Strategy Development in Cross Border and Global Organisations

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION 3](#_Toc197696720)

[TASK 1 3](#_Toc197696721)

[Principles and practices of quantitative and qualitative research on a practical level 3](#_Toc197696722)

[Research and development questions in Unilever 6](#_Toc197696723)

[Opportunities for the future development of strategy 8](#_Toc197696724)

[Task 2 9](#_Toc197696725)

[Critical analysis of formation of collective strategies by policies 9](#_Toc197696726)

[Factors which influence the collective strategy 11](#_Toc197696727)

[Task 3 16](#_Toc197696728)

[Critical assessment to resolve tensions between culture and ethics 16](#_Toc197696729)

[Critical evaluation of strategic intelligence used in development of strategy 17](#_Toc197696730)

[Contributing original thinking to strategy formulation at Unilever 18](#_Toc197696731)

[CONCLUSION 22](#_Toc197696732)

[REFERENCE 23](#_Toc197696733)

# INTRODUCTION

Strategy development in cross border or global organisations comprises of adhering to diverse needs of market by leveraging global perspective and managing international operations in order to gain competitive advantage (De Moraes, 2023). Considering this, purpose of this report is to address strategy development for cross border or global organisations that face challenges due to religious, cultural, political and social divides, along with assessing administration of organisations operating within particular countries. In this case, chosen organisation is Unilever, UK based FMCG Company that has strong presence cross border as it operates on global scale and has diversified product portfolio across home care, personal care, and food and beauty products (Unilever, 2025). Further, report will lay emphasis on analysis of political, social, ethical and operational needs for common strategy development in Unilever, along with analysis of collective strategy and how it is formed from the policies of organisations, key stakeholders and administrations. Apart from this, report will also include assessment of resolving tensions between ethics and culture of organisations, along with evaluating the usage of strategic intelligence across development and formulation of strategy. Overall, with the help of integration of models and theories, influence of strategy will be identified throughout the report.

# TASK 1

## Principles and practices of quantitative and qualitative research on a practical level

According to Wirba, (2024) it is stated that quantitative research uses numerical data and statistical analysis to test the hypotheses and quantify relationships, while qualitative research explores subjective experiences and meanings through non-numerical data like interviews and observations. These approaches offer valuable insights but are used to provide a comprehensive understanding of a research question.

Unilever’s quantitative research principles revolve around a severe, data driven approach to understand consumer behaviour and product performance. However it is argued by binti Tsuraya, (2023), that Unilever utilises the 6 Ps of marketing mix to ensure all aspects of their business are relevant and competitive. This framework is applied across 30 of Unilever’s brands by ensuring a consistent data backed strategy. The purpose of engaging in qualitative studies is to achieve a much deeper understanding of the consumer and marketing aspects, employees, and other stakeholders than is possible with quantitative metrics. The qualitative end of research is required for studying the "why" of consumer behaviours, employee motivation, and other factors that cannot be represented by numbers. These are some of the general areas wherein this methodology is applied, including product development, marketing, hiring, and employee engagement.

**Concept of common strategy**

Common strategy can be defined as the course of action incorporated by entities (individuals, organisations) in order to achieve common objective and goal (Dhlamini, 2022). It comprises of mutual benefit, shared goals, adaptability, coordinated action, collaboration and principles. This can be explained with the help of insights into different levels autonomy experienced by Unilever, as company adheres to decentralised strategy. For example; the national responsive strategy formulated by Unilever provides freedom to adapt to local subsidiaries, along with centrally controlled approach for standardised products. This suggest that Unilever does not operate through top down approach, rather it incorporate framework for through which goals are achieved across all entities (Sorge, 2023). Further, it represents criticality of autonomy, highlighting little autonomy can result in reduced responsiveness, resentment within management, whereas stronger autonomy can cause duplication and deterioration of brand identity.

**Unpacking organisation by utilising the complexity drivers**

Further, it can be ascertained that organisations can develop comprehensive understanding of autonomous business entities and overcome complexities by analysing the influence of drivers of time, geography/locations, customers/markets and technologies, as this helps in assessing communication channels. This can be seen as, time allows assessment of information flow, geography/location allows assessment of regional autonomy and information flow, whereas customer/markets allows assessment of different customer segments and technological factor enable assessment of impact of technologies on business entities (Song *et al.* 2022).

In this case, role of communication channel can be assessed as formal, informal, cross-functional, and centralised and technology based channels of communication leads to disseminating of information across different levels. Under this, by using email, formal meetings, social media, informal networks and internal forums, collaboration and alignment of common strategy can be communicated which ultimately results in achievement of goals.

**Critical analysis of political, social, ethical and operational needs for common strategy in Unilever**

**Political needs**

Political need for common strategy in Unilever exists in the form of navigating complexities across different trade policies, local laws and international agreements of cross border countries. Further, as company’s global supply chain is impacted by global trade and tariffs, a common strategy can help in optimising supply chain. Overall, by incorporating common strategy, unified approach can be leveraged that minimises political risks (Akinsola, 2025).

However, adherence to one size fit all approach may fail to address political nuances of specific region, resulting in conflicts and barrier to market entry. This can be seen as increased conflicts between local subsidiaries and global headquarters, which ultimately leads to deterioration of global strategy implementation.

**Social needs**

Social need for common strategy arises as it can help in addressing diverse consumer preference and cultural values, along with promotion of sustainability efforts at global level. This can be seen as company’s product development strategies and promotional campaigns needs to cater local custom and belief.

However, lack of local strategies may result in failure to address expectations of diverse communities and social needs of consumers. For example; marketing campaign that is successful in Western market, might be ineffective in African or Asian market (Wirba, 2024).

**Ethical needs**

Ethical needs for common strategy can be assessed as it can help in establishing ethical guidelines and clear standards that fosters accountability and integrity across diverse supply chains. This comprises of promoting sustainability, fair labour practices and so on (Chukwu *et al.* 2023).

However, due to ethical dilemmas and inconsistencies across market, global standards may not be replicated by brand.

**Operational needs**

Operational needs for common strategy can be assessed as it results in streamlining operations, improving efficiency, resource optimisation and minimising cost by leveraging technologies, cost across varied regions.

However, adhering to centralised approach may hamper operational flexibility that limits opportunities for future adaption and innovation.

Overall, it can be assessed that common strategy created both positive and negatives for organisation as its criticality can be assessed in the form of resistance from suppliers (in case of standardised process across supply chain) and ineffective communication, which further leads to mistrust, lack of collaborative approach and so on.

## Research and development questions in Unilever

R&D questions are specific inquiries that guide research and development activities within a business by aiming to identify, explore and develop new products. Unilever’s experts are pushing the boundaries of science and shaping the future of innovation by leading in cutting-edge fields such as microbiome, biotechnology and next generation packaging materials.

In order to enable external collaboration on a national and international basis, strategy for Unilever is evolved and developed by using varied methodologies, which comprises of external and internal factors. This can be seen as company emphasises on growth, sustainable living, fostering collaboration, digital transformation and so on. Apart from this, Unilever also uses, partner with purpose and partner to win approach to build collaboration based on sustainable and innovative aspects. Considering this, detailed description of methodologies through which strategy is evolved and developed is as follows;

**Stakeholder engagement**

It comprises of collaborating with NGOs, government and stakeholders, in order to achieve sustainable outcome and drive innovation and change. In this case, role of stakeholder management can be assessed as by engaging with stakeholders in strategy development, opportunities and challenges in the process can be identified, that ensures that overall strategy aligns with expectations of key stakeholders (Esan, 2024). Overall, company has strong record through which it engages with key stakeholders (comprising of world economic forum. NGOs).

**Scenario planning**

As methodology through which strategy is evolved and developed for Unilever, scenario planning comprises of devising different scenarios for future by assuming technological, political, social and economic trends. Further, it can be assessed that by forming alternative future options, company can create strategy that is less risky and delves with external partners. For example; company can form scenarios around potential collaboration with government and NGOs for addressing issue of climate change. This may result in forming appropriate strategy for minimising negative impact of climate change on organisational processes (Van Tulder *et al.* 2021).

**Decentralised management**

As Unilever operates through decentralised system, comprising of local players, it enables company to make faster decision along with, showcasing responsiveness to local market needs. This serves as effective methodology for evolving and developing strategy.

**Strategic alliance**

Methodology based on strategic alliance enables Unilever to develop strategy and achieve strategic goals. This can be seen as by partnering with firms that carries complimentary capabilities, Unilever gain access to technology, resources and new markets, along with sharing risk and cost. It results in external collaboration on a national and international basis, for example; strategic alliances of Unilever with Pespsi to sale Lipton tea (Garg, 2023).

Overall, it can be assessed that Unilever’s growth action plan serves as key force in driving value and unlocking potential, serving as key methodology for evolving and developing future strategies for company.

You could further identify some of the complexities and the respective required resources and capabilities to respond to the environment in which they operate. You might also make some reference to writers such as Stewart Brands who discusses ideas on disruptive technologies

## Opportunities for the future development of strategy

In order to enhance the impact on component organisations, administrations and key stakeholders, Unilever can incorporate strategy based on purpose driven, sustainable and evolving aspects of consumers on a global scale. This can be seen in the form of opportunities concerned with shaping value chain, fostering innovation, environmental sustainability and incorporating innovative aspects while engaging with stakeholders. Detailed description of the same is as follows;

**Digital transformation**

Opportunities for future development of strategies exists in the form of technological upgradation. This can be seen as company can leverage AI and ML across its operations, in order to drive efficiency and achieve sustainability. For example; the impact on the component organisations, administrations and key stakeholders can be enhanced by leveraging data analytics, as through this insights regarding taste and preference of consumers can be obtained. However, for optimising opportunities, emphasis needs to be laid on continuously innovating products and services to address social and environmental concerns.

**Sustainable practices**

Opportunities for future development of strategies exists in the form of incorporating sustainable practices, as consumers are becoming conscious about what they consume and its impact on environment. Further, it can be assessed that Unilever has incorporated sustainable living plan that showcases its commitment to sustainability. However, opportunities for future investment exists in the form of minimising ecological footprint, investing in renewable energy and reducing greenhouse emission by promoting sustainable practices. This can be justified through Stewart Brands idea, based on concept of disruptive technologies, indicating that company need to forecast and adhere to sustainability practices based on disruptive technologies in order to enhance long term competitiveness and create new business opportunities (Sahani, 2025).

**Purpose led organisation**

Opportunities for future development of strategy exists in the form of promoting purpose led organisation that empowers local team for making decisions that relate to local market needs as well. For this, Unilever can invests in employee skill development program and promote positive environment. As it will result in inclusive growth and promotion of labour practices, which ultimately helps in ensuring success of organisation (Ezeafulukwe *et al.* 2024).

**Other opportunities**

For enhancing impact on component organisations, administrations and key stakeholders, opportunities based on providing superior quality products to consumers, fostering supportive workplace environment for employees and demonstrating long term value to attract investors in the form of sustainable initiatives, exists for Unilever. However, all these opportunities needs to be aligned with ESG factors as it will help in contributing to community wellbeing (P Shravan, 2024).

In this case, sources of power and influence within organisations comprises of expert knowledge, formal positions, personal influence and relationships.

# Task 2

## Critical analysis of formation of collective strategies by policies

Unilever's sustainability undertakings are often lauded, yet the research backing issues here varies much in terms of methodology. As per the views of Magagan and Ngugi, (2021) it is stated that some research employs life cycle assessments (LCAs), rigorously taken through several steps of examining an environmental impact across the value chain. These types of analyses have been peer-reviewed and acceptable for diffraction through different standard methods such as ISO 14040, thereby providing the worthy data from which adequate decisions are derived to focus on interventions, to the effects of policies, or to see demonstrable improvements such as reducing carbon footprints and conserving economic water. The science stands behind the Unilever claims and allows for transparency in the communication of environmental performance.

It is opposed by Iglesias (2023) it is stated that self-reporting and consumer perception surveys have probably also formed the basis for environmental responsibility. These methods may indeed be employed well to measure brand images and consumer preferences. However, in terms of determining the actual environmental impact of products and processes, they lack objectivity and verifiable data. Overemphasis on consumer perception even does the company more harm by indulging in greenwashing; where the marketing-related sustainability benefits emphasized are far from genuine environmental improvements. This severely dents the trust and acts as a barrier to any serious progress towards a sustainable business model.

Essentially, collective strategy is an overarching strategic direction that is arrived at through the interfacing and integration of different individual approaches from various actors within a larger ecosystem. For an MNC like Unilever, the dynamics of the collective strategy are brought forth from the interplay of policies and strategic initiatives set in motion by the global headquarters, regional divisions, country-specific subsidiaries, and other external stakeholders like governments, regulators, NGOs, and consumer groups.

It is not straightforward and would not be imposed top-down. It's a very complex negotiation and alignment of various interests and priorities. For example, Unilever's global sustainability goals would be translated into individual policies addressing local realities, especially different environmental regulations and consumer preferences (Johansson and Wickström, 2023). The success of the entire effort will rely on opening channels of communications, mutual understanding, and willingness to compromise among all players involved.

The perspectives of stakeholders and the concomitant information flows within the organization play a decisive role in the formation of the collective strategy. The unique worldviews and changing perspectives of stakeholders are important factors in directing strategy. According to FENOY BARCELÓ, (2023) it is stated that in the case of Unilever, this means that an import mechanism is set up for engaging with the organizations of consumer advocacy, governmental organizations, and environmental organizations, relating their concerns to Unilever's decision-making process. This creates synergy when on the one hand a well-thought-out collective strategy is pursued with deep stakeholder engagement. On the other hand, if Unilever integrates environmental sustainability concerns of stakeholders into its sourcing policies, it gains competitive advantage along with enhancing brand reputation. With due regard and consideration of consumer perspectives, Unilever has been able to tailor its offerings to meet the individual needs and requirements. This reactiveness can also minimize risks associated with legislative changes and possible actions from social activists. The policy and strategy dimensions are presented in a summary through the STEEPV model. For instance, Unilever's sustainable palm oil sourcing decision received pressure via environmental groups and consumer awareness campaigns, demonstrating the ability of stakeholders to unlock strategic transformation within global organizations. The policy cascade applies to a very significant part of this transformation.

The intelligence gathering and flow from operational units for the overall collective strategy should be effective. However it is argued by Valencia-Romero and Grogan, (2024) that the bottom-up approach will help Unilever recognize emerging trends and potential risks while gearing up their strategies to the evolving needs of different markets. The quality of this information flow directly impacts the responsiveness and adaptability of the collective strategy. Key policy and strategy issues that influence collective strategy can be identified by the STEEPV factors. Similarly, a generalized collective strategy should be avoided in favour of more localized strategy formulation. For example, the company's common advertising might cost them more harm than good, particularly because advertising intended for culturally diverse markets may be a turn-off. Unilever should have a global reach and accessibility the more so because it will require adaptations to respective local strategies in the light of local cultural insensitivities in strategies employed. That lack of sensitization can generate public uproar, which can beat the initial purpose of the collective strategy. Reliance on such impasse of stakeholder input without due regard to internal capabilities and market realities will also create ineffective strategies. Thus, Unilever has to balance between responding to stakeholder hunger and pursuing independent strategic objectives. The lack of a clear policy cascade has the opposite effect and is counterproductive.

## Factors which influence the collective strategy

Unilever operates in a world characterized by intricate political, social, cultural, and religious landscapes. Developing a successful global strategy requires navigating these complexities effectively.

**Formation of Collective Strategy**

A crucial aspect of collective strategy is acknowledging the diverse perspectives of stakeholders. Nevertheless, this process is not purely uni-directional. From a communication theory perspective, including Shannon and Weaver's model, Unilever employs a variety of channels for both top-down and bottom-up communication (Gómez-Nava, Bon and Peruani, 2022). Operational units provide feedback to create a continuous loop in which local dynamics inform global strategy. In this way, the iterative process ensures that the global strategy is always relevant and change-ready. Feedback from operational units regarding local market environments and stakeholder concerns flows upwards to shape the broader collective strategy. This evidence-based approach, tempered by external considerations, allows Unilever to foresee potential difficulties in advance and find ways of resolving those while capitalizing on opportunities.

**Stakeholder influence and shifting perspectives**

Very much central to the collective strategy is the acknowledgment of different perspectives from its very many stakeholders. Unilever functions in a complex ecosystem, wherein stakeholders include the consumers, the government, NGOs, investors, and employees, all having differing worldviews (Bhat, Silllalee, and Kandasamy, 2023). Very much importantly, Unilever recognizes such multiple and differing potential viewpoints. The company engages with their stakeholders to acknowledge their concerns and include people in its decision making process which minimises the conflicts and creates a collaborative environment.

**STEEPV Factors Shaping Collective Strategy and the Reality of Influencing Factors**

The STEEPV (Social, Technological, Economic, Environmental, Political, and Values) framework to analyse the external factors influencing Unilever’s collective strategy:

Inclinations of the state: Unstable trade policies, implementation of regulatory frameworks, and political instability in certain regions impact Unilever's market access and supply chain operations. An additional challenge Unilever is facing is the intricate political landscape where trade barriers, regulatory hurdles, or political instability may affect market access and supply chain operations.

Globally: Global economic trends, international trade agreements, and geopolitical tensions directly impact Unilever's sourcing, manufacturing, and distribution networks. This side of globalization opens up avenues for market expansion and cost efficiency, but also creates challenges in the way of currency fluctuation, geopolitical risks, and opportunities from bottoming out of the global economy (Kpoku, 2021).

Public Interest: Increasing consumer awareness of such areas as ethical sourcing, sustainability, and health issues means that these public interests have to be taken into consideration by Unilever under its product development and marketing. Sustainable and ethical products are increasingly being demanded by consumers; hence, Unilever must adopt responsible sourcing and production methods as a sound business strategy.

Impacts of Media: Rapid and often vast information dissemination, whether through bad news or good news, through different media creates a huge impact on Unilever's brand equity and demands the establishment of an active crisis communication strategy. Online platforms and social media immensely influence marketing and brand reputation. Therefore, it is vital for Unilever to proactively engage and maintain its digital presence amongst the consumers.

Social, cultural, and religious beliefs: Changing demographics, lifestyle preferences, and consumer behaviours serve as a stimulus to the product design and marketing strategies of companies targeting specific segments (Bloemraad and Menjívar, 2022). Consumer behaviour in any location is shaped by culturally attendant norms and proper values; therefore, Unilever must adapt its products and marketing campaigns so that they reflect the spirit of local cultures. It is religious beliefs and practices that drive purchasing behaviours-witness the Personal Care and Food businesses-along with Unilever having to march in tandem with products such as foodstuffs amenable to religious requirements and sensitivities. Social trends, cultural norms, and religious beliefs influence consumer preferences and consumption patterns, which makes the company to tailor its products and market their strategies to a diverse group of individuals.

**Critical Systems Heuristics**

Applying Critical Systems Heuristics, as explored by Ulrich, helps identify those affected by Unilever's policies. The evaluation may unveil the unintended consequences that inform the adoption of strategies that are more inclusive and just. For example, decisions regarding the sourcing of raw materials may be seen to affect the local community. If Unilever factors in the demands of the affected people, then it can design policies that help all stakeholders. The collective strategy would be Unilever-above all, a living and therefore mutable framework arising from a complex of internal dynamics (Gigerenzer, Reb and Luan, 2022).

**Methodology, instrumentation and research design appropriate for Unilever**

As a multinational consumer goods and services company, Unilever engages in applied research that forms a basis for innovation, sustainability, and market control. This paper lists customized methodology, instrumentation, and research design to meet the evolving needs of Unilever, considering consumer behaviour, product testing, and environmental factors.

**Methodology:** The methodology principle underlines that a mixed-method approach is the best fit for Unilever, including quantitative data for statistical insight (e.g., sales trends) and qualitative methods to gain more in-depth insight into consumers (e.g., focus groups). This way, Unilever conducts comprehensive analysis to cover measurable outcomes along with cultural nuances in preferences- targeted toward Sustainable Living Plan.

**Instrumentation:** It consists of digital surveys and other online platform tools such as Qualtrics being our favourite for initial broad data-gathering, super-intelligence analytics software from IBM Watson for quick, real-time processing, and wearables for actual product testing...allowing efficient, scalable research with minimal bias.

**Research Design**: In contrast, a longitudinal design would best track change over time, measuring the long-term impact of brand loyalty or the execution of good marketing practices. This would include the actual experimental design done in a laboratory setting for testing products and observing the results in the commercial market in real-life environments.

Unilever, a global leader in consumer goods, relies on robust research to drive innovation, sustainability, and market dominance. This article outlines a tailored methodology, instrumentation, and research design to support Unilever's dynamic needs, focusing on consumer behaviour, product efficacy, and environmental impact.

The following table summarises the key elements:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Component** | **Description** | **Examples for Unilever** |
| **Methodology** | Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) | Surveys for sales data; interviews for consumer feedback |
| **Instrumentation** | Digital tools and devices | Qualtrics surveys; AI analytics |
| **Research Design** | Longitudinal and experimental | Tracking brand impact over years; lab-based product trials |

By adopting this framework, Unilever can enhance decision-making, promote innovation and achieve sustainable growth.

**Critical application of the statistical methods**

Unilever's diverse product portfolio demands robust market research. According to Hu and Zeng, (2024) it is stated that choosing the appropriate methodology, instrumentation, and statistical methods is crucial for generating actionable insights. For instance, when evaluating consumer attitudes towards a new sustainable packaging initiative, a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys (Likert scales, conjoint analysis) with qualitative focus groups offers a comprehensive understanding. Instrumentation should be carefully selected. Instead of relying solely on simplistic surveys, consider incorporating advanced techniques like eye-tracking during product testing to gauge visual attention or neuro-marketing techniques to understand emotional responses. This provides deeper, data-driven insights.

Instead of simply relying on descriptive statistics, utilize inferential statistics like regression analysis to identify key drivers of consumer preference and predict market share. It is argued by Indonesia and Yuntoharjo, (2021) that considering the A/B testing through randomized controlled trials to optimize marketing campaigns and product features. Ensuring statistically significant sample sizes and controlling for confounding variables is paramount to avoid biased results and flawed decision-making.

The following table summarizes examples:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Area** | **Methodology** | **Instrumentation** | **Statistical Methods** |
| New Product Development | Conjoint Analysis, Ethnographic Research | Online Surveys, In-home Product Testing | Regression Analysis, Cluster Analysis |
| Brand Perception | Sentiment Analysis, Social Listening | Social Media Monitoring Tools, Surveys | Natural Language Processing, Hypothesis Testing |
| Advertising Effectiveness | A/B Testing, Eye Tracking | Website Analytics, Eye-tracking Devices | T-tests, ANOVA |

# Task 3

## Critical assessment to resolve tensions between culture and ethics

International businesses are essentially faced with managing the challenges arising from the different cultures and ethics of the various organizations, administrations, and key stakeholders that contribute to a multinational corporation, and Unilever is by no means an exception. It is stated by Midgley and Rajagopalan, (2021) that one possible way to deal with this is through the active promotion of a culture of ethical awareness and transparency. Most importantly, it requires well-organized and solid ethical frameworks, regular training sessions and an open channel of communication. Ethical integrity with firm cross-cultural understanding becomes the hallmark of leadership, manifested through active involvement of relevant stakeholders to appreciate their views and concerns. An environment for open dialogue will be established so that feedback will be encouraged, thus ensuring trust while preventing the development of resentment toward actions taken in support of ethical decision-making. In addition to its own such steps, a centralized ethical review board with representatives from diverse backgrounds may be made available for oversight and guidance on complex ethical dilemmas in a manner in which such decisions recognize the values upon which Unilever stands and respect the sensibilities of all the stakeholders involved.

However it is argued by Tahmasbi, (2023) that purely top-down centralized systems are very prescriptive and fail to consider rules of local culture and ethics. Imposing one globally standardized ethical code can innocently disregard certain local existing practices, thus giving rise to resentment even amongst contributing organizations and other stakeholders. Furthermore, attempts at mandating compliance with a common set of values are to be seen as exercises in stagnating innovation as they institutionalize a long-drawn bureaucratic work environment, which ends up impeding the desired agility and responsiveness to the local market requirements. This might require a great shift in developing a more decentralized approach wherein the local leadership can instead adapt ethical guidelines under these basic principles-set fairness and integrity while considering their particular cultural context. This brings about creating the culture of ethical self-regulation, whereby such practices should make it so easier that local teams are cushioned with the necessary knowledge and resources to navigate ethical dilemmas in a culturally fairly sensitive manner and thus be able to raise ownership and accountability into grassroots levels. The effort could be difficult to work with, but indeed recognizes the existence of an ethics and culture world that is diverse in itself and then allows more nuanced and effective conflict resolution.

## Critical evaluation of strategic intelligence used in development of strategy

Strategic intelligence is a key factor in the development and implementation of strategy in organizations like Unilever. It is determined by Chaudhry, (2022) that Beer's Viable System Model (VSM) clearly illustrates how intelligence gathering (S4) informs policy setting (S5). Unilever's S4 function keyly looks well into the current and future environments, collecting data on market trends, competitors' activities, technological advancements, and evolving consumer preferences. This intelligence is then channelled to S5, where senior leadership formulates strategic policies and objectives. Coordination and control functions from S3 and S3\* ensure that resources are effectively balanced across Unilever's widely diversified operational units (S1) to be in line with overarching strategic goals. Operational units do interact directly with the environment and provide very important real-time data back into the intelligence gathering cycle, which creates a continuous feedback loop. This flow of information depends on vigorous channels of communication, which are necessary for people to disseminate intelligence and act on it. For instance, Unilever's leaning on increasing demand for sustainable products discerned from research done in the market (S4) affected its sustainable living plan (S5) which would guide the allocation of resources across several S1 units.

Strategic intelligence brings its problems at Unilever. The Nonaka SECI model points out the importance of socialization of knowledge for the harnessing of domain expertise. However it is opposed by Jakesch, Hancock and Naaman, (2023) that the company probably does create internal communities of practice to share intelligence, but among all the variation the effectiveness of this model might encounter, the most significant would be the varied cultures within the global operations. The speed and openness of knowledge sharing, for example, might vary significantly between Western and Eastern subsidiaries, impacting the overall efficiency of intelligence utilization. Also, the companies' dependence on formal intelligence-gathering processes may hinder tacit knowledge and innovative insights that arise from informal interactions and serendipitous discoveries within because of strict applications of VSM, ensuring coordination but at the same making inability to be as agile as necessary to respond to rapid market changes. Thus, it is obvious that Unilever might spend a packet on strategic intelligence. Still, the worth of such spending depends more on how well such organization structures processes and flexible knowledge sharing might be adapted to the globalization and multicultural nature of the organization.

## Contributing original thinking to strategy formulation at Unilever

Creating new thinking in the definition and development of strategies requires much more than the mere application of old knowledge. It implies digging deeper into the understanding of a context, challenging assumptions, and providing new alternatives (Podlesny, 2024). In a highly diversified multinational such as Unilever, the very existence of such original thought is important for competitive advantage. Thus, this contribution is about showing much broader study and reading, transcending surface knowledge.

One possible lens via which one could think about original thought is the idea of Michael Polanyi, proposing that all knowledge has a contextual background, thereby blurring any boundaries between tacit and explicit. Applied to Unilever, this would mean that large sets of data and market reports (explicit knowledge) are relevant only when placed in context with the consumer world and experience considerations, and the tacit knowledge workers on the field have. When these converge, true innovation is born.

Other than what Polanyi said, open and directed innovations are also relevant here. Open innovation refers to outward collaboration with research institutions, start-ups, and even competitors to generate diverse views to hasten the development of new products and technologies (Festré, and Østbye, 2021). Directed innovation then turns the internal R&D engines towards specific strategic ends. Frisson between these streams is essential for the origination of relevant and disruptive ideas.

The Kaizen philosophy would strengthen the realization of a joint learning environment that nurtures experiential knowledge and continuous improvement (CI). This important proposition, alongside the Japanese prescription "Ba," calling for a shared environment for knowledge creation, can provide tremendous benefits to Unilever. Following such lead would allow unconstrained input from employees at all levels and encourage them to explore different ways of doing things toward enhancing a culture that favors original thinking. For example, an observation by a packaging engineer about material waste could lead to an environmental profit drop due to a radical redesign. This is from the bottom up, driven by experiential knowledge, contrasting with the top-down strategic vision.

In conclusion, adding original thinking into Unilever's strategy must be through a perspective that is holistic, looking into knowledge's contextual nature, embracing open innovation along with directed innovation, and creating a culture of continuous improvement through shared learning environments (Kitsios and Kamariotou, 2021). It is by exploiting both explicit and tacit knowledge as well as encouraging employees to challenge assumptions and generate new solutions that will position Unilever to spearhead innovations and retain market leadership in perpetuity.

**Plan and deliver management research projects using research methodologies**

To execute a successful research project Unilever requires a robust understanding of project management principles and research methodologies. By combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods which are also known as mixed methods is important for comprehensive analysis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Aspect** | **Description** |
| **Methodology** | Mixed methods, integrating quantitative data (surveys, sales figures) with qualitative insights (interviews, focus groups). |
| **Project Plan** | Detailed plans outlining objectives, timelines, resources, and data analysis strategies. |
| **Analysis** | Combining statistical analysis with thematic analysis to derive actionable insights. |
| **Delivery** | Presenting clear, concise reports with recommendations to Unilever stakeholders. |

Effective planning, execution, and analysis using mixed methods are essential for delivering impactful research projects that inform Unilever's strategies and decision-making processes.

**Provide written research reports that include data visualisation**

Unilever combines mixed methods research to investigate consumer behaviour and market trends from all possible angles. Writing reports with robust data visualization elements is an essential part of Unilever's deliverables in the research phase.

Going beyond the raw data-base, these reports skilfully weave narratives, drawing from a pool of qualitative and quantitative data-sets and supported by charts, graphs, and infographics. Such synergy helps all stakeholders understand the insights at a glance, study patterns, and comprehend the finer details behind the data.

Visualizing complex data pays off in ensuring that whatever lines of research are pursued by Unilever carry more weight during decision-making processes and make them more appealing (Ismaeel and Alsariera, 2023). Usually, tables are sometimes prepared to summarize significant data points for supplementing the visualizations used. Unilever's philosophy revolves around clear communication and transparency, where the research findings must not only be understood but also translated into practical strategies effectively.

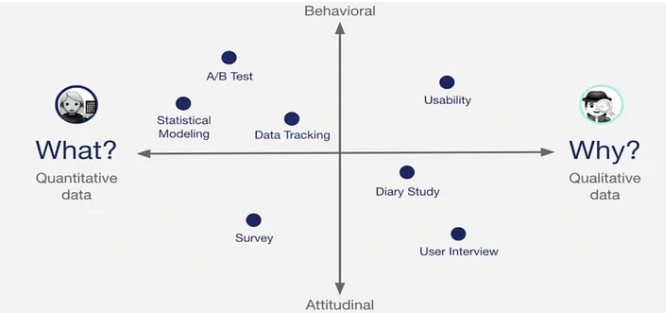


Figure 1: Mixed methods

**(Source: Daniel Kyne, 2021)**

**Ethical issues in research**

Unilever research faces ethical scrutiny in several areas such as:

* Unilever has been subject to boycott and criticism for its operations in Russia, even after the onset of the war in Ukraine.
* Unilever has been in the firing line for the plastic packaging considered to be "highly-polluting".
* Sexual abuse in Unilever's Kenyan supply chains has been reported.
* This is an extremely severe moral problem, as it entails exploiting and persecuting vulnerable workers.
* Where bribery and corruption were involved, some reports indicated very serious infringements of policy which may serve to seriously ruin the standing and legality of the company.
* Unilever considers the idea of using AI for research and operations but must take ethical issues into consideration.
* One of its policies states that no decision affecting a life significantly should be fully automated.
* This shown the company's dedication to ethical sourcing and to minimizing animal harm.

# CONCLUSION

The report on the topic strategy development in cross border or global organisations, presented comprehensive understanding of strategy development, along with challenges based on political, religious, cultural and social divides that impacts successful business operations. Further, report covered three different tasks that involved analysing political, social, ethical and operational needs for common strategy in Unilever, accompanied by methodologies (scenario planning, decentralised management and stakeholder engagement) through which strategy can be evolved and developed. Apart from this, report covered aspects of analysing collective strategy, along with its influential factors in the modern context. Lastly, information regarding evaluation of strategic intelligence and its role in formulation of strategy has been included in the report.

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