

## Operational Sustainability and Challenges of Montreal Group LLC

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**Asia Pacific Journal of  
Academic Research in  
Business Administration**

Vol. 7 No. 2, 92-103

September 2021

P-ISSN: 2467-6691

E-ISSN: 2467-5148

*Date Received: August 22, 2021; Date Revised: September 2, 2021*

**Abstract:** *Sustainable operations management and strategy primarily concern with strategic goal setting as guidance in control actions and provide a sense of direction. The firm's procedures, processes, practices, coordination, integration, directing of activities, and the system must function at its optimum to delivers profitable outputs. This study aims to evaluate the operational sustainability and challenges of Montreal Group LLC and come up with a proposed sustainability action plan that the company may adopt for implementation. The target respondents of this study were vital personnel from architecture, engineering design consulting firms, and main contractors involved in green building projects in Qatar. A total of 223 responses were gathered out of 241 total target respondents. SPSS software was used for frequency distribution, weighted mean, and for finding the significant differences. The findings of this study show that proposed strategies such as virtual employees, cloud storage, and social media marketing are effective for operational sustainability. Save physical office space rank first as a benefit for adopting virtual employees. For cloud storage, cost-effective means due to the virtual storing of files with 24/7 accessibility features. Moreover, social media marketing is an effective marketing strategy due to its cost-effectiveness compared to conventional TV, radio, or print advertising. Regarding the respondents' perception of Montreal Group's operational challenges, providing continuous learning and development to the employees followed by the timely salary of employees are the main challenges in terms of human resources management. For technology, keeping up with the latest technological trends and upgrades of software/hardware appears are the top two main issues in technology. Spending for business-related technology upgrades and maintaining reserve capital are the operational issues related to finance control. It was found that Filipino observed greater effectiveness than those who are non-Filipino.*

**Keywords:** *Proposed Strategies, Operational Challenges, Montreal Group, Qatar*

### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is one of Qatar's National Vision 2030. They have commenced a green building scheme called GSAS developed by GORD (Gulf Organization for Research and Development). All government projects in Qatar have started adopting GSAS as a sustainability rating system, particularly in the Lusail City and Qatar Foundation. The Qatar Construction Specification (QCS) has incorporated the green building construction specifications for private and government sector usage. Business sustainability management is becoming an increasingly relevant issue in the GCC region and the entire global business arena. Many private and government sectors have commenced retrenching their workforce and implemented forced vacation leaves without salary

payments. Hence, a long-term strategy plan for business continuity

On the aspect of human resource management, HRM in the Middle East continues to evolve. The region's fast-changing socio-political and economic environment poses many challenges for the HRM function. From a research viewpoint, especially given the substantial scarcity of reliable evidence, this offers tremendous opportunities to pursue exciting research projects. While employees are the most critical asset of any organization or business, HR Leaders have a vital role in managing employees. Pandemic COVID-19 has been interrupted the business results of organizations and created many challenges within the business world. There is a situation in many organizations where they need to adjust HR policies and practices or implement new policies and practices to manage employees and control costs.

Not just HRM is developing, the technology used in the business is evolving as well. It streamlined the business processes, most conspicuous during this pandemic. However, concerns have been raised for the security of the Internet of Things (IoT). These devices are smart in analyzing data, making decisions, and having network capabilities that allow them to be connected to the Internet. Due to IoT's nature, communication may be done without confidentiality and authenticity, making it susceptible to attacks. Traditional methods of protecting networks use firewalls and intrusion detection/prevention systems on the network edge to prevent an external attack. However, due to their unique characteristics, such defense mechanisms do not work directly with IoT networks.

Indeed, the use of technology in business has revolutionized the operations and performance of business activities. It has essentially molded small business activities with a competitive advantage and economic opportunity. Incorporating digital technology in planning and business management has achieved growth and stability, including reducing operating costs, securing essential information, improving the current communication process, and boosting employee productivity.

However, developing a business is to obtain the necessary financial result with effective cost management. It is noted that among the existing means of optimizing costs, the main ones are considered effective planning, accounting, and control, and several measures aimed at reducing costs.

The intention of conducting this study is to evaluate significant business challenges and proposed innovative strategic approaches to sustain the operations of Montreal Group LLC, a green building consultancy company in the State of Qatar in the Middle East. It is relatively timely, especially in this pandemic period, to develop measurable and achievable strategies for long-term survival in the business. Also, this paper considers and analyzes the problems that hinder the building of a productive sustainability operation of the Company.

This study's proposed operational sustainability strategy is implementing virtual employee arrangements, adopting web-based cloud storage, and engaging in social media marketing. On the other hand, the operational challenges were identified in terms of human resource management, technology, and finance control. This study's results mainly benefit the business owner and stakeholders of Montreal Group LLC to

improve the opportunity to make their business operate sustainably in the State of Qatar. This study is also beneficial in engineering & architecture design consultancy firms as they may adopt the proposed strategies if applicable in their business activities. Main contractors could benefit from this study in the commercial aspect. Once a green building consultancy service reduces operating costs, it has an impact on the bidding cost. Also, this study will benefit business researchers as a valuable source of information for future research in business management.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This research study aims to evaluate the operational sustainability and challenges of Montreal Group LLC. Specifically, the intent is to answer the following objectives: (1) to determine the effectiveness of the following proposed strategies for operational sustainability: (i) virtual employee, (ii) cloud storage, (iii) social media marketing; (2) to identify the operational challenges in terms of (i) Human Resources Management, (ii) technology, (iii) finance control; (3) to test the difference of responses on the effectiveness of proposed strategies for operational sustainability when grouped according to profile; (4) to prepare a sustainability action plan that may adopted by the company.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Research Design**

This study, conducted in Qatar, used a descriptive research design to interpret gathered data with a survey questionnaire as a primary tool for collecting data. The descriptive research method describes or depicts accurate characteristics of persons, situations, or groups. This research method in data collection gives the ability to collect valid and reliable data. This method is the most appropriate research design used since the researchers used questionnaires to obtain the data needed to answer the questions provided in the study.

#### **Participants of the Study**

The target respondents of this study were vital personnel from architecture, engineering design consulting firms, and main contractors. The respondents that were selected are decision-makers of the Company. Additionally, the researcher includes employees who feed valuable inputs to support decision-makers, such as chiefs, managers, directors, heads, supervisors, and senior-level staff.

Table 1 shows Qatar's number of registered companies related to green building projects generated from the Qatar Chamber of Commerce website public registry.

**Table 1**  
**Target Population Summary**

Description	Counts
Design Consultants	171
Contractor	70
Grand Total	241

(Source: Qatar Chamber of Commerce website)

A total of 223 respondents participated in the online survey out of 241 total target respondents in Qatar. Out of which, 86.5% of the respondents are males. Most expatriate professionals and skilled workers in Qatar are substantially males. The fact behind this gender imbalance is that the Qatar Ministry of Interior is a little conservative on giving visas for females.

**Table 2**  
**Characteristics of the Respondents' Profile**

Gender	Frequency	(%)
Male	193	86.50
Female	30	13.50
<b>Age</b>		
25 to 30 years old	14	6.30
31 to 40 years old	68	30.50
41 to 50 years old	96	43.00
51 to 60 years old	34	15.20
61 years old and above	11	4.90
<b>Nationality</b>		
Filipino	150	67.30
Non-Filipino	73	32.70
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Bachelor Degree	165	74.00
MBA	42	18.80
PhD	16	7.20

Table 2 shows the results of frequency distribution of respondent's profile. Noticeably, 16 respondents have a Ph.D. degree, and 42 with MBA degrees. For nationality, 67% are Filipinos. The researcher had experience challenges with the solicitation of surveys from other races. Unlike Filipinos who are answering phone calls for follow-ups. They constitute 7.35% (236,000) of Qatar's population as engineers, architects, administrators, nurses, laborers, domestic helpers, and many more. In terms of gender, 86% are male, which is no surprise as

males are mostly the dominant employees working in the construction industry in Qatar. With regards to solicitation strategy, the researcher coordinated with the Philippine Society of Mechanical Engineers (PSME), United Architect of the Philippines (UAP) - Qatar Chapter, and Society of Fire Protection Engineers (SFPE) - Qatar Chapter to obtain responsive participants. Members of those organizations mentioned are usually working in either main contractors or design firms.

**Data Gathering Instrument**

The questionnaires were self-made based on the researcher's experience, online researches, and informal interviews of some of the key management positions of Montreal Group LLC's clients. The survey questionnaires begin with a letter for the respondents informing them about the study's objectives and the confidentiality notes.

The questionnaires were composed of three main parts. The first part was intended for the demographic profile. The second part was for proposed strategies for operational sustainability having three variables. The description of the four Likert scale includes (1) not effective, (2) less effective, (3) effective, and (4) very effective. The third part was for operational challenges with also three variables. The description of the four Likert scale includes (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. Each variable has five questions. A total of 30 questions were made, excluding questions related to a personal profile.

The self-made questionnaires were validated through a reliability test of 20 sample sizes. The results were that all questions passed the reliability test, as shown in table 23

**Table 3**  
**Reliability Test Summary**

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Virtual Employee	0.818	Good
Cloud Storage	0.814	Good
Social Media Marketing	0.787	Acceptable
HRM	0.823	Good
Technology	0.847	Good
Finance	0.809	Good
Operational	0.816	Good

### Data Gathering Procedure

Google Form, an online application, was used to seek permission from the selected respondents from various companies to conduct the survey. The researcher sent the link of this application to their personal or office emails, Messenger, and WhatsApp. They were advised for one week period to answer the questionnaire. However, there were cases that the researcher phoned others as a follow-up. Respondents who were called requested a one-week duration to complete the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

Statistical measures, such as frequency distribution and weighted mean, were used to tally and analyze the desired data and figures based on the study's objectives. Furthermore, all data were treated using a statistical software named PASW version 18 to interpret the research outcomes further.

### Ethical Considerations

The thesis adviser reviewed and approved a formal letter before posting it on the Google Form survey. On the initial page of the online survey, the researcher informed that the participants' information would be managed with the utmost confidentiality and used for academic research purposes only. Also, the respondents were asked for their consent before the online survey starts. The online form was programmed to allow the participant to proceed upon his/her approval.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 4**  
**Effectiveness of Virtual Employee for Operational Sustainability**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. A well-trained technical staff working as a virtual employee reduces the operating costs.	3.16	Effective	2
2. Creates more energy due to flexibility in their working environment.	2.97	Effective	4
3. Meet target deadlines, even working remotely	3.03	Effective	3
4. Save physical office space	3.46	Effective	1
5. Enhances company branding	2.86	Effective	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>Effective</b>	

Table 4 presents the effectiveness of proposed strategies for operational sustainability in terms of a

virtual employee. The composite mean of 3.10 indicates that the proposed strategy is effective. All items were assessed to be effective, and "save physical office space" got the highest weighted mean score of 3.46. Based on the researcher's interview with some of the managing directors, they opt for a virtual setup to save office rent and collaborate using telecommuting scheme. A telecommuting is a work arrangement where staff performed tasks outside the office, such as in a home or elsewhere. The means of communication will be through emails, phones, social media, and other online communication platforms. According to Hoefling [1] companies can save money by moving to a virtual workforce. Virtually, organizations avoid leasing bigger office space, utility costs, furniture, electricity, internet connections or Wi-Fi, and other related expenses. In addition, the Company may hire as many staff as possible regardless of geographical location since there is no requirement for office space as the staff is working from home. Also, virtual collaboration arrangements offer less overhead cost, high employee satisfaction, higher scalability, and high expected efficiency.

However, items such as "create more energy due to flexibility in their working environment" and "enhances company branding" got the lowest position and rated the least. The researcher's perception of why company branding got the lowest rank is that virtual employee does not necessarily create a better image of the Company in terms of brand enhancement. Although based on the researcher's interview with some job seekers, they prefer working in a virtual setup to have flexibility in a working environment. Branding matters because it builds credibility, makes a good impression, and gives recognition. With regards to work flexibility, employees are enjoying freedom from work whenever and wherever they like [2].

Table 5 indicates that a composite mean of 3.28 for the effectiveness of cloud storage for operational sustainability is effective. All items were assessed to be effective, and the "cost-effectiveness of cloud storage with 24/7 accessibility" got the 1<sup>st</sup> rank with the highest weighted mean score of 3.44. Based on the researcher's experience, the 24/7 accessibility of files is the most beneficial cloud storage feature because the user can work any time and in many parts of the globe as long as internet access is available. Therefore, the target deadline is much better achievable because of work continuity as all updated files are available and accessible with unlimited capacity.

**Table 5**  
**Effectiveness of Cloud Storage for**  
**Operational Sustainability**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Cost-effective means of virtual storing of files with 24/7 accessibility features from anywhere such as dropbox, google drive, one drive, etc	3.44	Effective	1
2. Allows real-time files synchronization	3.35	Effective	2
3. Provides 24/7 online customer support that reduces the need for a full-time IT staff	3.23	Effective	3
4. Eliminates dependency on hard drives.	3.22	Effective	4
5. Allows access restriction for security purposes.	3.15	Effective	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>Effective</b>	

The costs of delivering high levels of availability and the scalability an organization needs are unmatched. According to Dieye et al. [3] from their study, cloud storage services have become the option to store and share data because of their cost-effectiveness, seemingly limitless capacity, and more guarantees on access time and data availability. Cloud storage has become the top choice platform for delivering data and hostings, providing easy access and instantaneous to seemingly unlimited storage resources. Hence, cloud service providers are compelled to widen their storage capacity and offer more stringent warranties on data availability with 24/7 access time.

However, items such as "eliminates dependency on hard drives" and "allows access restriction for security purposes" got the least favorable from the respondents. The researcher's point of view regarding access restriction was that it is a regular cloud feature with the link or password allowed to access files. For example, when purchasing a brand-new car, the classification was a primary or full option. In other words, access restriction was included in a primary option, and therefore, respondents rated this indicator the least amongst the rest of the indicators for operational sustainability. On the other hand, although cloud storage is evolving into reliable storage, there are substantial security issues in cloud storage to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Amongst these services are cloud storage applications like Dropbox, Box, Amazon Web Services, Sharepoint, and OneDrive, which are focused on file sharing and syncing between stakeholders.

Chow et al [4] pointed out from his research that even though cloud providers use different authentication policies, the sensitive data is still prone to attacks from malicious outsiders and insiders. The security issues are highly significant and require much broader research. His research proposes an alternative algorithm related to data security in cloud storage.

**Table 6**  
**Effectiveness of Social Media Marketing for**  
**Operational Sustainability**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Cost-effective marketing tool compares to conventional TV, radio, or print advertisement.	3.30	Effective	1
2. Has a broader coverage of target market	3.21	Effective	3
3. Provides a direct connection with clients	3.17	Effective	4
4. Ability to optimize company performance to drive better results	3.09	Effective	5
5. Direct clients to the Company's website to know more about the company profile.	3.26	Effective	2
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>Effective</b>	

Similarly, Table 6 shows that social media is an effective strategy to sustain company operation. The overall weighted average of 3.21 depicts that this strategy is effective. All items were assessed and found to be effective. The 1<sup>st</sup> rank was the indicator as a cost-effective marketing tool compares to conventional TV, radio, or print advertisement. The respondents agreed that using social media is a cost-effective means as a marketing tool. The researcher's point of view was that social media platforms such as Facebook, Linkin, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, Whatsapp, and others are much cheaper. Others are even free to put up advertisements, e.g., Facebook and Linkin. The corporate account in social media is still far more affordable than conventional TV, radio, or print ads. Besides that, fact that social media has a broader coverage compares with TV ads.

According to Chatterjee and Kar [5], social media marketing is used by small, medium, and enterprises to communicate with customers incurring less cost. It is easier to reach the niche market through social media

The respondent's perception showed that social media marketing has the least to have a significant impact in optimizing an employee's performance output. It is relative true because the marketing aspect

is not directly linked to the job task performance level of the employees. Perhaps the respondents assess this question on the individual performance basis rather than the company output in terms of sales or income, directly linked to marketing activity.

Social media could help small businesses be competitive against large companies by improving their management schemes and connect with stakeholders by building a solid presence in social media platforms as part of an ultimate strategy. This strategy will bring potential customers to know more about the business's products and services and bring them closer to the Company. From a global perspective, social media marketing was a prime factor for the growth of Small Business Enterprises (SME). Social media marketing's effectiveness contributes to small businesses' success and contributes to their future development, such as social commerce as a business model. For various organizations, non-profits, businesses, and governments, social media is frequently used in marketing, offices, and public communication to connect to clients directly, customers, and stakeholders. [5].

**Table 7**

**Summary Table on the Effectiveness of Proposed Strategies for Operational Sustainability**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Virtual Employee	3.10	Effective	3
2. Cloud Storage	3.28	Effective	1
3. Social Media Marketing	3.21	Effective	2
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>Effective</b>	

The overall composite mean of all proposed strategies in Table 7 is 3.20. Cloud storage ranked as the most effective strategy to sustain Montreal Group's business. Data owners could outsource their data remotely, storing it in the cloud [6]. Acernese et al [7] pointed out that the popularity and use of data storage are growing. For example, Google is now giving 15GB of free cloud storage to be shared across its Google Drive, Gmail, and Google+ Photos applications. Apple has its music cloud storage, iTunes Match. Furthermore, based on the article of Goldstein et al [8], social media further boost internet usability by storing rich multimedia content in cloud storage systems, like videos and photographs.

Table 8 presents the operational challenges in terms of human resource management. The composite mean of 3.26 indicates that respondents agree on the identified lists of issues to the business function. All

items were assessed and resulted in an agreed perception from the respondents, and "providing continuous learning and development" tops the list, having a weighted mean score of 3.39.

**Table 8**  
**Operational Challenges of HRM**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Timely salary of employees.	3.37	Agree	2
2. Retaining good performing employees.	3.36	Agree	3
3. Recruiting suitable candidates due to a shortage of local applicants.	3.29	Agree	4
4. Providing continuous learning and development.	3.39	Agree	1
5. Limited training providers.	2.87	Agree	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.26</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

The researcher's assessment was that probably in the perception of respondents the continuous training and development were taken protracted by management. According to (Ojoh & Okoh, 2015), employee continuous training and development were often neglected by higher management which is a significant aspect of HRM. Most employees seek continuous professional training and skills developments to keep up with fast-paced technological trends and for promotion purpose. They wanted to ensure that their technical skills are well competitive enough to prepare themselves because there has been greater competition in securing high-quality jobs. However, most employers will not designate enough budget for professional training and development because of cost savings. Perhaps, this was the main reason respondents rated this item as the main challenge in HRM. Nosulich & Mukan [9] states that organizations are increasingly challenged with staying competitive and keeping pace with an unprecedented rate of change in their environments in today's globalization. As business always says, human capital is the most critical asset to any company striving for success. Efficient learning and development are vital to a company's high performance and growth in a globally competitive market.

However, items such as "recruiting suitable candidates due to a shortage of local applicants" and "limited training providers got the lowest favorable from the respondents. The researcher assessed that training providers are available online or in a virtual setup that does not require face-to-face physical

presence. Furthermore therefore, even though the training providers are overseas is not anymore, a hindrance. This virtual training was indeed the actual practice during a pandemic situation. Hence respondents rated this item the least among the rest of the challenges. However, the organization must choose a training provider that will provide the most value. Brennan et al., [10] online training has emerged as the most promising, cost-effective approach in conducting training in human services. Also, research indicates that achieving learning objectives is enhanced when employee participants received company support, peer encouragement, and the opportunity to apply skills in real projects.

**Table 9**  
**Operational Challenges of Technology**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Keeping up with the latest technological trends	3.48	Agree	1
2. Availability of technical support	3.38	Agree	3
3. Integration and upgrades of software and hardware	3.44	Agree	2
4. Information security threats	3.29	Agree	4
5. Skills gap in using technology	3.17	Agree	5
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Similarly, Table 9 indicates a composite mean of 3.35 for the operational challenges in terms of technology. All items were assessed and come up with an agreed equivalent. The 1<sup>st</sup> place was "keeping up with the latest technological trends," garnered an average score of 3.48. The researcher's analysis was that some organizations are slow in adopting the latest technological trends in software and hardware because of cost issues.

Other reasons were when project specifications require specific software that forces the company to purchase accordingly. Perhaps another reason was that companies were waiting for technology maturity and observed if competitors used it as a differentiation strategy. Indeed, every advance in technology will always bring about productivity changes and consider critical in the business process. Shafi et al [11] stated in his research that the impact of COVID-19 is unpredictable and has no borders and "neither the technology which always helps people and business. Technology makes sure that there are no borders of a solution; however, it all depends on how well it is accepted across business platforms. One example of technology trends applicable in green building is the

use of 3D modeling software that enhances the accuracy of deliverables. In a study by Kondo et al [12] on the modeling of ancient Japanese architecture. They used Trimble SketchUp, an intuitive 3D modeling software to ancient model architecture rendered in life-size virtual reality and augmented reality.

However, items such as "information security threats" and "skills gap in using technology" got the lowest places. The researcher's analysis was that perhaps respondents are all well adapted to the technology they are using, and therefore they rated this item the least. In other words, learning to familiarized new technologies was relatively easy because tutorials are readily available online via Youtube and internet search engines. In an article by Chrisinger [13], he stated that education and workforce training programs could prepare employees to remain competitive despite rapid technological advancement and increased automation.

**Table 10**  
**Operational Challenges of Finance**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. Late payments from clients	2.79	Agree	5
2. Maintaining reserve capital	3.15	Agree	2
3. Price war with competitors	3.01	Agree	4
4. Budgeting employees salaries	3.09	Agree	3
5. Expenses for technology upgrades	3.21	Agree	1
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

Similarly, Table 10 indicates a composite mean of 3.05 for the operational challenges in terms of financial control. All items were assessed and resulted in an agreed perception from the respondents. The 1<sup>st</sup> place was "expenses for technology upgrades," garnered an average score of 3.21. The researcher's analysis was that the upfront cost of technological upgrades is costly, whether software or hardware upgrades. Some organizations are reluctantly investing in advanced technology upgrades unless it is deemed necessary due to cost issues. According to Morgan & Ngwenyama, [14] technology upgrades require significant investment that affects competitiveness and efficiency. The cost incurred due to downtime, learning, and implementation. Higher management may take more time to make decisions as this process requires more profound technical studies, risk assessment, and return on investments (ROI) analysis. More spending does not always mean value in their perspective. However, businesses' approach to technology and corresponding assets has undergone a massive shift.

However, items such as " price war with competitors " and " late payments from clients " got the lowest places. The researcher's analysis was that contractors might have different ways of dealing politically and diplomatically with their clients, consultants, and main contractors in payment collection. The collection of payment from clients was the main task of the higher management level. Delayed revenue collection has a direct impact on an organization's cash flow. However, the employer must give salary to their employees on time according to local labor law regardless of whatever their issue with the client. The target respondents of this study were employees at the senior level and above. Therefore, respondents might not experience delays in their salary and probably why this item rated the least. Contractors should develop a good relationship with their clients, preferably with a particular person. Moreover, agree on payment terms in advance to manage cash flow better.

**Table 11**  
**Summary Table on the Operational Challenges**

Indicators	WM	VI	R
1. HRM	3.25	Agree	2
2. Technology	3.35	Agree	1
3. Finance	3.05	Agree	3
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.22</b>	<b>Agree</b>	

The outbreak of COVID-19 forced companies worldwide to adjust to a new reality that is still under construction. In a published article by OutSystems (2020), technology adoption will continue to skyrocket even though the future is still unknown. People have started adjusting to this "new normal" where the most regular activities move to the online sphere.

Table 11 exhibits that technology is perceived as a top-notch challenge for businesses. The present pandemic poses opportunities for companies to develop new digital strategies and even find new business streams. Next in rank is Human Resources, an increasingly complex field and one with growing strategic importance, followed by Finance, which is an unusual position. The real problem, though, is that performance on HR matters threatens to undermine its traditional strengths. Unless human resources can attract, engage, and retain the best people, their overall business performance is at risk.

Finance, being the lowest rank in respondents' perception, should not be treated loosely. In an article of Oracle Netsuite, Beaver [15] said that 80% of companies in the USA make it through Year one of the pandemic, and 70% are still operating by the second

year ends. Just half of these small companies are still in business by the time they hit the five-year mark.

**Table 12**  
**Difference of Responses on Effectiveness of Proposed Strategies for Operational Sustainability When Grouped According to Profile**

Sex	U / $\lambda^2_c$	p-value	I
Virtual Employee	2599.5	0.363	NS
Cloud Storage	2677	0.501	NS
Social Media Marketing	2676.5	0.502	NS
<b>Age</b>			
Virtual Employee	4.515	0.341	NS
Cloud Storage	4.611	0.330	NS
Social Media Marketing	4.722	0.317	NS
<b>Nationality</b>			
Virtual Employee	4276.5	0.007	S
Cloud Storage	5071.5	0.365	NS
Social Media Marketing	4163	0.003	S
<b>Educational Attainment</b>			
Virtual Employee	0.548	0.760	NS
Cloud Storage	0.157	0.925	NS
Social Media Marketing	0.805	0.669	NS

Legend: Significant at  $p\text{-value} < 0.05$

Table 12 displays the comparison of responses on the effectiveness of proposed strategies when grouped according to profile. The observation noted was that there was a significant difference between a virtual employee ( $p = 0.007$ ) and social media marketing ( $p = 0.003$ ). Their p-values were less than 0.05 alpha level when grouped according to nationality. It implies that the responses differ significantly. Based on the test conducted, there was greater effectiveness in Filipino nationality than those who are non-Filipinos. The result was partially due to 67% of Filipino respondents, against 33% of non-Filipinos. Although most respondents were Filipinos, the Philippines was rank as one of the highest social medial users in Southeast Asia. A daily average of four hours of spending time of Filipinos using social media. It becomes the modern means of connecting between friends and relatives [16]. For many users, popular Facebook was used for social networking and as a daily source of trending news, beating paper-based newspapers, conventional television, and radios. The user-friendly functionality of Facebook allows users to create content and share information quickly, and take advantage of cost-effective promotional marketing features. Social media advertising has shown great



potentials in the Philippines because of consumers' high social media adoption. Also, many small and medium entrepreneurs have targeting to focus on social media in promoting their products and services.

Table also shows Filipinos has different perception when it comes to the virtual employment. The researcher assessment was that most Filipino value work freedom, flexibility in time, and the working environment because of embedded culture finding balance with money, work, and family. As the workforce continues to its dynamic change, companies need to give employees greater flexibility to realize the cost benefits for virtual work employment [17]. The virtual concept allows organizations to retain more excellent talent while nurturing a culture that merit work and life balance. In an article by Adamovic [18], the author mentioned that most French virtual employees prefers flexibility, multi-tasking and spontaneity in their work place. The idea that virtual works may offer flexibility in schedule is true.

Virtual employees are famous in the Philippines. They do not have to be based on where the employees are, and they do not have to be in the same country. The Filipino virtual employees represent the quality of work rendered by the Philippines' talented labor force. Since 2003, the Philippines' outsourcing industry has maintained its impressive 20% annual growth rate, and this is mainly due to the ability of Filipinos to produce world-class products and services consistently. Because of great demand, more Filipinos have taken on roles as virtual employees. Moreover, the work hours are flexible, and it offers opportunities to make good money—a significant number of Filipinos who become virtual employees already hold full-time jobs. It presents the option for additional income and offers a large pool of talent for companies to recruit. Despite the high volume of virtual employees, the quality of talent will never be diluted.

Moreover, the Philippines regards English as its primary medium of instruction, even if its official language is Tagalog. It is mainly because of the American influence on culture and education. Out of 76 countries, the Philippines achieved a 7.11 score. The Filipinos' English proficiency rating was graded 85%, which is among the best in Asia. From 2016 to 2018, the Philippines stayed in the top 15, placing 13th, 15th, and 14th. All the data that the Business English Index uses is skewed based on biases like internet access, national awareness or interest in the survey, income inequality, and the number of actual test-takers from the countries in question. Countries with fewer participants (the minimum is 400) are more likely to be ranked higher than countries with more participants, especially for countries with high wealth disparities, where the poor (with worse English) would have no access to the survey at all. It is much a given that almost all of the participants of the EF-EPI come from the upper class. Thus, they are likely the most proficient English speakers because people who have bad English would have no interest in a survey about English.

The Filipino virtual employees will be an immediate contributor to the business's success. Moreover, their English is within a creditable technical and fundamental competency and cultural trait of working in a multicultural environment. Most of all, they are internationally reputed to be hard workers committed to fulfilling their tasks to the best of their abilities. The Philippines is well known to have a strong culture of honesty and hard work, which qualified as a virtual employee. Most Filipinos can speak English well. Hence no issue with the language barrier should not be a significant issue. While there are some exceptions, a business employer can usually expect to find good employees reasonably quickly and efficiently when hiring virtual employees from the Philippines.

**Table 14**  
**Propose Sustainability Action Plan**

Action item and Goals	Activities & strategies	Remarks
I. Virtual Employee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perform potential cost-saving financial analysis on renting reasonable office space and on a virtual set.</li> <li>Gather information on salary compensation and labor regulation in the local country for a virtual setup.</li> <li>Select high-performing employees qualified for virtual setup in their home country.</li> <li>Train incumbent &amp; new employees in the head office for six months before deploying as virtual staff.</li> <li>Monitor performance every six months.</li> </ul>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CEO, HR, PM</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential savings in office rent</li> <li>Increase productivity</li> <li>Better work-life balance</li> </ul>
❖ To include the option of renting reasonable office space in the coming annual budget programming.		
❖ To adopt virtual setup on well-		

<p>trained employees to reduce operating cost.</p> <p>❖ To develop a key performance indicator in the schedule of deliverables.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow remote employees to collaborate through a virtual interactive online environment.</li> <li>• Record lead time on completing the task in office-based as a benchmark for virtual staff.</li> <li>• Develop KPI both for office-based and in a virtual arrangement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High job satisfaction rate</li> <li>• Meet deadlines or ahead of time</li> </ul>
<hr/>		
<p>II. Cloud Storage</p>		
<p>❖ To utilize cloud technology &amp; evaluate its benefits in terms of performance and cost savings.</p> <p>❖ To ensure that files are updated in real-time for team collaboration.</p> <p>❖ To test the effectiveness of 24/7 online support features of cloud technology.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comparisons among cloud technology available in the market.</li> <li>• Explore other features of cloud computing.</li> <li>• Explore other features of cloud technology like cloud storage is member of cloud technology</li> <li>• Link the email in mobile and activate notification features of the cloud for team awareness.</li> <li>• Explore other team collaboration software such as Monday.com to complement cloud technology.</li> <li>• To provide the most efficient way of file access to remote employees in a remote location.</li> <li>• To engage contract with a local contact for cloud technology.</li> <li>• Hire an information technology staff on a part-time basis only to monitor the effectiveness of the online support features of the cloud.</li> </ul>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, HR, PM</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost-efficient</li> <li>• Fast deployment of files</li> <li>• Synchronization enabling mobility</li> <li>• Convenient sharing of files</li> <li>• Client satisfaction</li> <li>• Fast troubleshooting response time</li> </ul>
<hr/>		
<p>III. Social Media Marketing</p>		
<p>❖ To utilize social media platforms as a marketing tool and evaluate its benefits in terms of performance and cost savings.</p> <p>❖ To create more traffic on the company website.</p> <p>❖ To identify and focus on the niche market.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comparisons among social media platforms available in the local region.</li> <li>• Engage contract with a local contact for the social media platform.</li> <li>• Research which social media the most popular in the local community with the target audience.</li> <li>• Create corporate account profiles on Facebook, Linked In, Instagram, and YouTube and link to the company website.</li> <li>• Post original content to promote the Company's services.</li> <li>• Highlights in social media page previous and current project profiles with high definition perspective views.</li> <li>• Conduct costumers feedback survey on services for quality improvement.</li> <li>• Outsource professional in creating company profile design in social media.</li> </ul> <p>Set up the social media page to a specific geographic location that serves the target niche.</p>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, IT, HR,Marketing</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease marketing costs</li> <li>• Increase company branding awareness</li> <li>• Increase inbound traffic</li> <li>• Provide direct access to customers</li> <li>• Higher brand authority</li> </ul>
<hr/>		
<p>IV. Technology</p>		
<p>❖ To upgrade system's software and hardware in line with latest trends in technology.</p> <p>❖ To integrate and upgrades software</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before selecting any new software vendors, due diligence would lead to better utilization and sustainability when replacing software solutions.</li> <li>• Avail of one-month free software for performance test.</li> <li>• Include a free staff training package for systems familiarization and troubleshooting.</li> <li>• Select a robust infrastructure for integrating software applications.</li> <li>• Use of software for engineering calculation and gradually eliminate manual design verification.</li> </ul>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, HR, PM</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase productivity</li> <li>• Cost-efficient</li> <li>• Effective flow of Communications among coworkers, clients, &amp; prospects</li> <li>• It makes work faster &amp; efficiently by</li> </ul>

and hardware system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train all engineering staff using integrated software applications.</li> <li>• Focus more on the solution rather than particular vendor offerings.</li> <li>• Coordinate with local suppliers authorized representative for technical support after-sales.</li> <li>• Enhance external and internal communication of the Company</li> </ul>	<p>automating redundant tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for working remotely</li> <li>• Enhances comfort to better productivity</li> <li>• Faster realization of profit Faster reinvestment into the value stream</li> </ul>
<hr/>		
V. HRM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear career pathways and personal development reviews.</li> <li>• Identify employee's technical skill gaps for improvement.</li> <li>• Monitor the learning and development journey of the employee.</li> <li>• Choose the suitable training needs by employees for maximum benefits.</li> <li>• Ensure achieving scheduled deliverables for timely issuance of invoices for payment collection.</li> <li>• Constant follow-ups with clients' outstanding payment invoices.</li> <li>• Improve buffer funds in the budget for operating expenses.</li> <li>• Encourage staff to make technical papers for international publication to boost company branding and market.</li> <li>• Diversify recruitment routes by identifying vital transferrable skills.</li> <li>• Define roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Define the knowledge &amp; behavior required</li> <li>• Build on skills and experience</li> <li>• Promote socialization &amp; team-building programs with other colleagues to avoid feelings of isolation.</li> </ul>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, HR</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boost employee satisfaction</li> <li>• Improve employee retention</li> <li>• Improve employee performance</li> <li>• Enhance company reputation &amp; profile makes work easier &amp; efficiently</li> <li>• It makes work faster by automating redundant tasks</li> <li>• Enhances comfort to better productivity</li> <li>• Adherence to quality standards</li> <li>• Increase productivity</li> </ul> <p>Reduced employee turnover</p>
<hr/>		
VI. Finance Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase technology equipment needed to operate and succeed through an external financing business company.</li> <li>• Strategize allocation of funds.</li> <li>• Engage long-term business deals with suppliers to avail maximum discounts.</li> <li>• Encourage employees to attend local technical conventions for tech. awareness.</li> <li>• Organize operations to allocate funds efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>• Participate aggressively in many proj. tenders with competitive prices.</li> <li>• Analyze tender prices and take advantage of cost savings using virtual staff and win more projects.</li> <li>• Extend project scope to maximized profits.</li> <li>• Manage cash flow by putting them into use and investing in significant engagements.</li> <li>• Prioritize budget for employee salaries.</li> <li>• Manage employee's technical skills by training them to complete multiple technical tasks.</li> <li>• Send employees to free technical local seminars &amp; workshops.</li> <li>• Engage with the local professional organizations for marketing purposes.</li> </ul>	<p>Persons involve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEO, HR, PM</li> </ul> <p>Expected Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better productivity and profitability of the Company</li> <li>• Help make intelligent and wise financial decisions</li> <li>• Help win more projects</li> <li>• Increase the potential to leverage more opportunities</li> <li>• Manage the cash flow of the Company</li> <li>• Knowledgeable staff to do multiple tasks save operating cost</li> </ul>

## SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

This sustainability action plan outlines specific goals and strategies in addressing the top three highest in the ranking of respondent's perception of the proposed strategy and challenges for operational sustainability of Montreal Group LLC. This action plan will be presented to the company for their review, comments, and possible implementation. When implemented its essential to evaluate its effectiveness and get the feedback of employees and their suggestions and recommendations. Providing a suggestion box is one strategy to get employees involved in the evaluating process for continuous improvements.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposed strategies for operational sustainability in terms of virtual employees, cloud storage, and social media marketing were found to be effective. The respondents have an agreed perception of the list of operational challenges in terms of human resource management, technology, and financial control. There was a significant difference in responses on the effectiveness of strategies in terms of nationality profile on virtual employee and social media marketing. A proposed sustainability action plan was developed based on the findings of the study.

The company may implement a virtual work scheme, adopt web-based cloud storage, and utilize social media as marketing means. The proposed sustainability action plan may be reviewed and considered for implementation. In case adopted, monitor its effectiveness and document employees' feedback and suggestions. Future researchers may conduct an in-depth study on the other dimension of business operational sustainability and compare the results of this study.

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