VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY-HANOI

**UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**PHẠM THỊ MAI**

**CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS OF BUSINESS**

**IN ECONOMIC NEWS DISCOURSE**

**(Ẩn dụ ý niệm ‘business’ trong diễn ngôn tin tức kinh tế)**

**Major: English Linguistics**

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**SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS**

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**CHAPTER 1:** **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter introduces the study’s focus on the conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in the retail industry during the Covid-19 pandemic. It outlines the research aim, key questions, and scope, and presents the methodology used in the analysis. The chapter emphasizes the research’s significance and provides an overview of the thesis structure, setting the stage for exploring how BUSINESS metaphors shape economic discourse during the pandemic.

* 1. **Economic and Social Context of Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS**

This study investigates how BUSINESS is shaped through metaphors in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. By analyzing Forbes’ Retail section, it explores how metaphors reflect socio-economic shifts in the crisis (2020) and recovery (2021-2022) phases. The pandemic’s impact on the U.S. economy, with contrasting outcomes for non-essential retailers and e-commerce, highlights how metaphors such as BUSINESS IS WAR and BUSINESS IS EXPANSION frame business strategies, resilience, and growth in response to economic disruptions.

**1.2. Rationale**

This research addresses the gap in studying conceptual metaphors within retail discourse, an area underexplored compared to sectors such as finance and marketing. The Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the role of metaphors in shaping business strategies, particularly around survival and growth. By analyzing metaphors such as BUSINESS IS WAR and BUSINESS IS EXPANSION, the study highlights how metaphors frame economic realities and influence public perception. Using Forbes Retail section as a data source ensures credibility, providing practical insights into how metaphors impact decision-making and economic narratives in the retail sector.

**1.3. Aim and Objectives**

The aim of this research is to explore the ideological implications of BUSINESS through conceptual metaphors in economic news discourse, focusing on the retail industry during the Covid-19 pandemic.

To achieve this, the study aims to:

1. Identify the source domains related to BUSINESS in retail discourse during the pandemic.
2. Analyze how BUSINESS metaphors are conceptualized and framed in retail industry discourse.
3. Investigate the ideological implications of BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**1.4. Research questions**

To achieve the objectives of the research, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What source domains are mapped onto the target domain of BUSINESS in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic?

2. How are the conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS conceptualized and framed in retail industry discourse?

3. How do conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS convey ideological implications in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic?

**1.5. Research Methodology**

This study adopts a Pragmatism paradigm (Morgan, 2014), combining qualitative and quantitative methods for practical insights. Using a Mixed Methods approach (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007), it applies the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) for qualitative analysis and a corpus-based approach (Deignan, 2008a) with WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2023) for quantitative analysis. The research follows an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (Creswell and Creswell, 2007), starting with quantitative data collection, followed by qualitative analysis to explore how BUSINESS metaphors are conceptualized, framed, and ideologically shaped during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**1.6. Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in the U.S. retail industry during the Covid-19 pandemic, based on 60 English-language articles from the Retail section of Forbes. The analysis is limited to two phases: the crisis phase (2020) and the recovery phase (2021–2022), with 30 articles selected from each period. The research is confined to the U.S. context and does not extend to other economic sectors or countries. By narrowing the scope, the study offers an in-depth examination of how metaphors shape economic discourse, emphasizing their cognitive and ideological functions during crisis and recovery.

**1.7. Significance of the Study**

This study makes theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions. Theoretically, it advances Conceptual Metaphor Theory by integrating a multi-level framework that accounts for both cognitive and ideological functions of metaphor in economic discourse. Methodologically, it proposes a systematic and replicable mixed-methods approach combining corpus tools and metaphor identification procedures. Practically, it highlights how metaphors shape business strategies and policy thinking, especially during crises, offering insights for enhancing adaptability, communication, and long-term resilience.

**1.8. Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study, its aim, research questions, methodology, and significance. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical background and literature review, focusing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory, Kövecses’ multi-level view, and Maalej’s ideological framework. Chapter 3 details the mixed-methods approach, data collection, and metaphor identification. Chapter 4 presents findings on the conceptualization and framing of BUSINESS metaphors in the crisis and recovery phases. Chapter 5 explores the ideological implications of these metaphors. Chapter 6 summarizes the findings, discusses their implications, and suggests future research.

**CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical foundations of the study, focusing on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson, and incorporating Kövecses’ multi-level view and Maalej’s ideological framework. It explores key concepts like source-target domains, cross-domain mapping, and the role of metaphors in shaping discourse and societal perceptions. The chapter concludes by identifying research gaps in economic news discourse that inform the study’s direction.

**2.1. Traditional Views on Metaphor**

Traditional views on metaphor evolved from Aristotle's view of it as a rhetorical tool to more complex theories in the 20th century. While early thinkers like Cicero and Quintilian focused on its aesthetic role, the Enlightenment critics like Hobbes and Locke dismissed metaphors as misleading. The mid-20th century Interaction Theory, developed by Richards and Black, redefined metaphor as a cognitive tool, laying the foundation for Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which now sees metaphor as central to human thought and not merely linguistic decoration.

**2.2. Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

**2.2.1. Conceptual Metaphor**

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), revolutionized the understanding of metaphor, positioning it as a central cognitive and linguistic tool, not just a rhetorical device. They argued that metaphors shape human thought and daily communication, providing a conceptual framework that goes beyond language, as seen in metaphors like “TIME IS MONEY.” Their 2003 work enhanced CMT by emphasizing empirical evidence and integrating cultural and contextual factors. Kövecses (2010, 2017, 2020) further developed CMT by introducing the idea of hierarchical levels of metaphors, including generic and specific levels, and highlighting the dynamic role of context in shaping metaphors. These advancements strengthened CMT’s empirical base and expanded its applicability across various fields, offering valuable insights into how metaphors influence cognition and societal processes. This enriched framework is pivotal for analyzing BUSINESS metaphors in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.2.2. Metaphorical Expressions**

Metaphorical expressions reveal how BUSINESS metaphors shape communication, especially in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to CMT, metaphors are deeply rooted in thought and language. These expressions, such as “ARGUMENT IS WAR” (e.g., *“indefensible,” “won”*), reflect how abstract ideas manifest in language. Conceptual metaphors guide thinking, while metaphorical expressions represent these ideas linguistically, offering insights into how metaphors influence cognition and communication. This distinction, emphasized by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (2010), highlights the impact of metaphors on understanding.

**2.2.3. Cross-domain Mapping**

CMT explains how metaphors map elements from a source domain to a target domain, such as "ARGUMENT IS WAR." This mapping includes ontological correspondences, where physical properties (e.g., heat and pressure) are applied to abstract concepts (e.g., anger). Epistemic correspondences transfer logic and causal relationships, like how "winning battles" aligns with "achieving market dominance." In this study, metaphors like "BUSINESS IS WAR" and "BUSINESS IS A JOURNEY" frame business challenges, shaping economic discourse by linking abstract business concepts to more familiar, concrete experiences.

**2.2.4. Metaphorical Conceptualization**

Metaphorical conceptualization, according to Kövecses (2010), emphasizes the combined influence of embodied experiences and cultural context on the formation of metaphors. While embodiment shapes metaphors, cultural factors contribute to the emergence of culture-specific metaphors. Kövecses highlights how the interplay between universal cognitive processes and cultural contexts influences metaphor use, as seen in examples like the seasonal variation of "ECONOMY IS HEALTH." This perspective enriches our understanding of how metaphors are shaped by both cognitive processes and situational contexts.

**2.2.5. Generic and Specific-level Metaphors**

Lakoff and Johnson’s Conceptual Metaphor Theory (1980, 2003) posits that metaphors structure abstract thought through cross-domain mappings. Generic metaphors provide broad cognitive frameworks, such as LIFE IS A JOURNEY, while specific metaphors are context-dependent expressions based on these frameworks, like "at a crossroads in life." Kövecses (2010) clarifies this distinction, showing that generic metaphors guide thought, while specific metaphors add detailed, context-sensitive meaning. For example, in this study, BUSINESS IS WAR serves as a generic metaphor, with specific metaphors such as BUSINESS IS A BATTLE providing concrete expressions.

**2.2.6. Conceptual Structure and Conceptual Categorization**

Conceptual structure and conceptual categorization are key to understanding how metaphors shape our cognition and communication. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) argue that conceptual structure organizes abstract ideas through metaphors, which link abstract concepts to more concrete experiences. For example, the metaphor "AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING" helps us understand arguments by relating them to the structure of a building. Conceptual categorization, as described by Croft and Cruse (2004), allows us to organize experiences into broader categories, facilitating cognition and communication. This process helps us understand metaphorical expressions by grouping them into relevant semantic fields, aiding in the interpretation of metaphors in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.2.7. Framing and Conceptual Metaphor in Discourse**

Framing within Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) refers to how metaphors highlight certain aspects of a concept while backgrounding others. Generic metaphors provide broad, abstract schemas, while specific metaphors adapt them to particular contexts. For instance, Musolff (2006) and Cameron et al. (2010) show how metaphors shape perceptions in different scenarios. Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) demonstrate that framing influences decision-making. In this study, metaphorical framing significantly shapes business narratives during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.3. Multi-level View of Conceptual Metaphor**

**2.3.1. Hierarchical Levels and Schematicity in Conceptual Metaphor**

Kövecses (2020) proposed a hierarchical framework for conceptual metaphors, which consists of four levels: image schemas, domains, frames, and mental spaces. These levels range from the most schematic (image schemas) to the most specific (mental spaces). Image schemas provide broad, foundational structures, while frames and mental spaces offer more detailed and context-specific metaphorical representations. This multi-level approach highlights the dynamic relationship between abstract metaphorical thought and its concrete expressions in discourse, allowing for a deeper understanding of metaphorical meaning. The study focuses on the domain and frame levels to explore how broad metaphorical mappings evolve into more specific, context-driven expressions.

**2.3.2. Domain level**

The domain level in Kövecses’ framework (2020) connects abstract target domains with concrete source domains. Metaphors like BUSINESS IS WAR at this level structure economic concepts such as competition and resilience. This research focuses on the domain level to identify broad ideological patterns in economic discourse, exploring how these metaphors shape perceptions of resilience and competition in the retail sector during the Covid-19 pandemic. This approach aligns with Maalej’s ideological dimensions (2011), providing insights into the broader ideological functions of metaphors.

**2.3.3. Frame Level**

In Kövecses's (2020) multi-level framework, frames refine broader domain-level mappings into context-specific, detailed metaphors. For example, the generic metaphor BUSINESS IS WAR can be further specified as BUSINESS IS A BATTLE or BUSINESS IS A STRUGGLE. At the frame level, these specific metaphors are elaborated into context-bound expressions like *"Suffering setbacks is receiving blows in a battle"* or *"Facing uncertainties is navigating through obstacles."* In real-world discourse, such metaphorical expressions, like *"hit hard"* in *"Retailers were hit hard by the pandemic,"* illustrate how abstract concepts, such as business setbacks, are framed in concrete, physical terms, rooted in the metaphor BUSINESS IS WAR.

**2.3.4. Interplay Between Domain and Frame Levels in Metaphor Construal**

The interplay between domain and frame levels in metaphor construal, as defined by Kövecses (2020), highlights how metaphors shift from broad, abstract mappings at the domain level (e.g., BUSINESS IS A BUILDING) to more context-specific, dynamic expressions at the frame level (e.g., *‘Building resilience is laying foundations’*). While domains provide a stable conceptual foundation, frames adapt metaphors to specific contexts, reflecting situational nuances. This dual-level approach ensures metaphors maintain coherence while addressing the changing needs of discourse, especially during periods of crisis or recovery.

**2.4. Framework for Analyzing Ideological Dimensions of Conceptual Metaphor**

**2.4.1. Definition of Ideology**

This study adopts Van Dijk’s (1998) definition of ideology, which views it as “a system of socially shared knowledge, beliefs, and values within a society.” This definition emphasizes that ideologies are collective constructs, distinct from individual memories or personal opinions, and are shaped by societal interactions. Van Dijk's definition aligns with the study’s aim to explore how metaphors reflect and reinforce societal norms and collective beliefs in the retail industry during the Covid-19 pandemic, influencing business practices and public perceptions.

**2.4.2. Ideological Dimensions of Metaphor: Conceptual, Cognitive, and Pragmatic Levels**

This study applies Maalej’s (2011) framework of the ideological dimensions of metaphor, analyzing metaphors at three levels: conceptual, cognitive, and pragmatic. At the conceptual level, metaphors structure abstract ideas by mapping properties from source domains onto target domains, making complex concepts more relatable. At the cognitive level, metaphors focus attention on specific aspects of the target domain, shaping perceptions by highlighting certain features while downplaying others. Finally, at the pragmatic level, metaphors serve as persuasive tools, influencing beliefs and attitudes. This framework is used to analyze how metaphors in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic shape public perceptions and reinforce ideologies.

**2.5. Integration of CMT, Multi-level View of Conceptual Metaphor and Ideological Dimensions of Metaphor**

This study integrates CMT (1980), Kövecses’ Multi-level View of Conceptual Metaphor (2020), and Maalej’s Ideological Dimensions (2011) to analyze BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. CMT identifies metaphors such as BUSINESS IS WAR, Kövecses’ framework examines metaphors at the domain and frame levels, and Maalej’s dimensions explore their ideological implications. This approach reveals how metaphors frame economic struggles, reinforce survival ideologies, and influence perceptions of competition and resilience during the crisis.

**2.6. Previous Studies on Conceptual Metaphors in Economic News Discourse**

**2.6.1. Pervasiveness of Metaphor in Economic News Discourse**

Metaphors are pervasive in economic news discourse, shaping how economic concepts are understood and represented, with common metaphors such as WAR, ORGANISM, and HEALTH framing business competition, growth, and stability. However, existing research has limitations, particularly in fully exploring BUSINESS metaphors and their role across different economic contexts. While BUSINESS metaphors have been studied, they have not been the primary focus. Additionally, research specifically targeting the retail sector is lacking, presenting an opportunity for this study to contribute unique insights into the metaphorical representations within retail industry discourse, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.6.2. Functions of Metaphor in Economic News Discourse**

Metaphors in economic news discourse serve crucial communicative and ideological functions. They shape perceptions of economic phenomena by framing complex concepts in relatable terms, such as portraying crises as wars or diseases. Metaphors like WAR, HEALTH, and ORGANISM help simplify economic ideas and influence public understanding during crises. Ideologically, metaphors emphasize or conceal aspects of economic events, reflecting the political and social ideologies of their creators. While previous research has explored metaphors in financial reporting, the metaphorization of BUSINESS, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing how metaphors frame resilience, survival, and adaptation in the retail industry during the pandemic.

**2.6.3. BUSINESS Metaphors in the Existing Studies**

While metaphors are widely used in economic news discourse, research specifically on BUSINESS metaphors is limited. Studies by Maestre (2000) and Kovács (2006) highlight how metaphors like WAR, GAME/SPORT, HUMAN BODY, and JOURNEY shape public perception of business dynamics. These metaphors map abstract economic concepts to familiar domains, making them more accessible. The WAR metaphor, in particular, portrays business as a competitive, high-stakes environment, emphasizing strategy and survival. Other metaphors, such as GAME/SPORT, HEALTH, and ORGANISM, frame business as a strategic competition, physical recovery, and an evolving ecosystem. Together, these metaphors offer varied perspectives on business challenges and success.

**2.6.4. Methodology of Conceptual Metaphor Research in Economic News Discourse**

This section reviews two primary methodologies for analyzing metaphors in economic news discourse: the lexical approach and the corpus-based method. The lexical approach relies on researchers' intuition and tools like dictionaries and the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). However, it faces criticism for subjectivity and lack of empirical rigor (Sinclair, 1991; Stefanowitsch, 2007). On the other hand, the corpus-based method is a more empirical, bottom-up approach that analyzes large datasets to detect metaphorical patterns, using tools like WordSmith and Wmatrix (Cai and Deignan, 2019). However, it struggles to capture extended metaphors and has mostly focused on broader economic events, leaving sectors like retail underexplored (Gil, 2019). This study addresses these limitations by integrating both methodologies, combining quantitative rigor with manual verification and expanding the analysis to the retail industry during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**2.7. Research Gaps**

This study addresses several key gaps in existing metaphor research. First, previous studies have rarely treated BUSINESS as an independent conceptual domain, often embedding it within broader economic discourse without systematic analysis. Second, the ideological implications of BUSINESS metaphors—particularly in the retail sector—remain underexplored, despite the sector's prominence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Third, existing research tends to present BUSINESS metaphors in isolation, lacking typological coherence or attention to variation. Methodologically, many studies rely on single approaches, with limited integration of corpus and qualitative methods. Finally, little attention has been paid to how metaphorical framing of BUSINESS shifts across crisis and recovery stages. This dissertation responds to these gaps by offering a multi-level, context-sensitive analysis of BUSINESS metaphors in pandemic-era economic discourse.

**Summary of Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical framework for analyzing BUSINESS metaphors in economic news discourse, focusing on the Covid-19 pandemic. It reviews traditional and conceptual metaphor theories, emphasizing multi-level analysis at the domain and frame levels, and the ideological role of metaphors in shaping economic and political ideologies. The chapter highlights the gap in research on BUSINESS metaphors in the retail sector, especially during crises, and critiques the predominance of studies on financial crises and policy. It concludes by underscoring the need for further research on metaphor usage in the retail industry, setting the stage for the research questions in later chapters.

**CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for analyzing BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, using a Pragmatism paradigm and mixed methods approach. It covers data collection from Forbes articles, corpus compilation, text processing, and a pilot study. The chapter explains the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and source domain categorization, ensuring rigorous analysis with attention to validity and reliability.

**3.1. Research Paradigm: Pragmatism**

This study adopts the Pragmatism paradigm (Morgan, 2014), which integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to explore conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Pragmatism emphasizes practical, real-world outcomes and methodological flexibility, allowing for both interpretive analysis of metaphor meanings and empirical validation. This approach aligns with the study’s goals of identifying, conceptualizing, and analyzing metaphors, while also providing actionable insights for business strategies and policymaking.

**3.2. Research Approach: Mixed Methods and Corpus-based Approach**

This study uses a Mixed Methods (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007) and Corpus-based Approach (Deignan, 2008a) to analyze BUSINESS metaphors in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. The qualitative phase applies the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) to identify metaphors, while the quantitative phase uses the corpus-based approach and WordSmith Tools (Scott, 2023) to analyze metaphor usage across a retail article corpus. This combined approach provides both interpretive depth and empirical validation for understanding how BUSINESS metaphors were shaped during the pandemic.

**3.3. Research Design: Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design**

This study adopts an Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (Creswell and Creswell, 2007), combining quantitative and qualitative phases. The quantitative phase involves analyzing 60 Forbes articles from the retail sector (30 from the crisis phase and 30 from the recovery phase) using WordSmith Tools to identify and measure metaphorical expression frequency. The qualitative phase maps and categorizes identified metaphors into generic and specific metaphors and analyzes their ideological implications using Kövecses’ (2020) Multi-level View of Conceptual Metaphor and Maalej’s (2011) Ideological Dimensions of Metaphor. This sequential approach allows the quantitative findings to inform the qualitative analysis, providing a comprehensive understanding of BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**3.4. Data**

**3.4.1. Economic News Discourse**

Economic News Discourse reports and interprets economic events, using metaphorical language to simplify complex concepts and engage readers (Van Dijk, 1998; Shi et al., 2019). It connects economic ideas to everyday experiences, framing events within broader societal and political contexts to influence public understanding and decision-making.

**3.4.2. Retail Industry Discourse as a Realm of Economic News Discourse**

Retail Industry Discourse, a subset of economic news, reports on retail performance and market trends, especially during crises like the Covid-19 pandemic (Kotler and Armstrong, 2012; Bednarek and Caple, 2012). It interprets economic shifts, emphasizing resilience and recovery, and shapes public narratives on growth, competition, and corporate responsibility (Shi et al., 2019). This study examines how metaphorical language in retail discourse influences perceptions of economic resilience and transformation.

**3.4.3. Data Collection**

3.4.3.1. Data Source

The primary data source for this study is the Retail section of Forbes magazine, known for its authoritative coverage of economic trends and business operations, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic (Shi et al., 2019). Forbes provides comprehensive analyses of the retail sector, offering credible, timely, and expert insights, making it a reliable source for understanding the evolving dynamics of the retail industry.

3.4.3.2. Corpus Compilation

The corpus for this study consists of 60 Forbes articles (30 from 2020, the crisis phase, and 30 from 2021-2022, the recovery phase) focusing on the retail industry’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The articles were selected based on relevance to BUSINESS metaphors, the credibility of authors, and their thematic coverage of retail issues. With a total word count of approximately 120,000 words, the corpus was manually compiled to ensure representativeness, balance, and alignment with the research objectives. It is a specialized corpus, providing in-depth analysis of metaphorical expressions in the retail sector during critical phases of the pandemic.

3.4.3.3. Text Processing

The text processing phase involves organizing and formatting Forbes articles to ensure compatibility with corpus linguistics tools. This step prepares the data for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, systematically extracting metaphorical expressions and structuring the corpus for further examination. The processed data is then ready for metaphor identification and analysis using analytical software.

3.4.3.4. Elaboration of the overarching target domain ‘BUSINESS’

This study elaborated the BUSINESS domain into five frames (Fillmore’s Frame Semantics, 1982): Commercial Transaction, Work and Employment, Organizational, Market, and Financial, focusing on 25 core concepts identified through a pilot study. Using MIP and semantic tension, metaphorical expressions were identified and analyzed. The pilot study validated the core concepts, ensuring a structured and empirically grounded approach to exploring metaphorical expressions in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.4.3.5. Unit of Analysis

This study uses the sentence as the unit of analysis to explore BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. Analyzing metaphors within complete sentences aligns with the views of Halliday (2004), Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Cameron (2003), and Charteris-Black (2004), who emphasize that metaphors function within full communicative units, offering deeper insights into their roles and implications in discourse.

3.4.3.6. Concordance Tool

This study used WordSmith Tools 8.0 (Scott, 2023) for corpus-based analysis of retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. The concordance tool was employed to identify target words representing BUSINESS concepts, such as "retail," "commerce," and "economy." These words were analyzed within their context to uncover metaphorical expressions. The concordance lines were extracted and sorted for further examination using the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) to identify metaphorical usage.

3.4.3.7. Frequency of Metaphorical Expressions

This study used a quantitative approach to calculate the frequency of metaphorical expressions across generic source domains in both the crisis phase (2020) and recovery phase (2021-2022). Metaphors were categorized and tagged by phase, and the percentage frequency of each expression was computed. For example, in the crisis phase, the WAR domain accounted for 20% of metaphorical expressions, while the MOVEMENT domain represented 13.5%. This frequency analysis helped identify shifts in metaphor usage between the two phases.

3.4.3.8. Native Speaker Consultancy

This study employed native speaker consultancy to ensure the accuracy and reliability of metaphor identification and source domain categorization. The consultant, a native English speaker with a business background and expertise in language analysis, acted as an independent coder during metaphor identification and validated the categorization of metaphorical expressions. Their involvement ensured contextual appropriateness and linguistic precision, enhancing the objectivity and consistency of the research process.

**3.4.4. Pilot Study - Validation of Specific Concepts of ‘BUSINESS’**

The pilot study validated the selection of key BUSINESS concepts for metaphorical analysis in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. A subset of 10 articles was analyzed using WordSmith Tools and MIP. The study identified 158 metaphorical expressions, with 25 core concepts showing strong metaphorical potential. These included ‘retail, commerce, brand, economy, price, revenue, profit, trend, employment, job, business, shopping, store, industry, supply, owner, company, mall, market, sales, performance, consumer, ordering, transaction, and consumption’. Concepts like ‘logo’, ‘hierarchy’, ‘career’, and ‘customer perception’ were excluded as they did not yield significant metaphorical data. This refinement ensured the study remained focused on metaphorically productive concepts, enhancing its methodological rigor.

**3.4.5. Data Analysis**

3.4.5.1. Identification of Metaphorical Expressions and Coding Criteria

This study uses the Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) developed by the Pragglejaz Group (2007) to identify metaphorical expressions in retail industry discourse. MIP involves analyzing lexical units (nouns, verbs, adjectives) by comparing their basic and contextual meanings. The study applies coding criteria to ensure objectivity, focusing on context, consistency, and domain-specific analysis of BUSINESS metaphors. The coding process includes corpus-wide metaphor identification across 60 articles, with double coding for reliability by two independent coders. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion.

3.4.5.2. Categorization of Source Domains

This study categorizes metaphorical expressions in retail industry discourse using Croft and Cruse’s (2004) conceptual categorization framework. Metaphors were first grouped into overarching generic source domains (e.g., WAR, EXPANSION, RESILIENCE) and refined into specific source domains (e.g., BATTLE, STRUGGLE). The categorization process involved identifying recurring linguistic patterns, verifying with WordNet, and consulting native speakers for cultural validation. For example, the expression *“anchor”* was categorized under the specific source domain STABILITY within the broader RESILIENCE domain, confirmed by both dictionary definitions and native speaker insights. This multi-step process ensured a comprehensive and reliable analysis of metaphorical expressions in the context of BUSINESS during the Covid-19 pandemic.

3.4.5.3. Ideological Analysis of Metaphors

This study analyzes the ideological implications of BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic using an integrated framework combining Kövecses’ multi-level view of conceptual metaphors (2020) and Maalej's three-dimensional ideological analysis (2011). Metaphors are identified at the domain (e.g., BUSINESS IS WAR (generic metaphor), BUSINESS IS A BATTLE (specific metaphor) and frame levels (e.g., *“Suffering setbacks is receiving blows in a battle”*), with further analysis at the conceptual, cognitive, and pragmatic levels. For example, the construed metaphor *“Suffering setbacks is receiving blows in a battle”* frames economic hardship as a physical conflict, reinforcing ideals of self-reliance (conceptual dimension). At the cognitive level, it emphasizes resilience but obscures external factors, while pragmatically justifying aggressive strategies like layoffs as necessary for survival. This layered approach reveals how metaphors reflect and shape socio-economic narratives in retail industry discourse.

3.4.5.4. Contextual Analysis

The contextual analysis in this study, based on Kövecses’ (2010) theory of Metaphorical Conceptualization, explores how embodiment, culture, and specific contexts influence the formation and interpretation of BUSINESS metaphors. It examines how cultural narratives and embodied experiences shape metaphorical language, such as the metaphorical expression *"heroes"* for retail workers in the BUSINESS IS WAR metaphor. The analysis highlights the interaction between physical hardship, societal views of heroism, and cultural norms, emphasizing how local culture and personal history influence the selection and understanding of metaphorical expressions in the context of the retail industry during the pandemic.

**3.5. Validity**

This study ensured validity through triangulation, reflexivity, and rich descriptions. It integrated qualitative and quantitative data from 60 Forbes articles, cross-referencing findings with expert consultations. Reflexivity addressed researcher bias, and rich descriptions provided contextual depth, ensuring comprehensive and trustworthy analysis of BUSINESS metaphors in the Covid-19 pandemic context.

**3.6. Reliability**

This study ensured reliability through consistent data collection, standardized procedures, and expert verification. Articles were selected and analyzed uniformly, with educated native speakers and metaphor experts validating metaphorical expressions. Comprehensive documentation and clear adherence to the explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell and Creswell, 2007) ensured consistency, transparency, and replicability, enhancing the reliability of the findings.

**Summary of Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework for analyzing BUSINESS metaphors in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, guided by Pragmatism. The study uses a mixed methods and corpus-based approach, combining qualitative metaphor identification with quantitative frequency analysis. Data is collected from Forbes Retail articles spanning the crisis and recovery phases, with a pilot study validating key BUSINESS concepts. The Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) is applied, followed by source domain categorization to analyze conceptual mappings, ensuring a robust investigation into the conceptualization, framing, and ideological dimensions of BUSINESS metaphors.

**CHAPTER 4: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND FRAMING OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS OF BUSINESS**

Chapter 4 presents the findings on the categorization, conceptualization, and framing of BUSINESS metaphors in U.S. retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. It analyzes metaphorical expressions, their source domains, and the structures of conceptual metaphors at both generic and specific levels, organized into two phases: 2020 (crisis) and 2021-2022 (recovery), addressing Research Questions 1 and 2.

**4.1. Conceptual Categorization**

Section 4.1 addresses Research Question 1 by identifying the source domains mapped onto the target domain of 'BUSINESS' in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, analyzing both the crisis phase (2020) and the recovery phase (2021-2022).

**4.1.1. Findings of Source Domains Mapping onto the Target Doman ‘BUSINESS’**

4.1.1.1 Metaphorical Expressions and Source Domains in the Crisis Phase (2020)

During the crisis phase of 2020, 480 metaphorical expressions were identified, reflecting the conceptualization of BUSINESS during the Covid-19 pandemic. Key themes included conflict, movement, resilience, and instability. Prominent expressions depicted BUSINESS as a ‘battleground’ (e.g., "struggle," "survival tool"), emphasizing conflict and survival; as ‘dynamic and adaptive’ (e.g., "shift," "shake off"), highlighting agility; as ‘resilient and durable’ (e.g., "durable group," "agile"), emphasizing endurance; and as ‘precarious and unstable’ (e.g., "teetering," "dried up"), reflecting fragility. These expressions laid the foundation for categorizing the source domains.

The metaphorical expressions were further divided into 14 generic source domains: WAR (20%), MOVEMENT (13.5%), RESILIENCE (13.1%), FLUCTUATION (9.2%), DETERIORATION (6.7%), PRESSURE (6.3%), PROTECTION (5.4%), HUMAN (5.4%), TRANSFORMATION (5.2%), PROGRESS (4.8%), EXPANSION (4.2%), OPERATION (4.2%), FORCE (1.3%), and PHYSICAL PROCESSES (0.8%). Specific source domains under each category captured finer nuances of BUSINESS during the pandemic. For instance, within WAR, specific source domains included BATTLE, STRUGGLE, MILITARY OPERATIONS, and STAND FOR SURVIVAL, all reflecting the conflict and survival themes. MOVEMENT included subdomains MOTION, NAVIGATION, and SHIFT, illustrating adaptability and strategic movement.

4.1.1.2 Metaphorical Expressions and Source Domains in the Recovery Phase (2021-2022)

During the recovery phase (2021-2022), a total of 419 metaphorical expressions were identified, highlighting themes of growth, resilience, transformation, and competition as businesses adapted to the post-crisis environment. Prominent expressions framed BUSINESS as experiencing ‘expansion and growth’ (e.g., “proliferates,” “move further”), ‘conflict and competition’ (e.g., “line of defense,” “win”), ‘resilience and stability’ (e.g., “anchor,” “tougher”), and ‘dynamic adjustments’ (e.g., “make the shift,” “parts ways”). These expressions reflect how businesses navigated new challenges, focusing on scalability, competition, and resilience.

The metaphorical expressions were categorized into 17 generic source domains, including EXPANSION (19.8%), WAR (12.2%), RESILIENCE (12.2%), MOVEMENT (9.8%), FLUCTUATION (8.1%), PRESSURE (7.6%), TRANSFORMATION (5.7%), DETERIORATION (5.5%), JOURNEY (4.5%), LEADERSHIP (4.3%), NATURE (4.1%), AWARENESS (3.8%), and others. Specific source domains under each category captured finer distinctions, such as BATTLE and CONFLICT under WAR, MOTION and TRANSITION under MOVEMENT, and ENDURANCE and ADAPTATION under RESILIENCE. These categories reflect the diverse strategies businesses employed during recovery, from scaling operations to managing volatility and embracing innovation.

**4.1.2. Discussion of the Findings**

During the crisis phase (2020), 14 generic source domains and 39 specific source domains were identified, with WAR (20%) framing business as a battleground for survival, emphasizing competition and resilience, in line with Maalej’s (2011) work. MOVEMENT (13.5%) highlighted businesses’ agility, particularly in adopting e-commerce (Forbes, 2020), while RESILIENCE (13.1%) and FLUCTUATION (9.2%) focused on endurance and instability, reflecting the challenging economic environment (Roy, 2020). Smaller domains like DETERIORATION and PRESSURE captured external stresses, aligning with Charters-Black’s (2004) view on survival strategies.

In the recovery phase (2021-2022), 419 metaphorical expressions were categorized into 17 domains. EXPANSION (19.8%) emphasized growth, particularly digital transformation (Forbes, 2021). WAR (12.2%) and RESILIENCE (12.2%) continued to frame business in terms of competition and adaptability, while MOVEMENT (9.8%) focused on digital transitions. These shifts mirrored the broader recovery and adaptation to the evolving economic conditions (Barnes et al., 2021; Pew Research Center, 2020).

The comparison of the two phases shows a shift from survival to growth and transformation. WAR decreased from 20% to 12.2%, with a focus on competition rather than survival. EXPANSION (19.8%) became the dominant metaphor, emphasizing growth and innovation. MOVEMENT evolved from short-term shifts to long-term transitions, while RESILIENCE remained consistent but focused on stability in the recovery phase, illustrating the retail sector’s adaptation to changing socio-economic contexts (Forbes, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2020).

**4.2. Conceptualization and Framing of Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS**

**4.2.1. Findings of Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS**

This section presents the findings of conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS during the crisis phase (2020) and the recovery phase (2021-2022). It identifies 12 generic metaphors in each phase, with 34 specific metaphors in the crisis phase and 29 in the recovery phase. The findings are structured into tables, offering a detailed overview of the metaphorical patterns across both phases.

During the crisis phase of 2020, 12 generic metaphors and 34 specific metaphors were constructed. BUSINESS IS WAR was the most dominant, with expressions like *"battle"* and *"survival tool"* highlighting competition and resilience. BUSINESS IS MOVEMENT depicted agility with expressions such as *"shift"* and *"navigate,"* while BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE emphasized endurance through expressions such as *"adaptation"* and *"endurance."* BUSINESS IS FLUCTUATION and BUSINESS IS DETERIORATION reflected instability and decline, with expressions like *"collapse"* and *"plummet."* BUSINESS IS PRESSURE showed external stress with expressions such as *"strain"* and *"tipping point."* BUSINESS IS PROTECTION focused on safeguarding operations, while BUSINESS IS A HUMAN framed businesses as human-like entities, using metaphorical expressions such as *"life"* and *"gambling."* BUSINESS IS TRANSFORMATION and BUSINESS IS PROGRESS illustrated growth and change, and BUSINESS IS EXPANSION highlighted scaling, with expressions such as *"amplification"* and *"momentum."* Finally, BUSINESS IS OPERATION described businesses as systems and mechanisms. These metaphors collectively captured businesses' strategies for survival, adaptation, and resilience during the crisis.

During the recovery phase (2021-2022), 419 metaphorical expressions were identified, categorized into 12 generic metaphors and 29 specific metaphors. BUSINESS IS EXPANSION was the most prominent, with expressions such as "*thrive," "grow,"* and *"ignite"* emphasizing growth and scaling operations. BUSINESS IS WAR continued to frame business as competitive, with expressions like *"battle"* and *"defense"* reflecting strategic maneuvers in a recovering market. BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE emphasized endurance and adaptation, with expressions such as *"endurance," "pivot,"* and *"adaptation,"* highlighting the sector's ability to withstand challenges. BUSINESS IS MOVEMENT and BUSINESS IS FLUCTUATION signaled ongoing transitions, with expressions like *"shift," "move forward,"* and *"surge"* illustrating flexibility and dynamic change. Additionally, BUSINESS IS PRESSURE and BUSINESS IS TRANSFORMATION reflected ongoing market stress and efforts to renew and innovate. Finally, BUSINESS IS A JOURNEY and BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP illustrated long-term vision and strategic direction, as businesses navigated recovery through growth, innovation, and leadership. These findings highlight the shift from survival to growth and transformation in the retail industry discourse.

The analysis shows that eight generic metaphors, like BUSINESS IS WAR and BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE, were common in both the crisis (2020) and recovery (2021-2022) phases, highlighting themes of survival and resilience. Each phase also introduced unique metaphors: the crisis phase focused on instability, while the recovery phase emphasized growth and transformation, such as BUSINESS IS EXPANSION and BUSINESS IS DEVELOPMENT. These shifts reflect the evolving focus in retail discourse during the pandemic.

**4.2.2. Discussion of the Findings**

4.2.2.1. Alignments with Previous Studies on Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS

The findings align with previous research on conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS, showing recurring patterns. The WAR metaphor (e.g., "battle") emphasizes competition and survival, consistent with previous studies (Kövecses, 2010). The MECHANISM metaphor (e.g., "grind to a halt") frames business as a structured system, aligning with Lăzărescu (2011). The HUMAN metaphor (e.g., "healthy") compares business stability to human health, reflecting Kovács' (2006) view of business as a living entity. The GAMBLING metaphor (e.g., "win") frames decisions as high-stakes risks, similar to Kovács' (2006) portrayal. Finally, the JOURNEY metaphor (e.g., "move") aligns with Maestre (2000), depicting business as a path of strategic shifts. These metaphors frame business as competitive, adaptive, and evolving through resilience and calculated risks.

4.2.2.2. Distinctions in BUSINESS Metaphors Compared to Previous Studies

(a) Quantitative distinctions in metaphor variety

This study identifies a broader range of BUSINESS metaphors (12 generic, 34 specific in 2020; 12 generic, 29 specific in 2021-2022) compared to previous research, reflecting the pandemic's complex impact. This expansion highlights how metaphors evolve to address new economic challenges, as noted by Cesiri and Colaci (2011), offering deeper insights into how business discourse adapts in crises.

(b) Expansion of traditional conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS

The study expands traditional BUSINESS metaphors by introducing new layers reflecting the unique challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. While metaphors like BUSINESS IS WAR, BUSINESS IS COMPETITION, and BUSINESS IS A HUMAN persist, the study introduces specific frames that emphasize resilience, leadership, and adaptability. For instance, BUSINESS IS WAR evolves from aggressive competition to a defensive strategy, highlighting businesses' efforts to maintain stability. BUSINESS IS OPERATION transitions into BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP, emphasizing the growing importance of authority and guidance during the prolonged crisis. Additionally, BUSINESS IS A HUMAN shifts from representing dynamic risks and growth to focusing on forward-looking resilience and exploration. The findings highlight a move from conventional competitive frames to more complex views that reflect strategic adaptability, setting this study apart from prior research.

(c) Introduction of crisis-driven conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS

The study reveals the emergence of crisis-driven metaphors reflecting the unique challenges businesses faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, metaphors like BUSINESS IS PRESSURE, BUSINESS IS DETERIORATION, and BUSINESS IS VULNERABILITY depict businesses as fragile entities under immediate stress. By 2021-2022, these metaphors evolve, with BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE, BUSINESS IS TRANSFORMATION, and BUSINESS IS NATURE emphasizing stability, adaptability, and survival. This shift highlights a move from reactive to proactive conceptualizations, as businesses adjusted to prolonged uncertainty. The introduction of new metaphors underscores the adaptability of metaphorical language in capturing crisis-specific experiences, reflecting both immediate impacts and longer-term adaptation processes. This evolution illustrates how the pandemic reshaped business metaphors, offering a more nuanced understanding of business dynamics in a prolonged crisis.

4.2.2.3. Situating Findings within the Broader Context of Conceptual Metaphor Studies in Economic News Discourse

This study situates its findings within the broader context of conceptual metaphor studies in economic news discourse by highlighting the adaptability of metaphors in capturing the shifting dynamics of the Covid-19 pandemic. Unlike prior research, which focused on traditional metaphors like BUSINESS IS WAR and BUSINESS IS GAMBLING, this study expands the metaphorical landscape by incorporating frames such as BUSINESS IS PRESSURE, BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE, and BUSINESS IS EXPANSION. These findings reflect the pandemic's unique impact, from immediate survival strategies in 2020 to long-term transformation and growth in 2021-2022. This evolution underscores the flexibility of metaphors in economic discourse, adapting to changing socio-economic conditions and enhancing our understanding of how metaphors shape business perceptions during crises.

**Summary of Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 analyzed conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in U.S. retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, identifying 480 expressions in 2020 and 419 in 2021-2022. These were categorized into specific source domains, with 12 generic metaphors and 34 specific metaphors in 2020, and 12 generic and 29 specific metaphors in 2021-2022. The findings highlighted the adaptability of metaphors, with BUSINESS IS WAR framing the crisis phase and BUSINESS IS EXPANSION framing the recovery phase, reflecting socio-economic shifts and aligning with previous studies while introducing new pandemic-specific metaphors.

**CHAPTER 5: IDEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CONCEPTUAL METAPHORS OF BUSINESS**

This chapter examines two key aspects of conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in U.S. retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic: their ideological implications, focusing on how they shaped public perceptions and societal values, and their contextual conceptualization, exploring how they adapted to the changing socio-economic conditions of the pandemic.

**5.1. Ideological Implications of Conceptual Metaphors of Business in U.S. Retail** **Industry Discourse During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**5.1.1 Crisis Phase (2020) - Ideological Implications**

5.1.1.1. Constructing BUSINESS as a Battleground - Ideological Narratives of Conflict and Strain

The metaphor BUSINESS IS WAR was central in framing the retail sector’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, reflecting the conflict, resilience, and strategic efforts businesses faced. Conceptually, it depicted businesses as combatants engaging with external adversities, emphasizing survival through expressions like "hit hard" and "struggling to survive." Cognitively, it focused attention on businesses' internal resilience, marginalizing external systemic issues such as unequal government support. Pragmatically, the metaphor embedded values of competitiveness and autonomy, portraying businesses as heroic entities overcoming adversity, thus shifting accountability for crisis management away from systemic actors. While providing clarity on business challenges, this framing reinforced individualistic ideologies, overshadowing collective responsibility.

5.1.1.2 BUSINESS as Resilient and Adaptive - Ideological Narratives of Movement and Flexibility

During the crisis phase of 2020, metaphors like BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE, BUSINESS IS MOVEMENT, and BUSINESS IS OPERATION framed businesses as adaptable entities capable of surviving and thriving in the face of adversity. The metaphor BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE emphasized endurance, adaptation, and flexibility, portraying businesses as resilient forces overcoming challenges through strategic innovation. These metaphors shaped public perceptions by focusing on businesses' internal capabilities, such as their ability to adapt and recover, while downplaying systemic issues like unequal access to resources. Pragmatically, they reinforced societal values of self-reliance and innovation, shifting the responsibility for crisis management onto businesses, and marginalizing collective actions or systemic reforms.

5.1.1.3. BUSINESS as Fragile and Unstable - Ideological Narratives of Vulnerability and Decline

During the 2020 crisis phase, metaphors like BUSINESS IS FLUCTUATION framed the retail industry as fragile and unstable, emphasizing volatility and disruption. Specific metaphors such as BUSINESS IS INSTABILITY, BUSINESS IS VOLATILITY, and BUSINESS IS DISRUPTION portrayed businesses as vulnerable to external pressures, highlighting their struggles without addressing systemic issues like unequal access to resources. These metaphors shaped public perceptions by focusing on businesses' internal challenges and resilience, while downplaying the role of broader structural factors. Pragmatically, they reinforced societal narratives of self-reliance, shifting responsibility away from systemic actors and onto businesses, thereby marginalizing calls for collective action and reform.

**5.1.2. Recovery Phase (2021-2022) - Ideological Implications**

5.1.2.1. Constructing BUSINESS as Expanding and Thriving - Ideological Narratives of Growth and Opportunity

During the recovery phase (2021-2022), the metaphor BUSINESS IS EXPANSION framed businesses as resilient and adaptive, emphasizing growth and innovation. At the conceptual level, metaphors like BUSINESS IS AMPLIFICATION (e.g., *"Scaling capacity is building momentum"*) structured the recovery as a period of dynamic growth, focusing on digital transformation. Cognitively, these metaphors shaped public perceptions by highlighting businesses' internal capabilities while downplaying systemic challenges, such as unequal access to technology. Pragmatically, BUSINESS IS EXPANSION reinforced neoliberal values of self-reliance, framing business success as an outcome of individual effort, thereby marginalizing the need for systemic reform.

5.1.2.2. BUSINESS as Transformative: Ideological Narratives of Change and Renewal

During the recovery phase (2021-2022), the metaphor BUSINESS IS TRANSFORMATION framed businesses as entities embracing change and renewal. At the conceptual level, BUSINESS IS PROGRESSION and BUSINESS IS RENEWAL depicted transformation as an evolutionary journey, emphasizing adaptability and reinvention (e.g., *"Adopting new dynamics is evolving pathways"*). Cognitively, these metaphors highlighted internal business capacities for change while masking systemic challenges, such as unequal access to resources. Pragmatically, they reinforced societal values of innovation and self-reliance, framing business transformation as a proactive endeavor and marginalizing the need for systemic reform.

5.1.2.3 Constructing BUSINESS as a Leader: Ideological Narratives of Authority and Guidance

The metaphor BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP framed businesses as dominant forces driving recovery and innovation. At the conceptual level, BUSINESS IS AUTHORITY and BUSINESS IS GUIDANCE portrayed businesses as controlling market trends and leading industry transformations. Cognitively, these metaphors emphasized businesses’ strategic foresight while downplaying external challenges like resource inequalities. Pragmatically, the metaphors reinforced societal expectations of businesses as self-reliant leaders, shaping market trajectories without collective support.

**5.2. Contextual Analysis of Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS**

**5.2.1. Contextual Influences in the Crisis Phase (2020)**

In the crisis phase of 2020, the U.S. retail sector faced significant challenges, including a 3.5% GDP decline (Guardian, 2021), widespread store closures, and a 14.8% unemployment rate (Debata and Mishra, 2020). Conceptual metaphors like BUSINESS IS ENDURANCE and BUSINESS IS WAR framed these struggles. BUSINESS IS ENDURANCE emphasized survival amidst crisis, while BUSINESS IS WAR depicted businesses as battling for survival, reinforcing cultural values of resilience and resourcefulness. The shift to e-commerce accelerated digital transformation, highlighting the urgent need for adaptability in the retail sector.

**5.2.2. Contextual Influences in the Recovery Phase (2021-2022)**

In 2021-2022, the U.S. economy began stabilizing, shifting the focus to growth, collaboration, and rebuilding. Metaphors like BUSINESS IS EXPANSION became prominent, with BUSINESS IS DEVELOPMENT and BUSINESS IS CONSTRUCTION portraying businesses as forces of growth and innovation. The metaphor BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE adapted from emphasizing endurance in the crisis phase to focusing on stability in the recovery. Additionally, BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP framed businesses as guiding forces in the recovery, emphasizing their role in navigating economic uncertainties and leading through challenges, supported by digital transformation and innovation.

**5.2.3. The Role of Context in Metaphorical Conceptualization**

The conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in this study highlight the influence of contextual factors - physical, cultural, and social - on metaphorical conceptualization. In the crisis phase, metaphors like BUSINESS IS WAR and BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE reflected survival and conflict, embodying the struggle businesses faced amid uncertainty. As the recovery phase began, metaphors shifted to focus on growth and innovation, with BUSINESS IS EXPANSION and BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP portraying businesses as drivers of recovery. This shift underscores how metaphors adapt to socio-economic realities, reflecting changing cultural narratives and aligning with the broader expectation of resilience and progress. The evolution of these metaphors supports Kövecses’ (2010) view that metaphors evolve in response to changing contexts.

**SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5**

Chapter 5 analyzed the ideological and contextual influences of conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in U.S. retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, using frameworks by Maalej (2011), Van Dijk (1998), and Kövecses (2020). The study found that during the crisis phase (2020), metaphors like BUSINESS IS WAR focused on endurance and conflict, while in the recovery phase (2021-2022), metaphors such as BUSINESS IS EXPANSION emphasized growth and innovation. These metaphors adapted to socio-economic contexts, shaping public discourse and reinforcing societal values.

**CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION**

Chapter 6 summarizes the study’s findings on conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in retail discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic. The chapter discusses the implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

**6.1. Key Findings**

**6.1.1. Conceptual Metaphors of BUSINESS in the Study**

The analysis of BUSINESS metaphors during the Covid-19 pandemic reveals notable shifts from survival to growth, reflecting the changing socio-economic context. In the crisis phase (2020), 12 generic metaphors and 34 specific metaphors were identified. BUSINESS IS WAR was dominant, with specific metaphors like BUSINESS IS A BATTLE and BUSINESS IS A STRUGGLE, framing businesses as engaged in a fight for survival. Expressions like *"retailers were* ***hit hard****"* and *"****fighting*** *to remain open"* conveyed the hostile environment businesses faced.

In the recovery phase (2021-2022), 12 generic metaphors and 29 specific metaphors emerged, with BUSINESS IS EXPANSION as the central theme, emphasizing growth and rebuilding. Specific metaphors like BUSINESS IS DEVELOPMENT and BUSINESS IS CONSTRUCTION reflected optimism, as in expressions such as *"****scaling*** *operations"* and *"e-commerce* ***proliferates****."* BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE persisted throughout both phases, transitioning from BUSINESS IS ENDURANCE and BUSINESS IS ADAPTATION in 2020 to BUSINESS IS STABILITY in 2021-2022, reflecting the shift to long-term sustainability. The rise of BUSINESS IS LEADERSHIP in the recovery phase, with metaphors - BUSINESS IS AUTHORITY and BUSINESS IS GUIDANCE, framed businesses as innovators and leaders in the economic recovery. Additionally, BUSINESS IS A JOURNEY emerged in 2021-2022, signaling long-term goals, contrasting with the crisis phase where no journey metaphors appeared. These shifts illustrate how the retail sector framed its response to the pandemic, emphasizing resilience, growth, and innovation.

**6.1.2. Ideological Implications**

The ideological implications of BUSINESS metaphors during the Covid-19 pandemic shaped public perceptions of survival, resilience, and growth. In the crisis phase (2020), BUSINESS IS WAR emphasized self-reliance and competition, framing survival as a moral duty. This justified aggressive strategies like layoffs. In contrast, during the recovery phase (2021-2022), BUSINESS IS EXPANSION highlighted growth and innovation, reinforcing ideologies of market dominance and individual agency. BUSINESS IS RESILIENCE persisted across both phases, evolving from BUSINESS IS ENDURANCE to BUSINESS IS STABILITY, reinforcing the idea that resilience, not innovation, was key to long-term stability. These metaphors framed businesses as both survivors and leaders in recovery.

**6.2. Contributions**

**6.2.1. Theoretical Contributions**

This study advances Conceptual Metaphor Theory by demonstrating how metaphors of BUSINESS in economic discourse serve both cognitive and ideological functions. By integrating Kövecses’ multi-level metaphor framework with Maalej’s ideological model, the research clarifies how domain-level and frame-level metaphors interact and evolve in response to socio-economic change, especially in crisis contexts.

6**.2.2. Methodological Contributions**

The study offers a multi-level methodological framework that combines corpus analysis, metaphor identification (MIP), conceptual categorization (Croft & Cruse), and frame semantics (Fillmore). This integrated approach ensures systematic identification of metaphors and enables nuanced interpretation of metaphorical patterns in economic discourse.

**6.2.3. Practical Contributions**

The findings reveal how metaphors guide business strategies and policy responses during crisis and recovery. Metaphors such as BUSINESS IS WAR, EXPANSION, and RESILIENCE shaped public discourse and organizational behavior, highlighting the role of metaphor in promoting adaptability, innovation, and long-term sustainability in the retail sector.

**6.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

**6.3.1. Limitations**

This study on conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in economic news during the Covid-19 pandemic has some limitations. The corpus was limited to 60 articles from Forbes, a U.S.-focused publication, which may not represent global or regional variations in metaphor use. Expanding the corpus to include international sources would provide a more comprehensive view of metaphorical patterns. Additionally, the study’s focus on the crisis and recovery phases may oversimplify the fluid nature of economic discourse, and future research could extend the analysis to post-recovery to explore lasting metaphor shifts. Future research should also include sector-specific metaphor studies to explore how metaphors function in industries like technology, healthcare, and energy, offering more targeted insights.

**6.3.2. Recommendations for Future Research**

First, expanding the corpus beyond Forbes to include economic news from diverse international sources would enable comparative analysis of BUSINESS metaphors across different cultural and socio-political contexts. This would help determine if metaphorical structures are universally applicable or culturally specific, broadening the understanding of how metaphors shape global economic discourse.

Second, focusing on sector-specific metaphor analysis would provide valuable insights into how metaphors function within particular industries, such as technology, healthcare, or energy. This approach could reveal industry-specific metaphorical patterns and how they reflect sectoral challenges and strategies during crises, contributing to a deeper understanding of metaphors in industry narratives.

**Closing Remarks**

This study analyzed the conceptual metaphors of BUSINESS in retail industry discourse during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on 60 Forbes articles from the crisis (2020) and recovery (2021-2022) phases. The research revealed that metaphors such as BUSINESS IS WAR framed economic survival as a competitive struggle, while BUSINESS IS EXPANSION and BUSINESS IS TRANSFORMATION shifted the focus to growth, innovation, and leadership in the recovery phase. These metaphorical shifts reflect the adaptability of metaphors to changing socio-economic conditions. The study underscores how metaphors shape business strategies, public perceptions, and market positioning, offering a replicable framework for future research on economic discourse. It highlights the powerful role of metaphors in shaping economic realities and navigating post-pandemic strategies, offering insights for scholars, policy makers, and business leaders.

**LIST OF PUBLISHED STUDIES**

1. Phạm Thị Mai (2021). Teaching idioms in Business English through conceptual metaphor. *2021 International Graduate Research Symposium,* 416-426. University of Languages and International Studies, VNU: Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.
2. Phạm Thị Mai (2023). A review on research approaches to conceptual metaphors in economic news discourse. *2023 International Graduate Research Symposium, volume 1.* 1153-1160. University of Languages and International Studies, VNU: Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.