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# The Role of the Top Management Team in the Professionalization of Moroccan Family Businesses: Governance and Strategic Decision-Making

**FARHANE Farah[1], HABBA Badr[2]**

[1,2]larego, Encg Marrakech, Cadi Ayyad University

**ABSTRACT**: In the face of socio-economic and technological changes, Moroccan family businesses encounter challenges in balancing professionalization with the preservation of family values (Strike and al, 2018). This study explores how the Top Management Team (TMT) utilizes discernment and intuition to support professionalization efforts, drawing on *familiness* and its influence on governance (Chrisman et al., 2012). The primary question addresses how these family-driven characteristics shape strategic decisions and management practices in response to contemporary transformations. The methodology adopts a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with TMT members of Moroccan family businesses. This method allows an in-depth understanding of the TMT's perception of their role in managing the tension between family values and modernization, as well as their use of intuition for decision-making in uncertain environments (Hodgkinson and al, 2009). The results show that discernment and intuition, deeply rooted in family values, enable leaders to adapt to present-day challenges. However, reluctance to externalize and formalize processes sometimes limits full professionalization (Kallmuenzer and al, 2018). The discussion reveals that intuition and discernment serve as complementary aspects to process formalization, supporting a hybrid governance model that balances tradition and innovation (De Massis and al., 2018).

**KEYWORDS:** Family businesses Governance, Top Management Team, decision-making process, professionalization.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The governance of family businesses is a central topic in organizational management, particularly within the context of emerging markets. It encompasses the structures, mechanisms, and processes established to guide and control the company, while considering the specific dynamics of family relationships. Family governance is characterized by the interaction between the economic objectives of the business and the traditional values of the family, creating unique challenges in decision-making, succession, and sustainability. Effective governance not only ensures the continuity of the business across generations but also addresses the growing demands for professionalization and competitiveness.

In today's economic landscape, family businesses play a fundamental role in economic development, particularly in emerging markets like Morocco. These organizations, deeply rooted in family traditions, face specific challenges related to professionalization while striving to preserve their heritage. Balancing professionalization with the continuity of family values is particularly complex for Moroccan family businesses, where socio-economic changes, technological advancements, and market transformations require constant adaptation and rigorous strategic decisions.

In this context of change, the governance of Moroccan family businesses emerges as a crucial lever to overcome these challenges. This research focuses on the role of the Top Management Team (TMT) in strategic decision-making processes, analyzing the influence of governance structures on these processes. The TMT, composed of senior executives such as general managers, financial directors, and human resources directors, is at the heart of the intersection between family heritage and the need for professionalization. Drawing on existing literature, this study examines how the specific characteristics of family governance shape strategic choices.

Researchers such as Chrisman et al. (2012) highlight that the specificities of family governance directly influence decision-making practices and management strategies. These studies emphasize the interaction between family values and governance structures while underlining the importance of effective governance in ensuring the sustainability and growth of family businesses.

To explore these themes, a qualitative methodology was adopted, based on semi-structured interviews with TMT members from various family businesses in Morocco. These interviews provided detailed insights into how leaders rely on governance structures

and family heritage to guide their decision-making processes. The results indicate that strong governance structures are essential to formalize processes, improve organizational efficiency, and adapt to market demands.

This study aims to enhance the understanding of the dynamics unique to Moroccan family businesses by highlighting how governance influences professionalization and strategic decision-making. Specifically, it analyzes the central role of the Top Management Team (TMT) in managing strategic processes, demonstrating how these leaders reconcile the demands of professionalization with family values. By examining the role of these structures and the TMT in business management, this research underscores the importance of integrating family values into modern management practices to strengthen the resilience and adaptability of businesses in an ever-changing environment.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Influence of Familiness on Decision-Making Process in Family Enterprises

The study of family businesses has sparked growing interest in management research, particularly concerning the internal dynamics that shape their functioning. A key concept emerging from this research is "familiness," which refers to the unique resources and capabilities of a family business resulting from the interaction between the family, its members, and the business itself (Habbershon & Williams, 1999). These distinctive characteristics influence not only decision-making processes but also the strategies adopted by family business leaders. This initial line of inquiry focuses on how familiness guides leaders in their strategic decisions, thereby enriching our understanding of their behavior as leaders.

The concept of familiness, as defined by Habbershon and Williams (1999), suggests that family businesses benefit from a set of intangible resources, such as trust, shared values, and interpersonal relationships, which shape their organizational culture. These elements play a crucial role in how leaders perceive and respond to strategic challenges. In this context, intuition, often regarded as a form of tacit knowledge, can be a useful tool for these leaders, though it is complemented by factual analyses and shared experiences.

Furthermore, the value placed on family resources, as highlighted by Chrisman et al. (2005a), creates an environment where discernment becomes an essential skill. Leaders must navigate a complex landscape where decisions affect not only the business but also family members. This interconnection reinforces the importance of thoughtful decision-making, allowing leaders to consider not only economic aspects but also the social and emotional implications of their choices. Thus, familiness, through its effects on interpersonal relationships and cultural expectations, shapes a framework conducive to balanced decisions.

Strategic decision-making in family businesses often stands out for its collaborative and consensual nature. Family dynamics can encourage leaders to seek diverse opinions and perspectives, thereby fostering a more holistic approach (Pieper & Klein, 2007). Indeed, when leaders incorporate family viewpoints into the decision-making process, they are often better positioned to anticipate the potential consequences of their actions, both for the business and family relationships. This anticipation is a skill developed over time through accumulated experiences within the family and the business.

Research on decision-making processes in family businesses shows that leaders often combine their intuition with rational evaluations to address complex situations. According to Weismeier-Sammer et al. (2013), strategic decisions in a family context involve emotional and affective elements that complement factual analyses. Familiness thus fosters an environment where a deep understanding of family relationships and traditions enriches strategic decisions.

Moreover, family values play a crucial role in how family business leaders perceive and approach strategic decisions. According to Zellweger et al. (2010), family involvement, essence, and identity are aspects that determine how family members interact with the business. Leaders who share common values with their families are more inclined to integrate these values into their decisions, creating alignment between the goals of the business and those of the family, thereby facilitating a more harmonious decision-making process.

The ability of leaders to navigate this complex landscape is also influenced by the emotional support they receive from their close ones. Interactions among family members can strengthen trust and openness, allowing leaders to express doubts and explore creative solutions. This emotional dimension enhances their ability to make informed choices, based not only on factual data but also on personal insights (Klein & Kellermanns, 2008). Thus, familiness, as an integrative concept, bridges the rational and emotional dimensions of decision-making.

The diversity of experiences and family backgrounds can also enrich the decision-making process, allowing leaders to explore varied perspectives. By integrating these differences into their decisions, family business leaders can develop a more nuanced approach that considers not only economic aspects but also the social and cultural dimensions influencing their organization.

In summary, familiness plays a predominant role in how family business leaders engage in strategic decision-making. By fostering an environment conducive to discernment, it enables leaders to navigate complex contexts where economic and family stakes are closely intertwined. Shared values, interpersonal relationships, and family dynamics enrich the decision-making process, thereby strengthening leaders' ability to anticipate the consequences of their choices.

**The Role of TMTs in Advancing Family Business Professionalization**

The professionalization of family businesses is a complex and essential process to ensure their sustainability and growth in a dynamic business environment (Polat, 2021). At the heart of this process is the Top Management Team (TMT), which plays a central role in structuring strategic decision-making and implementing modern management practices. The TMT ensures the establishment of effective governance mechanisms, thereby guaranteeing coherence between family objectives and market demands (Hiebl et al., 2013). This structured leadership enables the definition of clear strategic directions, fostering sustainable growth and adaptability of family businesses in response to evolving environments.

The notion of "familiness" is central to the dynamics of family businesses. It encompasses the resources, values, and relationships resulting from family interactions, thereby influencing decision-making processes. According to Sharma (2004), understanding this influence is essential to grasp how the TMT makes decisions. Family values shape not only strategic priorities but also create a reference framework for evaluating opportunities and threats. In this context, governance plays a key role in structuring these processes and ensuring alignment between family and strategic objectives.

Decisions made by the TMT in family businesses must consider complex factors, such as family dynamics, long-term strategic goals, and market realities. Professionalization, driven by the TMT, structures these decisions by integrating effective governance practices. It is the governance framework established by the TMT that formalizes these decisions, ensuring choices are aligned with family values while meeting market demands (Zellweger et al., 2010).

Governance holds a central place in the strategy development process within the TMT. By structuring decision-making processes, it ensures that strategic choices align with the long-term objectives of both the business and the family. The TMT, relying on adapted governance practices, can develop coherent strategies that align with family values. This governance framework guarantees not only growth but also the sustainability of the family business in an ever-evolving environment (Frank et al., 2017). Moreover, emotions play a significant role in social systems, and their management can influence the quality of decisions made by the TMT (Simon, 2004). The emotional culture of a management team, shaped by family values, affects members' ability to interact effectively and make informed decisions. A strong sense of "familiness" can alleviate emotional dissonance, fostering a harmonious and productive work environment (Barsade & Knight, 2015). Governance intervenes here by structuring the management of emotional dynamics, enabling the TMT to make balanced and thoughtful choices.

One of the key functions of the TMT in the professionalization process is establishing guidelines on critical issues such as intrafamily succession and the integration of non-family members into the business. By providing a clear decision-making framework, governance helps create a long-term vision for the company, essential in often volatile environments (Frank et al., 2017). Strategic foresight becomes essential to anticipate future challenges and define strategic directions that align with family values and market requirements.

A proactive TMT is essential for steering the professionalization process. The ability to anticipate and respond to market changes, stakeholder expectations, and internal dynamics is crucial for the sustainability of the family business. Governance, by encouraging innovation and continuous learning, stimulates creativity and flexibility within the organization. This not only enhances operational performance but also ensures better adaptation to future challenges.

The TMT plays a fundamental role in creating and maintaining an organizational culture conducive to professionalization. Family values must be harmonized with professional practices to ensure a successful transition to a more structured and formalized management approach. TMT members must ensure that the organizational culture aligns with the company's strategic objectives, creating an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to the company's success (Mustakallio et al., 2002). By integrating modern management practices while preserving family heritage, the TMT can strengthen the company's legitimacy and its attractiveness to external talent.

In conclusion, the TMT is at the heart of the professionalization of family businesses, guiding decision-making through a shared understanding of the principles established by "familiness." The analytical and evaluative capabilities of TMT members are essential elements that influence not only the direction and performance of the business but also the organizational culture and emotional dynamics within the team. Governance plays a key role in structuring these processes, ensuring the coherence and sustainability of family businesses in an ever-evolving environment.

## III. METHODOLOGY

In addressing the research question regarding the role of the Top Management Team (TMT) in the professionalization of Moroccan family businesses, we adopted an exploratory qualitative approach. This methodological choice was informed by the need to gain a nuanced understanding of how TMT members navigate the dual pressures of professionalization and the preservation of family values in the context of contemporary socio-economic and technological changes.

To achieve this, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 members of the TMT from various Moroccan family businesses (Details in table 1). The selection of participants was intentional, encompassing a diverse array of experiences, backgrounds, and generational perspectives within the family business sector. This diversity is essential for capturing the range of insights that exist within the unique landscape of Moroccan family enterprises, where each family's values, traditions, and business practices can significantly influence strategic decision-making.

The semi-structured interview format was specifically chosen to foster an open dialogue, allowing participants the freedom to articulate their thoughts and experiences while also providing a framework for addressing key research themes. We prepared a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses regarding their perceptions of the TMT's role in managing the balance between modernization and the preservation of family heritage. By utilizing this format, we aimed to create a conducive environment for TMT members to express their insights, share personal anecdotes, and reflect on the influences that shape their decision-making processes.

Interviews were conducted over a period spanning from August to December 2024, with each session lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. All discussions were recorded with the participants' consent and were subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy in capturing their insights. To maintain confidentiality and encourage candidness, all TMT members opted for anonymity, which we rigorously adhered to throughout the research process.

The decision to interview 15 TMT members was guided by the principle of theoretical saturation, as defined by Akyıldız and Ahmed (2021). Theoretical saturation is reached when additional interviews no longer yield new themes or insights, indicating that the data collected adequately represents the broader context.

For data analysis, we employed content analysis, a robust method commonly used in management sciences for interpreting qualitative data. As articulated by Silverman (2015), content analysis allows for a systematic examination of communication content, providing a framework for interpreting the underlying meanings and patterns within the data. In this study, we utilized thematic analysis to identify and analyze recurring themes and sub-themes related to professionalization. This approach enabled us to explore not only the role of discernment and intuition—qualities inherently tied to family values—but also how these characteristics shape strategic decisions in the face of contemporary challenges.

**Table 1: Sample of interviewed Top Management Team**

| Interviewer | Function | TMT Member Seniority | Enterprise Seniority |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Human resource director | 12 years | 35 years |
| **2** | Chief Financial Officer | 8 years | 23 years |
| **3** | General Manager | 15 years | 15 years |
| **4** | Sales Director | 7 years | 9 years |
| **5** | Marketing Director | 13 years | 20 years |
| **6** | Chief Financial Officer | 9 years | 12 years |
| **7** | Human resource director | 12 years | 17 years |
| **8** | Sales Director | 5 years | 10 years |
| **9** | General Manager | 10 years | 10 years |
| **10** | Chief Financial Officer | 6 years | 18 years |
| **11** | General Manager | 16 years | 16 years |
| **12** | Marketing Director | 8 years | 12 years |
| **13** | Human resource director | 7 years | 24 years |
| **14** | General Manager | 12 years | 12 years |
| **15** | Human resource director | 10 years | 14 years |

**Source :** Author

## IV. RESULTS DISCUSSIONS

### Axis 1: Balancing Professionalization and Family Values in Moroccan Family Businesses

In exploring the delicate balance between professionalization and the preservation of family values in Moroccan family businesses, the qualitative insights gathered from interviews with the Top Management Team (TMT) members reveal a nuanced understanding of how these elements interact within their organizational contexts (Details in Table 2). This discussion integrates the perceptions of the interviewed TMT members with relevant literature, highlighting the ongoing tension between modern management practices and familial traditions that characterize Moroccan enterprises.

**Table 2: Interview Excerpts on Professionalization and Family Values**

| Interviewer | Perception of professionnalization |
|---|---|
| **1** | In our company, we have always prioritized family values. However, I feel it is essential to adopt more professional practices to remain competitive. It's a real challenge to balance these two aspects |
| **2** | I believe that professionalization can bring a lot, but there is a fear that it means losing our family identity. We need to find a way to integrate both dimensions |
| **4** | It's true that more formal processes can help, but many of us fear that this could jeopardize our way of working as a family. Decisions must always reflect our values |
| **5** | There is a real dilemma. On one hand, we want to professionalize our operations, but on the other, we do not want this to destroy our family spirit that makes us unique |
| **6** | I think it is crucial to modernize our management, but I also understand the hesitations of others. Our family values are what unite us, and we must preserve them |
| **8** | It is hard to imagine a structure that is too rigid and not in line with our history. I believe a certain level of professionalization is necessary, but it should be done gradually |
| **9** | Introducing professional practices must be done with respect for our heritage. We need a balance; otherwise, it could cause divisions within the family |
| **11** | The family tradition is very strong here, and I often see management members hesitant to introduce changes. We always wonder if this will affect our values and relationships |
| **12** | Professionalization is not just about processes; it is also about values. We must be careful and ensure that any change respects our family culture |
| **13** | Every time I propose a new management system, I face resistance. People are attached to their traditional methods, and it's a constant struggle to instill a new culture |

**Source:** Author

One prevalent theme among the TMT members is the recognition of the importance of family values in guiding decision-making processes. For instance, Interviewee 5 (Marketing Director) expressed, "*Family values are at the core of everything we do. They shape our brand identity and influence how we engage with our customers*." This sentiment resonates with the findings of Chrisman et al. (2012), who argue that the unique characteristics of family businesses, often referred to as "familiness," play a crucial role in shaping governance structures and strategic decisions. The emphasis on familial values not only reinforces the identity of the business but also serves as a guiding principle for leadership behavior.

Conversely, several interviewees acknowledged the necessity of professionalization to ensure sustainability and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving market. Interviewee 8 (Sales Director) stated, "*While we cherish our family traditions, we must adapt to the changing landscape. Professionalizing our operations is essential for survival*." This perspective aligns with the argument put forth by Kallmuenzer et al. (2018), who note that family businesses often struggle with the dual mandate of maintaining family values while pursuing modernization. The tension between these two imperatives can lead to a reluctance to fully embrace formalized

processes, as observed by Interviewee 3 (General Manager), who remarked, "*There's a fear that too much formalization might erode our family essence. We want to grow but also stay true to our roots*."

The interviews also revealed a common thread of apprehension regarding the implications of externalizing certain processes. Interviewee 10 (Chief Financial Officer) noted, "*We often hesitate to bring in external consultants because it feels like we're losing control over our family legacy*." This aligns with the literature indicating that many family businesses are reluctant to relinquish internal governance to outsiders due to fears of losing their identity (De Massis et al., 2018). Such concerns underline the importance of integrating professional practices while ensuring that family values remain at the forefront of organizational culture. Moreover, the necessity of fostering a professional environment was echoed by Interviewee 11 (General Manager), who articulated the challenge succinctly: "*It's a balancing act. We need systems and processes to compete, but we must do it in a way that respects our family's history*." This echoes the conclusions drawn by Basco (2017), who asserts that the integration of professional management practices with family governance can lead to a more resilient and adaptive organization. The findings suggest that TMT members are aware of the need for hybrid governance models that allow for both formalization and familial influence.

Another critical aspect of this discussion is the role of communication in navigating the complexities of professionalization. Interviewee 4 (Sales Director) emphasized, "*Open dialogue about our values and how they translate into our professional practices is key. Without that, we risk misunderstanding each other's intentions*." This perspective highlights the need for continuous communication among TMT members to align family values with professional objectives. Literature supports this notion, indicating that effective communication is essential for successful governance in family businesses (Hodgkinson et al., 2009). By fostering an environment where family values are discussed openly, TMTs can create a culture that respects tradition while pursuing professional excellence.

In addressing the challenges faced during this balancing act, Interviewee 6 (Chief Financial Officer) noted, "*We face resistance from some family members who are comfortable with the status quo. Change is necessary, but it requires careful navigation*." This sentiment underscores the complexities of implementing change in family businesses, where familial relationships can complicate the decision-making process (Strike et al., 2018). The literature suggests that such resistance is common, as family members often hold strong attachments to traditional ways of operating, making the transition to professionalization a sensitive issue.

Furthermore, the impact of generational differences on the perception of professionalization emerged as a significant factor in the discussions. Interviewee 12 (Marketing Director) remarked, "*Younger generations are more open to change and professional practices, but there's still a deep-rooted respect for the past*." This generational divide aligns with findings in the literature indicating that younger family members often advocate for modernization, while older generations may prioritize tradition. Recognizing these differing perspectives is essential for TMTs as they navigate the complexities of family dynamics and professionalization.

The discussion also touched upon the need for a clear vision that encompasses both family values and professional aspirations. Interviewee 2 (Chief Financial Officer) articulated, "*We need a roadmap that incorporates our family's mission alongside our business goals. This way, we can ensure that both aspects are aligned*." This notion reflects the views of Chrisman et al. (2012), who emphasize that a cohesive vision is vital for family businesses to thrive in competitive environments. A well-defined roadmap allows TMTs to address the inherent tensions between professionalization and familial loyalty, facilitating a more harmonious approach to governance.

In conclusion, the interviews with TMT members underscore the intricate interplay between professionalization and family values within Moroccan family businesses. The perspectives shared reflect a deep understanding of the importance of preserving family heritage while adapting to contemporary challenges. The findings suggest that a balanced approach, characterized by open communication and a shared vision, can pave the way for successful professionalization efforts. As family businesses strive to navigate the complexities of modern management, the lessons drawn from this study can inform best practices for harmonizing tradition with innovation, ensuring the continued success of these enterprises in an ever-evolving landscape. By embracing a hybrid governance model that respects both family values and professional imperatives, Moroccan family businesses can cultivate resilience and adaptability in the face of change.

**Axis 2: Harnessing Intuition and Discernment in Strategic Decision-Making**

The integration of intuition and discernment in decision-making processes is a pivotal theme that emerged from the interviews with members of the Top Management Team (TMT) of Moroccan family businesses. This axis reflects the profound influence of familial heritage and cultural context on the strategic decisions made within these organizations. The interviewees illustrated how

their intuitive capabilities, honed through personal and familial experiences, play a crucial role in navigating the complexities of the business environment (Details in Table 3).

**Table 3: Verbatim Insights on Intuition and Discernment**

| Interviewer | Perception Intuition and Discernment in Decision-Making |
|---|---|
| **2** | In my experience, intuition often guides us in moments where data might be lacking. There are situations in our business where we must rely on our gut feeling, especially when assessing market trends that aren't yet fully visible |
| **5** | Discernment is crucial in our decision-making process. It allows us to weigh options more holistically. Often, I find that our family legacy plays a role in how we discern the best path forward. |
| **7** | I believe intuition comes from years of experience. When I look back, my decisions are often influenced by both my training and the family values I've absorbed over the years |
| **8** | While we must formalize many processes, there are times when intuition tells us to take risks. It's a delicate balance; sometimes, you just know when to pivot based on what feels right |
| **9** | In a family business, intuition is like a sixth sense. You develop it over time, and it becomes part of your decision-making toolkit. However, we also face pressure to provide evidence-based justifications for our choices |
| **10** | The ability to discern the nuances of a situation is vital. I've often relied on my intuition to guide my team through complex challenges where the answers aren't black and white |
| **11** | I think there's a fine line between intuition and impulsiveness. With discernment, we can evaluate our instincts against the backdrop of our strategic objectives. |
| **12** | I draw heavily on my intuition when making decisions about new initiatives. It's informed by the values I've inherited from my family and the lessons learned from past experiences |
| **14** | While analytics play a role, I've found that the insights from my intuition often help me make decisions that feel right for our family business, especially when we're navigating uncharted territory |
| **15** | The combination of discernment and intuition allows us to respond swiftly to market changes. It's about trusting our instincts while also being mindful of the data we have |

**Source:** Author

As discussed in the literature, Hodgkinson et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of intuitive approaches in strategic decision-making, particularly within family firms facing uncertainty and rapid changes in the market. The TMT members' responses echoed this sentiment, highlighting how intuition serves as a valuable asset in evaluating complex situations. For instance, Interviewee 1 (Human Resource Director, 12 years) stated, "*When faced with a critical decision, I often rely on my gut feeling. It's rooted in my experience and the values I learned from my family*." This reliance on intuition aligns with the findings of Chrisman et al. (2012), who noted that family-driven characteristics significantly influence governance and decision-making practices in family businesses. Moreover, Interviewee 3 (General Manager, 15 years) remarked, "*In uncertain situations, I find that my intuition helps me see things that data alone cannot reveal. It's about understanding the context and the people involved*." This statement reflects the literature's assertion that intuition allows leaders to grasp the nuances of complex scenarios that quantitative analyses might overlook (Hodgkinson et al., 2009). The ability to make sense of ambiguity and uncertainty is crucial in today's fast-paced business environment, where family businesses often contend with unique challenges.

However, while intuition and discernment offer significant advantages, they can also present limitations. Interviewee 7 (Human Resource Director, 12 years) acknowledged, "*Sometimes, I struggle to balance intuition with the need for structured decision-making. There's pressure to formalize processes, especially in a rapidly changing market.*" This sentiment resonates with the work of Kallmuenzer et al. (2018), who pointed out that the reluctance to adopt formalized processes can hinder the professionalization

of family businesses. The tension between intuitive decision-making and the need for structured processes can create challenges in ensuring that decisions are both innovative and aligned with market demands.

The insights from Interviewee 9 (General Manager, 10 years) further illustrate this dilemma: "*I often face situations where my instinct tells me one thing, but the data suggests another. Finding a balance is crucial*." This highlights the duality of intuition in decision-making; while it provides a unique perspective, it must be integrated with analytical approaches to achieve well-rounded and informed decisions (Hodgkinson et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Interviewee 5 (Marketing Director, 13 years) expressed a similar concern: "*I believe in the power of intuition, but I also see the importance of data in decision-making. It's about combining both to navigate complexities.*" This integration of intuition and analytical reasoning aligns with the concept of hybrid governance models that balance tradition and innovation, as discussed by De Massis et al. (2018). Family businesses can leverage their unique cultural heritage while embracing modern practices to enhance their decision-making processes.

The discussions also revealed that the TMT members' intuition is often grounded in their familial experiences and values. Interviewee 10 (Chief Financial Officer, 6 years) stated, "*My family's legacy influences how I approach decisions. It's not just about numbers; it's about the people and the relationships we build*." This highlights the interplay between familial influences and professional decision-making, reinforcing the notion that family-driven characteristics shape governance and strategic choices (Chrisman et al., 2012).

In conclusion, the role of intuition and discernment in decision-making is a critical axis in understanding how Moroccan family businesses navigate contemporary challenges. The TMT members' reliance on intuitive capabilities reflects their unique cultural and familial backgrounds, enabling them to assess complex situations and make informed decisions. However, the need for balancing intuition with structured processes remains a challenge, underscoring the importance of integrating both approaches to foster professionalization. As family businesses continue to evolve, embracing a hybrid model that values intuition while also recognizing the necessity of formalization may prove essential for sustained success in a dynamic market.

## V. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITS AND PERSPECTIVES

This research has provided valuable insights into the role of the Top Management Team (TMT) in Moroccan family businesses, specifically focusing on how discernment and intuition shape strategic decision-making amid the challenges of professionalization and family heritage. The findings underscore the critical balance that leaders must maintain between embracing modern business practices and preserving the unique values inherent in family enterprises. By drawing on qualitative data from interviews with TMT members, this study illuminates the complexities and nuances of decision-making processes within the context of family governance, contributing to the existing literature on family business dynamics.

One of the primary contributions of this work is the demonstration of how intuition and discernment—often rooted in familial legacy—play a significant role in navigating uncertainty and complexity in decision-making. The study corroborates the assertion by Hodgkinson et al. (2009) that intuitive approaches are essential for leaders in family firms as they confront contemporary challenges. Furthermore, the research highlights the dual nature of intuition, serving as both an asset in understanding complex scenarios and a potential barrier to formalizing processes required by market demands. This nuanced understanding enriches the discourse on governance and decision-making within family businesses, offering practical implications for leaders seeking to align traditional values with modern practices.

Despite the strengths of this research, several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the sample size, while adequate for qualitative studies, may limit the generalizability of the findings to all Moroccan family businesses. The perspectives gathered represent a snapshot of experiences from specific industries and generational contexts, which may not encompass the full diversity of family firms in Morocco. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from interviews introduces the potential for bias, as participants may present their experiences through the lens of personal and organizational values.

To address these limitations, future research could explore a broader and more diverse sample of family businesses across various sectors and regions within Morocco. This would enhance the generalizability of findings and provide a more comprehensive view of the role of TMTs in professionalization. Longitudinal studies could also be beneficial in examining how the dynamics of intuition and discernment evolve over time as family businesses navigate ongoing socio-economic changes. Moreover, comparative studies involving family businesses in different cultural contexts may yield deeper insights into the interplay between familial values and professionalization, further enriching the academic understanding of this critical area.

In conclusion, this study lays the groundwork for further exploration into the intricate relationship between family heritage and professionalization in Moroccan family businesses. By highlighting the significance of intuition and discernment in strategic

decision-making, it not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge but also serves as a catalyst for ongoing research in this vital field.

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