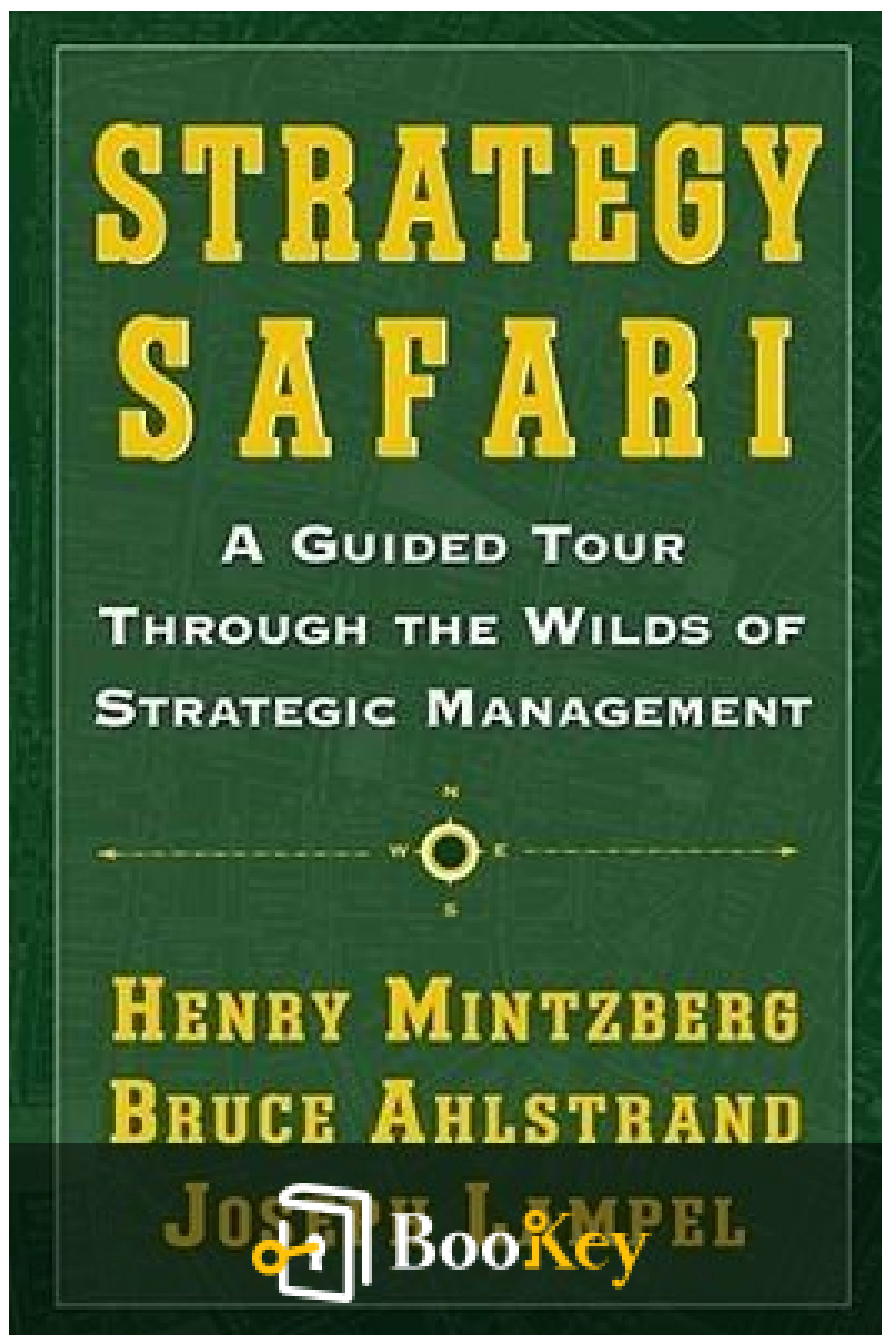


# Strategy Safari PDF (Limited Copy)

Henry Mintzberg



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# Strategy Safari Summary

Exploring the Ten Schools of Strategic Management.

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## About the book

"Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg takes readers on a captivating journey through the diverse landscape of strategic management, unraveling the complexities and nuances that shape how organizations formulate their paths to success. With a dynamic blend of insights and practical advice, Mintzberg introduces the ten schools of thought on strategy, from the prescriptive to the emergent, and invites readers to explore the rich tapestry of ideas that drive decision-making in business. This enlightening read challenges conventional wisdom, urging managers and scholars alike to embrace a multifaceted approach to strategy that is as varied and intricate as the environments in which businesses operate. Whether you are a seasoned executive or an aspiring leader, "Strategy Safari" offers invaluable perspectives that will transform the way you think about strategy in an ever-evolving world.

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## About the author

Henry Mintzberg is a prominent Canadian academic, author, and researcher recognized for his extensive contributions to the field of management and strategic planning. Born in 1939, he earned his Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering from McGill University, followed by a Master's degree in Business Administration and a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Mintzberg is most celebrated for his critical insights on management practices, particularly his critiques of traditional strategic planning. He serves as a professor at McGill University's Desautels Faculty of Management, where he has influenced generations of students and professionals alike. Through his numerous books, including "Strategy Safari," he explores the intricacies of organizational structure and management strategies, emphasizing the importance of practical experience over theoretical models.

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# Summary Content List

Chapter 1: Embarkation

Chapter 2: 1 'And over here, ladies and gentlemen: the strategic management beast'

Chapter 3: 2 The design school: strategy formation as a process of conception

Chapter 4: 3 The planning school: strategy formation as a formal process

Chapter 5: 4 The positioning school: strategy formation as an analytical process

Chapter 6: 5 The entrepreneurial school: strategy formation as a visionary process

Chapter 7: 6 The cognitive school: strategy formation as a mental process

Chapter 8: 7 The learning school: strategy formation as an emergent process

Chapter 9: 8 The power school: strategy formation as a process of negotiation

Chapter 10: 9 The cultural school: strategy formation as a collective process

Chapter 11: 10 The environmental school: strategy formation as a reactive process

Chapter 12: 11 The configuration school: strategy formation as a process of

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transformation

Chapter 13: 12 'Hang on, ladies and gentlemen, you have yet to meet the whole beast'

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## Chapter 1 Summary: Embarkation

In the introductory chapter of "Strategy Safari," the authors recount the origins of their collaborative effort, initiated by Henry Mintzberg's influential paper, "Strategy Formation: Schools of Thought." This paper sparked Bruce's idea for a book, which soon expanded to include Joe, creating a trio dedicated to exploring the vast and intricate terrain of strategic management. The authors clearly articulate their intent to produce a work that transcends traditional academic boundaries. Rather than a conventional textbook, they aspire to offer an engaging and accessible exploration that serves as a valuable resource for practitioners, consultants, scholars, and students alike.

The authors emphasize their desire to open up the field of strategic management, advocating for reconciliation among its diverse perspectives instead of isolating them. They aim to make the subject approachable without oversimplifying its complexities. To complement their main text, they have also released "Strategy Bites Back," a companion volume that presents additional insights and playful content, along with an Instructor's Manual designed to aid in classroom discussions of their unconventional approach.

Acknowledgments in this chapter highlight key contributors and supporters essential to the book's development and publication. The authors express

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their gratitude to numerous individuals and institutions, including Bob Wallace and Abby Luthin from The Free Press, as well as supportive colleagues like Kate Maguire and Coralie Clement, who facilitated the manuscript's production. Their appreciation extends to insightful reviewers such as Joëlle Meric and students from Henry's colloquium, who provided feedback fostering improvement.

With the second edition, the authors revisit their original work, refining existing content and integrating contemporary ideas, including dynamic capabilities and the interplay between cognition and competition. They acknowledge the ongoing dialogue with readers and instructors that has driven their evolution as authors.

Ultimately, the authors invite readers to embark on this intellectual journey through the strategic management landscape, promising both challenge and clarity as they navigate the intricacies of the discipline together. This chapter serves not only as an introduction to their work but also as an invitation to re-examine and engage with the multifaceted field of strategic management, fostering a shared exploration of ideas.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: 1 'And over here, ladies and gentlemen: the strategic management beast'

In this second chapter of "Strategy Safari," Henry Mintzberg introduces a complex and multifaceted view of strategic management through an insightful analogy of the blind men and the elephant, emphasizing the concept that strategy formation is akin to an elephant that cannot be understood merely by grasping individual parts. The chapter posits that, in approaching strategy formation, one must consider both the entirety and the individual components. This leads to the introduction of ten distinct schools of thought, each elucidating a different perspective on strategy formation.

The first central idea revolves around the concept that understanding strategy requires a variety of perspectives due to its complexity. This is summarized in the notion that while individuals may grasp specific aspects of strategy, the whole picture encompasses more than these parts. The anecdote of the six blind men illustrates that while each has a valid observation, none fully understands the elephant, akin to strategists who may excel in particular strategies yet fail to perceive the broader strategic landscape.

1. To maintain cognitive coherence, the book proposes ten schools of thought, each representing a unique approach to strategy formation. These ten schools are categorized as follows:

- **The Design School:** Focuses on the conception of strategy.

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- **The Planning School:** Centers on strategy formulation as a formalized process.
- **The Positioning School:** Analyzes strategy through competitive positioning in the marketplace.
- **The Entrepreneurial School:** Emphasizes visionary leaders and their influence on strategy.
- **The Cognitive School:** Investigates the mental processes behind strategic decisions.
- **The Learning School:** Highlights strategies that emerge over time through trial and error.
- **The Power School:** Explores strategy formation as negotiation between differing perspectives and interests.
- **The Cultural School:** Considers strategy as a collective process shaped by organizational culture.
- **The Environmental School:** Argues that strategy is reactive to external environmental pressures.
- **The Configuration School:** Integrates the various elements of strategy into distinct developmental stages.

Each of these schools represents a different approach to understanding strategy, with the first three being more prescriptive and focused on theory, while the subsequent schools describe how strategies actually form and evolve in practice.



2. The chapter further explains the cognitive aspects of strategy formation. Mintzberg suggests that while strategy is often defined in terms of clear plans and directives, it is also inherently shaped by the past behavior of organizations, leading to the understanding of strategy as both planned and emergent. This distinction is critical in recognizing that real-world strategies often blend intentional planning with the adaptability required to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

3. In discussing the definitions of strategy, the author introduces five distinct interpretations:

- **Strategy as Plan:** Emphasizing future-oriented action.
  
- **Strategy as Pattern:** Recognizing the consistency of behavior over time.
  
- **Strategy as Position:** Referring to the organization's marketplace stance.
  
- **Strategy as Perspective:** Highlighting the organization's overarching approach and ideologies.
  
- **Strategy as Ploy:** Referencing specific maneuvers to outsmart competitors.

These definitions underscore the multifaceted nature of strategy and highlight that no single interpretation is wholly sufficient in capturing its



essence.

4. The advantages and disadvantages of strategy are explored further, presenting the idea that while strategy provides clarity and direction, it can also limit an organization's vision by confining it to predetermined paths. For instance, a deliberate strategy can lead to groupthink, stifling innovation and responsiveness to changing environments. Conversely, organizations that maintain a flexible approach may foster creativity and adaptability, suggesting that strategic absence can also enable greater agility.

5. Finally, Mintzberg positions the academic discipline of strategic management within this broader framework, critiquing its conventional focus on rational and prescriptive formulations of strategy. He argues for a more nuanced understanding that encompasses diverse schools of thought, suggesting that high-performing organizations synthesize these varied approaches to create effective and adaptable strategies.

As the chapter closes, Mintzberg invites readers to hold these ten perspectives simultaneously, encouraging a comprehensive understanding of strategy that recognizes its complexity and interrelated components. The overarching message emphasizes that effective strategists must integrate both different schools of thought and the various definitions of strategy to navigate the intricate landscape of organizational management successfully.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Understand the Big Picture

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine standing before a vast tapestry woven from countless threads, each representing a distinct perspective on life and decision-making. This is similar to the intricate landscape of strategy formation that Mintzberg describes. By acknowledging that every viewpoint, much like each thread, contributes to the whole, you can approach your own life with a broader understanding. Instead of merely focusing on isolated events or decisions, allow yourself to see how they interconnect and shape your journey. Embrace the complexity of your experiences, knowing that it's not just the individual moments that count, but how they all weave together into the fabric of your narrative. This holistic perspective will not only enrich your understanding of situations but can guide you toward more thoughtful and strategic choices that resonate with your overarching goals.

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## **Chapter 3: 2 The design school: strategy formation as a process of conception**

The design school of strategy formation has established itself as one of the most influential paradigms in the field of strategic management. Its lasting impact can be attributed to insights from cornerstone publications, notably Philip Selznick's "Leadership in Administration" and Alfred D. Chandler's "Strategy and Structure," which paved the way for the notion of aligning an organization's internal capabilities with external opportunities. This school is encapsulated by the SWOT analysis framework—an assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats—that has become ubiquitous in both academic and professional settings.

At its core, the design school advocates for a systematic approach to crafting strategy where the ultimate goal is to achieve a harmonious fit between an organization's unique competencies and the opportunities presented by the external environment. The underlying mantra of this school is "establish fit," highlighting the importance of alignment in successful strategic endeavors.

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## Chapter 4 Summary: 3 The planning school: strategy formation as a formal process

In Chapter 4 of "Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg, the author examines the planning school of thought in strategy formation, emphasizing its evolution, principles, and limitations. The 1970s marked a significant rise in the popularity of formal strategic planning, driven by the belief that management could benefit from structured procedures, formal analysis, and extensive use of quantitative metrics to guide strategy. This notion became widely accepted among managers and academics alike, leading to the establishment of strategic management as a distinct field of study.

**1. The Nature of the Planning School:** The planning school focuses on a formal process of strategy formation that is often characterized by detailed procedures, checklists, and quantitative objectives. Influenced by works like H. Igor Ansoff's "Corporate Strategy," the school proposed that a well-defined and methodical approach to strategy would lead to better decision-making. However, despite the proliferation of literature advocating for this structured approach, actual research into its efficacy was scant, often focusing on the assumption that planning was inherently beneficial.

**2. Key Steps in the Strategic Planning Model:** Most strategic planning methods distill into a basic model involving several stages: objectives setting, external and internal audits, strategy evaluation, operationalization



of strategies, and scheduling. During the objectives-setting phase, the emphasis is on quantifying goals, frequently leading to confusion as to what qualifies as an objective versus a strategy. The external audit relies heavily on forecasting and analyzing future market conditions, while the internal audit examines the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Strategy evaluation becomes crucial for resource allocation and employs various financial techniques, thereby reinforcing the financial-centric view of planning.

**3. The Execution of Planning:** The planning process explicitly separates strategy formulation from its execution, a divide that risks overlooking the organic nature of strategy creation. Although planning methodologies aim to decompose tasks into manageable components, this can lead to a routine of 'number crunching' rather than meaningful strategic thought. Over time, it became evident that the increasingly complex and formalized nature of strategic planning often resulted in an inflexible and overly bureaucratic process that stifled creativity and adaptation.

**4. Recent Developments and Revisions:** Despite the critiques, several newer concepts within the planning school have emerged, such as scenario planning, which acknowledges the uncertain nature of the business environment. This method proposes that by imagining multiple plausible futures, organizations can better prepare for unforeseen challenges. Real options theory is another development that applies financial options to



managerial decision-making, allowing for more dynamic and flexible responses to changing conditions.

**5. The Fallacies of Strategic Planning:** The chapter outlines major pitfalls in the planning process, suggesting that it often leads to formalized, cookie-cutter strategies that lack real-world applicability. Common issues include the fallacy of predetermination—believing that future conditions can be accurately predicted; the fallacy of detachment, which emphasizes separation between strategists and action; and the fallacy of formalization, which assumes that structured processes can substitute for the creativity and flexibility needed in strategy development.

Overall, Mintzberg argues that while strategic planning can offer value, its rigid structures and reliance on quantitative data often lead to a disconnect from the complexities of real-world strategy making. The chapter ultimately challenges the belief that strategy can be reduced to a formalized set of steps; instead, it suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the nature of strategy—one that integrates both analytical and creative thinking—is essential for effective organizational decision-making. The future of strategic planning lies not merely in rehashing its existing methodologies but in recognizing the dynamic interplay between planning and emergent strategy creation.

Section	Summary
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Section	Summary
The Nature of the Planning School	The planning school advocates for a formal strategy formation process characterized by detailed procedures and quantitative objectives, influenced by H. Igor Ansoff. Despite the popularity of this approach, research on its effectiveness is limited, and it assumes that planning is inherently beneficial.
Key Steps in the Strategic Planning Model	Strategic planning involves stages: objectives setting, audits, strategy evaluation, operationalization, and scheduling. The objectives-setting phase often confuses objectives with strategies. It relies heavily on forecasting market conditions and examining internal strengths and weaknesses.
The Execution of Planning	Planning separates strategy formulation from execution, risking neglect of the organic nature of strategy. This divide promotes a focus on number crunching rather than strategic thinking, leading to an inflexible and bureaucratic process that stifles creativity.
Recent Developments and Revisions	New concepts like scenario planning and real options theory have emerged. Scenario planning helps organizations prepare for uncertainty by imagining multiple futures, while real options theory introduces flexibility in decision-making.
The Fallacies of Strategic Planning	Major pitfalls include the fallacy of predetermination (predicting future conditions), detachment (separating strategists from action), and formalization (over-reliance on structure), which can lead to strategies that lack real-world relevance.
Overall Implication	While strategic planning has value, its rigid structures often create a disconnect from the complexities of real-world strategy. A dynamic interplay of planning and emergent strategy is necessary for effective decision-making.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embrace Flexibility Over Rigidity

**Critical Interpretation:** Consider how the rigid structures of traditional strategic planning in your life may limit your ability to adapt and grow. Just as Mintzberg critiques the fallacies of pre-determined and formalized strategies, you too can benefit from allowing flexibility to guide your decisions. Instead of confining yourself to a strict plan or checklist for your personal goals, acknowledge that life is unpredictable and often requires you to pivot. By embracing the unknown and staying open to new opportunities, you empower yourself to navigate challenges with creativity and resilience, ultimately leading to more fulfilling outcomes.

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## **Chapter 5 Summary: 4 The positioning school: strategy formation as an analytical process**

In the fifth chapter of "Strategy Safari," Henry Mintzberg delves into the positioning school of strategy formation, highlighting its evolution as a significant movement that emerged in the early 1980s. This school focused on the analysis of market positions and the specific strategies organizations could adopt within varying economic contexts. By emphasizing concrete strategies rather than just the processes of strategy formulation, the positioning school opened the door for deeper investigations into the field of strategic management.

In 1980, Michael Porter's seminal work "Competitive Strategy" catalyzed this shift. Porter introduced a structured approach to competitive analysis derived from industrial organization, addressing the relationships between market structures and business strategies. His work solidified the positioning school as a dominant force in strategic management, promoting the idea that strategy formation must include the careful selection of generic positions that can be defended against competitors.

The positioning school operates on several premises:

1. Strategies are viewed as generic marketplace positions.
2. The context for these strategies is largely economic and competitive.

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3. Strategy formation hinges on the analytical selection of these positions.
4. Analysts significantly influence this process, providing data-driven recommendations for managerial decision-making.
5. This structured process leads to formal, predefined strategies that respond to market structures.

The chapter further outlines three distinct waves within the positioning school. The first wave traces the origins of strategic concepts to military maxims, notably from figures like Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz, who underscored tactical positioning in competitive environments. Sun Tzu emphasized understanding one's adversaries and environments, advocating tactics that resonate with today's positioning strategies, while Clausewitz provided insights into the complexities and unpredictability of strategy.

The second wave, emerging in the 1960s through the 1980s, saw strategy boutiques like the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) dominate the consulting landscape. These firms focused heavily on market share as a key indicator of strategic success and developed frameworks such as the BCG growth-share matrix, which categorized businesses into types like "cash cows" and "dogs" based on their market performance.

The third wave began to stress empirical research, as scholars sought to delineate relationships between external market conditions and effective internal strategies, spurred by Porter's encouragement of systematic study.

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Porter identified five competitive forces that shape an industry: barriers to entry, bargaining power of suppliers, bargaining power of buyers, threat of substitutes, and rivalry among existing competitors. He posited that firms could glean strategic advantages by effectively analyzing and responding to these forces through generic strategies categorized as cost leadership, differentiation, and focus.

Despite its contributions, the positioning school has faced critiques regarding its narrow focus and methodology. Critics argue that its over-reliance on quantitative analysis can overlook the importance of qualitative factors and the dynamic nature of real-world environments. The emphasis on choosing generic strategies may stifle creativity and adaptability, leading firms to be trapped in conventional paradigms rather than exploring innovative paths. This reductionist view risks positioning firms as mere imitators rather than innovators capable of crafting unique strategies that resonate with their deeper organizational identities.

In summary, while the positioning school has undeniably enriched the field of strategic management and provided robust frameworks for analysis, it risks promoting a deterministic view of strategy formation that may limit organizational creativity and responsiveness. The call is for a balance between analytical rigor and strategic flexibility, ensuring that firms do not become prisoners of established patterns but instead harness the dynamism of the business landscape to foster growth and innovation.

<b>Key Concepts</b>	<b>Description</b>
Positioning School	An evolution in strategy formation focused on market positions and strategies suited to economic contexts, began in the early 1980s.
Michael Porter	His 1980 work "Competitive Strategy" structured competitive analysis and emphasized strategy formation through careful market position selection.
Core Premises	Strategies as generic positions, context of economic competition, reliance on analytical selection, role of analysts, leading to formal strategies.
First Wave	Inspiration from military tactics by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, emphasizing competitive positioning.
Second Wave	1960s to 1980s focus on market share by consulting firms like BCG, and frameworks like the growth-share matrix.
Third Wave	Emphasis on empirical research linking external market conditions to internal strategies; introduced Porter's five competitive forces.
Critiques	Narrow focus on quantitative analysis, potential stifling of creativity, risks of reducing firms to imitators, and the need for strategic flexibility.
Conclusion	Positioning school adds value to strategic management, but it promotes a deterministic view that may limit creativity and responsiveness.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embrace Flexible Thinking in Strategy Formation

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine navigating your own life's journey with the strategic insights that the positioning school of strategy formation offers. By recognizing the importance of adaptable strategies, you can take lessons from the framework laid out by thinkers like Michael Porter. Picture yourself assessing your personal circumstances as if they were a market, analyzing the opportunities and challenges you face. This perspective empowers you to not only choose a position that aligns with your strengths but also to remain vigilant in adapting to changing personal and professional landscapes. Instead of adhering strictly to a single path dictated by convention, you embrace a mindset that allows for innovation, creativity, and a tailored approach unique to your aspirations and identity. So, as you embark on new ventures or tackle challenges, remember that the best strategies are those that blend analytical insight with the flexibility to pivot—making your journey not just about surviving market forces but thriving within them.

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## **Chapter 6: 5 The entrepreneurial school: strategy formation as a visionary process**

Chapter 6 of "Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg delves into the entrepreneurial school of strategy formation, positioning it between prescriptions and descriptive schools. Unlike the design school that emphasizes structured frameworks and often sidelines intuition, the entrepreneurial school elevates the role of a singular leader, who operates primarily through intuition, judgment, and vision, thus establishing strategy as a personal, introspective journey rather than a collective or cultural construct.

Central to this school is the concept of vision—a leader's mental representation of the organization's strategy. This vision serves as an inspiration and guiding idea for the organization, remaining flexible to adapt to experiences. The entrepreneurial strategy emerges as both deliberate in overarching direction and emergent in details, allowing for adaptability during its evolution.

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## **Chapter 7 Summary: 6 The cognitive school: strategy formation as a mental process**

In the realm of strategic management, the cognitive school emphasizes the importance of understanding the mental processes influencing strategy formation. This chapter introduces the cognitive school as an evolving body of research guided by cognitive psychology, urging a deeper exploration of how strategists think and make decisions.

1. **The Cognitive Process of Strategy Formation:** At the core of the cognitive school is the notion that strategy formation is fundamentally a cognitive endeavor that takes place within the strategist's mind. This perspective presents strategies not merely as plans but as mental constructs—concepts, maps, schemas, and frames—that guide how individuals interpret and react to their environment.

2. **The Role of Cognitive Biases:** Scholars such as Herbert Simon pioneered insights into human cognitive limitations, revealing how biases often cloud decision-making. Research by Tversky and Kahneman on judgmental biases, such as the tendency to seek confirming evidence and ignore contradictory information, showcases the distortion this introduces into strategic decision-making processes. These biases highlight how strategists often fail to engage with the complexities of their environments, relying instead on oversimplified interpretations.



3. Individual and Collective Cognition: Decision-making is further complicated by organizational dynamics where collective cognition and groupthink can lead to poor strategic outcomes. The interplay between individual biases and organizational structures creates a situation where information is filtered and distorted as it reaches higher management levels. Awareness of these dynamics can help strategists combat biases and improve decision-making processes.

4. Mental Structures and Strategic Mapping: A pivotal aspect of the cognitive school is the recognition of mental structures—schemas and cognitive maps—that help strategists organize knowledge and navigate complexity. These maps allow strategists to construct understanding from limited information, but can also reinforce existing beliefs, hindering adaptability.

5. The Process of Concept Attainment: Strategy-making involves the creation of cognitive maps, where managers synthesize diverse information into usable concepts. This blend of personal intuition and learned knowledge shapes strategic insights. However, understanding the full cognitive landscape of decision-making remains challenging as many intuitive processes lie outside conscious awareness.

6. Social Construction of Reality: The chapter contrasts objective and

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subjective interpretations of the environment, advocating for a constructionist approach. This perspective posits that the realities organizations perceive are shaped by collective interpretations rather than directly observable truths. Managers craft their environments through their beliefs and actions, emphasizing the significance of shared frames in strategic decision-making.

7. Implications of Hypercompetition: In rapidly changing markets characterized by hypercompetition, traditional views on competition as an objective reality become less relevant. Under such conditions, strategists must rely on their perceptions and interpretations of competitors' actions rather than fixed rules or outcomes. This necessitates the ability to adapt cognitive maps quickly and invent strategies that disrupt the status quo.

8. The Evolving Nature of the Cognitive School: The chapter concludes with a recognition of the cognitive school's contributions and limitations. While it provides valuable insights into the mental processes underlying strategy formulation, it also indicates the need for further investigation into how strategists transform complex inputs into actionable strategies. This perspective encourages continued exploration of the psychological dimensions of strategic management, blending cognitive psychology with the realities of organizational behavior. Understanding cognition is crucial for strategists aiming to navigate an increasingly complex business landscape.

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In summary, the cognitive school serves as a bridge connecting various approaches to strategy formulation by acknowledging the intricate cognitive processes that underpin decision-making, the biases that distort perceptions, and the collective dynamics that shape organizational reality. The interplay of individual cognition and collective interpretation reveals valuable insights into how strategies are crafted amidst uncertainty and complexity.

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# Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The Role of Cognitive Biases

**Critical Interpretation:** Reflecting on the concept of cognitive biases can profoundly transform your approach to decision-making. Imagine standing at a crossroads, faced with choices that will shape your future. Instead of rushing into a decision based solely on your instincts, you pause and consider how biases might be influencing your thoughts. Perhaps you're seeking affirmation from your previous experiences, inadvertently ignoring alternative perspectives that could challenge your assumptions. By actively recognizing these cognitive traps, you carve out the space to engage with complexities and uncertainty, allowing for insights that may have previously eluded you. This awareness not only enhances personal growth but could also lead to more rational, informed, and, ultimately, effective choices in both your career and personal life.

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## **Chapter 8 Summary: 7 The learning school: strategy formation as an emergent process**

In Chapter 8 of "Strategy Safari," Mintzberg introduces the learning school, which perceives strategy formation as an emergent and iterative process shaped by collective learning and experiences within organizations. This contrasts with the more structured approaches proposed by previous schools of thought in strategic management, such as the design, planning, and positioning schools.

1. The learning school argues that as organizations confront the complexities of their environments, strategies naturally evolve through the accumulated learning and actions of individuals, rather than through prescribed plans. This perspective was notably influenced by Charles Lindblom, whose idea of "muddling through" illustrates that decision-making is often chaotic and non-linear, a reflection of real-world organizational behavior.

2. Mintzberg emphasizes the distinction between strategy formulation and strategy formation. While traditional schools focus on how strategies should be constructed through deliberate processes, the learning school prioritizes understanding how strategies actually emerge in practice. This involves a significant shift towards observing real behaviors within organizations rather than imposing theoretical frameworks.

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3. A pivotal aspect of the learning process is incrementalism, as highlighted by James Brian Quinn. He proposed "logical incrementalism," where strategic direction evolves through the interaction of various decisions rather than through a predefined path. This approach allows organizations to adapt and refine their strategies based on real-time feedback and operational experiences.

4. The evolution of the learning school is marked by different stages, beginning with Lindblom's disjointed incrementalism and advancing to theories such as Quinn's logical incrementalism and the work of Burgelman on internal corporate venturing. These theories underscore the importance of smaller initiatives and their cumulative impact on organizational strategy, highlighting that significant changes often arise not from top-down directives but from grassroots efforts.

5. Mintzberg also discusses concepts such as emergence and retrospective sense-making, which illustrate how organizations learn from their actions. This involves reflecting on past experiences to understand their successes and failures, ultimately informing future strategic decisions. Managers in this framework are encouraged to facilitate environments where learning flourishes, allowing organic strategies to develop.

6. The chapter critiques the potential pitfalls of an overemphasis on learning, warning against the dangers of lack of strategic coherence and the risks

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associated with perpetual change. The challenge lies in balancing flexibility with stability; organizations must be adaptive but also grounded in a clear strategic vision.

7. Additionally, Mintzberg expands on the implications of the learning school in various contexts, especially in professional organizations where knowledge and expertise are often distributed. Here, effective strategy emerges through collaboration, allowing the various levels of an organization to contribute to the strategic process actively.

8. The learning organization concept emerges as a culmination of this school, stressing the need for organizations to create cultures that prioritize continuous learning and knowledge sharing. Core principles include recognizing learning from failure, engaging employees at all levels, and being open to external knowledge sources.

9. Finally, the chapter acknowledges that while learning is crucial, achieving coherent and effective strategies requires discipline. The organization must be vigilant and strategic in its learning processes to prevent drift and ensure alignment with overall objectives.

In summary, Mintzberg's portrayal of the learning school presents a rich understanding of strategy formation as a dynamic and collaborative process, challenging traditional notions of top-down strategic planning. The emphasis

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on emergent strategies fueled by collective learning reflects the complexities of navigating a rapidly changing business landscape, ultimately offering a more nuanced perspective on how organizations can effectively evolve over time.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Embrace Emergent Learning in Life

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine navigating your life's journey much like an organization does in the chapter on the learning school by Mintzberg. You can embrace the idea that life is a series of experiences—each decision, every new interaction, contributes to your personal evolution. Rather than strictly adhering to a rigid plan, allow yourself to learn from each moment, be it a failure that teaches resilience or a success that sparks further ambition. This flexibility opens up pathways you may not have considered, enabling you to adapt and grow organically. By reflecting on your past and understanding how it shapes your choices, you cultivate a wisdom that guides your future, transforming uncertainties into opportunities and turning chaos into your unique narrative.

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## **Chapter 9: 8 The power school: strategy formation as a process of negotiation**

Chapter 9 of "Strategy Safari" explores the power school, presenting strategy formation as an intricate process marked by negotiation, influence, and politics. The author emphasizes that strategies often emerge not through rational design but rather through complex social interactions among individuals and groups within an organization.

1. **The Nature of Power and Politics:** The chapter begins by framing strategy as an interplay of power dynamics, where various stakeholders wield influence both within and outside the organization. This view contrasts sharply with earlier schools of thought that treated strategy as a strictly analytical process. Here, power transcends mere economic considerations, encompassing political tactics that organizations utilize either to manipulate or to align with competitors and other stakeholders.

2. **Micro Power vs. Macro Power:** The power school distinguishes between micro power—internal organizational dynamics shaped by the interests and

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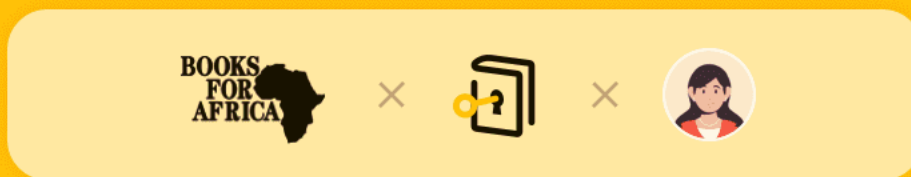
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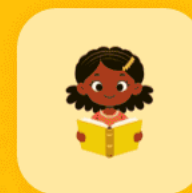
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## **Chapter 10 Summary: 9 The cultural school: strategy formation as a collective process**

Chapter 10 of "Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg discusses the cultural school of thought in strategic management, emphasizing that strategy formation is deeply rooted in the collective process shaped by organizational culture. The chapter introduces the duality of culture — its pervasive nature and its unique representation in different organizations, highlighting how culture influences both the stability of strategies and resistance to change.

The cultural school posits that strategy formation is a process of social interaction grounded in the shared beliefs and understandings within an organization. This school emerged prominently in the 1980s, largely influenced by the success of Japanese corporations, which demonstrated a distinct cultural approach to management. Despite its popularity, early studies focused primarily on worker motivation rather than directly contributing to a deeper understanding of strategic management. As this field matured, cultural analysis evolved, shifting from objective exteriors of culture to the interpretative insights of its essence within organizations.

A key premise of the cultural school is that individuals within an organization acquire beliefs through socialization processes, which often remain tacit and nonverbal. This leads to a situation where the beliefs underpinning culture may only be partially articulated by organizational

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members, shaping collective intentions that influence strategic behavior. Importantly, culture—especially ideology—tends to favor perpetuation of existing strategies rather than encouraging transformative changes.

Several frameworks illustrate the intertwining of culture and strategy. Organizational culture acts as a perceptual filter, influencing decision-making processes and filtering external stimuli to align with established values. Resistance to strategic change can often emerge from these shared commitments and deeply held beliefs that make organizations hesitant to deviate from familiar strategies. The chapter stresses that overcoming this resistance requires an unlearning of old dominant logics, spurred often by crises that expose fissures in organizational beliefs.

The Swedish wing of the cultural school significantly contributed to this field by focusing on concepts such as fit and consonance to adapt to cultural contexts. Their work emphasized collective reframing necessary for strategic evolution and detailed mechanisms for achieving organizational adjustments.

The notion of "strategy-as-practice" emerged as researchers sought to delve deeper into the day-to-day realities of strategy-making, advocating for a focus on the actual activities managers engage in rather than solely the cognitive beliefs that underlie cultural assumptions.

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Furthermore, the resource-based view provides an important perspective in linking cultural aspects to competitive advantage, positing that unique organizational resources, once formed within a cultural context, contribute to sustaining an edge over competitors. However, questions remain regarding how to effectively identify and measure these resources to ensure they deliver implications for long-term strategic formulation.

1. Strategy formation is fundamentally a collective social process influenced by the shared beliefs and interpretations of organizational members.
2. Members acquire beliefs through socialization, which are often tacit and hard to articulate, shaping the overall strategic perspective.
3. Organizational culture acts as a perceptual lens affecting decision-making and interpreting the environment, leading to resistance against fundamental strategic change.
4. Cultures rooted in ideology may discourage change, perpetuating existing strategies rather than adapting to new challenges, often requiring a crisis to catalyze transformation.
5. Overcoming resistance involves unlearning entrenched beliefs and fostering flexibility within the strategic context.
6. The “strategy-as-practice” focus emphasizes understanding strategies through the lens of everyday managerial actions rather than abstract concepts.
7. The resource-based view connects culture directly to competitive advantage, highlighting how unique resources cultivated through culture can



lead to sustained market benefits, albeit with challenges in recognizing and measuring these resources.

8. The critique of the cultural school highlights potential stagnation due to its emphasis on established traditions, while also recognizing its contributions in framing strategy within the context of collective cognition and stability.

The chapter concludes with a reminder of the importance of balance in strategic paradigms, recognizing that while culture plays a significant role in organizational life, dynamic adaptation to changing environments is equally crucial for strategic success.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** Recognizing the Power of Collective Beliefs

**Critical Interpretation:** Imagine walking into your workplace or community, fully aware that your own beliefs and actions are not in isolation but are shaped by the collective mindset around you. The key takeaway from Chapter 10 of 'Strategy Safari' encourages you to engage actively in the shared culture that surrounds you. By acknowledging how deeply ingrained beliefs influence your decisions, you can cultivate a more adaptable mindset. This awareness empowers you to challenge the status quo, unlearn restrictive habits, and embrace transformative changes when faced with resistance. Much like organizations recognize the need for adaptation during crises, you too can find the strength to reevaluate your values and perspectives, fostering not only personal growth but also encouraging a culture of innovation within your environment.

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## **Chapter 11 Summary: 10 The environmental school: strategy formation as a reactive process**

In Chapter 11 of "Strategy Safari," Henry Mintzberg introduces the environmental school of thought in strategic management, which emphasizes the pivotal role of external forces in shaping organizational strategy. This perspective diverges from previous schools by portraying the organization as largely reactive, interpreting strategy formation as a process that is predominantly driven by environmental factors. Here are the key premises that underlie this perspective:

1. The external environment acts as the central actor in the strategy-making process, framing the organization's choices.
2. In its formative period, an organization adapts to its environment; subsequently, its ability to respond diminishes as it becomes entrenched.
3. The survival of organizations heavily relies on critical choices made during their early development.
4. Over time, leadership's influence over performance and survival declines as external pressures gain prominence.
5. Organizations that withstand environmental selection pressures tend to cluster in specific ecological niches, sharing common technologies and management practices.

The origins of the environmental school can be traced back to contingency



theory, which posits that there is no universally optimal organizational structure or strategy; rather, effective management depends on context. This theory articulates various dimensions of the environment that affect organizational behavior, such as stability, complexity, market diversity, and hostility. Each of these dimensions can dictate different strategic approaches.

On the other hand, population ecology extends these ideas by suggesting that most organizational characteristics are established early and that significant changes are rare. It posits that environmental selection processes inherently favor those organizations that are best suited to the prevailing conditions. This view implies that organizational survival is contingent on how well they fit their environment, focusing less on adaptation and more on the competitive forces shaping the organizational landscape.

The chapter also explores institutional theory, highlighting how organizational strategies are influenced by external pressures, norms, and expectations that compel organizations towards conformity. This results in what is termed isomorphism, wherein organizations in similar environments adopt similar practices to gain legitimacy and reduce uncertainty, typically expressed through three forms: coercive isomorphism (pressure from regulations), mimetic isomorphism (imitation of successful peers), and normative isomorphism (influence of professional standards).

In a critique of the environmental school, Mintzberg raises concerns

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regarding the abstract nature of the proposed dimensions of environmental influence, arguing for a more nuanced understanding that goes beyond aggregated categorizations. He asserts the importance of individual strategic choice and posits that organizations can actively create strategies within constraints defined by their environments.

In essence, while the environmental school offers valuable insights into the interplay between organizations and their external contexts, it may overlook the agency and strategic creativity that organizations can exercise in navigating their constraints. Mintzberg concludes that strategic management thrives in complexity, where understanding the fine details of the environment can reveal opportunities for innovation and adaptation, underscoring the need for researchers and practitioners to remain engaged with the evolving realities of organizational life. The chapter serves as a call to balance acknowledgment of external influences with an appreciation of the inherent choices that organizations must navigate.

Key Premises	Description
External environment's role	The external environment is the central actor in shaping organizational strategy.
Adaptation in formative stages	Organizations adapt to their environment initially, but their responsiveness declines over time.
Early development	Survival relies heavily on critical choices made during early development.

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Key Premises	Description
choices	
Decline of leadership influence	Over time, external pressures diminish the influence of leadership on performance and survival.
Ecological niches	Successful organizations tend to cluster in specific niches with similar technologies and practices.
Contingency theory origins	No one-size-fits-all strategy exists; effective management depends on environmental context.
Population ecology	Most organizational traits are established early with rare significant changes, favoring suited organizations.
Institutional theory	External pressures cause organizational conformity, resulting in isomorphism.
Forms of isomorphism	Coercive, mimetic, and normative isomorphism lead organizations to adopt similar practices.
Critique of environmental school	Mintzberg calls for a nuanced understanding that acknowledges individual strategic choices and creativity.
Conclusion	Strategic management should balance external influences with individual organizational agency and adaptation capabilities.



## **Chapter 12: 11 The configuration school: strategy formation as a process of transformation**

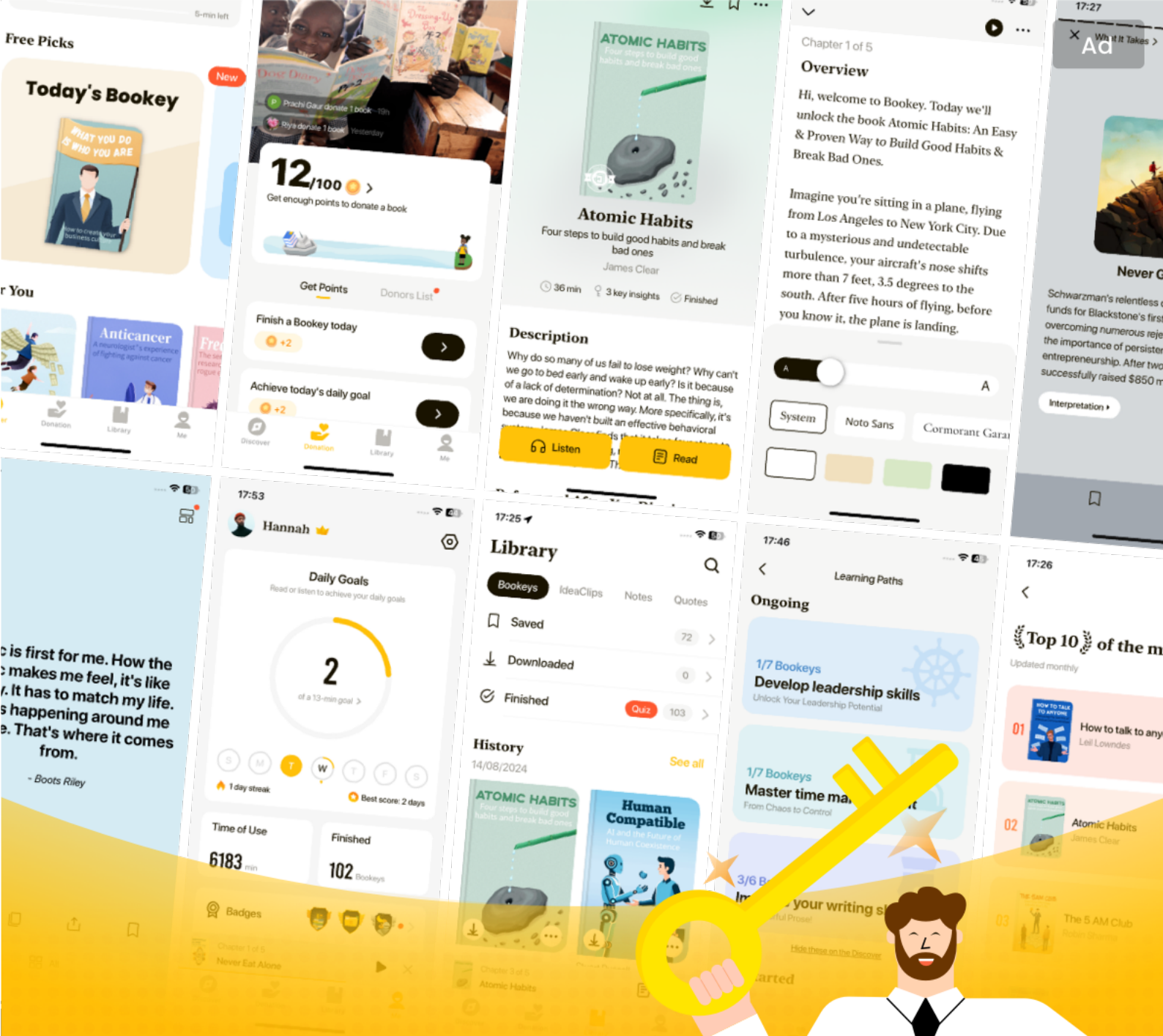
In Chapter 12 of "Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg, the configuration school presents a unique perspective on strategy formation, framing it as a dual process of configuration and transformation. This chapter elaborates the relationship between an organization's stable states and the dynamic processes of change.

The core premise of the configuration school posits that organizations typically operate within a distinct structure, or configuration, that shapes their strategies and behaviors over a defined period. These configurations are disrupted by transformative processes that propel organizations into new states, suggesting an intrinsic connection between stability and change in strategic management.

1. During the stable phases, organizations adopt particular forms that dictate their strategies, which remain consistent with their environment and overall goals.

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## Chapter 13 Summary: 12 'Hang on, ladies and gentlemen, you have yet to meet the whole beast'

In Chapter 13 of "Strategy Safari" by Henry Mintzberg, the author explores the multifaceted nature of strategic management by using a metaphorical "elephant" to represent the whole picture of strategy formation. He emphasizes that, like the parts of a cow which work seamlessly together, the elements of an organization should collaborate efficiently, rather than operate as disconnected components on a chart. This notion leads to a key inquiry: should organizations resemble a chart or an animal that instinctively functions as a cohesive unit?

1. The Limitations of Perspective: Just as the blind men who encountered an elephant could only grasp its features through isolated experiences, strategic management must be understood as a holistic construct. No single description or analysis can encapsulate its complexity; instead, it requires an overarching perspective that marries various aspects together.

2. The Diverse 'Beasts' of Strategy: Mintzberg outlines several metaphors for various strategic schools, including a lone spider representing the design school, a squirrel for planning, a lion for positioning, and a chameleon for learning. Each animal suggests different strategies and approaches to navigating the complexities of organizational management. Through these metaphors, he illustrates the wide-ranging perspectives that shape strategic

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thought.

3. **Evolution and Dominance of Schools:** The chapter discusses the evolution of strategic management theories and the dynamic, sometimes contentious journey they have undertaken since the early 1960s. Observational graphs demonstrate how attention to these schools has shifted over decades, highlighting the rapid pace of growth and the blending of ideas the field is now experiencing. This reflects a growing recognition that strategy formulation can be eclectic and adaptable rather than strictly prescriptive or descriptive.

4. **Summary of Schools' Attributes:** Mintzberg presents a comprehensive table delineating the attributes of each of the ten strategic schools. This table serves as both a reference and a summary, encapsulating the core principles, processes, and outcomes associated with each school, while also acknowledging the complexity of the relationships between them.

5. **Fundamental Issues in Strategy Formation:** A series of key dilemmas regarding strategy—such as the balance between complexity and simplicity, integration versus fragmentation, and the role of leadership—are explored. Each issue requires a nuanced understanding that eschews extremes and instead embraces a middle ground that accommodates various practical realities.

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6. **The Role of Learning and Control:** The chapter examines the tension between deliberate and emergent strategy formation. It emphasizes that successful strategic processes often require a blend of both deliberate planning and adaptability, illustrating the need to navigate between control and learning to achieve effective outcomes.

7. **The Necessity of Integration:** Mintzberg urges that no single school or approach should dominate the strategy landscape, as each has valuable insights to contribute. Strategy formation is inherently integrative, requiring a synthesis of various perspectives and frameworks to create coherent and successful strategies.

8. **The Complexity of Strategy Formation:** The chapter concludes with an acknowledgment of the inherent complexities within strategic management. Mintzberg highlights that organizations must contend with multiple factors—including cognitive, social, and environmental influences—all while balancing the need for proactive leadership and responsiveness to change.

Ultimately, Mintzberg encourages readers to venture beyond the confines of traditional strategic schools and to embrace a comprehensive, integrative view of strategy formation. This broader lens allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in organizational strategy, enabling managers to connect the disparate elements of their strategic

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processes into a cohesive whole. Rather than simply categorizing strategies, the chapter calls for recognition of the interplay between various schools, emphasizing that the true essence of strategy lies in understanding the entire ecosystem in which these strategies emerge and evolve.

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