
Sustainable Competitive Advantage in the Legal Industry: A Review of Business Strategies and Market Entry Approaches for Gowling WLG in Japan and Nigeria

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Abstract

The modern business landscape has been notably disrupted by events like the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced global trade by 13% to 23% in 2020, affecting the triple bottom line—profit, people, and planet—of the legal industry. This research develops a sustainable competitive advantage framework for Gowling WLG in emerging markets, focusing on Japan and Nigeria. The study compares Gowling WLG's business strategies and market entry approaches through a strategic management model and case study design, comparing the firm's operations in these diverse markets. Data was collected via document analysis, interviews, field observations, and megatrend articles to evaluate the competitive landscape. A context analysis of existing literature helped formulate relevant themes. Findings reveal the dynamic nature of the legal sector, influenced by political stability, economic conditions, technological advancements, and environmental concerns. Despite challenges like Brexit, global growth opportunities and threats coexist. Gowling's strengths include global recognition and advanced technology, but it also faces challenges in innovation and leadership. Opportunities lie in expanding the high-legal industry and offering sustainability-focused services, though cybersecurity risks and economic instability are significant threats. Strategic alliances with local firms for risk management and expertise are advised. Entering Japan requires thorough research, local collaboration, and cultural sensitivity. This research contributes to the empirical and theoretical literature, noting data reliability limitations, especially in Nigeria.

Keywords: Business Strategies, Gowling WLG, Legal Industry, Market Entry Strategies, Sustainable Competitive Advantage

JEL Classification: L10, K22, F23, M10

1. Introduction

The modern business world has witnessed drastic natural incidents, disruptions, crises, technological changes, environmental changes, disasters, and diseases, all of which negatively impact the triple bottom line of businesses (profit), society (people), and the environment (planet) (Ewertowski, 2022). This unpredictability, in turn, harmed company performance and increased the likelihood of business failure (Amankwah-Amoah *et al.*,

2021). Global trade declined by approximately 13% to 23% in 2020, following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019. This led to numerous businesses halting operations, laying off employees, temporarily closing, and reducing their activities (Sharma et al., 2020). These conditions significantly impacted business industries such as legal, retail, hospitality, travel, tourism, manufacturing, and the global supply chain, with border closures and quarantines impacting their overall sustainability landscape (Ayuso & Navarrete-Báez, 2018). These circumstances precipitated severe economic consequences, including long-term effects on national budgets, and highlighted the need for companies to mitigate the impacts of uncertainty and anticipate future events. Sniashko (2019) asserts that businesses strategize for uncertainty identification, prediction, and reduction. According to Stachowiak and Pawłyszyn (2021), businesses then develop and implement change and growth strategies tailored to their unique situations to thrive in uncertain environments across the emerging economy domain. Severo *et al.*, (2020) showcase the significance of competitive advantage (CA) for business success owing to uncertainty and increased competition. Teoh et al., (2021) support this by promoting the introduction of sustainable competitive advantage within strategic management. Maritan and Lee, (2017) discuss how companies maintain their lead in their industries by creating unique products, enhancing skills, and protecting intellectual property. Shan *et al.*, (2019) suggest that lower costs lead to higher profits, and companies gain competitive advantages through exclusive resources and capabilities not available to their competitors.

In today's globalised economy, establishing a sustainable competitive advantage is crucial for law firms seeking to expand into emerging markets (Shayganmehr *et al.*, 2021). Gowling WLG is a leading multinational law firm that arose from the 2016 merger of Canada-based Gowlings and UK-based Wragge Lawrence Graham & Co. (Gowling, 2023). The firm, structured as Gowling WLG International Limited, comprises Gowling WLG (Canada) LLP and Gowling WLG (UK) LLP. It boasts over 1,500 legal professionals across 20 offices in Canada, the UK, continental Europe, the Middle East, and China, offering a comprehensive range of legal services globally. Despite their financial independence, these partnerships collaborate closely to provide exceptional legal counsel. Gowling WLG ranks prominently in *The Lawyer UK 200 2019*, standing at number 16, with a global turnover nearing £500 million (Gowling, 2014). The firm's sector-focused approach allows it to provide specialised legal services in areas such as healthcare, technology, real estate, and energy, meeting clients' specific needs and challenges. Gowling WLG is deeply involved in a variety of high-profile initiatives and events, demonstrating its commitment to supporting important causes and events in the communities it serves. While initially founded in 1834 in Birmingham as Wragge & Co., Gowling WLG remains rooted in its founding countries, maintaining its commitment to excellence and integrity (McNicol, 2018). Gowling WLG, a leading international law firm, recognises the immense potential of Japan and Nigeria, two countries offering unique opportunities and challenges while being vastly different in terms of culture, economic development, and legal frameworks. Japan, with its advanced economy and robust legal system, provides a stable environment for international law firms (Hiyoshi & Kondo, 2020). In 2023, Japan's GDP stood at \$5 trillion, making it the third-largest economy globally, with a population of over 126 million (Salvatore, 2020). Over the past decade, the nation has seen a 30% increase in companies adopting international best

practices in corporate governance, ranking second in the Global Innovation Index. Over 300,000 annual patent applications demonstrate Japan's robust intellectual property rights environment (Tsugane, 2021). Conversely, Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, presents a dynamic, complex landscape characterised by rapid growth and regulatory challenges. In 2023, Nigeria's GDP reached \$514 billion, with its oil-rich market accounting for over 90% of export earnings and a population exceeding 213 million (Kaleem & Sabi, 2021). The Nigerian consumer base has historically grown by 15% annually for over a decade now, supported by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which aims to boost intra-African trade by 52% by 2024 (Ogbonna, Mobosi, & Ugwuoke, 2020). Despite Nigeria ranking 131st in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, its legal services market is expanding, with a 20% annual growth rate driven by foreign investments and local enterprise support (Chanchangi et al., 2023). The Nigerian government's recent enactment of the Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA) 2020 aims to improve the business climate. Gowling WLG's strategic approach involves leveraging global expertise and local knowledge (Gowling, 2021). Gowling WLG achieves this by concentrating on intellectual property, corporate governance, and technological innovation in Japan, while simultaneously navigating Nigeria's regulatory landscape and leveraging its economic growth and resources. By tailoring its strategies to each market's unique opportunities and challenges, Gowling WLG is well-positioned to develop a sustainable competitive advantage in these emerging economies.

Businesses need resources to enter the market (Huang *et al.*, 2015), even though academic scholars evaluate competitive advantages based on these resources (Varadarajan, 2020). Resource-Based Theory (RBT) significantly links a company's performance to its resources, enhancing its capabilities and outcomes (Shan *et al.*, 2019). Information technology, communication networks, and the internet all facilitate efficient information management, thereby improving business performance (Mao *et al.*, 2016). RBT emphasises that possessing scarce, unique, and inimitable resources can enhance an organisation's performance, providing a strategic advantage and superior efficiency. Identifying essential resources is crucial for establishing a long-term competitive edge (Donnellan & Rutledge, 2019). Moreover, businesses must balance their focus on resources with sustainability, considering economic, environmental, and social impacts as climate concerns grow (Pratono *et al.*, 2019). Companies must make environmentally friendly and profitable decisions (Darvish et al., 2019). New technologies drive global economic growth, but they often harm the environment, necessitating balanced decision-making (Ge et al., 2018; Jafari-Sadeghi *et al.*, 2023). Pratono *et al.*, (2019) and Rezaei *et al.*, (2022) have extensively studied sustainable competitive advantages (SCAs), highlighting how promoting green business practices fosters competitive advantage through knowledge creation and sharing. Donnellan and Rutledge, (2019) showcase how resources and capabilities influence strategy adjustments in commercial banks. Gellweiler and Krishnamurthi, (2021) highlighted the role of IT in creating value and reducing costs for businesses. As a result, these studies acknowledge the critical role of sustainable competitive advantage in long-term business success, as it fosters the maintenance of market position and profitability over time. Contrary to temporary advantages, sustainable competitive advantages are durable and difficult for competitors to replicate. Unique resources, proprietary technology, a strong

brand reputation, efficient processes, and superior customer relationships further enhance this, according to Balance Scorecard Theory. These elements create barriers to entry, ensuring the company remains ahead in the market. Thus, SCAs enable a business to respond effectively to market changes, customer needs, and competitive pressures, ensuring continuous growth and stability in an ever-evolving business landscape.

Although previous research has examined resource-based and sustainable competitive advantage (Tate & Bals, 2018), there is a lack of in-depth exploration using case study-based approaches. Given the impact of uncertainty management on SCAs, especially in the current less stable environment, there is a need for further investigation. Resource-based CA studies have not extensively used current decision-making frameworks, such as market, industry, and country-based analyses, designed for uncertain environments (Tuni et al., 2020). Furthermore, past research has not sufficiently addressed the intersection of sustainability and resources (Venkatesh et al., 2020). In developing economies, the legal industry is also a critical but overlooked market turning point. Existing literature tends to treat emerging markets as homogeneous, neglecting the nuanced differences between countries like Japan and Nigeria (Wang & Hu, 2020). Comparative studies on the effectiveness of market entry strategies in these countries are also scarce (Zhang & Song, 2020). Gowling WLG, a prominent international law firm, was chosen due to its substantial experience and strategic initiatives in global markets. The firm's expertise in advising multinational corporations on market entry and expansion strategies makes it an ideal subject for studying business strategies in diverse environments, such as Japan and Nigeria. Gowling WLG's commitment to innovation, client-centric approach, and comprehensive understanding of local markets underpin its competitive edge (Gowling, 2023). The empirical analysis of cultural, economic, and regulatory variations influencing Gowling WLG's strategic decisions can provide valuable insights. Bridging this gap could inform tailored approaches for Gowling WLG, enhancing its ability to establish SCAs in diverse emerging markets. Thus, this study develops a strategic competitive advantage framework for Gowling WLG in emerging economies by examining the business strategies and market entry approaches used by the firm to establish a presence in these diverse markets. The specific objective intends to analyse the environmental audit and competitiveness of Gowling WLG's market sector in the United Kingdom (UK). To evaluate Gowling WLG's existing marketing strategies and entrance approaches for their suitability in enhancing sustainability performance in the current market sector. To explore potential new market opportunities and challenges in emerging markets for Gowling WLG. Develop an implementation plan, including budget estimations, showcasing key financial metrics for sustainability evaluation, and propose action plans and recommendations to improve Gowling WLG's current and future overall business performance for long-term sustainability in emerging markets.

2. Literature Review

Competitive advantage (CA) showcases the company's ability to generate a more profitable advantage than its competitors. CA is categorised as either short-term (temporary advantage) or long-term (sustainable advantage); however, it typically remains short-lived unless competitors cannot replicate it (Mahdi *et al.*, 2019). With growing environmental

concerns, the concept of SCAs has evolved to encompass more than just financial gain (Darvish *et al.*, 2019). Companies now balance their economic, environmental, and social responsibilities (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018). Implementing green innovations, including increased recycling, resource conservation, and material efficiency, allows companies to achieve SCAs by reducing costs (Onjewu *et al.*, 2022; Chang, 2011). In his 1979 book "Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analysing Industries and Competitors," Michael Porter introduces the Five Forces Framework, which examines the competitive forces influencing industry profitability. These forces encompass the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of buyers and suppliers, the availability of substitute products or services, and the intensity of competitive rivalry (Carnahan *et al.*, 2010). This framework helps firms devise strategies to protect their market position and enhance profitability. Critics argue that Porter's model is too static and fails to account for the dynamic nature of modern business environments, and its industry-level focus might miss unique firm-level capabilities and strategies essential for CA (Huang *et al.*, 2015). As a result, the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory posits that businesses gain a competitive advantage through resources that are valuable, rare, unique, and irreplaceable. Resources that are merely useful and scarce offer only a short-term competitive advantage (Sadraei *et al.*, 2022; Shiri & Jafari-Sadeghi, 2022). Companies consist of various resources, and effective management of these resources, along with leveraging market opportunities, can enhance company performance, according to RBV. The theory suggests that a company's competitive advantages stem from its resources, including both physical and intangible assets, as well as strategic capabilities (Khan *et al.*, 2020). Tangible resources, which are visible and measurable, enhance productivity, while intangible resources, such as knowledge, innovation, brand reputation, service quality, and product excellence, are more abstract. Porter (1997) argues that businesses should develop a strategy to secure a unique and defensible market position and then acquire the necessary mental and physical tools to implement that strategy (Morgan *et al.*, 2009). Extensive research has been conducted on RBV across various fields, including business, marketing, international trade, and strategic management (Biancone *et al.*, 2022; Satyanarayana *et al.*, 2022). Research suggests that companies often view intangible resources as the primary source of competitive advantage, while tangible resources have a less significant impact on overall company success (Barney, 2012).

Alternatively, Dynamic Capabilities Theory, developed by Teece, Pisano, and Shuen in 1997, underscores a firm's capacity to integrate, develop, and reconfigure both internal and external competencies to effectively respond to swiftly changing environments (Bari *et al.*, 2022). This theory posits that sustainable competitive advantage stems from a firm's ability to adapt to market shifts, innovate, and consistently refresh its capabilities. These dynamic capabilities encompass critical processes such as product development, strategic decision-making, and alliance formation. Critics argue that measuring and operationalizing dynamic capabilities can be challenging (Tripathi & Joshi, 2019). Moreover, the theory assumes equal access to resources for all firms, potentially leading to disparities in competitive advantage (Prabowo, Sriwidadi, & Ikhsan, 2021). Thus, the Blue Ocean Strategy, introduced by Kim and Mauborgne (2005), advocates for the creation of new market spaces, or "blue oceans," rather than engaging in competition within existing, saturated markets, known as "red oceans" (Krylyov *et al.*, 2020). This strategy urges firms to pursue innovation and value

creation in order to open up new areas of demand and render competition irrelevant. Critics note that, while innovative, the Blue Ocean Strategy can be risky and requires substantial investment in research and development (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). This suggests that the sustainable competitive advantage gained through this strategy may be questionable, as imitators could quickly replicate the innovative products or services, leading to a return to a red-ocean scenario.

Innovation plays a crucial role in sustaining competitive advantages by enabling firms to differentiate their offerings and maintain customer loyalty (Islami *et al.*, 2020). Companies that consistently innovate tend to achieve significantly higher revenue growth compared to their industry peers. Barney (1986) emphasises the significance of a firm's internal resources and capabilities, including its culture, in developing sustainable advantages. A strong culture that emphasises adaptability, customer orientation, and continuous improvement enhances a firm's ability to respond to competitive pressures and innovate effectively (Kraus *et al.*, 2022). Scholars credit Gowling's corporate culture, which fosters experimentation and risk-taking, for its successful introduction of innovative products and its sustained competitive advantage. Strategic positioning, as highlighted by Porter (1985), is also critical to achieving SCA. Firms gain a competitive edge by offering unique products or services at a premium price (differentiation) or by providing similar products or services at a lower cost (cost leadership). This strategic focus helps companies build strong brand identities and customer loyalty, thereby reducing the threat of new entrants and competitive rivalry (Tsai *et al.*, 2021). However, sustaining competitive advantage presents challenges, as noted by Alavi *et al.*, (2020), who stress the importance of dynamic capabilities in adapting to changing market conditions. Dynamic capabilities, referring to a firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies, are crucial for addressing rapidly changing environments (Li *et al.*, 2023). Gowling's success in continuously innovating and introducing new legal service offerings, such as legal proceedings for cybersecurity, is attributed to its dynamic capabilities, which have helped it sustain its competitive advantage in the highly competitive legal industry (Gowling, 2023).

The concept of sustainable competitive advantage has garnered significant attention in strategic management literature due to its crucial role in ensuring long-term business success in dynamic and competitive environments. Mady *et al.*, (2023) emphasise the importance of continuous innovation for achieving SCA, noting that it not only differentiates businesses in the marketplace but also makes it difficult for competitors to imitate, thereby maintaining their competitive position. Similarly, Naidoo and Gasparatos, (2018) highlight that adopting environmentally friendly practices enhances a company's reputation, customer loyalty, cost efficiency, and regulatory risks, all of which contribute to sustained profitability. Lee, (2022) explores the broader discussion on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its impact on competitive ability, aligning with the ongoing discourse. Research on dynamic capabilities also plays a significant role in attaining SCA. Firms with robust dynamic capabilities can sense, seize, and reconfigure their resources and competencies in response to evolving market conditions, as shown by Warner and Wäger, (2019). Their study indicates that companies with strong dynamic capabilities are better equipped to adapt to market changes and technological advancements, maintaining a competitive edge over time.

However, Falcone et al., (2024) caution against over-reliance on a single source of advantage, advocating for diversification across various domains such as product innovation, operational efficiency, and customer service to sustain competitiveness. Elali, (2021) supports this view, emphasising the need for strategic flexibility and responsiveness to competitive threats and market changes. Gupta *et al.*, (2020) suggest the application of digital technologies like artificial intelligence and big data analytics as they enhance operational efficiency, customer engagement, and decision-making processes, providing new avenues for gaining and maintaining a competitive advantage in the digital era.

3. Methodology

Scholars consistently strive to push the boundaries of knowledge, regardless of the scale of their contributions. This study employs an interpretivist research paradigm, which posits that knowledge is socially constructed and context-dependent rather than universally applicable (Phillips, 2023). It suggests that understanding reality requires exploring the subjective experiences and meanings that empirical literature assigns to social actions and environments. This methodology holds significant value as it acknowledges the multifaceted nature of reality and its construction through social interactions, necessitating a comprehensive, qualitative approach to reveal these intricate viewpoints. This philosophical standpoint aligns seamlessly with the chosen qualitative research methodology, providing a robust theoretical foundation for tackling the research questions (Bille & Hendriksen, 2023). It promotes an inductive reasoning perspective, where patterns and theories emerge from the data collected in real-world contexts. Accordingly, a theoretical framework was established through context analysis, exploring the strategies Gowling WLG can employ to develop a sustainable competitive advantage in emerging economies, supported by rich and contextual empirical evidence. This methodology resonates with scholars such as Jando and Dionne, (2024), who advocate for interpretive approaches that consider the complexity and contextualization of human experiences while focusing on the unique insights and resources available within the specific context of this research.

A case study design was employed, involving a comparative analysis of Gowling WLG's business strategies and market entry approaches in Japan and Nigeria. The research utilized document analysis, reports on interviews, field observations, and megatrend articles to gather data on the firm's operations, market conditions, and competitive landscape in both countries. By examining these distinct environments, the study identifies key factors that contribute to sustainable competitive advantage in emerging economies. The comparative approach highlights differences and similarities, providing insights into how Gowling WLG effectively adapts and thrives in diverse markets. Consequently, a context analysis was conducted to address the research inquiries, utilising the research context as the basis for identifying and formulating themes from the existing literature related to the research questions. This approach is beneficial as it allows for the systematic exploration of prevalent patterns in the collected data (Mohd-Basar et al., 2021). For instance, examining business strategies and market entry approaches in emerging economies can offer comprehensive insights into how companies like Gowling WLG can enhance operational efficiency and competitiveness through effective market practices. Specific keywords and search strategies were used in two stages to gather the data. Initially, a comprehensive review of empirical

literature related to the concept, context, case study, and industry was conducted using reputable academic databases such as Springer, Scopus, Google Scholar, Elsevier, JSTOR, the World Bank Index, Statista, Thomson-Reuters, the Annual Report, and Megatrend News. The search incorporated keywords relevant to the study concept, including "sustainable competitive advantage," "market entry strategies," "business strategies in emerging economies," "Japan business strategies," and "Nigeria market entry." Boolean operators such as "AND" and "OR" were utilised to enhance search precision, incorporating pertinent research findings. The snowball method was applied to expand the search scope and eliminate irrelevant materials. This involves thoroughly examining reference lists in pertinent review papers and related studies. This strategy provides significant benefits by ensuring the inclusion of various articles and amassing an exhaustive knowledge base to support the methodological examination in this research (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). Therefore, the investigation used a purposive sampling technique with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria anchored on papers, literature, and reports that directly address the research objectives. This approach is required to meticulously identify pertinent literature, including critical elements essential to the study. Consequently, this research included only articles, reports, and search engine results that met the inclusion criteria and aligned with the research objective.

The motive behind this study was driven by a request from a group of students seeking guidance on how to conduct a case study analysis of a company. This context suggests that the primary aim was educational, intended to provide practical insights and methodological clarity to the students, while also contributing to the broader academic discourse. As such, the study was tailored to meet the specific needs of the students, focusing on the application of case study analysis techniques rather than generating findings with wide applicability. This distinction is crucial to avoid the perception that the study was a commissioned piece by Gowling WLG for its own use. If perceived as a commissioned study, Gowling WLG's interests and potential biases could compromise the perceived objectivity and rigour of the research. By clearly positioning the study as an academic exercise aimed at teaching students, it underscores its role as a learning tool rather than a commercial endeavour. Consequently, the findings from this study are not intended to be generalised but rather to illustrate specific analytical techniques and provide practical learning experiences for the students involved. This helps maintain the integrity and educational value of the research. Therefore, ensuring ethical standards in this research is fundamental (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). To achieve this, the study implemented several key ethical practices. Firstly, obtaining informed consent should be a top priority to prevent coercion and ensure participants fully understand the study's objectives and potential risks. The introduction section of this comparative review clearly emphasises voluntary participation and highlights the importance of data privacy by providing in-text citations of the included articles. Stringent measures were employed to protect sensitive information by properly communicating the research objective, methodology, and research topic and context. However, maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias is critical for obtaining credible results. This entails formulating research questions in an unbiased and un-imitated manner by conducting impartial comparative analyses. Thus, the entire research process was transparently communicated for easy tracking of records and imitation of processes in

different industries and contexts by future studies. This approach helps build trust and ensure accountability. Therefore, adhering to these ethical considerations is essential for upholding responsibility and integrity, thereby safeguarding the rights and interests of all involved in the study. The research focuses on a comparative review of business strategies and market entry approaches in Japan and Nigeria, ensuring adherence to all ethical standards throughout the process.

4. Result

Environmental Audit of UK's Legal Sector: PESTEL Model

A comprehensive approach is necessary to analyze the opportunities and threats facing the legal sector, which justifies the combined use of PESTLE and Porter's Five Forces models. These models provide a holistic view, offering strategic insights into the competitive landscape and industry dynamics of firms like Gowling WLG (Rashid, 2023). To remain competitive, Gowling must adapt to the dynamic landscape shaped by globalisation and evolving business environments. This necessitates keeping abreast of ever-changing political, economic, sociocultural, technical, environmental, and legal factors (Vining, 2011; Putera & Heikal, 2021). These factors, influenced by global forces, require Gowling to constantly evolve its strategies and operations to align with emerging trends and challenges. By understanding and responding effectively to these factors, Gowling can enhance its competitiveness and sustain its relevance in the business world.

The UK's political landscape, known for its stable democratic governance, faced challenges post-2015 elections when the SNP's significant majority heightened prospects of separation. Following this, the Conservative Party's dominance provided lawmakers with security and autonomy, streamlining the legislative process (Cairney, 2016). Gowling, on the other hand, faced difficulties due to the Eurozone crisis, which strained UK-EU relations. These issues intensified with Greece's potential EU exit and the government's anti-immigration policies affecting international relations (Vandoros, 2018). Proposals like the British Bill of Rights and abolishing the Human Rights Act could alter the UK's interaction with foreign law, impacting business law (Amos, 2018). Despite uncertainty, Gowling WLG aims to strengthen ties with China, potentially benefiting cash flow, infrastructure development, and clean energy projects. Nevertheless, terrorism remains a concern as the UK continues its counterterrorism efforts, with Gowling WLG addressing related legal issues (McCulloch & Pickering, 2009). In 2022, the UK's economy was struggling, with a 7.6% GDP growth rate and 11.1% inflation, creating challenges for Gowling WLG (O'Neill, 2023a). Despite these issues, the UK ranked 5th globally for business environment, GDP per capita, and competitiveness, demonstrating economic resilience (Clark, 2023). Key GDP contributors included banking, software, pharmaceuticals, legal, and financial services. The UK's international legal operations were notably strong, with over 7,000 cases in 2019, highlighting its global legal influence (Statista, 2022). However, long-term issues like declining productivity and a skills shortage have hampered overall economic growth (Clark, 2023). High-tech sectors such as defence, aerospace, and automotive present opportunities for Gowling WLG, but challenges like inflation and political instability abroad pose risks. To maintain success in the UK, Gowling WLG must align its strategies with the evolving economic landscape (Statista, 2022).



Figure 1: UK's Inflation Rate from 1988 to 2028 (O'Neill, 2023a)

Gowling WLG faces a complex landscape in the UK's social and cultural scene, where historical educational prestige offers opportunities, such as providing legal services for international students. However, challenges loom, notably from the controversial immigration act, which may deter foreign student enrollment due to increased restrictions (Hollifield, 2016). This, compounded by potential reductions in free NHS care and stringent immigration regulations, could impede the firm's growth. Meanwhile, projections indicate a rise in child poverty to 3.4 million by 2024, highlighting a potential demand surge for legal services in child rights and social welfare (Duncanson et al., 2020). Amidst these challenges, an ageing population, as evidenced by a rising dependency ratio, presents both problems and prospects. Gowling WLG must adapt its strategies to navigate potential shifts in government policies affecting pension rules, elder care, and estate planning (Statista, 2023). This evolving landscape offers the firm opportunities to leverage its legal expertise for impactful advocacy and strategic adaptation. However, technology presents both opportunities and challenges for law firms like Gowling WLG in the UK. Cyber threats pose significant risks, costing the country GBP 34.0 billion annually (Stoddart, 2016). Understanding the complex regulations around data security and intellectual property rights is crucial, highlighting the necessity for legal assistance. Law firms, on the other hand, benefit from government initiatives such as tax incentives and research hubs. Gowling WLG's strategy aligns with national efforts to prioritise high-value sectors like nanotechnology, space exploration, and alternative energy. Despite these advantages, the UK faces challenges due to a shortage of skilled IT and research professionals, impacting its competitiveness (Miles, 2007). Gowling WLG can address this by advising clients on employee management and legal compliance. Britain's commitment to innovation is evident from its 2019 expenditure of 1.76 percent of GDP on research and development (Vankar, 2022). While this creates challenges, it also offers opportunities for Gowling WLG to focus on intellectual property protection and regulatory compliance, maximising clients' returns on their R&D investments.

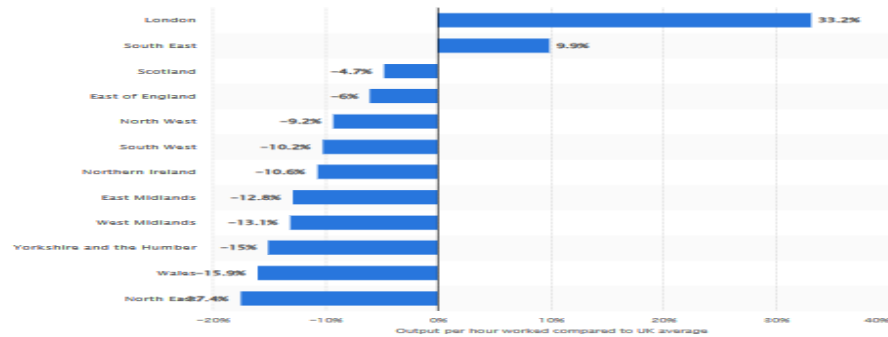


Figure 2: UK's Productivity Rate (Clark, 2023)

In Britain, the legal framework presents both opportunities and challenges for Gowling WLG. The UK's high rankings on the Index of Economic Freedom and the World Bank's Doing Business measures in 2022 (PwC, 2023) indicate a commitment to fostering an investor-friendly environment, making it attractive to foreign clients seeking favourable legal conditions. The efficient regulatory environment, characterised by a low total tax rate and minimal compliance costs, further enhances the country's appeal to businesses. However, issues such as the Diverted Profits Tax (Fuest & Riedel, 2009) and tax evasion, which incur significant costs, pose threats to Gowling WLG's clients, particularly high-net-worth individuals and businesses facing extensive regulations. Despite these challenges, Gowling WLG capitalises on evolving laws addressing matters like terrorism by specialising in compliance, risk management, and litigation. Additionally, the UK's efforts to increase tax transparency through agreements like the Swiss/UK Tax Cooperation Agreement strengthen the firm's expertise in international tax matters (Sawyer, 2014). Gowling WLG must navigate shifting foreign direct investment (FDI) policies and advocate for initiatives that enhance the UK's competitiveness and attractiveness to foreign investors, especially in light of the rapid growth of Germany and other emerging economies. Ultimately, Gowling WLG faces both opportunities and challenges in the UK's evolving environmental landscape, offering a comprehensive range of legal services with a strong focus on environmental protection and regulatory compliance as the UK continues to lead and influence sustainable development. However, significant issues such as air pollution, responsible for approximately 29,000 deaths annually (Watterson & Dinan, 2020), highlight potential legal actions and regulations. Gowling WLG's expertise is crucial for clients facing environmental health and compliance issues. Future initiatives, including new measures under the next Kyoto Protocol and an increased emphasis on carbon budgets, indicate a growing demand for lawyers skilled in climate change mitigation (He et al., 2022). As a leading legal advisor in these domains, Gowling WLG can ensure clients adhere to regulations. Nevertheless, balancing environmental protection with economic growth

remains challenging, necessitating foresight in legal matters and strategic advice that fosters both sustainability and development. (Charles, 2017).

Competitive Analysis of UK's Legal Sector: Porter Five Forces Model

According to the 2021 World Economy Index, the legal services industry plays a crucial role in global economic growth, generating approximately £32 billion annually (Statista, 2022). This significant contribution has attracted numerous brands to the market, fostering continuous growth. In order to navigate this competitive landscape, Gowling WLG must thoroughly understand the five-force framework to assess the longevity of the competition and its impact on their competitive advantage. The intensity of competition is evaluated on a scale where low is 1 point, medium is 1.5 points, and high is 2 points. These forces include low barriers to entry for new firms, moderate supplier power, high buyer bargaining power, moderate availability of substitute services, and intense competition (Porter, 2010). In 2023, the global market for legal services will have rebounded from the economic downturn caused by COVID-19, reaching a demand value of approximately \$840 billion (Statista, 2017). This resurgence has allowed new firms to enter the market, yet established giants like DLA Piper and Cleary Gottlieb have solidified their positions through stringent regulations, significant capital requirements, technological protections, and economies of scale (Burrige & Gill, 2017). The UK legal services market remains highly competitive (CBInsight, 2023), with major players like GreenPoint Global operating in over 10 countries worldwide. These global dominance actions by established firms raise entry barriers for newcomers. This is evident in the UK's crowded legal market, where competitors like Gowling WLG thrive by offering unique services and maintaining a global presence. According to Gowling (2022), Gowling WLG has significantly increased its client base since becoming the official legal adviser and sponsor for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games and Team England. Despite the number of law firms in England and Wales dropping below 10,000 in 2021, ending the year at 9,809, the legal sector experienced an impressive 8% growth in 2022 (Statista, 2022). Remarkably, only 13% of these firms operate under the traditional partnership model, while 52% have adopted the incorporated company model. This shift has intensified competition within the legal services industry, yet firms like Gowling WLG are expanding their market share to enhance their service offerings. Statista also notes that DLA Piper's international expansion has led to \$3.7 billion in revenue, positioning it among the highest-earning law firms in the country. To remain competitive in the UK legal services market, firms such as Cleary Gottlieb and Green Point Global have reduced their prices. Due to the high number of competitors, the quality of services varies, switching costs are substantial, and customer loyalty is strong, resulting in slower industry growth and heightened competition (Bennett *et al.*, 2013). In 2022, there was an 8% increase in legal sector employment, but by 2023, the number of law firms in England and Wales had fallen below 10,000, ending the year at 9,809 (Statista, 2022). Currently, 52% of these firms operate as incorporated companies, while only 13% continue to use the traditional partnership model. This shift has intensified competition in the legal services market, prompting larger firms like Gowling WLG to acquire substantial market shares to enhance their service offerings. DLA Piper, with an annual revenue of \$3.7 billion, has emerged as one of the highest-paying law firms in the US following its expansion overseas (Statista,

2022). Increased competition in the UK has led firms such as Cleary Gottlieb and GreenPoint Global to lower their fees to remain competitive, resulting in slower industry growth. Clients, reliant on customised legal solutions, tend to maintain long-term relationships due to high switching costs and varied service quality (Bennett *et al.*, 2013; Yarrow & Decker, 2012). Despite rising costs, spurred by legal advancements and technological integration, new entrants have diversified the market, offering services ranging from basic advice to comprehensive legal protection (Brooks, Gherhes, & Vorley, 2020). However, clients wield less negotiating power in this market. Leading firms like DLA Piper and Cleary Gottlieb are heavily investing in research and development, leveraging legal technology advancements to enhance service delivery and increase service substitution possibilities (Balthu, Reid, & Clegg, 2022). Alternative dispute resolution methods, such as online mediation and arbitration, are gaining popularity among tech-savvy clients seeking alternatives to traditional litigation (Mania, 2015). The rise of legal tech has spawned new service providers, diminishing the dominance of traditional channels (Gill *et al.*, 2014). Moreover, widespread interoperability among legal service providers facilitates seamless client communication across digital platforms like Microsoft Teams and Zoom (Patel *et al.*, 2022). To remain competitive and adaptive to evolving client needs, legal firms must embrace these changes in the legal landscape.

The UK's legal industry is characterised by traditional law firms, emerging boutique firms, and the increasing presence of alternative legal service providers (ALSPs) (Alaloul *et al.*, 2020). Regulatory changes, technological advancements, and evolving client expectations shape this sector. Traditional law firms dominate the market, with the Magic Circle firms—Clifford Chance, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, Allen & Overy, Linklaters, and Slaughter and May—holding significant sway due to their global reach, comprehensive service offerings, and long-established reputations. These firms compete fiercely for high-value corporate clients, particularly in areas like mergers and acquisitions, banking and finance, and complex litigation (Balthu *et al.*, 2022). They benefit from extensive resources, deep expertise, and strong brand recognition, which collectively create high barriers to entry for new competitors. However, the competitive landscape is shifting due to the rise of boutique firms and ALSPs. Boutique firms, often established by ex-partners from large firms, provide specialised services with a more personalised approach and competitive pricing. They have carved out niches in areas such as intellectual property, employment law, and niche litigation, offering agility and expertise without the overheads of larger firms. ALSPs, including the Big Four accounting firms (Deloitte, PwC, EY, and KPMG), have increasingly encroached on the legal space, leveraging their extensive client networks and multidisciplinary approaches. They offer services like contract management, compliance, and legal process outsourcing, capitalising on technological innovations and cost efficiencies (Bennett *et al.*, 2013). Their presence is growing, particularly in the commoditized segments of legal work, forcing traditional firms to innovate and streamline their operations. Technological advancements, particularly in legal tech, are reshaping the industry (Brooks *et al.*, 2020). Automation, artificial intelligence, and blockchain are transforming tasks such as document review, legal research, and contract analysis. Law firms adopting these technologies gain competitive advantages through enhanced efficiency, accuracy, and reduced costs. Client expectations have also evolved, with greater emphasis

on value, transparency, and flexible billing arrangements (Charles-Jr. et al., 2017). Clients increasingly demand more for less, pushing firms to adopt more client-centric approaches and innovative solutions.

Organization Analysis of Gowling WLG: TOWS and MCKINSEY 7S' Model

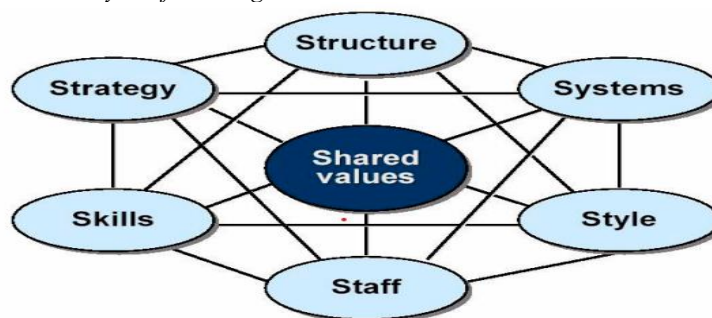


Figure 3: Dimension of 7S's McKinsey Framework (Demir & Kocaoglu, 2019)

According to Demir and Kocaoglu, (2019), using the SWOT/TOWS and McKinsey 7S frameworks is effective for identifying Gowling's internal strengths. These methods provide a comprehensive view of the company's structure and illustrate how its strengths and weaknesses evolve over time. The McKinsey 7S model, introduced by Waterman and Peters in 1982, posits that an organisation's success hinges on the harmonious interaction of nine internal factors (Alshaher, 2013). This model integrates tangible elements like strategy, structure, and processes with intangible ones such as shared values, skills, style, and staff, forming a comprehensive framework for assessing and enhancing organisational effectiveness. Management can easily define and control the hard elements, but identifying the soft elements, deeply rooted in culture, presents a greater challenge (Hanafizadeh & Ravasan, 2011). Nonetheless, all components are crucial and must function cohesively to optimise the organisation's performance.

Gowling's strategy emphasises global alignment, prioritising client needs by matching them with opportunities and striving for their success (Gowling, 2021). Key pillars of this strategy include providing a unique client experience, employing outstanding staff, and fostering innovation (Figure 7). Community engagement through philanthropy and direct sales and marketing enhances the firm's global image and provides a competitive edge. Strengths include community involvement, event sponsorship, and charitable support, which enhance service quality and foster crucial customer relationships (North & Young, 2013). However, an overemphasis on local exposure could undermine global alignment, requiring a balanced approach (Mountain, 2007). The departure of Derek Southall, Head of Innovation and Digital, raises concerns about continuity and leadership in strategic projects. The success of the transition depends on the effective integration of new businesses (Gowling, 2021). Gowling operates across various industries, including energy, financial services, life sciences, natural resources, infrastructure, real estate, and technology (Silver, 2015).

Gowling closely aligns its organisational structure with its systems, structuring each business area hierarchically based on the products it manages, and operating under the Gowling WLG name. This structure effectively allocates costs and income, providing the organisation with strong control over project decisions that align with its objectives (Harris et al., 2019). The company fosters collaboration and ongoing professional development among its employees, emphasising its purpose and enabling it to quickly adapt to market changes with its large full-time workforce and low fixed costs, which contribute to profitability even at low sales levels (Gowling, 2021). However, there are criticisms of the hierarchical management style, suggesting that it may hinder collaboration and limit participation in decision-making processes, potentially impeding creativity and flexibility. Thus, finding the right balance between control and flexibility is crucial for long-term success.

Gowling has implemented informal procedures to align with its overarching strategy, prioritising the recruitment of individuals with a "culture-first" mentality (Gowling, 2023). Rather than following conventional approaches, the company's hiring process involves extensive interaction with candidates to gauge their enthusiasm for business prospects and their dedication to a community-focused ethos. Gowling's commitment to diversity and inclusion exemplifies this approach, acknowledging that a diverse talent pool is crucial for delivering optimal service and fostering future development (Bernstein et al., 2020). This dedication is evident in initiatives such as Contest Creator, an online application that simplifies access to legal services (Gowling, 2016). Leveraging its expertise in client solutions, Gowling extends its reach through platforms like PartnerVine, allowing businesses to tap into the knowledge of a global law firm. However, the reliance on informal methods presents challenges in maintaining consistency and formality, particularly given the company's diverse range of operations in sectors such as technology, energy, financial services, life sciences, natural resources, infrastructure, real estate, and natural resources. This underscores the importance of having a well-coordinated approach across various locations (He et al., 2020). Gowling's distinctive style stems from its shared ideals, fostered through collaborative work. The company builds consensus on its goals through Fennell's distributed leadership, promoting a culture of continuous learning and improvement (Gowling, 2021). The Mackintosh leadership program exemplifies this approach by facilitating knowledge sharing on risk management among staff and improving collaboration among lawyers, energy distributors, and retailers. This sharing of insights also benefits the sales and marketing teams, enabling them to better understand customer preferences and improve their effectiveness (Alzoubi & Yanamandra, 2020). The two-way flow of information allows Gowling to adapt to market changes, showcasing its strength in shared values, an open work environment, and Fennell's leadership in fostering ongoing improvement. The Mackintosh initiative serves as a model for sharing knowledge and enhancing business data utilization. Cho, Stefanone, and Gay (2023) caution that failure to maintain this collaborative spirit could lead to weaknesses and hinder the company's ability

to adapt. Therefore, focusing on and amplifying these strengths while addressing any potential weaknesses will enhance Gowling's resilience in an ever-evolving market.

Table 1: Gowling TOWS Analysis

Element	Index	Justification
Threat (T)	i. Cybersecurity risks	i UK recorded a GDP growth rate of 7.6%, less than the inflation rate of 11.1% in 2022 (O'Neill, 2023)
	ii Scarcity of skillful staffs in R&D units	
	iii Inflation rate	ii UK noted persistent issues like declining productivity, a structural skill gap, and management quality (Clark, 2023)
	iv Economic uncertainties	
	v Geopolitical instability	
	vi Risk of stifled competition due to rivalry.	
Opportunity (O)	i Increased attention to sustainability and environmental protection	i Legal service experienced high volatility that demands greater competitive technology (Li <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
	ii Increased in foreign direct investment (FDI) among investors	ii Globalization gains widespread amidst greater innovation from firms (Keohane, & Nye, 2020).
	iii Increased legal service due perceived rise in child poverty and mortality issues	
Strength (S)	i Global brand reputation	i Diverse workforce of over 1,500 skilled professionals with a strong background in technology (Gowling, 2021)
	ii Human-centric organizational structure	
	iii Team collaboration, workable environment and direct channel of communication	ii Diversification through sector expansion, industry knowledge and adaptability (Gowling, 2023)
	iv Technology-based client solutions	iii Contest creator with diverse legal review process that encourage better scrutiny (Gowling, 2021).
	v Staff proficiency of industry knowledge	
	vi Diverse workforce capabilities and professional skepticism	
Weakness (W)	i Transition in leadership structure	i The departure of Derek Southall, the Head of Innovation and Digital, to pursue a new innovation venture, raises concerns regarding the continuity and leadership of strategic projects (Gowling, 2021)
	ii Diverse hierarchy and employee resistance towards innovation and adaptability	
	iii Sectoral constraints in workforce diversity due varied locations	ii Intense competition from tech-focused firms such as Global DLA Piper, Cleary Gottlieb, and Green Point is driving greater tech innovation in the legal industry (CBInsight, 2023).
	iv The need for careful orchestration in technology adoption.	

Source: Author, (2024)

Gowling has successfully navigated a challenging business landscape by prioritising community engagement and leveraging its skilled, diverse, and knowledgeable workforce (Gowling, 2021). Cohesive teamwork ensures effective task completion and smooth operations. The company's overarching objective is to "make simple moments worthwhile," underscoring its belief in the pivotal role of people in driving value (Gowling, 2014). This people-centric approach is evident in daily decision-making processes, including business expansion, risk management, innovation, and promotional strategies, where employees actively participate. The organisation's distinct identity is bolstered by passionate employees, fostering a vibrant and unified corporate culture (Prakash et al., 2020). Mackintosh, a business counsel, concurs with Gowling's emphasis on finding joy in daily

work, aligning with its commitment to fostering a positive and fulfilling work environment. Leveraging its profound sectoral expertise, Gowling deeply understands its clients' businesses, aiding in their success (Gowling, 2021). With a global team exceeding 1,500 lawyers and dedicated business support staff, Gowling is well-positioned to deliver exceptional service to its clients. Consequently, Gowling has consistently expressed its commitment to leveraging information technology (IT) to enhance its operations, aiming to digitalize its supply chain methods and information systems (Financial Times, 2023). Despite being renowned experts in their field with exceptional skills, Gowling's focus on IT is evident in its efforts to enable important decisions and relevant information to be accessible online, fostering an informal peer review system for the organisation's official decisions (He, Zhang, & Li, 2021). For instance, Gowling initiated a tech programme in the UK to assess the proficiency of its lawyers and staff in using technology and digital tools, demonstrating its expertise in both law and technology (Gowling, 2021). Derek Southall, Gowling's head of digital information and law systematics, emphasised that the programme's primary objective is to explore ways for the company to enhance its use of technology (Gowling, 2021). This proactive approach reflects Gowling's understanding of the evolving business landscape and its commitment to leveraging technology to enhance organisational efficiency (Ghadge et al., 2020).

Gowling has a strong track record of success and values hard work, emphasising honesty and high moral standards (Gowling, 2021). Their organized system actively encourages community involvement through donations and educational programs. Despite some past issues, the company's commitment to change and innovation has earned stakeholder trust. Core values such as "the power of teamwork, always striving to be better, and we all bring something different" (Gowling, 2023) facilitate collaboration across diverse fields for better client outcomes. Gowling consistently strives to enhance its services and internal processes to sustain a competitive advantage. Their emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and innovation has positioned them as a top employer (Gowling, 2021), demonstrating their value from different perspectives (Askari et al., 2020). However, as Table 1 illustrates, Gowling must strategically address environmental issues such as cybersecurity risks, the shortage of skilled staff in R&D units, and economic uncertainties, which pose significant threats. Geopolitical instability and the risk of stifled competition due to rivalry compound these issues, potentially impeding the growth and stability of the organisation. Contrarily, the organization has identified opportunities, including increased attention to sustainability, foreign direct investment, and legal services, due to perceived rises in child poverty and mortality issues. Thus, the organisation's strengths lie in its global brand reputation, human-centric organisational structure, and technology-based client solutions. These strengths, coupled with a diverse workforce and proficient industry knowledge, position the organisation well to capitalise on emerging opportunities. However, the analysis also identifies some weaknesses, including a shift in the leadership structure and employee resistance to innovation, that require attention to guarantee sustainable growth and competitiveness. Overall, the TOWS analysis provides valuable insights that can guide strategic decision-making and help the organisation navigate challenges while leveraging its strengths to achieve its goals.

Megatrend Analysis of Asia Technology Hub and Africa Powerhouse: Japan vs Nigeria

Japan, with a per capita income of \$43,000, ranks as the fourth-largest importer of U.S. goods and stands third globally in technological advancement and innovation, making it an appealing market (O'Neill, 2023; Statista, 2023). The U.S.-Japan alliance has notably supported growth in the aerospace, defence, and cybersecurity sectors, despite challenges like an ageing population. While Japan is renowned for its fishing industry, its low 3% unemployment rate sharply contrasts with its robust \$4.23 trillion economy in 2023, according to Figure 9 (O'Neill, 2023; Statista, 2023). However, entering Japan's legal market is challenging due to local distribution channels favouring established ties, non-tariff barriers, and complex regulations (Tanase, 2017; Prause, 2019). In contrast, the US legal services sector benefits from regulatory favoritism, with licensing primarily controlled by industry groups and lacking sufficient oversight (International Trade Association, 2022). Overcoming language and cultural barriers is crucial, necessitating fluency in Japanese for effective communication. Established local companies hold significant power, requiring new entrants to invest in building trust and reputation. To navigate these challenges, a thorough market feasibility study, strategic planning, and a dedicated approach to understanding Japan's distinct business and legal landscape are essential (Milhaupt & Pistor, 2019). Japan's legal market has emerged as a pivotal player in Asia's tech landscape, driven by innovative tech firms, strong legal frameworks, and increasing demand for tech-focused legal services. Tokyo, serving as its nucleus, has positioned Japan as a leading tech hub in Asia, enticing both local and international tech companies with its advanced infrastructure and skilled workforce. Central to Japan's tech ascension is its robust legal system, which safeguards intellectual property rights and fosters innovation. The data from the Japan Patent Office demonstrates a consistent increase in patent applications, surpassing 330,000 in 2020, with a significant contribution from the tech sector. Moreover, Japan's legal market has experienced a surge in demand for services tailored to tech companies' needs, particularly in data protection, cybersecurity, and regulatory compliance, with a reported 20% increase in demand over the past five years, according to the Japan Federation of Bar Associations. This reflects the evolving tech landscape in Japan, further solidifying its status as a tech powerhouse in Asia.

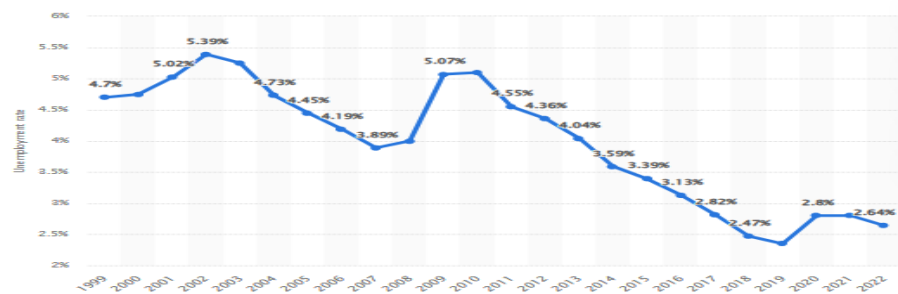


Figure 4: Japan Unemployment Rate (O'Neill, 2023)

With a population exceeding 200 million, Nigeria boasts Africa's largest economy, characterised by a diverse landscape of state and private enterprises (Jackson, 2019). In 2022, the country experienced 3.11% year-over-year growth, propelling its GDP to \$477 billion (International Trade Administration, 2021). Nigeria is a key player in the global crude oil market, deriving 90% of its export revenue from mining fuels, oils, and distillation products. The economy is segmented into official and informal sectors, with the latter comprising 65% of the overall economy. Noteworthy is the significant 16.2% contribution of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector to the economy in Q3 2022. Services constitute 52% of the GDP. However, the country faces challenges, including a high urban inflation rate of 17% and a notable increase in the Consumer Price Index in rural areas in 2021, highlighting issues in its legal business environment (O'Neill, 2023b). Unemployment, projected to reach 27% in 2020, particularly impacts the southeast states, exacerbating economic disparities. Widespread cheating and unfair practices undermine business competitiveness, compounded by difficulties in accessing foreign currency for imports and debt repayment (International Trade Administration, 2021). Nigeria also struggles to enforce intellectual property rights and address violent crime, insurgency, and oil theft, necessitating the formulation of intellectual property regulations. Despite these challenges, the government remains committed to enhancing infrastructure and welfare for its citizens (Sasu, 2022). For over a decade now, Nigeria's legal market has been a dominant force in Africa due to its substantial size, intricacy, and growth potential. With a population exceeding 200 million, Nigeria boasts Africa's largest economy and serves as a pivotal point for legal services, both domestically and internationally. The country's legal sector is vibrant and multifaceted, reflecting its diverse legal framework encompassing common law, customary law, and Islamic law systems. Statistical data confirms Nigeria's status as a legal powerhouse in Africa. According to the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Nigeria is home to over 120,000 registered lawyers, representing one of the continent's largest legal professions. This sizable legal workforce is a testament to Nigeria's robust legal education system, which includes prestigious law schools and universities that provide high-quality legal education. Additionally, Nigeria's legal market significantly contributes to the country's economy, with legal services playing a substantial role in the GDP. The legal market also attracts foreign investment, with many multinational corporations seeking legal counsel in Nigeria. Nigeria has made notable progress in improving its business environment, including legal system reforms, as recognised by the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report. However, challenges such as judicial independence, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure persist, necessitating reforms to fortify the legal system and enhance access to justice for all Nigerians.

Entrance Approaches in Emerging Economies: Strategic Recommendation and Implication in Nigeria and Japan

Wach, (2014) highlights that Gowling has the opportunity to expand into new markets through various strategies, leveraging its custom legal services to assist clients in navigating complex regulatory environments and accessing global business opportunities. The study primarily focuses on strategic alliances, joint ventures, mergers, and acquisitions as key strategies for market entry, noting their widespread use and strategic significance in the

global legal services market. This strategic approach aligns with Gowling's capabilities and offers strategic value in expanding its market presence and enhancing its service offerings. A legal strategic partnership, often referred to as a joint venture, entails two or more law firms collaborating to deliver specific legal services while sharing resources, risks, profits, and losses (Azis et al., 202). This approach, as observed in Gowling's expansion into the legal markets of Japan and Nigeria, holds significant strategic implications. Such partnerships enhance a firm's market presence by granting access to new territories and clientele, transcending conventional boundaries (Nippa & Reuer, 2019). This strategic move signifies Gowling's commitment to resource and knowledge sharing, facilitating access to a broader client base across various sectors, mitigating risks associated with specific markets, and enhancing service delivery (Uzoma, Pius, & Ifeoma, 2019). The collaborative model fosters innovation and positions the company as a comprehensive solution provider, crucial in an era where legal challenges span diverse fields. However, successful collaboration requires addressing challenges such as cultural disparities, conflicts of interest, and the need for robust governance structures (Lamba, Dhir, & Ongsakul, 2022). A thorough evaluation is imperative to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of the partnership, ensuring it bolsters Gowling's competitive advantage without compromising its core competencies.

Law firms are increasingly merging to adapt to evolving client demands and the global legal market. According to Malik et al., (2014), a merger represents a strategic alliance where two or more law firms collaborate while retaining autonomy. This trend impacts operational efficiency and global reach. Operational synergies in resources, technology, and expertise result in enhanced service delivery and operational efficiency (Chand, 2009). Although mergers stimulate innovation and broaden service portfolios, ensuring smooth collaboration among diverse cultures is crucial. Mergers also enhance customer service by meeting the growing demand for comprehensive legal solutions (Krishnakumar & Sethi, 2012), offering clients a single source for various needs. However, maintaining personalised service and agility can be challenging. Mergers enable law firms to navigate complex legal frameworks in countries like Nigeria and Japan (Edi & Lestari, 2023) by leveraging a broader network of international clients. Achieving consistency in legal practices across jurisdictions requires a delicate balance between uniformity and leveraging local expertise. Gowling aims to enhance its market presence, expand its service offerings, and grow its client base in Japan through strategic acquisitions of reputable law firms (Meyer et al., 2009). By leveraging these acquisitions, Gowling intends to position itself as a market leader by amalgamating legal expertise and resources to offer a comprehensive array of services. This strategy not only enhances its competitiveness but also fortifies its foothold in various legal domains, enabling it to penetrate new markets globally (Tien & Ngoc, 2019). The geographical diversity that results from these acquisitions serves as a buffer against economic fluctuations, enhancing overall resilience. Furthermore, acquiring other law firms facilitates the acquisition of new clients, fostering trust and loyalty. The ability to cross-sell a broader range of services is a significant revenue driver for the company (Kumar et al., 2020). However, the success of these acquisitions hinges on effective merger strategies that

encompass factors such as cultural alignment, seamless technology integration, and streamlined operational processes (Zampirolli-Dias et al., 2020).

According to Wach, (2014), there is no one-size-fits-all strategy for market entry. In light of this, the research recommends considering strategic alliances and joint ventures with both Japanese and Nigerian companies as a means to mitigate risks, leverage management expertise, and ensure an equitable distribution of ownership and control. This approach finds support in Yarrow and Decker (2012), indicating that forming a joint partnership is a prudent response to the challenges of globalisation (Nippa & Reuer, 2019). Collaborating with local legal firms also emerges as a crucial step to assess potential risks and liabilities, particularly in countries like Nigeria and Japan where legal frameworks are evolving. This collaborative approach not only enhances understanding of local business environments but also reduces the likelihood of unforeseen complications, thus safeguarding the company's business and financial objectives (Debellis et al., 2021). In today's global business environment, effective management is crucial, and joint ventures represent a strategic approach to leverage the expertise of local partners (Tien and Ngoc, 2019). Collaborating allows companies to gain valuable insights into local legal systems, cultures, and business practices in countries like Nigeria and Japan. This knowledge is essential for navigating complex legal issues, understanding client needs, and tailoring services to local markets. Joint ventures enable firms like Gowling to strike a balance between retaining control and sharing ownership with local partners (Qi et al., 2020), as they do not involve complete buyouts. This approach aligns with the company's global strategy while allowing for necessary adjustments to suit local conditions (Zampirolli-Dias et al., 2020), enabling informed decision-making, market adaptation, and establishing a strong presence in both countries while maintaining overall control (Tien et al., 2020). Given the stringent legal frameworks in Nigeria and Japan, entering their legal service markets through strategic partnerships or joint ventures is a prudent strategy that mitigates risk while maintaining a level of control (Beamish & Chakravarty, 2021).

Strategic alliances and joint ventures are valuable tools for companies seeking to expand their operations, access new markets, and leverage complementary capabilities. However, these partnerships come with inherent limitations, particularly when dealing with legal matters in Japan and Nigeria. In Japan, cultural and business practice differences can hinder effective collaboration. Japanese companies prioritise long-term relationships and consensus decision-making, which can be challenging for foreign partners accustomed to more direct and individualistic approaches. This difference in communication styles and decision-making processes can lead to misunderstandings and delays in strategic decision-making (Nippa & Reuer, 2019). Additionally, the complexity of Japanese legal and regulatory frameworks can result in additional cost burdens. The intricacies of Japanese law, particularly in areas such as intellectual property rights, antitrust regulations, and labour laws, can be difficult for foreign companies to navigate, increasing the cost and time

required to establish and maintain a successful alliance or joint venture. In Nigeria, similar challenges exist, but with some unique aspects. The legal system in Nigeria is known for its complexity, inconsistency, and inefficiency, which can create challenges for companies entering into strategic alliances or joint ventures. Legal disputes can be prolonged and costly, leading to potential damage to the partnership (Zampirolli-Dias *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, Nigeria's business environment is characterised by political instability, corruption, and security challenges, which can pose significant risks to companies entering into partnerships in the country. These factors can impact the success and sustainability of strategic alliances and joint ventures, requiring careful consideration and risk management strategies (Debellis *et al.*, 2021). Thus, while strategic alliances and joint ventures offer significant benefits, Gowling WLG must be aware of the cultural, legal, and regulatory challenges that can impact the success of these collaborations. Effective communication, thorough legal due diligence, and risk management strategies are essential to overcoming these limitations and maximising the potential benefits of such partnerships.

Consequently, by comparing Japan and Nigeria as potential markets for entrance, strategic factors make the Japanese legal market more preferable for Gowling WLG. Japan boasts a more developed legal system compared to Nigeria (Statista, 2022). Japan's legal framework is well-established, transparent, and predictable, providing a stable environment for legal operations. In contrast, Nigeria's legal system is plagued by corruption, inefficiency, and inconsistencies in the application of laws, which can pose sustainability risks to businesses operating in the country. Secondly, Japan's economy is more stable and diversified compared to Nigeria's economy (Statista, 2023). Japan is a highly industrialised nation with a strong focus on technology and innovation, offering a wide range of opportunities for legal services in areas such as intellectual property, corporate law, and international trade. Alternatively, Nigeria's economy is heavily dependent on oil and vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices, making it less attractive for long-term investment. Furthermore, Japan has a more favourable regulatory environment for foreign businesses compared to Nigeria (Thomson-Reuters, 2023). Japan has implemented various reforms to attract foreign investment, including simplifying regulations, improving infrastructure, and offering incentives to foreign companies. In contrast, Nigeria's regulatory environment is characterised by bureaucratic red tape, complex regulations, and inconsistent enforcement, making it challenging for foreign businesses to operate efficiently. Thus, the Japanese legal market offers Gowling WLG a more stable, predictable, and lucrative environment compared to Nigeria. Gowling WLG can develop a sustainable competitive advantage by entering the Japanese market, leveraging its expertise in legal services to tap into Japan's thriving economy and business environment.

Gowling Implementation Plan in Japan: SAFE Model

According to Figure 5, the SAFE Model provides a comprehensive framework for analysing the market's suitability, acceptability, and feasibility, making it an ideal approach to

understanding Japan's appeal. This model offers insights into the country's strategic, market, and operational prospects, enabling informed decision-making for improved market growth (Georgise & Mindaye, 2020). It considers the suitability of Japan's market conditions, the acceptability of its products or services, and the feasibility of operating within the country. By leveraging the SAFE Model, businesses can gain a holistic understanding of Japan's market dynamics and develop strategies that align with its unique opportunities and challenges, ultimately leading to more effective market growth strategies.

Suitability (S): Japan's robust national income of \$32,481 million annually underpins its ongoing legal sector reforms, signalling financial stability and potentially heightened demand for legal services (Miyakoshi, Shimada, & Li, 2023). The nation's political stability further enhances its appeal for foreign businesses, fostering a conducive environment for legal activities. With low tariffs of around 1.8%, trade flows smoothly, supported by a flourishing e-commerce market projected to reach \$128.3 billion in 2021, driven by a high internet usage rate exceeding 90% (Bologna, 2022). Japan's stable consumer economy and high per capita income of \$43,000 indicate a need for legal assistance in various economic spheres. As the third-largest global technology hub and the fourth-largest importer of U.S. goods, Japan plays a pivotal role in Gowling's strategic outlook, with economic integration and alliances presenting opportunities in defence, aerospace, and security (ITA, 2022). Despite its ageing population, Japan remains a significant consumer of U.S. goods, highlighting prospects for legal services in defence procurement, advanced manufacturing, and cybersecurity (Lieser & Peter, 2011). Notably, Japan's strong legal system and robust security for intellectual and real property rights make it an attractive destination for legal services (Figure 5).

Acceptability (A): Identifying and managing stakeholders is crucial for the success of any project, as their power and interests can significantly impact the outcomes. The Mendelow Power/Interest Matrix is a valuable tool for categorising stakeholders based on their level of power and concern (Ilinova et al., 2018). This categorization aids in aligning the interests of various stakeholders, thereby promoting collaboration and cooperation. By understanding the dynamics of stakeholder relationships, organisations can better manage their expectations and engage them effectively in the project. According to Ilinova, Cherepovitsyn, and Evseeva (2018), this approach enhances the effectiveness of entrance efforts by ensuring that stakeholders' diverse interests are considered and integrated into the project's strategy. Gowling's planned entrance into Japan requires the involvement of several important stakeholders. According to Maqbool, Rashid, and Ashfaq (2022), Mendelow's Power/Interest Matrix highlights that skilled staff members are initially considered high-power and high-interest partners within a company. This is due to their critical role in the company's growth and their capacity to shape its operations. Employees hold power because of their skills, knowledge, and daily contributions to the company's work. Their strong interest stems from a desire to secure their jobs, advance their careers, and work in a

favourable environment. To garner support, Gowling should prioritise open communication, implement programmes to facilitate collaboration among people from diverse cultures, and offer competitive advantages. By recognising and addressing employee concerns, the company can align their objectives with strategic initiatives, thereby facilitating a smoother transition into the Japanese market.

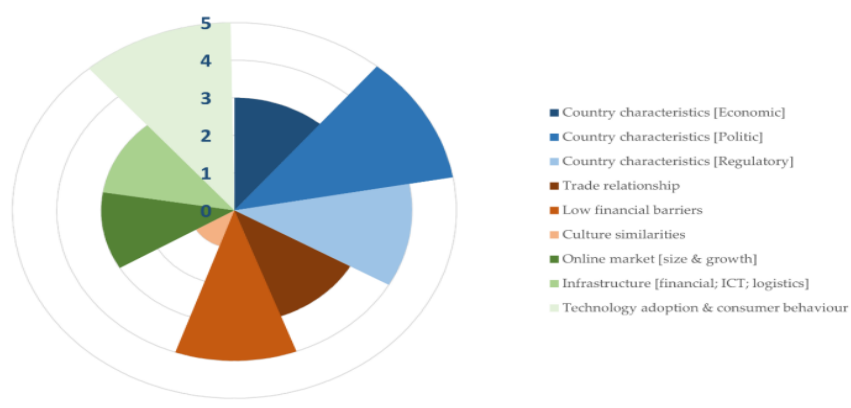


Figure 5: Japan Market Attractiveness (Bologna, 2022)

Mendelow's Power/Interest Matrix places the client in the upper right quadrant as a significant partner with high power and medium interest. This is because clients directly impact the firm's finances, making meeting their standards crucial (Gregory, 2007). Their high level of interest indicates a keen curiosity in Gowling's strategy outcomes. Clients' relevance stems from their financial contributions and potential for long-term partnerships. Aligning services with client needs, ensuring legal services meet market demands, and offering clear, customised solutions can enhance client loyalty (Gregory, 2007). Owners, on the other hand, are critical, holding both significant power and interest in the business. Shareholders wield substantial power by owning a portion of the company, enabling them to influence crucial decisions and demand transparency (Sapapthai, 2020). The potential impact on investments and the company's financial performance drives their deep interest. Shareholders' ability to support or hinder the Japan expansion plan underscores their importance. Successful implementation could lead to increased dividends or share value, aligning with their financial interests. Conversely, strategic decisions that harm profits or fail to meet standards may lead to disputes (Lakkala, 2020). Ensuring effective communication and addressing concerns can foster shareholder buy-in, facilitate the smooth execution of Gowling's Japan plan, and enhance shareholder value.

Mendelow's Power/Interest Matrix categorizes the local community as having low power but medium interest in Gowling's entry into Japan (Muthotho, Otsiulah, & Sikolia, 2021). Although the community may not wield direct decision-making power, their strong interest

in the social and economic implications of Gowling's arrival makes them influential in shaping public opinion, government actions, and local sentiment. Maintaining a positive relationship with the community is crucial for Gowling to navigate cultural differences and evolving regulations (Pidgeon & Dawood, 2021). The community's acceptance hinges on Gowling's alignment with their values, potential job creation, and contributions to community development. Conversely, resistance could stem from perceived environmental negligence or cultural insensitivity. To successfully enter the Japanese market and garner community support, Gowling must demonstrate proactive engagement and a commitment to social responsibility. Additionally, the government holds a moderate level of power and a high level of interest in Gowling's proposed entry into Japan (Trencher, Taihigh, & Yarime, 2020). Given the government's authority over market entry, regulations, and foreign investments, they are a key partner for Gowling. While the government can influence policies impacting Gowling's operations, they are keen on foreign investments as a means to boost the economy and create jobs. To align with government objectives, Gowling should consider forming partnerships with local businesses to stimulate economic growth and demonstrate support for local development (Tashiro & Shaw, 2020). Adherence to Japanese laws and regulations is crucial to facilitate cooperation with the government and mitigate opposition to Gowling's market entry strategy. By aligning with the government's objectives, Gowling can establish a favourable legal environment for a successful market entry.

Feasibility (Fe): Gowling WLG's potential expansion into the Japanese legal market appears promising due to the increasing global demand for legal services and Japan's robust economy, particularly in advanced technology sectors (Mourtzis, Angelopoulos, & Panopoulos, 2022). Japan's inclination towards innovative ideas aligns with Gowling WLG's expertise in intellectual property protection and adherence to regulations, which are crucial in a tech-oriented market (Sasaki et al., 2020). However, challenges such as regional disparities and diverse regulations necessitate effective communication and a deep understanding of local laws. The presence of well-established Japanese legal firms further complicates market entry. To overcome these hurdles, collaboration with Japanese specialists and consideration of geopolitical factors, trade dynamics, and potential legal or political changes are crucial (Ogunmakinde, 2019). Extensive market research, strategic partnerships, and a thorough understanding of Japanese law are essential to mitigate these risks and ensure a successful entry into Japan. As a result, Table 3 shows that Gowling is resourceful enough to enter the Japanese legal market by leveraging its extensive experience in catering to the legal needs of Japanese clients in Canada and the UK. The firm boasts a team of experienced lawyers, some of whom are native Japanese speakers, offering a significant advantage in understanding Japanese business intricacies (Gowling, 2023). Operating in Japan on a daily basis allows them to cultivate relationships and gain a deeper insight into clients' challenges and business objectives. Gowling's specialisation in intellectual property aligns with the high value Japanese companies place on these assets,

indicating a strategic fit with market demands (Japan Intercultural Consulting, 2012). The firm's track record in global M&A, particularly in mid-market transactions, demonstrates its proficiency in handling cross-border deals, crucial for Japanese companies eyeing international expansion. However, potential challenges include the dynamic nature of Japanese law and the paramount importance of personal connections in Japanese business culture (Trencher et al., 2020).

Table 2: VIRO Analysis of Gowling Resource Based View

Generic Resources	Capabilities and	To determine the capability or the resource				Organized	Competitive Implications
		Value	Rare	Inimitable			
Legal Expertise in Japanese Law		High	High	High	High	Sustainable	
Native Japanese-speaking Lawyers		High	High	High	High	Sustainable	
In-depth Understanding of Japanese Business Culture		High	High	High	High	Sustainable	
Global M&A Practice		Low	High	Low	Low	Temporary	
Intellectual Property Services and Litigation		High	High	Low	Low	Temporary	
Transfer Pricing Expertise		High	High	Low	Low	Temporary	
Regulatory Compliance Knowledge		High	Low	Low	High	Short-term Advantage	
Established Relationships with Japanese Companies		High	High	High	High	Sustainable	
Mid-Market M&A Experience		High	High	High	High	Sustainable	
Global Tax Planning Knowledge		High	Low	Low	High	Temporary	

Source: Author, (2024)

Financial Plans for Gowling Entrance in Japan: Gantt Chart and Budgeting Model

Gowling Entrance's financial plans in Japan are critical for their projects' successful implementation. The use of Gantt charts and budgeting models plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective management and allocation of resources. Gantt charts are visual tools that outline the project schedule, highlighting key milestones and tasks over time. This provides a clear timeline for project completion, allowing for better coordination and planning. In the context of Gowling entrance, Gantt charts are used to project the activities needed for successful projects' implementation, ensuring that they are completed on time and within budget. By identifying dependencies and critical paths, Gantt charts help in mitigating risks and optimising resource utilization. Budgeting models, on the other hand, are essential for financial planning and control. It assists in estimating the costs associated with various project activities, allowing for resource allocation based on priority and feasibility. Thus, a comprehensive budgeting model helps identify potential cost overruns and implement cost-saving measures. It also facilitates better decision-making by providing insights into the financial viability of various projects. Figure 6 outlines the essential activities and time required for Gowling to potentially enter the Japanese legal market. This plan is crucial for understanding the strategic steps and their corresponding timelines.

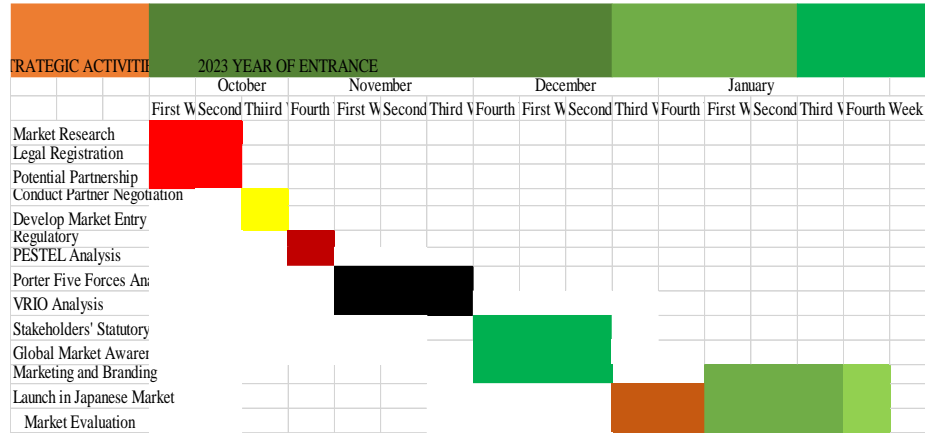


Figure 6: Gowling Gantt chart (Author, 2024)

Meanwhile, Figure 7 details the budget allocation necessary to cover the costs of these core activities. All budgetary figures are denominated in USD, reflecting the current international business standards. These figures are integral for financial planning and ensuring the feasibility of Gowling's expansion into Japan.

ACTIVITIES	Cost (\$'m)
	Cost (\$'000)
Market Research	100
Legal Registration	250
Potential Partnership	550
Conduct Partner Negotiation	10
Develop Market Entry	30
Regulatory	48
PESTEL Analysis	53
Porter Five Forces Analysis	32
VRIO Analysis	43
Stakeholders' Statutory	100
Global Market Awareness	1,000
Marketing and Branding	1,500
Launch in Japanese Market	1,500
Market Evaluation	1,700

Figure 7: Budget Estimate of Gowling Entrance in Japan (Author, 2024)

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Gowling operates in a dynamic UK legal sector influenced by political stability, economic conditions, technological advancements, and environmental concerns. Despite challenges like Brexit and terrorism, government stability facilitates international cooperation. The robust UK economy presents growth opportunities, though inflation and geopolitical uncertainties threaten stability. Evolving social norms create job opportunities in the legal field, yet restrictive immigration policies may hinder growth. Gowling's strengths include global recognition, an efficient organisational structure, a collaborative environment, and advanced technology. However, the firm faces challenges with innovation and leadership

transitions. Opportunities lie in expanding the high-legal industry, offering sustainability-focused legal services, and strengthening ties with Japan. Threats include cybersecurity risks, economic instability, and competition. To mitigate these risks, a strategic alliance or joint venture emphasising risk management, cost-effectiveness, and local expertise is recommended. Future mergers or acquisitions should involve thorough research, clear partnership terms, and cultural integration. Entering the Japanese legal market, as outlined in the suggested Gantt chart and budget, will require collaboration with key stakeholders, navigating cultural differences, and addressing competition in line with Gowling's global strategy.

To successfully enter the Japanese legal market, Gowling must conduct thorough research, examining local laws, cultural differences, and competitors. Collaborating with local experts, lawyers, and cultural consultants is essential to understanding the unique aspects of the Japanese legal system. Additionally, forming partnerships with local law firms will help navigate the market's complex regulations and cultural nuances. This strategy ensures Gowling adopts a customised approach, reflecting cultural awareness and a profound understanding of the legal environment. Working with Japanese professionals who understand the specific requirements of local businesses can facilitate the provision of legal services tailored to the needs and preferences of Japanese clients, ensuring long-term success. Gowling should continuously adapt its services to regional demands while adhering to global standards. This client-centric approach makes the firm adaptable and responsive, fostering client satisfaction and loyalty in the Japanese legal market. To effectively navigate Japan's intricate legal system, Gowling should prioritise hiring and training Japanese lawyers well in advance of entering the market. Collaborating with local colleges and legal institutions is crucial for identifying top talent. Comprehensive training programmes should be implemented to ensure the local workforce is proficient in both Japanese and international legal standards. This strategic investment will enhance Gowling's reputation, efficiency, and ability to meet client needs, making the firm more competitive globally. Integrating technology can significantly boost operational productivity by streamlining legal processes and enhancing communication. Consequently, Gowling should focus on incorporating advanced legal tech solutions and communication tools to facilitate seamless interactions with clients and global teams, positioning the firm as modern and tech-savvy, and enhancing its global competitiveness.

The research implications of Gowling WLG's market entry strategies in Japan and Nigeria are complex and encompass various empirical and theoretical insights, managerial strategies, policy advocacy, and business practices. The research empirically demonstrates the need to tailor market entry strategies to the unique socio-economic and regulatory contexts of each country. In Japan, a developed economy with stringent regulations and high consumer expectations, Gowling WLG could benefit from joint ventures and strategic alliances with local firms to gain market insight and navigate regulatory complexities.

Conversely, Nigeria, an emerging market with a growing economy and more flexible regulatory frameworks, offers opportunities for direct investment and wholly owned subsidiaries. Theoretical implications suggest that Dunning's Eclectic Paradigm and Porter's Diamond Model can help understand these market dynamics and guide strategic decision-making. Dunning's model emphasizes the importance of ownership, location, and internalization advantages, which are relevant when comparing Japan's stable but competitive market with Nigeria's high-growth but volatile environment. From a managerial perspective, Gowling WLG needs flexible strategies to adapt to the diverse challenges and opportunities in Japan and Nigeria. In Japan, managers should focus on building long-term relationships with local stakeholders, investing in compliance, and providing quality assurance to meet high local standards. Additionally, a localization strategy aligned with Japanese cultural and business norms can enhance market penetration and acceptance. In Nigeria, managers should prioritise agility and responsiveness to local market conditions, including understanding informal business practices and leveraging lower regulatory barriers to establish a strong foothold. Investing in capacity-building and corporate social responsibility initiatives can also help to establish a positive brand image and foster community support. The research emphasises the importance of Gowling WLG engaging with policymakers in both Japan and Nigeria to influence favourable business environments. In Japan, advocating for policies that promote foreign investment and reduce regulatory burdens can enhance market entry and operational efficiency. Participation in industry associations and policy dialogues can help shape a more conducive business environment. In Nigeria, the focus should be on advocating for policies that stabilise the economic and political landscape, such as improving infrastructure, enhancing the rule of law, and combating corruption. Collaborating with local and international organisations to support policy reforms can create a more predictable and secure business environment, which is crucial for long-term investments. To develop a sustainable competitive advantage in Japan and Nigeria, Gowling WLG must adopt a differentiated approach tailored to each market's specific needs and opportunities. In Japan, leveraging technological innovations and high-quality service delivery can set Gowling WLG apart from local competitors. Forming strategic partnerships with local firms can also provide access to established networks and enhance credibility. In Nigeria, capitalising on rapid economic growth and increasing demand for legal services can drive business expansion. Offering cost-effective solutions and demonstrating a strong commitment to local community development can differentiate Gowling WLG from competitors. Additionally, developing a robust risk management framework to navigate the political and economic uncertainties in Nigeria is essential for maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage.

Despite the research's insightful findings, the study must acknowledge several perceived limitations. At first, access to reliable and up-to-date data is, particularly in Nigeria, limited. While Japan has a wealth of accessible business data and market research, Nigeria has gaps in data availability, reliability, and comprehensiveness. This discrepancy can lead to an

uneven analysis, in which conclusions drawn for Nigeria may be based on less robust data compared to Japan. Also, emerging markets are inherently volatile, with rapidly changing economic, political, and social landscapes. Both Japan and Nigeria experience different degrees and types of market fluctuations, but Nigeria's volatility tends to be more pronounced. This dynamism can limit the applicability of research findings over time, as strategies that are effective today may become obsolete due to unforeseen changes in the market environment. As a result, the findings of this comparative study may not be generalizable beyond the specific contexts of Japan and Nigeria. Each emerging economy has unique characteristics, and what works in these two countries may not necessarily be applicable in other emerging markets. This limitation impacts the broader applicability of the research insights for Gowling WLG's strategic decision-making in other regions. Finally, the choice of methodology, such as the data collection methods and analytical techniques, poses limitations. Qualitative approaches might provide deep insights but may lack the statistical rigour and generalizability of quantitative methods. Conversely, quantitative methods may overlook nuanced cultural and contextual factors that are critical for developing effective strategies in diverse markets. This may introduce biases based on the researcher's familiarity with each country's regulations. This can impact the depth and accuracy of the comparative analysis. Despite these limitations, the research contributes to the empirical and theoretical literature because of its scientific novelty.

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