



Book Review

Mastering Strategic Thinking: A Comprehensive Review of *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases* (13th Edition)

Kariyapperuma, Seshika^a

University of Sri Jayewardenepura

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ABSTRACT

This review critically assesses the 13th edition of *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases* by Whittington et al. (2024), a widely used textbook in management and business education. With its comprehensive scope and practical relevance, the book provides a strong foundation in strategic management for undergraduate, postgraduate, and MBA students, as well as practitioners. The book is organised into three main sections: strategic analysis, strategic choices, and strategy in action. Each section is supported by a few real-world case studies, theoretical frameworks, and discussions that foster student engagement and critical thinking. The authors effectively combine theory and practice by blending traditional tools such as SWOT and Porter's Five Forces with modern issues such as digital transformation and globalization. Key strengths include clarity, updated content, and a global perspective. However, some limitations are also present. The extensive content sometimes sacrifices depth, and certain chapters, such as those on strategic lenses, mergers and acquisitions, and post-strategy evaluation, lack detailed development or seamless integration. Additionally, while the international case studies are commendable, their strong European focus may limit their relevance for students outside of Europe. Compared to other strategy textbooks, such as those by Lynch et al., (2024) or Wheelen et al., (2025) 'Exploring Strategy' places more emphasis on critical thinking and multiple viewpoints instead of detailed theoretical steps and processes. Despite some minor issues, the book remains an important resource for developing strategic thinking skills, offering both conceptual insight and practical application in today's complex business environment.

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* Corresponding author. Tel: +94774921545; Email: seshika@sjp.ac.lk; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1227-5189>
Institution: University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Introduction

"Exploring Corporate Strategy," authored by Whittington et al (2024), is a foundational textbook in strategic management. It is a widely utilized resource in business schools and management programs around the globe. The book offers an in-depth and realistic perspective on the complexities of strategic management, making it appropriate for both students and professionals. This review will assess the key strengths, weaknesses, and significance of the book, with a focus on the most recent 13th edition.

Exploring Corporate Strategy is written primarily for a diverse group of students and practitioners in strategic management. It is a core text for undergraduate and postgraduate business administration and management students, as well as students on related courses, offering a basic yet comprehensive understanding of strategic concepts. The book is also highly suitable for MBA students who require a broad and structured introduction to strategic management to support their subsequent studies. Beyond the academic arena, the book offers practical guidance for executive managers seeking to refine their strategic thinking and decision-making capabilities. Additionally, it serves as a useful guide for practitioners pursuing business or management qualifications, as it effectively links theoretical models to actual practice, thereby making its relevance applicable across both academic and professional contexts.

Contents

This comprehensive textbook on strategic management guides readers through the fundamental concepts, frameworks, and tools necessary for strategic analysis, decision-making, and execution. In the first section of the book, basic strategic concepts are introduced, strategy is defined, and the strategic management process is described. Following that, it examines strategic analysis and provides tools for evaluating an organization's strategic position. This includes understanding strategic purpose, expectations of stakeholders, and corporate governance (Chapter 4), evaluating internal strategic capabilities and competitive advantage through VRIO (Chapter 3), analyzing the external macro and industry environments using frameworks like PESTEL and Porter's Five Forces (Chapter 2), and investigating the significant impact of organizational culture on strategy (Chapter 5).

The second major section, "Strategic Choices," examines the various strategic options that are available for organisations. This covers corporate-level strategies pertaining to organizational scope, such as portfolio management and diversification (Chapter 7), as well as business-level strategies centered on market competition, such as Porter's generic strategies (Chapter 6).

Additionally, it covers global challenges, market entry strategies, and international strategies (Chapter 8). Then, it emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship and innovation (Chapter 9) and explores strategic alliances, mergers, and acquisitions as growth mechanisms (Chapter 10). These chapters equip readers with frameworks to formulate effective strategic directions.

Finally, the third section, "Strategy in Action," concentrates on the practical aspects of implementing strategy. While Chapter 11 explores various processes used to develop strategies, Chapter 12 addresses organizational structures and their alignment with these strategies. Chapter 13 discusses the critical role that leadership plays in leading and managing strategic change. In addition to the theoretical content, a special "Cases Section" (Illustrative Pages: 581-750) presents real-world business scenarios that enable readers to apply the frameworks and concepts they have learned to practical strategic problems, thereby gaining a deeper understanding and hands-on experience with strategic decision-making.

Evaluation

In terms of comprehensiveness, a key strength of the book lies in its extensive and inclusive coverage of strategic management. It provides a comprehensive overview of the field, encompassing a broad array of theories, frameworks, and concepts. The book thoroughly explores a wide range of concepts, from traditional frameworks like Porter's Five Forces and SWOT analysis to modern approaches such as the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities. Clarity and accessibility are also great strengths of this textbook. The authors excel at presenting complex concepts in an understandable and straightforward manner. The book is written in clear language and structured effectively, ensuring readers can easily grasp the arguments and comprehend the main concepts. The use of diagrams, models, and examples further enhances clarity.

Furthermore, the authors regularly revise the book to incorporate the latest advancements in the industry. The 2024 edition, similar to previous ones, addresses modern topics including digital transformation, sustainability, globalization, and the effects of technological advancements. Incorporating recent case studies demonstrates the impact of these issues on real-world organizations. Thus, this textbook is up-to-date and relevant. Moreover, it's a harmonious blend of Theory and Practice. It effectively balances theoretical concepts with practical applications. It offers a strong foundation in strategic management theory, complemented by numerous examples and case studies that demonstrate the practical application of these concepts in real-world scenarios. This equilibrium enhances the book's value for both academic research and professional growth.

Furthermore, it is carefully crafted as a detailed educational

resource, featuring various effective teaching elements that boost student involvement and comprehension. The book includes numerous case studies, ranging from concise examples within the chapters to more extensive analyses after each section, encompassing a diverse selection of industries and organizations. This variety offers learners a rich, contextual perspective on strategic management in different settings. Every chapter is accompanied by discussion questions that encourage critical thinking and assist students in applying theoretical ideas to real-world situations. Key concepts are strongly highlighted, and chapter summaries facilitate key concept repetition to enhance retention and comprehension. Suggestions for further reading are also provided, encouraging students to read further on areas of interest. The book's strong international emphasis is one of its glaring strengths, exemplified and case-studied in diverse globalization, reflecting the realities of operating business in a globalized economy. Throughout its versions, the authors have made enormous efforts to update the content continuously to incorporate new theories and counter emerging trends, as evidence of their desire to stay up-to-date with the rapidly changing world of business and academia. Above all, the book is rich in critical thinking, making the student think critically, question assumptions, synthesize competing viewpoints, and build well-organized, independent opinions on strategic management.

Even though this textbook offers remarkable comprehensiveness, its breadth can create challenges, particularly for undergraduates. For example, the chapter on 'Strategic lenses' is powerful and unique in critical thinking, but each lens was introduced with a brief explanation and examples. Thus, a student may lack a deeper understanding of how to apply it effectively in a case study. While its extensive topic coverage is significant, depth may sometimes be sacrificed, leaving some ideas less deeply investigated. For example, the chapter on 'Mergers and Acquisitions' sufficiently covers various aspects and motives but largely omits deeper discussions on post-merger integration failures. For new students, especially undergraduates or those with limited business backgrounds, the complexity of certain models and frameworks might be discouraging. For instance, those students who are unfamiliar with economic theories face difficulties in understanding areas such as transaction cost economics and agency theory. Despite the authors' efforts to clarify, some sections might require additional instructor guidance. The information density can also lead to overload, making it challenging to differentiate crucial ideas without extensive guidance. Furthermore, although the book integrates contemporary perspectives, its reliance on older traditional models can limit exposure to more unconventional or revolutionary approaches such as AI-powered predictive analysis, network, and ecosystem mapping, simulations, and gamification(Singh,2023),

internal data fusion and analytics(Ferrar & Green,2021) and cross functional sense making labs and sprints(Knapp.2016) Beyond its foundational content, the book's treatment of the strategic process also presents areas for improvement. It tends to emphasize strategy development (e.g., environmental analysis, strategic choices, and planning) but often treats strategy review and control more as an operational or managerial follow-up. For instance, the discussion on how organisations actually monitor the effectiveness of these strategies, beyond basic financial ratios, is comparatively brief, almost as if it's an afterthought for implementation teams. This can make the review and control process seem secondary or implicit rather than an integral and critical part of strategic management. Unlike other strategy topics supported by well-known frameworks such as SWOT, PESTEL, or the Ansoff Matrix, the review and control stage lacks a comprehensive framework or model, making it harder for learners, especially undergraduates, to structure their understanding of how organizations evaluate strategy success and make adjustments.

Similarly, while this textbook addresses important components of strategy implementation such as processes, change management, leadership, systems, and culture, these topics are usually discussed in isolation rather than as interdependent parts of a unified implementation framework. This fragmentation makes it harder for students, especially undergraduates, to see how these elements come together in practice. The book provides excellent individual case examples but doesn't often take readers through complete, real-world implementation journeys from planning to execution and evaluation. Without this kind of holistic approach, students may struggle to understand how abstract concepts translate into action in a dynamic organizational setting. Furthermore, despite its international scope, many examples and case studies are based on European companies and contexts, which may reduce relatability for students in other regions, especially in Asia, Africa, or Latin America.

Finally, no single textbook can cater to every pedagogical requirement. When compared with other leading textbooks, such as "Strategic Management" by Lynch *et al.* (2024), subtle differences in emphasis emerge. While "Exploring Strategy" excels at presenting a practical approach for strategy, it might offer a slightly less explicit or continuous exploration of the underlying theoretical aspects and process dynamics that characterize the strategic management field. For example, the section on 'strategic change' offers practical approaches and tools for managing resistance and implementing new directions. However, it does not deeply explore the behavioral theories of organizational change, such as Lewin's Force Field Analysis or the power dynamics that usually drive or hinder strategic changes, making the 'reasons' for change more explicit. For a program seeking to deeply immerse students in the academic discourse surrounding strategic evolution and its diverse theoretical

underpinnings, a supplementary text or Lynch's approach might provide a more targeted intellectual foundation. Another potential weakness, when compared to the strategic management model of Wheelen *et al.* (2025), is that its flexible, multiple-lens approach encourages critical thinking; it may feel less structured or more prescriptive to learners seeking a more step-by-step model of strategic management.

Overall, *Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases* (13th Edition) serves as an essential resource for students, educators, and professionals, providing a well-organized, enlightening, and thorough guide to understanding the intricacies of strategic thinking in the ever-changing business landscape even though some aspects could be refined, especially in terms of improving clarity for undergraduate students.

About the Authors

Exploring Corporate Strategy has been written by Richard Whittington, Patrick Regnér, Duncan Angwin, Gerry Johnson, and Kevan Scholes — world-leading strategic management thinkers whose combined teaching and research backgrounds add unparalleled credibility and authority to the work. Their sustained contribution to this widely recognized textbook, now in its 13th edition,

highlights their deep academic knowledge and practical insights into strategic management emanating from their professional qualifications and positions as leading academics and practitioners in the field.

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