ASSESSING WHETHER THE REGIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTRIES INFLUENCE BUSINESS STRATEGIES OF MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

by

Christopher Powell

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Business Administration

Liberty University, School of Business

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Abstract

The purpose of the qualitative multi-case study design study is to add to the body of knowledge by exploring how MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland (a) employ global approaches in their foreign market operations and (b) differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. Findings from the study have shown that cultural differences between the home and host companies have a profound effect on the internationalization strategy. Most of the managers included in the study reported that their organizations encourage diversity and cultural competencies. They also recommended conducting a feasibility study to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural influences that affect the internationalization plan for their respective MNCs. Feasibility studies and adequate planning allow MNC leadership/management to prepare adequately to navigate the complexities of the foreign culture being aware of the cultural norms and values. Second, the study has also highlighted the need of aligning strategic plan of the MNC with the local culture. The alignment is necessary to ensure that MNCs develop strategic plans and goals that are responsive to the underlying cultural norms and values of the host country. The greatest challenge for MNCs is merging the local and global internationalization plans to achieve strategic goals.

Key words: Multinational companies, internationalization, cultural differences, cultural influences, and strategic planning
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Dedication

The research is dedicated to my family members who have been the cornerstone of academic and professional progress. A special feeling of gratitude to my dear and loving wife, Viola whose push for tenacity and persistent encouragement helped me to stay on the track. To you my children, Claire, Jonah and Willow, you are special, thank you for understanding those missed events and providing all those hugs and kisses, especially during the long days and nights. I also dedicate this dissertation to my friends and coworkers for their unwavering support and commitment towards my success. May God bless you all abundantly.
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I would now like to thank MNC leaders headquartered in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland who agreed to participate in the study and share their insights about the phenomenon of interest. Thank you for taking your time to take part in the interviews and respond to the survey. The research would not have been possible without your invaluable analysis and insights. Many thanks to the research team that coordinated the entire process. Conducting research is a complex and protracted process. I am indebted to you because you stood and supported me at every step of the research, from the formative stages to data collection and analysis. Finally, special thanks to my family for being understanding and supportive. I would not have succeeded in this endeavor without your encouragement and support. I will always remember the sleepless nights you waited upon me as I drafted and compiled the report.
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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The phenomenon of globalization has led to the expansion of businesses to countries outside their national borders in pursuit of competition for increased market share (Boon, 2017). Globalization has made it possible for companies to pursue growth targets by entering other markets and competing with other foreign companies and domestic businesses. To successfully compete in a globalized market, companies need capital, infrastructure, and the right business model to allow them to adapt to local demands. Business managers and owners have been seeking to expand to foreign markets to achieve the same success they have made in their home markets. Many companies have been able to do this by learning to adjust their business models to the needs of their new markets. Successful expansion into freight markets requires understanding not only one's strengths and weaknesses but also a good understanding of the external environment, particularly on how to capture the market's interest and compete with existing businesses (Fallon, 2018).

Many businesses in various industries have become multinational corporations (MNCs) seeking to offer and deliver their goods to international markets (Perkins, 2014). Notably, MNCs also both provide and enjoy opportunities in knowledge transfer. These opportunities for knowledge transfer include managerial practices to attain the same level of success in their home and foreign markets (Li & Hsieh, 2009). The essence of globalization is for businesses to gain the capabilities, knowledge, and experience to compete effectively in their respective home markets and in foreign ones to dominate and succeed internationally (Amal, Awuah, Raboch, & Andersson, 2013; Perkins, 2014). However, this is not always the case since businesses are seeking to expand to foreign markets that also fail (Lai & Yang, 2017; Chanda & Ray, 2016). Foreign markets may be more challenging to manage and provide an uphill task for MNC
managers to replicate their home success. Based on extant literature on this aspect, it can be said that a gap exists when it comes to knowledge about how MNCs in the freight industry perform in foreign markets as opposed to their performance domestically.

**Background of the Problem**

The phenomenon of globalization has led to the expansion of businesses to countries outside their national borders in pursuit of competition for increased market share (Boon, 2017). Globalization has made it possible for companies to pursue growth targets by entering other markets and competing not only with other foreign companies but also with domestic businesses. To be able to compete in a globalized market successfully, companies need capital, infrastructure, and the right business model to allow them to adapt to local demands. Business managers and owners have been seeking to expand to foreign markets to achieve the same degree of success that they have made in their home markets. Many companies have been able to do this by learning to adjust and adapt their business models to the needs of their new markets.

Successful expansion into freight markets requires understanding not only of one's strengths and weaknesses but also a good understanding of the external environment, particularly on how to capture the market's interest, as well as compete with already existing businesses (Fallon, 2018).

Many businesses in various industries have become multinational corporations (MNCs) that seek to offer and deliver their goods to international markets (Perkins, 2014). Notably, MNCs also both provide and enjoy opportunities in knowledge transfer. These opportunities for knowledge transfer include managerial practices to attain the same level of success in their home and foreign markets (Li & Hsieh, 2009). The essence of globalization is for businesses to gain the capabilities, knowledge, and experience to compete effectively not only in their respective home markets but also in foreign ones to dominate and succeed internationally (Amal, Awuah,
Raboch, & Andersson, 2013; Perkins, 2014). However, this is not always the case since businesses are seeking to expand to foreign markets that also fail (Lai & Yang, 2017; Chanda & Ray, 2016). Foreign markets may be more challenging to manage and provide an uphill task for MNC managers in attempting to replicate their home success. Based on extant literature on this aspect, it can be said that a gap exists when it comes to knowledge about how MNCs in the freight industry perform in foreign markets as opposed to their performance domestically.

**Problem Statement**

The general problem to be addressed is that MNCs’ success in foreign markets is not at the same level as they have succeeded in their respective domestic markets (Ghemawat, 2005). While 88% of the world's biggest MNCs generate 50% of their sales from their respective domestic or home regions, only 2% of companies generate 20% or higher sales from their international markets in Europe, North America, and Asia (Verbeke & Kano, 2016; Ghemawat, 2005; Griffith, 2010; Amal et al., 2013). MNCs fail to generate the same level of earnings from foreign operations and, as such, are at risk for inabilities to attain their expected return on investment. These findings mean that international expansion of MNCs may not provide financial rationale besides market presence.

The specific problem to be addressed is lower success rates in international operations compared to domestic operations among MNCs in Western European countries, namely, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. Researchers have explained that MNCs may have different sets of strategies for their international and domestic markets (Oetzel & Miklian, 2017; Peprah et al., 2017; Twarowska & Kąkol, 2014). Moreover, evidence shows that there are varying degrees of successes that MNCs may achieve in their international and local markets (Dabic, González-Loureiro & Furrer, 2014; Edwards, Marginson & Ferner,
Previous studies have shown that culture plays a significant role in the varying degrees of success between an MNC's international and domestic market (Deari, Kimmel & Lopez, 2008; Faria&Sofka, 2008; Kania, 2010; López-Duarte, González-Díaz & Vidal-Suárez, 2016; Reynolds, 2017).

However, currently, there is little empirical knowledge about the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs in Western Europe, particularly in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland, as well as, possible differences in strategies that MNCs in these Western European countries harness in their international and local markets. There is also little empirical evidence about how regional differences in strategies that MNCs in these countries achieve in their foreign operations. Lastly, there is little empirical research on the role of culture in MNCs' performance in Western European countries in their foreign operations. The proposed study seeks to address these gaps in the literature. It is anticipated that by bridging this gap, valuable contributions may be made to literature that will benefit MNCs, policymakers in the aforementioned European countries, and entrepreneurs in general.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study design study is to add to the body of knowledge by exploring how MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland (a) employ global approaches in their foreign market operations and (b) differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. The study will add to the body of knowledge by exploring the two areas using selected MNCs from the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and
Switzerland for a multi-case study research design and finding out the strategies that their managers applied for globalization and localization operations. This qualitative methodology and multi-case study design component are suitable for effectively determining the degree of local penetration or global expansion for the respective company strategies. Manager survey data should help understand the relationship between MNCs' global and local strategies and their respective performances.

The study will explore how regional differences between countries affect the business approaches adopted by MNCs in attempts to rival the successes of host economies in international markets. Cultural effects on the operations of the selected MNCs in foreign markets will be derived from Hofstede’s (2007) model. This aspect of the research method aims to compare differences and changes in cultural outcomes for the communities of the studied MNCs and their behavioral patterns. It seeks to arrive at data for the most valuable cultural attributes of the foreign markets in relation to minimal costs of production and high profitability. Data from the manager surveys and company revenue reports should supplement evidence of connecting the broader understanding of the different levels of success in foreign and host markets.

**Nature of the Study**

The study is qualitative in nature, specifically, using multiple case study design. In a multiple case study design, a researcher evaluates similarities and the differences between various cases (Gustafsson, 2017, p. 1). In a case study, the researcher chooses a specific sample population or participants for studying (Martínez-Mesa, González-Chica, Duquia, &Bonamigo, 2016). Convenience sampling is suitable in guiding the selection of the participating MNCs because it is consistent with the qualitative method (Etikan, Musa, &Alkassim, 2016). Convenience sampling is appropriate in qualitative inquiries because the researcher aims not to
generalize results but to find information-rich participants and cases to shed light on the research questions (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Survey participants were recruited from the selected MNCs.

Triangulation was the last step to compile the results from the various forms of data analysis. The goal of data analysis was to compare variations in outcomes for the different MNCs and align it with the internationalization strategies and cultural differences between the home and foreign markets. The theories and concepts discussed in the literature review underpinned the data analysis process. Specifying the type of evidence required to evaluate a program, test a theory, or describe and assess the meaning related to an observable phenomenon effectively is important in obtaining information relevant to a research problem (University of Southern California, 2019). A research design plays an important role in ensuring that the evidence obtained addresses the research problem logically and unambiguously

**Discussion of Method**

The study sought an understanding of the cultural motivations and reasons guiding MNCs' managers in the adoption of internationalization strategies in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland using a qualitative design. Qualitative research has helped in providing insights into research problems (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016). The use of qualitative method in this study provides insights into how the cultural differences in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland influence the strategies the MNCs apply in attempts to rival home returns in foreign markets.

Moreover, the use of qualitative method provides insights into understanding why MNCs have not managed to make as much profit in the host countries as they make in the home countries. Data collection strategies vary between structured and semi-structured methods (University of Southern California, 2019). Focus groups, interviews, and surveys are methods
used to collect data under the qualitative method (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, & Mukherjee, 2018). Therefore, qualitative research is appropriate for this study because it favors applying different data collection methods that can provide the relevant information required to answer the research question. Sample selection targets data that meets specific criteria, making sample size relatively small in a qualitative method (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003).

A study can also utilize a quantitative or mixed method approach. Quantitative research generates numerical data and transforms it into useful statistics (Jankowski, 2010). Therefore, quantitative analysis makes it possible to quantify a problem. Different forms of surveys, such as online surveys, interviews, and systematic observations, are the major data collection methods under quantitative research (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). A survey is a preferred data collection method for this study, making quantitative research a desirable method. However, the quantitative method is not applicable because some of the information, especially the cultural differences data, is not quantifiable. A mixed method in which both qualitative and quantitative approaches apply to a study is not appropriate for this study because of the non-quantifiable nature of the cultural differences data.

Discussion of Design

There are different types of research designs, such as case study design, phenomenology, narrative inquiry, ethnography, and grounded theory (University of Southern California, 2019). Each of the designs is applicable to certain types of studies. The case study design is the most appropriate for this study. Case study design involves the in-depth study of a given research problem as opposed to a comprehensive comparative inquiry, or a sweeping statistical survey (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016). A case study design helps narrow down a broad field of research into a few easily researchable examples (Devi, 2017). A case study design effectively
addresses/investigates an issue that scholars know little about (University of Southern California, 2019). Scholars know too little about the effects of regional differences between countries on the business approaches adopted by MNCs in attempts to rival the successes of host economies in international markets.

The case study design is effective in studies seeking to understand a complex issue through contextual analysis of a limited number of conditions or events, as well as their relationships (Gustafsson, 2017). Analyzing regional differences between the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland and how they affect MNCs' strategies is a complex issue requiring the application of a limited number of conditions or events to understand. In this regard, it is not possible to analyze all the MNCs' strategies in relation to the cultural differences among the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. However, analyzing in-depth a few cases of MNC strategies in the various countries can provide significant knowledge on the ways through which cultural differences influence the MNC strategies of rivaling the successes of host economies in international markets.

Both qualitative and quantitative studies use case study design (Gustafsson, 2017). Multiple case study designs are appropriate for this study due to their ability to analyze the impact of culture in the foreign operations of different MNCs. Researchers have used a case study design to evaluate contemporary real-life situations (University of Southern California, 2019). The strategies MNCs use in efforts to ensure success in foreign markets deal with real-life situations such as market competition and customer needs. Case studies are effective in providing comprehensive explanations of specific and rare cases. In this regard, the design helped in the evaluation of specific and rare cases in which cultural differences influence MNCs to use different strategies in different countries to maximize returns in foreign markets.
Despite the benefits of using the case study design, there are limitations associated with it. For instance, using a single or a small number of cases provides a limited basis for establishing reliability, or generalizing the findings to wider populations (University of Southern California, 2019). This study utilized a multiple case study design to avoid the challenges associated with a single case study design. The evidence obtained from a multiple case study design is stronger and more reliable. A multiple case study design also makes it possible for a researcher to understand an issue within a situation and across situations (Gustafsson, 2017, p. 3). In this regard, a multiple case study made it possible to analyze the effects of internationalization strategies in specific MNCs, and across the MNCs. A multiple case study design also makes a more convincing theory, making them appropriate for this study.

Ethnography may be an appropriate design for this study because it involves the systematic study of people and culture (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012), which is a subject matter in this study. In this regard, ethnography can help analyze the impacts of culture on the foreign operations of participant MNCs. However, the multiple case study design is more appropriate because it facilitated understanding of the subject matter from the perspectives of different MNCs. Grounded theory and phenomenology are also not appropriate for this study for various reasons. For instance, phenomenology studies the structures of consciousness, while narrative and grounded theory designs are for the construction of general theories and not specific for the studies of culture like ethnography (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016).

Summary of Nature of Study

The study utilized a qualitative method and a multiple case study design. The desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of the ways through which cultural differences in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland influence MNCs to apply
different strategies in attempts to rival home returns with foreign returns informs the choice for
the qualitative method and the multiple case study design.

**Research Questions**

The specific questions that the proposed study seeks to address are the following:

- How do regional differences influence the level of success that MNCs achieve in
  their foreign operations?
- How important are cultural differences between home and host countries
  influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations?
- What are the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the
  performance of MNCs?

**Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to conduct an investigation on how the
multinational corporations (MNCs) in the United Kingdom (UK), Ireland, France, Germany,
Belgium, and Switzerland (a) employ global approaches in their foreign market operations and
(b) differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding
domestic operations. To obtain information about the MNCs, survey, and examination of
archival data and theories is necessary to define the impact of global business in MNCs. With
this, theories emerge in the course of the investigation. This conceptual framework aims to
elaborate on the different theories related to the core of the investigation. Based on the defined
purpose of the study, there are various underlying theories included in the research.

The theories include the regional differences between the MNCs in the UK, Ireland,
France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland that include the foreign markets, regional culture,
and internationalization of strategies. All these theories have respective aspects that need to
elaborate, expand, and examine to determine how they affect or influence the business strategies of MNCs. This perspective shows that the MNCs face different challenges that need extensive consideration to succeed in the business. Though there are greater opportunities in becoming a global brand, the MNCs also need to address the emerging differences between their home and host culture. This part of the research explains the nature and importance of each of the three theories and aspects defined to establish its purpose and value in the study. It is important to provide a discussion of these theories to provide a credible, reliable, and consistent contextualization of data as they emerge in the investigation.

**Discussion of Concept 1: Foreign Market Theory**

The first identified theory is the foreign market, which this study believes as an important aspect, tool, or structure that MNCs consider in building their brand. Fundamentally, the theory is under the international trade theory that deals with international business (Sen, 2010). Different foreign markets play a vital role in increasing the popularity, significance, and influence of MNCs. These foreign markets can include manufacturing, services, and retail. Considering the foreign market is a significant sign of deciding to become a global brand. It is perceived as an international strategy that enables companies to promote their business in different parts of the world (Hitt, Xu, & Li, 2015). Fundamentally, there are different foreign markets to consider depending on the nature of the company. Some of these markets include manufacturing, services, and retail. In going international, businesses need to determine which of the markets their targets are. Based on the nature of the business, the companies were required to establish a foundation in one or two of these markets to stabilize their system and presence (Twarowska & Kakol, 2014).
Nonetheless, there are other equally important drivers among MNCs so that the decision is made to expand to foreign markets. For instance, in certain countries, including some in Europe, researchers had found that expansion to foreign markets is motivated by opportunities that include political connections in government (Fernández-Méndez, García-Canal & Guillén, 2018). This perspective is important to this dissertation's attention to culture and how it may impact strategies that MNCs take. Notably, a good number of MNCs have successfully expanded to foreign markets because of a range of political motives, from managers' friendship with politicians to the presence of politicians or former politicians on the board of directors (Faccio, 2010). Appointing former politicians to the board is interesting theoretically, considering that politicians' presence is not warranted by standard corporate governance functions, including monitoring of the company's management and operations. However, in these positions, former politicians and politicians can provide access to resources in a foreign market, including expertise, knowledge, and contacts that they have accumulated during their careers (Fernández-Méndez et al., 2018). These facilitate entry into a foreign market and can help assure continued smooth operations that would otherwise be disrupted by complications that include regulation compliance. The expertise that these individuals bring to the board also facilitates better decisions in relationship with the foreign government.

Literature contains different studies exploring MNCs' internationalization patterns to foreign markets, sequential entry processes, and foreign-market entry mode (Ang, Benischke & Hooi, 2018). However, these studies have mainly focused on individual transactions and typically conducted on the assumption that MNCs use a natural sequence on international expansion to foreign markets. For example, the internationalization process model holds that MNCs expand to foreign markets according to experiential learning and psychological distance.
With regard to psychological distance, Chang (1995) also provided evidence that MNCs tend to enter foreign markets in their core businesses to exploit their competitive advantage over competitors before they expand into non-core businesses. On the other hand, experiential learning has been significantly studied from the international expansion to foreign markets because of evidence indicating that an MNC usually seeks to accumulate international experience by engaging in high-control market entries that they can subsequently exploit in the future. In other words, accumulating international experience is not exogenous to the MNC; it is a deliberate strategy reflected in the firm-level frequency of international expansion. As Fernández-Méndez et al. (2019) assert, MNC's foreign markets need to be studied particularly in the contexts of culture and strategy, which this dissertation is exploring.

Moreover, MNCs must conduct extensive research on their purpose and goal in expanding internationally to ensure their success. This concept is included in the investigation because it is one of the most significant considerations in building a global brand. Companies need to identify the reason they want to expand—and this can be justified through their identification of a foreign market. Through the inclusion of this concept, the research has been able to delve deeper into the foreign market's use in the business expansion and influence of MNCs. It provides this investigation with the opportunity to identify the businesses' decision-making processes as they decide to become MNCs. As one of the most significant aspects of global business, it is necessary to include the foreign market in the conceptual framework to provide concrete, elaborated, and well-discussed ideas about the process of becoming a multinational brand for international businesses in UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland.
Discussion of Concept 2: Natural Culture Theory

Through the years, "culture" has been defined in a multitude of ways. Hofstede's (2011) definition is that it "is the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (p. 3). Culture is always a collective phenomenon, although it may pertain to different collectives wherein there are different individuals. According to Hofstede (2011), if individual attributes vary according to a bell curve, the variations between their cultures reflect a shift in the bell curve when one moves from one society to another. Hofstede (2011) notes that the culture construct is frequently used in reference to tribes or ethnic groups, such as in anthropological perspectives; countries, such as from the perspectives of political science, sociology and management; and, for organizations, such as from the views of sociology and management. Relatively recently, there has been increasing attention to the use of the cultural construct in occupations, genders, generations, and social classes (Hofstede, 2011).

However, this evolving aggregation level reflects changes in the conceptualization of culture. Hence, societal, national, and gender cultures to which young people are exposed at a young age are now recognized as more deeply rooted in mind than in occupational cultures that are learned in school or through work. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that societal perceptions, because they are embedded in the mind, significantly impact the broader tendencies to prefer specific states of affairs over others (Hofstede, 2011).

Organizational cultures occur more invisible and conscious practices, indicating manners through which people perceive what goes on in their respective organizations. In light of these, Hofstede (2007, 2011, 2019) developed the Cultural Dimensions Theory, which is widely used in different fields, particularly in international business. The Cultural Dimensions Theory holds that there are six dimensions of national culture that influence thinking in both academic and
professional management settings (Hofstede, 2019). These cultural dimensions also indicate how one society generally prefers a specific state of affairs over others, thereby distinguishing one society from another. Usually, these cultural dimensions are used to compare one society with another based on the rationale that this is a meaningful way to understand cultures (Hofstede, 2019). The six Cultural Dimensions, defined by Hofstede (2019), are the following:

a. Power Distance Index (PDI)

The PDI demonstrates the extent to which "less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 2019). The primary question in this regard pertains to how society deals with social inequalities. A society with high PDI prefers a hierarchical order where each person has an established place that does not entail further justification. In a society where PDI is low, members endeavor for the equal distribution of power and demand that inequalities of power be justified (Hofstede, 2019).

b. Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV)

A high IDV is labeled as Individualism, which refers to members of society who prefer loose social relationships and expect to fend for oneself and one's families only (Hofstede, 2019). At the other end of the spectrum is Collectivism, which refers to members of society who usually have tight relationships with their kin and fellowmen. Often, people in Collective communities expect that they will care for their in-group fellows due to their mutual, unquestioning loyalty. A society's position in the IDV reflects people's self-image as defined according to terms of "I" or "we" (Hofstede, 2019).

c. Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS)

In this cultural dimension, the Masculinity side refers to people in a society that prefer "achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards for success" (Hofstede, 2019). A
society that is high on MAS is also highly competitive. On the other hand, a low MAS indicates Femininity, which refers to people in a society who prefer to cooperate with others, are modest, care for the weak, and appreciate the quality of life. In a society that is defined by Femininity, members tend to be consensus-oriented. Meanwhile, from an organizational perspective, Masculinity vis-à-vis Femininity is also referred to as "tough versus tender cultures" (Hofstede, 2019).

d. Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

The cultural dimension of UAI reflects the extent to which people in a given "society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity" (Hofstede, 2019). With UAI, the primary concern pertains to how members of society handle the reality that the future is generally unknown. Thus, the question is: "should we try to control the future or just let it happen" (Hofstede, 2019)? Societies with high UAI usually uphold rigid codes of belief and behavior and do not tolerate unorthodox acts and attitudes. Countries with low UAI typically have a more relaxed attitude where actions are more important than principles.

e. Long Term Orientation Vis-à-vis Short Term Normative Orientation (LTO)

According to Hofstede (2019), societies generally seek to maintain ties with the past while seeking to deal with current and future challenges. Societies deal with these two existential goals in different ways. A country that has low LTO prefers "to maintain time-honored traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion," while a society that has high LTO has members that are usually more realistic in life (Hofstede, 2019). They espouse thrift and endeavors in contemporary education as the best ways to succeed in the future. From the perspective of businesses, the LTO is also labeled as "(short-term) normative versus (long-term)
pragmatic (PRA)” while in the field of the academe, it is referred to as "Monumentalism versus Flexhumility" (Hofstede, 2019).

f. Indulgence versus Restraint (IND)

In the cultural dimension of IND, a high score reflects Indulgence, which refers to a society that prefers a “relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun” (Hofstede, 2019). Restraint reflects members of society who suppress “gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms” (Hofstede, 2019).

As reflected in Hofstede's (2007, 2011) scholarly discourse, MNCs' culture is different from the office or organizational culture imposed on the employees. National culture fundamentally refers to the companies' home culture and the culture of the target or host countries. From this case, the culture theory promotes communication and sociology to deliver the best form of information to the business operations (Serrat, 2008). The home culture is the culture established by the companies in the country. The MNCs have their respective organizational culture imposed from the conception of the business. This is established as a home culture where organizational movement, interaction, lifestyle, communication, values, language, priorities, beliefs, and structure occur. The established home culture determines the growth, stability, success, or failure of the organization, but MNCs can attest to the influence and power of their home culture in making their business successful.

According to the study conducted by Lindholm (2000), there is a significant correlation between national culture and MNC performance because the MNCs dwell or depend on their national culture in making decisions and managing the structures of their business. Tzeremes and Halkos (2008) have the same conclusion in their research, showing that the home country's
national culture has a significant impact on MNC's performance. However, for MNCs, the culture of the host countries is also important because the structure, system, beliefs, language, vision, interaction, and priorities may be different from them. It is important to consider that every country has its own organizational culture, and MNCs cannot instill their culture into the host country because they are hiring locals.

Therefore, they must study how local employees work, communicate, and prioritize jobs. If it is far different from their national culture, extensive training or adjustment is needed. This study includes a discussion of this concept because it is a significant tool in defining MNCs' success. It is imperative to determine how the MNCs balance the challenges of home and the other country's culture. There are significant probabilities of differences between the home and host country culture, but successful MNCs can address the concerns and keep the structure, system, and policies of the organization from the home culture alive even if the operation occurs globally. Through this study, the regional culture, as a concept, is defined, contextualized, and utilized as important aspects of MNCs.

Discussion of Concept 3: Internationalization Strategies Theory

International strategy theory is used to examine the multinational networks, market entry modes, and market entry timing (Li, 2007). The internationalization strategies are necessary for MNCs to expand their business and ensure success in their decision to go global. These strategies include local and global. Although MNCs' purpose is to internationalize their business, they still need to include their local strategies, for it may work in their target country. Fundamentally, there are different aspects to consider in becoming global, such as culture, legal and regulatory barriers, foreign government systems, and business aspects (Abner, 2015). The discussion of culture has been presented and explained previously. The legal and regulatory barriers refer to
the rules, laws, and policies of the target countries that may differ from those of the home country. The business needs to understand these rules to avoid penalties or rejection.

Foreign government systems also vary from one country to another, which the business needs to consider. Furthermore, the business aspects of the target country may be different from the home country, which requires the company to study and consider determining if the mode or nature of business in the home country applies to the target country. In the study conducted by Azuayi (2016), it was found that internationalization strategies for global companies are fundamental in defining the future and progress of businesses. However, not all businesses succeed because of the difference in culture, structure, system, and business ideologies of each country. Since internationalization strategies aim to make local strategies work for international structures and systems, not all strategies apply to the host countries. Therefore, it is imperative and significant to consider such actions before utilizing them in the host country.

MNCs have been receiving both praise and criticism for the changes they have brought to the world (Caprar, 2011). Aside from delivering popular services or products, such as through the McDonaldization of the world, MNCs have also been known to bring "culturally loaded" practices to their host countries, as well as, harness these practices as a means of organizational control (Caprar, 2011, p. 608). Nevertheless, on the other hand, MNCs have also been known to rapidly learn from a foreign market through their subsidiaries and then harness this knowledge to gain competitive advantage (Mu, Gnyawali & Hatfield, 2007). Indeed, a potential source of competitive advantage for MNCs is the ability of its subsidiaries to innovate based on what they have learned in the host country where they operate. In light of these, knowledge or learning may be used as an MNC strategy to gain a competitive advantage in foreign markets. For this to be achieved, the MNC and its top management team have to develop a network of local connections
to understand the foreign market's culture and navigate the market to obtain and integrate knowledge (Mu et al., 2007). In this regard, the concept of local embeddedness is important to strategy.

Local embeddedness pertains to the degree to which an MNC's subsidiary in a foreign market successfully establishes relationships with local institutions, such as suppliers, customers, and research institutions (Mu et al., 2007). International business studies have shown that an inter-organizational network indicates how an MNC's network of relationships can facilitate essential knowledge about that foreign market. Networks have strategic value to an MNC because these provide access to different types of resources, including information, knowledge, and physical assets, as well as, provide authority and legitimacy to firms (Mu et al., 2007). Since networks of relationships with local entities are conduits for information flows, an MNC's foreign subsidiary gets effective exposure to important new developments. As such, the strategic value of networks increases, as does MNC's subsidiary's ability to cultivate such networks. It must be emphasized that a foreign subsidiary that has a good local network also increases chances for innovation (Mu et al., 2007). Through networks, a subsidiary can access and obtain knowledge through strategic connections with customers, suppliers, and research institutions, all of which are crucial resources for localized subsidiary innovation.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that MNC subsidiaries begin to be formed by a team of expatriates, followed by progressive incorporation of local employees (Caprar, 2011). These local employees acculturated to the organization's culture, foreign to them so that they can learn the behaviors, values, beliefs, and social knowledge required to perform their new roles. The important challenge is that the subsidiary has a foreign parent and leadership while having a local presence and workforce. It is unreasonable to believe that the MNC to effectively deal with
this concern can also translate into its potential to become profitable in a foreign market. Important insights pertaining to how organizational cultures emerge in multicultural contexts may be gained through this dissertation. To note, the concept of a negotiated culture perspective also emerges in the discourse on MNCs, especially since organizational cultures of the MNC's subsidiary in the foreign market are constructed using interactions of organizational actors with different cultural backgrounds albeit the cultures of origin are also powerful anchors in the negotiation of organizational culture in a said subsidiary (Caprar, 2011).

Abner's (2015) discussion of the different aspects of going global is important to determine the applicability and usability of the strategies in the international business. This concept is included in the conceptual framework because it plays a vital role in understanding the system, structure, and formation of MNCs' business processes. Through the internationalization strategies, MNCs are able to define which of their local and international strategies are applicable and functional in their target foreign market. The investigation vows to the exploration and analysis of MNCs' internationalization strategies to present the process of establishing and managing the international business organization.

From all of the three defined theories and aspects, Figure 1 illustrates the visual presentation of the study's conceptual framework to provide a clearer understanding of the relationship of the three major theories and the aspects included in the discussion of the regional differences of MNCs in UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. The chart presents a simple but understandable and clear illustration of the major ideas on the discussion of the regional differences of MNCs.
Discussion of Relationship between Concepts

Three theories underpin the conceptual framework of the research: foreign market theory, natural culture theory, and internationalization strategies theory. The three theories explain the regional differences in the MNCs across the six European countries. Specifically, the foreign market theory conceptualizes the nature of manufacturing, retail, and services industries. The national cultural theory then highlights the cultural variations in the manufacturing, retail, and services industries for both home and host countries. The natural cultural theory plays an instrumental role in influencing international strategies for local and global businesses. The brief introduction illustrates the linkages inherent in the three theories. The point of argument is that companies cannot develop an internationalization strategy without understanding the foreign markets and the culture that underpins them. Therefore, the purpose of this subsection is to expound further on the relationship between concepts, as presented by the three theoretical frameworks.
The three theories that make up the conceptual framework of the research coincide with the three research questions. Exploring the research questions from the three theories' perspectives creates the framework for considering possible themes and answers. The first question entailed finding out how regional differences influence the success of MNCs in their foreign operations. The foreign markets theory lays the foundation for exploring the research question. Many companies are now expanding their operations in foreign markets to maximize profits and gain a competitive advantage. Emerging markets are increasingly becoming a source of economic growth and competitive advantage for many MNCs. Consequently, foreign markets have allowed MNCs to become global brands by promoting their businesses across multiple countries (Hitt et al., 2015). However, foreign markets are not ubiquitous, considering the variations in cultural norms and practices. The foreign markets theory sheds more light on the regional differences expressed in the first research question.

The internationalization of local business is more than just expanding or transferring some operations in foreign markets. On the contrary, local businesses must carefully consider the most appropriate markets for their operations. For example, it would be counterproductive for a business specializing in services to expand its operations in a country or region with a strong manufacturing culture. The primary proposition of the foreign market's theory is that businesses have different foreign markets to consider depending on the nature of the company. Some of these markets include manufacturing, services, and retail. Thus, businesses planning to internationalize their operations must target the most viable markets that suit their operations. The achievement of this goal challenges businesses to practice due diligence when considering global or international expansion of their business operations. The greatest task for businesses,
especially MNCs, is to study foreign markets from the context of culture and strategy (Fernández-Méndez et al., 2019).

Cultural differences exist in countries and regions where MNCs operate, which is an indisputable fact. Thus, it will be problematic to assume that strategies that work in a specific foreign market can be replicated in another country or region with the utmost success. The key issue here is that every country always have a unique culture and way of doing business despite being in the same geographical region. The finding then reinforces the value of feasibility studies. A key issue emerging from the analysis of the foreign market theory is that companies must first identify why they want to expand in a foreign market. Finding the reason means that companies must conduct a comprehensive study or analysis of the foreign market where they intend to expand their operations (Hashim & Hameed, 2017). The achievement of this goal is critical, given that foreign culture differs significantly from the local one. Thus, MNC leadership/management must prepare adequately to navigate the complexities of the foreign culture being aware of the cultural norms and values.

The need for research and due diligence brings forward the connection between the foreign market theory and the national culture theory. Culture is the core element that defines the research. The second research question looks at the importance of cultural differences between home and host countries in influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations. Cultural differences between the home and host countries have a profound influence on the internationalization plan. The greatest challenge for managers is aligning corporate and local cultures. Peprah et al. (2017) have found that the cultural norms and values of an international company are usually inconsistent with those in the host country. The performance and productivity of MNCs depend on their corporate culture. Nevertheless, companies expanding
into foreign markets face the challenge of hiring local employees whose cultural norms and values align with the corporate culture (Meyer, 2015). The national culture theory has focused principally on how the home culture affects the performance of MNCs.

Multinational companies often have a rich organizational culture that defines them from their competitors. The MNCs usually promote the same organizational culture as they expand their business operations globally. However, MNCs must consider the culture of the host countries because the structure, system, beliefs, language, vision, interaction, and priorities may be different from theirs. The point or argument is that every country has its own organizational culture, and MNCs cannot instill their organizational culture to the host country, especially when hiring local talent. The cultural differences between the host country and MNCs reinforce the relationship between the natural culture theory and the foreign market theory. The connection lies in the study of how the local employees work, communicate, and prioritize jobs. Thus, the study has integrated the concept of cultural differences based on the natural culture theory because of the relationship between the local culture and MNCs' success.

The application of the natural culture theory challenges MNCs to strike a delicate balance between their corporate culture and the local or host country’s culture to succeed. The noteworthy point is that the home culture of the MNCs has a major influence on their respective corporate cultures. The foreign market theory has shown that countries differ significantly based on their market orientations and local cultures. The finding means that MNCs' corporate culture is always inconsistent with the host country's culture, even between countries in the same region. The study has captured the essence of these differences by including six countries from the European region. Although the countries lie in the same region, they have cultural variations that affect MNCs' success. The cultural differences are inevitable. However, insights from the natural
culture theory have underscored the need to consider every cultural difference when making strategic decisions and plans regardless of the size or scope of the variations in culture. Cultural differences between home and host countries are a major topic when considering the internationalization of business operations.

The influence of cultural differences on internationalization strategies forms the relationship between the theory of natural culture and the theory of internationalization strategies. A major proposition of the natural culture theory is aligning the strategic plan of the MNC with the local culture. A clash between MNCs' corporate culture and the local or host country's culture can have devastating effects on the performance of international operations. Consequently, strategic planning is critical as MNCs prepare for internationalization or global expansion of their local operations. Successful MNCs plan advance for cultural issues that will emerge during the internationalization process. The success of the business internationalization process depends on the firm's ability or corporation to plan for international culture. Being aware of the dimension of cultural differences between the host and home countries is the foremost step to the planning process (Meyer, 2015). Prior planning for the cultural differences is central to the internationalization strategies theory, which draws directly from the two other theories.

Businesses planning to expand their operations into foreign markets cannot do so successfully unless they understand the underlying differences between corporate and local cultures. Such knowledge is central to the development of a feasible and successful internationalization plan. Meyer (2015) has argued that evaluating the differences between local and foreign cultures is instrumental in informing diversity management strategies. The noteworthy point is that choosing either the corporate or local cultures often creates problems in the future. Thus, the third question of the research, consistent with the internationalization
strategies theory, explored whether managers pursued internationalization strategies and thought that these strategies depended on the nation's global and local context. A review of the professional and academic literature has shown that the tension between global integration and local responsiveness underscores the role internationalization strategies play in defining MNCs' success in foreign markets.

The internationalization strategies are necessary for MNCs to expand their business and ensure success in their decision to go global. These strategies include local and global. The internationalization strategies theory has shown that MNCs must not only internationalize their business, but they must also include their local strategies to succeed in the foreign markets. Consequently, both the local and international strategies are often intertwined in the internationalization plan (El Namaki, 2016). The noteworthy point is that the managerial decisions at the MNC headquarters have a direct bearing on those at local/foreign subsidiaries. The challenge lies in ensuring that managers at the local subsidiaries and parent companies work together to ensure that strategic decisions are responsive to the former's unique cultural practices (Peprah et al., 2017). The third theory shows that MNCs expanding into foreign markets with a culture that differs from that in their home countries must create a local internationalization strategy that is consistent with the host country’s beliefs and norms to succeed.

MNCs that fail to develop internationalization plans that are responsive to the global markets' unique needs normally fail to achieve their strategic goals. MNCs usually expand into foreign markets because they see opportunities in the host country's favorable government policies, trade laws, legislation, and business-friendly government policies (Oh et al., 2019). Knowledge transfer is a vital outcome of internationalization strategies. Knowledge transfer influences the extent to which internationalization strategies affect the performance of MNCs.
Local embeddedness is at the center of the knowledge transfer between the host and foreign countries. Local embeddedness pertains to the degree to which an MNC’s subsidiary in a foreign market successfully establishes relationships with local institutions, such as suppliers, customers, and research institutions (Mu et al., 2007). The networks that MNCs form with local businesses are valuable since they enhance access to multiple resources, including information, knowledge, and physical assets.

In conclusion, this subsection has explored and discussed the relationship between three theories, which form the conceptual framework for the research. The three theories integrated into the conceptual framework are consistent with the three research questions. The theories build onto each other because they have laid the foundation for understanding the relationship between cultural differences and the successful expansion of MNCs into foreign markets. Although the three theories' concepts and principles are different, they converge at the proposition of cultural differences. The underlying issue is that cultural differences between host and home countries affect MNCs' performance and success. Therefore, MNCs' greatest challenge is developing and implementing internationalization strategies that are responsive to the cultural differences across countries. Internationalization is inevitable as more companies expand into foreign markets to maximize profits and build a competitive advantage. However, companies will only succeed if they pay attention to cultural differences across borders. A combination of these issues formed the basis for literature review and qualitative analysis.

**Summary of the Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework has presented and explored three theories that underpin the research questions. The theories are related to the regional differences between the MNCs in the six European countries, regional culture, and internationalization of strategies. Specifically, the
three theories that define the conceptual framework include the foreign market theory, the natural culture theory, and the internationalization strategies theory. Although the theories differ in their proposition, they all underscore the critical role that cultural differences between host and home countries or markets play in influencing MNCs' successful operation. Although MNCs face a myriad of challenges in their quest for internationalization, culture is perhaps the most pressing concern. Cultural differences are at the center of the relationship between the three theories included in the conceptual framework. The three theories and research questions converge to show that the failure to pay close attention to cultural differences can have long-term implications on the performance and operations of MNCs even when such failure is inevitable or unintentional.

The conceptual framework has three important takeaways. First, the internationalization of local businesses is more than just expanding or transferring some of the operations in foreign markets. The foreign market theory has shown that each host country has unique market offerings and conditions. As such, businesses planning to internationalize their operations must target the most viable markets that suit their operations. The achievement of this goal challenges businesses to practice due diligence when considering global or international expansion of their business operations. Prior planning is instrumental in informing strategic planning when developing an internationalization plan. Strategic planning allows businesses to scan the host country's market for opportunities and cultural differences that would influence operations' success. The challenge for MNC managers is to prepare adequately beforehand to navigate the host country's complex cultural issues. The need for due diligence and feasibility studies raises the second takeaway from the conceptual framework.
The second element is about the importance of cultural differences between home and host countries in influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations. MNCs have strong corporate cultures that they use to assert their global dominance. However, the natural culture theory challenges the notion that MNCs' corporate culture is enough to be successful in an overseas market. Notably, the natural culture theory reiterates the value of aligning corporate culture and the local culture to create synergies and enhance success. The foreign market theory has shown that countries differ significantly based on their market orientations and local cultures. Thus, MNCs must consider every cultural difference when making strategic decisions and plans regardless of the size or scope of the variations in culture. This goal achievement implies that MNCs must be responsive to the local culture while pursuing their strategic plans in the foreign market. The alignment of the corporate and local cultures brings the third issue to the forefront, which emphasizes the development of a feasible internationalization plan.

Prior planning for the cultural differences is central to the internationalization strategies theory. A clash between the corporate culture of MNCs and the local or host country’s culture can have devastating effects on the performance of international operations. Consequently, strategic planning is critical as MNCs prepare for internationalization or global expansion of their local operations. The internationalization strategies are necessary for MNCs to expand their business and ensure success in their decision to go global. The internationalization strategies theory has shown that MNCs must not only internationalize their business, but they must also include their local strategies to succeed in the foreign markets. Therefore, MNCs that fail to develop internationalization plans that are responsive to the global markets' unique needs normally fail to achieve their strategic goals. Internationalization is inevitable as more companies
expands into foreign markets to maximize profits and build a competitive advantage. However, companies will only succeed if they pay attention to cultural differences across borders.

**Definition of Terms**

*Cultural differences:* The quality of diverse cultures that aim to understand the traditions, customs, and cultures of nations in which multinational companies intend to expand their business (Kania, 2010)

*Foreign market:* An international strategy that enables the companies to promote their business in different parts of the world (Hitt, Xu, & Li, 2015).

*Globalization:* The process of developing an international presence and influence to strengthen a company's economy in international trade (Reynolds, 2017).

*Internationalization strategies:* To make the local strategies work for international structures and systems, not all strategies apply to the host countries (Abner, 2015).

*Internationalization theory:* Establishment and development of foreign operations, beginning with making resource commitments in culturally-proximate nations, and increasing them across another geographic area (Rugman & Verbeke, 2003).

*Multinational companies:* Worldwide enterprises that operate in different countries worldwide (Dabic, González-Loureiro & Furrer, 2014).

National culture - the home culture of the companies and the culture of the target or host countries (Lindhold, 2000).

*Regional differences:* Differences in traits, perspectives, beliefs, and culture in the regional context (Gilbert & Heinecke, 2014).

*Self-determination theory:* To assess the extent to which regional differences among countries influence multinational companies (Gilal, 2019).
Transaction cost economics: The cost of making economic trade through participation in the market (Rugman&Verbeke, 2005).

Transnational strategies: Strategies used in international operations to stabilize the enterprise's business system (Marginson et al., 2013).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations define the coverage and boundaries of any empirical study. In this research, several assumptions, limitations, and delimitations were identified based on the information gathered from primary and secondary sources. These aspects of the study play a vital role in illustrating the focus and issues that emerged during the investigation of primary and secondary data.

Assumptions

This study assumed that the MNCs in Western Europe, namely, United Kingdom (UK), Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland, vary in their outcomes for international operations from their domestic markets because of their regional and cultural differences. Though these enterprises were all settled in Europe, there were regional disparities that made them unique from one another. Furthermore, it was assumed that regional variations across countries affect the strategies implemented by the multinationals and their success in international markets. This assumption showed that regional variation affects the MNCs as they operate in various countries. This study provided these assumptions based on the purpose of the investigation and the identified perspectives from primary and secondary sources.

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to conduct research using surveys, archival data, and theories and concepts discussed in the literature review. The survey results served as the primary
source of data, while the archival data and theories and concepts presented in the research literature, were determined as secondary sources. Since the investigation was contextualized as a case study, the extensive discussion of the topic was limited. The sources of evidence were from surveys and secondary data alone, which showed that the investigation could not expand the analysis to other information. An interview was vital, but the limited time and resources disabled the researcher from conducting this method. However, these limitations were addressed by conducting extensive research on research literature to fill the investigation gaps.

**Delimitations**

One of the main delimitations of this study was time. There was no sufficient time to conduct large-scale research considering that the topic was on international relations. The study aimed to determine the business influence of the EU MNCs as they expand their operation in different countries around Europe. Truly, extensive research was necessary to determine the business culture, environment, and operation of these countries, but time constraints affected the process. Another notable delimitation was the countries included in the discussion. There were 28 states included in the EU, but only six were included in this study, namely United UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. Limiting the countries to these numbers influences the case study's discussion because it was difficult to provide a generalization of the EU context. A specific discussion on these six countries alone was necessary to ensure the credibility of the study. Nonetheless, these delimitations were used to structure the study's coverage and provide a concrete foundation for the analysis.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is vital because it can significantly contribute to the understanding of MNCs and the influence of international corporations in business relations and operations. This study
showed that MNCs in Europe played a critical and essential role in influencing the international market. Therefore, it was imperative to conduct this research to provide documented information on how the MNCs influence the global market and the global business structures and operations. The following discussions also presented the reasons why this study is significant, which included identifying gaps in the research literature, implications for biblical integration, and relationship to the field of study.

**Reduction of Gaps**

Regional differences are crucial for business strategies. Failing to consider and account for regional differences can result in demeaning business mistakes, strain business relationships, and poor business productivity (Aybar & Ficici, 2009). It is crucial noting that regional differences have been relatively stable over time. While there might be various convergences in cultural differences at the surface level, these differences persist at a deeper level. For instance, research involving 65 states representing 70 percent of people worldwide found an incredible resilience of separate regional practices even after considering the extreme cultural differences due to globalization and economic growth (Hutzschenreuter, Voll, & Verbeke, 2011). There are significant variations in the culture and general values of individuals across countries.

According to TungliandPeiperl, (2009), over 90 percent of managers in the US, Western Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, and Australia indicated that while on oath they cannot falsely testify to assist their family members or friends. The findings varied significantly for managers from other countries. For example, less than 50 percent of the managers in China (47 %), Indonesia (46 %), Russia (40 %), Venezuela (32 %), and South Korea (25 %) reported they would not falsely testify. These findings suggest that some countries put more weight on common values such as integrity, while others emphasize an allegiance to their relationships.
Therefore, the misapprehension is significant, even among affluent and largely interconnected states like the US and South Korea. Managing across borders introduces significant complexity since it forces MNCs to tailor their business strategies to all cultural settings in which they operate. This study is especially valuable to large MNCs exposed to many regional cultures in their daily business activities.

Regional differences present a number of issues for MNCs. Firms that effectively manage adaptation can attain consistency in the different cultures in which they operate while spreading their major sources of advantage to other countries and making cultural diversity a source of strength (Ramamurti, 2012). While the current literature has focused on regional differences, it is equally crucial to note the similarities of different cultures. Previous research reveals that both high and low power regional differences reflect responses to common challenges across the world and how employees should interact amongst themselves when facing unavoidable regional/cultural differences in specific business settings (Kolk & Van Tulder, 2010).

Assessment of whether the regional differences between countries influence MNCs' business strategies would significantly help manage adaptation. Therefore, much stands to be gained by the outcome of this study.

As businesses continue to grow and expand across the regional borders and accessibility of the global marketplace becomes increasingly simple, more opportunities to work internationally emerge. A study by Lopez, Kundu, and Ciravegna (2009) shows that multinational and cross-cultural teams are becoming popular rapidly in the modern society, which means that MNCs can gain from an increasingly diverse knowledge, as well as new insightful business strategies. Despite these benefits, global businesses face potential hindrances when it comes to regional differences and international trade. This study is focused on
understanding how regional differences influence international differences. This can be helpful for various stakeholders, as the study will help them avoid misunderstandings brought about by regional differences and succeed in a globalized business context.

While the primary focus of this research is on MNCs, the findings of this study can be used in various foreign business operations. In addition, this study will study regional/cultural systems and dimensions of value that have been adopted to examine regional variations. It is worth noting that these frameworks are subjective since they are based on self-reported data by specific members of cultural communities. Therefore, to address these issues, this study will introduce a number of objective markers of regional differences and assess how they shape different aspects of MNCs. Overall, this study seeks to address the identified gaps. This study's findings will mainly be essential to MNCs on how they can manage adaptation to regional differences and excel in business.

**Implications for Biblical Integration**

The section explores the truth of the scripture and how it is reflected in relation to business operations in the global context. Specifically, the section assesses how the scriptures and Biblical teachings can be implemented in business to respond to variations in regional cultures and influence MNCs' performance. The Bible and the truth of the scriptures demonstrate how cultural diversity should be embraced, and the reflection of this study enacted to enhance business operations on a global scale. One of the main teachings of the Bible is that all people of the world are one, and businesses should be run in a way that embraces cultural diversity and treats all people equally. According to 1 Corinthians 12:12-30, the body is one but has many members that work together, "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:12). This
means business owners should consider all people as being equal in terms of deserving their services or products. For instance, business managers could adopt the stakeholder perspective when making corporate decisions to ensure that the needs of all critical stakeholders who could be affected by such decisions are considered. As the scripture says in James 2:3-4, 'If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?’

Key teaching from the Bible is that human beings were created to be stewards of the earth and take care of it. In Genesis 2:15, the Lord put the man into the Garden of Eden to dress and keep it. In 1 Peter 4:10, the scripture says, "As every man has received the gift, minister the same to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This implies that businesses should develop resources that allow them to take care of and benefit others. For instance, business leaders should engage in strategic planning to ensure proper utilization of resources in line with the short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals and objectives of the corporation. Such strategic planning would focus on aspects such as sustainability and social responsibility, ensuring that organizations strike a balance between their profit objectives and the survival of both present and future generations. Specifically, the Bible presents the fundamentals of stewardship in the Old Testament, highlighting that the world and everything in it belong to God (Psalms 24:1). A business should be conducted in a socially responsible manner that takes care of the environment and the communities it is meant to serve. The focus of business organizations should be on how well they can integrate the values of the communities they serve while at the same time, being organized to benefit them.
In 1 Corinthians 12:12, the Bible portrays the diversity of cultures as one of the pillars of society, indicating that all the body members are one body. The topic being studied in this case involves assessing whether regional differences influence the strategies implemented by multinational companies. It assesses the significance of the regional cultural differences in MNCs' business outcomes in terms of market share and performance. The question in the topic is whether MNCs apply different strategies in their international and local operations to produce varied outcomes. Countries and regions differ considerably, and hence, customers may have variations in preferences. The scriptures indicate the relevance of appreciating cultural diversity and responding to it as Jesus did when preaching the gospel. Jesus changed how He delivered God's message to different communities to win them over. Jesus says, "To the Jews, I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law." (1 Corinthians 9:20). This shows the relevance of understanding cultural diversity and using it in communicating with different groups or communities. In Romans 14:3, 'Those who feel free to eat anything must not look down on those who don't. And those who don't eat certain foods must not condemn those who do, for God has accepted them.' This verse shows the need to accept other people's cultures without judging them or looking down upon them. This should be considered as a critical element of the business strategies implemented with the focus on strategic planning to ensure that organizations can respond effectively to the issues posed by their different markets.

Managers should be able to adapt and align their products and marketing messages to different communities' needs without necessarily conforming to the values of the foreign communities. This is a key part of their strategic planning efforts and should be considered critical in enhancing their overall competitiveness. How MNCs address their value proposition in
the different markets may be a major issue in helping them succeed uniformly at home and in foreign markets. The scripture provides guidelines on how the issues should be addressed in relation to the stewardship role of human beings in protecting the environment and other people (Steward, & Shook, 2004).

The Bible in Ecclesiastes 11:1-6 talks about the wisdom of investing in foreign trade. "Invest your money in foreign trade, and one of these days you will make a profit. Put your investments in several places - many places - because you never know what kind of bad luck you are going to have in this world (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2). This shows that foreign trade should be considered by businesses to make a profit and diversify risk to avoid losses in the future. The consideration of foreign trade as a major element of strategic planning is highlighted in the Scriptures to show the importance of operating in different markets. The fact that the Bible promotes foreign trade and shows the relevance of responding differently across communities to reach them presents a significant case for undertaking this study to enhance MNC outcomes across foreign and regional markets.

**Relationship to Field of Study**

This study will make a significant contribution to the field of study. The adoption of business strategies that are compatible with their regional settings can enhance business productivity. Therefore, it would be a poor business decision to disregard the role of regional differences in international business strategies. As MNCs grow and expand with differences across geographical regions, complementary approaches such as indigenization of in-country management teams and decentralization of decision-making can support businesses' ability to be responsive to regional contexts (Meyer et al., 2011). Equally, a different strategy everywhere to optimize congruence is also not a good idea, since the outcome is likely to be a remarkable
amount of costly sophistication. At the far end, an MNC becomes so domestic to an extent it loses its global protective strengths and performs no better than several domestic companies would. Therefore, this study is vital in this field of study, seeking strategies to limit the need/cost of the variation to manage adaptation.

Assessing the influence on MNCs’ regional differences in business strategies is one way of reducing the need/cost of variation (Narula & Dunning, 2010). The easiest way to achieve this is to have focus on regions with identical cultures. Focus on a firm's home state's diaspora members can facilitate access to potential markets by minimizing the cultural hurdles that must be crossed to find the target customers locally (Aybar & Ficici, 2009). It is worth noting that expatriates from the home country in specific internal positions show this kind of focus. Having expatriates as for top managerial positions, for instance, chief finance officer minimizes the scope for prospective miscomprehensions around sensitive financial issues due to cultural differences and describes the trust patterns MNCs have considered.

Another strategy used to reduce the need/cost of variation is promoting an influential organizational culture (Lopez et al., 2009). The attraction and cultivation of employees and clients are drawn to a specific culture that might reduce the need to respond to regional differences. Nevertheless, it is crucial not to put excess confidence in a typical organizational culture that overpowers regional cultural differences. Additionally, research shows having workers from culturally different regions in a firm might strengthen than mitigating cultural differences that influence their behaviors (Ramamurti, 2012). In general terms, a multinational company can improve its capacity for addressing regional differences, including cultural variations. Recruitment for adaptability and cross-cultural education investment can enhance the flexibility and abilities of employees. Being exposed to a more profound with foreign experience
and expatriation can inform and develop such capacities. For several firms with a high growth rate in international marketplaces, increasing management diversity needs to be prioritized (Lee & Sukoco, 2010). Nevertheless, companies have failed to optimize on this cultural capability source.

Overall, business-to-consumer (B2C) businesses are less sensitive to regional differences as compared to business-to-business (B2B) companies. Service sectors are more sensitive to regional differences than manufacturing sectors. Therefore, while doing business with other companies, most services are highly susceptible to linguistic differences. Contrastively, products are inclined to be comparatively insensitive to regional differences. This study's findings are relevant to the field as several critical business concerns are addressed in this study.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

This section is divided into three sub-sections: reduction in gaps, implications for biblical integration, and relationship to the field of study. Regarding the reduction in gaps, regional differences are crucial for business strategies. Managing regional differences across borders introduces significant complexity since it forces MNCs to tailor their business strategies to all cultural settings they operate in. This study will be especially valuable to large MNCs that are exposed to many regional cultures in their daily business activities. Regarding implications for Biblical integration, studies focusing on regional differences and common religion and language have been demonstrated to increase to enhance business between two countries. This study will provide comprehensive and profound insights into the effect of MNCs' regional differences and business strategies in various countries. As concerns the relationship of this research to the field of study, this study will make a notable contribution to the field of study. As MNCs grow and expand with differences across geographical regions, complementary approaches can support the
ability of businesses to be responsive to regional contexts. Therefore, this study is vital in this field of study that seeks to find strategies to limit the need/cost of the variation to manage adaptation.

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

Conducting a review of research literature provided a significant challenge in this topic because the coverage must be based on EU countries, and the context must be relevant to business strategies and the regional culture of the six countries included in the case study. However, it was interesting to note that numerous studies were conducted on this topic. A wide variety of research was explored on MNCs' business strategies and the regional differences affecting these enterprises. Through the existence of the wide range of studies conducted on the selected topic, three significant themes were identified: (1) impact of regional differences on business strategies of multinational companies, (2) implications of regional cultural differences in the functioning of multinational companies, and (3) major regional differences between countries of the EU.

Identifying the regional, cultural, and business differences among the EU MNCs was important for this study because it focused on the business strategies and regional culture of MNCs that affect and influence their stability in the international market. These three themes were based on the secondary sources gathered from the preliminary research. The scholarly sources identified in the review showed a remarkable contribution to the understanding of the topic and the gaps that this study wanted to explore and examine. Numerous studies were conducted exploring the themes related to the research topic, which provided a wider view of how the topic played an important role in examining the MNCs in the EU. The review of the research literature of this study provided an extensive discussion on the regional differences,
cultural differences, and business differences of MNCs in the EU, which were part of the topic that this research wanted to explain and examine through an empirical investigation. The purpose of this outline was to present three important elements in the review of the research literature that illustrated and supported the study's purpose.

**Impact of Regional Differences on Business Strategies of MNCs**

The impact of regional differences on MNCs' business strategies is wide and deep because of the disparities that create conflict between the home and host cultures. Fast-paced globalization of markets in the last decade has not only opened up most economies of the world to a liberal trade environment but has also made people from different cultural backgrounds to get effectively integrated into multicultural environments. Such circumstances have motivated firms to make the best of global resources and to grab bigger customer segments in a fast-increasing competitive environment. Consequently, firms from different parts of the world are intensifying their marketing and production functions beyond their national boundaries.

However, most of these firms are unable to implement their home strategies in the new global markets because of cultural barriers. In such an environment, regional differences between countries impact multinational companies’ business strategies in different ways, thus creating challenges for them. Firms must achieve a comparative advantage in international business, which is best done by understanding the foreign markets' culture in which they wish to operate. Culture has a strong bearing on standardization and localization strategies, brand effectiveness, free trade policies, advertising, international business management, and business relationships. Consequently, multinational companies have to frame marketing strategies in keeping with the unique cultural aspects of the societies in which they wish to market their products (Peprah et al., 2017).
From the second half of the 20th century, the majority of the barriers to international trade had been removed, and big corporations started adopting international strategies. They adopted the new strategies to achieve a comparative advantage that could not be achieved in their respective home countries because of the saturation of business opportunities. Also, emerging and developing economies provided vast markets and natural resources that could be tapped in gaining comparative advantage. However, regional differences between different countries implied dealing with cultural barriers.

Many multinational companies (MNCs) succeeded because of globalization as it provided them opportunities to mold themselves with the cultural environment in the new markets. In doing so, they provided products and services that met consumer needs in better ways than domestic producers and service providers. From this perspective, regional differences between countries influenced the business strategies of multinational companies. This was particularly true in respect of entry strategies, exports and imports, franchising, licensing, strategic alliances, joint ventures, and direct investments. Direct investments are the most dominating means through which multinational companies enter other regional markets through the foreign direct investment (FDI) route or other strategies such as mergers and acquisitions. The most imperative need for such firms is to meet the aspirations of the consumers in new markets in better ways than the domestic industries in the given state (Twarowska & Kąkol, 2014). This makes the business strategy successful for MNCs.

The impact of regional differences on business strategies was also explored by Bournakis et al. (2018). In their study, the researchers compared the operations of multinational enterprises and domestic enterprises in the UK, seeking to establish whether regional differences in the firms' strategies had a significant impact on aspects such as productivity, output, and quality.
From the study, the researchers concluded that multinational enterprises are more likely to have a greater impact on regional productivity than domestic enterprises. This observation was attributed to factors such as intensive research and development (R&D) on the part of multinational corporations since many of them inject vast resources into the study of the operating environments in foreign locations. From such efforts, the multinational corporations end up gaining more insight into the needs, preferences, and local markets compared to their domestic counterparts. Consequently, multinational corporations are more likely to produce products and services that meet the target markets' needs, leading to higher profitability. On their part, domestic enterprises may fail to attain similar levels of success due to aspects such as limited competitive abilities and assumptions regarding the needs of the domestic markets.

Differences in the organizational culture and structure of the multinational corporations, compared to those of domestic enterprises, may also play a role in creating disparities in performance. Largely, the culture and structure of an organization influence the decisions made by such organizations and the success of decision implementation. According to Bournakis et al. (2018), the country of origin served as a major determinant of an organization's effectiveness when operating beyond national borders. In other words, the success of the multinational corporations studied by the researchers could be attributed to the culture of their countries of origin. This observation portrays the effect of culture on business performance, implying that cultural differences from one region to another could also influence the success of organizations operating across national borders.

Cultural diversity is both an advantage and disadvantage depending on how the MNCs use them in their business management. According to Peprah et al. (2017), cultural differences amongst different countries are best understood through Hofstede's five cultural dimensions that
delve into analyzing the impacts of Individualism/Collectivism; Long-Term Orientation/Short-Term Orientation; Masculinity/Femininity, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Power Distance. Multinational firms need to consider these dimensions while framing their marketing strategies in foreign markets. However, a single strategy does not work in a culturally diverse environment. Firms have to use a combination of local and standard strategies to succeed in a globalized environment. For example, multinational companies gain a more standardized advertising strategy in the European Union than in regions such as Asia, where regional differences are greater. Regional differences are known to have a strong impact on multinational companies' marketing strategies in terms of promotion, product offerings, pricing, and distribution, which have to be framed in keeping with the cultural aspects relative to ethnic values, religious beliefs, and language. Multinational companies in the EU favor using global marketing strategies, while those in North America and Asia are prone to focus on local strategies.

Most multinational companies in the EU that are expanding into other EU states have to deal with major issues such as the impact of religion on consumer behavior, barriers to communication, lifestyle patterns, attitudes, and values, which have a strong bearing on promotion strategies. Aesthetics create a strong influence on consumer preferences, while the political and legal environment indicates the rules and customs that are acceptable to consumers. It is in this context that Kania (2010) has highlighted the immense significance of regional and cultural differences in framing business strategies, which is why it is imperative to have a thorough understanding of the traditions, customs, and cultures of nations in which multinational companies intend to expand their business.

The impact of cultural differences was also studied by Miska et al. (2018), who sought to understand how culture affects corporate sustainability practices. The researchers were interested
in learning about the influence of culture on aspects such as economic, social, and environmental sustainability practices. In their study, the researchers relied on data from a sample of more than 1900 companies in over 30 countries. The sample was representative of the population, and the large number of countries represented by the companies served to increase the study's reliability. Ideally, the researchers found that gender egalitarianism, future orientation, and uncertainty avoidance are likely to positively impact corporate sustainability practices. At the same time, performance orientation was found to hurt sustainability practices. Given that the effects varied from country to country, it is clear that regional differences can have varying effects on organizational operations. This implies that the dominant orientation in a multinational corporation's region of origin may impact the organization's strategies more than the orientation present in the foreign location.

Although Miska et al. (2018) were only interested in establishing the impact of culture on sustainability practices, their findings can be used to understand how regional beliefs and practices can influence business strategies on a wider scale. For instance, the use of institutional theory to understand the role of social structures in influencing organizational activity supports the assumption that regional differences can impact performance. According to the theory, the formal and informal institutions within an organization are used to guide decision making and behavior. Depending on the prevailing beliefs, values, and principles held by the formal and informal groups, as well as aspects such as the region of origin, the impact of the regional differences can be felt positively or negatively by the organization.

The differences among regions, especially in culture, affect the way businesses manage their organization. According to Deari et al. (2008), regional differences create major impacts on price negotiations and international business nature. Cultural differences can impact the
multinational company's potential to do business in a new market because of cultural complexities, pricing problems, and language issues. The company should have the ability to deal with these issues in ways that satisfy all concerned parties. López-Duarte et al. (2016) researched by analyzing the literature from 2000 to 2012 to investigate the impact of regional culture on multinational companies' management. Their objective was to make a thematic analysis of the challenges that are present in researching the difficulties multinational companies face while expanding in overseas markets. The main focus areas were the impact of the host/home culture on the internationalization patterns; the need to analyze the internal environment of the host country; and the factors that increase or moderate the effects of the prevailing cultural dimensions on the internationalization process.

According to Faria and Sofka (2008), multinational companies play an extremely important role in spurring international growth through their function of international knowledge transfer. This is a major reason why they are gladly welcomed by many developing and emerging economies. For this reason, despite the major cultural gaps between MNCs' organizational environment and host countries, both stand to gain even if it involves making major strategic changes by the MNCs. Amal et al. (2013) studied disparities and resemblance in the context of the internationalization processes adopted by multinational corporations in developed and emerging economies. They found that multinational companies use their advantages while conducting their internationalization functions. Simultaneously, the learning they imbibe through their internationalization processes and how they use their networks are major factors that determine their final decisions regarding expanding in different markets.

The growing influence of MNCs happens because of globalization. Reynolds (2017) argues there is no doubt that globalization has a greater propensity amongst multinational
companies to expand across borders because of the increasing convenience associated with accessing international markets. Consequently, multinational companies are increasingly characterized by cross-cultural working teams, which allow them to benefit from a massive knowledge base and new ways of dealing with business issues. However, regional differences between countries do impact business strategies of multinational companies because cultural disparities that entail different ways of communication, workplace etiquette, and organizational hierarchy.

Although there are varied ways to describe and classify culture, it is best understood as the norms and mutual standards of life that are common within a given society. Consequently, from the perspective of international business, something that is common and shared amongst people from one nation may prove to be unique for others in the same organization. For this reason, Reynolds (2017) has held it is extremely important for MNCs to understand how culture impacts communication, working systems, and organizational hierarchy in the organizational environment. Communication is the cornerstone of any organizational system and may prove to be highly detrimental if messages in the organizational environment are not meaningfully conveyed. In most MNCs, English is the default language for communication.

However, more important than the language one speaks is how a given message is communicated. This is particularly important in the European Union because, for example, people in Finland may attach greater value with brevity and directness, while people in France may prefer to be indirect or subtle in their communication patterns. Besides, even though fluency in English may provide added advantages to a professional, MNCs' professionals must recognize the subtleties relative to non-verbal communication amongst different cultures.
Amid the opportunities provided by globalization, some threats can affect the MNCs. Oetzel and Miklian (2017) investigated how multinational companies manage risks in fragile and conflict-affected markets. This research is important from the perspective of the topic of this paper because it delves into how multinational companies manage their affairs in their new foreign markets, many of which pose major risks. The authors have suggested that MNCs prioritize reducing their risks by reacting to them as soon as they occur. By adopting peace-building strategies, they not only reduce their investment risks but also add to societies’ prosperity and stability in the foreign markets they operate in. In doing so, they gain a unique competitive advantage. Oetzel and Miklian (2017) found that MNCs adopting such strategies are the ones that understand the local atmosphere and the factors that impact their profitability and operations. Such MNCs can sustain long-term competitive advantage over their competitors.

There is no doubt that if multinational companies start functioning in their foreign markets by becoming more congruent with the given cultural context, business performance will improve. Hence, it is not right for multinational companies to ignore cultural differences. They have to make some variations in their operating practices at different locations. They can lessen the variation needs if they focus on cultural similarities. This is best done by functioning in areas characterized by similar cultures. An important strategy is to focus on the firm's home country diaspora, which will ease the complexities of entering new markets, particularly by shrinking the cultural gap to better serve local customers. For example, hiring an expatriate for the role of finance head reduces the chances of creating culture-related squabbles in the context of sensitive financial issues.

In this regard, variation can be reduced by promoting a strong corporate culture in terms of having customers and employees that are attracted to a specific organizational culture. This
reduces the need to deal with cultural disparities. Nevertheless, it is not appropriate to focus on adopting a corporate culture that is different from the prevailing regional culture. More importantly, the multinational company can improve its capacity to bridge cultural disparities by adopting cross-cultural training systems, which will improve workers’ capabilities and make them more adaptable and flexible (Ghemawat & Reiche, 2011). By incorporating the home culture and adopting the international market's culture, the MNCs can stabilize their business abroad.

Leaders of multinational corporations can also rely on strategic management and human resource management perspectives to facilitate the development of better talent management practices and overcome the challenges that could be posed by regional differences in culture. According to Meyer and Xin (2016), multinational corporations need competent talent in the form of leaders and subordinates for foreign locations. Owing to differences in regional cultures, values, and beliefs, the multinational corporations may find cultural diversity being a challenge to the smooth operations of the organization in the foreign location. To this end, leaders need to attract, acquire, and develop employees with diversity management skills and cultural sensitivity to ease the process of integrating the different regional cultures that could be at play in the organization. At the same time, the leaders should ensure that cultural diversity does not become a hindrance to the efficiency of the organization in reaching its goals and objectives.

Another challenge that could face multinational corporations' leaders is the retention of the competent talent developed to handle cultural diversity. Due to the increasing popularity of globalization, more and more organizations are engaging in international expansions to exploit profitable business opportunities across their national borders. With such activities, the multinationals are in need of competent employees, thereby creating demand for talents with
experience working in a multicultural environment. This creates a constant need for the leaders to retain their own talents or risk losing them to competitors who would be willing to offer better working conditions. With the use of the human resource management and strategic management perspectives, however, the authors argue that multinational corporations can be able to overcome the challenges posed by cultural diversity and even achieve success on the global context (Meyer & Xin, 2016). For instance, multinationals can become learning organizations and utilize capability building to ensure consistent satisfaction of employees' professional needs. Further, the leaders could ensure continuous professional development while also providing opportunities for career advancement.

**Theoretical Perspectives on the Global and Regional Strategies of MNCs**

The theoretical perspectives on the global and regional strategies of MNCs provide a valuable exploration of how these businesses can manage their global presence. There is no doubt that regional cultures are best understood through Hofstede's cultural dimensions, which he framed after conducting exhaustive research during the period 1967-1973 involving 116,000 IBM employees from over 50 different cultures. Amongst Hofstede's dimensions, the most significant is Power Distance that relates to the extent to which a given culture recognizes that power in society is not distributed evenly. People from high power distance cultures tend to acknowledge the differences in their societies and are hence respectful towards those they feel are superior to them. Even though differences in status are more dominant in the hierarchical organizational environment, they can also be associated with family roles, social class, and age.

Hofstede found that people holding superior positions in cultures characterized by high power distance will tend to behave in dignified ways with their subordinates. In contrast, people in low power distance cultures will be less happy with the hierarchical structure in the
organizational environment and will remain more focused on participating in the decision-making process. From this perspective, cultural dimensions are strong indicators of the varied priorities related to dealing with the prevailing issues (Ghemawat & Reiche, 2011). Birnik and Bowman (2007) made a systematic review of the literature concerning the standard marketing mix that multinational companies use while entering new foreign markets. They have highlighted the need for a stronger theoretical foundation because the linkages with other related areas are not obvious. As a result, much of the marketing standardization literature tends to exist in isolation from the key theoretical debates in other fields (Birnik & Bowman, 2007). The authors have called for establishing stronger theoretical links to arrive at better managerial prescriptions.

Hofstede's dimension of Individualism/Collectivism relates to the greater priority that is given to the individual than to the group. For example, the UK is characterized by a strong individualist culture in terms of giving more significance to the individual's rights and attaching more importance to personal achievements and resourcefulness. Conversely, people from collectivist cultures are prone to give immense importance to all members of society's overall welfare. People belonging to this culture are prone to attach greater significance to their families and organization. This cultural aspect is known to be strongly related to the dimension of power distance, implying that individualist cultures are inclined to be closely associated with lesser levels of power distance. For example, multinational companies aspiring to market or establish production functions in France must know that this dimension is associated with giving importance to high power distance, even while emphasizing personal achievements and individual rights.

Uncertainty Avoidance is associated with the extent to which people in a given culture are ready to accept and deal with risky or ambiguous circumstances. In the EU, Greece is a
country that is characterized by high uncertainty avoidance because its people give preference to predictability and structure that implies the prevalence of strict laws and clear rules in the context of how people should behave. People in such cultures are prone to adopt new approaches, change employers, or involve in the opening of new business ventures (Ghemawat & Reiche, 2011). These different cultures surrounding different countries in the EU can allow the MNCs to select which country they can expand their business and what culture they can tolerate and adapt to properly manage their business.

In the context of Hofstede's Masculinity dimension, it is known that some cultures are characterized by practicing strong values relative to material success, competition, assertiveness, and achievement. Conversely, a feminine culture is characterized by sensitivity, in which people give more importance to the quality of life, caring for others, and personal relationships. For example, Sweden is characterized by a feminine culture where gender roles are not very distinct. Thus, it becomes apparent that in comparison to masculine cultures, organizations working in feminine cultures will tend to focus more on ensuring the welfare of workers than on profitability. Even though Hofstede's dimensions are very helpful in comparing and analyzing the cultures of different states, it is also characterized by some shortcomings. Most pertinent is that the research carried out by Hofstede is now very old and may not be valid in respect of all parameters considered by him, particularly because of globalization and the changing working environment in which greater emphasis is placed on teamwork, empowerment, and knowledge-sharing.

Other than the work carried out by Hofstede, other frameworks classify cultures based on different dimensions. Fons Trompenaars collected data from over 40 nations and came up with seven dimensions, out of which five emphasized relationships amongst people. His other two
dimensions focused on time management and the link between nature and culture. Another theory was put forth by Schwartz, who held that cultural values reflected the three core problems that societies face; relationships between a given group and its members, how to ensure responsible behavior, and how to control the relationship between people and the social and natural world.

Another notable theoretical framework that borrows from Hofstede's dimensions is GLOBE. The perspective posits that societal perceptions of culture can have an influence on individual behavior. In this regard, the questionnaire used by GLOBE asks respondents to refer to the current practices in their societies, since such practices would reveal the underlying norms and beliefs. Ideally, the main dimensions based on this perspective are Uncertainty Avoidance, Future Orientation, Power Distance, as well as Institutional Collectivism. Other dimensions include Humane Orientation, Performance Orientation, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, and Assertiveness (Stankov, 2015). This theoretical framework can reflect the cross-cultural differences among individuals from different regions, especially in the age of globalization, where multinational corporations rely on multicultural workforces. The use of GLOBE can enable organizational leaders to learn about the dominant cultural dimensions held by their workforce, and hence predict workforce behavior with a higher degree of accuracy.

Notably, studies indicate that differences in regional cultures translate to differences in people's behavior across different aspects of life. For instance, de Mooij (2016) conducted a study to compare dimensions of national culture and their influence on consumer behavior. The study utilized different theoretical models, including the GLOBE and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, where the focus was on exploring the existence of meaningful relationships with consumer behavior. The study found that the majority of the dimensions have meaningful,
interesting relationships with consumer behavior. From these findings, it can be argued that learning about the dimensions prevalent in a certain region can enable organizational leaders to predict workforce behavior and project the influence of such dimensions on organizational strategies. For instance, the knowledge of regional differences in dimensions can reveal beneficial insights about the groups' values and motives, enabling organizational leaders to formulate effective strategies in relation to aspects such as motivation, teamwork, and individual performance.

Interestingly, studies are showing some variation in expanding the business internationally. Rugman and Verbeke (2003) argue that even though large multinational companies control the majority of the world's business, the maximum sales of these companies are within the home leg of what they call the 'triad' comprising of Asia, the European Union, and North America. This new aspect of globalization is in much variance from the traditional perspectives held on international trade. The concept of the 'triad' is best understood by the fact that most of the world's biggest multinational companies are based in the United States, the European Union, and Japan. According to Rugman and Verbeke (2003), 430 of the world's biggest 500 multinational companies have their headquarters in the 'triad' regions.

A major problem faced by these companies is that the products sold by them are produced through technologically advanced capital-intensive production procedures that require heavy investments. However, such products lose their unique monopoly status rapidly in spite of brand names and patents. This is because technology can be quickly diffused by competitors in host countries at a much faster rate than the multinational companies' distribution capabilities. Consequently, establishing large-scale distribution capabilities across the "triad" leads to massive and irrevocable fixed costs. In the process, it entails high risks if the sale of products does not
meet the established targets (Rugman & Verbeke, 2004). This affects the ability of the MNCs to expand their influence abroad.

About the monopoly of international trade, one of the problems is that not all international businesses can acquire or adopt the "triad powers." According to Rugman and Verbeke (2003), even the largest multinational companies often face a 'global impasse' as they are unable to become "triad powers," and cannot imbibe strong exploitation and penetration capabilities. Given such challenges, firms often resort to the establishment of joint ventures and consortia to capture larger market share from the non-home triad regions. Another problem for multinational companies in respect of dealing with regional differences is that rivals in host regions often use implicit and socially relevant strategies that most MNCs are unable to combat or duplicate in the short-term because of high costs.

To succeed in non-home markets, MNCs tend to absorb some specific characteristics of the host country markets. They strive towards well-integrated management systems, business functions that naturally respond to local conditions, gain knowledge about the regional and local competitors and customers, and establish management continuity by including home-grown and internationally trained managers. In addition, they gain by making quick and independent decision making that is well-coordinated and in sync with communications processes that are understood in the entire organization. The MNC has to remain strong during the period characterized by complexities and incoherence in the main markets. It must adopt creative solutions that meet the challenges created by changing market environments. The MNC must maintain effective and meaningful communications with its associated companies.

Amid the issue of "triad power," there are identified solutions or alternatives that can help MNCs expand their businesses internationally. Rugman and Verbeke (2003) have argued that the
people who envisaged the 'triad' did not anticipate or provide for the revolutionary changes that will take place in the future. It is important to note that benefits emanating from the integration that results from economies of scale at the global level are attained only if MNCs adopt strategies of responding to the regional culture, particularly by way of meeting with adaptation needs and internal pressures.

However, MNCs' major challenge is that despite their efforts to enhance their firm-specific advantages (FSAs), they do not succeed in achieving consistent sales across all geographical regions in the host country. It is for this reason that most MNCs focus on their respective triad markets. A major issue in this regard is that many large MNCs that have most of their sales in international markets are not truly global because the majority of such sales are accounted for by the triad regions. It is only after MNCs meet a saturation point in terms of expanding and increasing sales in the triad regions that they plan to venture into other regional markets. Here, they meet new challenges by way of regional foreignness and additional risks that are not encountered in the triad host regions.

According to Oh, Kim, and Shin (2019), the international expansion paths taken by organizations vary depending on factors such as industry and organization characteristics. Usually, international expansion can be institutional-driven, capability-drive, or linkage-driven (Oh, Kim, & Shin, 2019). Institutional-driven expansion is attributed to forces such as laws and regulations, where the attractiveness of the operating environment in a foreign location serves as an incentive for foreign direct investment (FDI) and internationalization. On the other hand, capability-driven expansion is driven by the growth of a firm's capacity beyond the domestic market, prompting the firm to pursue other opportunities beyond national borders. Lastly, linkage-driven expansion can be attributed to the emergence of opportunities through
collaboration and synergetic association with other operators. For instance, offers for mergers, acquisitions, and joint-ventures provide opportunities for linkage-driven expansion, enabling a firm to explore foreign markets through a collaborative effort with others. According to the authors, the path of internationalization followed by an organization can play a major role in determining the nature of influence attributed to regional differences.

Ideally, the institutional-driven industry is more likely to face the challenges of foreign locations than the other forms of expansion. This is because this form of expansion is fueled by the attractiveness of the foreign operating environment through favorable government policies, appealing trade laws and legislations, and friendly government policies (Oh, Kim, & Shin, 2019). Under such conditions, many businesses could be interested in pursuing internationalization in the foreign market, leading to an influx of foreign operators with a mixture of regional cultures in the new market. Owing to the diversity in terms of cultural and regional beliefs and values, the foreign organization could face extended cultural challenges that could hinder firm-specific advantages, leading to poor performance and ineffective business strategies. At the same time, the organization could exploit diversity and enhance its competitiveness by harnessing the strengths and competencies of the diverse pool of resources at its disposal. For instance, the foreign firm could maximize the use of the existing cultural beliefs to its advantage by learning how to embrace diversity and multiplicity.

**Implications of Regional Cultural Differences in the Functioning of MNCs.**

The implications of regional cultural differences in multinational companies' functioning affect the way MNCs perform their business management and strategies. The differences in regional cultures have a strong bearing on businesses' decision-making processes, particularly regarding the mode of entry in foreign markets. Nevertheless, understanding of regional cultures
helps a great deal in making better decisions. The main benefit accrues from recognizing that improvement incongruity amongst cultural contexts and management practices results in massive tangible business gains—the adoption of participative management practices helps increase profitability in cultures characterized by lesser power distance. However, the situation deteriorates in cultures with high power distance. It is possible to improve profitability in the short term in cultures that are short term oriented. Nevertheless, the outcomes worsen in cultures that are long term oriented.

As noted by Hunt et al. (2019), multinational corporations operating in the contemporary business environment continue to experience cultural diversity’s effect on their performance. In fact, many multinational corporations led by culturally-diverse leadership teams demonstrate superior financial performance compared to those whose leadership teams are predominantly homogenous in terms of cultural orientation. This implies that the diversity attributed to different cultural backgrounds plays a positive role in enabling multinational corporations to overcome business challenges in their operating environments and achieve desirable profit outcomes. Based on their study, the researchers established that many of the best-performing firms demonstrated diversity in the composition of their leadership teams in terms of cultural backgrounds. Although other dimensions may have contributed to the differences in performance, the researchers found that firms with little or no diversity in relation to cultural backgrounds did not demonstrate similar superior performance.

At the same time, diversity in terms of gender also contributes to a multinational corporation's performance. According to the authors, organizations that encourage gender diversity within their leadership teams are more likely to report better financial performances than the rest, with the best performing multinational corporations having more women in their
leadership circles (Hunt et al., 2019). The inclusion of gender in leadership positions may be attributed to cultural beliefs, values, and norms dominant within each culture. For instance, some communities consider the male gender superior to the female gender, implying that women receive less recognition than men. In such communities, the inclusion of women in leadership positions may be less. The acceptance of gender diversity in leadership roles portrays that society's beliefs consider women to be equally capable. As a result, the open-minded stance towards gender equality plays an important role in creating favorable working conditions for the multicultural workforce, which is common in multinational corporations, leading to superior all-around performance.

The effect of cultural diversity on multinational corporations' performance is also evident in terms of inclusion, where more ethnically diverse corporations achieve better financial results. In other words, diversity beyond gender to include ethnicity, culture, and other attributes contributes to the superior performance of a firm by presenting a pool of competencies that may not be available in firms with less diversity. Multinational corporations with poor scores for gender and cultural diversity are less likely to achieve above-average profitability. This observation suggests that the cultural differences attributed to diverse regions serve to boost organizational performance and profitability. Largely, diversity in terms of gender and ethnic composition for leadership teams seems to positively impact financial and operational performance, while lack of such diversity forces such as firms to lag.

Interestingly, the degree to which organizations embrace cultural diversity varies from one region to the other. While multinational corporations whose countries of origin are in developed economies such as the United States, Australia, and the UK demonstrate more cultural diversity, others from regions such as South Africa tend to be more reluctant to embrace ethnic
diversity. This may be attributed to social norms and cultural beliefs that are dominant in communities where the multinationals originate. For instance, borrowing from Hofstede's national dimensions, communities tend to share predominant beliefs about aspects such as power distance, masculinity, and individualism. In relation to cultural diversity and inclusion, similar trends may influence multinational corporations' practices, leading to variations in their treatment of ethnic and cultural diversity.

According to Hunt et al. (2019), leaders can address undesirable practices in relation to cultural diversity and inclusion in a number of ways. First, a multinational corporation's leadership team can articulate a compelling vision towards diversity management and inspire the rest of the organization to embrace it. The leaders should prioritize the need for growth and create awareness across the organization regarding the role played by diversity in this process. At the same time, the leaders should consider the beliefs, values, and norms within the local communities to ensure congruence with domestic practices. These strategies would promote a culture of diversity management within the multinational corporation in line with its own vision, mission, and long-term objectives. In regions where such beliefs conflict with the prevailing community norms, the multinational corporation leaders will spend more effort showing the need for change and inspiring radical transformation for a more inclusive workforce.

The maximum impact of power distance is apparent at the organization's external boundary, particularly in terms of marketing. The impact extends further to other internally-focused functions such as human resources and organizational environment. Human culture is very important from the perspective of marketing and organizational environment. This is because marketing functionaries must have a thorough understanding of the organizations and their customers, which is best done by understanding employees thoroughly. For example,
humor is an important element in marketing and proves to be a complete failure if it is not used in the right cultural context of the given nation.

Promotion policies and merit-based pay tend to increase profit in masculine cultures, but reduce it in feminine cultures. Focus on individual contributions of people leads to higher profitability in individualistic cultures, while it is reduced in collective cultures. Ghemawat and Reiche (2011) have highlighted the immense significance of Hofstede's dimensions in aligning business strategies within a given regional culture. Teixeira and Grande (2012) made interesting findings in the context of the mechanisms that have a strong bearing on multinational companies' entry decisions in host countries characterized by corruption. They analyzed the entry mode choices of multinational companies in countries with rampant corruption and found that such MNCs have no qualms about entering such economies. This is because of the need to have low equity that becomes possible because of joint ventures with local partners or through non-equity options such as contracting and exports.

In particular, humor in advertising is known to work best in cultures characterized by low power distance and low uncertainty avoidance. For this reason, it is said that cultural differences often prove to be the main hurdles to the adaptation of common advertisement campaigns. High power distance indicates that people make purchase decisions mainly based on emotions as opposed to information. Such aspects imply that cultural disparities have a strong bearing on varied aspects of marketing communications and advertising. Ghemawat and Reiche (2011) cited research in asserting that in nations with high collectivism and power distance, public relations campaigns emphasize more on developing and sustaining relationships. The opposite is true in the context of low individualism and power distance cultures, where greater importance is given to the dissemination of information.
In the context of high-power distance, the relationship between innovations, new product development, and marketing works best if the management is done in centralized ways. Higher levels of innovation will characterize nations characterized by low power distance. Such patterns have a strong impact on the organization in the context of planning and choosing other locations to attain higher levels of innovation. High individualism and low uncertainty avoidance are associated with high innovation capabilities. Consequently, policies regarding both product development and marketing should be framed in considering the impact of the given country's culture on consumers' product preferences. Consumers in cultures characterized by high power distance will demand products that assist them in depicting their status. Given such patterns, there is a strong likelihood that negotiators coming from cultures characterized by high power distance will be less prone to arriving at conclusive outcomes. This occurs because they are mostly adapted with prevailing patterns of power differences while arriving at their outcomes.

The impact of culture on multinational corporations' performance was also confirmed by Boone et al. (2018). In their study, the researchers sought to establish how team nationality diversity affects corporate entrepreneurship and innovation in multinational corporations. The researchers analyzed the operations of top corporations from 20 countries over ten years, seeking to understand how the composition of their leadership teams in terms of nationality changed the corporate decisions adopted by the firms. From their findings, the researchers concluded that multinational corporations with nationally-diverse leadership teams tend to engage more in corporate entrepreneurship. As a result, the financial performance of these firms is usually remarkable due to increased innovation. The findings underpin the importance of diversity and the positive role played by culturally and, in this case, nationally diverse leadership teams.
According to the researchers, there is a positive impact of national diversity on top management teams leading multinational corporations.

However, the researchers found that the remarkable performance was only reported in cases where the multinational corporations operated in environments characterized by equal distribution of power. In other words, cultural diversity is only effective in environments with low power distance. From this observation, it emerges that multinationals seeking to achieve success in their internationalization efforts should consider target markets with low scores for power distance based on Hofstede's national dimensions. Low power distance implies that such communities prefer power and authority to be shared almost equally among all participating parties in an engagement. In addition, individuals from such communities are not comfortable with unequal and unfair distribution of power, and they are likely to question occurrences when some individuals are more powerful than others. The decision-making strategies that leaders in such societies can use include democratic and participative leadership styles since these would provide equal opportunities to all critical stakeholders to participate in making important decisions related to the organization.

A nation's culture has a strong bearing on practices relative to supply chain and manufacturing. These are helpful in different contexts, such as evaluating suppliers and competitors in different nations, dealing with multi-plant functions; and examining manufacturing footprints. According to Beugelsdijk et al. (2017), the moderating impact in the context of emerging and developed economies occurs because multinational companies in emerging economies are willing to invest in distant locations. This is because of their ability to work in competitive environments where emerging economies can benefit from the transfer of
technology and imbibe other best practices. Consequently, the benefits accruing from operating in distant markets exceed the costs and risks of coping with and dealing with cultural disparities.

Multinational companies planning to expand their marketing activities in other EU states have to consider the extent to which they will adopt quality management services. European studies in this regard have indicated that cultures characterized with uncertainty avoidance and low power distance will need to be dealt with in different ways, particularly in the context of considering external market pressures concerning the initiatives of internal management. Besides, high power distance is also linked with firms that purchase and not with firms that manufacture in-house. Even though finance is a department that is not impacted much by culture, uncertainty avoidance is associated with greater dependence on finance, particularly bank finance (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). For this reason, the accounting systems in nations with high power distance will tend to justify the decisions taken by the top power holders. In essence, the top management makes use of power distance as a tool to depict the desired images, whereby data is twisted accordingly. More importantly, regional differences create major implications for human resources.

In nations characterized by high power distance, hiring of employees is more focused on social class than on educational qualifications. Also, training is more based on conformity than on the performance criteria, while there is a wide gap in the wages of workers and managers. In such an environment, leadership tends to be authoritarian instead of being participative. Moreover, motivation tends to be coercive because the leadership does not believe in motivating employees through extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Practicing cultural diversity can play a critical role in the growth and development of MNCs. Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) found a mixed impact of cultural disparity with respect to the amount of practice transfer. At the same time, there was a
positive impact in terms of the advantages accruing from practice transfer. It emerged that multinational companies were not forthcoming in making such efforts. This resulted from the contradicting context in which their subsidiaries functioned in the host country.

A second finding was that multinational companies gain by adopting integrated models that allow the use of best practices and knowledge sharing in the context of a large number of operations that can be established in diverse settings. The authors have demonstrated that multinational companies can adopt mechanisms through which they develop abilities to effectively meet the challenges emanating from cultural disparities, primarily through common practices. Companies adopt mechanisms that help in meeting the challenges emanating from cultural disparities. For example, Beugelsdijk et al. (2017) were able to find that social capital led to enhanced commitment, trust, and association of the subsidiary with the head office of the multinational company in ways that led to the reduction of cultural gaps. They also found that if the home country is an emerging economy, the negative impact of cultural distance led to positive outcomes. However, if the home nation is an emerging economy, just like many EU states, the negative link between cultural disparities and performance becomes more negative. Conversely, if the host country is a developed economy, the link between cultural disparity and performance becomes positive.

Enhancing multinational corporations' performance and minimizing the impact of regional cultural differences can be achieved through effective talent management. According to Collings, Mellahi, and Cascio (2018), the perspective of global talent management can enable leaders of a multinational corporation to harness the synergy of diversity evident in multicultural workforces. Ideally, the management can use the resource-based view of management to align available human, financial, and material resources to the short-term, medium-term, and long-
term objectives of the corporation. For instance, the management can adopt global strategies to promote efficiency at the headquarters, and transnational or multi-domestic strategies to align operations at the local level. Doing this would be aimed at optimizing the workforce's productivity by integrating the strengths of different cultural beliefs into teams and workgroups. As a result, a multinational corporation would turn regional cultural differences into sources of competitive advantage and create a strategic fit between the various cultural beliefs and the organization’s new culture. Consequently, all critical stakeholders would feel valued and find a sense of belonging in the organization, leading to increased commitment and overall productivity. The financial performance of the multinational corporation would also benefit from the harmonious integration of diverse regional cultures.

**Major Cultural Differences between Countries of the EU**

The major regional differences between the EU countries are significant justifications of how MNCs are affected by cultural disparities. In Kaasa, Vadi, and Varblane (2014), the patterns of regional differences between countries in Europe were evaluated. The authors relied on data from the European Social Survey and the European Values Study. The authors also identified that there were distinct differences within countries as well as across them. Confirmatory factor analysis based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions was used in assessing cultural differences. The results indicated that there was significant diversity in the regional cultural variability between countries in the EU. In some countries, the variability within countries was relatively larger than the cross-country variability. This was observed in Portugal, Spain, and France, while in Finland, Norway, and Sweden, the country's cultural variability was smaller than the cross-country variations. Kaasa et al. (2014) also found that more detailed regional divisions resulted in large differences.
In an earlier study by Beugelsdijk et al. (2006), the regional variations in value patterns were evaluated. The evaluation was based on cultural heritage, economic development, and shocks. It focused on the cultural variations between the different regions within Europe. The findings indicated that in line with the modernization theory, Europe's economic development had pushed societies in a common direction. However, they do not converge but move in parallel trajectories based on individual countries' cultural heritage. The authors argue that while the countries' samples are maybe culturally close when considered on a global scale, they had significant regional differences that also reflected in their economic development.

In another study, Antalóczy et al. (2014) evaluated the factors influencing the outward flow of foreign investment by MNCs. The study is an example of a case study evaluating the impact of cultural differences on MNCs’ performance in Europe. The researchers analyzed the factors that have favored multinational companies to succeed through such foreign investments using a case study of Hungarian MNCs. The authors found that these were privatized companies that succeeded because of their unique ownership characteristics linked with what they inherited from the country's pre-revolutionary period. The authors have been particular in referring to the companies established after 1990.

In the context of these companies, the ownership advantages (OA) enjoyed by them were similar to those that characterized the conventional multinational companies in liberal economic systems. Antalóczy et al. (2014) made a strong connection between such OAs and virtual indirect investors in demonstrating that the management's specific knowledge and strong position were interrelated. The authors have traced the consistently increasing local competition in the country that occurred because of enhanced investments made by MNCs from other countries. Such
circumstances facilitated some local companies to become more capable and competitive and make investments in other EU states.

Antalóczy et al. (2014) analyzed six Hungarian outward investors and compared them with some of the conventional MNCs and emerging MNCs in the EU. The companies chosen for the analysis were a perfect representation of the Hungarian investment scenario because they accounted for the country's maximum foreign investments. In considering the ownership advantages (OA) of these companies, the authors differentiated amongst inherited companies that inherited their ownership advantages from the previous period. The OA of these companies was explicit in terms of being a factor of their privatization knowledge and the restructuring of companies that were previously owned by the government. The authors found that the significance of such ownership advantages eventually faded away because of a lack of privatization deals, and the success achieved by neighboring countries in becoming market economies.

The current differences between EU member states occur primarily because of their past economic systems and their ongoing attempts to make the best of the new legal, political, and economic frameworks that have been established after the formation of the European Commission. Antalóczy et al. (2014) have argued that in situations where the inherited ownership advantages are no longer available, the involved firms are forced to alter their strategies. Eventually, there was a change in ownership advantages. The new forms of ownership advantages (OA) allowed these firms to become more competitive in the new markets and gradually make strides in states that offered greater potential for success. From the study of MNCs, with the initial ownership advantages emanating from state ownership, firms gradually became more capable of being characterized with better forms of ownership advantages (OA).
This allowed them to benefit from new kinds of ownership advantages and to expand into other EU states successfully. These multinational companies succeeded despite encountering major cultural and procedural differences in the other EU States where they relocated. It can be said that the regional differences in other EU states proved to be a kind of motivation for the MNCs because they could frame strategies that were in keeping with the social, political, and economic environment in other EU states.

Arguably, regional economic divergence is a threat to economic progress and political stability. While one of the guiding principles behind the EU’s formation was to strengthen economic performance through favorable trade policies, this has not always been effective. The divergence may be attributed to different factors, including differences in cultural beliefs and practices among the different EU members. From such differences, the member states tend to treasure divergent values, and the impact of such differences is evident in the performance of organizations from one region to the other. Consequently, economic development across the EU has not been progressing uniformly, with some areas showing sharp economic growth while others continue to lag behind. Although regional economic development is dependent on different factors, cultural differences likely have a role to play. Tian, Deng, Zhang, and Salmador (2018) found that culture is one of the main factors influencing innovation in a region. This explains why some countries within the EU are more enterprising than others.

According to Iammarino et al. (2018), attributes such as demography and labor force participation have contributed to the differences in the level of income and economic development within the EU. In some areas, unemployment due to low levels of population literacy exists, while others demonstrate the unequal distribution of male and female participation in the labor force. From these findings, it becomes clear that cultural beliefs and
practices can influence other areas of regional development, including economic activity and growth. This is because the prevalence of inequality in accessing education, which contributes to unequal participation in the labor force, is an ingredient of culture. In other words, cultural beliefs and practices influence population behavior and should be considered by multinational corporations seeking to conduct business across their national borders.

Leadership is responsible for ensuring cross-functionality, given its role in providing the required direction and oversight. Innovative leaders embrace change and are amenable to receiving feedback from their team members and guiding them appropriately. They believe in synergy and value the need to involve each team member in the attainment of tasks assigned to teams. Such outcomes are achieved only if the organization adopts recruitment strategies focused on hiring people with the required skills to take the organization forward. Consequently, for multinational organizations to venture into new international regions, it is very important to adopt efficient talent-management strategies that help identify the right talent and carry the organization forward towards achieving its mission. The apparent regional variations in culture across countries in Europe indicate the need to have distinct strategies meant to aid the companies in penetrating the individual markets. They also indicate that a unified or standardized approach would be ineffective in helping an MNC to achieve the same level of success and home and abroad.

**Potential Themes and Perceptions**

With the great number of studies obtained, gathered, and discussed in the review of research literature, it is shown that the regional difference has a significant influence on the business strategies of MNCs. Through the information obtained from the research literature, appropriate and relevant themes were identified. The potential themes and perceptions identified
in this study were the foreign market, regional culture, and internationalization strategies. These three themes were defined and identified in the conceptual framework wherein an illustration was provided to justify their relationship. As shown in the framework under the foreign markets, there were the manufacturing, services, and retail as examples of the markets targeted by MNCs. In the regional culture, there were home and host countries that served as a benchmark in business operations. The internationalization strategies included local and global MNCs’ strategies based on their home culture and the host countries' culture. These relationships played a critical role in understanding the significance of the study. The purpose was to address the issues surrounding MNCs' business strategies in their pursuance of global strategies, presence, and influence. Through these themes and perceptions, the problem could be addressed, and the purpose statement was able to deliver. These themes could also play an essential role in expanding the discussion of the topic and provide a more critical analysis of the business strategies and international presence of MNCs.

In the review of research literature, the three identified themes were (1) the impact of regional differences on business strategies of multinational companies, (2) implications of regional cultural differences in the functioning of multinational companies, and (3) major regional differences between countries of the EU. These three themes were related to the theories explored in the conceptual framework. The first theme was related to the foreign market, the second theme was connected to regional culture, and the third theme was linked to the internationalization strategies. These relationships demonstrated the strong connection between the topic and the research literature. The correlation also implies that the topic was widely discussed, explored, examined, and investigated. The identified potential themes respond to the secondary sources' information and provide a further contribution to the research literature.
Based on the presented review, the identified themes were broad, and this study provided a narrow discussion through the theories presented in the conceptual framework. The three theories aimed to contextualize the ideas presented in the literature by focusing on specific ideas and thoughts related to MNCs' business strategies and culture.

**Summary of the Literature Review**

From the literature review, many MNCs that choose to adopt a global strategy are unable to achieve success to the same extent in their international functions as they do in their home countries. This is a significant problem in business management that numerous studies have attempted to discuss, examine, and address. The prime reason for such patterns is the regional differences that primarily occur on account of cultural disparity between the home country and the foreign market. The regional differences affect how businesses manage their enterprise abroad because their home culture is different from the culture of their target country. Considering that they hire local workers in their target country, the work system, structure, and environment can create conflict due to cultural differences. For this reason, MNCs have to make changes in their business strategies to make them more amenable to the social, cultural, economic, and political circumstances in the new environment. This is an important consideration in doing international business because the MNCs cannot focus on the culture they carry and the culture they need to face in their target country. It is not their market that needs to adjust but the MNCs that aim to expand their business and stabilize their presence internationally.

Companies have to focus on framing regional strategies that are in keeping with the foreign context so that the regional differences are effectively addressed. Regional strategies are vital for MNCs because it provides them a better understanding of the host country's culture.
about their culture. From this, the MNCs can determine the kind of strategies they need to foster and practice in their target country and identify the possible loopholes that can affect their business. Given that regional differences between countries impact overall business strategies of multinational companies, such companies must adopt proactive strategies that focus on meeting the cultural and social needs of the different market segments in the host country. A particular characteristic of EU based MNCs, particularly in states such as Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece, Spain, Germany, and the Republic of Ireland, is that they have to cope with major challenges in other EU states characterized by a distinct cultural and social environment.

The purpose of this review of research literature is not only to discuss and analyze the existing research on the selected topic. It also seeks to identify the views of the previous studies on the issue of cultural diversity in MNCs' business strategies. Cultural differences play an integral role in the growth, development, success, and failure of businesses. This makes it an important topic to discuss in business management and strategies. Cultural differences continue to create major challenges for multinational companies. This literature review provided a significant justification for this argument as MNCs are struggling to achieve a successful international presence. Some MNCs succeed through the "triad powers" and other strategic solutions, but some companies suffer tremendously because of the cultural differences that affect their business system and structure.

Companies that can adapt effectively can develop the ability to attain congruity in the diverse cultures in which they operate. This becomes a significant advantage to companies seeking to penetrate the international market. Their adaptability plays an essential role in promoting the international presence. In the process, they can enhance their comparative advantage. These MNCs' advantage from their understanding of cultural differences and
practicing appropriate strategic management includes being able to succeed in their target country. At the same time, it is also pertinent to take into account cultural similarities and make the best of them. For example, cultures with both low and high-power distance are reflective of the need to respond to widespread challenges. It is imperative to consider the advantage of choosing the countries that have an almost similar culture as the home culture of the MNCs because little adjustments are required. These relate to how human beings should effectively communicate with one another in an environment characterized by disparities resulting from the power held by them in different contexts. The crux of adaptation lies in focusing on the varied aspects that unite human beings than on what divides them.

**Transition and Summary of Section 1**

The purpose of the first section was to present the study's foundation, which included the background of the problem, problem statement, purpose statement, and nature of the study. The section also focused on the research questions, conceptual framework, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, the significance of the study, and a brief review of research literature. All these parts were covered and succinctly discussed to present the overall nature, structure, and goal of this research. As shown in those parts, this topic was selected because of the importance of MNCs and their influence in the global market.

Numerous studies were conducted on this topic, which was also discussed in the brief review of research literature to justify its commonness and the gaps that required further understanding of the MNCs and their influence in the global market. The discussion in the next section provides the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, research methods and design, population and sampling, data collection, data analysis, and reliability and validity of the study.
Section 2: The Research

This research is descriptive, using the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study design. A case study is an empirical investigation seeking to explore contemporary phenomena using real-life contexts, "especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). Typically, researchers opt for the case study design if they seek to research predefined phenomena without having to manipulate variables. This is because the case study researcher's main goal is to obtain deep insights about a given phenomenon and its various contexts (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998). Through the case study design, the researcher merges data collected using different techniques, including, interviews, secondary data, and text analyses. There are two types of case studies: single and multiple. A researcher usually utilizes the multiple case study design when the purpose is to undertake a cross-case analysis and comparison, and, when phenomena are investigated in different settings (Yin, 2009). A researcher may also prefer multiple case studies when similar results may be predicted (replication), or when the researcher expects to produce contrasting outcomes for predictable reasons, otherwise termed as theoretical replication (Yin, 2009).

Section 2 discusses the methodology of the research. Covered in this discussion is the researcher, selected MNC participants, the multiple case study research method and design, the population being studied, the sampling method used, data collection and analysis, and reliability and validity. On the whole, use of the qualitative method, particularly multiple case study provides sufficiently profound insights regarding the cultural differences in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. Using thick description characteristic of qualitative designs, an exposition of how these differences impact the strategies the MNCs harness in order rival home returns in foreign markets has been made. Consistent with the
multiple case study design, this study uses documentary and archival evidence about the selected MNCs to shed light on the differences in their strategic outcomes. Further, systematic data will be collected on MNCs' performance in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland using a survey tool patterned after Bloom and Reenen (2007). The aforementioned instrument will be administered to facilitate assessment of the internationalization strategies utilized by MNCs in the countries considered in this study. The multiple case study will also help offer a more profound understanding as to why MNCs are not as profitable in their host countries as they make in the home countries.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study design study is to add to the body of knowledge by exploring how MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland (a) employ global approaches in their foreign market operations and (b) differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. The study will add to the body of knowledge by exploring the two areas using selected MNCs from the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland for a multi-case study research design and finding out the strategies that their managers applied for globalization and localization operations. This qualitative methodology and multi-case study design component are suitable for determining effectively the degree of local penetration or global expansion for the respective company strategies. Manager survey data should help understand the relationship between MNCs' global and local strategies and their respective performances.

The study explores how regional differences between countries affect the business approaches adopted by MNCs in attempts to rival the successes of host economies in
international markets. Cultural effects on the operations of the selected MNCs in foreign markets can be derived from Hofstede's model. This aspect of the research method aims to compare differences and changes in cultural outcomes for the communities of the studied MNCs and their behavioral patterns. It seeks to arrive at data for the most valuable cultural attributes of the foreign markets in relation to minimal costs of production and high profitability. Data from the manager surveys and company revenue reports should supplement evidence of connecting the broader understanding of the different levels of success in foreign and host markets.

**Role of the Researcher**

Researchers play a valuable role in any empirical study because they provide the mandate on what needs to be done to accomplish the investigation. The researchers are also the main drivers of the study as they know the details of their topic. In this dissertation, the research's role is critical because of the selected participants included in the study. The participants are leaders from internationally-known companies in different parts of the UK. These leaders include the managers and supervisors who are willing to undergo an interview. In contrast with the quantitative method researcher, the qualitative method investigator is the instrument of research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In qualitative approach, researchers are more connected to the respondents through the data collection process. The interview, for example, requires the researcher to connect with the participants through conversations. There are different actions occurring in the interview, such as an impromptu discussion of the topic, exploration of the participants' responses, and an extension of queries to unleash the arguments' details. Through this, the researchers of qualitative approach become deeply connected to the participants. Aside from the responses, facts, and opinions, the researchers also learn more about the respondents' behavior and thoughts during the interview.
The collected data reflected the participants' realities and the researcher analyzed these data according to the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm is based on the participants' responses following the identified key idea or themes. From the identified themes, the researcher determines the important aspects of MNCs and the importance of their business strategies in maintaining their brand and influence. Thus, the researcher analyzed the data through the lens of his personal perceptions, understandings, and experiences, informed by his knowledge that the researcher has developed through research, previous studies, experiences, and higher education. This means that the interpretation of data is based on the perspectives, perceptions, and understanding of the researcher, and not the personal feelings or beliefs of the investigator. Instead, the researcher served as the interpreter of the MNCs as they share their arguments, thoughts, and visions about their business strategies.

The researcher filtered the participants' experiences and responses through his own understandings, and interpret them as guided by established qualitative methods of analyses. However, it must be clear that the researcher interprets the data based on the truthfulness and accuracy of the information obtained from the respondents. For reliability, credibility, and consistency, the researcher must also know that the researcher has no personal or professional relationships with the participants, and he foresees no issues regarding researcher biases. The researcher selects the companies randomly, based on their influence as MNCs. It is important to consider the influences of these MNCs considering that the topic revolves around the business strategies and successes of these companies as they penetrate the international market.

The investigator does not also foresee any power relations that could impact data collection, data analysis, and sampling. The researcher complied with the process of data collection, which started with a signed permission of the company and a letter of consent.
(Appendix A) from the respondents to be sent to the companies’ email addresses. Only the companies that accepted the invitation participated in the study. Those who chose not to respond to the invitation were respected and not included in the study. The researcher does not have any conflicts of interest related to this study. To prevent any form of bias, the researcher prepared an interview guide beforehand and requested peers and advisors to review this to eliminate potential biases with certainty. Also, a triangulation of data was conducted to examine the information obtained from the sources and test its validity. Fundamentally, there are four types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). This research uses data triangulation as it includes more than one method in gathering data. Aside from the interview, the study included survey and focus groups.

Participants

Participants for this study includes the MNC leaders headquartered in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. These countries are set from the beginning of the discussion based on the availability of the respondents, as well as the existence of MNCs in the said countries. Each of the countries is considered a single case compared with the other cases using the multiple case study design. Through the case study design, the study was able to profoundly examine the details and aspects of each MNC in each country. Only two MNC participants were required for each selected country using the inclusion criteria exhibited in Figure 2. To date, only the countries have been identified, but the MNCs are yet to be selected and contacted once this research proposal is approved.
Figure 2: MNC Selection Criteria

As explained in the notes of Figure 2, in the selection of the MNC country of origin, preference is given for adjacent countries to facilitate schedule setting for the focus group discussion if an online conference cannot be successfully arranged. Meanwhile, in the revenue aspect of the selection criteria, the range is purposely delimited on a wide range so that the study can draw insights from those on the higher and lower ends of the spectrum and compare winning strategies and best practices mediocre ones. The specification of the MNCs line of business to prime commodities to basic services, which includes financial services, food processing, manufacturing, oil, gas and technology, and pharmaceuticals practically covers the whole industry. Finally, the last two points of the inclusion criteria are important because even if a
MNC answers to the first three criteria, it is critical to seek and acquire informed consent from both the MNC and the participant to ensure they are aware of the nature of personal information to be solicited from the participants and the nature of the use for the personal data. The consent mechanism was sought to ensure that the participants agree to export the data outside the EU to the United States where the researcher is located. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria are: (1) refusal of the prospect MNC to participate; (2) countries with peace and order problem; (3) MNCs earning less than USD 10 billion; and (4) prospect-respondents who have issues with signing the consent form and data transfer agreement for their participation (Appendix B-I, Appendix B-II, and Appendix B-III).

The data collection procedure commences with an online search of MNCs based on the inclusion criteria. A representative from each of the two selected MNCs per country was contacted to nominate one or more personnel from the firm that could provide more reliable, consistent, and accurate information about the research. By including two MNCs from each of the six countries with one firm-designated informant each for the interview, the case study for each country was able to provide better insights, arguments, and perspectives on the influence of large and international companies in Europe.

In order to gain access to the participants, the researcher carried out a research of the target respondents online using the organization chart of each of the selected MNCs. From this, the researcher forwarded an email to each of the target contact-person, the personnel who handles public relations or an equivalent position/designation to inquire: (1) if the MNC can help inform the study as an institutional-participant; (2) if a personnel can be nominated to join this researcher for a survey, an interview, and/or focus group discussion (FGD) about the study; and (3) if the nominated personnel was willing and able to join the survey/interview FGD. Once the
nominated prospect-respondents agreed, a formal invitation was sent to them through their respective companies to schedule the interview and present the respondent with the informed consent form and data transfer agreement. Before the interview, details of the informed consent form and data transfer agreement was discussed with and explained to the respondent. The respondents were requested to affix their signatures, which affirms agreement to the interview or FGD as the case may be. Ethical considerations were observed such as anonymity, privacy, and consent. These considerations are vital in maintaining a strong and respectful relationship with the respondents.

The data collection procedure was earlier designed to include the survey respondents as participants of the interview and the FGD. However, to effectively achieve data saturation, the interview respondents can nominate other informants from their MNC who can provide more profound insights and accurate information. This enhancement of the plan for the data collection process also addresses the research goal to perform data triangulation. As defined Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014), “triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena” (p. 545). If the same respondents are used for the survey, the interview, and the FGD, different methods would have been used, but data still comes from the same sources.

Given that triangulation is also a strategy in qualitative research to scrutinize validity by verifying convergence of data/information from various sources, as explained in Carter et al. (2014), inviting other respondents by nomination from the interviewees and to the FGD was aligned with the methodology not just with the triangulation objective, but contributed towards effective data saturation. It is often challenging to deduce when data saturation had actually occurred, but the standard indicator points to diminishing returns. Saumure and Givens (2008)
elucidated that when new details from additional respondents provides little to the development of an emerging theory, data collection is said to be manifesting diminishing returns. This implies that data saturation had been attained. While there are no hard and fast rules about the sample size, Saumure and Givens (2008) advises that 15-20 respondents may be sufficient. Thus, starting with an initial sample of 12 respondents was arbitrary, but sensible. Furthermore, Saumure and Givens (2008) underscored that “the sample size will vary depending on the context and content under study” (p. 195).

**Research Method and Design**

This study is qualitative in nature and uses a multiple case study approach to assess the similarities and differences among multinational corporations (MNCs) in Western Europe. Specifically, the study utilizes a sample of MNCs headquartered in Ireland, the UK, Belgium, German, and Switzerland. The study aims to evaluate the impact of national culture and other factors on the performance of MNCs listed in the selected countries in Europe. The purpose is to enhance our understanding of the impact of regional differences in the performance of MNCs located in different countries. Due to the focus of the study on gaining rich data on MNCs' performance in different countries, the sample is not selected to be representative.

Instead, the researcher seeks to utilize a convenience sample (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, & McKibbon, 2015). This section presents a discussion of the different aspects of the research methods and design that was implemented in undertaking the study. The purpose of the study is to add to the body of knowledge on MNCs' strategic management by assessing how they apply global approaches in addressing their operations. This section explains the major elements of how the research is undertaken in this case including the justification of the methods and design in line with the purpose of the study.
Discussion of Method

This study focuses on the different aspects of MNC performance, including the cultural motivations and strategies for international competitiveness. The qualitative method of data collection and analysis was selected for this study because it provides the most effective way of understanding the cultural differences and the variations in the strategies that are adopted by the relevant organizations. The qualitative method was selected for the study because it provides a way of assessing how and why MNCs have varied performance levels in their home and host countries.

The qualitative method is effective in addressing open-ended research issues since it enables the researcher to gather different types of data that can be triangulated to answer the research question. A major aspect of qualitative research methods is their application in situations, where there is little knowledge about an issue and the researcher is interested in revising the existing theories or devising new ones (Mohajan, 2018). Qualitative research methods are inductive and used to describe phenomena in detail without focusing heavily on causality. In this case, the researcher's interest is not the identification of relationships among variables but to glean into the interactions, experiences, and in-depth information about the issue of interest.

According to Levitt et al. (2017), qualitative research methods are inductive and the researcher aims to explore meanings and insights from the situation under consideration. It is a research model that requires the researcher to be highly involved in the participants' experiences. In this case, the researcher has to be immersed in the natural setting of the participants to gain a high level of detail in their experiences. It makes use of interpretive material practices that is naturalistic to the subject matter in question. The researcher makes an effort to get a clear
snapshot of the participants in their natural settings to understand their social life. The participants' local knowledge is of critical relevance in this type of research method where the collected data is specifically linked to those involved without any efforts to generalize (Punch, 2014).

This research aims to evaluate the operations and outcomes of MNCs located in different countries in Europe. The countries were selected from the outset due to the availability of data on the MNCs operating in particular countries. To understand the similarities and variations across the different MNCs, each one would be evaluated individually to examine them. In this respect, the research does not focus on statistical data and instead seeks to identify the critical aspects of their operations, strategies, and outcomes. This is one of the key strengths of qualitative research as cited in Gopaldas (2016). The researcher aims to identify the critical variations in organizational cultures and other factors that may influence MNCs' outcomes.

One of the main themes guiding this study is the view that most MNCs do not achieve the same level of success in their foreign operations as in their home markets. Different factors have been hypothesized as the reasons for this variation. The current study focuses on regional differences between countries having a significant bearing on how MNCs implement their strategies. As a result, this study can be described as an effort to develop the hypothesis and themes that may explain the variations in MNC outcomes across the different countries in Europe. This makes the qualitative research methodology effective for addressing the issue because it enables the collection of data that can be analyzed thematically (Punch, 2014).

The study is exploratory in nature since it explores an issue that has not been effectively explained by the available literature regarding the management of MNCs. This nature of the study means that the researcher seeks to identify the best way of understanding why MNCs fail
to achieve the same level of success in their host operations like in their home countries. Studies indicate that most MNCs are regionally focused on the majority of their revenues from local operations. Additionally, studies such as Verbeke and Kano (2016) indicate that MNCs face the risk of failing to achieve their expected return on investment in their foreign operations. As a result, it is essential to explore the potential issues and themes that may explain MNCs' poor performance in their external operations.

A key element of the study is that the differences in MNCs' performance at home and in their host-countries can be associated with the regional cultural differences, variations in strategies, and other internal elements. The focus on these elements in explaining and assessing MNCs' performance indicates a need for interpretive approaches where subjective data would be analyzed. The subjective analysis of data, in this case, would be geared towards identifying the key themes from the different cases that may explain their variations in performance. The focus of the analysis to evaluate the level of organizational success for MNCs in their home county and the host countries. Data on their national cultures and strategies adopted was triangulated to develop themes and sub-themes that would be essential in understanding the issue.

The qualitative data collected from the sampled MNCs was beneficial in assessing the potential explanations for the variations in performance and strategies through a thematic analysis. As cited in Teherani et al. (2015), qualitative research is based on post-positivist and constructivist perspectives where the reality is assumed to be influenced by a wide range of factors. These include the view that the environment and individual differences can influence outcomes while the constructivists focus on the view of reality from the participants' perspective. In this case, a post-positivist approach is adopted where the environmental aspects in terms of the national culture and competitive environment, as well as the strategies adopted by the MNCs,
may influence their ability to compete at home and in foreign markets. The research question proposed in this study and the researcher's views about reality presents the rationale for using a qualitative method to address the issues highlighted here.

**Discussion of Design**

As indicated in Punch (2014), there are different approaches to undertaking qualitative research. These designs are influenced by the researcher's objectives and the research questions they seek to address. The researcher needs to identify and determine the most effective qualitative research approach to ensure that it aids in answering the research questions posed. The design selected for this study is a case study, which involves the analysis of processes, projects, decisions, and events among other systems. The case study approach involves an in-depth analysis of a given research problem. It is effective for narrowing down the broad research field into a few examples that can be easily researched. Due to its focus on particular cases and their outcomes, the researcher has the opportunity to collect in-depth information that can be used to evaluate an issue from a contextual perspective.

In this case, the case study approach was selected because it aligns effectively with the research objectives. The focus on regional differences and the varied strategies applied by MNCs in their operations presents a good case where contextual information should be gathered to assess their influence on organizational outcomes. It involves analyzing a few cases in-depth to understand how MNCs' performance can be associated with varied issues. One of the main aspects of a case study is the fact that it is a bounded phenomenon such as a social unit or institution. The analysis involves an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon in its real-world context. There are significant contextual conditions pertinent to the MNCs and their
internal and external environments. The cases can best be understood when evaluated holistically.

Unlike other qualitative research methods that require the researcher to get into the community of interest, the case study can be used both qualitatively and quantitatively. The case study describes an entity forming a single unit and can involve several units evaluated distinctly and in a comparative manner. As indicated in Astalin (2013), research studies may involve a series of case studies where the aim of the researcher seeks to identify causation and underlying principles that may be apparent in the different cases evaluated. The focus of the case study is to identify issues that are illuminated and explicated by the case.

The design adopted in this study is a multiple case study approach that focuses on assessing the differences in the performance of the MNCs located in different countries. The focus of this analysis is to assess whether regional differences play a role in influencing the strategies that are applied by the management of MNCs in different countries. In this case, the strategies applied by the MNCs headquartered in different countries was assessed. The specific strategies applied by the MNCs in their context were the key consideration in the analysis. The different aspects of the MNCs strategies and competitive approaches in their markets were evaluated alongside their national cultures.

An important element of case study designs is that they provide a way of gathering in-depth data from individuals who have what may be identified as local knowledge of their contexts. The top management members to be interviewed in the selected MNCs are knowledgeable about how their organizations compete. These are also individuals who can highlight the specific approaches they apply for their home markets as well as their foreign operations. The impact of such strategies on the overall competitiveness of the MNCs and the
distribution of resources between the home and foreign markets will be considered as major
elements of uniqueness in the case studies.

The specific challenges faced by the MNCs and their responsiveness through strategic
efforts are evaluated in the case studies by focusing on the leaders as the most relevant
information sources. Unlike grounded theory where respondents may be selected using
snowballing until data saturation is achieved, the multiple case studies require data from all
identified participants. While the researcher is not seeking generalization of the finding, having
more case studies can be beneficial in creating a more detailed picture of the situation and
identifying the similarities and differences. The fact that the analysis involves the real-life
strategies adopted by the MNCs as they compete for means that it can be used to identify the
potential effects of the different cultural factors.

The multiple case study design requires the researcher to be heavily involved with the
participants and to apply the same approaches for collecting data. The same approaches were
adopted for collecting data in all the cases to ensure that the same data is collected from all
participants. The research's focus is to understand each issue from the perspective of the MNCs'
managers. This is based on the knowledge that each MNC has different realities even when
operating in the same market. This is because the top management may have varied values,
goals, and organizational cultures dissimilar. As a result, each case included in the sample is
evaluated on merit, with the researcher avoiding assumptions.

The participants' experiences are filtered through the other data collected about the MNCs
and their operating environments. The data collected from the other methods such as Hofstede's
model for assessing cultural band behavioral variations across countries can be beneficial for
assessing the situation facing the MNCs in their markets. This information was useful in the
analysis where the findings were triangulated to develop a clear picture of the distinct situations facing each MNC and what that means concerning the research questions.

This study is based on an approach similar to Amal et al. (2014), which utilizes multiple case studies to evaluate the phenomenon of internationalization. The multiple case study design was applied in the two companies sampled and was found to be effective in showing how they made use of different elements of their operations such as ownership advantages. The approach was selected due to its effectiveness in developing new insights about the issues under review. In this case, the participants were selected from a wide range of industries, making the industry sector another variable that may be considered in assessing the variations and similarities in the MNCs’ competitive strategies and outcomes.

To gain the necessary insights from multiple case studies, a comparative analysis approach was selected. This was conducted to identify how the different factors including the country of origin, national culture, the industry may have influenced the strategies they adopted and their overall internationalization process. The main issue in the analysis was to assess whether there are substantial differences in the competitive strategies, organizational cultures, and outcomes for the MNCs. A critical issue is that the different case studies can be evaluated through triangulation and thematic analysis where the strategies applied, national culture, and performance at home and in foreign operations can be compared (Mohajan, 2018).

As cited in Punch (2014), the qualitative research analysis is mostly thematic and conducted in a narrative format. The information gathered from the interviews were used to describe the case studies and the internal context of each MNC. The exploratory nature of the multiple case studies means that the researcher has to explore similar themes and differences that can be explained by the MNCs’ internal and external environments (Astalin, 2013). The external
factors influencing MNCs' performance, such as competition, the national culture and the state of the industry, were also be considered in the triangulation and used as a part of the thematic analysis geared towards identifying the similarities and differences across the selected MNCs.

Each case was presented and discussed individually with the thematic analysis being applied to assess how each MNC competes in its market and the strategies it applies. The discussion focused on the assessment of the different case studies to identify similar themes in how they compete based on their headquarters and host countries. The focus of the discussion is to assess the state and pace of internationalization for the different MNCs. The triangulation's focused on identifying the differences and similarities in the approaches adopted by the MNCs, including how they approach their host markets and the distribution of their sales and profitability between their home and foreign markets (Teherani et al, 2015). The multiple case study approach is beneficial in ensuring that each MNC is discussed individually using information from different data sources. The design also allows the researcher to employ a thematic analysis of the critical issues raised and identify significant themes and sub-themes representing the similarities and differences across regions and MNCs.

**Summary of Research Method and Design**

This section focused on a discussion of the research methods and design applied in the study. It seeks to highlight the rationale for the method and design applied in the study concerning the research questions posed and the purpose of the study. This study utilizes a qualitative method, which was selected because it allows for an interpretivist approach to the problem. This research focuses on getting detailed information that can be used to create theories and to study this area with limited empirical evidence. A multiple case study design was selected for the study because it requires the collection of in-depth and specific data from particular cases
involving the MNCs operating in different countries in Western Europe. The desire to obtain an in-depth understanding of the ways through which cultural differences in the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, Ireland, France, and Switzerland influence MNCs.

The focus of the applied research methodology is to identify how the MNCs headquartered in different countries vary in their strategies as well as their level of success in international operations. It assesses how different MNCs’ strategies are applied in their efforts to rival home returns with foreign returns. The research method and design are responsive to the objectives of the research and its focus on getting in-depth information about MNCs from different countries. A key element of the research design is that it does not focus on generalizability. Instead, it is interested in getting in-depth data that can be used to formulate new theories and provide a deep understanding of the issues surrounding the MNCs and their performance.

**Population and Sampling**

This subsection aims to present the population and sampling procedure. Since the study uses qualitative research as a methodological design, the target participants are not expected to be large. Qualitative research focuses on the quality of information gathered from the methodology rather than the number of respondents (Creswell, 2013). With this, the study's focus is on the exploration of facts through interviews of the participants. The participants of this research are the public relations officers or other relevant personnel in equivalent positions of selected MNCs in the six countries. The study is open for recommendation or suggestion of MNCs in each of the six countries but the selection is heavily based on the information gathered from various sources. This means that the selected MNCs provide credible, reliable, and stable business influences based on their financial and organizational trends.
After the process of MNC selection based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researcher then finds the public relations (PR) officers or other relevant personnel in equivalent positions who can inform the study as interview participant to shed light on this researcher's inquiry on the business influence and strategies of the different companies. Alternatively, the PR officers or other relevant personnel in equivalent positions can nominate a respondent to act as informant of this study, with the permission of the MNC's CEO or his authorized representative. These study informants for the survey, interviews, and the FGD play a critical role in exploring the MNCs' business strategies that can provide a significant contribution to the understanding of MNCs—and their capability in penetrating the international market other businesses cannot successfully perform.

The target population of this study comes from the six countries discussed in the "participants" section. As previously discussed, the countries included in this qualitative research are UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. There are 44 countries included in Europe today but only six countries are included in this study to provide a clearer and more detailed discussion about the business strategies of MNCs in Europe. The rationale of the choice for these six countries have been stated under the inclusion criteria. Additionally, the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland are selected because they are home to numerous MNCs that operate not only within Europe but also in different regions around the world, including the Americas and Asia. Furthermore, the researcher has been in the six countries in the past, and this has provided the researcher with a glimpse of the MNCs operating in those countries. Based on the researcher's experience, numerous companies are operating in those countries, which show strong business influence in various industries. The target sectors are businesses in line with prime commodities and basic services, such as: financial services,
food processing, manufacturing, oil, gas and technology, and pharmaceuticals. These sectors play a significant contribution to the economies of the six countries. The selection process plans to identify MNCs that can inform the study in its goal to delve deeper into the business strategies of MNCs and provide appropriate information and interesting data about the effectiveness of these business strategies in influencing the world's business culture.

This study focuses on MNCs' business strategies in Europe, but the target population is not the countries but the leaders working on the selected MNCs. In each country, the initial target population is at least one respondent each from at least two MNCs. This means that the target population is two respondents from each country. However, this can increase depending on the availability of the MNCs, their willingness to provide permission for nominated respondents to participate as study informants, and subject to diminishing returns to hint of data saturation. These MNCs were selected using an MNC database that can be found online. An initial sample of 12 MNCs were selected and after which the researcher selected and invited the nominated respondents that showed willingness to participate in the interview. These procedures are explored and explained earlier under the population and the sampling section. This brief exploration of the population and sampling procedure shows that the study focuses on the MNCs dominating in the six selected countries. Nonetheless, the discussion and presentation of data about MNCs' business strategies in these six countries are not successful without the interview, which serves as the main methodological approach in this qualitative research.

**Discussion of Population**

This study's target population is the leaders of MNCs in the six countries or a nominated representative who can participate as study informants. The researcher selected at least five MNCs in each country. These MNCs are selected based on their operations management,
financial structure, economic trend and patterns, and existence in various countries and regions. As stated in the "participants" subsection, the selected MNCs have significant revenues, where one of the criteria is revenue from 10-300 billion US. This justifies their success in penetrating different parts of the world. Generally, all MNCs in the six countries can be part of the population. However, there are inclusion and exclusion criteria used to ensure that the target population responds to the research's needs and expectations. As stated previously, the research considers the operations management, financial structure, economic trend and patterns, and existence in various countries and regions of the MNCs. On the other hand, those with low revenues and limited operations in other countries are excluded from the target population. Using the Market Line (2009) website which offers industrial information and reports, a selection of MNCs which qualify for the study based on the inclusion criteria was selected. The website provides appropriate information, reports, and data necessary to understand the industry's financial trends, business structures, and position. The researcher utilized this website to find appropriate MNCs operating in the six countries.

After identifying the MNCs that comprised the sample for this study, communication was initiated with the relevant personnel to contact for each company. The researcher used the organizational chart of each MNC to access the names of these personnel. Initially, the target participants are the operations, executive, and marketing leaders. They are the ones to be selected to become part of the interview. The main reason for targeting these leaders is their direct connection to the business strategies of their companies. The operations managers or leaders are the ones who perform and manage the operations—both locally and internationally. The executives or managers are the ones who uphold the structure, system, and procedures in the company. They are aware of the situations occurring throughout the MNC; therefore, they are
capable of answering queries about the topic of this study. The marketing leaders are the ones who manage the marketing structures of the company. They are the brainstorms of business strategies to ensure that the company remains in its position. These prospective respondents are initially selected to become part of the interview. The researcher then selected two to three leaders from each MNC for sampling. The researcher contacted the PR officers or other relevant personnel in equivalent positions personally to determine if the MNC can be an institutional participant and to build a relationship with the relevant people before the interview.

The population has at least two respondents in each MNC selected. There are five MNCs selected in each country. These MNCs and leaders serve as the pool of participants included in the research. From this pool of participants, the researcher selects the samples based on the availability of the respondents and the permission provided by the companies. All companies are sent with a letter through email to seek permission in interviewing one of their personnel who can expound about the MNCs strategies and other inquiries from the interview. One letter was sent to each of the five companies in every country. The sample size was determined after the companies respond to the letter sent through the email. The researcher must receive feedback from the company as one way of promoting ethics in research. Since the companies are multinational, which means big and popular, they must agree to become part of the study for they also consider their position in the industry. That is why the companies are given sufficient time to respond. A four-week response period was given to the companies to provide the appropriate time to think about the invitations since the purpose of the study is for them to share some ideas about their business strategies.
Discussion of Sampling

The sampling method was chosen after locating the five MNCs through the Market Line website. The selection of the five companies was based on their adherence to the inclusion criteria, in terms operations management, financial structure, economic trend and patterns, and existence in various countries and regions. From the five companies, two companies from each country were selected. The companies were selected based on the companies' responses from the permission letter sent to them through email. The first two companies that responded and permitted the researcher to conduct the interview were selected. Those who provide a permit later receive a response from the researcher, stating its appreciation for the response and the explanation for not including the company in the study. After obtaining permits from the two companies, out of the five initially selected MNCs, the researcher sent a follow-up letter to the companies seeking consent to interview the selected leaders. Since the researcher has initially established a connection and relationship with the MNC personnel, the follow-up letter includes the names of these personnel to be part of the interview. However, it is still the company's and the respondent's discretion if they would allow their personnel to participate in the interview. This considers that the nominated personnel to act as study informants from the MNC may be handling professional and confidential information. Also, even if the nominated respondents agree but the company does not provide permission, the researcher cannot continue the interview with the interviewees. This was explained in the inclusion criteria discussion under Figure 2.

Some MNCs may designate other personnel instead of those preferred by the researcher. A few companies may provide their reasons why they choose other personnel instead of the preferred ones. One reason is the unavailability of the respondent in the preferred date and time of interview. Another reason is the critical role of the respondent in the company, which does
allow him or her to take part in interviews during office hours. Some MNCs may choose not to disclose the reason for nominating another instead of the preferred ones. Those who may not be allowed to participate in the interview but have established a relationship with the researcher may be notified about the company's decision without giving the company the exact reason to select other personnel to attend to the interview. This is part of the ethical considerations fostered in this research. The researcher directly contacts the respondents preferred or nominated by the company through their company email. The researcher provides the leaders with a letter that introduces the topic, purpose of the research, and contribution to the study. A one-week response period is given to the respondents for their consent and the data transfer agreement to enable the researcher use the data outside the EU. The respondents are informed about the deadline for responding to the letter. This provided them sufficient time to check their schedule, as well as to provide appropriate date and time for the interview.

From the two companies from each country, the total number of MNCs included in this research is 12. These 12 leaders were recruited to take part in the study. The number of participants is sufficient in a qualitative research approach. As stated by Creswell (2013), qualitative research design does not focus on the number of the sample but the quality of information the respondents can provide during the data collection process. Only one respondent is selected in each MNC because of the complexity and system of the companies. Since these companies are operating in various countries around the world and the leaders have limited time outside their duties and responsibilities in their organization, it is difficult to pull out two or more leaders to be part of the interview. To ensure that the research can obtain appropriate, sufficient, and valuable data, two MNCs in each country are selected. From these two MNCs, the researcher can conduct an extensive interview and obtain the most detailed information that each
respondent can provide. Also, pertaining to conflicting arguments or ideas in between respondents—if two respondents are included in each MNC. Such conflict can be avoided because only one respondent from each company is selected and interviewed.

**Summary of Population and Sampling**

The population and sampling discussion shows that the researcher determined to proceed with the research complying with the standard procedure of inviting participants. The process of selecting and inviting participants is part of the ethical considerations fostered in this research. Considering the participants' position and stature, it is imperative to apply ethical considerations to ensure the privacy, anonymity, and credibility of the respondents involved in the study. These ethical considerations are briefly discussed in the invitation sent to the respondents, as part of the letter of consent. The researcher ensures that the respondents' privacy, position, and personal background are protected and secured from the interview to the study's documentation. The researcher provides a clear explanation of the reason for conducting the study, as well as the contribution of the respondents and their companies in exploring the topic. Along with the ethical considerations and the initial questions to be asked in the interview, this detail is presented in the invitation letter for the leaders that also serves as their letter of consent. The respondents must respond to the letter within the given period.

The result of the discussion on population and sampling shows that the MNCs in the six countries are initially included but the inclusion and exclusion criteria serve as tools in managing the population. From the inclusion criteria, the researcher contacts the companies to determine which of these companies can be part of the study. The companies that respond to the email are the ones included as samples. A four-week response period is given to the population to provide them ample time to make an appropriate decision. Considering their business condition and
industry position, their decision is properly and profoundly respected. Some companies may choose not to disclose the information of their decision not to be included in the study, while some may not provide a response but they are all respected as part of the study’s ethical consideration.

Qualitative research design may not focus on the number of respondents for the endorsement of generalizability but it offers significant insights that can be used in assessing the business strategies of MNCs in the six selected countries. Even though the study uses the interview as the primary source of data, it also includes documents to be shared by the leaders and theories used in examining MNCs' business strategies. Therefore, aside from the interview, this study also uses the related documents and theories as part of the triangulation method in the data collection. Considering the nature of this study, the depth of the research focuses on the explanation, arguments, opinions, and experiences of the respondents in managing the MNCs. As stated previously, the respondents play an important and critical role in understanding the journey, trend, pattern, and success stories of the selected MNCs. They serve as the tool in understanding and examining processes and strategies performed by the MNCs to become successful in the international market. Based on the discussion presented in the population and sampling, the purpose of this study is to examine the views of the 12 MNCs in six countries on their business strategies that lead to their success. Through the respondents of this study, the research can provide not only interesting insights but also valuable information and substantial data that can be used in examining the business strategies of MNCs.

**Data Collection**

The data collection process is one of the most important aspects of research. According to the Responsible Conduct in Data Management (2019), “Data collection is the process of
gathering and measuring information on variables of interest, in an established systematic fashion that enables one to answer stated research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes” (para. 1). This definition shows that data collection aims to gather and measure information in accordance to the selected topic. Using an established systematic fashion, data collection is conducted to reveal the behavior, action, and decision-making of the people involved in the phenomenon. However, the data collection process does not stand on its own. It must be based on the research questions presented in the beginning of the study. In the context of this study, the research questions are the following:

1. How do regional differences between the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland influence the success of MNCs in their foreign operations?

2. How important are cultural differences between home and host countries are in influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations?

3. What are the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs?

These research questions serve as the study's benchmark in conducting the appropriate data collection process. Given these research questions, the study is focused on the impact of MNCs’ regional and cultural differences in the six countries in their business strategies. Even though the study is focused on the business strategies, it aims to delve deeper into MNCs’ international actions and decisions to succeed in their plans to become internationally known and acclaimed companies. Through this data collection process, the research questions can be answered.

This study used qualitative research approach to delve deeper into the phenomenon through the participants' responses in the interview. Barrett and Twycross (2018) explain that
"qualitative research requires data which are holistic, rich and nuanced, allowing themes and findings to emerge through careful analysis" (p. 63). Qualitative research focuses on the quality and depth of data rather than the number of respondents who have similar experiences on the phenomenon. This study explores and examines the views of the MNC leaders as they discuss the impact of regional and cultural differences in their international business strategies. Through this data collection process, the research can provide valuable, significant, and profound insights into MNCs' business strategies, including the explanation of the regional and cultural adjustments they make to continue their business internationally.

There are different processes in conducted qualitative data collection. These include interviews, focus groups, and observation. Interview is the process of collecting data by asking the participants several questions about the topic. It is a straightforward approach that dwells on the research question (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Focus group is a method of collecting data where the researcher finds a group of people to discuss the topic. The participants undergo a group discussion that relates to the topic. The discussion is free-flowing, which can go deeper depending on the topic (Barrett & Twycross, 2018). Observation is a data collection method where the researcher immerses into the lives, setting, or environment of the people affected by the phenomenon to understand their situation in relation to the topic. In the period of immersion, the researcher observes the movements, words, and behavior of the people—whether participants or non-participants. In the context of data triangulation, this study includes the survey, focus group, and interview as processes of qualitative data collection. The survey was used to identify the demographic information of the participants. The interview explored and examined their business strategies. Interviewing each leader from the two MNCs in each of the six countries plays a vital role in understanding MNCs' business strategies. The focus group was used to
assess the regional and cultural differences of the MNCs and its impact to the companies’ business strategies.

**Instruments**

Instrumentation is necessary to ensure that the data collection process possesses validity, credibility, and reliability. The instrumentation concept refers to the instruments used in researching the researcher who conducts the survey, interview, and focus group as part of the nature of the qualitative research approach. According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003), "Research instruments are simply devices for obtaining information relevant MNCs' to your research project, and the alternatives from which to choose" (p. 3). This statement justifies that research instruments are devices or tools used to obtain information related to the topic. There are different kinds of research instruments in qualitative research, which include survey questionnaire and interview questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire asked questions that are answerable using a Likert scale or other measures to determine the participants’ pulse on the topic. Most survey questionnaires are brief and concise, but others require elaboration or explanation to understand the respondents’ thoughts and choices further. The interview questionnaire refers to the list of questions to be asked to the participants. In some occasions, the researcher shares the list of the questions during the interview invitation to provide a glimpse of what the study aims to achieve and prepare the participants with their answers. Some researchers choose not to disclose the list of questions to ensure that the respondents provided raw and truthful information based on what they know within the time of the interview. With triangulation, this study used the interviews and surveys as the main research instruments (see Appendix C and Appendix D).
Surveys were distributed to the respondents to determine their demographic information. The questions included the name of their company, their position, tenure, age, race or ethnicity, and duties and responsibilities in the company. Such information was sought to determine the credibility of the respondents when they undergo the interview. The survey data served as a justification in demonstrating their knowledge about the company and the validity of their responses based on their tenure and experiences in their organization.

The interview questionnaire, shown as Appendix C, includes 10 questions. They are all related to the research questions and based on the study's purpose and objectives. Part of the interview questionnaire examined the cultural differences of the local and international organizational setting. It also explored the individual business strategies used by the MNCs to compare the ones they use locally and internationally. The interviewees were asked if they are changing their business strategies abroad or they keep on utilizing the strategies they use locally.

The regional and cultural differences in business strategies were extensively explored and examined in the interview to understand the perspectives and vision of the MNCs based on the respondents' views, analysis, and arguments. The questions revolved around the views of MNC leaders on the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on MNCs' performance. The responses to the questions for this topic facilitated answering the third research question and provided a significant contribution in understanding the business strategies of the MNCs.

Overall, the MNC leaders' responses served as the primary basis of information that compared the regional differences of the six countries in their level of success in foreign operations.

Aside from the interview questionnaire, the data collection process included internet and Skype application. Considering that the researcher cannot travel to all six countries in a single period, the best way to do is to perform a virtual interview. This kind of interview occurs when
the researcher and interview use an application where they can communicate with each other. The most appropriate application is Skype where both call and video programs was used. Skype is often used for conversation and remote interviews. This application provides clear sound and video, which was helpful to both the researcher and interviewee. In the letter of consent, the respondents were informed about the process of conducting the interview, which is through Skype. After all the individual interviews, the MNC leaders participated in the focus group process in Skype wherein everyone was invited to discuss their business strategies and the impact of regional and cultural differences in the internationalization of their business strategies. Their agreement with the consent form and data transfer agreement served as an approval to the structure of interview, as well as the recording of the focus group discussion. Also, a Skype recorder was used for data transcription. After the interviews, the data was transcribed for validation and analysis. The respondents were asked for permission, prior to the interview that their responses will be recorded.

**Data Collection Techniques**

The data collection techniques were based on the data triangulation using survey, interview, and focus group. However, before the data collection, the interviewees were selected through a purposeful sampling. The 12 leaders from the six countries served as the resource persons coming from the selected MNCs. For the survey, the data was collected through email. Along with the letter of consent, the participants answered a short survey that asks for their demographic and professional information. The information in the survey was not directly disclosed to avoid linking the data to the participants. The participants need to provide their answer to the survey along with their agreement to the letter of consent. This means that each participant returned two files in the email: the letter of consent or interview invitation and
survey. The respondents need to complete all the questions included in the survey. The consent letter included a brief discussion of the importance of the survey to encourage the respondents to answer the questionnaire completely and accurately. The interviews were conducted until saturation is achieved. Saturation is where no new information is presented by the interviewees (Morse 2015: p. 588).

In the interview, the researcher depended on the availability of the respondents. The survey respondents were also be the interview respondents and they were contacted through email prior to the survey. The email included an explanation of the need for data triangulation (i.e., the survey and the interview) that the respondents need to participate in. After completing the survey, another letter is sent through email, which served as an interview invitation (see Appendix D). The aforementioned email also included the questions to be asked and the proposed schedule (i.e., time and date of the interview). To clarify, the researcher initially provided a preferred time and date of the interview in the email invitation, but the participants had the freedom to change the researcher’s proposed date and time according to their availability. Once the interview invitation is returned with the participant’s approval of the interview, with their affixed signatures on the informed consent form and data transfer agreement, they were also include the time and date of their availability for the interview. The participants were requested to provide at least two times and dates of their preferred interview schedule to avoid conflicts with the other participants. The researcher considers the availability of the respondents and conduct the interview accordingly.

Prior to the interview, the researcher provided a brief introduction about the researcher and the nature of the study. After the introduction, the interview proceeded. The researcher provided the participants ample time to discuss their opinions and arguments regarding the
questions. If necessary, the researcher asked follow-up questions that further clarified the information provided by the participants. After the interview, the respondents were asked for their availability in the focus group discussion. The researcher provided a specific time and date for the focus group discussion based on the participants’ availability information. The respondent decision was respected if they were not be available during the given time.

The majority of the respondents who would be available on the date and time considered by the researcher based on the participant-provided availability information were expected for the focus group. The focus group is expected to have a minimum of number participants. Obtaining half of the projected interviewees, would provide the most optimal discussion in the focus group. Before the beginning of the focus group discussion, the participants introduced themselves one-by-one. They were required to state their company, position, and country. The researcher also introduced himself and inform the participants about the rules and regulations in the discussion, as well as the information that all discussion done in the focus group was recorded for transcription and data analysis. After introductions, the researcher asked a question where the group discussed their ideas, opinions, and experiences in their respective organizations. The group was free to discuss their opinions in a professional manner. Each participant that wanted to answer was given sufficient time to respond.

Data Organization Techniques

Organization of data is necessary to provide proper and clear analysis. The data analysis results will depend on the clarity of the raw data gathered from the primary sources. The data was organized after completing the data triangulation. For the survey, the data was organized after receiving all the responses from the participants. Tabulation was conducted to transcribe all the demographic and professional information of the respondents. Through the process of
tabulation, the information of each respondent was noted. However, in the tabulation, the name of the respondents was be included. Each participant had an alias, which can be R1 that refers to respondent 1 and so on and so forth. The researcher was the only person to determine who from the respondents is R1, R2, … R11, and R12.

For the interview, tabulation was done in the transcription of the collected data. Using the recorded interviews, the researcher organized the data using transcription. The data was transcribed and tabulated according to the alias of the respondents. The structure was similar with the demographic and professional information table. The only difference is that the table's content is the answer of the respondents in each interview question. In this tabulation, all responses were transcribed, which means that regardless of the grammar structure's complexity, the tabulation included all the statements provided by each respondent. This technique was used to easily conduct a thematic analysis and comparative analysis of the data.

For the focus group, the data organization technique was same as the interview. A transcription of statements were conducted to ensure that all ideas are noted and given appropriate credits and validity. However, the difference is that the focus group was not tabulation but in dialogue format. Since different speakers are answering one question, it was necessary to use a dialogue format where each speaker's statements were transcribed. The format of the transcription is similar to a script where different speakers had their alias (R1, R2, … R11, and R12) and present their respective arguments and opinions. The transcription of the data was done in this format from the beginning to the end of the data organization to ensure that all statements are properly and noted.

Considering the techniques to be done in data triangulation, the data organization aims to achieve proper and clear data analysis based on the structure of the information gathered from
the primary sources. Tabulation of the survey results and interview results was used to analyze the raw data using a specific data analysis application. The dialogue format used in the focus group also provided a clear evidence of the similarity and differences of perspectives of the participants in each question asked. Since the focus group discussion focused on the regional and cultural differences between the local and international business structures, it would be best to use a dialogue format in organizing the data to ensure that all ideas, opinions, and arguments were considered.

**Summary of Data Collection**

The discussion of this part of the second section is divided into three parts: instrumentation, data collection techniques, and data organization techniques. The instrumentation discusses the types of instruments to be used in the data collection. The instruments that were used in the data collection process are survey, interview questionnaire, and Skype application. The survey identified the demographic and professional information of the respondents. The interview questionnaire provided the list of the questions to be asked during the interview with the participants. The Skype application served as the communication tool between the researcher and the participants. These instruments played an essential role in obtaining the required information, facts, or data from the primary sources.

The data collection techniques are also based on the data triangulation. The techniques included the survey, interview, and focus group. The survey is important in the data collection because it obtained the participants' demographic and professional information. Through the survey, the research was able to strengthen the information as they served as an evidence of the leaders who provided information about the research topic. The interview was used to have a deeper connection and relationship with the respondents as they discuss their views, experiences,
and arguments about the topic. Using the Skype application, the researcher conducted an interview with each of the 12 participants coming from the 12 MNCs in the six selected countries. After the interview, the participants were asked if they are willing to be part of the focus group given the time and date of the group discussion through Skype. Considering the strict schedule of the MNC leaders, the target participants in the focus group is eight. A minimum of eight leaders were included in the focus group depending on their availability. In the focus group, the leaders discussed their respective ideas, thoughts, knowledge, and experiences about the questions to be asked by the researcher.

The data organization techniques included tabulation and dialogue format. The tabulation was done in the survey and interview results. For the survey results, each column had the information of the participants using an anonymous name like R1 that corresponds to respondent 1. The information in each column includes the participant’s company, position, tenure, age, race or ethnicity, and duties and responsibilities in the company. This was same with the tabulation format of the interview results. Columns provided each of the respondents for their responses in each of the 10 questions that were provided to them. This made the data analysis process easier. For the focus group, the data was organized using a dialogue format. With the number of participants talking about their ideas on the questions to be asked, tabulation was an appropriate organization technique. With the dialogue format, the responses of each participant were properly delivered and transcribed. It also helped in the data analysis process in identifying the speaker during the focus group. With this, the comparative and thematic analyses were properly and accurately conducted.
Data Analysis

As discussed at the beginning of this section, the research is descriptive, using the qualitative methodology and the multiple case study design. Data analysis within qualitative research involves description, classification, and integration of the findings to give insight into the research problem (Mihas, 2019). Data analysis of a case study includes examination, classification, tabulation, testing, or recombination of various sources of data to address the previous study propositions (Sgier, 2012). This being a multiple case study research, data analysis intends to follow specific case analysis guidelines. Firstly, data analysis begins with preparation and organization of the collected data more systematically and structurally to facilitate the review. This is followed by data analysis, which is fundamentally be carried out through data collection, data display, as well as data verification (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid, & Redwood, 2013). These stages facilitated raw data analysis process in a manner that demonstrates what is happening at MNCs and makes it feasible to comprehend the impact of regional differences on the business strategies adopted by MNCs.

In this study, data analysis entailed some of the engagement with the collected data. Data analysis transforms data into results by bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of the gathered data from various sources. It is important to note that the analytical process does not continue in a linear fashion but it is more of a spiral process entailing reduction of the volume of the collected data, identifying important themes from irrelevant facts, identifying trends and patterns, as well as developing a framework for communicating the essence of the collected data. The following steps were adopted for this research.
Data Preparation

Various kinds of evidence have been gathered in this study, including interviews, supplementary observations, and even archival records. Before coding, the collected materials were read extensively to obtain the overall picture of the collected evidence (Tesch, 2013). Data analysis started by listening to the recorded interviews to ensure that the transcribed information is similar to the one recorded; this has facilitated the comprehension of the entire data set. To save resources, the process of data preparation was initiated in the early data collection stages to ensure the capture of a robust picture of the research subject. This was followed by the translation of analysis into the written form to establish a workable outline. In this step, the researcher formulated statements that connect various parts to ensure the study is regarding the progress of theoretical perspective development (Smith & Firth, 2011). The researcher started the processes of writing initial notes in the codebook, which is crucial in data analysis as it allows formal organization data, demonstrating and recording additional links between/among/within encounters and concepts described in the collected data.

Data Reduction

Data reduction is defined as the process of selection, focus, simplification, abstraction, as well as the transformation of transcribed data (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). In theoretical terms, data reduction is the process selection, coding, and categorization of data (Savi-Baden & Major, 2013). At this stage of data analysis, the researcher read and re-read the transcribed data to gain deepknowledge about the importance and scope of the collected information. Then, the researcher determined the unit analysis of the study. It essential to note that units were assigned codes to indicate specific response to a particular question, together with the data record and column position where these codes were entered (Mihas, 2019). Data coding, which is defined as
the process of breaking down large data sets into smaller data sets, is the beginning point for data analysis in qualitative research, and it is focused on an extended discussion regarding a few limitations associated with dependence on coding (Stuckey, 2015). A number of coding levels have been documented in the existing research. First, basic coding that involves the use of direct quotes from the transcripts; second, skillful researchers have more awareness about what has been said by the interviewees; and third, the researcher moves neglect specific interviewee sayings to broad analytical themes (Smith & Firth, 2013). Sutton and Austin (2015) affirm that manual coding allows consistent coding of message content with lists of categories formed to classify data.

To facilitate reference and analysis in this research, codes were assigned manually to participants. It is expected that the manual codes reflected the experiences and practices of MNCs in the selected case studies. The fixed field code was adopted to ensure consistent coding. Fixed field code is the code in which several records for each participant is similar, and the same information appears in the corresponding columns for all participants (Sgier, 2012). In summary, the data reduction, coding process and integration of identical data enabled this research to identify the main trends and patterns from the transcripts. Following coding, data classification, which is described as an analytical process developing from the collected data, can be typed, keyed in, and revised to remove any outliers, blank responses, and inconsistencies, among other issues that can affect the outcome of the study (Gale et al., 2013). Computer software programs like N*Vivo was adopted in some cases to assist and enable analytical coding process as well as textual data analysis to make data more accessible (Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

Overall, it must be noted that data reduction and data preparation can overlap; therefore, it was started at the earliest data analysis phase of this study. Besides, data was classified into
various patterns and trends. Further, data reduction was conducted via all data analysis steps until the crystallization and verification of the conclusions.

**Data Display**

Following data preparation and reduction, tables and figures were adopted to demonstrate the interplay between MNCs' regional differences and business strategies in the selected case studies. Data display helped to determine the structure and organization of data, which is expected to enable data analysis to advance to the last step, which is data drawing and verification. Extended texts are a standard form of data display (Sutton & Austin, 2015). The first form of extended texts is unreduced text, in which the researcher reviews assigned codes and categorizes the collected data (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The second type of extended text involves a case research report (Stuckey, 2015). It is essential to note that data display is the presentation of selected data, matrix, graph, and chart that illustrate data trends that might enable the research to comprehend the findings and draw generalizations based on the trends in the reduced data sets (Sgier, 2012). Overall, the primary concern of the researcher at this data analysis stage is expected to be the integration of the study findings and interpretation to reflect the uniqueness of the encounters and practices of MNCs in various regions across the world.

**Data Drawing and Verification**

Verification of data can take many forms, including revision or review and discussion of the field notes with other interested scholars, or replicate the results in different data sets (Tesch, 2013). After data preparation, reduction, and display, the researcher triangulated the reviewed data from various sources such surveys and other secondary sources of information; here, data has been compared and contrasted with each other. Also, the results have been interpreted concerning the relevant literature to enhance the integrity of this study. In this stage, the central
concern of the study is expected to be the clarification of the similarities and discrepancies among the collected data from different sources (Mihas, 2019). To mitigate this issue, the researcher revisited the collected data in their original form many times to identify the correspondences between/among the primary themes. In summary, the discussed data analysis processes (reduction, analysis, and triangulation) significantly refined this research.

**Triangulation Method**

As mentioned in the data analysis discussion, triangulation plays a critical role in data analysis. Triangulation is an indispensable method used to process qualitative data due to its ability to adopt different techniques and checks to ascertain the trustworthiness of the results, making it integral part of the data collection and analysis process (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). In multiple case studies, there are more critical factors of interest than there are data points that at times rely on multiple sources of data; therefore, data should be converged through triangulation method to assist the researcher that uses several sources of data for analysis (Heale & Forbes, 2013). In broad terms, triangulation is described as the integration of methods in the research to study a similar phenomenon (Cope, 2014). In other fields such as military and navigation, triangulation is adopted as multiple reference points to identify the exact location of an item through the use of basic principles of geometry, with excellent points of view that enable higher accuracy (Carter et al., 2014). Nevertheless, the accuracy of results and analysis can be enhanced through the gathering of multiple data for a similar phenomenon, and after that, it can be traced back to build the themes through the use of the triangulation method.

The central aim of the data gathering process is to bring together different facts to produce informative opinion about issues involved in a coherent manner, highlighting the
relevance of the data to the intervention question, credibility of the study, and applicability of the study (Cope, 2014). More often, case studies adopt this method to make sure that the validity of the results and other data items are corroborated from another source(s) and typically by another data collection method (Heale & Forbes, 2013). The approach of a single source of data is not suitable for multiple case study design, making triangulation approach the most appropriate method for this study, as the method uses various techniques to facilitate data collection and analysis (Carter et al., 2014). In this study, this method was illustrated in multiple comparison themes with observations from the respondents to enhance the confidence in the new theoretical framework.

Specifically, the data collection methods selected for this study are interviews, focus groups, and observation. The interview was the main data collection tool, whereas focus groups and observation complemented data gathering tools. Each of the mentioned data collection method has been selected to access specific type of information from the target population for comparing results across the three methods. For instance, an issue identified during an interview or focus group can also be assessed during observations in the natural working settings of the targeted MNCs. Data from the interviews was reviewed to increase understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Themes obtained from the interviews were used to create the basis for discussion guides to be used during focus groups. Overall, data collection was facilitated by the three data collection methods were iteratively coded and categorized.

Therefore, the triangulation method provided the researcher with many opportunities during data analysis. To start with, this technique enables researchers to be more confident about their findings. Besides, the method might help them reveal the deviant opinions that are likely to generate some elements that might fit a theoretical framework. It is essential noting that a thread
connecting all benefits of this method is the most crucial part played by qualitative data qualitative techniques in triangulation. Finally, this method improves data analysis because it utilizes qualitative techniques to clarify the identified themes.

**Coding Process**

Before the coding process begins, the researcher intensively read and re-read through the transcripts to have a general understanding of each interview transcript. The significance of doing this lies in attempting to have a sense of the interview narratives as a whole before segmenting it (Stuckey, 2015). The aim of the researcher was to identify trends or recurring patterns that show what respondents felt strongly and what they expressed strongly. Identification of the recurring ideas, salient themes, and patterns that connect the respondents poses a challenging intellectual phase of the data analysis and one that can integrate a group of similar topics. To address this, the researcher seeks to cluster recurring patterns and similarities repeated by respondents into generative themes.

The researcher intends to generate themes with an understanding of the respondent particularities and generalizations. This was vital in finding the meaning expressed by respondents and create a sense of what might come next from the other respondents (Smith & Firth, 2011). This led to the production of useful condensations that make it possible to gain from a single participant an understanding that can facilitate the understanding of all respondents. In addition, theme analysis involved observing how one participant's expressions fit into a specific theme and how interpretations of another participant might indicate a divergence from the same theme.

Therefore, to generate order out of the different pattern and similarities, the study used a process of coding. The researcher assigned numbers' turn unit' of each respondent narratives
from the transcriptions. This gave a clear presentation of data when the identified themes are described and supported by quotes in the preparation of the final thesis. This study followed the following coding process.

Open Coding

The first step was open coding, which include reading and re-reading of the collected data to understand how patterns were grouped and coded. It is essential to note that open coding is the process of assigning numbers to the identified patterns or themes, breaking them down into distinct parts, and carefully analyzing and comparing them to obtain differences and similarities, and lastly questioning the phenomena that are revealed in them (Mihas, 2019). In this research, the researcher intends to highlight the clustered patterns and then name each theme depending on its subject matter or focus and highlight the name down with a distinct color in the text above the highlighted participant narrative. The naming process is known as data conceptualization (Hilal & Alabri, 2013), where the name represents a specific phenomenon. This was achieved through comparison of different narratives as the researcher sought to classify similar events under a particular name. This is crucial because, without it, the study may end up with numerous names, which could create confusion and potentially harm the study adversely. The name assigned to each of the identified themes is the one that appears most related to the narrative it represents and is catchy enough to draw the attention of the researcher and the target audience.

Axial Coding

The second step in the coding process involves axial coding, which involves the identification of connections and linkages between the themes so that similar themes were used to form clusters. Axial coding is also called categorization or classification because it involves looking for categories and meaning that have internal convergence and external divergence.
Sutton and Auston (2015) support this by affirming that the identified themes have to be consistent internally, but different from each other. Accordingly, the researcher clustered highlighted themes in the similar narratives provided by different participants. Diverging cases of the identified patterns, trends, and themes were noted from the transcripts and given new meanings based on the understanding of the narrative by the researcher (Stuckey, 2015). The researcher was keen to critically assess the patterns that seem apparent, as well as look for other significant and alternative descriptions for the collected data.

**Selective Coding**

Selective coding is the winnowing of the collected data and reducing it into smaller sets of themes to create the final narrative (Mihas, 2019). This is the last step, in which all themes from the combined respondents' themes were divided into a selected number that consists of the final data presentation. In this step, groups of similar themes were created with sub-themes and groups.

In summary, coding is a vital part of data analysis in qualitative research that eventually identifies the final themes. Data coding needs a careful attention because the logic used for data coding determines how the subsequent sections of research. The researcher prefers the use of computer software for quality data analysis to help in the coding process. It makes data management of all collected data easier and assists in the organization of the codes in a manner that makes sense. The researcher understands that the most critical thing is ensuring that all necessary data is captured during the coding process.

**Summary of Data Analysis**

Data analysis within qualitative research involves description, classification, and integration of the findings to give insight into the research problem. In this study, data analysis
entailed some of the engagement with the collected data. Data analysis transforms data into results by bringing order, structure, and meaning to the mass of the gathered data from various sources. The analytical process does not continue in a linear fashion but it is more of a spiral process entailing reduction of the volume of the collected data, identifying important themes from irrelevant facts, identifying trends and patterns, as well as developing a framework for communicating the essence of what has been revealed from the collected data. Coding is a vital part of data analysis in qualitative research that eventually identifies the final themes. The researcher prefers the use of computer software for quality data analysis to help in the coding process. It makes data management of all collected data easier and assists in the organization of the codes in a manner that makes sense.

**Reliability and Validity**

Every research requires the discussion and explanation of reliability and validity because they justify the usability and function of the instruments used in conducting the study. As stated previously, the data collection has been done through interview. The selected MNCs provided a leader who can be interviewed through Skype. Since the MNCs are located in Europe and the researcher is currently residing in the United States, an online interview was the most applicable method to perform. The interview was conducted according to the availability of the MNC leaders. In the interview invitation letter, the MNCs provided a specific time and date for the interview to prepare the researcher. In qualitative research, the interview is one of the most common types of data collection method. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008), interviews are used to explore the respondents' perspectives, experiences, motivations, and views. As the ones who experience the define phenomenon, an interview encouraged respondents to share their experiences, thoughts, and opinions about the given situation.
happening around them. In the case of this research, the MNCs' business strategies were discussed based on the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of the leaders. However, since the interviews and the participants' statements might not be objective, a discussion of reliability and validity must be considered. Aside from the interview, a focus group and survey was conducted to examine the perspectives and experiences of the participants.

Numerous studies are conducted on the value and function of validity and reliability. These two elements vary from one research design to another. This means that validity and reliability is different in quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed methods. In qualitative research, "validity and reliability are two factors which any qualitative researcher should be concerned about while designing a study, analyzing results and judging the quality of the study" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). This statement justifies that the validity and reliability in qualitative research aims to identify the quality of the investigation. Since qualitative research focuses on the quality, the validity and reliability of the findings are explored through the instruments. Furthermore, in identifying the reliability and validity of a qualitative research, the instrument's credibility must be explored. In examining the credibility of a qualitative research, Noble and Smith (2015) presents the strategic enhancements, which include the truth value, consistency or neutrality, and applicability. The truth value refers to the reflexivity and reflection of the perspectives obtained from the interview and the representativeness of findings related to the identified phenomena (Smith, 2015). Consistency or neutrality is the achievement of audibility, which demonstrates a clear description of the findings (Smith, 2015). Applicability is the application of the findings to other contexts (Smith, 2015). These strategies of enhancing the quality of the data are necessary in examining the functions and usefulness of the instrument and
its findings. Considering that the instrument to be used is interview, it is vital to explore its function and applicability in the given topic and data collection process.

To further examine the study's validity and reliability, it is also important to discuss the case of triangulation. Fundamentally, "triangulation is typically a strategy (test) for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603). Triangulation in data collection is necessary to identify its validity. As stated previously, there are four triangulation types, which include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Carter et al., 2014). The data triangulation focuses on the content of the information gathered from the respondents. The investigator triangulation determines the different methods used in investigation. The theory triangulation dwells on the theoretical foundation of the study. The methodological triangulation examines the methodologies used to obtain the primary sources. This study utilized the data triangulation because the process of gathering data is not singular but multiple. Aside from the interview, the data collection was facilitated by survey and focus group. The reliability and validity of this study was strengthened through the exploration of findings using the three data collection processes. Aside from the interview, a focus group was conducted wherein the researcher asked the participants to join the group interview and discussion through Skype to validate their arguments. Through the process of triangulation, the findings were validated due to the strict criteria of determining reliability associated with triangulation.

Aside from triangulation, saturation was used to determine the reliability and validity of the study. According to Saunders et al. (2018), “saturation is ‘present in all qualitative research’ and as previously noted, it is commonly considered as the ‘gold standard’ for determining sample size in qualitative research, with little distinction between different types of qualitative
research” (p. 1897). Qualitative research does not focus on the number of respondents but merely on the quality of studies. This is the reason why, at some point, researchers are use a few numbers of respondents. In this study, the total number of target samples is 12 because two MNCs were selected from each of the six countries to be included in the investigation. Considering the great number of MNCs throughout Europe, 12 MNCs are extremely few. Nonetheless, this was not be perceived as an issue in qualitative research. The issue that can be seen is the validity and reliability of the sample size. The concept of saturation occurs in this case. There are four models of saturation: theoretical saturation, inductive thematic saturation, priori thematic saturation, and data saturation. Theoretical saturation focuses on sampling, inductive thematic saturation is on the analysis, priori thematic saturation is on the sampling, and data saturation was on the data collection process.

The validity and reliability of the sample size and findings can be examined from the four models of saturation. The reason why saturation is important to consider is due to the cases of replication or recurrence of themes, data, and information. This is a common case in qualitative research wherein the respondents have similar ideas, thoughts, and opinions that may not provide new arguments and information to the study. Even though similarity gives strength to the study, it also affects the diversity of themes and codes. This is the reason why saturation is significant in qualitative research. From the four models discussed, the model used in this study is the inductive thematic saturation as it relates to the emergence of new themes or codes (Saunders et al., 2018). However, as per the study design of 12 MNC-affiliated respondents, the initial sample of 12 may be increased or even reduced depending on the emerging information based on the principle of saturation.
Reliability

Reliability is a term used to examine the consistency and effectiveness of the instrument and its findings. It is important to note that "assessing the reliability of study findings requires researchers to make judgements about the 'soundness' of the research in relation to the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the final conclusions" (Noble & Smith, 2015, p. 34). To determine the study's reliability, it is integral to determine the reliability of the data collection process and the instruments used to gather data. As stated previously, this study utilized triangulation in its data collection: interview, focus group, and survey. Based on the research design selected in this study, the three data collection methods were the most applicable tools for this study.

The interview is one of the most common and reliable tools in gathering qualitative data. Through the interview, the researcher was able to delve deeper into the phenomena and unleash further information and ideas that cannot be done in simple surveys. The focus group provided a deeper understanding of the topic using different arguments and opinions from the participants. Through the focus group, the researcher was able to further explore the participants' individual arguments and examine the views of the leaders as a group. The survey determined the background of the MNCs and the leaders that participated in the study.

Another important aspect of the study that needs to examine is the consistency. According to Leung (2015), “the essence of reliability for qualitative research lies with consistency. A margin of variability for results is tolerated in qualitative research provided the methodology and epistemological logistics consistently yield data that are ontologically similar but may differ in richness and ambience within similar dimensions” (Leung, p. 326). Consistency can be seen through the data collection process and the sample size. The sample size must adhere
to the requirement of the study and nature of the research design. This study utilized the case study approach of qualitative research.

A case study is selected because of the variety of MNCs included in this research. The nature of case study does not require extensive or greater number of participants. One case can play a valuable role in providing evidence related to the topic. However, this study involved 12 MNCs with 12 leaders as respondents for the interview, focus group, and survey. These numbers were arrived at based on the preselected MNCs in each of the six countries in Europe. Each of the six countries in Europe have been represented by two MNCs. These MNCs are preselected according to their financial and operations stability. In the context of a case study, these numbers are sufficient and valid, which provided consistency throughout the investigation.

The reliability of this study depends on how the data collection is executed. This study ensured that the triangulation process was reliable considering the nature of its research design. The 12 leaders that participated in this study were asked about their MNCs' role to ensure that they are credible enough to provide the right information about the topic. Furthermore, the use of two MNCs in each country enhanced collection of reliable data. Whether they have similar or different perspectives on their business strategies and their company's cultural influences, the study has been able to provide diverse perspectives that can strengthen the arguments of the study. Furthermore, the issue of saturation was addressed by ensuring that the respondents provided new information with triangulation. Aside from the interview, the researcher administered the survey and focus group interviews, which encouraged the respondents to offer new insights about the topic.
Validity

The validity of this qualitative research was based on how the process of data collection was conducted. It is true that "in a qualitative study the data-gathering instrument is frequently the researcher himself. Thus, questions of researcher bias and researcher competency, if unchecked, may influence the trustworthiness of data considerably. The researcher's very presence may affect the validity of the data provided by subjects" (Brink, 1993, p. 5). Qualitative research is often perceived as insufficient, inconsistent, and bias because of the researcher. Brink's (1993) argument is somehow true and agreeable because the main instrument of qualitative research is the researcher. For example, in an interview, the researcher can provide bias when transcribing and explaining the data because the understanding of the participants' statements depends on how the researcher has interpreted them. This is how validity in qualitative research is challenged. Qualitative researchers must ensure that the data provided is consistent to the arguments shared by the respondents. To address this case, qualitative researchers provide the transcription of the data or raw data. The raw data has been placed in the appendices to show the raw information gathered from the interview. This validates the discussion of the results of the investigation.

Aside from the examination of the consistency of the data collection process and the role of the researcher, it is also vital to examine the findings. There different criteria in determining the validity of qualitative research: primary and secondary. Under the primary are integrity, authenticity, credibility, and criticality (Whittemore, Mandle, & Chase, 2001). The secondary criteria include explicitness, thoroughness, vividness, creativity, and congruence (Whittemore, Mandle, & Chase, 2001). The primary and secondary criteria of validity played a critical role in examining the legitimacy of findings. In the primary criteria, the integrity of the interview has
been examined. The researcher and the interviewee must know the topic they are both discussing during the interview. For the authenticity, the interviewee's information must come from his or her professional experiences and knowledge—without copying from any other source.

The credibility determined the researcher's connection to the topic, as well as the leader's knowledge in the topic. The criticality is evident in the questions asked by the interviewer and the answers provided by interviewees. In the secondary criteria, the explicitness were explored through the clarity of the questions and answers in the interview. The thoroughness of the answers have been examined, as well as the richness of the respondents' information. The creativity was explored based on how the researcher performs the interview and how the respondents answer and handle them. The congruence facilitated examination the trends and patterns of the interviewees' answers for themes.

Considering the primary and secondary criteria of validity, this study ensured that the interview remained clear, elaborated, well-discussed, logical, and critical. The interview validates the significance and contribution of this study because it is the main research instrument in primary data collection. The consistency of the interview process was promoted and practiced from the first to the last interviewee. There was one list of interview question for all the participants to ensure fairness and thoroughness in the process. The researcher also prepared the sub-questions that are related to the main questions if ever the participants provide unclear discussion that answers the interview questions. The preparations and execution of the interview has been properly performed to ensure that the validity process of the data collection.

**Summary of Reliability and Validity**

The discussion of reliability and validity shows that qualitative research is in the midst of inconsistency and bias because of the subjective arguments, opinions, and information that was
gathered in the data collection process. However, the discussion of the reliability and validity provided clarity to skepticisms. This part of the research shows that reliability and validity play a critical role in understanding the value, consistency, and correctness of the research design and methodology. Using a qualitative research, this study aims to examine the business strategies of MNCs in Europe. The six countries selected included two MNCs that served as representatives of each country. From the method of identifying population and sampling, the issue of reliability and validity may occur. Nonetheless, this study ensures that the research process is consistent throughout by following the standards of data collection process, particularly the case of triangulation.

As discussed in this part of the study, reliability and validity are two aspects of the research that promote clarity, transparency, and consistency. This part explores and examines the nature of the research design, as well as the data collection process. The case of triangulation and saturation are also discussed to delve deeper into the analysis of the case studies conducted in this research. The use of triangulation method justifies the study's reliability because it supports different methodologies to be used to gather primary data. The saturation showed the validity of the research because it examines the contribution of the findings and how it becomes different from other studies.

The discussion on the reliability of the research also shows the effectiveness and consistency research instruments and how they can be properly utilized in the presentation of the case study. The sample size, as well as the process of conducting the interview, are also discussed to show that this study aims to provide a reliable process and findings. The validity part discusses how the research was validated. The primary and secondary criteria of validity are also explained in relation to the topic to justify the study's rationality. Through these discussions,
the reliability and validity of the study are explored and justified. This study also shows how it aims to provide new data and information that is useful for future researchers who want to study international business strategies of MNCs.

**Transition and Summary of Section 2**

Section 2 first presents the purpose statement of the project, the researcher's role, and the participants selected for the project. The researcher's role describes the process of conducting the research such as identifying, contacting, and interviewing the participants, that is, the leaders of the selected MNCs. The section, research method and design, deals with a general discussion of the proposed qualitative method of analysis and the selected design by way of multiple case studies. The rationale for the method and design selection is also elucidated grounded on an interpretivist perspective that justifies the decision required for an in-depth understanding of specific data pertaining to each participant MNC.

A discussion of the population and sampling section touches on selecting and recruiting participants based on an ethical framework and a set of considerations that ensure anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality of the disclosures made by the leader-participants of the study. The research attempted to revisit additional data sources deemed important for the specific context of the MNC, including but not limited to company documents that the leaders can furnish. Section 2 is also concerned with instrumentation, data collection techniques and data organization strategies. Among the data collection instruments planned for the project are: a survey questionnaire, interview guides, and the Skype platform. Accordingly, the following data collection techniques were utilized; survey, interview, and focus group discussions. To organize the vast data collection, quantitative data was tabulated and charted, whereas qualitative data has
been organized in themes and presented using the inductive method. The rationale for selection of these specific techniques has been discussed in detail in the findings and discussion section.

The data analysis section describes the protocol that utilized in addressing the research questions, which include: data preparation, data reduction, data display, data drawing and verification, and triangulation. This section further details the analytical process of coding that identified the final themes for presentation of study results. Lastly, Section 2 explains the reliability and validity of the research project's outcomes and addresses concerns regarding bias, which is inherently present in qualitative research. An exposition was offered to clearly present how reliability, validity, and consistency has been maintained throughout different processes of the research, particularly in participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

In the next section, which tackles applications to professional practice and implications for change, the following were covered: an overview of the study; presentation of findings, including general and qualitative outcomes; applications of the findings to professional practice; recommendations for action. Additionally, Section 3 addresses avenues for future research and recommendations for further study. The section on reflections provides an account of the researcher's experience in the research, and any potential personal bias involved or preconceived values and ideas that may impact the study results. Moreover, this section integrates biblical principles with findings to describe the relevance of Christian teaching in the modern business context. Lastly, the next section provides a summary and the study conclusions.
Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The third section of the dissertation focuses on the application of the study findings to professional practice. The section analyzes how the study findings affects change. The section is comprised of four broad categories: presentation of findings; application to professional practice; recommendations for action and further study; and reflections. The section is concerned with themes, patterns or relationships identified through data obtained from methods of survey, interviews and focus groups from representations of each MNC based in United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland. The themes are consistent with three predetermined research questions. The first question focuses on regional differences influence level of success that MNCs achieve in foreign operations. The second question is on the importance of cultural differences between the host and home countries and how they influence MNCs' performance in foreign countries. The third question is on the impacts of local and global internationalization strategies on MNCs' performance.

The findings analyzed based on the research questions influences application in professional practice. Specifically, findings related to the cultural differences and their impact on MNCs' regional performance has a profound effect on professional practice. As such, the researcher provided recommendations for action to the companies analyzed through multiple case study. Furthermore, this section also provides recommendations for further research avenues that future researchers can pursue in order to enrich existing literature related to the topic. Reflections are provided based on the case analysis of each MNC participant and as per information obtained from MNC representatives. The reflections integrates many aspects, such as leadership, cultural competence, and diversity in terms of how these factors affect decision-making in the companies. The reflections also integrate Biblical principles with findings to
describe the relevance of Christian teaching in the modern business context. The section begins with a brief overview of the study and end with a summary and conclusions.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of the qualitative multi-case study design study is to add to the body of knowledge by exploring how MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland (a) employ global approaches in their foreign market operations and (b) differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. The study contributes towards existing literature by exploring the two major areas of strategies regarding globalization and localization operations developed by managers of MNCs from selected six regions. The study integrates findings from the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland since it considers a multi-case study approach. The case study approach effectively investigates or addresses an issue that is yet to receive extensive attention in the literature. The case study design is also effective since it seeks to gather in-depth understanding of the complex issues underpinning the phenomenon of interest. The study adds value to the present knowledge of MNCs' internationalization strategies from a European perspective.

The chosen qualitative study design played an instrumental role in explore and gaining in-depth details and insight on how MNC from each region have effectively engaged in degree of local penetration or global expansion. Respective strategies used by managers formed the basis for the exploration. The data collected through the Manager survey enables determining the relationship between strategies applied to MNCs' local and global contexts and the impact of these strategies on their respective performances. Overall, the findings indicate that most MNCs within the six regions are well-informed about the importance of diversity and cultural
competencies. The diversity and cultural competencies of the MNCs are also aligned based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions with the host countries. The major overlapping themes identified through manager survey, interview, and focus group discussions include the awareness of impact of regional differences on MNC performance, perceived significance of cultural differences on MNC performance, and managers' perceptions of internationalization.

**Anticipated Themes/Perceptions**

Preliminary investigations and synthesis of the literature has offered cues about anticipated themes or perceptions. The established research questions also point to possible themes/perceptions that could emerge from the study. A key theme is about managers' perceptions and attitudes related to their awareness of regional and cultural differences. The researcher believes that the managers' attitudes and perceptions influence differences in thought and action as they determine internationalization strategies in host nations. Additionally, the researcher expects managers to consider the local culture of the host nation and change their business strategies accordingly as they pursue internationalization. Furthermore, leadership is another expected theme such that most successful MNCs are those that apply charismatic or transnational leadership styles. Lastly, the researcher interpreted that diversity and cultural competencies are valued significantly for the pursuit of internationalization and play a fundamental role in ensuring MNCs' success in foreign countries. The next section presents the actual results from the study.

**Presentation of the Findings**

Although the study was qualitative in nature, it also generated quantitative data, which has been presented as descriptive statistics. As such, this section presents demographic data gleaned from the data analysis. The integration of descriptive statistics in the presentation of
findings is instrumental in visualizing the data in a meaningful way. For example, the age and position of the research participant offer in-depth understanding of the sample population included in the study. The study included thirty participants from MNCs in six European regions. Figure 1 illustrates the age distribution of the participants, with 40% of them falling within the 35-40 age bracket. Male managers were overrepresented in each age bracket except for the 46-50 category where the number of male and female managers was equal. Male managers who took part in the study were 18 (60%) were more compared to 12 (40%) of their female counterparts.

![Age Distribution of the Managers](image)

*Figure 3 Age Distribution of the Managers*

On the other hand, most of the participants fell within the age group of 35-45 years. Therefore, the descriptive statistics shows that the population sample consisted of more participants who were in the early years of middle age. Specifically, 63% of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 45 years. Management position is another descriptive variable that emerged from the data analysis process. Figure 2 presents the managerial roles and positions of participants in their respective companies. Fifty-three percent of the participants were in senior-
level management compared to 40% in top management positions. The remaining 7% were in middle-level managerial positions.

![Management Position in the Company](chart)

**Figure 4 Managerial Roles of the Managers**

A notable finding from the descriptive statistics is that women are still underrepresented in management and leadership positions. The study has shown that male managers constituted 60% of the sample compared to 40% of their female counterparts. The gender gap in the management of the MNCs across the six countries is not marginal, but it reinforces concerns over gender disparities. Scholars have described MNCs as gendered social spaces that transform and reproduce gender practices, relations, and norms through cross-border activities within MNCs. For example, Frenkel (2017) has argued that MNCs are carriers of gender regimes of their home countries. Julien and Pealoza (2012) have described gender regimes as systems of social practices and norms that construe men and women as being different, as well as organizing gender relations based on these assumptions. Therefore, the gender differences illuminated in the study offers an opportunity of shedding light to sensitive yet critical issues, particularly power relations and social hierarchy in MNCs.
An analysis of the data has shown that women participants were underrepresented in all the three managerial position. An anticipated finding was that women were confined in middle-level management positions while men were overrepresented in both the top management and senior-level management positions. Although the focus of the present study is not on gender issues, gender relations are critical when examining the performance of MNCs. A major gap in the literature is that studies in both international management (IM) and international business (IB) have traditionally overlooked the role that gender relations play in shaping internationalization patterns (Frenkel, 2017). Additionally, Frenkel (2017) have asserted that IM and IB studies ignore the influence of MNCs in the transformation or reproduction of division of labor and gender identities in the countries where they operate. Thus, focusing on gender issues in the leadership and management of MNCs is vital since gender issues have far-reaching ramifications beyond the boundaries of the firm.

The issue of gender is consistent with the second area of the study, which is to examine how MNCs in the six European countries differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. Unprecedented expansion of MNCs and their penetration into new markets have raised hope about their impact on gender. Scholars have hoped that the rise of MNCs would offer better employment opportunities for women, including education, training, and leadership. For instance, Julien and Pealoza (2012) have contended that the growth of MNCs enhances human resources (HR) practices in the local environment, including improved work-life balance and diversity management. The practices are then diffused beyond the boundaries of the MNCs by contributing to a more gender-egalitarian society and democratization. Managers from seven of the twelve MNCs acknowledged the existence of gender quotas to expand the representation of women in targeted senior leadership roles,
including senior and board management. The quotas are responsive to the changing legislative landscape across the European Union, and they have been instrumental in the rising number of women moving from lower to medium-level management. However, women leaders included in the study noted practical challenges to gender equity, noting specifically gender pay gaps.

A major emphasis of the study is on the cultural effects on the operations of the selected MNCs in foreign markets based on the Hofstede’s model. Masculinity is one of the elements that falls under the element of culture in the Hofstede’s model. The study findings have shown that women are underrepresented in top management position. The gap may not significantly wide but exemplifies the scope of the problem. The 2016 Report by the World Economic Forum (WEF), *The Industry Gender Gap*, identified the female talent as one of the most underutilized resources in business organizations. According to the report, the female talent is either untapped from the onset or through the lack of progression. The report further states that women have a 28% chance of progressing to leadership positions compared to men despite being more educated globally than their male counterparts (Wang & Kelan, 2013). Concerns over gender disparities at top-level management has prompted many EU countries to enact quotas for women on the boards of publicly listed companies.

The aim of introducing the gender quotas was to increase the number of women represented in targeted senior leadership roles, including top leadership positions on corporate boards. Nevertheless, research findings have shown that the overall effect of quotas on women leadership has been insignificant because men are still the dominant gender in top leadership positions across corporate boards (Pastore & Tommaso 2016). As mentioned, gender issues were not the primary focus of the current study. However, it is critical to have background understanding of the gender relations in the light of the findings generated from this study. The
information lays the foundation for future studies. The achievement of this goal is critical considering that gender is one of the prominent issues confronting MNCs. The relationship between gender quotas and firm performance highlights the need of exploring the place of women in the management and leadership of MNCs. A major finding across the studies is that increasing the representation of women in leadership positions has a positive effect on organizational performance (Wang & Kelan, 2013).

A dominant finding from quantitative data is the underrepresentation of women in top management positions at the MNCs. The finding is significant considering that Europe is largely an egalitarian society based on the Hofstede’s model. The gender issue has been explored further under the recommendations for action and recommendations for further studies. On the other hand, quantitative data was only a minor portion of the study, which was qualitative in nature. Therefore, presentation of qualitative findings formed the largest part of the third section. The section presents three major themes extrapolated from qualitative analysis and coding of raw data. The thematic presentation of the findings forms the foundation of this section. Three key themes emerged from the analysis of data arising from the surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions with the managers. The next section explores in detail the three themes and sub-themes. The analysis of each theme gave special attention to the phenomena of triangulation and data saturation.

**Theme 1: Regional Differences in Foreign Markets**

The first theme identified is that of managers’ awareness of impact of regional differences on MNC’s performance in foreign market context. The researcher identifies that the participant companies based on selected six countries have regional differences compared to other nations in the EU. As such, a major question guiding the interviews for the manager was
whether regional differences in their country as compared to other nations impact the level of success of the firm for its foreign operations. Table 1 presents the managers’ response to the first question based on a three-point Likert scale: very strongly, strongly, and moderately. As a response, 36.67% participants reported that their firm very strongly encourages diversity and cultural competence, while the majority 50% presented that their firm strongly encourages diversity and cultural competencies. Lastly, 13.33% of MNC managers reported that their companies or nation only moderately encourages diversity and cultural competencies.

**Table 1 Responses to Question #1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Q#1 Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Very Strongly</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Moderately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Participants</td>
<td>1. In your opinion, do regional differences in your country, as compared to other nations in the EU, have an influence on the level of success that your firm achieves in its foreign operations? If so, can you identify some of those traits that contribute to the success/failure?</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Culture is a prominent issue that influence the operation of MNCs. Culture featured prominently among the responses related to the regional differences. The finding is consistent with results from previous studies on international business and international management. Frenkel (2017) has argued that company executives often face a myriad of challenges on culture when expanding their operations abroad. Dispersion of employees across geographical locations is the first outcome of internationalization of business operations. The resulting cultural disintegration challenges the effectiveness of the traditional human resource management strategies (Hashim & Hameed, 2017). Cultural diversity becomes a major barrier to successful
internationalization because it affects implicit communication between employees in local and international offices. According to Hashim and Hameed (2017), managers of MNCs must find a way of ensuring that all employees are committed to the organizational culture and norms without causing tension between local and corporate cultures. Thus, diversity management is one of the key issues that have emerged from the present research.

Diversity management has increasingly become synonymous with the internationalization of business operations. The management of diversity plays a key role in promoting greater inclusivity of staff from diverse backgrounds. Most of the managers included in the study reported that their organizations encourage diversity and cultural competencies. Conducting a feasibility study is the key strategy to diversity management. The feasibility study allows managers to evaluate the similarities and differences between corporate and local cultures. Outcomes of the analysis then help managers to develop and implement strategies that have the ability to promote diversity and cultural competencies (Hashim & Hameed, 2017). As mentioned already, inclusivity is another crucial element of diversity management identified in the literature. Hashim and Hameed (2017) have asserted that giving everyone a voice ensures that employees from diverse backgrounds have an equal chance of taking part in key decisions and strategic planning. Diversity management positions MNCs to confront regional differences that affect performance and productivity.

Findings from focus group discussions replicated those generated from the interviews. For example, participant I8 revealed the concept of “buying power” and stated that as an MNC leader, there is indication to conduct “a lot of research, understand variance in culture, nations’ weather etc.,” elements that make up the nation’s buying power. Additionally, the participant pointed out that regional differences have a huge influence on operations in the foreign context,
as managers of MNCs must understand how the foreign government works, what roadblocks or challenges are present for business expansion etc. This is understood through the concept of negotiated culture as explored in the literature review, which presents that organizational culture of the MNC’s subsidiary firms in the foreign context are impacted based on host country’s cultural differences and thus these should be considered (Caprar, 2011). Similarly, participant UK16 stated,

Regional differences between nations can be a big factor in identifying if my MNC would be a success or not. It may be a success to my home nation where it originated but since there are cultural differences between nations we are not sure if the business would be supported by the other nations. Thus, that’s why there are feasibility studies before having the MNC deployed in order to measure if it would suit to a specific demand of each a nation.

UK16 raises a fundamental issue about conducting due diligence before venturing into a new foreign market. The study findings have shown that regional differences exist among MNCs operating in the EU. Thus, it is problematic to assume that strategies that work in the UK can be replicated in Germany or any other European country with utmost success. The key message here is that every country has a unique culture and way of doing business despite being in the same geographical region. The finding then reinforces the value of feasibility studies. Research findings have shown that prior planning for the international culture is critical to prevent communication breakdowns, dysfunctional workplaces, and fault lines (Hashim & Hameed, 2017). The achievement of this goal is critical given that foreign culture differs significantly from the local one. Thus, MNC leadership/management must prepare adequately to navigate the
complexities of the foreign culture being aware of the cultural norms and values. A combination of these issues brings to the forefront the concept of cultural sensitivity.

After stating the importance of regional differences and their influence on the MNCs performance in foreign nations, participants S14 and UK16 highlighted the need for cultural sensitivity course and feasibility studies that must be conducted to help consider the regional differences and develop strategies accordingly. In this context, the managers had previously responded in the interview questionnaire regarding what measures the company takes to ensure to note that while 17 respondents engaged in regular or consistent training programs, 10 respondents conducted cultural training and orientation programs occasionally, while the remaining 3 only provided such programs after noticing a problem. The findings imply that continuous cultural training is critical but does not receive the attention it deserves in MNCs. Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of cultural training programs based on the responses of the managers.

![Frequency of Cultural Training Programs](image)

*Figure 5 Frequency of Cultural Training/Orientation Programs Conducted*
Training is another critical strategy that many corporations are pursuing once they expand into international markets. Adapting and responding effectively to the local culture is a major milestone for MNCs entering international markets. However, training is also vital because it allows employees to learn about the culture of the organization. Corporations cannot navigate the complex cultural issues in international markets unless their train and support foreign staff to integrate and assimilate within it. Cross-cultural communication is one area where staff training and development is of great importance. Training on cultural competencies ensures that employees acquire new skills that help them to communicate effectively within a multi-cultural setting (Julien & Pealoza, 2012). Koveshnikov et al. (2019) have found that training both managers and staff enhances effective cross-cultural communication, which in turn minimizes the risk of conflict. According to Koveshnikov et al. (2019), diversity training empowers both local and foreign employees to express divergent opinions without engaging in confrontation, especially during meetings.

The conclusion from the study is that all participants in the focus group discussion unanimously agreed that regional differences account for major implications on MNC’s performance in foreign nations. Therefore, managers must not overlook these differences. Responses of the managers indicate that participant companies from the six EU countries studied overwhelmingly state that their respective companies strongly encourage diversity and cultural competencies. The strongest responses came from Switzerland and UK companies, who also articulated the need continuing learning on cultural sensitivity in their companies, as well as, feasibility studies focusing on regional differences that would guide the formation of strategies. All participants in the focus group discussion unanimously agreed that regional differences
powerfully impact MNC’s performance in foreign nations, which means to say that managers should prioritize learning about these differences and how these should be managed.

Although globalization has offered many opportunities for internationalization of local businesses, it has also produced new challenges. Companies that have a strategic plan for expansion into foreign markets often succeed than those who enter the markets before conducting due diligence. The assertions made by UK16 exemplifies the need of conducting feasibility studies before venturing into international markets because of the regional differences. The point of argument is that successful strategies in local markets do not necessary work or generate the desired outcomes when applied in foreign/international markets (Koveshnikov et al.). The latter finding underscores the value of feasibility studies. Yi (2012) has argued that MNCs cannot expand into international markets before assessing the situation and how it affects their operations. For instance, it would be inconsequential to enter a foreign market before understanding the cultural, economic, legal, or political situation in the international context.

MNCs typically depend on their employees’ cultural diversity to ensure that their subsidiaries in foreign countries are not adversely impacted by cultural differences between the host and local country. Indeed, evidence shows that cultural differences strongly affect organizational outcomes, including, in terms of optimizing upon local resources (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). An MNC should have employees in its foreign operations that are culturally competent to prevent conflicts that may arise between the local and foreign employees, as well as conflicts between the MNC and stakeholders in the host country. However, regional cultural differences represent challenges for MNCs in terms of diversity, as well as, ascertaining that local and global factors are integrated. Consequently, entrepreneurial culture and capabilities can
be adversely impacted if MNCs do not have local capabilities to manage cultural diversities and regional differences (Amal et al., 2014).

Hiring local talent is one of the key requirements that governments impose of MNCs. The goal is to ensure that local citizens benefit from the economic opportunities afforded by MNCs. Many of the managers have agreed that strengthening the local capabilities of employees helps the MNC to achieve strategic goals and plans. The local talent can play an instrumental role in helping the management to navigate the complex local environment. However, research findings have highlighted the need of maintaining heterogeneity in all global branches. Koveshnikov et al. (2019) have discouraged the tendency of having most of the employees from the local market to avoid creating faulty lines in the organization. The best strategy is to move across the business borders so that they can learn about the cultures of each other. For example, local UK employees can be transferred to Switzerland and vice versa to promote cultural exchange. The strategy reduces the risk where managers from the parent company make decisions without having prior knowledge of the cultural context in the international market.

Meanwhile, one of the challenges that these MNCs are accosted with is that they have difficulties implementing home strategies in their foreign markets because of cultural barriers (Verbeke & Geisler Asmussen, 2016). The regional differences between countries further affect their business strategies in different ways. For instance, countries in Europe share cultural similarities as a result of the shared history in their region, and eventually, membership in the EU. Trade within the EU allows member states to benefit from the strengths of their national and regional traditions and even though the UK has exited EU, it continues to share similarities in regional culture (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). Countries in EU have been linking up with subnational levels of government, both regional and local, so that they can continue trading with
each other and benefit from the policies of the EU that are applicable when they trade with other countries.

Industrialization, urbanization, and European business structures have created a market environment, that although conducive for member states, when these states trade with other countries, are subjected to institutional pressures simply because other countries conduct businesses according to their own standard patterns of experiences, attitudes, beliefs, values, and so forth. Despite the shared cultural similarities within the region, a close look at countries in Europe, such as the six countries being studied in this dissertation, reveals that Germany has a highly traditional and rational culture while the Netherlands has a strong self-expression and survival culture (Beugelsdijk et al., 2017). The UK, Belgium, and France are moderate in these respects, although Italy and Spain score lower on both dimensions. Hence, these regional differences impact even trade between each other, more so, trade with countries outside of Europe. Nonetheless, it must be emphasized that to succeed internationally, the six countries in this study should achieve comparative advantage by understanding the culture of foreign markets in which they wish to compete (Meyer et al., 2012). This is especially true since culture strongly influences standardization and localization strategies, brand effectiveness, free trade policies, advertising, strategic management, and business relationships.

**Theme 2: National Cultural Differences**

The second primary research question that guided the study and data collection methods was whether the participants thought that cultural differences between host and home countries affected the performance of MNC’s in foreign countries. As such, the participants reflected increased perceived significance of cultural differences on MNC performance in the present context. However, the degree of how much the MNC acted based on the perception of
significance of these cultural differences differed from company to company. This is reflected through existing literature in which researchers reveal that culture plays an important role in the context of MNCs operating in various countries, and that cultural differences can be assessed by using Hofstede’s cultural dimensions’ tool (Peprah et al., 2017).

The greatest challenge that MNCs face when entering new markets is aligning their corporate culture with that of the foreign country. Peprah et al. (2017) have found that the cultural norms and values of an international company are usually inconsistent with those in the host country. Meyer (2015) cites an example where the task-oriented and egalitarian management of TNT, a Dutch company did not align with the local Chinese culture. The performance and productivity of MNCs depends on their corporate culture. Nevertheless, companies expanding into foreign markets face the challenge of hiring local employees whose cultural norms and values align with the corporate culture (Meyer, 2015). A pertinent question in the literature is whether MNCs should prioritize corporate culture over the local culture, or whether to merge the two. The answer to this question is essential because a clash between the two cultures can have an adverse effect on the performance and success of the company. Findings from the current study lays the foundation for gaining an in-depth understanding of the issue at hand.

Table 2 presents the managers’ responses to the second question on the relationship between culture and performance of MNCs in foreign markets. The findings show that 53.33% of managers strongly believed that cultural differences between host and home countries affected the performance of MNCs in host nations. On the other hand, 43.33% and 3.33% managers respectively believed that cultural differences ‘positively’ and ‘somewhat’ affected MNCs’
performance in foreign context. This is in line with literature review findings that one approach is not necessarily successful in different cultural settings (Sacramento, 2018).

Table 2 Response to Question #4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Q#4 Question</th>
<th>Strongly</th>
<th>Positively</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think the cultural differences between home and host countries influence the performance of an MNC’s foreign operations? If so to what extent?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The words of S14 present significant emphasis on perceived importance of cultural differences as seen in the following excerpt: “Education is key. In the age of globalization, virtually no cultural differences remain insurmountable, so long as host and guest nations converge on policymaking.”

Most of the participants highlighted the importance of cultural differences. They also supported the need of considering every cultural difference when making strategic decisions and plans regardless of how big or small the difference is. Furthermore, participant F25 added to the discussion that MNCs must “consider their business objectives if they are aligned with the culture of their target country,” because similarities and differences in the home and host culture have a “significant impact” on MNC’s performance. Li and Hsieh (2009) have supported the view by demonstrating that companies need to utilize a mixture of local as well as traditional approaches to appeal to the host countries, and thus flourish in the globalized context. Furthermore, participant G26 presented a perspective of the society in the host nation stating that
only by incorporating strategies that address cultural differences can the MNC communicate its vision to provide “effective products in the [host] market.”

Cultural differences between home and host countries is a major topic when considering the internationalization of business operations. A key finding from the study is about aligning the strategic plan of the MNC with the local culture, which is consistent with the finding from the review of the literature. The synthesis of evidence has specifically underscored the essence of planning in advance for cultural issues that emerges during the internationalization process. The success of the business internationalization process depends on the ability of the firm or corporation to plan for international culture. Being aware of the dimension of cultural differences between the host and home countries is the foremost step to the planning process (Meyer, 2015). Meyer (2015) has argued that evaluating the differences between the local and foreign culture is instrumental in informing strategies for diversity management. A noteworthy point is that choosing either the corporate culture or local culture often creates problems in the future. Therefore, cultural considerations are always at the forefront when making plans for international expansion.

The findings from the present study can be viewed broadly from the insights presented in the current body of knowledge. Considering works such as that of Ghemawat (2005), MNCs are successful when they employ homogenized market approaches in regions such as EU compared to more regionally distinct countries and national cultures such as that of Asia. Ghemawat (2005) concluded that regional differences significantly influence MNC’s marketing approaches including products and services provided, pricing, promotion etc. Thus, as per existing literature, and the findings of this study, MNCs must consider regional differences and national culture and appropriately choose localized and homogenized strategies. As such, all participants in the focus
group agreed that cultural differences between host and home nations were important factors affecting MNC’s performance in foreign countries compared to the home country. Similarly, findings from the literature review have shown that companies should ignore the influences of the local culture on business operations at their own peril.

Culture is one of the factors that companies must assess and quantify as they consider expanding into international markets. Internationalization of local business operations is critical in a modern environment characterized by stiff competition and economic volatility. Expansion into foreign markets allow companies to maximize profits by taking advantage of opportunities in foreign markets, especially in emerging economies (Meyer, 2015). However, such prospects can turn into failure when local and foreign cultures clash. The clash of cultures is an important cultural consideration for the MNCs seeking to expand their operations into foreign markets. The greatest task that managers must accomplish entails identifying and addressing cultural issues and differences in a satisfactory manner that maximizes benefits for both the company and the local communities. The achievement of this goal is of outmost import because disrespecting or devaluing a foreign culture can have devastating outcomes on the entire business operations before they mature or generate returns on investment.

The second theme identified through data analysis pertains to the ways that national cultural differences impact the performance of MNC’s in foreign countries. The degree in which participants perceive the importance of cultural differences on MNC performance significantly vary. Nevertheless, the majority of the participants believe that cultural differences between host and home countries impact performance of MNCs in host countries. Therefore, business objectives and strategy have to be aligned with the culture of the host country, particularly, consumers’ tastes and expectations from companies. In light of these, it is crucial that MNC’s
communicate the value of product or service to consumers through marketing efforts that are culturally appropriate and sensitive. One way of effectively achieving this is to hire local third-party marketers and advertising experts who understand the host country’s markets and consumers.

The national/local culture has a profound effect on almost all aspects of the business operations. According to Reynolds (2017), it is common in the realm of international business, for MNCs to adhere with national culture albeit this is different from other organizations. There, it is crucial that MNCs understand the ways through which culture impacts work behaviors, communication, working systems, as well as, organizational hierarchies not only in the local country but also in the host country. On the other hand, Lindholm (2000) emphasizes the important relationships between national culture and MNCs’ employee performance. National culture affects the choice of performance evaluation methods, including, management by objectives; differences in management and leadership style; as well as, how performance is appraised in different countries (Lindholm, 2000). Just as importantly, it must be emphasized that performance methods, tools, assessments and their management cannot be easily transferred from parent company to subsidiary in a foreign country due to the influence of culture. Hence, it is uncertain whether what is deemed effective in a headquarters may not necessarily be the same in the foreign subsidiary. In this regard, if performance is impacted by culture, then employees need to be trained in the foreign subsidiary in order to fulfill policies and performance standards set in headquarters.

Companies expanding into foreign markets usually assign some of their managers and employees to run their subsidiaries. Sustained expansion into overseas markets means that the trend is expected to continue and increase in scale. However, employees being assigned to
foreign subsidiaries often experience numerous challenges as they work within a foreign culture for the first time. Problems related to cultural differences are the most challenging for the personnel (Pastore & Tommaso, 2016). The participants acknowledged the concern by recommending training for employees working in a foreign subsidiary. Although companies send the most talented employees to their foreign subsidiaries, they need cultural training to navigate the culture of the local markets. Cultural differences are the overarching finding from the present study. As such, specialized training for employees in foreign subsidiary ensures that they are aware of the cultural differences and their effect on the performance of MNCs. According to Pastore and Tommaso (2016), cultural training allows employees in foreign subsidiaries to adapt effectively to the local culture.

The review of the literature confirms the value of cultural training for personnel in the foreign subsidiaries. Training is critical in cases where the local culture has a profound effect on business operations and performance. Alternatively, performance methods, tools, and evaluations, should be culturally adapted to the host country and supported by employee training. This way, employees can meet standards and criteria relative to performance being implemented at headquarters. An added bonus here is that when employees are well-trained and developed, job satisfaction increases along with improvements in performance (Lindholm, 2000). It is likely that in the case of MNCs, the second option is better because a huge part of performance evaluations are feedbacks given by managers and supervisors within the subsidiary firm in the host country because they are the ones working with the employees directly. Performance evaluations are also steps forward for discussing future plans for employee performance that also positively affects employee attitudes and job satisfaction (Lindholm, 2000).
A combination of findings from both the study and literature review confirms the need of emphasizing cultural considerations when making plans for global expansion. Cultural mistakes can have long-term implications on the performance and operations of MNCs even when the mistakes are an unintentional or unconscious occurrence. The review of the literature has shown that being knowledgeable about the foreign culture and knowing how to use the knowledge allows MNCs to prevent the occurrence of cultural mistakes (Pastore & Tommaso, 2016). The greatest task for MNCs is striking a balance between the local and foreign culture. Whichever the case, MNCs must ensure that the local culture has a special consideration in the company’s strategic plans ad goals. Specifically, business operations must be aligned with the national laws, in addition to adapting with local tastes and preferences (Yi, 2012). A company that has a comprehensive plan for cultural diversity management achieves a competitive advantage in the foreign market. Local preferences and tastes were also covered in the study.

Table 3 Response to Questions #5 and #6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Question</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>30 Participants</strong></td>
<td>Q# 5 So what strategies do you adopt? For example, do you align your products or its features to match the expectations of the host country’s consumers?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>30 Participants</strong></td>
<td>Q#8 Do you involve local ad agencies or handle everything through in-house or national ad agencies?</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 presents findings from questions 5 and 8, which focused on the adoption of country-centered strategies. Based on this main theme of cultural difference, sub-questions were formulated to investigate to what extent managers practically applied their perception and knowledge of impact of cultural differences on MNC performance. For instance, one question asked in the interview was whether managers align products or modify its features based on expectations of consumers in the host country. For this, 46.67% of managers reported that they always took absolute measures to align and modify the products to suit host country’s consumers’ expectations, while 43.33% reported taking some measures within frequent intervals for making such modifications to their products. Finally, 10% of the participants presented that their companies took very moderate measures that occasionally sought to modify products based on host country’s consumer expectations. It can be seen that no manager or MNC took no measures or never took any measures not to align their products, this means that most managers support the role of cultural differences. The difference between responses and approaches is seen in case of degree and frequency of modification approaches taken.

In addition to modifying the products, it is also important to communicate the value of product or service to consumers via marketing and advertising efforts. In this context, the question asked whether companies involved local advertisement agencies or handled everything related to ad marketing in-house. Majority of managers, that is, 16 participants reported that they always involved local ad agencies, while 8 managers and 6 managers involved local ad agencies ‘frequently’ and ‘sometimes’ respectively (Table 3). This is specifically supported in existing literature with studies that focus on applying Hofstede’s cultural dimensions and analyzing how MNCs adapt their marketing approaches based on the national culture of the host nation (Awazu, 2007; Beugelsdijk et al., 2018). For instance, while a national culture such as the US would
embrace marketing message that supports independence and individualism, this message might not be as appealing to countries that have predominantly collectivist societies (Szymura-Tyc & Kucia, 2016). Therefore, the study revealed that MNCs relied on local ad agencies to ensure that host nation’s socio-cultural dimensions would be adequately integrated into marketing and advertisement approaches.

Country-centered strategies are necessary for the successful entry and management of MNCs in foreign markets. A key finding that has emerged from the study is the need of aligning business strategy and goals with the culture of the host country or market. The study findings have also shown that business strategies and plans are successful when MNCs work local marketers and advertising experts. The two findings are consistent with those in the literature review. Notably, forging partnerships with local influencers allow MNCs to grow their businesses abroad. Companies entering new markets, especially in foreign countries, cannot succeed unless they gain the trust of the local business partners, as well as prospective customers. Local businesses have already established a strong portfolio and networks in the market. Therefore, it would be cost-effective for MNCs to work with local influencers and partners than starting new strategies from the scratch. Having a local strategy ensures that the company integrates the local culture into its strategic plans.

**Theme 3: Internationalization Strategies in Local Vs. Global Context**

The third primary research question was related with whether managers pursued internationalization strategies and thought that these strategies depended on the global and local context of the nation. Managers’ perception of internationalization was such that many of them believed that internationalization strategies within the global and local environment would affect the MNC’s performance in to a certain extent. As shown through literature review, MNCs play a
key role in knowledge transfer when pursuing international growth opportunities, which means that they are welcome by host nations (Faria & Sofka, 2008). Thus, the management of this knowledge transfer and related opportunities in the host nation is important to sustain good performance of the MNCs in foreign context. As such, 63.33% participants believed that global and local internationalization strategies had a highly significant impact on the performance of MNC, as opposed to 36.67% participants who perceived the impact of to be just significant.

Knowledge transfer is a critical issue in the expansion strategies for MNCs. The ability to leverage locally developed and available knowledge is the most significant competitive advantage for MNCs. The quest to replicate and expand success across borders often challenges MNCs to move beyond the knowledge they know to how they can gain and diffuse it throughout the organization or business enterprise (Pastore & Tommaso, 2016). A consensus in the literature has shown that the dissemination of knowledge across locally dispersed business units has a strong impact on the practices of MNCs. Thus, it is of the essence to align the company’s overall strategy with the local knowledge. A major concern is that most studies have focused on the local dimension of knowledge transfer at the expense of the international dimension (Peprah et al., 2017). According to Peprah et al. (2017), such a limited focus makes it hard to understand how knowledge transfer occurs between the parent company and local subsidiaries scattered across multiple nations/countries. Gaining an in-depth understanding of the knowledge transfer is critical to finding out how cultural differences influence the process.

Findings from the present study have shown that knowledge transfer should occur between the parent company and subsidiaries, as well as between the locally dispersed MNC units. A noteworthy point is that MNCs use their knowledge stock to support the creation of knowledge across organizational entities. However, knowledge sharing and transfer differs
significantly across MNC units because of cultural differences. For example, the knowledge needed to manage MNC units in one country may not be the right one of effective for units in other countries. Therefore, the unique cultural context where MNC units operate usually impinge on the successful transfer of international knowledge (Peprah et al., 2017). Yi (2012) has argued that the current body of evidence rarely explores the problems that emerge from cross-cultural transfer of knowledge between MNCs and their local units. A vital question arising from both the study and the review of the literature is how MNC headquarters can structure and manage relationships with their foreign subsidiaries. The relationship between the two influences the internationalization strategies that the MNC employ.

Table 4 presents the managers’ response to the tenth interview question related to the global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs. Based on the findings, all participants unanimously perceived the importance of the impact of internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs. The participants were in agreement that both the global and local internationalization strategies affect the performance of MNCs. Therefore, they made changes to such strategies depending on the global or local context of operation. The sentiments presented by the participants brings to the forefront the tension that emerges during the development and selection of global business strategies. A key issue that managers encounter when developing an internationalization strategy is the tradeoff between local responsiveness and global integration. Effective global integration occurs when companies apply the same methods and products to other countries. On the other hand, local responsiveness is the degree to which companies must customize their methods and products to suit the needs of the local markets.
### Table 4 Responses to Question #10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Q#10 Question</th>
<th>How significant, in your opinion, are the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs?</th>
<th>19</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The tension between global integration and local responsiveness underscores the role that internationalization strategies play in defining the success of MNCs in foreign markets. Global integration is desirable in the wake of unprecedented globalization and intensifying competition. Modern companies can only achieve the highest performance outcomes if they expand their operations into foreign markets. Nonetheless, global integration strategies often fail when they do not respond to the unique needs of each foreign market (El Namaki, 2016). These issues were reinforced during the focus group discussions. During the focus group interview, participants put forth detailed explanation of how they thought internationalization strategies would affect the performance of MNCs. According to Participant B1, the impact of internationalization strategies on the performance on MNCs is something that MNCs need to consider while they devise the strategies to expand their operations into a different country. Participant B1’s response is as follows:

Impacts would vary depending on the way the company adapts to the country…If the people or clients accept the product or service it means that they marketing strategies are effective. But if the people or client aren’t satisfied or they believe it will not benefit or fit
in their system, then it is a failure. So, there are more work to be done for a company to successfully enter a different market from different nationality.

The response from B1 lays the foundation for understanding the challenges that managers face when developing an internationalization strategy. MNCs are unique in the sense that they must perform both locally and internationally. In fact, the performance of MNCs in their home countries has a profound influence on their image in international markets. For instance, a MNC with a bad reputation or poor performance often experiences challenges when expanding into global markets. Thus, MNC managers often face the challenge of achieving both internal legitimacy in the domicile region and external legitimacy in the local or foreign context. Consequently, both the local and international strategies are often intertwined in the internationalization plan (El Namaki, 2016). A point to reiterate is that the managerial decisions made at the MNC headquarters have a direct bearing on those at local/foreign subsidiaries. The challenge lies in ensuring that managers at the local subsidiaries and parent company work together to ensure that strategic decisions are responsive to the unique cultural practices of the former (Peprah et al., 2017).

B1’s response to the question becomes clear that when MNCs enter from one country to another country that is greatly different based on national cultures and identities, it is important to create local internationalization strategy that would be in line with the host country’s consumers’ beliefs. Literature reveals that decisions of expansion to different markets depends on factors of lessons that the company takes from previous internationalization procedures and methods (Amal et al., 2013). As Participant B1 put forth, if the consumers accept the products and services, this means the strategies were effective, and the MNCs can follow such strategies in future decisions for internationalization. According to Participant G27, when MNCs pursue
internationalization, the “way people think when handling certain situations” definitely is an important factor. The participant presented the team could be goal oriented or not, and there is a difference between these teams, as a team without any established goal cannot be very successful.

The ability to merge the local and global internationalization plans depends on the effectiveness of teams. Teamwork is a crucial concept that dominates discussions related to the expansion of local businesses into the overseas markets. The first challenge that companies face when they penetrate global markets is how to coordinate the activities of teams dispersed across multiple geographical locations. A prominent feature of modern MNCs is that characterized by geographically dispersed teams with functional expertise couple with deep, local knowledge of the most lucrative markets (El Namaki, 2016). El Namaki (2016) has also asserted that these teams have international diversity that enhances the competitiveness of MNCs. Nonetheless, poor management of global teams can stymie progress toward the achievement of strategic goals and plans. The foremost task for managers is to promote cross-cultural communication within the global teams. Team members must be aware and responsive to the cultural norms and practices of others to prevent the risk of having a dysfunctional workforce.

Literature presents that when MNCs enter new market with their internationalization strategy, there is a need to be aware of cultural complications, language barriers, and pricing issues (Deari, Kimmle, & Lopez, 2008). In cases that the MNC’s management team is not goal oriented, there is a chance that they can merely try to expand to new markets to “exploit ownership benefits” (Amal et al., 2013). However, this may not lead to successful internationalization as the products or services of the company does not appropriate the needs and demands of the consumers in the host nation. Study participants strongly believe that MNCs
need to align business objectives with the culture of their target country especially since
differences in cultures can adversely impact MNC performance. Unless an MNC is able to
achieve this alignment, its leadership cannot create and implement a compelling vision that
applies to the host market. In relation to this, the majority of the participants disclose that they
constantly take absolute measures for aligning and modifying products to suit host country’s
consumers’ expectations, at frequent intervals.

Most of the participants recommended paying closer attention to the local context when
developing an internationalization plan for MNCs. Previous discussions based on B1’s response
have shown that global integration aligns with local responsiveness. MNCs that fail to develop
internationalization plans that are responsive to the unique needs of the global markets normally
fail to achieve their strategic goals. The modern economy has challenged every company to take
advantage of opportunities presented by increased economic globalization. Nevertheless,
research findings have shown that global operations and internationalization of local brands
presents significant risks. Most of the managers who took part in the current study argued that
the success of their MNCs depends on their ability to align corporate strategy with the local
culture. The aspect of feasibility studies emerges again considering that MNCs must conduct
thorough research and plan extensively before expanding their operations into foreign markets.
Managers can only make informed, strategic choices if they have adequate information on how
global integration affects local responsiveness (Wild & Wild, 2013).

Product modifications to suit customer expectations and preferences in the host country
should be supported by marketing efforts conveying value propositions that competitors cannot
achieve. Studies show that a good number of MNCs expand to foreign countries because of
ownership advantage (Amal et al., 2014). These MNCs usually approach internationalization
through strategies from the perspective of their own culture and regional contexts (Verbeke & Geisler Asmussen, 2016). In other words, MNCs adopt a regional approach to strategy development such that they compete in different ways across regions based on the available resources and transaction costs. Doing so leads to different issues, such as, there are regional differences in implementing strategies across organizations, not to mention cultural factors that impact both internationalization and regional strategies. Moreover, taking a regional approach to internationalization self-limits MNCs because this means that they focus on regional value chains and regional head offices instead of a more globalized approach.

Usually, MNCs expand to foreign markets because they see opportunities in the host country’s favorable government policies, trade laws and legislations, as well as, business-friendly government policies (Oh et al., 2019). This leads to a business landscape in the host country that is highly diverse culturally and competition-wise such that taking a regional approach to such foreign markets is severely limited. For the six countries studied in this dissertation, a regional approach to strategy is acceptable only if they conduct within Europe, where regional differences are not significant. The scenario changes when they expand to culturally-different foreign markets, such as, Asia or the Middle East. Due to the diverse cultural factors in the latter foreign markets, an MNC that uses a regionalized approach to strategy would fail to maximize upon, or obtain, firm-specific advantages that could improve performance, including, in terms of market share and profitability (Oh et al., 2019). At the other end of the spectrum, MNCs in the same time, the organization could exploit the diversity and enhance its competitiveness by harnessing the strengths and competencies of the diverse pool of resources at its disposal. For instance, the foreign firm could maximize the use of the existing cultural beliefs to its advantage by learning how to embrace diversity and multiplicity.
Relationship of Themes to Research Questions

The study has three questions, which have formed the basis for the analysis of the themes. The three themes gleaned from the qualitative data analysis flow directly from the research questions. The first question entailed finding out how regional differences influence the level of success that MNCs achieve in their foreign operations. Findings from the study have shown that regional differences have a profound effect on the success of MNCs. A notable issue from the study is that cultural diversity can be a barrier to successful achievement of strategic goals if poorly managed. Therefore, diversity management drew linkages between the first theme and research question. Many of the respondents claimed that their respective MNCs were encouraging and emphasizing both diversity and cultural competencies. Diversity management positions MNCs to confront regional differences that affect performance and productivity. The first theme has generated invaluable insights about the first research question. A noteworthy point is that foreign culture differs significantly from the local one. Thus, MNC leadership/management must prepare adequately to navigate the complexities of the foreign culture being aware of the cultural norms and values.

The second research question investigated the importance of cultural differences between home and host countries in influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations. Study findings have shown that cultural differences between the home and host countries influence the internationalization plan. The greatest challenge for managers is aligning corporate and local cultures. The second theme confirmed that cultural differences between home and host countries are a major topic when considering the internationalization of business operations. Most of the participants supported the need of considering every cultural difference when making strategic decisions and plans regardless of their scope. A key finding from the study is
about aligning the strategic plan of the MNC with the local culture. Therefore, the second theme supports the second research question supporting the need of emphasizing cultural considerations when making plans for global expansion. Cultural mistakes can have long-term implications on the performance and operations of MNCs even when the mistakes are an unintentional or unconscious occurrence.

The third research question focused on the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs. The research has also established congruence between the third question and third theme like the two cases. Specifically, the respondents argued that internationalization strategies within the global and local environment would affect the MNC’s performance to a certain extent. A key revelation is that knowledge transfer influences the extent to which internationalization strategies affect the performance of MNCs. In view of the third research question, the study findings have underscored the significance of aligning the company’s overall strategy with the local knowledge. On the other hand, the impact of internationalization strategies can be understood from the tension between global integration and local responsiveness. A solution to the tension is developing an internationalization strategy that aligns with the host country’s consumers’ beliefs. Additionally, having functional cross-border teams promotes the integration of local and global internationalization plans.

In summary, there is a consistency between the three research questions and the corresponding three themes gleaned from the analysis of qualitative data. A point of convergence is that cultural differences between the host and home countries affect the performance and success of MNCs. Therefore, the greatest challenge for MNCs is developing and implementing internationalization strategies that are responsive to the cultural differences across countries.
Internationalization is inevitable as more companies expand into foreign markets to maximize profits and build a competitive advantage. However, companies can only succeed if they pay attention to cultural differences across borders. The themes and research questions converge to illustrate that the failure to pay close attention to cultural differences can have long-term implications on the performance and operations of MNCs even when such failure arises from an unintentional or unconscious occurrence. The analysis shows the interconnections in the three research themes, which are also evident amongst the research questions. The next section presents a summary of the findings, which also analyzes the linkages between the research themes and questions.

**Summary of the Findings**

The study included quantitative findings based on two types of demographic data: gender and level of managerial role in the MNCs. A key issue that has emerged from the quantitative data is the persisting underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions. Male managers were overrepresented in the sampled population, standing at 60% (n=18) compared to 40% (n=12) of their female counterparts. Although the difference is not significantly marginal, it highlights the underrepresentation of women in top leadership and management positions in MNCs. The main issue lies in the overrepresentation of men in both the top and senior level management in MNCs. Women were overrepresented in the middle-level management, which exemplifies the magnitude of the glass ceiling phenomenon in MNCs. A critical point to note is that the preoccupation of the study was not on gender issues and relations in the management of MNCs. However, gender is one of the cultural issues confronting MNCs today because it as a positive relationship with firm performance. Findings from the study have shown that cultural
differences dominate the three themes. Thus, it is crucial to explore how gender relations influences action and further studies.

On the other hand, cultural differences between the local and international contexts underpin the three themes gleaned from the analysis of qualitative data. The main finding from the study is that cultural differences between the home and host companies have a profound effect on the internationalization strategy. Diversity management is the core concept that underlies the first theme. Most of the managers included in the study reported that their organizations encourage diversity and cultural competencies. They also recommended conducting a feasibility study to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural influences that affect the internationalization plan for their respective MNCs. Feasibility studies and adequate planning allow MNC leadership/management to prepare adequately to navigate the complexities of the foreign culture being aware of the cultural norms and values. The main argument is that diversity management positions MNCs to confront regional differences that affect performance and productivity.

The second issue that has emerged from the qualitative analysis related to the second theme is about aligning corporate strategy with the local culture. MNCs often face the question of whether to prioritize corporate culture over the local culture, or whether to merge the two. Findings from both the study and literature review have highlighted the need of aligning strategic plan of the MNC with the local culture. Insights from the first theme have noted the significance of conducting feasibility studies as part of the planning process of internationalization. The connection to the second theme arises since feasibility studies allow managers to find out how the local culture influences the overall corporate strategy for internationalization. A combination of findings from both the study and literature review confirms the need of emphasizing cultural
considerations when making plans for global expansion. Cultural mistakes can have long-term implications on the performance and operations of MNCs even when the mistakes are an unintentional or unconscious occurrence.

The need to blend corporate and local cultures brings forward the relationship between the second and third qualitative themes. The third theme has acknowledged tension between global integration and local responsiveness. Managers often face the challenge of pursuing global integration without undermining local responsiveness. Thus, the study findings have underscored the need of developing an international plan that integrates global integration and local responsiveness. Functional teamwork is another vital element that arose from the study in relation to development of an effective internationalization plan. The ability to merge the local and global internationalization plans depends on the effectiveness of teams. MNCs work with diverse teams scattered across multiple geographical locations. The challenge for managers is ensuring that the teams collaborate to achieve the overall strategic goals of the MNCs. The takeaway message is to emphasize the local context, especially cultural differences, when pursuing internationalization plans for MNCs.

In conclusion, the study had to interrelated aims. The first one entailed finding out how MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland employ global approaches in their foreign market operations. The second one focused on how MNCs in the six European nations differ in their outcomes in international activities compared with their corresponding domestic operations. Findings from the study have reiterated the need of being alive to the cultural differences that underpin the operations of MNCs during the process of internationalization. The study has also underscored the need of integrating global and local business strategies to get the most out of internationalization strategy. However, aligning global
integration and local responsiveness is not an easy task. The growing trend of globalization and internationalization of local businesses challenges MNCs to be proactive in identifying and addressing issues that would stymie progress. The study findings laying the foundation for best practices. The next three sections are focused on the application of the study findings to professional practice, as well as recommendations for action and further research.

Applications to Professional Practice

Findings from the study have far-reaching implications on professional practice. Expansion of local business operations is inevitable in the wake of stiff competition and economic volatility. Many companies are now in a rush to expand into foreign markets, especially in emerging economies, to enhance their global competitiveness. The phenomenon of globalization has contributed to the current trend because it has opened formerly closed global frontiers for trade and business. However, venturing into a foreign or overseas market is not simple and straightforward. On the contrary, companies expanding into foreign markets must navigate and surmount many challenges to be competitive, successful, and profitable. The present study has generated invaluable insights that would help MNCs to successfully sail through the internationalization process. The purpose of this section is to explore how the findings from this study, including insights from the literature review, are applied to professional business practice, especially in the management of MNCs.

Human resource management is a key area of application of the study findings to professional practice. Specifically, the staffing of subsidiaries in foreign countries challenges the traditional norms of HRM for MNCs. Most, if not all, MNCs often send expatriates to their overseas offices in the initial stages of operation. The role of the expatriates is to offer adequate guidance and facilitate knowledge transfer. The MNCs then gradually transition to local staff
while retaining the most experienced expatriates to work with the former. However, expatriates often find themselves struggling to keep-up or adapt to the cultural norms and practices of the host countries. Problems emerge when expatriates are non-responsive to the unique needs of the local customers and personnel. Therefore, the findings of this study have a profound effect on international human resources management. Staff training and development is one of the most significant areas of application considering the critical role of NMCs in the transfer of local and global knowledge.

MNCs need to invest in local talent when they operate abroad, mainly because they typically depend on their local staff to deal with cultural factors that could lead to misunderstandings and conflicts in standardization and localization strategies, brand effectiveness, free trade policies, advertising, strategic management, and business relationships. Here, MNCs need to attract, develop and train, and retain local employees with a global mindset to effectively lead international operations (Meyer & Xin, 2018). MNCs that expand into foreign markets must both adapt to the local culture and ensure that local employees have received adequate training to embrace specific elements of the corporate culture. The review of the literature has shown that diversity training and education are evidence-based interventions for diversity management. Diversity training is a preventive approach that is instrumental in ensuring that both local managers and employees deal effectively with diversity issues. As mentioned previously, cultural differences and diversity are the primary sources of miscommunication (Yi, 2012). Therefore, training local managers and staff about key norms of corporate and local cultures enhances effective communication, which in turn ensures successful transition into the foreign market.
Alternatively, MNCs can develop their existing in-house employees through education and training so that they may be assigned to foreign subsidiaries especially in light of internationally-experienced managers in their home countries (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Researchers have shown evidence that when managers are sent to subsidiary leadership roles abroad, they are likely to encounter major challenges for which they have not been trained (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Findings from the study have shown that continuous cultural training is critical but does not receive the attention it deserves in MNCs. The greatest achievement of any MNC entering an overseas market is adapting and responding effectively to the local culture. An in-house training program gives employees an opportunity of learning about cultural diversity and how to interact with people from diverse cultures (Wild & Wild, 2013). The study findings challenge MNCs to develop diversity training to enhance cross-cultural communication and interaction. Training expatriates beforehand allows them to develop linguistically and culturally-competent knowledge and skills that they need in their new assignments.

While it is advantageous to hire local managers in the host country, a lack of managers with global and international education and training can render this difficult. On the other hand, training and educating existing talent is advantageous in the sense that these managers or employees are already deeply knowledgeable about the MNC, and further training and education prepares them better for assignment abroad. Through time, rich experiences in the host country can increase the qualification of these managers to deal with complex cultural factors affecting MNCs’ foreign operations. Either way, a local manager or an expat assigned abroad, should ensure that there is reverse transfer of knowledge to headquarters to guide formation and documentation of best practices (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Knowledge transfer should be a priority for MNCs during the internationalization process to achieve a competitive advantage. Highly
trained expatriates have the ability of scanning the foreign market and responding to unique needs of local business partners, employees, and customers. The interaction among these entities lay the basis for knowledge transfer between the parent company and foreign subsidiaries.

The second application to practice is for leaders, such as CEOs, to promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the organization, locally and abroad (Hunt et al., 2019). The integration of cultural competence and diversity management should be encapsulated in an overarching corporate vision that is embraced at every level of the organization, locally and abroad (Hunt et al., 2019). This way, the CEO can help ensure that managers and other corporate leaders honor and respect foreign beliefs, values, and norms within the local communities where their foreign subsidiaries operate (Hunt et al., 2019). The role of leadership in diversity management is indisputable. Leaders have a responsibility of empowering and motivating their followers to achieve strategic plans and goals. A strategic and transformational leader ensures that employees have access to staff training and development opportunities that allow them to function well in the diverse business environment (Wild & Wild, 2013). As such, leaders must assume a leading role in creating an organizational culture that promotes diversity management and cross-cultural competencies through targeted training programs.

Training is a key concept in the literature that has explored diversity management. For instance, training and career development for employees predict job satisfaction for subsidiaries in foreign operations (Lindholm, 2000). Another option available to the MNC, which might be less effective and more complicated to implement, is for headquarters to transfer knowledge and tools to the foreign operations. This way, employees in the foreign country are forced to adhere to the same performance standards and criteria to other employees in the parent company. A cost-benefit analysis is needed in this regard. While the MNC can save money by implementing
the same performance manage systems, the downside could be a mismatch with the natural culture in the foreign subsidiary. Lastly, MNCs need to know the differences between overall strategic goals and its subsidiary goals relative to performance in order to identify roadblocks that need to be eliminated (Hellqvist, 2016). The alignment between these goals are also relevant to internationalization strategies, which constitute the third theme derived from the qualitative inquiry and analysis.

Leaders and managers map the path that MNCs needs to follow during the internationalization process. The application of the research findings challenges the MNC management and leadership to eliminate roadblocks in order to facilitate performance. This includes providing necessary resources, including, training and development for human resources not only for the local company but also for employees in subsidiaries in host countries (Hellqvist, 2016). In respect to performance, headquarters should also equip its foreign subsidiary with the requisite resources for appropriate performance management, including, tools, knowledge, and performance evaluation standards that have been adapted culturally (Lindholm, 2000). If headquarters fails to provide these tools and resources, employees in the foreign business abroad might be frustrated especially when conflicts start to arise (Hellqvist, 2016). As much as possible, the business subsidiary abroad should start with the recruitment of employees that have the aptitude and competence for cultural adaptations and cultural sensitivity especially since they will be working in an MNC (Hellqvist, 2016).

The rapid growth and expansion of multinationals have both challenged conventional management practices. Companies have traditionally developed and implemented HR plans aimed at effectively managing diversity within their local boundaries. However, multinational organizations have increasingly become more diverse as they expand beyond national
boundaries. Traditional approaches are now no longer adequate to manage the highly diverse crop of employees scattered across multiple geographical locations (Wild & Wild, 2013). Yi (2012) has argued that MNCs must now formulate new approaches and knowledge that will help them to survive the fierce competition at the global marketplace. A combination of these issues emphasizes the role of frontline managers in promoting diversity management. The achievement of this goal is critical considering that employees are now a strategic resource for enhancing competitiveness. Companies need skilled talent to convert capital and intangible resources into profitable ventures. The concept of strategic human resource management (SHRM) arises at this point given the growing significance of employees in strategic planning.

MNCs cannot create value from its resources unless their leaders and managers starting treating employees as a strategic resource. The widespread adoption of SHRM has risen from the realization that a company can capitalize on its human resources to achieve competitiveness. Consequently, companies and business organizations have transitioned gradually from conventional personnel management to the SHRM approach. The viewing a company or business organization as a wholesome entity rather than a composition of disjointed constituents is the driving force behind SHRM (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Armstrong and Taylor (2014) have posited that SHRM evolved when organizations realized that employees are central to the achievement of strategic goals and objectives. Diversity management is one of the core elements of SHRM. Effective management of cultural diversity is necessary in the context of MNCs and internationalization planning to breach the cultural differences between the local and international employees. Thus, MNCs should adopt SHRM as a management principle that will lay the foundation for cultural diversity management to successfully steer the process of internationalization.
The adoption of SHRM will allow MNCs to navigate and overcome the cultural issues that confront them during internationalization of business operations. The underpinning principle of SHRM is aligning HR issues and needs with the overall strategic plans. Employees are no longer passive recipients of instructions but they are active participants in the planning and decision-making processes (Nyberg et al., 2014). Nyberg et al. (2014) have identified staff training and employee engagement as the core elements of SHRM. The two have a direct bearing on the management of MNCs. Thus, the management should be proactive in promoting a culture of diversity management through continuous staff training and professional development. Cultural awareness will position MNCs to achieve a competitive edge in the global market. On the other hand, employee engagement will enhance buy-in and ownership of the change process. MNCs will have an easier time implementing change, including expansion into foreign markets. Empowered, engaged, and supported employees will assume a leading role in steering the change process instead of undermining it.

The study findings have also shown that MNCs must shift from a regional approach to strategy to one of internationalization. In doing so, MNC leadership needs to analyze institutional environments that are challenging because there are multiple institutions. For example, when an MNC expands to foreign markets, it will deal with an institutional environment that has both formal and informal institutions (Hitt, Li & Xu, 2016). These institutions are multiple-level and come from multiple centers of power, which make them polycentric. Here, the term polycentric means that an MNC is making a mistake if it uses a regional approach only. Formal institutions, including culture, occur at the national, regional, municipal, and global levels. An MNC must be careful in treading these institutions. For example, culture may exist at a global level but there are also sub-cultures occurring in different
regions (Hitt et al., 2016). Hitt et al. (2016) have concluded that foreign subsidiary in a specific host country should have capabilities to deal with constraints of the global, national, provincial, municipal formal institutions (Hitt et al., 2016).

Local companies expand into overseas markets for diverse reasons but increasing sales potential is the overarching motivation. Most companies that internationalize their operations adopt the polycentric orientation as one of the sales and marketing strategies. The polycentric approach exemplifies the need to increase sales and maximize profits as the primary motivator behind internationalization of local business operations. The primary thinking behind the polycentric approach is that every country in unique and needs a country-specific business approach that matches it cultural and societal norms (Hitt et al., 2016). Therefore, MNC should comprehend and navigate within the global and national cultures, and regional sub-cultures in order to fully meet customer needs and preferences. In addition to these, the host country’s institutional environment should inform the crafting of competitive strategy, stakeholder management, and subsidiary performance – all with emphasis on the impacts of culture. The cultural differences illuminated in the three qualitative themes reiterates the significance of adopting the polycentric approach when expanding local business operations to overseas markets.

**Application of Biblical Teachings**

Cultural differences that underpin the internationalization of local businesses bring forward the Biblical framework for the application of the study findings. The underlying Biblical teaching is that of oneness whereby all human being are one before the eyes of the creator. Therefore, the application of the findings based on the scripture and Biblical teaching entails promoting equality regardless of one’s culture. The diversity of humanity appears within the
greater context of unity. MNCs are increasingly expanding their businesses in foreign markets where cultural diversity is profound. For example, the six European countries exist in the same region geographically but each has unique cultural norms and practices, including religious affiliations. As such, it would be both unethical and unjust to retain or impose the preferences of dominant culture when expanding business operations in foreign markets. Instead, the Biblical teachings and scripture challenge MNCs to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Environmental justice is one of the main areas where the operations of MNCs raises moral and ethical questions based on Biblical teachings.

The book of Corinthians captures the essence of cultural diversity in the real world. Specifically, Corinthians 12:12-30 illustrates how different components unite to form the body. Paul the Apostle uses the analogy of the human body to show that no single part can exist alone without the input of the other. For example, Paul writes, “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12). The Biblical scripture challenges MNCs and their managers to promote cultural diversity and inclusivity. Equal employment opportunity is a dominant HR policy that every MNC should integrate to ensure equality. Quantitative study findings have shown that women are underrepresented in the top and senior-level management positions. The application of the findings to Biblical teaching calls for the development of policies that will address gender-based discrimination in leadership positions. Culture, race, sex, and other attributes should not be used as the basis for discriminating or stigmatizing other people. Therefore, inclusivity, equity, and engagement should be the foundation of strategic planning for the MNCs.

The rapid expansion and growth of MNCs have coincided with rising concerns over the destruction of environmental resources. MNCs are exploiting natural resources in emerging and
developing countries to maximize profits at the expense of the local communities (Wild & Wild, 2013). Wild and Wild (2013) have argued that the introduction of neoliberal policies that promote capitalisms means that MNCs can exploit poor and vulnerable population groups for cheap labor while accruing abnormal profits. According to Wild and Wild (2013), local communities then suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of global warming. The capitalistic tendencies of MNCs can be understood from the perspective of environmental justice. Environmental justice is about equality, fair treatment, and involvement of all people in matters related to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental policies, regulations, and laws (DeLeo, 2018). The widening gap between the rich and poor, as well as pervasive wage gaps is an affront to the globalization quest of MNCs. The challenge for MNC management is to pursue measures that will enhance the lives and wellbeing of local communities. Most MNCs have adopted social corporate responsibility initiatives to improve the lives of the local populations.

**Recommendations for Action**

The analysis of the qualitative data has shown that cultural differences are essential when considering internationalization of business operations. The primary challenge for the management is ensuring that global integration and expansion plans are responsive to the cultural norms and practices of the local market. Research findings have also highlighted the need of diversity management and training to enhance successful implementation of the internationalization plan. However, the study findings have also shown that aligning global integration with local responsiveness is a daunting task for MNCs. The main issue is that the cultural clash that emerges from the failure of integration. Therefore, the knowledge derived from the research and the review of the literature lays the basis for evidence-based based
First, MNCs have to invest in local talent for its foreign operations. These local employees will enable the subsidiary to handle cultural factors to minimize misunderstandings and conflicts in standardization and localization strategies, brand effectiveness, free trade policies, advertising, strategic management, and business relationships. The MNCs will do this by attracting, developing, training, and retaining local employees using effective recruitment and selection strategies, training and development, performance evaluations, and appropriate motivation systems (Meyer & Xin, 2018).

Alternatively, MNCs can develop employees in its headquarters at the home country so that they may be assigned to foreign subsidiaries. The advantage of this approach is that in host countries, there are not as many internationally-experienced managers as in home countries (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Therefore, MNC leadership needs to weigh the pros and cons of these two options. A drawback of sending an expat to the host country is that when managers are deployed for subsidiary leadership roles abroad, they may be accosted with challenges, including, challenges in cultural contexts, for which they have not been trained (Meyer & Xin, 2018). The advantage of this approach is that the expat would already be knowledgeable about the company and its strategies and training and education will better prepare them for assignment abroad.

Second, MNC leaders, such as, CEOs should consistently promote cultural diversity and inclusion in the organization, locally and abroad (Hunt et al., 2019). The most efficient and effective way to do this is to integrate cultural diversity and inclusion in corporate vision, and strategies for attaining it articulated, as well (Hunt et al., 2019). The MNC should also ensure
that the subsidiary abroad recruits employees who have aptitude and competent for cultural adaptations and cultural sensitivity (Hellqvist, 2016)

Third, MNC management in the subsidiary operating abroad should eliminate barriers to performance that determine differences between outcomes in foreign operations and home operations. MNCs should allocate requisite resources for its foreign subsidiary needed for performance management, including, tools, knowledge, and performance evaluation standards that have been adapted culturally (Lindholm, 2000). The MNC has an alternative option in that it will implement that exact same performance management system to its foreign operations, such that employees in the host country will comply with the same performance standards and criteria as in headquarters. Again, MNC leadership will have to carefully weigh the pros and cons of these two recommendation implementing the same performance management system abroad could translate to savings but, in the long run, if there is a mismatch between the system and culture in the foreign subsidiary, it would be costlier.

Finally, many MNCs need to expand their usual regional approach to strategy to one of internationalization. These MNCs can achieve this by analyzing institutional environments at the municipal, regional, national, and global levels. The six MNCs being studied in this dissertation need to shift from their Eurocentric view to one that is polycentric (Hitt, Li & Xu, 2016). In other words, taking an international approach means that competitive strategy, stakeholder management, and subsidiary performance, will likely be impacted by cultural and customary practices. Hence, an MNC seeking to expand to a different country has to carefully study formal and informal institutions, including, culture, at the national, regional, municipal, and global levels.
Recommendations for Further Study

This study reveals different gaps in knowledge that could be addressed through future research. Indeed, the associations between regional and cultural differences in MNCs are exciting prospects for future investigations. First, future research is needed wherein different perspectives are studied on cultural and regional differences and an MNC’s foreign entry mode, including, the combined effects of multilevel factors, such as, at the project, subsidiary, parent company, and host environment levels. Another future area for research pertains to the role of information technology in business practices that MNCs can adopt to ensure that performance in both the local and host countries are even. Indeed, more insights and evidence are needed about information technology and how it helps MNCs that depend on their foreign subsidiaries to sustain their competitiveness. It would also be interesting to find out how information technology can help address cultural differences on means of foreign entry and operations. Such studies are warranted particularly since MNCs usually have the financial muscle to invest even in costly technologies to improve their performance.

Other areas for future research on information technology among MNCs are (a) the use of this technology to better manage and achieve strategic value for its foreign subsidiaries; and (b) address cultural and regional differences. The present study investigates MNCs in six countries only. More studies are needed on MNCs in emerging economies in order to learn more about their internationalization strategies, the paths that they take to execute these strategies, and outcomes. For example, it would be interesting to learn about the host countries that they select for their expansion and why, and the results of their strategies. Another example here is to conduct a study on the impacts of formal and informal home institutions on the MNC’s strategic behaviors, managing stakeholders, and, internationalization strategies.
In terms of cultural competence, a possible area for future research pertains to how MNC home country managers and leaders with little multicultural experience manage employees and other stakeholders in their foreign cultural context. An important aspect of this future research would be the role of the subsidiary CEO and how this individual facilitates knowledge exchange with headquarters. When an MNC pursues strategies, it is crucial that the CEO facilitates reverse knowledge transfer to headquarters (Meyer & Xin, 2018). Recent evidence shows that reverse knowledge transfers hinges upon both the characteristics of headquarters and the subsidiary, including, its leadership (Meyer & Xin, 2018).

Gender disparity in MNC leadership is one of the significant findings from the study. The MNCs had adopted gender quotas in line with the EU legislation aimed at increasing the number of women in leadership positions and corporate boards. The underrepresentation of women in leadership positions questions the effectiveness of the gender quotas, which then lay the foundation for future research. Notably, it is of the essence to conduct further studies to find out why women are still underrepresented in leadership positions despite the existence of gender quotas. Leadership is still a male-dominated area in both political and business spheres. Thus, future studies should focus more on how gender quotas and other legislation have influenced cultural norms and beliefs about women leadership. The point of argument is that the usefulness of gender quotas can only be understood from the perspective of culture and people’s beliefs. The question for researchers is whether efforts should focus more on legislation or changing people’s perceptions about women leadership.

**Reflections**

The research process undertaken for this study is a complicated one that entailed commitment and significant self-discipline on my part. Overall, my personal reflections about
this dissertation are mostly about the methodology that I chose. It was difficult. Indeed, the multiple case study design was the appropriate decision although execution was more difficult beyond my expectations. I had the misconception that case studies are not as difficult to conduct as, for example, quantitative studies with sophisticated statistical analyses that require the researcher to manipulate variables. Of course, I soon found out that I was wrong during data collection when I needed to find a diverse range of sources to fulfill case study protocol. This was warranted because the primary aim of the case study researcher is to obtain deep insights about the phenomenon that he or she is investigating. However, if data collection was difficult, data analysis was a dozen times more difficult. Nonetheless, I made my choice for methodology and had to stick with it and commit my time and efforts to succeed. At the end of this study, I felt a sense of fulfillment that I have not felt in a long time.

Sampling and recruiting participants were also challenges because I had to execute it according to standards of quality and reliability. I had to convince participants who were leaders from known MNCs in different parts of the UK that their participation is crucial to the field. In accordance with the status and leadership positions of these participants, I had to make sure that my interview questions made sense, were coherent, and systematized especially for the FGD. I was able to create good interview questions by studying previous research on the topic. I checked the questions that were asked in surveys and/or interviews, and adapted them to my own study. This was one way of eliminating bias in my interviews and focus groups. At this point, I give credit to the participants not only for their knowledge on the phenomenon I was investigating but their willingness to share their knowledge and insights. I fully appreciate the concept of knowledge sharing that, in today’s business climate, is touted as a formula for success in many industries, along with the concept of collaboration and innovation. As a researcher, it was up to
me to analyze their responses, differentiate opinion from facts, beliefs, values, and sentiments and analyze them accordingly.

I reached the height of difficulties during coding and thematic analysis of data collected. I had to listen to the recordings countless times so that I could properly code responses. I took volumes of notes, started over again many times, and eventually was able to make sense of the codes I made after several weeks of work. It was mentally taxing, to say the least. Nevertheless, the rewards of completing the coding was commensurate with the degree of difficulty. I think this is the most difficult part of qualitative studies – coding. Both coding and thematic analysis required critical analysis and thinking, as well as, the appropriate behavior in organizing notes and files so that work can continue the following day. Notably, all these are consistent with the qualitative method wherein the researcher is the instrument of research and uses the filter of his own personal lens, knowledge, and beliefs to analyze data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Thematic analysis and triangulation were not as difficult as coding because I had the literature review as my guide. I have learned through this dissertation the importance of good literature review that not only sheds light about what is known and unknown about the topic I was investigating but also helped me discern gaps in literature that I can address through my own research. When I look back, the literature review substantiates the need for my study, and served as a solid foundation for data analysis, particularly, thematic analysis and triangulation.

Meanwhile, this study changed my thinking in two ways. First, I used to believe that MNCs have perfected their craft because they seem so successful. I used to think that MNCs only suffer due to economic shocks, unforeseen events, and market certainties. Since they have access to resources that allow them to mitigate risks, I also used to think that among all business types, the MNC is the most formidable. I now realize that there are stories behind these MNCs
that reveal weaknesses and challenges. One of these is how performance in foreign operations
does not match that of performance in home countries, or headquarters. Early on in this study, I
discovered that I was partly correct in the sense that MNCs do prioritize risk management
especially in new foreign markets. However, the manners through which they respond to these
risks are not always correct. Hence, there is a gap in performance between home and host
markets. The second way through which this study changed my thinking pertains to the power of
culture. In my other classes, I learned about the importance of culture and how it can impact
business processes and market preferences and responses. However, I overlooked the ways
through which culture can profoundly impact strategies that, if not effective, can make or break
even an MNC.

Right now, I am satisfied with the study I undertook and the results that I generated. I
now have a deeper understanding and respect for culture and the power it represents to business
people for as long as these business people know how to manage it and maximize upon its
impacts. I look forward to sharing my findings through publications, including, journals.
Publication of the findings in business journals will be instrumental in ensuring that the findings
reach a wider audience. The remarkable expansion of MNCs underscores the need of
strengthening the current evidence base. The success of internationalization plans depends on the
ability of MNCs to align corporate culture with the local culture of the foreign market. MNCs
need timely and accurate information that would allow them to achieve their internationalization
goals. Therefore, sharing the findings in journal publications will add to the growing body of
knowledge, which was one of the goals of the research. MNCs and stakeholders in the business
world will use the information for strategic planning and decisions.
Moreover, the Biblical framework selected for this study pertains to multiculturalism because of the strong impact of culture on MNCs. Multiculturalism is also important because MNCs studied in this investigation operate across borders, thereby implying the global nature of business across cultures. Notably, multiculturalism is covered in many Biblical passages. Before Abraham and his family are introduced in the Old Testament, the Bible already affirms the diversity of people and groups of people that are inherent to God’s Master Plan. For example, Genesis 1-11 allude to the diversity of people that culminate in a Table of Nations in Genesis 10, and the scattering of these nations in the following chapter (Patten, 2013). Indeed, the Table of Nations spring from Noah’s three sons who all come from Noah, providing a sense of common humanity (Patten, 2013). Since Noah is the progeny of these nations and a creation of God, the Bible indicates that the human race itself is created by God. However, if Genesis 10 contains the Table of Nations and Noah’s obedience to God’s words to be fruitful, the arrogance of people who gather in Chapter 11, as well as, the Tower of Babel, resists God’s word, suggesting that this is a problem that needs to be solved.

Globalization may be likened to the Tower of Babel where companies, regulators, countries, all strive to succeed in businesses, whether local or international. The goal for business success is analogous to the one language and common speech among those in the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1). Despite the shared language, globalization would be chaotic without the proper management of international and local businesses. This is where culture enters the picture since multiculturalism and cultural competence can be a solution to this problem. Globalization, itself, suggests the convergence of different cultures in global markets where they speak the common language of business but drown out each other.
There are many Biblical verses in the New and Old Testaments that address multiculturalism. For example, Exodus 18:20 states: “And you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do.” The leadership context in multiculturalism is also addressed in the Bible: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus...” (1 Timothy 2:1-15).

Moreover, 1 Corinthians 12:12-28 states: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body...”

These Bible passages show that for millennia now, multiculturalism has existed in the world. Modern theorists have simply built upon this history of humanity. An example of such theorist is Hofstede (2011), whose Cultural Dimensions attest that, indeed, it is inherent for different groups of people have different cultures. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions emphasize dimensions of individualism/collectivism; long-term orientation/short-term orientation; masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance, that differ from one culture to another. Unfortunately, in spite of knowledge and evidence pertaining to cultural differences,
fast-paced globalization of markets has also highlighted conflicts that emerge when business stakeholders from different cultural backgrounds encounter one another. Here, it seems that the Tower of Babel is reborn. In order to avoid the chaos similar to the Tower of Babel, contemporary business leaders need to be able to manage complexities and conflicts arising out of cultural factors. In essence, this is what this dissertation is undertaking.

Summary and Study Conclusions

Globalization has intensified competition in international markets, with MNCs vying for greater market share. Many of these MNCs have expanded to foreign shores through subsidiaries that they established in order to pursue growth targets. However, many studies have been showing that MNCs have been successful in their host countries although the success they achieved in foreign operations are not the same as in their respective domestic markets. It is important to look into this phenomenon especially since 88% of the largest MNCs in the world generate at least half of their earnings from their respective domestic or home regions, while only 2% of companies achieve at least 20% higher sales from their international markets in Europe, North America, and Asia. When MNCs are not able to achieve the same level of success from their foreign operations compared to their home operations, these firms could be at risk for failure to recoup their investments. Moreover, since MNCs are important parts of any economy, any failure also impacts that economy. Against this backdrop, this dissertation was undertaken in order to provide insight as to why MNCs’ foreign operations are not as successful as their home operations.

The focus of this study is in MNCs in the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland, which are all analyzed using a qualitative multiple case study design. This investigation addresses a gap in literature by exploring the roles of cultural and regional
differences affecting MNCs, as well as, internationalization strategies – all of which are determinants of success for MNCs. Although this multiple case study has an overall European perspective, by addressing crucial gaps in literature, it is anticipated that results will also inform MNC managers from other regions. As a result of data collected from primary sources, namely, participants to a survey, interviews, and focus groups, three themes have been identified. The first theme is that managers are aware about the impacts of regional differences on MNC’s performance in foreign market context. Second, cultural differences between host and home countries can adversely affect the performance of MNC’s in foreign countries. Third, MNCs’ internationalization strategies depend on the local and global contexts.

This study seeks to address three research questions:

- How do regional differences influence the level of success that MNCs achieve in their foreign operations? Based on the findings of this study, regional differences significantly impact MNCs’ success in foreign operations. Consequently, MNCs need to master these regional differences.

- How important are cultural differences between home and host countries are in influencing the performance of MNCs in their foreign operations? Cultural differences between home and host countries profoundly impact MNC performance in foreign operations. As a result, MNCs need to employ culturally competent employees both abroad and locally.

- What are the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs? MNCs tend to harness regional strategies even if the scope of their operations is global. This adversely affects performance in the foreign and home markets.
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Appendix A: Request for Permission to Conduct a Research on (Company)

November 15, 2019

Mr. A
Manager (Logistics)
X Company
No. K Street
London

Dear Mr. A,

As a graduate student in the School of Business at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor Business Administration degree. The purpose of my research is to assess whether regional differences influence business strategies of multinational companies, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you have 5-10 years' worth of experience with SCM, are a leader from the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, or Switzerland, and your company has recorded good financial performance over the past two years and with a large international presence, and you are willing to participate, you will be tasked to three procedures which include: (1) Completing a demographic survey and returning it via email; (2) Participating in a Skype interview and; (3) Participating in a focus group discussion. Each of the procedures will be executed within varying timeframes, although caution will be taken to ensure that schedules are made on the basis of mutual agreement for the purposes of convenience. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please reply to this email with a signed copy of the consent document, the GDPR consent document, the GDPR data agreement, and your completed demographic survey. In your reply, please indicate a convenient date and time for an interview, which will be done through Skype. If you do not use Skype, I can guide you through the sign-up process.

The consent document, GDPR consent document, GDPR data agreement, and demographic survey are attached to this email. The consent and GDPR documents contain additional information about my research and your rights as a participant. Please sign the consent and data agreement documents, complete the demographics survey, and return them to me as attachments in a reply to this email.

If you choose to participate, you will be given a copy of the findings and conclusion of the research paper.

Sincerely,

Christopher Powell
Doctoral Scholar
Appendix B-I: Letter of Consent

CONSENT FORM

Assessing whether the Regional Differences between Countries Influence Business Strategies of Multinational Companies

Christopher Powell
Liberty University
Business Studies Department/School of Business

You are invited to participate in a research study on whether the regional differences between countries influence the business strategies of multinational companies. You were selected as a possible participant because you have 5-10 years’ worth of experience with SCM, are a leader from the UK, Ireland, France, Germany, Belgium, or Switzerland, you have recorded good financial performances over the last two years, and you have a wide international presence. Your profile, thus, means that you can help in informing the theories that define strategy in internationalization. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Christopher Powell, a doctoral candidate in the department of Business Studies/School of Business, at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to assess whether the regional differences between countries influence the business strategies of multinational companies.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a demographic survey and return it to me via email. (TIME ESTIMATE). This will be done within one week (seven days- from the moment of the reception of the
forms). When returning the survey, please provide a tentative date and time for the interview, and I will confirm the date and time for you.

2. Participate in a Skype interview (TIME ESTIMATE). This will be a 1-2 hours’ process, based on the scheduled date and time as mutually agreed upon through Skype. Information about your identity, status in the company, and demographic data will be collected. This data will, however, remain confidential.

3. Participate in a focus group discussion (TIME ESTIMATE). This will be a 3-4 hours’ process based on the scheduled date and time as mutually agreed upon through Skype. Information about your title/status in the company in addition to demographic data will be collected. This data will, however, remain confidential to the furthest extent possible in a group setting.

**Risks:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks encountered in everyday life.

**Benefits:** Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit by participating in this study. The findings of this research will be beneficial to the scholars and academicians in the field of management of multinational companies. Moreover, it will also provide sufficient insights to the practitioners in this field. The findings, which may be of direct benefit to the participants in terms of additional knowledge in their practice area, will be shared with them, if applicable.

**Compensation:** The participants will not be paid any monetary compensation as a result of their participation in this study.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. No information will be shared with any third parties or used for any purpose other than this research.
• Any identifying information will be coded and only the researcher will have access to any personal information. Data stored will be destroyed after a period of three years.

• The interview and focus group will be recorded and transcribed. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings of the interview/focus group. Recordings will be kept under password protected computer/folders and will be destroyed after three years.

• Upon request, participant data will be permanently erased, consistent with the GDPR’s right to erasure clause. Under the EUGDPR, you have the right to request access to, rectify, erase and restrict the processing of your personal data. You also have the right to revoke this consent to use your personal data. If you feel the principal investigator has violated the EUGDPR, you have the right to file a complaint with the appropriate EU supervisory authority.

• Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:** If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.
Upon request, participant data will be permanently erased, consistent with the GDPR’s right to erasure clause.

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Christopher Powell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at his phone number 001-7708557040.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste.2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515.

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

___________________________________  
Printed Name & Signature of Participant       Date

___________________________________  
Signature of Investigator              Date
Appendix B-II: Letter of Consent under GDPR

GDPR Consent

To Be Signed by the Individual Providing Personal Data

Controller Information

For the purposes of this research study, the principal investigator (PI), Christopher Powell is the controller of your personal data. You may contact Christopher Powell by phone at +1(770)855-7040.

Uses of Personal Data

Your personal data will be used for the purpose of research. Specifically, the research seeks to determine whether the business strategies adopted by various multinational corporations are influenced by regional differences within the European region. As a doctoral study for a Doctor of Business Administration, the study will seek to compare and contrast case studies in different countries to assess whether regional differences inform the strategies utilized by multinationals located within the study region and if possible, to determine the extent to which regional differences influence the business strategies.

Categories of Personal Data

The categories of personal data you are being asked to consent to the principal investigator’s use of are your name, gender, nationality, age, ethnicity, address, email address, the organization you work for, your current job designation and the level of involvement within the company.

Confidentiality of Personal Data & Provisions for Data-Sharing

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The principal investigator may share your
personal data with third-parties, including his immediate doctoral supervisor, the dissertation chair, and the Dean, School of Business at Liberty University for the sole purpose of enabling the dissertation committee to verify the veracity of the research and related academic purposes.

The principal investigator may also share your name, country of location, and industry in which your company operates during a focus group session where you will be a participant. This data will be shared as part of an introduction to other members to facilitate the focus group engagement. You will be at liberty to restrict the principal investigator to merely sharing your first name and region where your company operates during the focus group engagement.

Your personal data will be transferred out of the European Union to the principal investigator located in the United States. By signing this consent form, you acknowledge and understand that your personal data will be transferred out of the European Union to the principal investigator in the United States and that the United States does not protect personal data in the same manner as it may be protected in the European Union. By signing this consent form and checking “gives consent” below, you consent to this transfer of your personal data.

Provisions for Data Storage & Your Rights

Your personal data will be stored in accordance with the record retention requirements applicable to research activities and Health and Human Services (HHS) regulations in the United States. Under the EUGDPR, you have the right to request access to, rectify, erase and restrict the processing of your personal data. You also have the right to revoke this consent to use your personal data. If you feel the principal investigator has violated the EUGDPR, you have the right to file a complaint with the appropriate EU supervisory authority.
Your Consent

Please electronically sign, check the desired box, date, and return this form to the principal investigator via the email address provided in the first page.

I consent to Christopher Powell using my personal data for the purposes described in this notice and understand that I can withdraw my consent at any time using the contact information provided above in this notice.

___ Gives consent  ___ Does not give consent

___________________________________________
Printed Name of Individual Providing Consent

___________________________________________
Address of Individual Providing Consent

___________________________________________
Signature of Individual Providing Consent          Date
Appendix B-III: Personal Data Transfer Agreement under GDPR

This is a data transfer agreement between [name of individual or institution in the EU], [address and country], hereinafter “data exporter” and Christopher Powell, Liberty University School of Business, United States of America, hereinafter “data importer” each a “party”; together “the parties.”

Definitions

For the purposes of the clauses:

a. “personal data”, “special categories of data/sensitive data”, “process/processing”, “controller”, “processor”, “data subject” and “supervisory authority/authority” shall have the same meaning as in the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (“GDPR”);

b. “the data exporter” shall mean the controller who transfers the personal data;

c. “the data importer” shall mean the controller who agrees to receive from the data exporter personal data for further processing in accordance with the terms of these clauses and who is not subject to a third country’s system ensuring adequate protection;

d. “clauses” shall mean these contractual clauses, which are a free-standing document that does not incorporate commercial business terms established by the parties under separate commercial arrangements.

The details of the transfer (as well as the personal data covered) are specified in Annex B, which forms an integral part of the clauses.

Obligations of the Data Exporter

The data exporter warrants and agrees that:

a. The personal data has been collected, processed and transferred in accordance with the laws applicable to the data exporter.
b. It has used reasonable efforts to determine that the data importer is able to satisfy its legal obligations under these clauses.

c. It will provide the data importer, when so requested, with copies of relevant data protection laws or references to them (where relevant, and not including legal advice) of the country in which the data exporter is established.

d. It will respond to enquiries from data subjects and the authority concerning processing of the personal data by the data importer. Responses will be made within a reasonable time.

e. It will make available, upon request, a copy of the clauses to data subjects who are third party beneficiaries under clause III, unless the clauses contain confidential information, in which case it may remove such information. Where information is removed, the data exporter shall inform data subjects in writing of the reason for removal and of their right to draw the removal to the attention of the authority. However, the data exporter shall abide by a decision of the appropriate supervisory authority regarding access to the full text of the clauses by data subjects, as long as data subjects have agreed to respect the confidentiality of the confidential information removed. The data exporter shall also provide a copy of the clauses to the authority where required.

**Obligations of the Data Importer**

The data importer warrants and agrees that:

a. It will have in place appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect the personal data against accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss, alteration, unauthorized disclosure or access, and which provide a level of security appropriate to the risk represented by the processing and the nature of the data to be protected.
b. It will have in place procedures so that any third party it authorizes to have access to the personal data, including processors, will respect and maintain the confidentiality and security of the personal data. Any person acting under the authority of the data importer, including a data processor, shall be obligated to process the personal data only on instructions from the data importer. This provision does not apply to persons authorized or required by law or regulation to have access to the personal data.

c. It has no reason to believe, at the time of entering into these clauses, the existence of any local laws that would have a substantial adverse effect on the guarantees provided for under these clauses, and it will inform the data exporter (which will pass such notification on to the authority where required) if it becomes aware of any such laws.

d. It will process the personal data for purposes described in Annex B, and has the legal authority to give the warranties and fulfill the undertakings set out in these clauses.

e. It will identify to the data exporter a contact point within its organization authorized to respond to enquiries concerning processing of the personal data, and will cooperate in good faith with the data exporter, the data subject and the authority concerning all such enquiries within a reasonable time. In case of legal dissolution of the data exporter, or if the parties have so agreed, the data importer will assume responsibility for compliance with the provisions of clause I(e).

f. At the request of the data exporter, it will provide the data exporter with evidence of financial resources sufficient to fulfill its responsibilities under clause III (which may include insurance coverage).

g. Upon reasonable request of the data exporter, it will submit its data processing facilities, data files and documentation needed for processing to reviewing, auditing and/or
certifying by the data exporter (or any independent or impartial inspection agents or auditors, selected by the data exporter and not reasonably objected to by the data importer) to ascertain compliance with the warranties and undertakings in these clauses, with reasonable notice and during regular business hours. The request will be subject to any necessary consent or approval from a regulatory or supervisory authority within the country of the data importer, which consent or approval the data importer will attempt to obtain in a timely fashion.

h. It will process the personal data in accordance with the data processing principles set forth in Annex A

i. It will not disclose or transfer the personal data to a third-party data controller located outside the European Union unless it notifies the data exporter about the transfer and

i. the third-party data controller processes the personal data in accordance with a Commission decision finding that a third country provides adequate protection, or

ii. the third-party data controller becomes a signatory to these clauses or another data transfer agreement approved by a competent authority in the EU, or

iii. data subjects have been given the opportunity to object, after having been informed of the purposes of the transfer, the categories of recipients and the fact that the countries to which data is exported may have different data protection standards, or

iv. with regard to onward transfers of sensitive data, data subjects have given their unambiguous consent to the onward transfer
Liability and Third-Party Rights

a. Data exporter shall be liable for damages caused by data exporter as a result of its breach of these clauses. Data importer shall be liable for damages caused by data importer as a result of its breach of these clauses. Liability as between the parties is limited to actual damage suffered. Punitive damages (i.e. damages intended to punish a party for its outrageous conduct) are specifically excluded. Each party shall be liable to data subjects for damages it causes by any breach of third party rights under these clauses. This does not affect the liability of the data exporter under its data protection law.

b. The parties agree that a data subject shall have the right to enforce as a third party beneficiary this clause and clauses I(b), I(d), I(e), II(a), II(c), II(d), II(e), II(h), II(i), III(a), V, VI(d) and VII against the data importer or the data exporter, for their respective breach of their contractual obligations, with regard to his personal data. In cases involving allegations of breach by the data importer, the data subject must first request the data exporter to take appropriate action to enforce his rights against the data importer; if the data exporter does not take such action within a reasonable period (which under normal circumstances would be one month), the data subject may then enforce his rights against the data importer directly. A data subject is entitled to proceed directly against a data exporter that has failed to use reasonable efforts to determine that the data importer is able to satisfy its legal obligations under these clauses (the data exporter shall have the burden to prove that it took reasonable efforts).
Law Applicable to the Clauses

These clauses shall be governed by the law of the country in which the data exporter is established, with the exception of the laws and regulations relating to processing of the personal data by the data importer under clause II(h).

Resolution of Disputes with Data Subjects or the Authority

a. In the event of a dispute or claim brought by a data subject or the authority concerning the processing of the personal data against either or both of the parties, the parties will inform each other about any such disputes or claims, and will cooperate with a view to settling them amicably in a timely fashion.

b. The parties agree to respond to any generally available non-binding mediation procedure initiated by a data subject or by the authority. If they do participate in the proceedings, the parties may elect to do so remotely (such as by telephone or other electronic means). The parties also agree to consider participating in any other mediation or dispute resolution proceedings developed for data protection disputes, with the exclusion of arbitration.

c. Unless international law or treaty provides otherwise, each party shall abide by a decision of a competent court of the data exporter’s country of establishment or of the authority which is final and against which no further appeal is possible.

Termination

a. In the event that the data importer is in breach of its obligations under this Agreement, then the data exporter may temporarily suspend the transfer of personal data to the data importer until the breach is repaired or the contract is terminated.

b. In the event that:
i. the transfer of personal data to the data importer has been temporarily suspended by the data exporter for longer than one month pursuant to paragraph (a);

ii. compliance by the data importer with these clauses would put it in breach of its legal or regulatory obligations in the country of import;

iii. the data importer is in substantial or persistent breach of any warranties or undertakings given by it under these clauses;

iv. a final decision against which no further appeal is possible of a competent court of the data exporter’s country of establishment or of the authority rules that there has been a breach of the clauses by the data importer or the data exporter; or

v. a petition is presented for the administration or winding up of the data importer, whether in its personal or business capacity, which petition is not dismissed within the applicable period for such dismissal under applicable law; a winding up order is made; a receiver is appointed over any of its assets; a trustee in bankruptcy is appointed, if the data importer is an individual; a company voluntary arrangement is commenced by it; or any equivalent event in any jurisdiction occurs then the data exporter, without prejudice to any other rights it may have against the data importer, shall be entitled to terminate this Agreement, in which case the authority shall be informed where required. In cases covered by (i), (ii) or (iv) above, the data importer may also terminate this Agreement.

c. Either party may terminate this Agreement if (i) any Commission positive adequacy decision under the EUGDPR (or any superseding text) is issued in relation to the country (or a sector thereof) to which the data is transferred and processed by the data importer, or (ii) EUGDPR (or any superseding text) becomes directly applicable in such country.
d. The parties agree that the termination of these clauses at any time, in any circumstances and for whatever reason (except for termination under clause VI(c)) does not exempt them from the obligations and/or conditions under the clauses as regards the processing of the personal data transferred.

**Variation of these Clauses**

The parties may not modify these clauses except to update any information in Annex B, in which case they will inform the authority where required. This does not preclude the parties from adding additional commercial clauses where required.

**Description of the Transfer**

The details of the transfer and of the personal data are specified in Annex B. The parties agree that Annex B may contain confidential business information which they will not disclose to third parties, except as required by law or in response to a competent regulatory or government agency, or as required under clause I(e). The parties may execute additional annexes to cover additional transfers, which will be submitted to the authority where required. Annex B may, in the alternative, be drafted to cover multiple transfers.

Dated: ______________________

_________________________________________

Name: [Name of individual or institution in the EU]

Title:  [Title]

_________________________________________

Name: Christopher Powell

Title:  Liberty University Doctoral Candidate
ANNEXURE B-IV: Data Processing Principles under GDPR

1. **Purpose limitation:** Personal data may be processed and subsequently used or further communicated only for purposes described in Annex B or subsequently authorized by the data subject.

2. **Data quality and proportionality:** Personal data must be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date. The personal data must be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which they are transferred and further processed.

3. **Transparency:** Data subjects must be provided with information necessary to ensure fair processing (such as information about the purposes of processing and about the transfer), unless such information has already been given by the data exporter.

4. **Security and confidentiality:** Technical and organizational security measures must be taken by the data controller that are appropriate to the risks, such as against accidental or unlawful destruction or accidental loss, alteration, unauthorized disclosure or access, presented by the processing. Any person acting under the authority of the data controller, including a processor, must not process the data except on instructions from the data controller.

5. **Rights of access, rectification, deletion and objection:** Data subjects must, whether directly or via a third party, be provided with the personal information about them that an organization holds, except for requests which are manifestly abusive, based on unreasonable intervals or their number or repetitive or systematic nature, or for which access need not be granted under the law of the country of the data exporter. Provided that the authority has given its prior approval, access need also not be granted when doing so would be likely to seriously harm the interests of the data importer or other
organization dealing with the data importer and such interests are not overridden by the interests for fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject. The sources of the personal data need not be identified when this is not possible by reasonable efforts, or where the rights of persons other than the individual would be violated. Data subjects must be able to have the personal information about them rectified, amended, or deleted where it is inaccurate or processed against these principles. If there are compelling grounds to doubt the legitimacy of the request, the organization may require further justifications before proceeding to rectification, amendment or deletion. Notification of any rectification, amendment or deletion to third parties to whom the data have been disclosed need not be made when this involves a disproportionate effort. A data subject must also be able to object to the processing of the personal data relating to him if there are compelling legitimate grounds relating to his particular situation. The burden of proof for any refusal rests on the data importer, and the data subject may always challenge a refusal before the authority.

6. **Sensitive data:** Sensitive Data is defined as data concerning a natural person revealing race, ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, sexual orientation and criminal conviction. The data importer shall take such additional measures (e.g. relating to security) as are necessary to protect sensitive data in accordance with its obligations under clause II.

7. **Data used for marketing purposes:** Where data is processed for the purposes of direct marketing, effective procedures should exist allowing the data subject at any time to “opt-out” from having his data used for such purposes.
8. **Automated decisions:** For purposes hereof “automated decision” shall mean a decision by the data exporter or the data importer which produces legal effects concerning a data subject or significantly affects a data subject and which is based solely on automated processing of personal data intended to evaluate certain personal aspects relating to him, such as his performance at work, creditworthiness, reliability, conduct, etc. The data importer shall not make any automated decisions concerning data subjects, except when:

a. either
   
   i. such decisions are made by the data importer in entering into or performing a contract with the data subject, and
   
   ii. (the data subject is given an opportunity to discuss the results of a relevant automated decision with a representative of the parties making such decision or otherwise to make representations to that parties.

b. or where otherwise provided by the law of the data exporter.
ANNEX B-V: Description of the Transfer Under GDPR

1. The personal data transferred concerning the following categories of data subjects:

The categories of personal data you are being asked to consent to the principal investigator’s use of are your name, gender, nationality, age, ethnicity, address, email address, the organization you work for, your current job designation and the level of involvement within the company.

2. The transfer is made for the following purposes:

Your personal data will be used for the purpose of research. Specifically, the research seeks to determine whether the business strategies adopted by various multinational corporations are influenced by regional differences within the European region. As a doctorate study for a Doctor of Business Administration, the study will seek to compare and contrast case studies in different countries to assess whether regional differences inform the strategies utilized by multinationals located within the study region and if possible, to determine the extent to which regional differences influence the business strategies.

3. The personal data transferred may be disclosed only to the following recipients or categories of recipients:

The Researcher, Christopher Powell, may share your personal data with third-parties, including his immediate doctorate supervisor, the dissertation chair, and the Dean, School of Business at Liberty University for the sole purpose of enabling the dissertation committee to verify the veracity of the research and related academic purposes.

The Researcher, Christopher Powell, may also share your name, country of location, and industry in which your company operates during focus group studies where you will be a participant as part of introduction to other members to facilitate the focus group engagement.
You will be at liberty to restrict the principal investigator to merely sharing your first
name and region where your company operates during the focus group engagement.

4. The personal data transferred concerns the following categories of sensitive data,
   ethnicity, gender, age, nationality, and name.

5. Contact information for data protection inquiries:
   If you have any questions or concerns regarding the way in which your personal data has been or
   is being used, please contact Christopher Powell at +1(770)855-7040
Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire

Assessing whether the Regional Differences between Countries Influence Business Strategies of Multinational Companies

These are the guidelines for the demographic survey that your organization/you have consented for participation as confirmed through your letter of consent. You are also advised that the participation in the survey is voluntary and you will be free to withdraw at any time, should you find any problems in your continued participation. Following are some questions that relate primarily to your demographics as well as organizational/status information.

Please answer the questions and return the form along with the enclosed consent form, if you are willing to participate in the said research study, as explained in the accompanying e-mail. The information that you provide on this survey questionnaire will be kept confidential, will not be shared with any third parties, and will exclusively be used for the purpose of this research only.

1. What is your nationality?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your age?
4. What is your race or ethnicity?
5. What is the name of your company and also identify your role in its management?
6. Explain the line of business the company operates in and the global locations where it has its operations:
   a. More than 5 locations
   b. More than 10 locations
   c. More than 15 locations
   d. More than 20 locations
   e. Above 25 locations
7. In your said capacity, as part of the management team, briefly select your responsibilities and duties in the company:
   a. Top management
   b. Senior level management
   c. Middle level management
d. Junior level management

e. Insignificant influence on decision making

8. Do you take part in strategic decision-making in your company and, if so, to what extent do you have an influence in the process? If not, please select option ‘e’
   a. Final decision maker
   b. Participant decision maker among 2 individuals
   c. Participant decision maker with less than 5 individuals
   d. Participant decision maker with more than 5 individuals
   e. Insignificant influence on decision making

9. Do you involve your junior management staff in the strategic decision-making or discuss relevant issues with them before you participate in decision-making?
   a. Always
   b. Often
   c. Occasionally
   d. When absolutely necessary
   e. Never

10. How will you describe your leadership style?
    a. Charismatic
    b. Transformational
    c. Motivational leader
    d. Democratic
    e. Authoritarian

11. What are your organizational policies relating to diversity?
    a. Actively pursue diversity of human resources
    b. Pursue diversity
    c. Reasonably pursue diversity
    d. Occasionally pursue diversity
    e. Seldom pursue diversity

12. Does your organization have an emphasis on cultural competence?
    a. Very strong emphasis
    b. Strong emphasis
c. Reasonable emphasis  
d. Low emphasis  
e. No emphasis

13. Do you provide orientation/training in cultural competence/tolerance?  
a. Consistently  
b. Often  
c. Occasionally  
d. Rarely  
e. Never

PS: [Not to be communicated to the participants]. Answers to questions ‘a’ through ‘e’ will be scored in a scale of ‘5’ to ‘1’ respectively. Questions on aspects such as leadership, diversity, and cultural competence are included as the researcher believes that these have a direct bearing on the strategic decision-making of an organization operating in a multi-cultural context.
Appendix D: Interview Questionnaire

Assessing whether the Regional Differences between Countries Influence Business Strategies of Multinational Companies

Interview Questionnaire:

Welcome to the interview. This interview is being conducted in relation to the research study, as explained to you through an e-mail at the stage of obtaining your written consent for this interview. You are once again assured that your identity or any information you share during the interview will be kept confidential, will not be shared with any third parties, and will be used exclusively for the purpose of this research. At any time during the course of this interview, you have the choice to withdraw from it. Similarly, if you are not comfortable with providing an answer to a particular question you may opt to avoid it and indicate your choice against the question. It is also informed that the interview will be through Skype, which will be recorded and transcribed later for data analysis.

1. In your opinion, do regional differences in your country, as compared to other nations in the EU, have an influence on the level of success that your firm achieves in its foreign operations? If so, can you identify some of those traits that contribute to the success/failure?
   a. Our nation/firm very strongly encourages diversity/cultural competence
   b. Strongly encourages diversity/cultural competence
   c. Moderately encourages diversity/cultural competence
   d. Somewhat encourages diversity/cultural competence
   e. Does not encourage diversity/cultural competence

2. So, in the context of diversity, can you tell me what percentage of your staff constitutes employees from a diverse/different culture?
   a. More than 40 percent
   b. More than 30 percent
   c. More than 20 percent
   d. More than 10 percent
   e. Less than 10 percent
3. From the perspectives of cultural competence, what measures do you take to ensure that the staff remain culturally competent/tolerant to other cultures?
   a. Regular/consistent training/orientation programs
   b. Occasional training/orientation programs
   c. Rare training/orientation programs
   d. Training/orientation programs when we notice a problem
   e. No training/orientation programs

4. Do you think the cultural differences between the home and host countries influence the performance of an MNC’s foreign operations, if so to what extent?
   a. Strongly
   b. Positively
   c. Somewhat
   d. Rarely
   e. Never

5. So what strategies do you adopt? For example, do you align your products or modify its features to match the expectations of the host country’s consumers?
   a. Always take absolute measures to align/modify
   b. Take some measures at frequent intervals to align/modify
   c. Take very moderate measures occasionally to align/modify
   d. Take certain measures rarely to align/modify
   e. Never

6. What strategies do you adopt for your marketing campaigns in the foreign countries that you operate in? For example, do you align your ads to be compatible with local culture?
   a. Completely align
   b. Frequently align
   c. Occasionally align
   d. Rarely align
   e. Never align

7. Do you adopt other strategies, such as special offers or discounts during the local festive seasons or other occasions of significance like a national day?
   a. Offers and discounts of all festivals/important days
b. Offers and discounts on many festivals/important days

c. Offers and discounts on significant festivals/important days

d. Offers and discounts of rare festival/important days

e. Never

8. Do you involve local ad agencies or handle everything through in-house or national ad agencies?

a. Always involves local agencies

b. Frequently involves local agencies

c. Sometimes involves local agencies

d. Rarely involves local agencies

e. Never involves local agencies

9. What is a significant impediment, in your opinion, when operating in a foreign country?
   You may select more than one answer should you determine that more than one of the explained situations is applicable to you.

a. Hostility of local population to our culture

b. Loyalty to domestic products

c. Lack of diversity in own workforce

d. Lack of cultural awareness of workforce

e. Hostility of workforce towards locals

10. How significant, in your opinion, are the impacts of global and local internationalization strategies on the performance of MNCs?

a. Highly significant impacts

b. Significant impacts

c. Moderate impacts

d. Insignificant impacts

e. No impacts

11. What is your response to a strategy that seeks to promote your country’s culture on the younger populations of the host nation?

a. Strongly favorable.

b. Favorable.

c. Neutral.
d. Unfavorable.
e. Strongly unfavorable.

12. What corporate social responsibility/public relation strategies will you suggest to improve the relation with local public? You may select more than one answer should you determine that more than one of the explained situations is applicable to you.

a. More humanitarian work
b. More environmental friendly work
c. Special concessions for specific groups such as disabled
d. Discounts during local festivals
e. None of the above

13. Do you change your business strategies when you launch in a new country or stick to the same strategies you adopt in your homeland?

a. Actively innovate new strategies
b. Innovate new strategies
c. Sometimes innovate new strategies
d. Rarely innovate new strategies
e. Never innovate new strategies/stick to standard strategies

14. Do you undertake a cultural/population study of a locality before you launch an operation in a specific area?

a. Yes, always
b. Sometimes
c. If conditions are ideal
d. Rarely
e. Never

15. How would you describe the policies of your companies: masculine, feminist, or gender-neutral?

a. Will depend on country of operation
b. Gender-neutral
c. Feminist
d. Masculine
e. Nothing specific
16. What is your company’s work-life balance notion:
   a. Try to provide work-life balance
   b. Depends of the nation of operation
   c. Works comes first
   d. Family comes first
   e. Not sure

17. Understandably, internationalization should be carefully schemed and executed; the fact that it defines venturing into new territories means that companies have to balance the complexities of everyday business against new trends and unexpected forces in the external environments. In your perception, how many strategies would effectively position a company pursuing internationalization to realize success?
   a. 5 strategies
   b. 4 strategies
   c. 3 strategies
   d. 2 strategies
   e. 1 strategy
Appendix E: Survey Results

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