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ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATION SUCCESS FACTORS THAT SUPPORTED SURVIVAL AND GROWTH OF BUSINESSES DESPITE VOLATILITY IN THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

Background: In turbulent environments like the Covid-19 global pandemic organizations have to implement novel process innovations and new management practices in order to survive and grow. Literature confirms that innovative organizations increase their chances of survival and growth. Although literature reveals benefits of leadership, organizational innovation and business model innovation strategies, there seems to be a gap in understanding how they can impact effective implementation and whether such implementation can assist businesses to achieve success during a global crisis.

Purpose: The purpose of this paper was to produce a framework which helps in the understanding of the extent to which innovation can be used to capacitate multinationals in South Africa to grow and survive in a volatile environment. The outcomes of this provide a tool to ensure survival and growth in subsequent volatility.

Results: Models generated show that an organization will have an increase in revenue, an increase in profit, a return on investment, a return on equity, a return on assets and positive bottom-line if organization innovation is implemented. Survival and growth will be possible through process and product innovation, flexibility, creativity, combining and mutually adapting technological knowledge. The recognition of organizational innovation as a necessary activity for business will also ensure sustainability. If the organization does not align its strategies and activities to organizational innova-

tion, then failure is imminent. This stagnation or reduction of revenue may lead to the closure of the business if it fails to cover fixed costs for a protracted period.

Methods: Financial indicators were used as predictors of survival and growth if leadership, OI and BMI are used with their associated factors. To evaluate the relationship between the constructs OI, leadership, and BMI toward survival and growth, a series of discriminant analysis models were estimated. The constructs survival and growth consist of different financial indicators, including revenue, profit margin, return on investment (ROI), return on assets (ROA) and earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). Models were run to optimise model fit. The standardised canonical discriminant functions which were used were significant and the correlation coefficients were high.

Conclusions: The findings from the literature, the qualitative and quantitative outcomes, lend credence to the effect that organizational innovation will help companies to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment.

Key words: Organizational-innovation, leadership, business-model-innovation, crisis, volatility, survival, growth.

Introduction

Organizational innovation plays an important role for the survival and growth of organizations. It is perhaps too strong to refer to innovation as "life or death" to survive, yet innovation forms an integral part of this (Santarelli & Vivarelli, 2007; Freeman, 2002). In volatile environments, such as the 2008/2009 global economic melt-down, organizations have to implement innovative strategies and management practices in order to survive or grow. Cefis and Marsili (2005) and De Jong and Marsili (2006) suggest that innovative organizations , increase their chances of survival and growth during a crisis. Wolf and Pett (2006) suggest that innovations help to grow sales and productivity. However, the role of organizational innovation, despite a volatile economic environment has not been explored fully.

There is a need for innovation to be implemented in order to increase revenue and productivity following a global crisis as it encompasses both internal and external innovation. Due to the dynamic nature of the global environment and volatility, organizations and businesses have to permanently deploy the most effective models in order to maximize their innovation management.

Problem statement

Adina and Ramona (2013), Ahmad, Francis and Zairi (2007), Jain, Chandrasekaran and Gunsasekaran (2010), Marin-Garcia, Aznar-Mas and Gonzalez-Ladrón-de-Guevara (2011) studied organizational innovation, focused on innovation in general and did not demonstrate the effect of Organizational innovation (OI) following a crisis. Therefore, the research problem that informs this research is that in the

modern global environment, volatility is not new, although specific events on a global scale can be destructive and may lead to the demise of organizations operating in a global domain. Multinationals in South Africa could not escape the impact of the world economic crisis in 2008/2009.

Thus, the research statement was: South African multinationals need to establish appropriate organizational innovation strategies to deal with and survive the effects of volatility in the global environment. The study aimed to ascertain if there were any organizational innovation strategies established in South African multinationals following the global economic crisis. The study sought to identify the organizational innovation strategies implemented by these companies and how these impacted on their survival due to their multinational orientation.

Purpose

There seems to be a strong indication that volatility is on the rise (Tong & Wei, 2010). The purpose of the research is to provide a model which helps in the understanding of the extent to which innovation can be used to assist in the sustainability and survival of businesses in a volatile environment. The research outcomes could provide a tool to ensure sustainability and growth in subsequent volatility. The theoretical objectives provide the concepts and variables as they are outlined in the current literature while the empirical research objectives inform the specific outcomes of the research. Thus, the development of a model for understanding the use of innovation in periods of global volatility is the main focus of this research. With innovation delimited to OI, this research aimed to develop a model for OI, BMI and Leadership, in order to sustain or grow an organization through a period of unexpected volatility.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research was to determine the elements of innovation (with specific reference to OI and BMI) that supports leadership in creating successful multinational companies in South Africa following the global economic crisis of 2008/2009, in order to establish the effects of such elements on the survival and growth of the organizations.

The objectives were to:

1) Identify the key success factors for OI that supported sustainability and growth despite the unexpected volatility

2) Establish the effect of OI on long-term survival and growth

3) Analyze the role of leadership during organizational innovation

4) Synthesize the elements of possible turnaround strategies.

Literature Review

The study reviewed the relationships between the variables that affect organizational innovation, and the growth of organizations in a volatile environment.

Innovation

One source of sustained competitive advantage is an organization's capacity to continuously generate innovations (Kuncoro, and Suriani, 2018; Brem, Maier and Wimschneider, 2016). Innovation as an organizational phenomenon has been studied in many fields. There is no universal definition of the term innovation or how it can be measured .(Adams, Bessant & Phelps, 2006). The ambiguity emanates from the complexity of the phenomenon itself and there are many ways of conceptualizing it: the introduction of processes or new products (West & Farr, 1990), the innovative activity of organizations (Terziovski, 2010), diffusion of innovation , innovation involvement and capability (Obstfeld, 2005). A clear understanding of what innovation represents is important in order to assess the process innovativeness of an organization (Quintane *et al.*, 2011). Rodan and Galunic (2004) define innovativeness as the capacity within an organization to produce innovations on a continuous basis and this is important in the production of certain outcomes. Campo, Diaz and Yague (2014) hold that to assume a dominant competitive position in a turbulent economic environment and to have new process innovations serving as a key driver of firm performance, the company has to be good in the generation of innovativeness.

There are two dimensions that can be used to conceptualize innovation. The first dimension looks at the possibility for innovation to be either a process or it can be viewed as a process outcome. (Chesbrough, 2020). Innovation refers to the activities that companies undertake in order to develop new business processes in an emergence, if viewed as a process (Gupta, Tesluk & Taylor, 2007). The second dimension looks at the value attached to the concept of knowledge when innovation is being conceptualized. Some authors propose that there is a clear distinction in the way that innovation is conceived In the traditional innovation literature, some authors propose that there is a clear distinction in the way that innovation can be conceived (Chesbrough, 2020; Kuncoro, and Suriani, 2018). Innovation involves both the outcome and the process to reach this outcome (Brem *et al*., 2016). Quintane *et al.* (2011) give definition which looks at the dual nature of innovations as both a process and an outcome. When innovation is viewed as a process, it describes the bringing into use (Kanter, 1984), application and introduction (Lee and Trimi, 2020), or the development and implementation of ideas (Chesbrough, 2020) of an idea.

These researchers agree that business process innovation in a turbulent environment brings new ways of developing and managing the value creation activities within an organization as a source of sustainable competitive advantage. When innovation is defined as a process, researchers investigate the constituting activities of innovation (Hall and Williams, 2019; Edison, Bin Ali and Torkar, 2013).

Researchers have investigated activities relating to the creation of social ties that helps in the generation of innovation (Obstfeld, 2005; Adner, 2006). Activities placed in a sequence are needed for innovation to be in phases. This sequence involves idea

generation, implementation and commercialisation stages (Axtell *et al*., 2000; Kuncoro, and Suriani, 2018). A shift in the economic conditions or prevailing changes in the customer tastes may bring about such a process. Contrary, definitions of innovation as an outcome brings out the characteristics of the outcome, this includes being novel, useful, in use, or nontrivial (Lee and Trimi, 2020; Utterback, 1971). These definitions are important in the identification of the components of an innovation, but also classify these innovations into categories for further analysis. Akinwale (2020) presents three important categories of innovation: technical versus administrative, product versus process, and radical versus incremental, each of which focuses on innovation as an outcome. Novelty should be at the heart of the definition of innovation as an outcome (Gupta, Tesluk & Taylor, 2007).

Change Management

The management of organizational change , is viewed as crucial by several authors who concentrate on the need to take account of the human side of process innovation. Fernandez and Shaw (2020) and George, Lakhani and Puranam (2020) suggest that the change management is the largest task in any innovation regime. On the other hand, Hyland and Wong (2013) incorporates the human element of process innovation because of the perceived threat it has on work methods and jobs.

Process and Customer Focus

The primary focus of OI, according to Parthiban and Goh (2011) and Glykas, (2011) is to redesign processes with an aim of improving performance from the customer's perspective. This has a positive effect of providing a strong link with the process improvement methodologies proposed by authors from the quality field such as Singh (2012). In some cases, the terminology is almost identical to that used by quality practitioners in the improvement of processes (Parthiban and Goh 2011).

It is important to note that few authors refer to any single technique when discussing OI. Most authors fuse a bouquet of tools, although the nature of the mix depends on the application, whether it be hard (technological) as proposed by (Teng, Grover and Guttler 2002) or soft (management of people), as proposed by Fernandez et.al (2020) . It can be seen that OI, as a strategic, cross-functional activity, must be integrated with other aspects of management if it is to be successful, as much as the exact methodologies to be used are the source of some discussion.

Organizational Innovation And Change Management

For the implementation of innovation to be successful, organizational culture should be considered as determining factor(Laforet, 2016). Globocnik, Rauter and Baumgartner, (2020), write that organizational culture is a key influencer to the organization's ability to adapt to change. In most cases, the existing culture wields beliefs and values that are mostly obsolete to deliver results in the innovated environment. It is therefore imperative for the organization to have a clear understanding and strategies to conform

to the new values, management processes and communication styles that will be created by the newly-redesigned processes. In an innovated organization , people share common goals and thus become more capable of working co-operatively without competing against each other (Kanapathy, Bin, Zailani, and Aghapour, 2017). As OI fosters a fertile ground for teamwork and integration of labour, cooperation, co-ordination, and empowerment of employees become the standard attitudes in the new work environment. It is important to note that trust and honesty among team members is imperative, and within the organization as a whole (Lijauco, Gajendran, Brewer and Rasoolimanesh,2020).

Organizational Innovation Failure Factors

Organizational innovation's failure refers to the condition of not achieving the desired outcome envisaged by its execution. This may manifest as lack of success, non-fulfillment, abortion, miscarriage, defeat, frustration or even neglect of the required action. There are myriad of factors that can contribute to OI failure:

Problems in Communication

Liao and Cheng (2014) and Engström and Stehn (2016) cite inadequate communication of the need to change as a cause of OI strategy failure. Contrary, Ayodele and Oginni (2019) suggested that when uncertainties in communication are hidden, this can also contribute to failure of OI. Kotey and Sorensen (2014) attributed the failure of OI execution to poor communication between OI teams and other personnel. Another factor aligned to poor communication is the lack of motivation and rewards (Bear, 2013).

Organizational Resistance

Many researchers have found resistance to change to exacerbate the failure rate of strategies (Agboola, and Salawu, 2011). The other factor associated with resistance to change, as a cause of failure has been identified to be fear, lack of optimism, and skepticism about OI strategy results (Peltokorpi, 2011). In addition factors that have been concluded as catalysts for organizational resistance are worries about job security (Abraham and Houseman, 2010), fear of job loss, fear of loss of control and position, middle management impermeability and the lack of adequate planning for resistance to change (Canning and Found, 2015)

Problems Related To Commitment, Support And Leadership

Various factors associated with commitment and leadership have been identified. The lack of sustained management and leadership (Firdaus, Purnamasari, and Akuba, 2019), lack of top management attention and support (Brown, Mohan and Boyd, 2017), lack of support from line managers (Firdaus *et al*., 2019) and a "Do It to Me" attitude have been outlined as examples of problems emanating from lack of support, commitment and effective leadership.

Organizational Innovation And Leadership

Organizational climate during OI, requires leaders who are consistently supportive. . Khan and Khan (2019) emphasize that the confidence displayed by leaders on their subordinates, how free are subordinates to talk to superiors about their job, to what extent are subordinates' ideas sought and used?

It is therefore important to note that making an organizational climate change is one of the fundamental steps to beginning to create a great place of work that makes OI a success. Many researchers point that OI must have the full support of top management to succeed. Where there is resistance, the leader must be willing to drive change, even to the point of ruthlessness (Martin, 2014). Khan and Khan (2019) points to poverty of ambition as a reason why strategies to execute OI projects fail. Organizations that fail in effective strategy execution fail to achieve gainful results.

The Technology - Organization - Environment Framework

The technology-organization-environment (TOE) framework is described in Baker, (2012). This framework describes the process of innovation from the development of innovations by engineers and entrepreneurs to the adoption and implementation of those innovations by users within the context of the organization. The part of a process represented by the TOE framework demonstrates how the firm context influences the adoption and implementation of innovations (Austin, Sole & Cotteleer, 2003). The TOE framework is viewed as a theory that seeks to help an organization to explain the three different elements of a firm's context that can influence decision adoption of decisions. The three elements are the technological context, the organizational context and the environmental context (Angst, Agarwal, Sambamurthy & Kelley, 2010). These three elements are posited to influence technological innovation. Figure 2 shows the relationship between technology, the organization and the environment.

Volatility In An Economic Environment

The world economies have been experiencing unstable economic trends following years of uneven recovery from the global financial crisis (Jackson, 2011). The Covid -19 global pandemic has caused even more harm to the already ailing global economy (Globocnik et.al, 2020). Output growth slowed down during 2011, more so in developed countries and developing countries like South Africa were not spared. The challenges affecting the economies were multiple and interconnected (Aalbers, 2009). The most devastating challenges were the continued job crises and the declining prospects for economic growth across the globe. With unemployment remaining high and incomes stagnating, the recovery is stalling in the short run because of the lack of aggregate demand (Gardo & Martin, 2010). As more and more workers remain out unemployed for a long period, especially young workers, medium-term growth prospects also suffer because of the detrimental effect on workers' skills and experience. It becomes even a greater challenge in a country like South Africa where there is an acute shortage of skilled

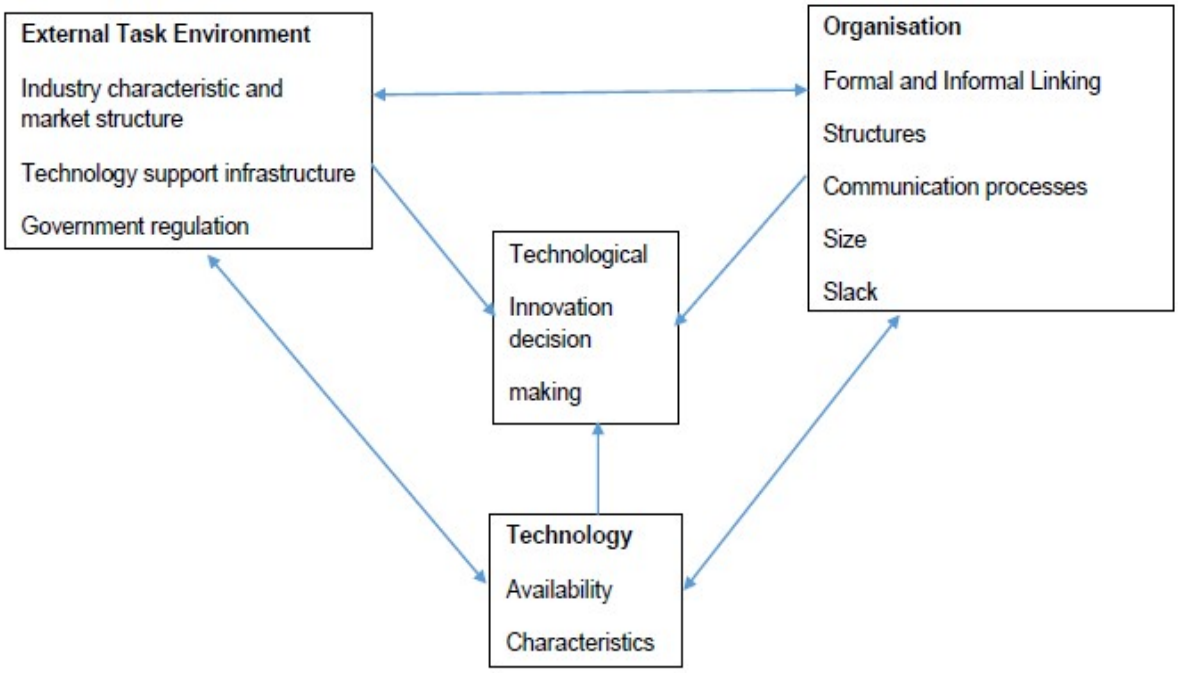

Figure 2. The technology-organization-environment framework (Baker, 2011)

manpower due to the continued brain drain. The devastating effects of the global Corona virus pandemic continue to finish off the businesses which had survived the 2008/9 global economic melt-down.

Possible Turnaround Strategies

Panicker and Manimala (2015) indicate that if a comparison is to be done, it can be found that most research focused on organizations that were successful and the quest to identify success factors, organizational decline and volatility has received far less attention in the management literature. Decline in organizations represents substantial resource losses, if observed over time and can be either a gradual process or a sudden, unexpected disruption (Cooke & Memedovic, 2003). Substantial decline in organizations leads to a crisis where survival of the firm is under threat. Research reveals that managers often attribute performance decline and any subsequent crises in the organization to external factors beyond the company's control, such as fierce competition and the detrimental effects of the global economic crisis (Chen and Wei, 2017).

Empirical research, however show that few business failures are as the result of external factors only (Atsan, 2016). Instead, failure in organizations is often linked to problems that exist internally such as failures to do product updates, investment in core competencies and cost control(Weber, and Rohracher, 2012). A few studies have investigated decline of organizations or crises and possible turnaround

strategies following an economic crisis such as he Covid-19 pandemic.

Miller and LeBreton-Miller (2005) reported how several of businesses stumbled but they have not reported on how they were rejuvenated to growth and sustainability. Some of the contributory factors to the demise of companies are: over-confidence and straying from a successful business formula as the main cause for organizational decline. Similar arguments of success-based over-confidence and the risks of altering fundamental organizational change as causes for organizational decline have also been made in the general management literature (Pettigrew, 2013). Despite these research efforts, very little is known about the survival or growth of organizations despite volatility in the prevailing economic condition (Pretorius, 2009).

Data Collection And Analysis

The research followed a mixed methods research methodology. This research design involves both a quantitative and a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. This methodology is appropriate due to its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research (compared to mono-method research) (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004:26). The research was carried out in three phases:

Phase 1

In the exploratory phase, a sample of six specialists in the field of OI were interviewed with regard to OI, BMI and leadership practices in terms of sustainability and growth in volatile markets, in order to provide rich information about the impact of OI, BMI and leadership on the survival and growth of organizations, despite unexpected volatility in the global environment. The snowball sample was intended to enhance efficiency as it stays robust even when tested against random probability sampling (Tongco, 2007). The intention was not to generalize but to obtain rich information with regard to the research constructs that can be used in the development of the questionnaire for the survey in the quantitative phase of the research in order to identify the elements of OI, BMI, leadership and their links that can model OI, BMI and leadership in the second phase.

Phase 2

In the second phase (the quantitative design), use was made of a stratified random sampling technique (1% because of the large target population) across all MERSETA industries. A survey was used to gather data through the randomly selected strata of MERSETA organizations. The data was analyzed using discriminant function analysis to develop the model for OI, BMI and leadership implementation to assist in sustaining and growing organizations in a volatile environment.

Phase 3

Validation of the model

In the third and last (qualitative) phase of this study, a purposive sample of CEOs in volatile environments, outside MERSETA, were interviewed to validate the model developed.

Strategies For Minimizing Bias And Error

Strategies related to this research.

To minimize bias and error a number of aspects of the topic were explored before reporting. General terms related to the topic were searched on a number of data bases. The databases were in disciplines such as organizational innovation, BMI, volatility, growth, survival and turnaround strategies. To limit the amount of bias, topics that consistently showed up in literature were included in the paper. The topic had to deal with the major constructs as highlighted in the research ideation (Figure 1). This method of choosing literature was chosen instead of limiting the paper to the areas of the author's own interest to effectively analyze organizational innovation, BMI, leadership and its effect on organizations in order to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment.

Strategies related to future inquiry.

The response bias may be an issue when conducting future research. The participants may be inclined to give responses that do not reflect the true and fair view of their organizational performance. The respondents may deliberately try to manipulate the outcome of the research by advocating a more extreme position than they actually hold to boost their side. The respondents may also feel under corporate pressure not to give certain information. In order to possible biases, researchers should not inform participants of their hypothesis. The researcher can ask participants to be as truthful as possible and assure them of strict confidentiality. Another possible bias may be the wording and order of questions. In order to this possible bias, the researcher should ask sufficient questions to allow all aspects of the major constructs to be covered and to control effects due to the form of the question (such as positive or negative wording).

Findings from Literature.

Literature was useful for understanding this topic. It enabled the researcher to address the objectives and the research question. Based on the literature findings, the researcher proposed a framework of understanding the constructs underpinning the research. The conceptual framework shows the factors within leadership, organizational innovation and business model innovation that facilitate the survival and growth of organizations. Firm survival and growth can be evaluated using revenue generated in a particular period compared to a base period, return on investment, return on assets, return on equity and earnings before interest, tax, dividends and amortization. It is important to note that business model innovation happens within the context of organizational innovation and both are highly influenced by leadership.

Conclusions

The findings from literature as outlined on the proposed framework (Figure 4), led the researcher to draw conclusions about the effect of OI, BMI and leadership on companies in order to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment. The findings also enabled the researcher to be able to make recommendations for future study. It is evident that there is no

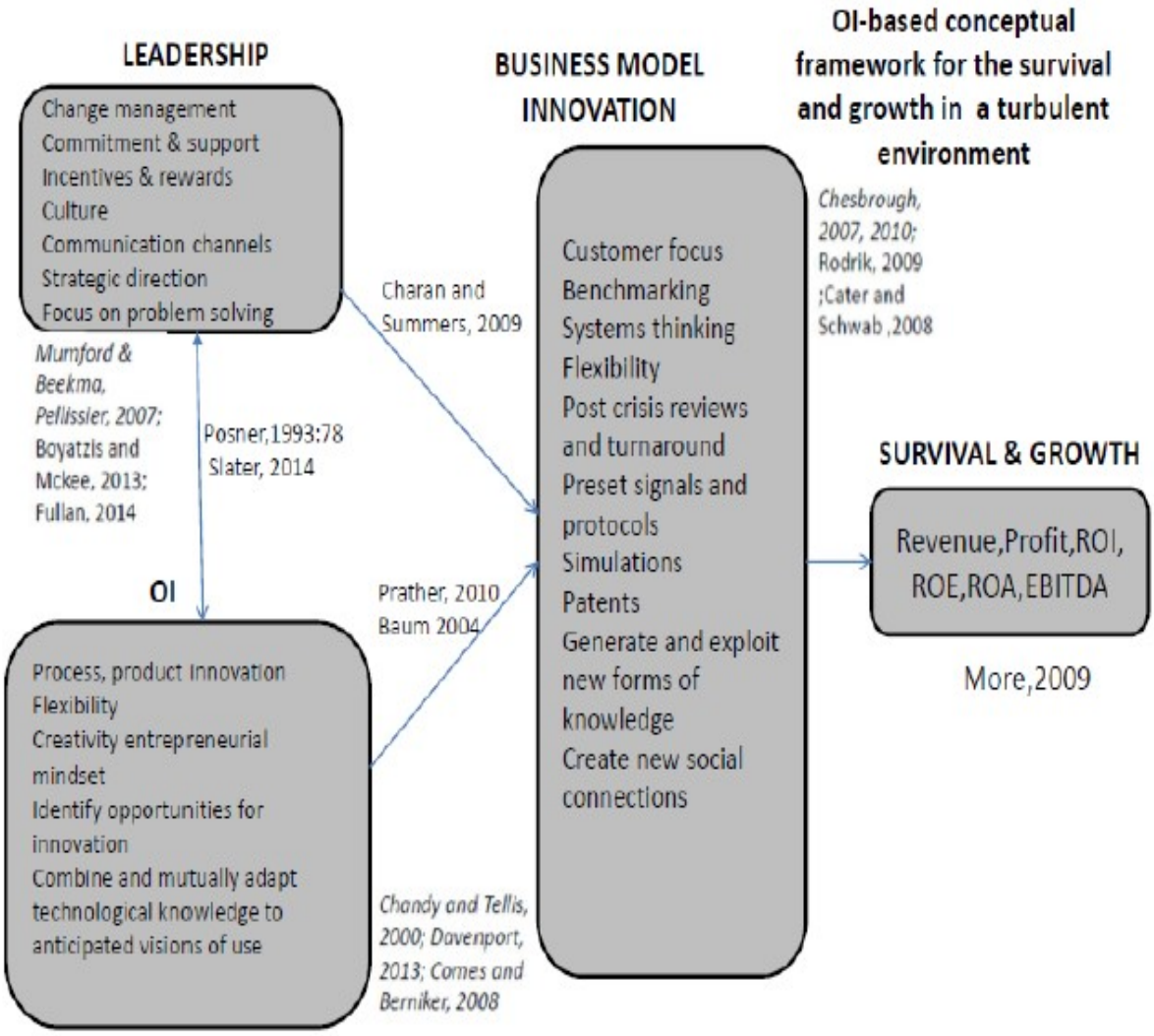

Figure 4: OI Based Conceptual Framework For Survival And Growth In A Turbulent Environment

single factor within OI, BMI and leadership responsible for survival and growth. There is therefore a compelling reason to develop a model that integrates most of the factors that can be used by an organization in order to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment.

The findings from literature, the qualitative and quantitative outcomes, lend credence to the existence of an effect of leadership, OI and BMI on companies in order to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment. The findings also enabled the researcher to make recommendations for future study. It is evident that there is no single factor within OI responsible for survival and growth. There is therefore a compelling reason to develop a model that integrates most of the factors that can be used by an or-

ganization in order to survive and grow despite volatility in the environment.

The model developed provides a system consisting of three interrelated components namely, the constructs of leadership, OI and BMI. In stable environments, it is a matter for multinationals to manage their sustainability and growth. Indeed, leadership is generally tasked with this undertaking. However, when the environment becomes (unexpectedly volatile), a combination of activities and actions are required encompassing the interrelation between leadership, OI and BMI as one management system to achieve sustainability and growth. It is difficult for competitors to copy a synchronous system like this, unlike a product or a process innovation.

At the time of completing this research, there was volatility in the world environment again. There were huge political and economic outcomes that will have extreme impacts on the longevity of business in the world. The more the business world becomes connected, the greater the impact of these pressures on the long-term survival of entities. In focusing on OI and deploying appropriate leadership and BMI practices, it is possible to circumvent the possibility of failure. Since business creates its own value even if the objective is only to provide employment and produce products for consumption, its survival is of utmost importance to the survival of mankind in an increasingly volatile and turbulent environment.

If at least the research can add value to survival in the face of extreme volatility, the purpose of the research has been achieved. At the time of writing, the world is anticipating again significant threats to its stability and its obvious consequences to the world of business and its survival and growth. Classical examples are the rise of ISIS, the shift in the political environment in the US and the Covid-19 pandemic coupled with its knock-on effects on Africa. Indeed, it is not an event that these volatilities will be sustained, but most important is how do organizations survive and grow despite these? This research proposes that when leadership entrenches innovation in the form of OI and BMI, then its survival and growth are assured.

Recommendations For Future Research

Based on the literature, the following recommendations for future research are posited: Further research should be conducted to see how organizational innovation can be used in the services industry as the study focuses on the manufacturing industry. Further research should be done on non-managerial staff to understand how organizational innovation can be applied from this perspective.

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