

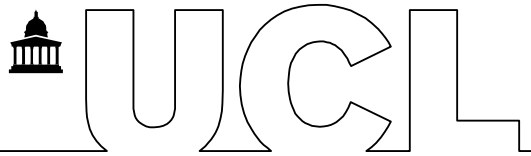
The CSR Strategy of Corporate-NGO Partnership to sustained competitive advantage: Case Study of FamilyMart Taiwan

MSc, Prosperity, Innovation and Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

This study focuses on CSR strategy using the programs of corporate-NGO partnerships from FamilyMart, the second largest convenient store chain brand in Taiwan. In total, nine NGO programs were identified in 2020 FamilyMart's CSR report. The qualitative case study research was conducted and combined with documentary analysis. The data was collected from public documentaries, such as academic papers, CSR reports, corporate websites, press articles, and promoting videos online. The study applied resource-based theory to examine the contribution level on forming corporate's sustained competitive advantages of different types of partnerships. Also, by implementing CSR approach analytical framework, the programs were analysed the intentions and implications of each type of partnership. The analyse showed that there is the possibility of transition from one type of partnership to the other one if the initial cooperation was based on strategic CSR approach and both sectors were able to leverage and complement to each other.

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1. Introduction

In the last few decades, environmental and societal challenges are becoming more severe and imperative. And quite recently, considerable attention has been paid to the 2030 Agenda to sustainable development announced by United Nation in 2015, which is ‘a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity’ over the next 15 years (United Nations, 2021a). Prosperity here implies to reach an adequate level of economic and social progression while protecting the planet for the present and future generations and living in harmony with nature simultaneously (United Nations, 2021a). Moore (2015) stated that the next 15 years will become the harshest period that we humans ever encountered, from the wide range of environmental issues to changes in social innovation. Similarly, the author stated that the values of prosperity, quality of life and the health of society should be taken into consideration, rather than the conventional focus on perpetual economic development (Moore, 2015).

So far, the progress of adopting sustainable development goals (SDGs) has continued unabated and based on the surveys conducted by WBCSD & DNV GL around 250 companies across 43 countries, 82% of companies mentioned SDGs in their reporting, and 41% of companies are ensuring that SDGs align with their own corporate strategies (*Business and the SDGs*, 2018). As in the preamble of the SDGs website delineates, the implementation of SDGs is a collective journey and that a partnership of collaboration should be an active part of every stakeholder (United Nations, 2021a). The suggested SDG 17- partnership has been the essential factor of advancing SDGs especially in the interlinkage and interwoven nature in the 2030 Agenda. Although partnerships always involve various actors ranging from public to private sectors and other beneficiaries, business is now being seen as the essential and key actor in partnerships amongst other types of stakeholders (SDG Partnership Guidebook, 2020). Likewise, Porter (2013) described that nowadays corporations possess enormous resources and the fundamental of rationale is earning money by solving social problems and needs (TED Global, 2013). Hence, the greater impacts will be generated when the corporate world focuses on what resources and advantages it has and utilises them to manage highly relative challenges (Porter and Kramer, 2006). To achieve this, cooperation should be strengthened and corporations should take the corporate social responsibility (CSR) approach as a core strategy. Moreover, both business managers and NGO workers must discard the us-versus-them perspective and start ‘corporate social integration’, that means co-create shared value via addressing the issues that are relevant (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

Despite the evolving concept of CSR that can be traced back to 1930s (Carroll, 1979) the notion has been taken for granted in the western world (Bondy, Moon and Matten, 2012), the definition of CSR is still elusive and under discussion. However, many studies mentioned the 3 keywords that are, social, environmental, and profits (Seitanidi and Crane, 2009; van Marrewijk, 2013; Elkington, 2018). Another statement illustrated that CSR is at the intermediate stage which consist of 3 elements, people, planet, and profit to achieve the ultimate goal of corporate sustainability (van Marrewijk, 2013). Thus, both SDGs and CSR share commonalities across their core values. Indeed, CSR and SDGs are 2 inseparable notions and terminologies because of the strong corelation between responsibility and sustainability, which are (1) the underlying philosophy of global responsibility of SDGs, and (2) sustainability is the outcome of corporate responsible (Rendtorff, 2019). Similarly, a KPMG survey (2017) also supported this idea and presented that SDGs has become an articulate trend in corporate responsibility reporting, in which ‘43% of the world’s 250 largest companies linked SDGs into their CR activities’ (‘The KPMG Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2017’, 2017). Furthermore, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the most widely adopted sustainability disclosure standards (GRI, 2021) and the ‘most popular frameworks for corporate responsibility reporting’ in the world (‘The KPMG Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2017’, 2017, p.5) also adopted the SDGs framework in 2015 and stepped forward in 2017 by launching the guidance for corporate reporting on SDGs.

In the literature, several theories have been proposed and applied to partnerships, alliances, such as resource-based theory, resource complementarily perspective, resource dependent theory (RDT) (Barney, 1991; Murray et al., 2005; Hillman et al., 2009). The RDT was proposed in 1978 which focused on how firms manage their external relations and the level of dependence on other parties. Since not one single firm can require all aspects of resources and competences it needs, exchange and interact with the external ecosystem is crucial and necessary. RDT pays attention on external environment and the context of the ecology, which has been one of the most popular theories in organisational and strategic management field (Hillman, Withers and Collins, 2009). However, not a single theory is sufficient to apply on the corporate strategy and some scholars took another perspective on how corporation can leverage and manage resources. Resource-based theory implies the concepts that corporate should look into its internal strengths and weaknesses first. Barney (1991) proposed an empirical analytical framework to examine if firm’s attributes are

sustained competitive advantages or not (Barney, 1991). Besides, resource complementarity perspective has close linkage with resource-based theory, which both shared the similar definitions on resources features and focused on discussing how can firm develop competitive advantages. In particular, resource complementarity perspective emphasised when firms are seeking mergers or strategic alliances, they should select and cooperate with the counterpart which possess complementary resources and competences so that firms themselves can develop competitive advantages simultaneously (Harrison et al., 2001). Moreover, corporate-NGO partnership relies on how can both parties strategically combine the complementary resources well (Mousavi and Bossink, 2020). Another recent article described the strategic alliances/partnerships which are comprised by multinational enterprises (MNEs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has become a noticeable trend as CSR as well as corporate strategy respond to various stakeholders and the public (Napier, 2019). Although studies have indicated and emphasised corporate-NGO partnerships as a CSR activity/strategy (Napier, 2019), little attention has been paid to the nuanced and diverse types of corporate-NGO partnerships. Not to mention using the lens of resource complementarity or resource-based theory to categorise corporate-NGO partnerships and to examine the relations between different types of partnerships and sustained competitive advantages of corporations. Furthermore, most of the previous CSR studies focused on western countries yet largely neglected the rest of Asia, with a particular reliance on data from North America, Western Europe, Australasia, and Japan (Chapple and Moon, 2005). Although the seminal study from Chapple and Moon (2005) focused on CSR research in 7 Asian countries, it failed to include Taiwan. The small island with 23 million population actually stands at a leading CSR position around the world, ranked 5th with the highest rates of CR information in annual financial reports among 43 countries in one survey ('The KPMG Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2017', 2017). Moreover, the authors indicated that CSR is conventionally seen as a western dominant phenomenon (Chapple and Moon, 2005), and they found several extraordinary business-NGOs collaboration cases that are also from the western world. These cases fitted the core values of SDGs and CSR-people, planet, profit (prosperity) well, such as a 10+ years partnership between KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) and the World Wildlife Fund for Nature Netherlands (WWF), which started from enhancing the biofuel program of KLM and then a joint venture was founded to focus on the aviation sector's biofuel bridging service role (Mousavi and Bossink, 2020). Starbucks was initially under pressure from campaigns about fair trade activist organisations but then chose

to cooperate with Conservation International (CI) to implement projects in several coffee bean sourcing countries and eventually expanded its product line of sustainable coffee (Perez-Aleman and Sandilands, 2008). Another well-known example is the joint venture-Grameen Danone, a social enterprise, co-founded by Dr. Yunus and CEO of Danone in 2006, to produce and supply nutritious yogurt to school children (Danone, 2021). The above corporate-NGO partnerships generated new business models either through developing a brand-new product collection or setting up joint ventures. These partnerships co-created shared values by utilising their own specialties and exchanging their unique resources to complement each other that resulted in not only financial benefits for the business but also enlarging the NGO's societal/environmental impacts and achieving its social and environmental missions via the cooperation, which benefits both sides concurrently.

Therefore, by differentiating the nuance of corporate-NGO partnerships and classified 3 different types of partnerships, and analysing the case of Taiwan by those types, this paper aims to provide a further example of CSR activities and answer how different types of corporate-NGO partnerships represent different CSR approaches and how they form sustained competitive advantages among corporations. The research explores three questions as follows,

RQ 1- What types of Corporate-NGO partnerships can be identified?

RQ 2- What are the intentions and implications of these partnerships?

RQ 3- How do different types of partnerships contribute to corporate competitiveness?

The article is organised as follows. Firstly, literature review started from the SDG-17 partnerships, the transition of CSR, and critiques on CSR issues. Moving on theoretical frameworks, which combined the review on resource-based theory and its correlation of RDT and resource complementarily perspective. Because of the strong relations between resource-based theory and corporation strategy/strategic alliances, the following section is CSR as corporate strategics. Literature review section finished at the synthesis typology of corporate-NGO partnerships. Secondly, the methodology section, this was qualitative research that used case study method and secondary publicity data. The third chapter is the case section, which started from the current CSR setting in Taiwan, the convenient store chain industry and FamilyMart's briefly introduction. After that, the 9 identified FamilyMart-NGO cooperation programs were introduced and analysed by the following synthesis analytical framework

which consisted of three parts, the typology of corporate-NGO partnerships, CSR approaches analytical framework from Porter and Kramer (2006), and four indicators of examining sustained competitive advantages (Barney, 1991). Figure 1 illustrated the synthesis analytical frameworks that applied in the following sections.

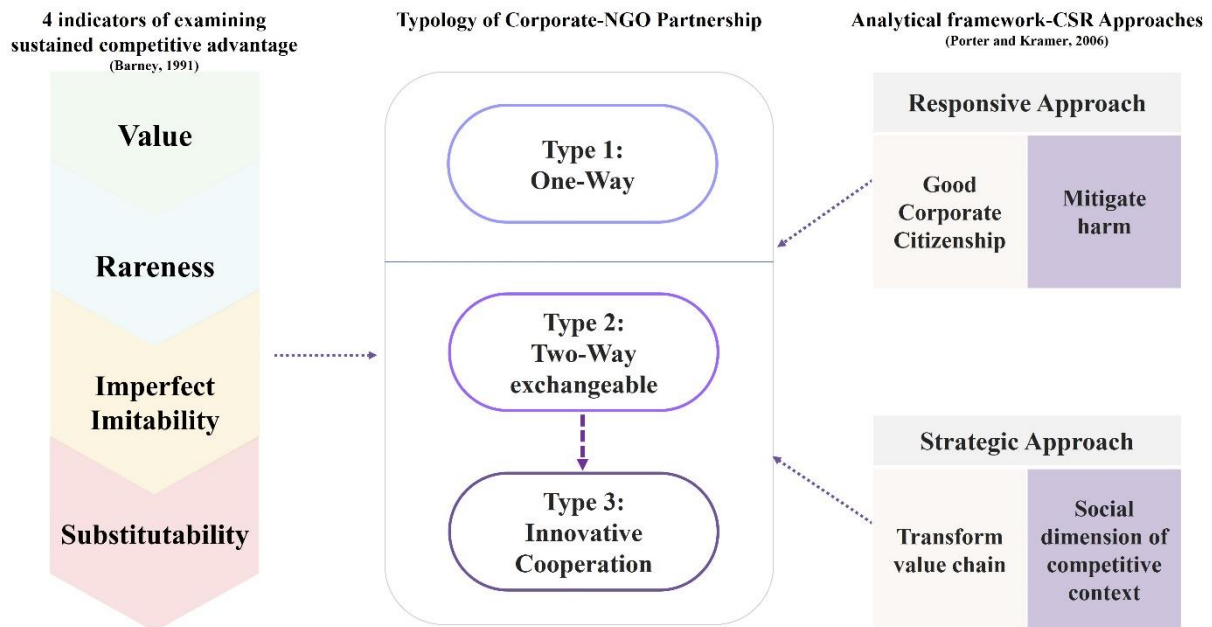


Figure 1-Synthesis analytical framework

Source: Made by author

In the middle is the typology of corporate-NGO partnerships, which consisted of 3 different types, (1) single-way cooperation, (2) two-way exchangeable cooperation, and (3) innovative cooperation. All the NGO partnerships will be classified into one of the types based on the depth of the collaboration and the level of resource exchanging. On the right side of the figure is the CSR approach analytical framework from Porter and Kramer (2006). Initially, the proposed framework examined the corporate involvement by 3 steps, started from identifying the activity's intersection and then social issue types, finally the corporate involvement-the approach that corporate takes action to response the social issues. Here, the analysing section will straightforwardly examine the last step, to identify how corporate involves itself into different NGO partnerships and then move to identify second step, the types of social issues. The resource-based theoretical framework that contains 4 indicators to determine if corporate possesses sustained competitive advantages on the left side is then applied to examine the 3 different types of corporate-NGO partnerships.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Partnerships as the core of SDGs

In recent decades, partnership has become a trendy word in both the academic and practical business world, which frequently is cited when people talk about corporate social responsibility, and specifically, the partnerships between non-profit and private corporations (Seitanidi and Crane, 2009) as well as this kind of partnership becomes more important in strategic practice (Mousavi and Bossink, 2020). Napier (2019) delineated that MNEs (multi-national enterprises) are using NGO partnerships as a strategic alliance as well as CSR strategy to create mutual benefits by combining companies' resources and NGO's specific knowledge (Napier, 2019). In particular, the United Nations announced the 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development (2015), which emphasised the important role of partnerships and denoted that the core of 17 SDGs is global partnership, which imperatively requires all practitioners to collaborate to achieve these goals (Littlewood and Holt, 2018; United Nation, 2021b). In addition, the SDG Partnership Guidebook illustrated that partnerships is the element that at an unprecedented level among the other three key sections, which are healthy environment, thriving society, and prosperous economy. Figure 2 shows that partnership represents the synthesis of elements among all 17 SDGs, which implies that partnership connect all the SDGs and is also interwoven into each goal (The SDG Partnership Guidebook, 2020). The partnership is defined into two types, the global partnership for sustainable development and multi-stakeholder partnerships according to 2030 agenda (United Nation, 2021a). Scholars usually define multi-stakeholders partnerships as collaborations between more than two parties/sectors, such as public, government, private, civil society which aim at achieving sustainable goals (Horan, 2019). Alternatively, cross sector partnerships is another interchangeable term which often implies a similar notion, and some scholars categorised cross sector partnerships as social partnerships, dividing these into four types, business-NPO (Private-NPO), business-government (Public-Private), government-NPO (Public-NPO), and trisector (tripartite) (Selsky and Parker, 2005; Seitanidi and Crane, 2009).

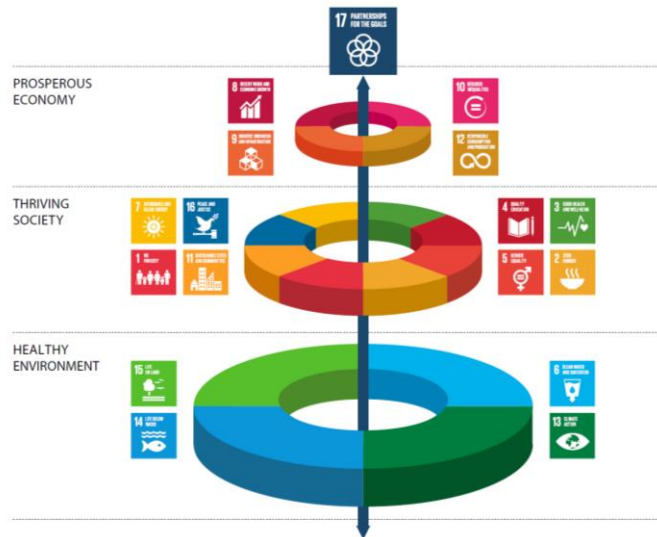


Figure 2
The 17 SDG Goals and Partnerships as a core linkage
Source: (THE SDG PARTNERSHIP GUIDEBOOK, 2020)

2.2 The transition concepts of CSR

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a highly cited term in both academic areas but also in the empirical business world for an extended period of time. Werther and Chandler (2006) identified four key trends related to the occurring of CSR, ‘increasing affluence, changing social expectations, globalisation and free flow of information, and ecological sustainability’ (Werther, W. B., Chandler, D., 2006, pp. 19-20). In 1970, Friedman delineated that the only social responsibility of corporate groups is to create and increase their profits (Friedman, 1970), which was viewed as the CSR shareholder approach (van Marrewijk, 2013) and became one of the most important positions on defining and debating this development in the CSR field. To extend Friedman’s perspective, in the article of Quazi and O’Brien (2000), the authors classified the above notion as a classic model of CSR, that businesses only narrowly focus on how to maximize their own profits via providing services and goods, rather than considering businesses themselves as actually part of society (Quazi and O’Brien, 2000). On the contrary, the stakeholder approach proposed by Freeman in 1984 and linked to the CSR literature advanced the stakeholder approach to become one of the most-mentioned perspectives when talking about CSR (Carroll, 1991; Prieto-Carrón *et al.*, 2006; Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Freeman, 2010a; Lim and Greenwood, 2017). Stakeholders were initially defined as consisting of shareowners, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders and society (Freeman, 2010b). Hence, one of the main differences between the shareholder and stakeholder approach is the latter emphasised all aspects of beneficiaries

and will balance the interests between different groups, rather than lean on shareholders solely, which means suggests the preference for maximisation of profits as mentioned above. Similarly, in 1994, John Elkington coined the famous phrase ‘triple bottom line’ to evaluate corporation performances, which emphasised the environmental and social values generating or undermining performance, while corporations create financial value and this has become one of the most well-accepted concepts when examining CSR (Elkington, 2018). Furthermore, numerous scholars linked CSR with institutional theory since the nature of CSR is highly connected to society and environment, hence it will be influenced by the culture, context, and institutions (Yang and Rivers, 2009; Bondy et al., 2012). For example, Yang and Rivers (2009) used the lens of stakeholder approach and institutional theory to examine CSR practices in MNCs (multi-national corporates), and classified influences into internal and external, that when corporations conduct CSR, they need to correspond with the local context (external) as well as corporate policies (internal) to attain legitimacy from both sides (Yang and Rivers, 2009).

Yet its popularity and range of discussion hitherto scholars have debated the definition of CSR and have not reached a consensus. Matten and Mood (2008) delineated that it is difficult to define CSR because of its nature of complexity, various practices, and the concept is an umbrella term that consists of many related aspects (Matten and Moon, 2008). This idea is supported by other scholars, for example, van Marrewijk (2013) cited Göbbels (2002) and Votaw and Sethi (1973), which stated that CSR is a term that has different meanings for different people, and there is no typical pathway that can be followed (van Marrewijk, 2013). In addition, in the book from Crane et al., (2008), instead of following one of the previous definitions in this contested and complex terrain of the CSR world, the authors synthesised six core characteristics from CSR concepts to try to form the qualities of CSR. They are, voluntary (self-regulatory that is the frequently extended term), internalizing or managing externalities, multiple stakeholder orientation, alignment of social and economic responsibilities, practices and values, and beyond philanthropy (Crane et al., 2008).

In this article, when talking about CSR, we implicitly imply the combination of the below two definitions of CSR. One is the most cited definition of CSR (Prieto-Carrón *et al.*, 2006) ‘CSR as a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis’ (Brussels: European Commission, 2001). The other is one of the official definitions in the UK, ‘CSR is the integrity with which a company govern itself, fulfils its mission, lives by its value,

engages with its stakeholders, measures its impact and reports on its activities' (Rexhepi et al., 2013, cited the department of Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom, p.1). In short, the above two definitions describe that CSR concerns the way corporations make profits and the interaction with the breadth of actors.

2.3 Business case of CSR and the critiques

Following the continuously debates between shareholder approach (aims at maximising profits for shareholders' interests only) and stakeholder approach (balancing various stakeholders' benefits and take account into society and environment), Lim and Greenwood (2017) stated that the more traditional approach to identify CSR goals was divided into two main aspects, economical (tangible) and non-economical (intangible) (Lim and Greenwood, 2017). The linkage and relationship between CSR and financial performances of corporations has been a constant research topic, in which scholars investigated corporate social performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance (CFP), and the results vary from different studies. However, some scholars concluded similar positive relationships between CSP-CFP by conducting meta-analysis methods (Kurucz, Colbert and Wheeler, 2009). However, based on the Manufacturing Executive (2005) the key is not the causation between CSR and financial performance, but the fundamental point is the interdependent relations and this cannot be viewed as a charitable endeavour (Kurucz et al., 2009 cited the Manufacturing Executive 2005). Therefore, rather than diving into the contested debate about the relationship between CSR and financial performance, Kurucz et al. (2009) proposed generalising value propositions of the business case of CSR. The four propositions are, cost and risk reduction, competitive advantage, reputation and legitimacy, and synergistic value creation. Firstly, cost and risk reduction assume that stakeholders' interests are initially in conflict to the corporation's financial interests, hence the corporation needs to trade these threats to mitigate the potential loss. Secondly, competitive advantage provides another angle on stakeholders' demand compared to the first proposition, it views demands as opportunities and tries to leverage and benefit from them. Thirdly, reputation and legitimacy align to enhance the corporation's fame and legitimacy. Lastly, synergistic value creation identifies and connects interests from various stakeholders, which reach mutual and multi-point value creations. Since this approach is usually relates to the resources of diversly and broadly, it is often presented as an innovative approach (Kurucz, Colbert and Wheeler, 2009). Although the authors generalised the core propositions of the business case of CSR not only in terms of

the lens of financial performance, but there are also some critiques of the business case in the CSR field. Bondy et al., described that these business cases of CSR cannot be viewed as real CSR because they fail to meet the triple bottom lines but lean on only the economic factors. Besides, in which they stated the business case of CSR utilising CSR as an approach to improve corporations' innovation level to increase profits and described that nowadays 'CSR is done either by passive firms pressured by stakeholders, or because it improves profitability' (p.2) (Bondy, Moon and Matten, 2012). This point of view leads to one of the often cited terms when talking about CSR - 'greenwashing'. Corporations make huge profits by claiming they are implementing CSR, yet the evidence suggests that they are not. Green marketing is one of the tools, which corporations use, which can be described as orthodox patterns to attract customers by advertising using the colour green, animals, children, and natural images, etc (Alves, 2009). Another critical issue arose from several scholars, that is, what is the role and responsibilities of corporations for tackling these imperative societal and environmental problems, though there is a consensus that corporations play a key role on some issues of social change (Bondy, Moon and Matten, 2012; Sheehy, 2015).

2.4 Theoretical framework: Resource-based perspective

After Pfeffer and Salancik published a seminal study on dependence theory in 1978, the theory has become one of the most popular theoretical approaches in the area of organisational and strategic management (Hillman, Withers and Collins, 2009; Davis and Adam, 2010). The authors described RDT is 'to understand the behaviour of an organization you must understand the context of that behaviour—that is, the ecology of the organization' (direct quote, 1978:1). Although the principle of RDT is that the organisation is constrained by contexts, managers can still take actions to reduce the level of dependency and uncertainty from external and internal circumstances. Besides, despite the fact that RDT is one of the dominant theories when discussing joint ventures and strategic alliances, Hillman et al. (2009) stated that it is impossible to cover everything from a single theory, and proposed to combine or apply other theories to complete the theoretical framework, such as resource-based perspective in discussing how corporations acquire competitive resources (Hillman, Withers and Collins, 2009). Similar ideas are supported by Murray et al. (2005), in combining RDT and resource complementarity views to examine strategic alliance-based sourcing in the transitional economy (Murray, Kotabe and Zhou, 2005). One of the most cited articles of resource complementarity was authored by Harrison et al. (2001), in which argued that

resource complementarity holds a vital position on both acquisitions and alliances. Although initially, the previous research from Harrison et al. (1991) applied resource complementarity in firm acquisitions and concluded that the characters of resource complementarity were those resources that are neither similar nor identical, they should be complementary for both firms and create competitive advantages concurrently, they then demonstrated and extended the above arguments to strategic alliances and asserted that resource complementarity is both critical and effective to both acquisitions and strategic alliances. The concepts stemmed from the rapid competitive global environment and one corporation cannot possess all the resources they need to develop competitive advantages. Therefore, strategic alliances are seeking to take advantage of resource complementarity, which is proven it will generate knowledge transfer, enhance learning processes, create opportunities to develop new capabilities, and obtain accessibility of unique and private synergic benefits (Harrison *et al.*, 2001).



Figure 3
The relationship between resource and sustained competitive advantage
 Source: (Barney, 1991, p.14)

Furthermore, the strong linkage between resource-based perspectives and resource complementarity can be identified by the logic that the features of these resources are 'valuable, unique, and inimitable' (Harrison *et al.*, 2001). Barney (1991) applied a resource-based view into competitive advantages, specifically, sustained competitive advantages, which can be distinguished from the resource dependence theory, rather the resource-based perspective suggests that corporations should examine their internal strengths and weaknesses. In the seminal piece, Barney proposed an applicable framework, which consists of four empirical elements: value, rareness, imitability, and sustainability, to examine and analyse the corporation's resources and the relations between sustained competitive advantages. The framework starts from examining a firm's resources whether they are (1) heterogeneous or homogeneous and (2) immobility or mobility. By demonstrating three critical conditions

about homogeneity and mobility on sustained competitive advantages, first-mover advantages, and entry/mobility barriers, Barney concluded that heterogeneity and immobility are the two crucial pre-conditions to move on to the next stage of examination. The first condition assumed that if all firms possess the same resources and have the equal level of strategic capabilities, then the consequence will be that all firms can come up with and execute the same strategies, which ended up as none of the firms will reach the distinct competitiveness. The second demonstrated that even though the first-mover firm in the market can have the opportunity to build positive relationships among customers and reputations, other firms will have the identical capabilities to adapt the same strategies based on the perfectly homogeneous resources and mobility. Last, the entry/mobility barriers occur only when the firms implement unique strategies which require specific resources and are not completely mobilised. Following by the assumption that the potential sustained competitive advantages need to first be heterogeneous and immobile, the next is to analyse if the resources fit the four indicators of value, rareness, imperfect imitability, and substitutability. Being valuable is the fundamental requirement to be seen as 'resources' of the corporation. Here, Barney applied the theory of external analysis on environment of models, which defined that 'attributes only become resources when they exploit opportunities or neutralize threats in a firm's environment' (p.8). Once they are considered as resources, the remaining three indicators are adapted from the resource-based view will be the analytical elements to assess if these resources could be classified as a sustained competitive advantage. Rareness implies not only valuable resources but also particular bundles of resources for the specific strategy should only possess by a small number of firms, in other words, the greater the number of firms have the above valuable resources that are rare for any firm to achieve a sustained competitive advantage. However, these valuable but common resources can still play a vital role as a competitive advantage and contribute to the firm to compete at least equally well with their rivals. Three different conditions can cause imperfect imitability, that implies that rare and valuable resources are not imitable by other competitive firms perfectly and this can be seen as a potential sustained competitive advantage. Firms can utilise and leverage resources timely via the specific historical context, can create distinct and imperfectly imitable potentially sustained competitive advantage that is the so called 'unique historical condition.' Causally ambiguous refers to the resource itself has implicit or an uncovered link to sustained competitive advantages, hence lead to the result that firms have a difficulty to identify and implement these key potential resources as a result failed to reach sustained competitive

advantage. In contrast to causally ambiguous conditions, socially complex conditions describe firms equipped with accessibility of interpersonal connections, firms' reputations, firms' cultures..., which all tend to have articulated linkages to firms' potential for sustained competitive advantage. Notably, physical tools are not considered as part of the elements to form social complexity because it is not impossible or scarce to acquire physical tools for most competitors. The last is substitutability, that suggests that if firms' valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable resources can be substituted by either alternative or similar resources which can achieve the same strategic outcomes, then the resources cannot be classified as a sustained competitive advantage. To sum up, the theoretical framework provides a list of indicators for firms to analyse various resources if any of them confers to be a sustained competitive advantage and most importantly, whether these resources are already possessed by firms themselves, or that that they should not seek or can acquire externally (Barney, 1991).

2.5 CSR as corporate strategy

Carroll (1991) proposed a seminal concept, the pyramid of corporate social responsibility, which breaks down CSR into four components - economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. Economic is the fundamental base of the pyramid since the primary role of corporations is to provide services and products to those who needs them and it would be contended to discuss other components if corporations cannot fulfil this basic principle. The second layer is legal and is seen as coexisting components with economic, which reflects that corporations should comply with the minimum acceptable and unacceptable activities to operate and adhere to the 'social contract' with society. The next layer is ethical, which indicates corporations take their obligation and practices as something ethical, moral even though these activities are not codified into law to avoid harm to its stakeholders. On top of the pyramid is philanthropic responsibilities, which emphasise voluntary and discretion and asks corporations to be a good corporate citizen that can improve communities' quality of life. Notably, although the traditional perception will see these layers contest with each other, especially the economic with others, Carrol depicted this idea as oversimplified and the four components are intertwined and considered as a whole comprising CSR. A similar idea is supported by Lanto (2001), in which the author classified CSR practices into three different types - ethical, altruist, and strategic CSR. Ethical CSR is to meet the legal requirement and the meaning is to prevent corporations from social injuries, while altruist CSR (seen as the same as

philanthropic CSR from Carrol) embodies partial responsibilities toward society. Strategic CSR creates benefits to both the corporation itself and other stakeholders concurrently (Lantos, 2001).

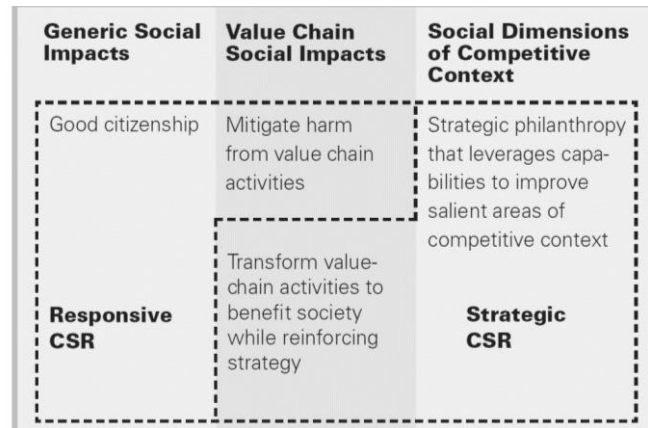


Figure 4
Corporate Involvement in Society: A strategic Approach
Source: Porter and Kramer, 2006, p.10

Furthermore, Porter and Kramer introduced a framework for corporations to identify their CSR approaches strategically and build long-term shared value between business and society. Besides, the authors criticised the extent of prevailing approaches to CSR that are normally ‘uncoordinated CSR and philanthropic activities disconnected from the company’s strategy that neither make any meaningful social impact nor strengthen the firm’s long-term competitiveness’ (p.6). As healthy society and successful companies are interdependent, people need to start thinking ‘corporate social integration’. The framework consists of three main aspects, first, corporations need to identify the points of intersection, whether it is inside-out or outside-in linkages. Next, to identify which type of social issue the corporation is addressing. The three different classified social issues, which are generic social issues, value chain social impacts, and social dimensions of competitive context. In reality, it is impossible for one business to tackle all kinds of social problems, hence, a corporation needs to carefully select the social issues they want to address. On top of that, the key is to identify the potential opportunity that can create meaningful benefits for society as well as build value for the corporation. The last point is to create a corporate social agenda, which the authors differentiated into two approaches, responsive CSR and strategic CSR. In responsive CSR, the main features are to be a good corporate citizen and mitigate harm for corporations. The best and effective corporate citizens have clear and measurable goals as well as build credit with local governments which often involves employees’ contributions. The other feature of

responsive CSR is corporations will monitor and analyse the anticipated threats or social problems and respond proactively by identifying and implementing best practices in their value chains. Although, the responsive CSR can bring benefits to the corporation, the advantages are limited and tend to be in the short-term. Strategic CSR, on the other hand, moves beyond best practices and neither stay as good corporate citizens nor mitigate harmful activities only. It is about being selective and finding a specific position that can distinguish the corporation from its rivals and maximize social impacts and enhance competitiveness. Innovation is the term often related to strategy and strategic CSR, for example, if business implement strategic CSR as the second social issue, value chain social impact, it reflects that corporations will transform their value chain while simultaneously benefiting society. Strategic CSR located in the third social issue proposition, it means corporations integrate social dimensions into their value propositions and leverage capabilities to enhance its overall strategy (p.13). The differences between responsive CSR and strategic CSR is that the latter focuses far more on how corporations utilise and leverage their own resources, specialties, management know-how, and industry experiences to the issues it comprehends fully and has connections which can create shared values, contribute positive social impacts, and can lead to self-dependent solutions. In conclusion, strategic CSR not only aims to control risks and harms, not simply as PR campaigns, nor as philanthropic donations to charities, although the above activities have their value at some point (Porter and Kramer, 2006).

2.6 Typology of Corporate-NGO partnership

There are several seminal articles that identify different types or stages of corporate partnerships. In the article of Perez-Aleman and Sandilands (2008), which investigated the partnerships of Starbucks and Conservation International (CI) organisation, it showed that usually in the first stage, NGOs will play a more reserved role that pressures corporations via customers and market campaigns. And the following stage is developing partnerships, alliances, or a joint project (Perez-Aleman and Sandilands, 2008). Kourula and Halme (2008) took a slightly different angle to apply the categorisation, that they first differentiated a firm's corporate responsibility (CR) into three types - philanthropy, CR integration, and CR innovation, and then applied this category to the eight different Corporate-NGO engagement forms. CR philanthropy refers to extra activities from the corporation and utilises a corporation's resources to making positive contributions, such as charity, voluntary, and donations, etc, which corporations will not expect to retain direct business benefits from. CR

integration, on the other hand, is much closer to the business core operations and aims to improve its supply chains/operating processes more than societal or environmental responsibility and expect to generate certain positive outcomes at the same time, for instance, cost-saving, risk mitigating, and reputational. On the contrary, CR innovation is based on the notion of 'CR as a source of business innovations' (p.4) which emphasizes to tackle social or environmental problems, corporations will develop new services, products or new businesses and create win-win situations, that are fundamentally different to philanthropic activities, since the corporation itself will generate economic values simultaneously. In conclusion, the author preliminarily classified that CR philanthropy consists of sponsorship, employee training/volunteerism, while CR integration includes systematic dialogue, common programs, partnerships, certification (eco-labelling), consultation and research cooperation. And CR innovation focuses on a closer and deeper cooperation of common programs and partnerships (Kourula and Halme, 2008). A similar theory of CR innovation proposed by Kourula and Halme (2008) was supported by Dahan et al., (2010), who suggested that corporate-NGO partnerships can eventually deliver economic and social values concurrently by facilitating complementary capabilities to fulfil each other's business models (p.1). Dahan et al. described the evolution of corporate-NGO collaborations into three scenarios. Firstly, there is no collaboration between two counterparts. Secondly, restructure/redefine business modules through collaboration, in this scenario, both sides exchange some core and unique competences to complete and complement each other. Thirdly, develop new business modules through collaboration. The result is a joint project which developed from both partners via their own specific resources and will create economic as well as social values simultaneously throughout this joint project (Dahan *et al.*, 2010). The above concepts were supported by Porter (2013), who stated that there is neither a trade-off nor an opportunity for making money by causing a social problem. In fact, businesses make profits by solving social problems. And because businesses are the ones creating resources, other actors can only utilise them, the future is shared value. Above all, the most progressive success to address these social problems and taking them as fundamental opportunities is those NGOs and government sectors who have partnerships with businesses and identified an approach to cooperate with each other (Porter, 2013). Furthermore, Mirvis et al. linked corporate partnerships to corporate social innovation (CSI) under a CSR and sustainability-oriented innovation context, which illustrated that innovations stemmed from external collaborations, especially social entrepreneurs, non-business sectors who typically contribute to their

own know-how that can be complementary to the corporation and co-create innovations to their target markets/users (Mirvis *et al.*, 2016). In terms of the typology of corporate-NGO partnerships, this article will apply the typology mainly from the proposal of Dahan *et al.* (2010) but combine some key notions from Kourula and Halme (2008) and Mirvis *et al.* (2016). The corporate-NGO partnerships here is classified into three different types as follows. (1) Single-way cooperation (2) Two-way exchangeable cooperation (3) Innovative cooperation.

- (1) Single-way cooperation refers to the activities or communications that are only one-way directions. Either the corporation donates tangible things (money, tools, facilities...) or intangible resources (encouraging/sending employees to attend charities, techniques, connections from corporate), or NGOs/activists put pressure on the corporation and critique unmoral operations.
- (2) Two-way exchangeable cooperation implies that both the corporation and NGOs provide their own specialties and particular know-how that it accumulates in its industry for years, which are normally what its counterparts are missing. By implementing this cooperation, both parties exchange and learn from each side and adapt some core competences, which means both the corporation and NGOs will improve their operating processes or the efficiency of communication toward their target audiences.
- (3) Innovative cooperation indicates the deeper, closer relationships that both parties exchange and learn from each other's core competences and as a result, co-create innovative collaborative forms or outcomes, that while generating share values and win-win situations, the cooperation tackles certain social or environmental issues simultaneously. Typically, the forms are such as, new joint ventures, transformative business models, or intrapreneur in both organisations.

3. Methodology

3.1 Deciding Methods

The qualitative research combined with case study method and documentary analysis is used in this study. Documentary analysis has become more frequent mentioned in recent years and the advantages of it are such as, availability, cost-effectiveness, and broad range of coverage (Bowen, 2009). In particular, this research utilised documentary-literature review analysis, which is defined as 'a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners' (Fink, 2005, p.3 cited by Tight, 2019, p.4). Purposes

of this analysis approach are for example, ‘synthesising and gaining a new perspective, identifying relationships between ideas and practice, establishing the context of the topic or problem’ (Tight, 2019, p.5).

The multiple nested case studies were adopted in this article as the study compared different elements (NGO programs) within one principal case (FamilyMart Taiwan) of analysis (Thomas, 2019). The study focused on how and what different types of corporate-NGO partnerships contribute to CSR strategy by applying resource-based theory and the CSR approach analytical framework from Porter and Kramer (2006). Case study is useful when studying on human affairs because of its nature to focus on a single person or social phenomenon by applying theoretical issues down to earth (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2009). Gomm et al. (2009) even stated that ‘Its (case study) best use appears to me to be for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding’ (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster, 2009). Also, Rashid et al.,(2019) cited Ja’rvensivu and To’ rnrroos (2010) that ‘case studies are suitable for exploring business-to business relationships and networks’ (Rashid *et al.*, 2019). The inherently linkage between qualitative research and case study can be noticed because the essence of case study focuses on individual and heterogeneous understandings which requires deep and rich data in small number of cases (Outhwaite and Turner, 2007).

The related literatures and documents were first selected and then synthesised as the analytical framework used in this article. After the synthesis analytical framework was built, the real-world business case, NGO partnership programs of FamilyMart Taiwan were provided in this article and then examined as well as analysed those programs by the framework.

3.2 Data collection

All the data used in this research was secondary data and it was mainly collected by published corporate documentaries, such as the CSR report of FamilyMart Taiwan, Sustainability report from FamilyMart Japan and corporate websites. The partnerships’ website and related press news or articles were also collected. Several interviewing videos and introducing videos produced by FamilyMart were used. The author started from searching keywords such as, MNCs-NGO partnerships, win-win benefits, CSR innovation and then narrow down to case in Taiwan after broadly reading some seminal cases from big western MNCs. Although this research did not use participatory methods to collect primary data, the author herself had profound living experiences with the case corporate and some of the NGOs. Since the author had lived in Taipei for more than 10 years and lived close the area of program 9-Ankang low-cost community area for 4 years.

3.3 Research limitation

Nonetheless, the study has some limitations. In this research, the data sources are all secondary, published data, which lack of primary data and ample sources. As Rashid et al. stated, case study research includes numerous empirical materials that can be well-analysed of the whole context (Rashid *et al.*, 2019).

4. Case Analysis

4.1 Contextualisation of CSR in Taiwan

In 2020, corporations from Taiwan won 40 awards in the Asia Responsible Enterprise Awards programme (AREA) from a total 81 recipients list among 19+ countries/markets nominations (Insider, 2020). AREA, since 2011, is one of the most prestigious responsible enterprise awards in Asia, which are organised by a leading non-governmental organisation, Enterprise Asia, and ‘aims to recognise and honour Asian businesses and leaders for championing sustainable and socially responsible business practices’ (AREA, 2021). Moreover, according to the analysis of GRI database from Sustainhub, Taiwan stands at No.8 in the top 10 countries in the total number of CSR reports, from a total 2,361, only behind China (the second, 4,904) and Japan (the third, 3,331) in Asia (Data collection period: 2000-2020) (Sustainhub, 2020). The outstanding outcomes of Taiwanese corporations was made possible in part due to the various law amendments on corporate responsibility supervisions since 2010. In 2010, the Corporate Social Responsibility Best Practice Principles for TWSE/GTSM Listed Companies was promulgated by the Taiwan Stock Exchange and Taipei Exchange, which were authorised and supervised by Financial Supervisory Commission R.O.C (Taiwan) (FSC). Later in 2015, the legislation aimed to regulate certain listed companies to prepare annual CSR reports, which needed to refer to the latest Global Reporting Initiatives (GRI) standards (Title: *Taiwan Stock Exchange Corporation Rules Governing the Preparation and Filing of Corporate Social Responsibility Reports by TWSE Listed Companies*). More recently, in August 2020, the FSC announced ‘Corporate Governance 3.0 – Sustainable Development Roadmap’, in which the notions of sustainability, Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) were promoted to an unprecedented level. Henceforward, the listed companies are mandatory required to prepare and file CSR report annually, which not only refer to GRI standards but also TCFD and SASB (Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, Sustainability Accounting Standards Board) (Financial Supervisory Commission, 2020). Because of this legislation, Taiwan has become one of the most important CSR hubs in Asia and has continuously developed CSR programs.

4.2 Convenient Store Chains in Taiwan

The business of convenient stores stemmed from the 1970s, the first store was a 7-11, which franchised from the United States and has been operated by Taiwanese local dominant corporation, President Chain Store Corporation. Currently, Taiwan stands as the second highest ratio of convenient stores per population density since 2011, approximately one convenient store for every 2,000 people, the average number is only behind South Korea, which is nearly one store for 1,200 people, and the third highest country is Japan, around one store for 2,200 people (Department of Statistic, 2020). The total number of convenient stores in Taiwan had officially hit over 11,000 stores in 2019 and the growth rate of new stores had broken the record, and reached 4.7%, 517 new stores in a year (BNEXT, 2020). Convenient store chains play a vital role in Taiwan from metropolis to very marginalised rural areas or outlying islands because of its high density, efficient supply chain/logistics, and centralised well-developed systems which link various services to government, banks, post, utilities, and transportation. The important and inseparable role of convenient stores in the society can be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. At the beginning of 2020, when the government executed centralised control in the sale of masks and requested people to use their national health insurance cards to pre-order a certain number of masks during a fixed interval; the government chose convenient stores as the main channel to distribute, rather than community centres, health centres, or pharmacies. Nowadays, the largest chain brand 7-11, and the second, FamilyMart, both provide more than 150+ different services on their own multi-functional digital kiosks, such as, tax payments (annual income and other taxes), payment of bills (credits cards, utilities, parking), sending parcels, click and collect, purchasing train tickets, top-up metro cards, and printing services etc.

4.3 Background of FamilyMart in 2020

FamilyMart is the second largest convenient store chain brand in Taiwan and currently consists of 3,770 stores, which stands at 34% of market share, and nearly 5,000 employees around the country. The parent company-FamilyMart CO., LTD is a Japanese corporation which was founded in 1981 and entered Taiwan in 1988 as its first overseas market, that holds 50% of shares of TAIWAN FAMILYMART CO., LTD.

The slogan and core message from FamilyMart is 'FamilyMart, where you are one of the family.' The vision and mission of FamilyMart is to 'become a store that is rooted closely and evolves as an integral part of the local community', and grow together with its' customers and societies (FamilyMart Sustainability Report, 2020). Besides, both on the Taiwan FamilyMart website and Japan parent corporate sustainability Report 2020 indicates

that corporations in this rapidly changing era will face shrinking labour supply because of the ultimate effect of an aging society and reduced birth rate. Hence, the aim to change the customers' behaviours and demands. Therefore, FamilyMart TW aims to become a sharing platform, and has taken initiatives to cooperate with social enterprises and various organisations, which allows FamilyMart to be innovative and lets it become the best supporter among the community (FamilyMart, 2021a). FamilyMart TW has published a CSR report since 2014 to confer to the amended law on corporate responsibility. The report follows GRI standards and discloses 10 extra types of data discretionarily. The non-financial limited assurance report has been issued by the PWC accounting firm since 2014.

In this article, eight cases of NGO partnerships are identified and selected from the FamilyMart 2020 CSR report (FamilyMart CSR report, 2020). Notably, one extra case was chosen in 2011 because one of the cases in 2020 is the extensive program from it. The below table 1 shows information of all nine cases that will be analysed later.

No.	Name of program	NGO	Type of cooperation	CSR Approach	Possessed Indicators	Corporate Involvement	Length of partnerships
1	LoveMore-FamilyMart member points platform for charity	Multiple	Type 1: One-Way	Responsive Approach	Value & Rareness	Good Corporate Citizenship	2017-present
2	Child traffic safety program	Jing Chuan Child Safety Foundation					2020
3	Enhancement of food education in elder group	John Tung Foundation					2020
4	Low-carbon environmental education seminars	Homemakers United Foundation					2020
5	Beyond Beauty - TAIWAN FROM ABOVE With FamilyMart	Chi Po-lin Foundation	Type 2: Two-Way exchangeable	Responsive Approach	Value & Rareness	Good Corporate Citizenship	2020-2025
6	Improving youths' abilities on employment and education	Taiwan Alliance for advancement of youth rights and welfare					Since 2009
7	High school lunch box competition	Douceur Network		Strategic Approach	Value, Rareness, partially Imperfect Imitability	Value Chain Transforming	2020-present
8	Community-based Supportive Employment service for disabled people	Victory Social Welfare Foundation	Value, Rareness, Imperfect Imitability				Since 2010
9	Partner Stores of Charitable Social Enterprise	Victory Social Welfare Foundation	Type 3: Innovative Cooperation	Strategic Approach	Value, Rareness, Imperfect Imitability, and Substitutability	Social dimensions of competitive context	2020-present

*Table 1
Programs of FamilyMart-NGO partnerships
Source: Made by author*

4.4 Type 1 Cases: Single-way cooperation

Four of nine programs are identified as type 1, single-way cooperation. In this type, three programs comprise typical philanthropic cooperation, that the direction is from the corporation itself to the partner NGOs by donating money or products. Three of the four programs utilised the donation from the unique ‘coin donation boxes’ in FamilyMart’s 3,800 physical stores, and then executed their own projects, which were neither linked to the corporation’s products, supply chains nor gave any feedback on the corporation’s operations. The four programs are identified as good corporate citizenship involvement and tackled the generic social issues. The issues that each program focus on are quite diverse, ranging from green energy, health of the elderly, traffic safety, to marginalised poverty. However, even though the above issues are imperative and vital to society, none has a great impact on the corporation’s operations or will affect its strategic decisions and competitiveness. Hence, the social issues of these four programs are categorised as generic social issues. Notably here for the first program, which utilised technological features to encourage its customers to participate in philanthropy. Although using APP to conduct the donation is new compared to the conservative ‘coin donation boxes’, the priority of social issues, and the impacts are not apparently different than the other three programs. Since there is no certain pattern or apparent rationale as to why FamilyMart chose these social issues, as the impact of corporate involvement is identified as good citizenship, which shows that FamilyMart tries to do contribute toward the society without seeking any particular benefits.

4.4 Type two Cases: Two-way exchangeable cooperation

Program 5- Beyond Beauty - TAIWAN FROM ABOVE With FamilyMart

The Chi Po-lin foundation is the NGO established in memory of one of the most famous contemporary documentary directors, Chi Po-lin, who perished in an accident during aerial filming on a helicopter in 2017. The foundation has proceeded the mission of the director, who was good at using stunning aerial videos, photos to explicitly indicate the environmental problems and social issues the earth is facing (Chi Po-lin Org., 2021). Only if as many people understand and see the beauty of the island/ the earth, can we witness a change of people’s behaviours and for them to do less harm to the earth can be expected. Therefore, the foundation has developed four sub-projects and embarked on a 5-years collaboration with FamilyMart (FamilyMart, 2021b). Holding local events is one of the sub-projects which utilises FamilyMart’s strength of possessing a large number and high-density of stores. More

than 3,700 stores are rooted in almost every community in the country and play a close and vital role in the community, and therefore was the ideal location for the foundation to hold local advocate events to deliver and stimulate awareness of the public. Meanwhile, FamilyMart are benefiting from the association of the foundation and as people attend the event in stores, it obtains the potential purchasing activities from these participants. Hence, the cooperation is two-way exchangeable that both sides are benefiting from each party. Despite each party is contributing its own unique resources, such as reputation of the director, easy accessibility of the location to the residents etc), FamilyMart does not combine this important environmental issue to its value chain and its involvement could only be identified as being a good corporate citizen. As a result, the partnership is classified as a responsive CSR approach.

Program 6- Improving youths' abilities in employment and education

The program focuses on supporting youths (aged 16-24) who are out of school and unemployed. The organisation, which was founded in 2003, has had a profound impact across a variety of youth social issues and has built great connections between local schools and governments around the country, which is accessible to those youths in need (Youth Power, 2021). Throughout the organisation's coordination, FamilyMart has opportunities to allow its outstanding employees step forward to present FamilyMart's core business and services, the service of employees in convenient stores, which not only increase the positive branding impression but also fills gaps in the workforce. From the cooperation, the employees who represent the corporation feel proud of their job and this enhances their loyalty. For more than 10 years the partnership indicates that cooperation is two-way and both side either exchange or provide their own know-how according to its profession. Although FamilyMart might attract potential employees in the future from the programs, the results can be found neither in the CSR reports nor public reports. Therefore, the implication is the collaboration increases the current employees' level of loyalty, which tends to be a presentation of good corporate citizenship that encourages its employees to do charitable activities. However, this does not disrupt the value chain or operating processes. For this reason, this partnership is identified as a responsive CSR approach in which FamilyMart plays a role of a good citizen.

Program 7-High school lunch box competition

Douceur Network organisation founded in 2018, emphasises food education for the 12 years compulsory education in Taiwan, in particular, school lunch issues. The high school lunch

box competition of 2019 was the second year of the lunch competition held by the Douceur Network, which specifically targeted students studying at vocational high schools and required each team consisting of one chef and one nutritionist and that they work under a certain budget. The organisation was responsive of all the processes of the competition, from selecting the candidate teams to executing the competition. FamilyMart, on the other hand, provides its branding power for marketing of the competition, and most importantly, it will honour one special award, the FamilyMart Commoditisation Award, which offers the winning team to co-create and develop a limited-edition lunch box product with FamilyMart and then launch the product on the market. As FamilyMart contributes its unique know-how of commoditisation and the advantage of distribution, so as the Douceur Network organisation provide distinguished content, the lunch box from the champion of the year. By involving product research and development process, FamilyMart upgraded this partnership at a strategic level. Although it took FamilyMart and the prize winners more than five months to allow this award-winning lunch box to reach the stores' shelves, both parties had learnt from each other. Senior purchasing manager Hsu, from Food-To-Go division mentioned that because the competition and high school champion were a hugely attractive focal point for the public, this cooperation gained huge success by selling 40,000 lunch boxes in two weeks, and at the same time transformed people's impressions of school lunches, which were usually 'oily, not healthy, unbalance nutrition, and not tasty at all.' Most importantly, it arose awareness among the public about the problem of the low budget on school meals which actually harms our next generation and affects the whole of society (Douceur Network, 2020). Another senior manager, Huang from R&D, said that the dishes designed by the champions were really innovative compared to the usual research and development path they used to conduct. For instance, the seasoning of the main dish used, yuzo paste (citrus), which conventionally, FamilyMart typically used more common and generic flavours (Douceur Network, 2020). Therefore, this pioneering collaboration lies as a strategic CSR approach, which generated shared value between FamilyMart and the organisation, that both parties achieved societal and financial benefits. In this program, FamilyMart was not only a good corporate citizen but transformed its FOOD-To-Go R&D and purchasing value chain, while at the same time obtained first-hand information of the young generation's current preferences and trends concurrently.

Program 8- Community-based Supportive Employment service for disabled people

Founded in 2000, the vision of Victory Social Welfare Foundation (Victory Organisation) is to 'Enable the disabled people' (Victory Org., 2021). By focusing on design and development of new occupations, running sheltered workplaces, vocational training and learning at home, the foundation provides job opportunities to disabled people and bridges with private sectors to assist disabled people's deinstitutionalisation and support them back to the mainstream. The mission of the foundation is to be a self-dependent organisation by empowering disabled people to create their own values and creating a win-win scenario on both the charitable side and for private businesses.

The foundation opened the first ever retail sheltered store in 2003 at one metro terminal station in New Taipei City, which after four years operation, the founder, Mr. Chang, obtained evidence and experience that demonstrated disabled people can run a retail store. After that, Mr. Chang sought to collaborate with chain brands to utilise the professional supply chain systems and huge corporate resources behind the brand. Though he faced rejection from multiple convenient store brands because those brands viewed that this initiative tended to be part of a corporate PR function or philanthropic CSR issues. And most importantly, it suggested that corporations do not trust that disabled people can carry out daily operation of convenient stores, since the job is relatively complicated and consists of a wide range of skills. Besides, customers are usually in a rush, so the working environment is fairly fast paced and employees are under high pressure as well. Despite those frustrations, in 2011, FamilyMart became the pioneer in the industry to embark on the partnership with the foundation and opened a convenient store whose franchisee is a group of disabled people. As being the first mover in this kind of partnership, FamilyMart and the foundation worked closely to overcome the challenges and obstacles together and then eventually co-created a unique collaboration process and module. The disabled people who work with FamilyMart include people who are autistic, aurally challenged, intellectually challenged, mentally challenged, and physically challenged. Based on the exhaustive understandings and knowledge of replicating the same high standard, quality of service in operating a store, FamilyMart implemented three main methods in this cooperation. First, leverage the advantages of teamwork by unifying different types of disabilities. Second, readjust and transform the standard operating procedures (SOP) to accommodate various disabilities, such as, breaking down one procedure into more detailed steps, revising training processes etc. Third, allocate employees who possess professional counselling backgrounds to assist and support these disabled staff. At the same time, the foundation took control of selecting

suitable potential staff, pre-training, and engaging in designing the transforming SOP from their existing know-how in working with disabled people. Since the first store launched in 2011, until 2019, there are currently in total 6 stores franchising and operated by Victory Social Welfare foundation in Taipei metropolises, which has created 69 job vacancies for employees with a variety of disabilities. During the seven years, these stores won several internal honours, such as, Award of mystery shopper, Annual Award, and National-wide best stores etc. The outstanding results affirmed what Mr. Chang once said in the interview, that he really believes that the disabled people just lack opportunities and suitable job positions. Once society found a way to co-create shared values between corporations and disabled people, they are a group of people who are willing to work, and the talent turnover rate will be extremely low (FamilyMart, 2015). The partnership is a vivid example of two-way exchangeable cooperation that each side is committed and contributing a large amount of time and expertise, in which both sides have developed some specific knowledge during the partnership. The social issues FamilyMart and the foundation are tackling can be summed up in two main issues.

(1) The labour force shortage crisis in Taiwan according to changes of the social structure.

The retail industry is one of the most severe industries facing labour shortages, especially the junior frontline salesperson positions (Ministry of Labor, 2017). Besides, the high labour-intensive working style and long working hours (most convenient stores chains are 24/7) is one of the main reasons causing the high employee turnover rates (Ministry of Labor, 2021a). Since the social structure has changed rapidly and in addition, the working value of the young generation is quite different from the older generation, hiring employees will become an challenge for the convenient store industry (Ministry of Labour, 2021b).

(2) The relatively low labour force participation rate in Taiwan.

The population of disabled people over the age 15 in Taiwan is about 1.2 million, comprising nearly 5% of the total population (Ministry of Labor, 2019). In 2016, the labour force participation rate of 15+ aged disabled people was 20.4%, lower than the international average ratio and even neighbouring East Asian countries (Taiwan Association for Human Rights, 2019).

By integrating the social problem (low labour force participation rate) into its value chain (become one of the human resources of franchisees and in-store employees), FamilyMart embodied the transformation of value chain activities and was able to essentially co-create shared values for not only the corporation itself, but also addressing social issues concomitantly. In addition, throughout the partnership, FamilyMart is able to strengthen its franchising strategy and decrease its risk of labour force shortage by hiring well-trained disabled people, which is undoubtedly a strategic CSR approach.

4.5 Type 3 Cases: Innovative cooperation

Program 9- Partner Stores of Charitable Social Enterprise

The partnership is an extensive and profound cooperation from the previous successful program 8, which consist of three parties, FamilyMart, The Victory Social Welfare Foundation, and Love thy neighbour social enterprise (founded by the guidance of Bread of life Christian Church in Taipei). The partnership developed a brand-new business model in FamilyMart's franchising system, the social entrepreneurship partner store, that the idea was realised by FamilyMart leveraging and replicating its previous exemplary experiences.

The convenient store of this partnership located at XingLong Public Housing community, known previously as 'Ankang Low-Cost Housing'. The community has been the largest low-cost housing project national wide, which was part of the government's resettlement project for marginalised group and displacement of people who fled from the Vietnam War in 1975, which comprised 1,020 units and the household compositions are 18.9% disabled people, 12% elderly, 25% dependent children, and included 19% single parent household (Shi et al., 2008). The preconditions and restrictions of applying for this low-cost housing is that residents comprise almost the lowest 1.5% of marginalised population, in which residents only need to pay an extremely low maintenance fee monthly. The surrounding neighbours have been increasingly sharply since the metro construction and as it is close to one of the best universities in the country, which cause labelling issues (Shi et al., 2008). Since 2007, the church set up a branch service in Ankang community to support the local government, community centre, and social welfare organisations. In the beginning, the church wanted to create a warm and welcoming place for children and teenagers in the community because most of them had nowhere to stay after school. While after establishing itself in this community, the volunteers and workers observed the employment issues for

adults and decided to provide a place without ‘obvious community charity labelling’ to integrate all community members.

Since the long-term partnership and remarkable collaboration performance between FamilyMart and Victory Social Welfare foundation, Mr. Chang continues to think of how the foundation can become a social incubator to leverage its strengths and first-hand knowledge to other NGOs. Moreover, Mr. Chang grew up in Ankang community, so that he has profound experience of the hurdles in the locality. Hence, the partnership to open the unprecedented ‘social entrepreneurship partner store’ started in 2019, which took 12 months from the initial stage to operating the store, more than 4-fold the duration of time compared to standard franchising. In the partnership, based on more than a decade’s dedication in Ankang community, Love thy neighbour social enterprise administers the selection of potential staff to join the new store, to identify who are most suitable and can benefit from the job opportunities. On the other hand, Victory Social Welfare Foundation provides advantages on reforming and transforming working processes of vulnerable groups, coaching and leading the SE partner about operating details and the potential challenges they might face while employing marginalised people, and the six stores currently under the operation of convenient stores by Victory foundation have become the training stores for potential staff in the SE new store. Furthermore, FamilyMart furnishes the partnership by developing the innovative SE franchising procedures, and offers various supports from human resource training, financial funding, and plenty of time. The notion of funding project stemmed from venture capital, which by cooperating with Victory Foundation, SE invested the franchise fee in the beginning, and then amortized this in the following two years. The partnership comprises a complete and fully supported design, which after two years incubation, the SE will need to be independent both financially and in every operating aspect. However, Victory Foundation will still provide one year of monitoring support.

As according to Director Wang of Love Thy Neighbour, the main reason why the church wants to launch a convenient store in this deprived area is to utilise the advantage of the close connection between the 24/7 convenient store chain and local community and most importantly, the church wants to build this store to be one of the main locations for residents to come and socialise, that can create positive energy for the local community (Commercial Times, 2020). Similarly, branding manager Cheng from FamilyMart mentioned, store owners usually try to hold various social events to get involved in the communities to increase a friendly and familiar impression as well as boost the potential sales at the same time.

Although the initial goals might be different from FamilyMart and the SE, the outcomes and the impacts are quite similar at the end, which are delivering the core value and mission of FamilyMart, ‘where you are one of the family and FamilyMart is rooted closely and evolves as an integral part of the local community’ (Commercial Times, 2020).

This partnership implies the innovative business model is evolving and has developed a win-win-win circumstance that all parties can benefit from. Notably that, different from the previous program 8, in this program, FamilyMart has added a social dimension to its value proposition, although FamilyMart cannot integrate social values around to its entire value proposition, the partnership still raises FamilyMart’s competitiveness, which according to Porter and Kramer (2006), is a strategic CSR approach that leverages the corporation’s capabilities to tackle and integrate social issues and enhance its competitiveness.

4.6 Using the lens of resource-based theory on the three types of partnerships

Consistent with the previous case analysis, here we will discuss the linkage between four indicators of resource-based theory and three types of partnerships which are integrated with its own programs respectively. In short, the features of the four indicators are described in the following,

- (1) Value plays the criteria of attributes to be seen as resources, which implies that they can either decrease the possibilities of threads happening or extend further opportunities.
- (2) Rareness delineates how rare are the resources that determines whether the resources can be categorised as competitive advantages or potentially sustained competitive advantages.
- (3) Inimitability: The specific historical context can determine whether the firm possesses valuable and rare resources that are difficult to imitate, which usually only the firm can utilise in a timely and effective manner.
- (4) Substitutability: For sustained competitive advantage to materialise then this feature is imperative, and that neither alternative nor similar resources/strategies could be identified and implemented by other competitors.

Starting from the first type of Corporate-NGO partnership, single-way cooperation, which we identified four different programs of FamilyMart with four NGOs. Reviewing each program accordingly, we can identify that each cooperation can be seen as a valuable collaboration because FamilyMart utilises those partnerships to reach the breadth of social

and environmental issues, that can impact the different interests and concerned topics of different age groups. Hence the potential external threats can be reduced. However, those partnerships cannot fit the notion of rareness, since all four programs are basically pure philanthropy, that FamilyMart donated money to NGOs. This kind of single-way partnership can be set up and the cooperating relationship might fluctuate because of the external environment changes. Many NGOs faced a 30% cut-off of donations in the first half year of 2020 since the global economic slump (Commercial Times, 2020). Moreover, we can see some of the NGOs only cooperated with FamilyMart for one year (2020) or did not collaborate consistently (2020 only: Child Traffic safety Program, Low-carbon environmental education seminars. 2020 only: Enhancement of food education among elderly groups but cooperated in other programs in 2018).

Moving on to the two-way exchangeable cooperation, the scenarios we discussed are more diverse. Program 5 - Improving youths' abilities in employment and education and 6 - Beyond Beauty - TAIWAN FROM ABOVE With FamilyMart are both examples of possessing valuable and rare features because throughout the partnerships, FamilyMart benefits from increasing staff loyalty and further potential sales opportunities based on the events instore. The more than 10 years cooperation and the fame of the Chi Po-lin director generated the rareness of these two partnerships. In spite of being valuable and rare, these two partnerships have not met the imperfect inimitability indicator as the partnerships were not immersed into the corporation's operations, which means other competitive rivals can readily collaborate with other famous celebrities and they might also possess some long-lasting partnerships. Therefore, these two partnerships are seen as being competitive resources because of the aligning indicators of value and rareness.

Program 7 - High school lunch box competition is a relatively new partnership and indicates that the partnership is both valuable and rare. Yet, it might be exaggerated to determine this partnership as also possessing inimitability although the competition is the only one in the country and although it takes advantage of social media marketing, it is not prestigious since the NGO itself and the competition are newly established. For this reason, the competitors might be able to imitate and hold a similar competition with a commitment of a corresponding marketing budget, which can reach similar outcomes.

Program 8 - Community-based Supportive Employment service for disabled people, is the partnership that can be seen as valuable, rare, and difficult to imitate. Based on almost a

decade of close cooperation between FamilyMart and the NGO, the stable and reliable partnership transformed FamilyMart's value chains reveals the special nature of this unique historical condition, in which FamilyMart's competitors will face difficulty to perfectly implement the same programs. Nevertheless, this type of profound partnership might be implemented by other corporations for other vulnerable groups as an alternative initiative. 7-11, the biggest convenient store chain in Taiwan has implemented a program targeted at senior citizens with dementia since 2017. The program offers those selected senior citizens from the community to go to the store one hour per week to be interns and now nine stores are involved in this corporate program (7-11 TW, 2021, Health Udn, 2020, AREA, 2020). This program suggests that even though the partnership and program of FamilyMart and The Victory Foundation delivered quite a unique collaboration and the program from 7-11 TW can be viewed as a philanthropic community service, yet there is a possibility that a competitor could integrate its current program into a long-term strategy. That will cause FamilyMart be deprived of the opportunity to develop this partnership as a sustained competitive advantage.

The last type of partnership, innovative cooperation, includes only one program, the Partner Stores of Charitable Social Enterprise. Due to this the extensive program of program 8, contains valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable features as the former program. Focusing on substitutability, the last but the dominant indicator to examine is the resources (partnerships) that could be sustained as a competitive advantage. As the above, taking the competitor 7-11 as an example, if 7-11 commits to developing its current dementia senior citizens program, it can form a similar scheme as program 9. However, the cooperating nature of program 9 is relatively complex and is successful in part due to the long-term trust between various parties. Most importantly, the partnership established a novel franchising business model that was embedded into the corporation's proposition, which creates a significant barrier for competitors to implement similar strategies. After all, when reviewing the 7-11 program, we could observe that there is a considerable gap compared to the progress of FamilyMart's partnership 9. Therefore, the third type of partnership, innovative cooperation, can be seen as the corporation's sustained competitive advantage based on the program reviewed.

5. Empirical Results

The results of the previous analysis section on 9 NGO programs from FamilyMart were listed as below synthesis 2 figures. Figure 5 depicted the correlation of 3 different types of

cooperation and 2 CSR approaches. The horizontal axis showed 3 types of cooperation and each column was filled by categorised programs, while the figure was divided into 2 CSR approaches. The figure was adapted from the analytical framework of Porter and Kramer (2006). The second figure 6 illustrated which sustained competitive advantage indicators that different types of cooperation possess.

The findings were,

- (1) The more resource exchanging and involvement from both corporate and NGO, the higher possibility that the cooperation will be strategic CSR approach.
- (2) Being a good corporate citizenship stands the dominant proportion among NGO partnerships. 2/3 of the programs fell in this intention. Indeed, Porter and Kramer (2006) delineated that even though corporate is urged to identify what type of social issues it can better tackle by leveraging its own advantages and competences, there are still numerous organisations rely on corporate’s philanthropic activities.
- (3) By diving into program 7, 8 and 9, the key for partnership become strategic is the imperfectly imitability, the last indicator from resource-based theoretical framework.

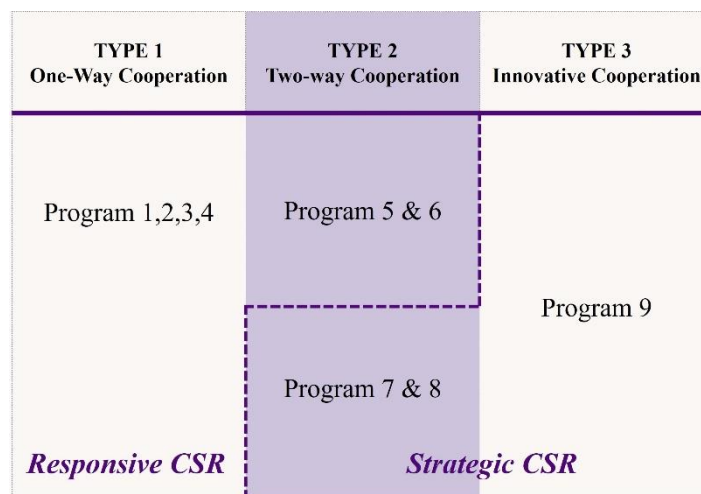


Figure 5. Result 1
Source: Made by author

And all the programs of Type 1 are identifiable as cases of a responsive CSR approach. In the middle of the figure Type 2, Two-way exchangeable partnership, which straddles responsive and strategic approaches divided by program 5,6 and program 7,8. Notably, although Type 2 includes two programs which tended to focus on donations like Type 1, those categorised as Type 2 meet the minimum exchange level from both parties. Moreover, the other programs indicate close exchangeable experiences and strengths of each other. At the end, one

prominent program is classified as Type 3 because of its innovative business model among three different parties that transformed the franchising system of the corporation, which represents a clear strategic CSR approach.

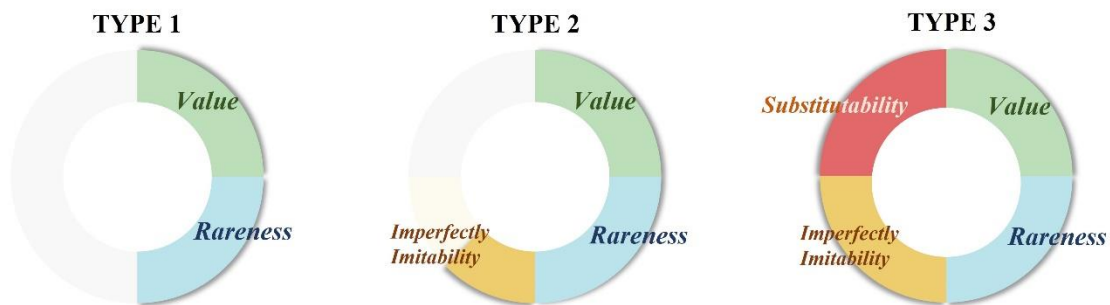


Figure 6. Result 2

Source: Made by author

The synthesis of examining three partnerships is whether sustained competitive advantage is achieved or not and is shown as figure 6. Type 1 partnership meets the first two indicators, but in contrast to Type 2 the collaboration demonstrates inconsistent results. Part of type 2 demonstrated that cooperation possessed two features, while one program suggested the potential to possess imperfect imitability and the other reaches the criteria of difficult to imitate. Ultimately, Type 3 collaboration possesses all four indicators.

6. Discussions

One of the issues that emerges from these findings is according to the analytical framework from Porter and Kramer (2006), it contains 4 different corporate involvements that eventually categorised as 2 different CSR approaches. In spite of successfully identifying good corporate citizenship, value chain transformation, and social dimensions of competitive contexts, we did not classify any program as responsive approach-mitigate value chain. The examples presented in the initial seminal article was B&Q-the international chain of home supply centres, which examined and analysed its products corresponding a list of numerous societal and environmental issues, from its own stores and its suppliers to confirm if there is any potential social responsible risks might happen and how can corporate itself can prevent or mitigate in advance. This kind of CSR involvement tends to manage the existing products and focus on supply chains, which can be found out on the FamilyMart CSR report 2020, but

mostly on the supplier management section rather than cooperation with NGOs. Therefore, in this case studies, it finally did not contain the value chain mitigating involvement.

The other interesting findings in the case was the transition of type 2-program 8 to type 3-program 9. The case studies suggest a possibility of one NGO cooperation can transit to another type of partnerships. However, if we dive into programs from type 1 partnership, all of them were relatively short-term partnerships and positioned at the same type. Thus, it would be worthy to discuss more about the differences. Notably, the NGO of program 8 and 9 is the only one mentioned ‘self-dependence, and create win-win situation by cooperating with private sectors’ in its vision and mission among all cooperated NGOs. Although there are several possible explanations for the successful transition and long-lasting partnerships, this self-sufficient goal and embracing the collaboration with private business mindset could be one of the keys toward the transition. Apart from other programs, program 8 started from the specific needs and requirements from Victory NGO, which were not only already well-prepared itself but also identified what’s shared value can be generated beforehand. The partnership demonstrated how can each parties identify both sides’ strengths and weaknesses and further leverage the advantages as well as mitigate the shortages at the partnership selection stage, that was rarely been found from the other NGO programs FamilyMart implemented in 2020. Furthermore, based on this initial solid and win-win partnership, the replicability nature of the module program 8 has built is then implemented. Distinguished from other programs, the closeness of the partnership program itself (franchise a FamilyMart convenient store) and the core business (FamilyMart as a convenient store chain brand) possesses the potential replicability in the future. Hence, the possibility of developing a deeper partnership and moving to the next type is much higher than other programs. The determination about being self-dependence was another dissimilarity and the example can be found that before embarked the partnership, Victory NGO already retained the experiences and abilities to operate a small shop by itself, which fits the core business of FamilyMart. The entrepreneur mindset and innovative ability to create new occupations also became one of the main points for Victory NGO to transforming the partnership business module and then extend on more like-minded NGOs. In addition, the willingness to build the deep relationship while considering the maximised benefits generated for both sides might be key difference as well. As Porter and Kramer stated, nowadays, various NGO activists are sceptical about the pursuit of social value for profit (Porter and Kramer, 2006), so that resist or behave negative on cooperative with private sectors, which led to the unsatisfied circumstance. ‘If the goal is

to transform the mindset and change to the better world, NPO/NGO should not reject to co-work with corporates and other sectors' stated by Ms. Chen, who led the organisation to collaborate with Carrefour Taiwan to launch new product line-free range eggs program (Scaling Innovation Taiwan, 2018). Therefore, the potential transition of partnership types depends on how openness and innovative level both parties stand, and most importantly, how do both sides identify, leverage, and complement each other and create benefits during the partnership. Indeed, corporate and NGO will have different definitions on 'benefits', and the definitions vary from one organisation to the other. For this reason, the nut is to develop and suit what each party expected, no matter they are economic value creation, social value creation, or reputation retaining, etc...

7. Conclusions and limitations

In this dissertation, the aim is to examine how do different types of corporate-NGO partnerships contribute on firm's sustained competitive advantage. To do so, I used qualitative case studies method to study NGO partnership programs of FamilyMart, the second largest convenient chain brand in Taiwan, and analysed as well as examined data by the synthesis analytical framework. The answers to the research questions listed below.

1- What types of Corporate-NGO partnerships can be identified?

Three different types of corporate-NGO partnerships were identified in this study based on the exchanged and interactive level and the closeness between corporate and NGO. They are (1) Single-way cooperation (2) Two-way exchangeable cooperation (3) Innovative cooperation. Single-way cooperation has a clear direction of collaboration, and in this article, it implied the direction that is corporate toward NGO. In contrast, two-way exchangeable cooperation requires both parties' contributions, either its own specific know-how, experiences, or core competences that can complement each other. The collaboration in this type is deeper and each party will acquire new skills and knowledges. The last type of partnership is more profound and presents the win-win situations, which develops innovative new type of business modules, which might be alliances, joint-ventures, or transformative business module.

2- What are the intentions and implications of these partnerships?

By combining the CSR approach analytical framework from Porter and Kramer (2006) and the previous 3 different types of partnerships, the intentions and implications can be

identified as follows. (1) Single-way cooperation: The intention of corporate is to be a good corporate citizenship so that corporate is not selective to which social/environmental issues it addresses. Since the cooperation tends to be light and loose, the implications are also mild to both sides. On NGO's side, because of the length of the partnership is relatively short, it can not benefit from the stable funding sourcing and need to seek other partners again in a short term. On the other side, for the corporate itself, the implications are not financial benefits, while in terms of the intangible benefits, they are difficult to identify because of the loose and short partnership. (2) The intentions of two-way exchangeable cooperation are more diverse, which consisted of being a good corporate citizenship and transforming value chain. One of the identified implications from the case studies of being a good corporate citizenship under two-way exchangeable cooperation is this kind of partnership tend to have longer length of cooperation. Moreover, corporate has possibility to benefit a minimum economic return and enhance the level of employees' satisfaction. (3) The intention of the innovative cooperation is a step forward of transforming value chain, that is to add the social value propositions in its business operations. Thus, the implications were more profound and broad. For the corporate side, it can not only benefit the financial interests by the selective programs which suited its core business and competences, but can also increase the level of innovation and keep the whole corporate more active and fit in the society's trends. The implications identified from the NGO side were also excited, which NGO can enlarge its social value creation on not only the targeted service groups but also other like-minded organisations that need supports.

3- How do different types of partnerships contribute to corporate competitiveness?

Three different types of partnerships contributed different level on corporate's sustained competitive advantages respectively. One-way cooperation can contribute the first 2 indicators, value and rareness, which can at least maintain corporate's competitive level to its counterparts. Two-way exchangeable cooperation may lead to divergent outcomes, such as only fit the first 2 indicators; or depends on the length of partnership, it can meet value, rareness, and partially or fully imperfect imitability. Clearly, the innovative cooperation achieves all 4 indicators which means by implementing type 3 partnership, corporate can benefit the sustained competitive advantages.

Although there are important discoveries revealed by these studies, there are also some limitations. First, the study focused on only one company in Taiwan, which lacks the comparison to other competitors, the parent company, the whole industry, and the convenient

store chain brands in other countries. Second, the data collected and used in this study were all public secondary data, whereas the analysis could have been more thorough with the availability of primary data. Third, due to the limit of length, some relevant issues were not covered in the study. Yet, topics such as intrapreneurship, transformative entrepreneurship, and open innovation theory are worth exploring. Therefore, a number of interesting topics are listed here as potential direction for the future research: comparative study of the business models between FamilyMart Taiwan and FamilyMart Japan, that of the convenience stores industry in Taiwan and in the UK, as well as the application of open innovation theory on strategic CSR. In addition, more holistic research results could be achieved by a mixed methods which combines primary and secondary data.

In conclusion, this study presented the real business case from one of the CSR leading Asian countries and demonstrated how a corporate implemented NGO partnerships and how those programs were linked to a corporate's strategy, competitiveness, and the society. The key contribution of this study is to demonstrate how a corporate develops a long-term innovative partnership with NGOs, while having achieved shared values of both parties and concurrently been benefited from their collaboration financially and socially. However, the essence of CSR remains inconclusive: what if a CSR strategy is employed as a mean of boosting a corporate's economic interests? Should it be perceived as a true CSR then? There is a clear path with vivid examples in this article, that only if all actors on the planet cooperate together, a prosperous and sustainable future would be achieved. And of course, corporates cannot be excluded from this and should play a vital role among this. Hence, it is crucial for the private sector to be open for various corporate NGO partnerships, no matter what their initial intentions or which type of partnerships it is. As we can see in the case, there is a possibility that partnership will transit to another type, to the win-win situation. The key is to embark on the collaboration strategically as soon as possible.

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