Uber, an on-demand ridesharing service, connects passengers to local drivers in real time using smartphone technology and the Chinese electric vehicle drivers locate charging stations nearby using a smart device (Qu, Qi, Zhang, & Zhou, 2017; Watanabe et al., 2016). Netflix's video streaming and Skype voice over the Internet (VoIP) are two other successful technological innovations among global operators (Baiyere & Salmela, 2015). Other technological breakthroughs are radio frequency identification (RFID) technology, sensor technology, intelligent embedding technology and nanotechnology, and cloud technology (El Kadiri et al., 2016).

W. Li, Liu, Belitski, Ghobadian, and O'regan (2016) noted the importance of online commerce and applying latest technology for successful business strategies for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Information technology empowered the development of digital technological innovations such as mobile devices, social media marketing, digital data analysis, big data storage facilities, and the Internet applications (Gupta et al., 2016). Similarly, the advanced digital technology has resulted in global strategic alliances, improved communication among network partners, and exchange of innovative ideas to develop new innovative products and services (Naveed, Watanabe, & Neittaanmäki, 2018). The inception of the digital technology offers SMEs ample opportunities to create value for customers through innovations leading to competitive advantage (Li, Liu et al., 2016).

Modern business leaders need to quickly re-model their traditional business models with more online and innovative business operations (Ren & Dewan, 2015). With the latest development trends in IT technologies, like e-services, big data, and mobile

clouds, modern business leaders must rapidly change their business management strategies toward more e-business operations to survive and remain competitive (Dasgupta et al., 2011). Spill, Kijll, and Samela (2016) studied the shift of standard business practices toward organizational digital business process model. Business e-strategies should encompass process, product, and business model innovations to attain e-leadership in the ever-intense competitive markets (Makkonen, Johnston, & Javalgi, 2016). Modern business leaders cannot ignore recent innovations and continue with business as usual, without bringing digital technology into their daily business operations (Spill et al., 2016).

Globalization, high-speed connectivity, digital technology, and social networks are the main driving forces transforming businesses and social landscapes of modern business operations (King, 2015; Loebbecke & Picot, 2015; Watanabe, Naveed, & Neittaanmäki, 2015). Sciences and technological advancements are changing the business, social, and connectivity landscapes, transforming the old limited model of business operations to the new innovative business model (Guimaraes, Thielman, Guimaraes, & Cornick, 2016). For businesses to stay competitive in today's digital and technological landscape, organizational leaders need to penetrate the global market through network alliances, transparent collaborations, and value creation (Viltard, 2016).

One of the latest innovative business trends has been business leaders positioning technological operations within a confined geographical zone, especially in developing countries like China, India, and Malaysia. Zhen, Wang, and Wei (2015) found that in China, Internet cities are growing at an increasing pace compared to western countries.

The consumers have an array of choices when it comes to markets and shopping, and market alliances are mutually beneficial to businesses (Zhen et al., 2015). Industries that are interdependent foster higher growth within their economic sectors (Geldes, Heredia, Felzensztein, & Mora, 2017; Spill et al., 2016). In developing countries, the clustering companies is playing an important role in accessibility and affordability of advance technology for consumers (Walcott, 2018).

Lambrou (2016) studied the relationship between firms' innovation capabilities, their knowledge management, and big data technology. Lambrou focused on how innovative company's business leaders bridge the gaps between technological innovation and their innovative business strategies, business models, marketing strategies, and knowledge management. Lambrou discovered that business culture and business climate play a prominent role in knowledge management and innovation. Innovative firm leaders can foster systematic innovation capabilities by optimizing the use of new business knowledge, big data, and internal creative opportunities (Lambrou, 2016; Macy & Coates, 2016).

The new trends of digital business innovation include the Internet of things, cloud computing, big data, enterprise 3D printing, mobile money, and 5G technology (Turban et al., 2017). Business leaders need to focus on digital identity, customers' privacy, design, and content to ensure clients' operational deliverables (Loebbecke & Picot, 2015). Online technologies are bringing disruptive innovations at an increasing speed in global markets, which are changing the way people live, work, learn, buy, and play (Zhang et al., 2016). E-business through disruptive technology is changing local,



regional, and international businesses operating climate radically (Hobday, 2005; Kiss et al., 2015). The brick and mortar business models of the 1990s are quickly being phased out. Customers are doing shopping online with mobile devices such as tablets or smart mobile phones and paying their invoices with credit or debit cards (Jin, Liu, Ji, & Liu, 2016; Tam & Oliveira, 2016). Business leaders need to understand these changes, learn about innovative business shifts, and adjust their business practices without delays.

**Open and disruptive innovations.** Business innovations are taking place every day throughout the world (Baiyere & Salmela, 2015; Straub, 2014). Young entrepreneurs in both developed and developing countries are leading technological breakthrough. The Australian company MYOB is an excellent example of such disruptive business innovations (Power, 2016). Wan, Williamson, and Yin (2015) stated technologically advanced firms are facilitating disruptive innovations more quickly in developing countries like China, Brazil, and India. Chinese firms promptly develop and market disruptive innovations more cheaply than their overseas competitors (Wan et al., 2015). China's disruptive innovations are being successful because managers are focusing on industrialization, parallel engineering, modularization, and pragmatic decision-making.

Khanagha, Volberdal, and Oshri (2014) illustrated the complexity and the internal challenges that large business firms' leaders face when addressing disruptive technology. Cloud computing represents a disruption in the business model in which business leaders sell cloud-based service instead of selling hardware products (Wan et al., 2015). Business model disruption is one of the alarming business risks in 2019 (Watanabe et al., 2016). Disruptive technology such as cloud computing and big data processing impose a 360-

degree shift in normal business operations of some companies (Manyika et al., 2011). Companies that invest in cloud computing and big data may have leading market advantages over their direct competitors (Moura & Hutchison, 2016; Yang, Huang, Li, Liu, & Hu, 2017).

Some companies are changing manual data testing methods to automated data testing systems to achieve improved organizational efficiency (Markus, 2015; Merino, Caballero, Rivas, Serrano, & Piattini, 2016). Automated data testing can decrease operational cost, reduce processing time, and increase data quality through concise data controls (Krogstie, 2015). Business executives must prioritize strategic goals and intents while re-shaping and aligning their business models with the emerging disruptive and innovative business environment (Khanagha et al., 2014). The importance of having the right timing to enter the market with disruptive products and services is essential.

New technologies and the Internet of Things enable an integrative approach to health, education, social care, and security (Kiss et al., 2015). According to Lytras, Damiani, and Mathkour (2016), companies such as Google, Facebook, YouTube, and others invest billions of dollars in the provision of smart services, and such applications create a new landscape for business exploitation. The introduction of large-scale virtual reality worlds may soon promote a culture that quickly moves the typical computer, tablet, and smartphone users to virtual and augmented reality models and business applications (Hoffman & Offutt, 2015).

Business leaders are using IT and the Internet to train their workers to enhance innovations within their companies. Already some small and medium scale applications

of virtual systems exist to deliver training and education in several sectors, including universities, medical and scientific research, space technology, robotics, automation, and in other spheres. Sungkur, Panchoo, and Bhoyroo, (2016) designed a prototype mobile application for learning through augmented reality which may help learners to understand difficult topics and subjects.

Lytras et al. (2016) illustrated the possibilities of using virtual learning in several areas. These areas are educational immersive video games, virtual reality for industrial design learning, investigating the interrelation between attitudes, and learning readiness and learning styles under virtual learning environment. Lytras et al. stated personalized e-learning could impact cognitive and emotional factors of individuals, thereby resulting in better understanding of the materials presented.

An even more recent business innovative approach to business management strategies is the application of open and outsourced innovations. With such an approach, it is the users who initiate innovations, depending on immediate or future demands of customers (Dasgupta et al., 2011). Piller and West (2014) proposed a model for user collaboration for developing firms' open innovation, where all parties are winners. Modern business leaders must realize that disruptive digital technologies have moderated traditional system-level thinking. Disruptive digital technologies reduced the effectiveness of the traditional analytical tools and processes, while at the same time, has given ways for new business models of operation that continue to shape the business decision makers' roles (Loebbecke & Picot, 2015). Enterprise architecture and the enterprise information system are the future trend of digital technology (Agostinho et al.,

2016; Bernus et al., 2016). Digital technology allows managers to connect and collaborate to simplify complex data instantly to enhance business efficiency (Newell & Marabelli, 2015). Even traditional careers are shifting from conventional jobs toward more digital oriented professions (Falk & Hagsten, 2015; Mokyr, Vickers, & Ziebarth, 2015).

**Media and social media impacts on business innovations.** In the old model of business management, the traditional media influence business operation, and performances. Since recently, social media and current global communication networks are affecting firms' competitiveness (Bear, 2015). Shayan, Allotey, and Ghotb (2015), analyzed the relationship between media and innovation on a national level in developed economies. In countries with higher freedom of the press, the level of innovativeness is more advanced because of media influences (Shayan et al., 2015). Social media are means for diffusing innovations within any country and across countries' borders. According to recent research, the diffusion power of social media is significant for innovation (Potgieter & Naidoo, 2017).

Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman (2015) stressed that the individual's needs significantly drive social media adoption. The first need is desire, which is about an individual's enjoyment and entertainment. The second need is social, comprising social influence and interactions of the person. The third need concerns ones' belongings, companionship, and playfulness. Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman highlighted the successful adoption of social media innovation depends on its relative advantage, observability, and compatibility, concerning the end users. Social media may give innovative companies

several advantages (Park, Sung, & Im, 2017). Social media links business leaders with their customers and may capture buyers' ideas and product or service preferences (Rathore, Ilavarasan, & Dwivedi, 2016). Park et al. (2017) argued that business executives could create new entrepreneurial opportunities by focusing on prior knowledge, alertness, and social media. Rathore et al. (2016) recommended the use of social media over traditional methods to increase the time and cost efficiencies needed to produce new products that are competitive in the markets. Rathore et al. identified the importance of customer engagement in the product development process and highlighted the importance of user-generated content on social media in new product development. As a word of caution, leaders and workers using social media tools need to ensure that social media are information sharing and knowledge build-up tools involving major partners, but it could create work overload overtime for IT operators (Schulz & Cannon, 2013).

The potential use of social media for innovations in business operations and strategies are still evolving (Georgescu & Popescul, 2015). Successful businesses must have social media woven into the fabric of daily activities from marketing and sales to services (Bear, 2015). In the tourism industry, social media have become a useful and innovative marketing tool to influence consumers' destination choices (Hua, Ping, & Jun-Hwa, 2017). Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong (2017) found that the use of social media may improve companies' performance.

Business leaders are using social media for their firms' broadcast, dialogue, collaboration, knowledge management, and sociability (Schlagwein & Hu, 2017).

According to Schlagwein and Hu, internal broadcast, external and internal dialogues, and internal knowledge could help business leaders boost firms' absorptive capacities. Hanna, Kee, and Robertson (2017) illustrated workers who used Facebook to interact with their work colleagues during working hours were more productive than those who did not communicate through Facebook. Business leaders seeking to serve employees, suppliers, and customers, need to use social media to increase business performance, strengthen competitiveness, and ensure their business sustainability in the digital age (Kasemsap, 2018). Social media has the potential to improve organizational performance and expand the business market base, as well as the business brand image.

### **Business Competitiveness and Innovative Business Management Strategies**

Modern business leaders need to be competitive and innovative to become market leaders and even expand their firms' operations. Hacklin, Björkdahl, and Wallin (2018) argued that Nokia, the market leader of the mobile telephone business in 2009, was out of business in 2015 because of the up rise of new mobile phone companies, including Apple, Samsung, and LG. These new mobile firms applied innovative business approaches to the mobile phone market, which Nokia failed to overcome (Alibage & Weber, 2018; Vuori & Huy, 2016).

One method of becoming innovative and competitive is to develop and adopt new technologies continuously (Jones et al., 2016). Makkonen et al. (2016) studied business strategic approaches and found organizational leaders adopt technological innovations to improve the technical infrastructures and business relationships with their customers. Local and global firms' competitiveness is dependent on networks, technology,

leadership, strategy, marketing, internationalization, and online presence (He et al., 2017). IT facilities, coupled with high-speed Internet connectivity are essential business resources for competitive business advantage, in 2019.

In a case study illustrating the application of technology, B. Singh and Ratha (2016) demonstrated that using technology, the business leaders could improve the business distribution networks by switching from the traditional push-type of distribution technology to a push-pull approach. Technology innovations can improve business leaders' competitiveness when applied correctly (Makkonen et al., 2016; B. Singh & Ratha, 2016).

Understanding the impact of the external environment and internal business management innovations is essential for modern business leaders (Bocken, Rana, & Short, 2015; von den Eichen, Freiling, & Matzler, 2015). Product and process innovations are useful sources of competitive advantage that affect business performance (Prajogo, 2016). Bicen and Johnson (2014) found that four attitudinal factors, mainly intention, inspiration, integration, and indefatigability, act as catalysts for radical innovation when resources are limited. Intention is about knowing the task ahead and the resource availability. Inspiration is a passion for an idea and the determination to pursue that idea. Integration is synergy across the value chain. Indefatigability entailed working strenuously toward a goal despite challenges and failures. These attitudinal factors are important for successful innovations. Business leaders must, therefore, develop clear organizational goals, a clear vision, and a tenacious determination to succeed.

Companies' leaders that can achieve sustainable innovations can create positive

business results (Bocken et al., 2015; Radomska & Soloduch-Pelc, 2015). In the following study, the authors illustrated the importance of business management innovative strategies for a competitive market advantage. Agarwal and Thiel (2014) studied Kraft Foods' business management innovative strategies. Agarwal and Thiel addressed different innovative growth strategies in a fiercely competitive environment. These strategies adopted by Kraft Foods aggressively sought win-win partnerships and alliances using solutions that created mutual value and sustainable product innovations for its associated business entities.

Agarwal and Thiel (2014) focused on six key strategic elements Kraft Foods' leaders adapted for solid sustainable results. The first element was that Kraft Foods turned information into insights. The second element was to drive enterprise operations into effectiveness and efficiency. The third strategic element was to increase internal agility. The fourth element was to connect and empower its people. The fifth strategic element was to enable business service and product innovations. The sixth and final element used by Kraft Foods leaders was to manage risks, security, and business compliance. Business management innovative strategies bring positive results and competitive organizational success (Cho, Halford, Hsu, & Ng, 2016; Karaoulanis, 2018). Business leaders need to invest time, new thinking, training, and finance in innovative business practices to increase their businesses' market shares.

Service delivery firms in Korea depended on both service innovations and business strategies (Ryu, Lee, & Choi, 2015). Certain research supported the notion of developing more aggressive and innovative market intelligence. Chari, Luce, and Thukral



(2017), and E. Singh (2016) stated business leaders should develop five prime business strategies for business performance's success. First, leaders should obtain market intelligence on a continuous rather than on an ad hoc basis in emerging markets. Second, leaders should use updated market intelligence to drive strategy and strategic change in emerging markets. Third, leaders should use diverse sources and methods for obtaining market intelligence in emerging markets. Lastly, corporate and country managers should collectively create and update alternative scenarios to implement changes in response to market intelligence in emerging markets.

Kumar (2016) focused on a sustainable competitive advantage, where employees hold abilities to transform gained information to new business knowledge. E. Singh (2016) suggested that managers must develop the right working environment through data sharing processes, the use of the latest technology, and the encouragement of innovation applications. E. Singh explored some aspects of new technology, transfer of learning, information sharing, novel management practices and, knowledge management networks.

Companies' leaders are now developing innovations for competitive advantage through the application of new product development (NPD) strategy on a continuous basis. Racela (2015) posited that leaders that simultaneously adopts a customer-focus practice, exhibited entrepreneurial behavior, and fully utilized IT, demonstrated the ability to enhance NPD capabilities and ultimately improved NPD performance. Racela confirmed innovative business leaders could access resources, including finance, beyond its current boundaries and launch new innovative products and services that increase the

firms' profitability. Viardot, Sherif, and Chen (2016) stressed on the critical balance between business standardization and business innovations by business leaders because standardization could lead to business monopolies, in local, regional, and global markets.

Some global multinationals are using innovative business management strategies to differentiate themselves (Saebi, Lien, & Foss, 2016). Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail, and others provide free e-mail services while making a significant business profit from advertisements (Zhu, 2013). Innovative business leaders find various means to generate revenue for their companies while remaining competitive.

The internal network may bring breakthrough and innovative business ideas and solutions that could surprise competitors (Rooks, Sserwanga, & Frese, 2016). The creation of adaptive space is an essential innovative strategy which enables internal networks (brokers, connectors, and energizers) to flow ideas, information, and resources across the organizations to spur innovations (Cross et al., 2017). Brokers are persons within an organization acting as critical channels of information and ideas. Brokers have extensive access to diverse information, early access to new information, and control over the dissemination of new information. Connectors are crucial to the development and implementation process of adopted ideas. Connectors are persons of authority within a cohesive group in the organization. Energizers are individuals in an organization who enthusiastically take a new idea and promote it in a way that others across the organization follow and implement that new thinking.

Another novel approach in modern business leaders' strategic thinking is combining business competition with business collaboration (Xie, Zeng, Zang, & Zou,

2017). Multiple companies, whose leaders are sharing innovative business strategy, may have improved market power and broader supply chain access (Bouncken, Gast, Kraus, & Bogers, 2015). Business managers that continue to use traditional business practices may experience difficulties to compete and remain sustainable locally and internationally.

### **Business Finance and Investments for Management Innovations**

Local and global business competitions continue to be more intense, and only the smartest and most innovative firms continue to survive, remain competitive, and grow (Winterhalter, Weiblen, Wecht, & Gassmann, 2017). Business leaders use business management innovation (BMI) for business diversifications and entering new markets (Comberg & Velamuri, 2017). There is a very close relationships between BMI and technological innovations (Winterhalter et al., 2017). Such a BMI model was used by the leading United State chemical producing firm, BASF Group, by investing US \$ 8 million in Boston based NBD Nanotechnologies (Winterhalter et al., 2017). Business leaders must balance their investment portfolios well with regards to becoming more innovative for their customers.

Understanding how business leaders in developing economies invest in business management innovative practices requires a different approach than their counterparts from more advanced economies. C. Chen, Lin, Lin, and Hsiao (2016) showed a close relationship between the firms' governance arrangements (foreign ownership and independent board members) and firms' internal conditions (technology, diversity, strategy, and internal absorptive capacity). The innovation and creativity depend on the firms' sizes, level of diversifications, and the firms' management structures (Chen, Lin et

al., 2016; Klein & Wuebker, 2017). Diversification of firms reduces the level of firms' innovations because fewer investments go into research and development (Klein & Wuebker, 2017).

Srivannaboon and Munkongsujarit (2016) presented their study's findings at an international conference and showed project portfolio management and open innovations are closely related. Business leaders must pay attention to large projects, especially with regards to the investments and financing of such projects. Small business leaders interested in investing in innovative technologies seek alternative funding sources, such as venture capital, leasing, mezzanine financing, and crowdfunding (Doroshenko, Somina, Yarmolenko, Afanasiev, & Kurbatov, 2015). Doroshenko et al. (2015) showed business leaders who use these novel investment approaches, enhance small businesses' innovations. Few business leaders sell business innovation secrets to other competitive firms and still manage to be competitive. Block, Henkel, Schweisfurth, and Stiegler (2016) studied four excelling firms and found innovative firms can diversify vertically and sell their innovations to their competitors and allies, and still grow commercially with minimum risks. Executives who collaborate with their competitors may improve their firms' business performances.

In Germany, Nasiri, Alleyne, and Yihui (2016) highlighted that stronger German enterprises gave greater attention to innovations and are global market leaders. The British private sector is the engine of the country's economy. The strong global positioning of British firms is a direct result of its business leaders' innovative management strategies, including their abilities to take calculated business risks (Dinnie,

2016). The private sectors of Germany's and Britain's successes illustrated that business innovation management practice is an essential element for maintaining global competitiveness.

### **Globalization and Business Management Innovations**

Corporate leaders need to continually build new business knowledge, as well as apply innovative business management strategies to remain competitive (Watanabe et al., 2016). Business access to customers continues to increase because of the Internet, smartphones, and affordability of home Internet services (Verhoef et al., 2017). More consumers from both developed and developing countries purchase services and products online because of Internet accessibility (Kelly, Liaplina, Tan, & Winkler, 2017). The hi-tech savvy customers, mostly the younger generations, are using e-payments for their online purchases (Dutta, 2015).

Business leaders cannot continue to think traditionally and operate their businesses in the isolated brick and mortar business models. The old ways of mass marketing and advertising have been phased out and are in 2019 being replaced by targeted and individualized promotions (Zhu, Ye, & Chang, 2017). Many businesses in some developing countries continue to have competitive advantages over their international competitors (Huggins, Izushi, Prokop, & Thompson, 2014; Porter, 2011). Companies in developing regions of the world, such as China, India, Brazil, South Korea, and Malaysia are acquiring new knowledge and delivering business innovations which can be a threat to businesses which are still using traditional business practices in developed countries (Hu et al., 2017). Business leaders in China, India, Brazil, South

Korea, and Malaysia are applying innovative and disruptive technologies to take over the western countries' business markets (Christensen, 2011).

Business leaders could contribute to the positive economic growth of their countries through innovative business management strategies and entrepreneurship (Estrin, 2009). According to recent research, staying competitive in the digital technology landscape requires competitive organizations to penetrate the global market through network alliances, transparent collaborations, and creative innovations (Viltard, 2016). Business executives must create, adapt, and apply innovative business management strategies to enhance their companies' competitiveness, within the global markets (Pisano, Pironti, & Rieple, 2015).

**Globalization.** Business globalization has evolved since the 1970s. In 1980s and 1990s, Chinese's and Korean companies were producing goods through imitation strategies, and India's advances in the IT sector in early 2000s brought intense global competitions (Brondoni, 2015). Business management innovations are the key elements that ensure business leaders' success at home and in overseas markets (Laeque et al., 2017). In a globalized economy, business competitions are very intense and aggressive (Christensen, 2011). Business leaders must invest in innovative technologies and use IT to remain competitive (Gërguri-Rashiti, Ramadani, Abazi-Alili, Dana, & Ratten, 2017). Business leaders must understand technological innovations to reach consumers (Afuah & Tucci, 2003). Geographical distances should not be a barrier to win global customers because of the access to consumers through the Internet (Shih, Venkatesh, Chen, & Kruse, 2013). The buyers have more choices than before to compare prices and purchase

online (Council of Science, Technology & Innovation, 2016).

The traditional business model of operating between brick walls of commercial stores is no longer in fashion, and now customers sitting at home are purchasing worldwide with their laptops or smartphone (Brondoni, 2015). In a globalized market, business leaders need to ensure pricing, distributions, and marketing strategies meet the expectations of the targeted customers and adequately cater to clients' cultural norms and habits (Kivenzor, 2015). Business leaders need to develop new innovative products to remain competitive. New product development depends on business strategy, teamwork, resource allocation, and senior management commitment (de Brentani & Kleinschmidt, 2015).

Globalization has changed the way businesses and customers exchange services and products (Huebener et al., 2016). The rapid development of disruptive technological introductions, such as smartphones, tablets, big data storage and processes, cloud computing, as well as super-fast Internet services, are providing business leaders with new business opportunities (Ghanbari et al., 2017). The business management capabilities have multiplied many folds with excellent access to the Internet (Bongiorno et al., 2018). Several studies illustrated the positive impact of computers and the Internet on local and global firms (De Souza & Batista, 2017; Velinov & Gueldenberg, 2016; Zhang et al., 2016).

Management innovations are helping business leaders to eliminate the traditional business model and replaced it with innovative business models (Valos, Turner, Scheepers, & Stockdale, 2018). Expedia business leaders completely changed the

travelers' way of booking their flights and hotel accommodations (Zhou, Jia, & Yao, 2017). Expedia leaders applied an innovative business approach to a road-mapping strategy, by combining IT to disrupt its usual business practice (Vishnevskiy, Karasev, & Meissner, 2016). Travelers are now booking their flights and hotels online from their homes, as well as making their payments online with credit or debit cards (Shaikh, Hanafizadeh, & Karjaluto, 2017). Most western universities are delivering online advanced degree courses, with the application of virtual reality technology for some courses (Sungkur et al., 2016).

Amazon, YouTube, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft, and Google are building global online brands with millions of customers daily (De Wever & Bulcke, 2016). Google's AdSense strategy of overcoming online advertising competitions is another good example (Tosti, 2010). Innovative organizations invest in research and development (R&D) to continuously create innovative products and services (Jindal & Shaikh, 2017). Inventions, research, and innovations are no longer limited to scientists and academia, but also popular among business leaders (De Wever & Bulcke, 2016).

Since 2016, cloud data services have become more accessible and affordable IT service innovation is available to both large and small businesses (Moura & Hutchison, 2016). Digital technology proposition permits instant global connectivity and collaboration. (Cowhey & Aronson, 2017). IT technologies simplify ways of analyzing complex data (Rogers, 2016). Innovative technologies allow business leaders to hyper-scale information, through co-creation and collaborative synergies between stakeholders (Leimgruber, 2018; Partzsch, 2017). The smart Internet connectivity networks are



allowing business leaders and value chain actors to network, collaborate, and share critical business information to create business innovations on a global scale (Kotabe, Jiang, & Murray, 2017). Business leaders are pushing for outsourcing of new ideas from online customers, supply chain actors, and even their competitors (Brondoni, 2015). With improved global IT communication at higher speed, business leaders can access R&D centers and universities to purchase affordable state of the art business innovations.

There is a debate on whether a globalized economy improves business leaders' innovative strategies. Globalization has improved business leaders' opportunities to innovate (Liu, 2017). In a globalized market, business leaders have access to a global client base (Alon, Jaffe, Prange, & Vianelli, 2016). Expanding local markets overseas reduce the unit cost of production and improve business performance (Porter, 2008). As business investment opportunities increased because of globalization, business leaders need to tap into the new emerging and innovative global financial markets (Brondoni, 2015).

**Business management innovations in developing countries.** Some business leaders' find investing in certain economic sectors or regions of the world risky. However, many companies' leaders are partnering with Chinese and Indian business leaders through smart business investments. The Emerging Market Multinationals Companies (EMMCs) from China and India are now competing directly with western companies with much success (Kotabe et al., 2017; Kotabe & Kothari, 2016; Li, Strange, Ning, & Sutherland, 2016). Kotabe and Kothari (2016) studied eight Indian and Chinese companies and discovered the following competitive factors contributing to EMMCs

success in developing countries (a) innovation capabilities, (b) knowledge sharing and organizational learning, (c) specializations, (d) rich cash flow positions, and (e) strategic partnerships with developed countries' firms. Kotabe and Kothari noted that innovative companies' leaders from developing countries could compete and succeed in developed economies with well-formulated innovative business strategies.

The three critical decisions business leaders make for successful operations in emerging markets depend on (a) the size and uniqueness of the market opportunity, (b) resource availability, and (c) production capabilities (Jha, Parulkar, Krishnan, & Dhanaraj, 2016). Managers must use the bootstrap tactic to access the firm's limited resources, build a cutting-edge prototype, and make sure innovative product acceptance throughout the company before starting full production (Jha et al., 2016). Business innovations are successful when the decision makers partner with suppliers and other stakeholders to share the production costs and risks of new product development (Sharmelly & Ray, 2015). Business leaders must give high priority to building strong local networks for their business success.

The African states are presenting attractive business investment opportunities for local and foreign investors, with a focus on technology and innovations (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2018). Ernst, Kahle, Dubiel, Prabhu, and Subramaniam (2015) identified three antecedents of affordable value innovation, for developing countries, as bricolage, local embeddedness, and product standardization. Bricolage is a firm's ability to improvise during resource constraint. Local embeddedness is an extent to which a firm is in alliance with local partners. Product standardization is about setting up a generic

character for the service or product. African states continue to have weak institutions which are limiting interactive learning and management innovations (Lizuka, Mawoko, & Gault, 2015; Muok & Kingiri, 2015). Oluwatobi, Efobi, Olurinola, and Alege (2015) highlighted that governance systems for policy making, implementation and monitoring at national, regional, and continental levels in Africa, are prime factors for transformational changes on the continent.

Certain aspects of African cultures may constrain effective innovative leadership and some of these long-established traditions and practices may need to be changed or modified to bring about the needed innovations (Zoogah, Peng, & Woldu, 2015). African past events, traditions and modern political organizations highlight the influence of Africa's history on modern African leaders' decisions (Goody, 2018). Business leaders in Africa need to continue to develop new knowledge that is smart and not easily imitable (Maritz & du Toit, 2018). Public and private African organizational leaders must create an environment that fosters the development, sharing, and application of new knowledge through smart measures like excellent government policies in education, scientific research, and technology promotion (Barasa, Knobon, Vermeulen, Kimuyu, & Kinyanjui, 2017; Ribeiro, Rapini, Silva, & Albuquerque, 2018).

Business competition depends essentially on the knowledge economies (Tchamyou, 2017). Nations may use open science and sharing of innovations for their developments (Gaziulusoy, 2015). On a global scale, Voegtlin and Scherer (2017) posited that responsible innovations contributes to sustainable development (SD) through innovations that avoid harm to people and the planet, that are beneficial to customers

with new products, services, or technologies that foster SD, and that bring excellent global governance schemes for further positive innovations. Organizations successful application of innovative management approaches depend on the transformational leaders' visions and abilities to implement effective and timely changes within their enterprises.

### **Transition**

The objective of this study was to understand how business leaders in a small island economy acquire, apply, and share innovative business practice within the local business community. In Section 1, I discussed the following components (a) topic of study, (b) background of the problem, (c) problem statement (d) purpose statement, (e) research methodology and design, (f) the research question and interview questions, (g) the conceptual framework, and (h) an extensive literature review.

In Section 2, I included the following components (a) the role of the researcher, (b) the research method, (c) the research design, (d) the population and sampling, (e) data collection instruments, (f) the data analysis, and (g) reliability and validity of the study. Section 3 contained (a) presentation of the study's findings, (b) professional applications, (c) implications for social change, and (d) recommendations for future studies.

## Section 2: The Project

At the start of this study, my focus was on the selected conceptual framework and the outcomes of the literature review, both provided in Section 1. In this section, the following components are included: (a) a restatement of the purpose statement, (b) the research method and design, (c) the participants, and (d) the research method and design. This section also covers the population and sampling method, the basis for ethical research, the data collection instruments and techniques, the data organization techniques and analyses, and finally the reliability and validity of the study.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore business leaders' innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness. The targeted population consisted of business leaders from four large business organizations who had successfully developed and implemented innovative business management strategies that enhanced their organizations' competitiveness. These four organizations were operating in Seychelles, from the three main islands of Mahé, Praslin, and La Digue, for the last 3 years. The implication for social change in this study was that it might help to create more job opportunities and may help to bring a significant contribution to the local tax base.

### **Role of the Researcher**

My initial role as the researcher begins with a review of the literature to gain a more in-depth understanding of the research topic (Yin, 2017). For this study, the selected participants were interviewed at the sites where they work to collect the required

data. As the only researcher of this study, I was the primary instrument for data collection and had interactions with the participants. Qualitative interview questions encourage participants to provide detailed answers and even additional information (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). The local business leaders in my study answered open-ended interview questions to share their leadership work experiences, including the innovative business management strategies used in their organizations. Researchers must ensure the welfare and safety of the study participants (Tatebe, 2015). The interviews were held in secure and closed offices to protect the identity of the participants.

Self-evaluation enables researchers to assess their tendencies in influencing the study interpretation and results through minimizing their prejudgments, and preconceived ideas during data collection (Haneuse, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). All sides of the arguments on this research topic were studied, especially the opposing views and data. Analyzing the research question from all perspectives allows researchers to have a more balanced understanding of the business problem under research (Yin, 2017). My professional experience includes over 20 years of senior management practice, including 2 years working with the private sector. To reduce any researcher bias, organizations I have worked for or have shares in did not form part of this study. Additionally, the research topic of innovative management practice was relatively new to me.

The Belmont Report guided my execution of this doctoral study. Ethical principles are essential when conducting field research to protect the participants

(Drugge, 2016; Tatebe, 2015). The Belmont Report acknowledges that all researchers should follow basic ethical principles when researching human subjects, including respect for vulnerable populations, avoiding deception, and equal treatment of all research participants (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). I have followed and passed the ethical principles in the *Belmont Report* training delivered online by the National Institutes of Health (Certificate Number: 2156645). I practiced beneficence and justice during the field study. I received permission from Walden's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before I started gathering field data for this study.

In any field research and multiple case studies, the element of possible bias on the part of researchers may always be present (Yin, 2017). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), data collection instruments can present biases, beliefs, and practices from their background. Researchers must ensure that their self-biases and conflicts of interest are contained and kept at a minimum, so as not to impact negatively the collection, processing, analysis, and interpretations of research data (McKinney & Pierce, 2017). I was conscious of my worldviews, biases, and any conflicts of interest in this study. During this field study, I took side notes of all reactions and moments of silence in the interviews.

To keep my self-bias in check during this doctoral research, I used other strategies, such as bracketing of my bias tendencies, applied a strict interview protocol, used member checking, facilitated epoché, and ensured data saturation of the study. According to Moustakas (1994), the use of bracketing, correct application of the interview protocol, and member checking reduces self-bias in researchers' studies.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stressed that bracketing allows the researcher to identify details of tension and conflict in a research study. Stake (1995) posited that case study researchers must adhere to the field study protocol and ensure that they protect the participants and the participating organizations. Member checking ensures accuracy and correct interpretation of the interview data (Morse, 2015). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A), including the use of an approved interview questionnaire (Appendix B), as well as respected the time limit for each interview. Yin (2017) stressed that case study researchers must be disciplined when undertaking field research.

### **Participants**

Participants selected for research need to have applied experiences in the subject question of the qualitative study (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2017). Researchers must present information on the participants' knowledge and lived experiences concerning the research study (Ferguson, 2016). I used purposeful sampling to select four managers from four businesses that have successfully implemented innovative management strategies. According to Kazadi, Lievens and Mahr (2015), purposeful sampling allows researchers to collect rich field data and also enhances the literature review themes. The participants I aimed to interview needed to meet the following requirements: (a) senior business leaders who had successfully implemented business innovation management strategies in their organizations, (b) had applied these innovative management strategies within their daily business operations for at least 1 year, (c) senior managers in their organizations, and (d) their companies had successfully applied innovative business management strategies for the past 3 years. Potential participants who were excluded from the interview were



business leaders with no involvement in the implementation of innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness.

In multiple case studies, researchers must have a strategy to gain access to the participants (Stake, 1995; Valerio et al., 2016; Yin, 2017). I used the Seychelles Licensing Authority's database to find the names and contact details of four companies for my study. I wrote officially to the executive officers (CEOs) of the selected firms to inform them about my study and sought their approval for their companies to participate in the research. The potential participants received an e-mail that included the informed consent form with information about the nature of this study. I also shared the purpose of the research with the CEOs and discussed with them how their organizations' participation may help increase the body of knowledge on business leaders' innovative management strategies, in a small island state like Seychelles. The participants were not given any monetary or other incentives to participate in this research.

Researchers must develop an excellent working relationship with potential participants to execute the study (Harvey, 2016; Yin, 2017). According to Gray (2013), researchers should establish short face-to-face meetings with business leaders, to assure them that the research studies are purely for an academic purpose and to ensure buy-in for those studies. I organized brief introductory meetings with the four CEOs to develop a working relationship with all four participating organizations. The participants were informed that their participation in this study was voluntary and that they could withdraw their participations at any time. The CEOs were briefed on my association with the research topic of business leaders' innovative management strategies and the reasons I

had selected this research subject for my study. I followed closely the approved interview protocol, throughout the field study.

For my study, these senior business leaders were able to answer my main research question from their work experiences through semistructured interviews. The selected research participants needed to be experienced to answer the main research question (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; King, Horrocks, & Brooks, 2018; Merriam, 2014). The potential senior business leaders had successfully implemented innovative business management practice within their companies. Each selected interviewee needed to formally give consent to be interviewed by signing the consent form before the interview started.

### **Research Method**

The three methods researchers use for conducting research inquiries are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Choy, 2014). I considered all three methods for my study and chose the qualitative method as most appropriate for studying business leaders' innovative management strategies in competitive organizations. A qualitative method allows the researcher to conduct the study in its natural setting and probe in-depth into the phenomenon under research, providing patterns, themes, concepts and logic models (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McCusker & Gunayadin, 2015; Yin, 2017). Researchers use open-ended questions in qualitative case studies, to optimize the collection of information and data, while out in the field (Maxwell, 2008). I used Burns' TLT for my conceptual framework in order to understand why and how a limited number of local business leaders are applying innovative business management strategies to

improve business competitiveness. Another strength of using a qualitative approach in research is that it allows researchers to (a) achieve the research goals, (b) answer the research question and interview questions, (c) understand meaning from the participants' perspectives, (d) allow the application of an integrated strategy to complete the study on time and with a small budget, and (e) enable the assessment of the validity and reliability of the research findings (O'Brien et al., 2014).

For my research, I reviewed but did not select the quantitative research method. Teater et al. (2016) illustrated that in the quantitative research method, researchers use closed-ended questions to test hypotheses and theories by comparing variables, and relationships. Researchers need to have an appropriate sample size for the study's findings to be valid and reliable, in quantitative research (Yang & Banamah, 2014). Because my study's business problem focused on the limited application of innovative management strategies by business leaders in my country and testing a hypothesis was not part of my research, the quantitative research method was not appropriate for my study.

The mixed method consists of both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). In mixed-method research, researchers can collect qualitative data, conduct a specific analysis of those data to answer the research question and follow-up this initial phase, with a quantitative study to understand the research problem in more depth (Gabryś, 2016). Mixed-method research is, therefore, a more time-consuming method. As the quantitative method was not suited for my study, I ruled out the use of the mixed method for my study.

## Research Design

From various qualitative research designs, I considered four potential designs: (a) ethnography, (b) phenomenological research, (c) narrative research, and (d) case study research. Researchers have several design options for qualitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patton, 2015). I selected the multiple-case study design for this study. Marshall and Rossman (2016) indicated that researchers use case studies when they want to have an in-depth understanding of a situation taking place at various sites and for comparing the study's findings. Yazan (2015) stressed that case studies provide researchers with data from participants' natural settings. The purpose of this multiple-case study design was to explore what innovative business management strategies some business leaders in Seychelles have used to enhance competitiveness. Through this research design, I was able to develop a better understanding of how the local business leaders apply the conceptual framework of TLT within their companies.

For this research, I did not select ethnography, phenomenological research, or narrative research. Researchers use ethnographic studies to describe and interpret the shared pattern of group cultures and to describe ways of living of communal groups (Andrea, Lehtonen, & Atefipour, 2017; Fetterman, 2010; Lewis, 2015). Ethnography study design was not suitable for this research because I was not interpreting or describing a shared pattern of a group. Researchers conducting phenomenological study design attempt to understand social reality research based on people's experiences of that social reality, free from the researchers' interpretations and biases, while exploring the individuals' lived situations (Gray, 2013; Wilson, 2015). The phenomenological study

design was not suited for this study because I was not aiming at understanding the social reality of the participants but was aiming to understand business leaders' innovative management strategies to enhance competitiveness. Researchers who use the narrative design try to analyze individuals' or groups' stories, studying about their lives as individuals or as groups (Dixon, 2015; Haydon & Riet, 2014). The lived and told stories of individuals or groups, as well as their lived experiences, were not part of my study and thus the narrative design was not appropriate for my study.

According to Yin (2017), data validity and reliability are critical for case studies. Though the phenomenon under study is relatively new in Seychelles, I had chosen to use a multiple-case study design instead of a single-case study design to allow for research replication, data comparison, and saturation, as well as for ensuring field research data validity and reliability. This research strategy also helped to minimize any research bias. In multiple-case studies, researchers must continue with the interviews of selected participants until data saturation is reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2017). Five business leaders with work experiences in innovative management practice were interviewed for the data collection process.

### **Population and Sampling**

Proper selection of the population and sampling frame is critical to ensure that the participants who are taking part in the study are able to provide the needed data to answer the study's main research question (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Robinson, 2014; Valerio et al., 2016). In qualitative research, the sample size is a debated topic, which is sometimes left with the research editors of the publishing firm to decide (Valerio et al.,

2016; Willig & Rogers, 2017). Researchers often use four sampling strategies for the multiple-case research study, which are census sampling, probabilistic sampling, nonprobabilistic sampling, and purposive sampling. Census sampling is time-consuming since the researcher must interview all the participants from the population and the data analysis may also take more time (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

According to DeFeo (2013), purposeful sampling allows researchers to access those participants who best fit the study and may generate rich data. For probabilistic sampling, all the participants have the chance of being selected for the study, since participants are randomly chosen, whilst researchers using the nonprobabilistic sampling can be biased in the selection process since the participants are not randomly selected (Yang & Banamah, 2014). According to Yin (2017), for multiple-case studies, even a small sample size of the participants is adequate for a study, provided the conceptual framework is clear and concise. A purposive sampling approach was used for my study since the phenomenon that I studied is being practiced by only a few business leaders in Seychelles.

For case studies, researchers determine the number of participants that they interview based on the need to reach data saturation during the field study (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Stake, 1995). For this study, four business leaders were interviewed that have successfully implemented innovative management strategies to improve competitiveness, for these last 3 years. I continued to seek and interview one more participant until I reached data saturation with my research finding, where no new themes emerged. Case study researchers must ensure that they reach data saturation, for the study to be valid and

reliable (Yin, 2017).

It is critical in a multiple-case research study that researchers achieve data saturation, to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study (Maxwell, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). Interviews of five business leaders from five different innovative business organizations, helped me to reach data saturation. Data collected from each organization were used to compare and contrast for emerging themes, trends, and patterns. The organizations' official documents and reports were also used to cross-check and triangulate with the data collected from the interviews, which helped to minimize research bias. In field research, researchers reach data saturation when no new information, no new trends, no further patterns, no new codes, and no new themes emerge during the data collection and analysis process (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Participants for research should be selected based on criteria that they have the work experience related to the phenomena of the research (Yanchar, 2015). The innovative business management organizations participating in the study, were operating in various economic sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, fisheries, agriculture, telecommunication, and financial services, in Seychelles. The sample selected were business leaders who had been applying successful innovative business management strategies for a minimum of one year in their organizations, to enhance their firms' competitiveness. Researchers must protect participants and their organizations from any negative impact, as a result of the research (Marshall, Hancock, & Algozzine, 2015; Wester, 2011). Each interview was held in a private room that was comfortable for the

participant and that provide the confidentiality aspect to the study. All the participants signed the consent form before participating in this study.

### **Ethical Research**

When conducting field research study, researchers must consider ethical issues, especially when human beings are part of the study (Nichols, 2016). Yin (2017) posited that when human subjects are involved in the research, researchers must ensure that they protect the participants and acquire informed consent from the participants before beginning the study. I got all the participants to sign the informed consent form before being interviewed. The informed consent form provided explanation of the details of the field study to the participants. The informed consent form also covered the aspect of privacy and limits to confidentiality, statement of consent, samples of the interview questions, and the researcher's contact information. Finally, the consent form contained details regarding the process of audio recording of the interviews. Through a formal letter, the participants were informed on the purpose, objectives, and background of the study and sought their agreement to participate. I officially sent a letter of cooperation to the participating companies, to obtain permission to conduct the study.

Guaranteeing the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the participating companies, were crucial for my field research. A guiding principle for all researchers is that they should not harm the participants during the interviewing process and during the other stages of the study, such as when doing the interpretation of the findings and the final reporting (Yazan, 2015). The Belmont Report research protocol was followed during the whole study. The researcher must not disclose the participants'



and the participating organizations' names, to ensure the confidentiality of the research and protect the participants and their firms (Yin, 2014). Coding the real names of the interviewees and participating firms using labels such as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, and Participant 4, and company C1, C2, C3 and C4, was essential for the study. No harmful or threatening interview questions were used during the field study.

The approval from Walden University's IRB for my study was required before conducting the field research. Getting IRB approval ensures compliance with the university's ethical standards, and that researchers are complying with the United States federal regulations, with respect to ethical practice in research (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The IRB approval number for my study is 04-24-19-0589953. The participants for this study were over 18 years of age and were not from any protected groups of the national population. The participants could have withdrawn from the study at any time, by informing me in person, through an e-mail or a phone call. There was not any incentive or compensation given to the participants for taking part in this study, since participation was voluntary. I will provide a summary of the research findings and the study recommendations to the participants and their organizations, if they would like to have such information.

The interviews and the companies' information have been recorded and stored on my computer with a secret password which only I know. The NVivo software was used to process and code the collected data. Researchers conducting qualitative study use NVivo software to facilitate and speed up the coding and analyses of collected field data (Zamawe, 2015). The other companies' hard copy documents have been stored and

locked in a filing cabinet, which only I have access to. Storing data using locked cabinet for physical files and having computer password to protect digital files, enables researchers to comply with the ethical requirements of the university (Walden University, 2016). According to the requirement of Walden University, the collected data will be safely kept for 5 years, to protect the rights of participants and the participating companies. At the end of the 5 years, all stored files will be destroyed by shredding paper files and deleting permanently all digital files.

### **Data Collection Instruments**

For this study, I used a qualitative research method with a case study design. Documentation, interviews, archived records, direct observations, participants' observations, and artifacts are six sources for data collection and evidence in case study research (Yin, 2017). As the researcher who conducted the interviews, I was the primary data collection instrument for this study. Two additional instruments were used to collect field data for my study. The study included semistructured interviews and review of company's official documents, as the other two additional instruments of research in the data collection process, for triangulation purposes of the field data. In recent studies, researchers proved that triangulating research data improved reliability and validity of the study's findings and minimized research bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017). Before I started the field data collection, the Walden IRB approval had to be confirmed and each of the interview participant had to sign the informed consent form.

In this study, semistructured interview questions were used to explore the

innovative business management strategies the participants used to enhance business competitiveness. According to recent research, interview questions can provide in-depth and rich data from experienced participants on the phenomena under study (Yin, 2017). Using interview questions, researchers are able to ask follow-up questions to have a better understanding of the actual field situation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The interview protocol was the guide used to conduct the field interviews. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions based on the study's conceptual framework. The field interviews were recorded electronically, transcribed, coded, and adequately documented for each of the participants' responses.

In research studies, researchers must ensure that in the data collection process there are no captured or retained biases in the study (Bevan, 2014; Harvey, 2015; McKinney, & Pierce, 2017). Member checking were used to ensure that I had captured the appropriate interpretive perspective of each participant's interview, to increase the reliability and validity of the study. I prepared summaries of the interviews and e-mailed them to the participants for their validation. I also organized follow-up interviews with the participants if required. In case study research, researchers may use organizations' official documents as another relevant and important source of evidence (Marshall et al., 2015; Yin, 2017). One advantage of using documents in the research study is that the information is always available for re-use and one disadvantage is that it may contain certain biases (Stake, 1995). To obtain access to the official companies' documents for the study, I sought authorization through a formal letter of cooperation to each of the companies' respective CEOs. The official documents that were used in this study

included action and strategic plans, marketing plans, and business plans.

### **Data Collection Technique**

For my study, I collected data through open-ended, semistructured interviews of five sampled business leaders from the three main islands of Seychelles. For qualitative studies, semistructured interviews provide researchers with an in-depth and actual situation of the research enquiry by asking how and why questions (Emmel, 2015; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017). Face to face interviews of participants allow the researcher to observe the participants' body language and also to take note of their voice tones, which may assist the researcher in having a deeper understanding of the phenomenon that the researcher is studying (Merriam, 2014). My main data collection medium was based on the approved interview questionnaire instrument that was made up of eight questions (Appendix B).

Researchers using interviews may discover richer study findings because they may ask the participants follow-up questions to elaborate on their answers (Gustafsson, Jertfelt, Blanchin, & Li, 2016; Hancock & Algozzine, 2016). Pavlovic, Todorovic, Mladenovic, and Milosavljevic (2014) revealed qualitative preliminary investigation produce possible learning tools to develop a process for the understanding of the perceptions and worldviews of the individuals involved in the study. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were recorded through an electronic recording device. I transcribed each interview myself, immediately after completing each interview. The interviews were conducted at the participants' business locations or at appropriate locations that the interviewees had accepted. Managing the duration of the interviews

efficiently is important in qualitative studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, Yin, 2017).

Each interview did not exceed more than 45 minutes.

The advantages researchers have when using interviews for data collection process include (a) observation of facial and body language of the participants during the interviews, including voice tones, (b) rate of response to questions asked, and (c) possibility of immediate clarification of unclear responses (Rossman, 2016; Yanchar, 2015; Zhang, Kuchinke, Woud, Velten, & Margraf, 2017). The ability to record electronically each interview allow researchers to have accurate transcripts of the participants' responses (Dombrowski, 2015). The disadvantages of face-to-face interview include researchers (a) have to multi-tasks when conducting interviews by listening, simultaneously recording and interpreting the responses, (b) the recording device may malfunction, and (c) researchers must manage efficiently the duration of the interviews (Dombrowski, 2015). Also, as a disadvantage, using the interview as the qualitative study's single strategy for data collection may expose the study's finding to research bias and may raise questions to the study's validity and reliability (Yin, 2017),

I initiated contact with the participants and their organizations with an exposure visit first. Exposure visit helps build a foundation for the interview relationship (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; McCusker & Gunayadin, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) revealed that the more attention and dedication researchers put into making the first contacts with the participants and their organizations, the better the interviewing relationship will be. The companies' annual reports, strategic and business plans, and management meetings' minutes were other data sources that I used during the field study.

With this data collection strategy, I triangulated the research information, to minimize research biases, and increased the study's validity and reliability. In qualitative research, triangulating data from at least three sources increases the validity and reliability of the research findings (Morse, 2015; Stakes1995, Yin, 2017). It took about 3 weeks to complete all the five interviews and collect other relevant documents from the five participating organizations.

When conducting a study that involves human participants, it is important for researchers to protect and maintain the rights of those individuals participating, as well as their organizations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979). The Walden IRB approved interview protocol was applied during the field data collection phase of my study (Appendix A). I therefore assigned a number to each of the participants and a different number to their organizations. It is important that the researchers use the consent form to inform the participants the details of the interview process (Meriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yin, 2017). The informed consent form is part of the interview protocol for research studies that involve humans (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). The participants signed the consent form before I conducted the interviews. The consent form included information for the participants about recording and transcribing the interviews, as being part of the research process. The participants were able to ask any questions about the consent form, the interview or the study's process before accepting to participate in the study. I waited for Walden IRB approval before I started the interviews.

As the sole researcher of this study, I engaged in the epoché or the bracketing process prior to and during the interviews. The epoché process implies that past

associations, understandings, facts, and biases are set aside, and should not influence the interviews (Moustakas, 1994; Yin, 2017). I used member checking by summarizing the interview data to clarify possible misinterpreted answers, and even during the interviews. Member checking may be performed during or after the interview whichever makes the participant most comfortable (Harvey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Some researchers allow the participants access to the interviews' summaries (Hancock & Algozzine, 2015). To increase the study's validity and reliability, I provided the participants access to the interviews' summaries for review within a short timeline after the initial interviews.

### **Data Organization Technique**

In doctoral research, researchers must organize the collected data to protect the participants and organizations participating in the study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979; Walden University, 2016). I stored the transcribed data, companies' official documents and typed notes in a folder on Microsoft Word document. The collected data were processed and analyzed using the NVivo data management software. Software programs can help to facilitate coding and theme creation in qualitative research studies, including data compiling, coding similar words and terms, and interpreting relationships among codes (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Yin, 2017). Zamawe (2015) showed that software management programs only assist qualitative researchers in their processing, analyses of the research study and data management. I filled a research log during the field research, recorded the interview dates, the interview durations, as well as the coded names of the participants and their companies that participated. A

reflective journal was also kept and used to take side notes before, during and after each interview. When conducting qualitative research, a personal journal helps separate personal thoughts from the interview data, which help to minimize bias, and assist to maintain the study's validity (Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2017). After completing the interviews, I engaged in a moment of thinking and took appropriate additional notes in the dedicated reflective journal.

The data from interviews and other soft copy data have been securely stored on my personal computer, with a special password, known only by myself. The actual names of the participants and their organizations have been replaced with coded names such as P1, P2, P3 and P4 for the participants and C1, C2, C3 and C4 for the organizations. Such procedure ensured that my data were well organized and were not misplaced or mixed. In qualitative multiple case studies, researchers must ensure that their collected and stored data are securely managed and are well organized (Marshall et al., 2015; Merriam, 2014; Yin, 2017). The hard copies of reference documents from the organizations have also been locked in a filing cabinet, which only I have access to. The soft and hard copies of the research data will be stored for only 5 years, as required by Walden, and will be destroyed when the 5 years elapsed.

### **Data Analysis**

In qualitative multiple case studies, researchers aim to uncover hidden patterns, concepts, and themes in the data analysis process (Bedwell, McGowan, & Lavender, 2015). The theoretical basis of the study, starting with the main research questions and the conceptual framework, was based on Burns' TLT and the study's literature review.



These were the study's instruments to guide the practical field research and the research data analyses.

I followed Yin's five-step data analysis process of identifying and code themes, trends, and patterns from the research data. According to Yin (2017) researchers must (a) collect and compile the data, (b) disassemble the data, (c) reassemble the data, (d) interpret meaning of the data, and (e) conclude the data. In case-study research, methodological triangulation is applied to enhance conformability, accuracy, and validity of the study's findings from multiple sources (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Yin, 2014). For this study, two different sources of data, namely interviews of five top executives from five large innovative business management organizations and official documents from these five organizations, after authorizations had been received, were used. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was used to assist in sorting, coding, processing, and analyzing the interview data. Software management programs, such as NVivo, only assist qualitative researchers in their processing, analyses of the research study and with the management of the collected data (Edwards-Jones, 2014; Zamawe, 2015). In a similar way, the official documents were extracted and separately loaded into the NVivo software for independent coding, processing, and analyses. I compared these two independent results to corroborate and triangulate the field research data for any emerging patterns, trends, or contradictions.

The theoretical lens through which I answered the study's research question was through the conceptual framework of Burns' TLT. I followed five steps in my study's analyses phase. The first step of my data analysis was to compile the data, using NVivo

software, from the transcribed interviews, researcher's notes, and official organizational documents. I rechecked with the participants for any unclear data that were received through the original interviews, within a few days after the initial interview using a follow-up interview. I also listened a few times to the audio interviews' recordings, to ensure that I understood well the information as were meant by the participants, and minimize any bias from myself, in my interpretations of the interviewed and documented data. The second step involved coding, categorizing and classification of the compiled data, based on keywords and themes identified in Burns' TLT conceptual framework and key topics from the study's literature review. For the third step, I used NVivo software to identify emerging patterns, themes, connections, and trends from the processed field data. A new grouping was created for any new emerging theme. Thomas (2015) recommended that researchers categorized emerging new themes under new headings and that researchers re-scanned the whole data set using the new theme category, for confirming any additional associations. The fourth step involved counting the repetitions of certain themes, trends, and patterns, to know how strong they were as findings from the research study. The fifth and last step was to critically analyze the research findings, and also the emerging themes and patterns, which helped my understanding of innovative business management strategies that local business leaders in Seychelles have been applying to enhance business competitiveness.

The analyses of the study's research data were my preparation for me to answer the research questions based on Burns' TLT conceptual framework and the literature review. It also allowed me to make my study's recommendations based on the research's

findings. New recent published studies were used to support the emerged findings and to relate the research results to the study's conceptual framework and the general body of the literature.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Since the works of Lincoln and Guba (1985), the results of qualitative research have been under rigorous scrutiny, in order to ensure that these studies are reliable, valid, and trustworthy. Santiago-Delefosse, Gavin, Bruchez, Roux, and Stephen (2016) showed that qualitative researchers must create and implement strategic processes for their research to be valid and reliable. The aim of qualitative research reliability and validity is to make the study findings rigorous and trustworthy (Morse, 2015). For qualitative research method and multiple case study design, Marshall and Rossman (2016) highlighted that dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability are essential measuring criteria. For this study, I applied strategies of dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability to ensure that the research findings were valid and reliable.

#### **Reliability**

The significance of research is dependent upon the reliability and validity of the research contents. Harvey (2015) stressed that researchers must ensure that the studies are dependable to increase their reliability. Dependability in qualitative research refers to the reliability of data's stability over time and under different conditions. Marshall and Rossman (2016) insisted that qualitative researchers must use member checking for the research results to be dependable. According to Bevan (2014), qualitative researchers

achieved dependability through credibility, strategies of triangulation within the study, duplication of the research analysis and use of audit trail.

Morse (2015) posited that researchers must use member checking approach to ensure the study's dependability. I checked all interview transcripts for inaccuracies, used member checking, and detailed all data collection and analysis steps to ensure accuracy of the research process. This process of collection of detailed information provides a comprehensive audit trail to support confirmability of the study. Each participant's interview was reviewed and interpreted to ensure that I am able to capture each of their perspective and provide each participant with a detailed synthesis of his or her responses. I established dependability of the research data using member checking approach through a follow-up interview soon after the initial interview.

### **Validity**

In qualitative research studies internal validity measures the research credibility while external validity measures transferability of the qualitative study (Wahyuni, 2012). Member checking allowed me to confirm the accuracy of participants' responses and the credibility of the study. According to Harvey (2015) researchers use member checking and methodological triangulation to improve the validity of the research findings. As soon as I reached data saturation, I used the NVivo software to organize the research information into key topics and themes. To confirm validity, I triangulated the research data using the participants' interviews and official documents from the five sampled innovative business organizations. When researchers follow ethical research procedures and protocols such as the university's IRB approval process, the study's findings improve

(Wester, 2011). I followed the IRB approved interview protocol for all the interviews.

**Credibility.** Rushing and Powell (2014) defined credibility as the correspondence between the way participants perceive and respond to the interview questions, on one side and on the other side, to the way a researcher projects the participants' responses to the questions covered in the interview. To ensure my study establishes credibility, I provided each participant with a follow-up interview to member check on the authenticity of the initial interview. The needed corrections were made as I received the feedback from the interviewees. Researchers increase their studies' credibility by registering the actual interviews and safely keeping copies of the recording (Yin, 2017). I recorded the study's interviews and have safely kept copies of the recording in a locked filing cabinet.

**Confirmability.** Confirmability in research study is the extent to which the study's findings can be verified by other researchers and readers (Noble & Smith, 2015). Member checking is one strategy researchers use to increase confirmability in qualitative studies (Fusch, & Ness, 2015). Member checking using summaries of the interviews and conducting follow-up interviews with all the participants, was an essential element of my field study. Triangulating the research data between interviews and official documents ensured the coded themes and patterns collaborate, which also supported confirmability of the study. The interviews' and official company documents' data were checked to ensure that there are no major differences or contradictions between the two field information sources. I checked the accuracy of all the data collected, so as to eliminate all errors between the interview responses, the official companies' documents, and the study's coding system. My aim was to ensure that the research data were reliable,

trustworthy, valid, and had error free reporting. Strict ethical practice was followed in the execution, analyses, and reporting phases of the study. According to Yazan (2015), researchers must ensure that they protect the research participants and the sampled organizations from any harm. Keeping the anonymity of the participants and their organizations throughout the research process, was one of my top priority for this study. To increase confirmability of the study, research summaries and side notes were kept, as I worked through the data analyses process.

**Transferability.** Transferability of a qualitative study is about the ability to transfer the research results to other contexts and settings (Santiago-Delefosse et al., 2016). The study's findings may need to be possibly generalized and applied in a different environment and setting by other researchers, with the expectation of achieving similar results. I will leave the opportunities of generalizing the study's findings and transferability of the study for future researchers. Rushing and Powell (2014) posited that by thoroughly describing the research context and its assumptions, both readers and future researchers can judge the transferability of the study in another context. I systematically documented my research process in all its details by keeping a research journal.

**Data saturation.** Reaching data saturation ensure that the study is credible and confirmable. According to Fusch and Ness (2015) researchers reach data saturation when no new information is obtained in the study and further coding of emerging themes is no longer feasible. Fusch and Ness also stressed that researchers must ensure that they achieved data saturation, else their studies quality and validity are questionable.

Colombo, Froning, Garcia, and Vandelli (2016) showed that researchers should aim to achieve data saturation when conducting qualitative research to improve the research reliability and validity. I continued to interview other participants until I reached data saturation.

### **Transition and Summary**

In Section 2, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study that explored innovative management strategies some business managers used to enhance competitiveness of their organizations was restated. I described in this section my role as the researcher, the selection of participants, the research method and design, the population and sampling strategy, the ethical research principles, the data collection and analysis techniques, and the reliability and validity aspects of the study. In this section I explained how, as the researcher, I aimed to ensure that the study has dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability. Member checking, audit trail, and triangulation provided an assurance of reliability and validity of my study.

I will detailed in Section 3 my research findings and will explained how the information in the research applies to business leaders' innovative management strategies, to enhance business competitiveness. Areas for further research of my study will also be explored. The aspect of how this study may encourage social change will be covered in this final section, and it will include a reflection on my experience as the researcher. Proposing certain recommendations for the local business leaders on innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness, based on the study's findings, will also be an important part of the final reporting. As the researcher, I

hope that this study may initiate a new thinking for the business leaders from their traditional business approaches to enhance business competitiveness and possibly help to support social change, through an increase in the tax contributions of the local business communities.



### Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies business leaders have used to apply innovative business management strategies to enhance competitiveness. I conducted semistructured interviews with five participants who had at least 3 years' work experience with implementing innovative business management strategies. The data collection process included semistructured interviews that were recorded, transcribed, and coded. The interview protocol and member checking were both applied for the field phase of this study. The data were then analyzed using NVivo software to help establish themes from the transcribed interviews. I applied methodological triangulation by analyzing various documents from the participating companies, including their annual reports, strategic and business plans, and management meetings' minutes. For the five sampled companies, their official documents corroborated the data collected from the five interviews. Within the data analysis, four themes emerged: (a) innovative business leaders, (b) technological innovations for competitiveness, (c) regional and international markets and competitions, and (d) competitive business environment.

#### **Presentation of Findings**

The research question for this qualitative study was: What strategies do business leaders use to implement innovative business management strategies to improve competitiveness? The participants in this study shared their experiences on the strategies they have used to successfully implement innovative business management strategies to

improve competitiveness within their business organizations. The five participants were from the leadership team of five successful large businesses, operating in five different sectors of Seychelles' economy. Participants were eligible to participate in this study if the participating firms were officially licensed by the Licensing Authority of Seychelles, the firms had been operating and practicing innovative management strategies for more than 3 years in Seychelles, and the participants had to be senior management leaders who had successfully applied innovative management strategies to enhance competitiveness for at least 1 year. Table 1 provides information on the participants' eligibility to participate in this study.

Table 1

*Eligibility for Participation*

Requirement	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5
Valid business licensed	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Age of firm (years)	>30	>25	>30	>30	>30
Participant experience (years)	>10	>15	>15	>15	>12

The study's findings may contribute to increasing the awareness of business leaders who are implementing innovative business management strategies for increased competitiveness in their respective organizations. I assigned the participants and the companies alphanumeric codes: C1 to C5 for companies and P1 to P5 for participants. I interviewed five participants using semistructured interviews; each interview lasted between 35 and 45 minutes. Data saturation was attained at the end of the third interview, where no new themes and information emerged, and there was no need for more interviews. Upon completion of the interviews, I transcribed the recorded interviews and

proceeded with the member checking process to ensure appropriate interpretation. All participants agreed with the interpretations of their summarized interview answers. From the coding with NVivo, I derived four primary themes: (a) innovative business leaders, (b) technological innovations for business competitiveness, (c) regional and international markets and competitions, and (d) a competitive business environment.

### **Theme 1: Innovative Business Leaders**

All five participants stressed the importance of having innovative and visionary business leaders in their business organizations for them to continue being competitive and sustainable. Innovative management strategies are the responsibilities of a business's executive leaders (Porter & Kramer, 2019). There is a general acceptance that firms need to change, adapt, and innovate their business models toward business innovations in order to appropriate value from technological innovations and be sustainable in global markets (Pogodina, Aleksakhina, Burenin, Polianova, & Yunusov, 2019; Venkatesh & Singhal, 2018). From the first theme of innovative business leaders, three subthemes emerged: (a) transformational business leaders, (b) innovative business culture, and (c) the local business environment.

P3 showed the importance of business leaders' role for innovative changes in business operations, with the following remarks:

It is always leaders that decide if they want to go for an innovation or a new product. It is not the staff who will do this. They might make suggestions, but it is the leaders who decide to innovate, or they can decide not to do anything. I am always pushing for my managers to innovate and find new and better ways of

doing things. This becomes our innovative leadership drive.

According to P4, business leaders are critical agents for innovative changes within their organizations,

This is the reason why innovations are needed in our industry and our management teams need to be able to cope with getting and understanding the skills that they know nothing about and be able to develop their employees with those innovative skills in organizations that have been historically traditional and gives our staff the right support to ensure that these innovative skills that the workers have are transferred throughout our organizations.

P3 further illustrated the importance of innovative business leaders when explaining how their company was digitalizing their services:

What we have done in 2019 is launched a new online product for mobile banking applications. So, this is meeting our customers' needs and moving us towards our strategy of digitalization. This is one thing we can talk about in more detail in our innovative strategies. Digitalization is now a big battle for banks to increase their efficiency in terms of their processes and business operations.

This innovative business strategy is supported by company C3's Strategic Plan 2018, which precisely mentioned, "Our company will use modern IT, ICT and Internet technology to improve our service deliveries to our customers in the next 3 years." C3's customers are already benefiting from online and mobile banking services in 2019.

P2 used an innovative leadership outlook to summarize this first theme, captured with the following remarks,

I think that is the only way, maybe here and other places as well, where you can actually grow the market by being disruptive in the market and actually providing products that are new to the market and services that actually make a difference for your customers.

This contribution by P2 is supported by C2's documented deliveries to government departments and private companies with innovative products and services, including latest alarm systems, IT support and maintenance, security and safety services, software design and development, and vehicle fleet management system, over last 10 years.

**Transformational business leaders.** All five participants supported the concept that modern and innovative business organizations needed to train their executives to become transformational business leaders. The companies of all the participants had a few transformational business leaders who were making innovative business decisions continuously. According to all the participants, transformational leaders are essential to bringing innovation management within business organizations. Since 2014, all five participating companies have recruited university graduates and invested in their management training. The five companies have allocated a specific training budget each year for training their young managers, which is detailed in their annual training budgets. All the five companies have 5-year training plans for their managers and staff.

Table 2 provides key terms relating to transformational business leaders for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to transformational business leaders equaled 17.81% of all the participants' responses.

Table 1

*References to Transformational Business Leaders*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Innovative	48	3.77	Disruptive, creative
Organization	39	3.07	Businesses, company, team
Change	35	2.75	Think, improve, different
Strategies	29	2.29	Strategic, objectives
Leadership	34	2.68	Executives, champions
Management	20	1.58	Managers, managed
Competitiveness	12	0.88	Achieve, challenge
Transformational	10	0.79	Transform, vision

P4 and P3 emphasized on this type of leadership to bring positive, innovative changes within organizations. According to P3, transformational leadership is essential, and his company is encouraging each of its leaders to become “a component of change champion.” P4 said that, “For transformational leadership to work and bring in innovations and improve competitiveness, there must be empowerment and involvement.” P4 added that as business leaders, they had “to take the organization on a journey.” P5 illustrated the importance of transformational leadership by saying,

Transformational leadership is crucial in our organization. I tell you, if it was not for this style of management, with a lot of flexibility and innovations in it, we would not have been able to sustain all the challenges and all the changes that we have had to go through. If we were transactional or traditional in our management approaches, we would not have been able to succeed.

The leadership of C5 is innovative, and the CEO practices an open-door approach with respect to the other managers and staff. The company’s managers have regular strategic

meetings to measure the latest development in the market and adjust their marketing strategy accordingly. C5 has continued to bring new products and services to their customers every year, which is proven by the number of new products' and services' ranges that C5 has brought onto the market over these last 5 years.

**Innovative business culture.** This was the second subtheme that emerged from the theme of innovative business leaders. Corporate culture originates from a set of shared beliefs of organizational members in response to both external and internal forces of change (Kuswandi, Harijono, Handini, & Sanggarwati, 2017). Wallach (1983) described internal culture by identifying three types of organizational culture: (a) bureaucratic, (b) innovative, and (c) supportive. Wallach further argued that unlike bureaucratic culture, innovative culture is exciting and dynamic, where entrepreneurs and ambitious people thrive. Tian, Deng, Zhang, and Salmador (2018) highlighted the complex and idiosyncratic relationship between culture and innovation.

The five participants confirmed that an innovative internal business culture was critical for sustaining an innovative business approach. Table 3 provides key terms relating to innovative business culture for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to innovative business culture equaled 28.65% of all the participants' responses.

P3 elaborated on the significant factors for having the right internal business culture to foster business innovations,

One thing which is very important, is to work from the perspective of what kind of internal culture our company needs to have, because I think we say that culture

eats strategy at breakfast, since the internal culture can be one of the major limitations. We have worked for about a year on our internal culture for our strategy. As I have said, it began with our executive team, and then we have extended the training to the rest of our management leaders.

Table 3

*References to Innovative Business Culture*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Innovative	54	5.76	Disruptive, create, ideas
Team	53	5.68	Unit, company, department
Leadership	52	4.74	Executives, management
Culture	42	4.49	Work, organization, internal
Change	34	3.60	Changing, new, improve
Transform	21	2.35	Transformational, approach
Traditional	19	2.03	Behavior, conservative, barriers

P3's claim is supported by entries in C3's management minutes of meeting, where the executives discussed and confirmed the series of strategic meetings that C3 conducted with all their senior managers throughout 2018, focusing on developing a new business culture for the company.

According to P1, the latest development in social media is having a direct impact on the internal culture of their business, since they have had to quickly adapt and change to fit with this emerging business trend, and P1 added, "Social media is a market that we want to target and the youths' thinking is not the same as ours. They are more like mobile phones', Apps' and websites' people." P2 emphasized that having a good customer and supplier business culture, where loyalty and good business relationships exist, are



essentials for having a sustainable and innovative enterprise. From the company's document of working visit to customers, C2 showed that their Marketing Section, has had regular meetings, at least once every three months, with their corporate customers. C2's Marketing Manager and one other junior officer conducted working visits to their customers' premises to discuss with their clients.

P4 had an interesting comment about the subject of the innovative culture of their company and said that cultural change is tough. P4 further explained that it takes an approach of supporting the leaders and empowering them while ensuring that they show the right behavior and shared a quote on leadership culture that, "Leaders should water the flowers and not the weed." P5 detailed the internal culture subtheme for innovative business leaders in a bit more depth, echoing,

I think innovative internal culture was already there when I came. Projects are excellent tools in changing internal cultures. We have had to individually transform ourselves first before attempting to transform and change other external organizations. I had to go through a lot of professional development myself before I could bring innovative changes for other organizations.

C5 has continued to provide ongoing training to their senior managers, including short overseas courses and conferences that have enhanced their performances at work. During these last 3 years, all of C5's senior managers have had at least one overseas exposure to improve their management skills and these were recorded in C5's annual report for 2018.

Modern organizations may find the business environment very challenging when transforming themselves into innovative entities, if they do not make fundamental

changes to their internal organizational cultures (Tian et al., 2018). Business leaders have the responsibility to initiate and craft such internal cultural changes (McCloskey, 2016; Taylor, 2016; Xie, & Paik, 2018). Although more macro, societal, and historical influences might have shaped cultural differences in creativity and innovation over recent years, new work cultures in the organizations that are externally oriented is helping such firms to become centers of excellence in product development based on customers' desires (Prajogo & McDermott, 2011). Products such as Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, iPhone, and Android have succeeded in changing the way people live in 2019 and influenced the development of countries such as South Korea, the United States and Japan towards creativity and innovations (Zainal, 2018).

**Local business environment.** The third subtheme that emerged from the first primary theme of innovative business leaders was the aspect of how the local business environment was impacting on business innovations. The locality or country where a company is operating may have an important influence on how innovative the company may become (Ruohomaa & Salminen, 2019). One major factor that may assist or hinder organizations' innovative growths could be the financial operating regime of the country and the ease of access to affordable loan financing (Patwardhan, Singleton, & Schmitz, 2018).

All the participants made a few comments with respect to this subtheme of local business environment. Table 4 provides key terms relating to the local business environment for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to local business environment equaled 35.81% of all the participants' responses.

Table 4

*References to Local Business Environment*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Financial	35	6.06	Costs, investments, loans, banks
Local	30	5.19	Seychelles, government, country
Innovations	24	4.17	Technology, improving, disrupt
Market	24	4.14	Need, business, attract, compete
Changes	21	3.63	Diversify, challenges, think, better
People	20	3.63	Human, public, customers,
Company	20	3.42	Organizations, private, employers

The contributions that four of the participants provided concerning this subtheme on the local business environment illustrated the importance of this subtheme. The third participant, P3, said,

We have been lucky that because of our firm's diversified portfolio, we are capturing the remarkable economic growth of Seychelles. So when the business climate has been improving, we have benefited from this improvement through our profit and loss statement and our balance sheet growth. We know that Seychelles is not that big in terms of customers, but our customers have had many successful projects, which we have financed. If we look at the tourism sector, which has been booming, a lot of people have invested and have reaped the benefits of their investments quite successfully since 2009.

This claim by P3 was supported by C3's financial and business portfolio breakdown statements for these last 3 years. As the economy of Seychelles recovered from 2010, with a continued growth in tourism arrivals annually, C3 continued to approve on average

5 business loans for various sectors of the economy every month. P2's response focused on the financial and human resources' challenges of the country, mentioning,

The local barriers are mainly resources' related, which are either financial or manpower resource limitation. For the financial resource's constraints, we do our best with the financial limitations of the company. Human resource is probably a bigger challenge because there are directions that we want to take, but we cannot go since we do not have the required local human resource capacity. When we have to, we will bring in skilled human resource capacity from overseas.

The aspect of resistance to change and innovative approaches were covered by P4, who said,

Internally, every time you change something, there is resistance. There is always friction with changes. Internally we can manage other people in the chain, and as a leadership team, we can tell the narrative ourselves on what strategy is needed. Sometimes you may depend on other stakeholders, and this is where the real challenge lies.

P5 echoed the concern for the local social environment and its impact on business innovations with the following,

Our second barrier for our innovative services and products has been due to the local social conditioning system that prevail in Seychelles where in general people do not like changes and our children are not brought up to become creative and innovative. One reason for certain poor results is because of the culture of the country. People here expect to get various services for free. When we are starting

these innovations, we are disrupting a lot of people in organizations.

**Links to the literature.** An innovative leader is a leader who is never satisfied with the achieved performance (Verburg, 2019). Such leaders operate in the context of discovery, exploration, and learning, by making special provisions for curiosity and open spaces for the creation of new ideas and projects (Kuswandi et al., 2017). In a complex business environment, recent research has advocated that shared leadership is a way to enable team-based organizations to operate effectively (Clarke 2018; Sweeney, Clarke, & Higgs, 2019). For a more human working environment, with an emphasis on employees utilizing their ideas and abilities, there is a demand for spreading leadership power throughout the organization (Salovaara, & Bathurst, 2018). There is importance for innovative business leaders to develop long-term action plans related to innovations, which may boast a higher degree of utilization of the firms' competitiveness (Decyk, 2019)

**Links to the conceptual framework.** According to Visser (2018), modern business organizations desperately need transformational leadership to support sustainability. Transformational leaders infuse work with meaning, stimulate followers intellectually, stress the importance of the collective, inspire others to transcend self-interest, and perform beyond expectations (Den Hartog, 2019). Through such visions and behaviors, transformational leaders can transform individual followers as well as the collective to achieve stretched goals. Lowe and Bathula (2019) posited that charismatic leadership and transformational leadership, aim to create unique bonds between leaders and followers, which may result in superior organizations' outcomes. Miftari (2018)

demonstrated that there may be a close link between SME's leaders' communication skills and the ability of such leaders becoming transformational business leaders.

Transformational business leaders demonstrate a positive impact in local and global competitive markets. Examples includes, Nokia's loss of the smart mobile phone industry market in 2013 to such new innovative business companies like Apple, Samsung, and LG (Hacklin, Björkdahl, & Wallin, 2018). Recent studies' findings included empirical evidence that points towards the benefits of transformational leadership in reducing employee burnout in business organizations (Hildenbrand, Sacramento, & Binnewies, 2018; Tafvelin, Nielsen, von Thiele Schwarz, & Stenling, 2019). In the IT and ICT sector, emergent and transformational leadership have been shown by recent researchers to be important and to bring positive changes (Hickman & Akdere, 2017).

Transformational business leadership is critical for business management innovations.

### **Theme 2: Technological Innovations for Business Competitiveness**

The second primary theme emerged as technological innovations for business competitiveness, with two subthemes, based on the participants' answers to the interview questions and these companies' strategic documents. In this digital age of 2019, business leaders should innovate and apply technology for their organizational competitive advantage and sustainability (Parida, Sjödin, & Reim, 2019). According to Reis, Amorim, Melão, and Matos (2018), modern business leaders must adapt their business deliveries with the digital reality of competitive businesses, which are disrupting our traditional business models.

All five participants contributed to give references to this second primary theme.

P3 championed this second theme saying, “We have detailed a bit what we are doing and this year, 2019, we are going to launch e-commerce, which is the acquisition of transactions through the Internet and also the bulk notes acceptance on ATM.” To support P3’s statement on moving C3 toward more e-commerce, in early 2019, C3 launched their first online banking services where their customers could view their account transactions on their mobile phones and also make money transfers or payments using this same technology. C3’s business strategic plan statement 2018 states that C3 will continue to “Leverage technology to improve the efficiency of processes and deliver a better customer experience.” P1 shared that, since last year, 2018, they had moved into the Digital Platform for television broadcasting, which has improved their service deliveries. This is a reality, since from 2018, C1 had moved their transmissions to digital technology, connected with the internet, which was confirmed in C1’s annual report for 2018.

The second participant, P2, had this to say with regards to this second theme, “We started moving into network and software development, IT related services, and we also ventured into Internet service provisions as well. We are the only ICT company that offers these comprehensive services on the local market today.” The portfolio of services and products that C2 has been providing to their customers over these last 5 years support P2’s statement that they are the leader in IT and ICT in Seychelles, by providing advanced services in security, transport fleet management, accounting and human resource management, warehouses and point of sales management systems, as was reported in their 2018 annual report. P5 also stressed on this innovative thinking by

adding,

This will have an impact on the business competitiveness and its market shares, because the way the universe works, business is in everything, society do not stay the same, and things evolve and change. Look at how especially technology is revolutionizing and has revolutionized the world.

**E-commerce, mobile business, and social media.** The research findings from this study demonstrate that technology, the Internet, computers, and smartphones are revolutionizing local and international businesses. The traditional brick and mortar business models are being replaced by smart e-businesses, targeting individuals using e-marketing strategies (Silva, Khan, & Han, 2018). The five companies that participated in this study, operate in five different economic sectors of Seychelles, are using advanced technology, including computers, the Internet, and social media, and have well trained workforce.

All five participants made references to the critical role that e-commerce, mobile business, and social media were having on their business performances. Table 5 provides key terms relating to e-commerce, mobile business, and social media for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to e-commerce, mobile business, and social media equaled 29.77% of all the participants' responses.

The participants made several comments on this first subtheme for technological innovations for business competitiveness. P3 remarked,

If something can be done on Internet banking or mobile banking, this is something that we are very much focused on. So, it's now a battle to get



customers to subscribe, register and start to use all these IT applications, because not all customers are technology-friendly, and for some customers, the bank must train them to use these advanced technologies and educate them on these new innovative products. There is also more and more data coming in, so banks must crush and go through a lot of data, and the idea is for us to make the most of those data, to make the most for our balance sheet. There is a Management Information System that we need to exploit better and make sure that we are looking at the right indicators and drivers in the bank. These drivers become very important indicators to help us make sure that we deliver value to our shareholders.

Table 5

*References to E-commerce, Mobile Business, and Social Media*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Services	41	8.66	Time, ATM
Customers	33	5.42	Human, people, value, market
Technology	26	4.23	Digitalization, data, Apps
Innovations	21	3.46	New, touch, automations
Internet	18	2.95	Mobile, access, channels
Media	13	2.12	Social, platform, youths
Financial	9	1.47	Grants, resource
Management	9	1.46	Manager, organizations

P1 remarked,

Since last year, 2018, we have moved into the Digital Platform for TV. Before that, for many years we were using the analogue platform. One of the advantages of using digital technology is that we can offer multi-channels, instead of having just one channel for the customers and being very tight with the scheduling, we

now have three local channels. Apart from that we also offer foreign contents and we have a total of ten channels being offered. We can also offer radio services on that platform. Nowadays social media is overtaking traditional media. So, we had to move into social media as well and we have created a new position and recruited a Multi-media Officer, so that we have a dedicated person doing that job, because before it was part of our general duties and sometimes we were doing it and sometimes we could not, because we had so much to do. This is the kind of importance we have placed on social media.

Since 2018, C1 has moved to broadcasting digital signals, instead of the analogue signals and even overseas listeners and viewers are able, through the internet to watch and follow programs diffused from Seychelles, as reported in C1's annual report of 2018. P2 simply said, "We have touched about 90% of the country's government departments', parastatal and private companies' IT software and hardware businesses." P4 supported P2's contribution, saying,

It is the same for automations for customers. As customers are doing checking, staff get so caught up in the transactions that they forget that they have to keep the human contact with customers. The transaction is very simple to automate, since you have just a customer doing the checking, but the value of the service is if staff can touch the customers as human beings. Some elements of the process may be unknown and uncomfortable for customers and the human touch improves that. It is a service on top of automation. Automation may be sometimes scary, but actually it should not be. Once customers experienced it, it is no big deal, as it

will make their lives easier and also give them better control.

**Importance of the Internet and technology.** The Internet and technology have given business leaders access to individual customers on a 24-hour basis, via their smartphones and social media associations (Zhu et al., 2017). The young generations have their smartphones with them everywhere they go (Zolkepli & Kamarulzaman, 2015). In this global village, business leaders are in another world of the competitive business landscape, in 2019 (Verhoef et al., 2017). Young and experienced business leaders should change and invest towards more innovative business approaches, otherwise they will be left behind by their technologically savvy consumers.

The five participants made positive remarks with regards to the subtheme of the importance of the Internet and technology. Table 6 provides key terms relating to the Internet and technology for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to the Internet and technology equaled 36.63% of all the participants' responses.

Table 6

*References to the Internet and Technology*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Market	19	9.36	Customers, needs, service, access
Innovation	8	5.71	New, Apps, changes, advanced
Business	10	5.18	Competition, capacity, facilities
Technology	10	5.16	Contents, platform, systems
Management	11	4.49	Organization, responsible, time
Internet	7	3.62	Websites, world, Facebook
Digital	6	3.11	Electronic, ICT

The participants made a few references on the importance of the Internet and

advanced technology to spearhead business innovation strategies. P3 expressed concern of having well trained employees and customers with abilities to use modern technological applications with ease, and said,

A point which I will add is in term of the maturity of the market, since not everyone is technology savvy, and internally we need staff that are technologically well trained. From the customers' and the employees' perspectives, do we have people that are technically very advanced, who may drive the organization's capacity to innovate?

According to P1, their company was maximizing the availability of IT, ICT and the Internet business environment and explained,

We have launched two Apps for our radio services, where listeners can come back any time and listen to our recent contents. We have a new website, with new functionalities and facilities. For example, viewers can listen to live national debates from overseas and locally, via the Internet, including all our popular programs.

C1 have since 2018 improved their service quality deliveries for their customers with more online services and digital broadcastings, both for TV and radio programs, as promoted on the official website of the business.

P2 further stressed on how their company was leading the local IT market and mentioned,

Firstly, we ventured into areas where we saw there was a market and felt that we could have a competitive advantage. We are known for bringing innovative

offerings in the IT and ICT sector for our customers, even though we will be soon 25 years old. This is what we are known for in the market. We have brought in the market the vehicle tracking service that we have then expanded to a full fleet management system, and we are now responsible for these fleets' management systems, which are managing most big fleets in the country.

P4 shared that the industry has moved from paper tickets to electronic tickets, as a result of the Internet, which have made the lives of both workers and customers smoother. P5 summarized how innovations, using the Internet and modern technologies, have been impacting positively on their company's competitive business environment. P5 shared,

This will have an impact on our business competitiveness and market shares, because the way the universe works, business is in everything, society do not stay the same, and things evolve and change. Look at how especially technology is revolutionizing and has revolutionized the world. If you are not up to date with the revolutions happening in the business world, even in the public sector, you will be at a disadvantage with your competitors.

**Links to the literature.** The context, as well as practices, of collaboration are essential for substantial innovations and open science to bring about innovative business applications to local and global business markets (Ramírez-Montoya & García-Peñalvo, 2018; Vicente-Sáez & Martínez-Fuentes, 2018). AL-Masri, Ijeh, and Nasir (2019) posited the need for a new approach of teaching science and technology in colleges and universities to create a paradigm shift where technological innovations will be contributing in making smart cities smarter. Lamine et al. (2018) found that technology

business incubations were important for successful business innovations. Fu and Hwang (2018) shared the importance of having the learning approach with respect to mobile technology learning.

Daily business operations are becoming more mobile with the ability for executives and staff to work from home or on the move, with their laptops, smartphones, or tablets (Valos et al., 2018). E-banking and mobile payments are increasing, with improved security (Shaikh et al., 2017). Customers of all age groups are enjoying a time of online purchases never seen before, from purchases of air-travel tickets and hotel bookings to payment of luxury goods and services (Turban et al., 2018). Through a 4G Internet service, social media are changing even more transformational business leaders' competitive business strategies and marketing approaches (Veile et al., 2018).

**Links to the conceptual framework.** Emergent and transformational leadership are important for IT investments and adoption (Hickman & Akdere, 2018). Integrative leaders' competencies are essential and needed to lead organizations' technology innovations into the future (Vlok, Ungerer, & Malan, 2019). For successful changes within modern organizations, teams should learn from their leadership (Koeslag-Kreunen, Van den Bossche, Hoven, Van der Klink, & Gijsselaers, 2018). Jiang and Chen (2018) found that transformational leadership is an important integrative function when enhancing collective innovations. Task complexity and support for innovation enables the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' creative process engagement (Mahmood, Uddin, & Fan, 2019). Transformational leadership has a significant impact on employees' creative engagement process and the adoption of

advanced technology (Suganthi & Divya, 2018).

### **Theme 3: Regional and International Markets, and Competitions**

The five participants, in this study, showed that they were aware of the opportunities and threats that regional and international competitors and consumers were having on their locally based firms. There was no subtheme for this primary theme. In a competitive business environment, modern business leaders cannot ignore regional and international competitors and customers (Pogodina et al., 2019). These five companies had to be very innovative in their management approaches to compete against external and more financially stable competitors during these last 25 years. In Seychelles during these last 5 years, in most economic sectors, new local and foreign companies have started operations, from new airlines, new IT and ICT firms, new banks, new media houses, to new training institutions. Like certain of the participants had commented, these new regional and international businesses have transformed the local business environment of Seychelles. Access to overseas online products and services by the local consumers have also increased this competitiveness, as payments are now easily paid with debit or credit cards. Even studying are being done at home with an overseas accredited online university. With the arrival of the Internet, Seychelles is now part of the new global village, with all its business opportunities and threats.

Table 7 provides key terms relating to regional and international markets, and competitions for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to regional and international markets, and competitions equaled 30.35% of all the participants' responses.

Table 7

*References to Regional and International Markets, and Competitions*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
International	28	6.80	Africa, overseas, regional, Europe
Business	23	5.58	Company, financial, management
Innovative	16	4.61	New, change, example, demand
Local	18	4.38	Seychelles, market, government
Competitions	16	3.89	Achieve, attracting, costs, win
Partnership	15	3.14	Access, agreement, collaborate
Customers	8	1.95	Human, resources, people

The five participants echoed new business concepts, which emerged as the third primary theme of regional and international markets, and competitions. P1 explained how company C1 was addressing such foreign threats and shared, “One key thing we want to achieve is to focus on local contents, because in 2019 there are other firms re-broadcasting foreign TV channels. Our key strength and our unique selling proposition that we have, is local contents.” C1 was in 2019 investing in hiring local private producers to produce local programs, confirmed by their 2018 Strategic Plan. P3 showed that their company, C3, wanted to maintain international standards, which were allowing them to work with foreign partners and competitors. P3 shared, “Even foreign banks that work with us look at our compliance. We want them to see that our bank is well managed and see that attentions are put on these important aspects of the business, especially operational controls.” C3’s international accreditation and standards was confirmed by the firm’s international standards provided in their auditing report for 2018.

P4 talked on the impact of international competitions in the aviation industry



when mentioning their company's new innovative strategic business model and shared,

The company needed to change its business model because that one that we had connecting Seychelles with Europe no longer worked, as it was economically not feasible. So, we have had to change and regionalized our business strategy to be a regional player by making use of the advancement in technology with the latest aircrafts which have more powerful engine allowing us to fly at a much lower cost. Yes, this is what we have chosen to do and the first aircraft will arrive in six weeks. This will improve our competitiveness because it will reduce our costs.

From C4's new strategic plan, for the next 5 years, the company shifted their business to regional and domestic markets. The company is now flying to regional destinations. The company has stopped flights that were going to Europe and China. P5 illustrated the attention that Seychelles is now having as a small developing economy in Africa from the more advanced overseas partners and competitors, with the following remarks,

We have been able to break down some of these old habits, get people to collaborate and we have had more collaborations than partnerships. We have few organizations with which we have signed partnerships agreements and Memorandum of Understanding. We also have international partners as well and this is really growing, as they are flooding our mails and they really want a business partnership with us.

From management reports summaries for 2018 and the first half of 2019, C5 showed that there were increasing serious exchanges with foreign partners wanting to work with their management for new business opportunities. P2 summarized the new innovative

approaches that our local business leaders are taking in order that they can face foreign competitions and attract overseas customers, and P2 shared,

We are aware of international competitions, but what that has forced us to do is to offer services of international recognized standards. So today, we compete for international tenders against international service providers. We have won local projects against big international companies and we won it because of our knowledge of the local market and the quality of our work that we deliver. Like I have said, we have had to raise our game, increase our standards, so that we can meet demand of international customers. We have seen only one part of this market, since we have been able to compete locally against international competitors. We are thinking and seriously considering to venture and compete overseas soon, including in Africa and in the region.

**Links to the literature.** Local businesses cannot ignore regional and global competitions, especially with the continued rapid expansions of online and mobile businesses (Dimitrijevic, 2016; Ruohomaa, Salminen, & Järvenpää, 2019).

Globalization have had a very positive impact on the United States' competitive business environment (Lv, Liu, & Xu, 2019). Also, foreign investments may bring technological expertise to local firms (Ho, Wu, & Xu, 2011). Hong, Schoenherr, Hult, Zinn, and Goldsby (2019) demonstrated that in emerging markets, leaders such as Brazil, Russia, India, and China have been experiencing slowdowns; investors and business leaders are shifting to countries like South Africa and Turkey with market-creating products' and services' innovations. Such global business shifts may offer new business opportunities

and may create new markets for local businesses.

**Links to the conceptual framework.** Information is one of the main economic resources for business competitive advantages in 2019, and business executives should ensure that their firms invest in systems and technologies that generate economic value for their organizations (da Anunciação, Martins, Bernardo, Costa, & Duarte, 2018). Pettigrew (2019) detailed the importance of having responsible deliveries of high standards and quality to customers when firms are operating on a regional and global levels. When competing internationally and locally, Clougherty, Duso, Seldeslachts, and Ciari (2019) posited that firms may choose from six generic transformational strategies from retirement, renewal, retrenchment, replication, redeployment, to recombination. There was no confirmation which strategies are the best to improve business competitiveness and performance, when competing regionally and globally.

#### **Theme 4: Competitive Business Environment**

All the five participants stressed the critical importance of having an excellent competitive business environment to improve their firms' sustainability. This fourth primary theme when coded, resulted in four subthemes: (a) business competitiveness, (b) business intelligence, (c) customers' satisfaction, and (d) human resource management. With the rapid changes that are taking place in our global village, modern competitive companies have to continuously change their business management strategies towards more innovative business approaches (Geissdoerfer, Vladimirova, Van Fossen, & Evans, 2018). Business organizations' leaders have to understand the profound changes occurring in our digital business environment, where customers are shopping more

online, especially the younger generations (Parida et al., 2019). The online, e-commerce and mobile businesses are growing very quickly across all countries of the world, which is imposing a paradigm shift in normal business competitive strategies (Pettigrew, 2019).

The importance of this fourth primary theme is illustrated through remarks made by two of the participants. P3 remarked,

What we have been looking at in terms of our business competitive advantage is mostly around the use of electronic channels by customers. We are looking at giving customers solutions which are convenient and interesting, so that customers do not have to travel long distances to access certain services which before required filling of forms and with long waiting time. In 2019, if you want to transfer money from your account to that of your partner, you can do this from the convenience of your home, and within a few seconds the money has moved from your account to the account of your partner.

This innovative service being provided to C3's customers is confirmed on C3's official website. P2 gave an account of why modern businesses should not remain complacent and traditional, and said,

In the IT business, if you stand still you will probably move backward. To have survived over these years since 1995, and soon it will be 25 years, we have had to reinvent ourselves many times. We have had to offer products and services that kept up with technological advances of the day, and with products and services that met customers' expectations and demands. I believe strongly in disrupting the market.

**Business competitiveness.** All participants interviewed found this subtheme important for having a competitive business environment. In global market, business survival and sustainability depend on the competitiveness of the business organization with respect to its direct competitors, as well as the country in which the firm is based (Adeleye & Esposito, 2018). In 2019, successful business leaders have transformed their business models toward more innovative business strategies, while taking advantage of the rapid progress in technological business operating tools, such as the Internet, social media, smartphones, and advanced computers (Ibarra, Ganzarain, & Igartua, 2018).

Table 8 provides key terms relating to business competitiveness for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to business competitiveness equaled 23.30% of all the participants' responses.

Table 8

*References to Business Competitiveness*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Innovative	42	5.01	Innovations, future, change
Customers	34	4.03	Locals, want, service
Business	28	3.33	Companies, organization, work
Competitors	22	2.62	Competitions, benchmark
Strategy	21	2.61	Strategies, strategic, vision
Technology	18	2.50	Internet, channels, ICT, digital, network
Management	14	1.66	Government, Seychelles
Market	13	1.54	Country, world

There was much to learn from what the five participants had to share on business competitiveness. P2 shared information and experience of their company and stated,

Over the years we have changed our business model, so that dependence on

Government as our main client was reduced. We are now more diverse, and we are better positioned in the market. We are very much aware of the competitions, and in a way, we prefer the competitions since they keep us on our toes, and again it's a small industry, it's a small world, and we know everybody.

The proof of C2 diversified portfolio was provided by C2's 2018 annual report that listed the main private companies that the company was working with during these last 3 years. P4 demonstrated how business competitions was imposing drastic innovative changes within their company and remarked,

The new aircrafts that we will bring in this year will be very innovative. The company needs to change its business model because that one that we had connecting Seychelles with Europe no longer works, as it was economically not feasible. So, we have had to change and regionalized our business strategy to be a regional player by making use of the advancement in technology with the latest aircrafts which have more powerful engines that is allowing us to fly at a much lower cost. Yes, this is what we have chosen to do, and the first aircraft will arrive in mid-2019. This will improve our competitiveness because it will reduce our costs, including fuel costs and our payload.

The first innovative aircraft for C4 arrived in August 2019 and started commercial operation.

P5 provided a detailed account of the importance of a healthy competitive business environment,

We have had to do two cycles of strategic planning and strategic management

implementations, with a focus on our competitiveness. We have had to come up with different business models, as well as pilot test a few projects, to see what works and what does not work. With respect to our competitors, I think competitions are good, and we have used our competitors to help keep us on our toes so that we do not slack back, because when you are successful, you tend to be comfortable and be complacent. We have embraced the competitions, and we have even had to collaborate with some of our competitors, because there are a lot of works in Seychelles, and there is not enough manpower to deliver.

In 2018, in C5's management meetings' minutes, the meeting recorded the number of strategic planning meetings in that year that C5's management had in order to re-position themselves in the changing global market.

P1 confirmed that their company is using innovative business strategies to boost their firm's competitiveness. P1 said, "Yes, our market is growing in terms of our audience and listeners over the past years." C1 market performance has increased by 12%, over the last 2 years, according to the results of their last two market surveys, conducted in 2018 and 2019. In support of P1's remark, C1's strategic plan 2019 mentioned,

The company strive to be a model for creativity, innovations and excellence, as a public broadcaster, be better prepared to compete, and deliver in the competitive and evolving broadcasting landscape, makes effective use of technology to remain relevant, engaging, and valued, while embracing convergence of broadcasting from linear to digital.

**Business intelligence.** All the participants interviewed covered this aspect of business intelligence when answering the interview questions. Modern business leaders need to be smart and wise in their business decisions (Attaran & Attaran, 2019; Llave, 2019). Transformational business leaders need to create intelligent business organizations, through their people, systems, management, and technological bases (Alali, Nofal, & Alharafsheh, 2019; Davenport, 2018; Tan, Cheng, Ren, & Wong, 2019). Business information must be used to generate business intelligence to improve the innovative companies' competitiveness and market sustainability (Ali & Miah, 2018; Rouhani, Ashrafi, Ravasan, & Afshari, 2018; Torres, Sidorova, & Jones, 2018). In their study, Vidal-García, Vidal, and Barros (2019) posited that the analysis of business data is needed to improve business knowledge management that contributes towards systematic and sustained forms of business innovations. Investing in big data processing IT system in 2019 is not a choice, but a necessity for modern global businesses (Mishra & Tiruwa, 2017; Vidal-García et al., 2019). Such investments will allow competitive firms to expertly manage volumes of business information at an affordable cost and very quickly (Adeyelure, Kalema, & Bwalya, 2018; Gaardboe & Svarre, 2018). Innovative business entities cannot compete successfully using old business information.

Table 9 provides key terms relating to business intelligence for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to business intelligence equaled 21.49% of the participants' responses.



Table 9

*References to Business Intelligence*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Business	47	5.58	Company, services, enterprise
Innovative	42	4.82	Innovate, create, technology
Market	32	3.47	Products, clients, customers
Strategy	28	3.00	Strategies, plan, disruptive
Intelligence	27	2.90	Learning, information, education
International	16	1.72	Seychelles, regional, country

Some of the answers the participants provided that referred to the business intelligence's subtheme were unique. The third participant, P3, shared,

There is a business intelligence tool which we use to extract key information from the bank's system. The model of our company is that we rely on IT services from our business partners. Our strength is that we have the same IT system across various jurisdictions and we make the most of these systems, since we have a pool of IT experts who know how to operate, maintain, and remotely intervene quickly and address any urgent issue that may arise locally.

P1 confirmed that in their business they are continuously learning and improving. P1 added,

We have improved through these various projects, for example based on the launching of the digital broadcasting project, we have improved through the lessons that we have learnt and the experiences we have gained. We are learning and getting better, learning the trick to get it right, and planning in advance so that when we get to that point, we can sail through. These are part of the learning

process I would say.

In 2018, C1 started the innovative digital broadcasting system, which was completed and commissioned in mid-2019, as reported in one of C1's minutes of management meetings held in July 2019.

P2 share a similar perspective, combining business intelligence with successful international marketing. P2 remarked,

We are aware of international competitions, but what that forced us to do is to offer services of international recognized standards. So today, we compete for international tenders against international service providers. We have won local projects against international companies and we won it because of our knowledge of the local market and the quality of our work that we can deliver. Like I have said, we have had to raise our game, improve our standards, so that we can meet demand of international customers. We have seen only one part of this market, since if we can compete locally against international competitors, we are thinking and seriously considering to venture and compete overseas soon, including in Africa and in the region.

P5 elaborated on how they transformed their organization into offering innovative products and services by being an intelligent learning entity. P5 stated that they have had to go out of their comfort zone and had to come up with various products that they did not have before, like renting of their facilities, providing more consultancies with coaching and mentorship, programming or process re-engineering in several organizations, and academic research as well, focusing more on applied research. P4

summarized this aspect of business intelligence expertly saying,

Now it's not so much about customer services, but more on the internal use of artificial intelligence in forecasting and making everything more efficient. These are what more of the innovations are geared towards. To be able to run a business properly you need to have control over what is going on, and automation and systems help you with that control a lot more reliably than people ever could. It is not a matter of reducing headcounts, which I do not believe in, as the overall objective of the business. It is all about the overall efficiency, as well as the predictability and sustainability of the business in the long run.

All five participants insisted that innovative business organizations must also have a business intelligence system in place for continued business profitability and customers' satisfaction.

**Customers' satisfaction.** All the participants interviewed found that customers' satisfaction is important for having a competitive business environment. Innovative business leaders ensure that their customers are satisfied with their products and services (Al-Otaibi, Aljohani, Hoque, & Alotaibi, 2018; Prayag, Hassibi, & Nunkoo, 2019). Transformational business leaders place the companies' customers as the business priority (Liu, Lobschat, & Verhoef, 2018; Nguyen, de Leeuw, & Dullaert, 2018). A business operating on the local or global level will cease to exist, if the leaders continue to operate in the traditional business ways, with the brick and mortar business model, without any computer, Internet, and IT applications (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018).

Table 10 provides key terms relating to customers' satisfaction for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to customers' satisfaction equaled 31.11% of all the participants' responses.

Table 10

*References to Customers' Satisfaction*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Customers	41	6.30	Clients, delivery, happy, people
Time	37	5.67	2019, years
Product	36	5.52	Services, need, want, demand, care
Innovations	35	5.33	Innovative, technology, disruption
Satisfaction	27	4.14	Value, standards, success, excellent
Business	21	3.21	Management, leadership
Competitors	6	0.91	Difference, markets, opportunity

P5 showed how important their business customers were. P5 commented, People and organizations do not like change. So, bringing about some of the disruptions and some of the new ways of doing things have not been easy, but we have had to really influence and to play our leadership cards to develop excellent contacts with leaders in those other organizations. About 95% of them are happy with our services and are positive with respect to our changes. It took a lot on our part to work with them.

The customer base of company C5 has increased over these last 3 years, since 2016 and the number of students attending their courses have also increased, as well as the number courses they are offering. C5 financial performance have improved over these last 3 years, from 2016, which was illustrated by their 2018 annual report.

P4 placed emphasis on how business innovation is transforming and facilitating the lives of their firm's customers, with improved service deliveries and P4 shared those new happenings that were taking place within the company,

Technology has enabled a massive improvement, innovative improvements, in interacting with our customers. On the distribution side we now need less staff, with customers now taking control of the process and are able to book tickets at their own time, comparing prices, and building their own trips themselves.

In 2019, C4's customers are able to book and buy their air-travel tickets online.

P2, also spoke on the importance of business innovations for their customers and for the business success. P2 made two statements on this subtheme. P2 said,

With our customers, we tend to develop very close professional relationship with them. We keep in touch with them regularly, maybe not at management level, but more at the operational level. At management level, since the country is small and everybody know each other, we do keep ourselves very close to our customers.

P2 added,

We need to stay on our toes, to remain alert at all times, and we need to keep innovating. On the horizon, I cannot see any real threat for the next three years for our business. We are constantly innovating our range of products and services.

We are improving our current products and services. So, that is a given, we have to improve, we have to innovate if we want to move forward.

P1 explained how modern customers may exert their power on the business to deliver quality services and products, stating,

There is pressure from the audience. You may do something which the customers do not appreciate. It is difficult to please all customers all the time and at the same time. Now, with three channels we can have telenovela on one channel, and sports, as well as another show, on the other two channels.

As recorded in P1's recent minutes of their management meetings, C1 is now delivering three local TV channels and six international licensed TV channels. P3 gave this subtheme of customers' satisfaction a lot of importance. P3's contribution is summarized as,

The level of technology that the bank is migrating to, is to ensure that customers are offered improved services and that customers do not come to queue for long hours within the bank. This is one of the things that we are trying to do. If something can be done through Internet banking or mobile banking, this is something that we are focused on doing.

The five participants stressed on the importance of having satisfied customers for business competitiveness, which depends on their managers and staff.

**Human resource management.** All five participants made references on the importance that their companies should manage well their human resource to continue being innovative and competitive organizations. All business organizations need to recruit, train, and retain experienced, smart, as well as creative employees to develop innovative business management strategies (Pak, Kooij, De Lange, & Van Veldhoven, 2019). As the global and local business competitions continue to depend on the growing knowledge of companies' young talents, business leaders have to manage their manpower

in an innovative fashion (Gloet & Samson, 2016). Modern businesses will continue to innovate toward more advanced technological applications, and managers and workers would need to improve their skills and knowledge for operating in the digital working environment, with investments in IT training for employees (Parry & Battista, 2019).

All the participants interviewed made comments on the human resource management aspect of their respective organizations. Table 11 provides key terms relating to human resource management for all interviews. Combined, the frequency of terms referring to human resource management equaled 24.13% of all the participants' responses.

Table 11

*References to Human Resource Management*

Reference	Frequency	Weighted percentage	Similar words
Human	94	6.85	Employees, workers, manpower
Training	74	5.38	Trained, skills, learning, educate
Innovations	56	4.00	Innovative, new, think, strategies
Local	38	2.64	Seychelles, expatriates, graduates
Leadership	28	1.96	Management, recruitment, team
Work	24	1.75	Job, labor, pay, schemes
Company	22	1.55	Business, organizations, corporates

The five participants shared different perspectives on human resource management in relationship with business innovations. P3 explained,

From the staff perspective, I am interested to know how we can make the bank a nice place to work in, not only in terms of its building and facilities, but also in terms of what they are learning and what help them to grow as individuals,

because without innovations the individual does not grow. This is why I like this interview because we are learning, and our brain is working. This is where we all need to go. I would like the people at the bank to tell me that they have learnt something new each day while doing their jobs. Innovation is not only good in terms of business growth for profits and revenue, but also in terms of the growth of our human capital.

In 2019, C3 initiated an internal innovative competition for all their employees, which was confirmed in one of their recent management meetings' minutes. C3 offered interesting prizes to the best three innovative project proposals.

P2 gave a combined view of this subtheme when saying,

If it is a human resource problem, we tend to recruit locally from the local university. We will take on board and train students while they are still students, get them to work with us and have them employed with us when they finish their schooling. If there are skills that we require, we will bring in skilled expatriates when we need them. If there are skills that we need to develop, we will do training and certification in-house, like Microsoft and Cisco certifications. So, that was on the human resource angle.

The first participant, P1, gave an interesting account how their organization was encouraging their employees to face and accept internal changes, and shared,

We try to plan well in advance when we start the process of change and aim to familiarize staff to the change that is going to happen, explain why it needs to happen, and how we are going to implement the change, as well as what will be



everyone's role during and after the change, so that they know they still have a place within the organization.

P5 believed that their organization had to be innovative in getting senior personals and explained,

In terms of manpower, we have had to really advertise strongly and try to get people more interested to come and work with us and also give more jobs to part-time lecturers, If it was depending on my decision, a lot of people will work part-time in our country, so that professionals can share their expertise to several organizations, and we would value our workforce and reduce our dependency on foreign workers.

P4 focused on the aspect of human resource management related to recruitment and training. P4 remarked,

We have a recruitment strategy of how to get graduates every year and who we want to move through the ranks. We have a new signed MOU with the Seychelles Business Academy, and it is ideal to get graduates from universities with good numerical, mathematical, and financial skills. We train them internally for them to move up in the company and we train them a lot.

P3 highlighted, "In Seychelles there was a serious concern to employ and retain the right caliber managers and staff, due to the shortage of qualified human resource supply." The other four participants supported this argument. The contributions of all the participants illustrated the importance that they all attached to organizational human resource availability for business management innovations.

**Links to the literature.** For modern companies to have a successful competitive business environment, such organizations need to apply digital business transformation link with new approaches for their business management (Parida, Sjödin, & Reim, 2019). Researchers in another study showed that modern firms must adapt their business marketing strategies according to customers' demands and needs (Visnjic, Neely, & Jovanovic, 2018). According to Arnold, Kiel, and Voigt (2017), the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) will be the powerful driver of innovations for competitive advantage in the coming years that will trigger the next wave of the industrial innovations. The complete business strategies will change on the local, regional, and global fronts since competitions and marketing will be done in a different approach. New business models that run through different paths, from optimizing internal and external processes or improving customer relationship to creating new value networks or smart products and services through disruptive business models, are becoming the business norms (Foss & Saebi, 2018; Ibarra, Ganzarain, & Igartua, 2018).

**Links to the conceptual framework.** Transformational leaders communicate the vision and act as role models of desired behaviors that are required to attain the business objectives. (Den Hartog, 2019). According to Den Hartog, transformational leaders provide subordinates with a flow of challenging new ideas to stimulate them to rethink the old ways of doing things and to come up with new ideas. Transformational leaders lead from the front and take the critical, innovative decisions for business new approaches (Miftari, 2018). Transformational leaders empower employees to question the status quo, be creative in problem-solving and think out of the box, and break habits

and routines (Zhu et al., 2016). Burn's (1978) TLT was appropriate for this study to help in understanding how modern business leaders develop a successful competitive business environment for their enterprises.

### **Applications to Professional Practice**

The purpose of this study was to determine successful innovative business management strategies that business leaders use to enhance competitiveness. The study's findings identified strategies business leaders were applying to innovate their management professional practices within their respective business organizations. This study's findings may contribute to business practices by providing modern business leaders with innovative business management strategies that they may apply in their business organizations to improve competitiveness and sustainability. Local and global business leaders may assess, adopt, and adapt these successful innovative business management strategies for their enterprises, to bring business management innovations into their companies that may benefit their customers.

Based on the conceptual framework of this study, transformational business leaders need to be visionary and should be able to influence team members to continue to innovate. Business leaders need to invest in technology, IT and ICT training for employees, and to develop innovative business cultures to support innovative business organizations.

### **Implications for Social Change**

This study has illustrated that competitive business organizations are practicing innovative management strategies, with a fair degree of success. Such business practice

may bring positive social change within the business organizations themselves; one of the possible results of applying positive business cultures. Transformational business leaders demonstrate concern for the social well-being of their employees and not only for their work contributions. The implications of this study for employees are that they may be financially stable and be happier at work, which may encourage them to be more innovative and productive in their organizations. The study's implications to communities include, local firms may become more competitive and sustainable, which may keep the local economies thriving. With an improved economy, the local authorities may collect more tax revenues and more job opportunities may be generated for the people.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The study's findings have demonstrated some successful innovative business management strategies that business leaders may apply to enhance competitiveness in a small island economy like Seychelles. The results of this study have also showed that, though these five companies were operating on an isolated island-state, they managed to innovate, modernize their businesses and compete with global competitors. With transformational business leaders leading these five organizations, these firms have developed their own organizations' innovative business cultures. The recommendations derived from this study are based on the study's four themes: (a) innovative business leaders, (b) technological innovations for business competitiveness, (c) regional and international markets, and competitions, and (d) a competitive business environment. From these findings, I propose five specific recommendations for the business

community to consider: (a) modern business leaders need to learn and understand the importance of innovative and transformational leadership for business innovations, (b) business leaders must develop thinking organizations, with innovative business cultures, (c) developing and implementing innovative business management strategies is crucial for competitive businesses in 2019 and the years ahead, (d) investing in employees and training employees to work with the latest technology is a priority for business innovations, and (e) participating in regional and global markets, including online business operations, may bring business advantages to innovative organizations.

The results of this study may be disseminated to local, regional, and global businesses, to demonstrate the application of management innovations within business organizations. I plan to share the study's findings to others through education sessions, workshops, national and international conferences and seminars, and mentorship with interested business executives.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The main purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to identify innovative business management strategies that local business leaders used to improve business competitiveness. This study's findings have demonstrated how transformational business leaders in Seychelles continue to invest in advanced technology and are using IT, ICT and the Internet for their daily business operations, to improve their businesses' competitiveness. Future research may consider including other economic sectors such as tourism, offshore companies, entertainment, and sports; as they may have more to offer in terms of innovative business management strategies to enhance business competitiveness.

This study was based on a qualitative multiple case study. A quantitative or mixed-methods research may reveal important relationships between innovative business management strategies and variables such as business competitiveness, employees' creativity, investment and training in advanced technology, social media impact or other factors. This study was limited to Mahe, Seychelles, and future research may be conducted in other regions or in other countries in Africa, such as Mauritius and South Africa, since there may be different social and economic parameters that may arise. There may be interest in exploring the results of a similar research that apply a different conceptual framework, other than Burns' (1978) TLT.

### **Reflections**

Through this long doctoral study process, I learnt on becoming an independent doctoral scholar. This study was challenging but at the same time rewarding; it imposed self-discipline and certain sacrifices on me, especially with my time management and my commitment to achieve my study goal. I gained profound knowledge from extensive research, writing, and the editing processes. I learned how to give and receive constructive criticisms and be thoughtful of the feelings of others. At different stages of this long student journey, I had certain doubts that I might not complete this research. With the encouragements of a few people, including my chair, I took short breaks and returned with a new study approach; being calmer. I have managed to remain the simple person with my feet firmly on the ground during my study and I will continue to remain so, after graduating at Walden.

The field research for data collection had been enriching and the most enjoying

part of my DBA study. It was challenging to obtain study participants and I had to use my marketing experience to get companies and participants to accept voluntarily to participate. Prior to this study, I believed there were very limited companies and business leaders who were practicing innovative business management strategies in Seychelles. The findings of this study have demonstrated that there are several business leaders who are innovative in their management approaches in Seychelles. I have learnt a lot throughout this doctoral journey. These learnings have had a profound impact on my inward and outward look at myself, my family, my country, and the world at large.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore innovative business management strategies that business leaders have used successfully to improve competitiveness. This study was completed in Seychelles with five innovative and competitive business organizations and one of their business leaders. The participants shared their companies' innovative business strategies that they have successfully applied since 2015. I used NVivo to organize and analyze the data that I collected from the five participants and found the following themes: (a) innovative business leaders, (b) the Internet and technological innovations for business competitiveness, (c) regional and international markets, and competitions, and (d) business competitive environment

The findings of this study were consistent with the current research concerning innovative business management strategies for improved competitiveness. As illustrated by the study's literature review and the research findings, modern companies need transformational business leaders to dream, plan and develop internal systems for

successful innovative business strategies, which may result with innovative products and services for customers.

Potential professional applications from this study include: (a) new strategic approaches to business planning and execution, (b) new calculated investments in advanced technology, such as high-speed Internet connectivity, IT and ICT, (c) giving value to the employees through training and proper remunerations, and (d) to form young transformational business leaders to create the innovative and thinking organizations' business cultures, for improved business competitiveness. Modern business leaders should seriously consider applying innovative management strategies to improve their business competitiveness, in 2019 and in the years to come.



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## Appendix A: The Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol	
What You Will Do	What You Will Say: Script
<p>Introduce the interview and set the stage.</p>	<p>Good day Sir/Madame. My name is Roger Denousse and I am a doctoral student in the Doctorate of Business Administration program at Walden University. I thank you for taking the time to participate in this study to understand “Strategies for Business Management Innovations to Improve Competitiveness.” Please note that the interview will be recorded and will be kept confidential.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch for nonverbal cues.</li> <li>• Paraphrase, as needed.</li> <li>• Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth responses.</li> <li>• The first interview should not be more than 45 minutes</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you define innovative business management strategies that result in improved organization’s competitiveness?</li> <li>2. How did you implement innovative business management strategies that improved the organization’s competitiveness?</li> <li>3. What specific training has your organization given employees in these last two years to</li> </ol>

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- support a successful adaptation of innovative business management practice which resulted in improved competitiveness?
4. What are the barriers to transform the organization to support business management innovation strategies that enhance business competitiveness?
  5. How have you addressed the business challenges you encountered in implementing innovative business management strategies to improve the organization's competitiveness?
  6. How do you measure the success of the innovative business management strategies you have used to improve the organization's competitiveness?
  7. What innovative business management strategies you applied that did not enhance your organization's competitiveness?
  8. What additional information would you like to add regarding how you have developed and implemented innovative business

	management strategies to improve your organization's competitiveness?
Wrap up interview and thank the participant.	I would like to thank you for your time and participation in the study.
Schedule and confirm a date when the participant will receive follow-up member checking via email or follow-up interview.	I will review the recording of the interview we have completed this morning/afternoon. In the following days, I will provide you with a summary of my comprehension of your answers for each question. I will ask that you confirm in the short follow-up interview or through email if the information is accurate and correct. You will be able to confirm if I have missed any information or to add any additional information.
Follow-up Member Checking	
Ensure member checking by sending an email to participants with a summary of their responses. Conduct follow-up interviews few days after the initial interviews with each participant. The follow-up interview should not be more than 15 minutes.	I have reviewed the recording of the interview; below is a summary of my comprehension of your answers from the recorded transcripts.  Please confirm by email if this information is correct for the following questions. Please let me know if I have missed anything and if there is anything you would like me to add.

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1. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  2. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  3. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  4. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  5. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  6. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
  7. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed.
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	8. Question and succinct synthesis of the interpretation – perhaps one paragraph or as needed
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### Appendix B: The Interview Questions

1. How do you define innovative business management strategies that result in improved organization's competitiveness?
2. How did you implement innovative business management strategies that improved the organization's competitiveness?
3. What specific training has your organization given employees in these last two years to support a successful adaptation of innovative business management practice which resulted in improved competitiveness?
4. What are the barriers to transform the organization to support business management innovation strategies that enhance business competitiveness?
5. How have you addressed the business challenges you encountered in implementing innovative business management strategies to improve the organization's competitiveness?
6. How do you measure the success of the innovative business management strategies you have used to improve the organization's competitiveness?
7. What innovative business management strategies you applied that did not enhance your organization's competitiveness?
8. What additional information would you like to add regarding how you have developed and implemented innovative business management strategies to improve your organization's competitiveness?