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Towards improved agility in response to disruptive market changes in South African business

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about how South African businesses can improve agility in response to disruptive market changes. Agility is defined as having a quick resourceful and adaptable character, marked by the ability to readily move with quick easy grace. The rapid pace of changes in the business world requires a great level of flexibility and readiness to manoeuvre and keep abreast with the changes. These changes may be in the form of organisational restructure, reworking a strategy, and responding to competitor moves. The changes require organisations to think on their feet in order to always manage the drivers of change. Agile approaches are used in business to produce a minimal viable product and deploy to the market in order to ensure that the service or the product deployed is more acceptable to consumers. The findings of the study conducted indicate a common need for businesses to understand agility better and to adapt to better methods of managing disruptive market changes. The study was underpinned by the Theory of change. This paper provides a framework on how businesses can improve their response to disruptive market and business change. The framework could help provide business with a competitive edge. This paper adds to the body of knowledge on Disruptive Change and Agility.

Keywords: Agility, Business Agility, Competitive forces, Disruptive market changes, Disruptive innovation.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper analyses how disruptive market changes affect businesses in South Africa and how businesses can subsequently plan around the changes in order to manage the disruptions better. The study sought to understand business agility and how businesses can respond better to disruptive changes by improving on their agility. Although a significant amount of project management effort is spent on managing change, organizations often face the challenges of responding effectively to rapid change. New market entrants seem to be more flexible, because they tend to be less bureaucratic and for the most part, they are potentially the disruptors. Disruptive technologies and other drivers of change pose threats to organisations. The lack of agility in businesses makes it difficult to formulate adequate responses to these threats.

The problem is that the existing literature inadequately addresses the approaches or responses to curb these threats and disruptions. This paper, therefore, analyses and conceptualises how business can respond to disruptive technologies by improving their agility. The goal of the study was to determine how businesses can respond better to disruptive changes and to determine how agility can be improved. The purpose of this paper is to describe business agility and how businesses can respond better to disruptive changes and improve on their agility.

The objectives of the study were a) to analyse the sequence of events when disruptive market changes happen, b) to explore and describe the processes and activities involved in agility (Context of the initiative), c) to identify the factors influencing agility in organisations (To explore and describe business agility) and d) to subsequently determine how business agility can be improved (Intermediate outcomes). The research question driving the study was how can businesses improve their Agility so that they could respond better to disruptive changes?

There is limited recognition within the information systems discipline of the important impact agility already has had on organizational studies in general (Mathiassen & Pries-Heje, 2006). Some companies allocate minimal amount of resources to research and development and may not be as agile in responding to new innovations and unexpected

changes competitors might bring. To this point, both small and large corporates may benefit from this paper. The study was not about evaluating a specific methodology used in agility but rather about factors influencing agility. The paper shows how businesses could improve their agility and it extends the body of knowledge in responsive strategies.

The rest of the paper is outlined as follows: it first surveys the scholarship relative to the topic; the theoretical framework then follows; this is followed by the research methods used; the data analysis and discussion of the findings follow; lastly, the interpretations and implications are given.

Survey of scholarship and related works

The previous section provided an introduction and the problem this paper addresses. This section surveys the scholarship. The terms and concepts making up the paper topic are reviewed. The related studies are also reviewed in this section.

We live in a world full of change driven by new trends, natural progression, innovations and many other drivers. For instance, technology as a change driver has for many years been a business enabler. It enables businesses to conduct their day-to-day operations and growth. Many companies have leveraged off technology to enhance their product offering. The increase in technological innovations has brought about disruptive changes to the markets. And this changes how businesses function, taking market share from competitors or larger companies.

According to Lunenburg (2010), forces of change include:

- Marketplace
- Government laws and regulations
- Technology
- Labour markets
- Economic changes
- Administrative processes
- People problems

Anthony (2008) also mentions common drivers of change such as a clear vision and strategy and the need to put the customer or consumer in the centre of the transformation equation. Change remains constant because of these drivers and companies need to drive initiatives to keep abreast and ahead of the curve. We also live in the age where both the customers and the companies undergo changes to suit the modern customer's needs and expectations. Srinivasan & Patary (2017) explain that in today's economy, the ability to satisfy changing customer expectations is considered key to improving the bottom line for the organization. Organisations that are not agile won't achieve this as customer expectations are never static. Business needs to be agile enough to make the necessary changes or adapt in order to keep up with competitors. Agile approaches are used to produce a minimal viable product by

sending it out to the market and continually improving on that product while responding effectively to market changes.

Overview of Agility

Agility has its origin in the United States of America (US) car manufacturing industry in the early nineteen-nineties. In the US, there were concerns about the decline of the manufacturing industry and loss of competitiveness (Oosterhout, 2010, p. 2). Agility is defined as having a quick resourceful and adaptable character or marked by ready ability to move with quick easy grace (Webster, Merriam, 2018, p. 1). Businesses are finding it much harder to survive or maintain a certain level of success. The constant change requires them to be more agile. Agile organizations respond quickly, they are resourceful, and they are able to adapt to their environment (Mathiassen & Pries-Heje, 2006, p. 117).

Being agile requires a paradigm shift for an organisation as it may require or introduce new ways of working. Agile organizations are not only capable of successfully implementing change; they are nimble, capable of responding quickly and gracefully to both expected and unexpected events in their environment (Mathiassen & Pries-Heje, 2006, p. 116). On account of the growing complexity and the persistent pace of change in the global economy, it is clear that all organizations, including service firms, government agencies, and non-profits – and the teams within them – need to develop higher levels of agility in order to manage the rapid changes in the market place (Srinivasan & Patary, 2017, p. 2).

The success of the business is challenged by the inability to manoeuvre when changes come about and having to adapt to new environments. Agility requires a mind-set change when trying to embrace new ways of working. Agility requires the successful implementation of change in a flexible and effective manner. Managers increasingly feel the need to have a sufficient level of business agility performance to react in an agile way – proactively or reactively – to uncertain internal events, external events, and opportunities (Oosterhout, 2010, p. 7).

Business Agility

Business agility is the distinct quality that allows organizations to respond rapidly to changes in the internal and external environment without losing momentum or vision (Srinivasan & Patary, 2017, p. 5). Business agility can help adapt or manage change and uncertainties in business and requires a paradigm shift. It is a management concept to cope with the competition, business practices and corporate structures of the twenty-first century (Oosterhout, 2010, p. 13). Agile businesses should be able to sense on what is happening in the markets and to act quickly on it. Srinivasan & Patary (2017) further mention that long term businesses ability requires attributes such as adaptability, flexibility, and balance as key attributes.

Information Technology (IT) is an enabler of business it is heavily relied on to help execute and support the business strategy. IT is a major force driving the need for business agility and at the same time an important capability, which can hinder or enable a firm's level of business agility (Oosterhout, 2010, p. 3). Companies need to ensure that their IT capability is mature enough to adapt and maintain the required changes. A major contributor to disruptive change is technology. CA Technologies (2017) explains that technology drives industries and is at the centre of every business given the fast-paced application economy. Uncertainty is a challenge for many businesses.

Business agility can help adapt or manage change and uncertainties in business and requires a paradigm shift. A good question to ask is how a company copes with the competition. Markides (2012) explains how a point of entry for some smaller or new companies may be serving consumers with low-cost products where larger organisations may not be competing or may be ignoring. Such a strategy can be used to start and grow into a large player and taking a considerable market share. Therefore, the new market entrant can be a threat and existing corporations need to be able to sense what is happening in the markets and act quickly on it. Business agility has to do with company adaptability, flexibility and balance to respond to market changes. They need to manage the necessary changes internally or adapt in order to keep up with competitors. Mathiassen & Pries-Heje (2006) mention that quickness of organisations to respond is not necessarily about the speed with which the

organization can respond to customer requests, market dynamics, and emerging technology options. Business agility requires organisations to learn more rapidly and adapt to change.

Methodologies used in Agility

Agility has been adopted in the IT world to develop new systems or products in order to get them out to market quicker. In this instance agility refers to the ability to quickly deliver IT-based services and quickly adapt to changing requirements (Mathiassen & Pries-Heje, 2006, p. 117). This has spawned the development of other methodologies such as:

- Dynamic Systems Development Model (DSDM) methodology
- Rapid Application Development (RAD) and
- Scrum methodology.

These methodologies are tailored and used to do the necessary in order to get a viable product or solution out to market. Businesses use such innovative approaches to grow and not be held back by the typical challenges and issues behind bureaucracy, cumbersome processes and red tape, to name a few barriers. Agile methodologies on the other hand are focused towards customer satisfaction and therefore allow for changes through iterative style of development where only needed functionalities are focused on (Hoda, Noble , & Marshall , 2008, p. 219).

Agile is a methodology used to manage customer requirements iteratively and allows some flexibility to change these requirements in order to get to a definite acceptable solution for a client. Agile innovation methods have transformed information technology. The success rates in software development have greatly improved as agile methods has yielded better quality and faster time to market, and increased motivation, morale and efficiency of IT teams (Rigby, Sutherland, & Takeuchi, 2016, p. 1). Agile methodologies follow iterative and incremental style of development that dynamically adjusts to changing requirements and enables better risk management (Hoda, Noble , & Marshall , 2008, p. 219). Hoda et al (2008) also explain how Agile helps answer the problem where frequent change requests are made for customer requirements whereas the traditional ways of working did not really allow for such frequent change requests. Customer requirements are not fixed. The table below compares the agile way of working with the traditional way of working.

Table 1. Comparison of agile and traditional ways of working (Hoda et al, 2008)

Categories	**Traditional**	**Agile**
Focus	Process	People
Management	Controlling	Facilitating
Customer involvement	Requirements gathering and delivery phases	On-site and constantly involved
Developers	Work individually within teams	Collaborative or in pairs
Technology	Any	Mostly Object Oriented
Product Features	All included	Most important first
Testing	End of development cycle	Iterative and/or Drives code
Documentation	Thorough	Only when needed

According to CA Technologies (2017), Agile methods achieved superior results compared to the least effective traditional methods as they ensure better cost, schedule, productivity, quality satisfaction and Return on Investment. By taking people out of their functional silos and putting them in self-managed and customer-focused multidisciplinary teams, the agile approach is not only accelerating profitable growth but also helping to create a new generation of skilled general managers (Rigby, Sutherland, & Takeuchi, 2016, p. 1). Hoda et al (2008) mentions versions of agile methodologies such as Crystal, Feature Driven Development (FDD), Dynamic Systems Development Method (DSDM), and Adaptive Software Development.

Agile Organisations

This section cites examples where forms of agility are applied in business. An agile organization embraces change by moving rapidly and effectively to anticipate, initiate and take advantage of change, yet it remains robust enough to absorb any setbacks. But agility is not just about being fast: it also implies the capacity to remain in touch with the customer needs so that they are met appropriately (Srinivasan & Patary, 2017, p. 4). Examples where forms of agility are applied include Shadow banking and Blue ocean strategy.

Shadow banking institutions

Shadow banking institutions can be defined as financial intermediaries who perform the same services as traditional banks, however, are not subjected to regulatory oversight as traditional banks are (Investopedia, 2018, p. 1). Globally, shadow banking is estimated to have reached over $75-trillion by 2013 and in South Africa it is estimated to be over R2-trillion (Donnelly, Bring shadow banks into the light, 2015, p. 1). Shadow banks offer similar financial services that traditional banks do and are therefore directly competing with the major banks and considered rivals to other financial service providers too. The rise of shadow banking institutions also came as a result of more consumers not qualifying or affording certain services offered by the major banks. Such customers need personal loans and other financial transactions or need to develop a credit profile for themselves. Calling them Shadow Banks was a bad naming convention and considered negative given the disruption they brought and difficulty to regulate.

In terms of the business model, shadow banks focus on providing cheaper and more conventional financial services in order to accommodate low income earners, pensioners and young professionals who have just started working and are thus considered high risk profilers who cannot afford access to traditional banks. South African regulators are in step with the developed world in efforts to better oversee broader financial services (Donnelly, Bring shadow banks into the light, 2015, p. 1).

Credit scores often affect a consumer's accessibility to financial access and to protection by traditional banks and as such in order for those consumers not to be unbanked, such consumers maintain an option of being serviced by shadow banks (Deloitte, 2014). Anthony Smith who is an associate director at Deloitte Risk Advisory explains, in Donnelly (2015) article, that the growth of shadow banking institutions has been brought by the rise in technology and innovation and as such, shadow banks are seen as disruptors to the traditional banking system by offering a system that is cheaper, more efficient and more inclusive than traditional banks in that shadow banks provide financial access to the unbanked by providing credit and savings facilities (Donnelly, 2015). Smith further indicated that the level of disruption by shadow banks will increase the technologically savvy younger generation without the need for bricks-and-mortar institutions as things stand currently, and an example of this is virtual currencies such as Bitcoin (*Ibid*., 2015).

In an economy plagued by so much uncertainty and the wake of increased consumer debt and exclusion from banking due to poor credit records, shadow banks play a crucial role in increasing financial inclusion and affording people the opportunity to contribute to the country's economy. The shadow banking industry thus plays a critical role in meeting rising credit demand especially in a strained economy.

Some of the services offered by shadow banks include money market funds, hedge funds and other investment tools aimed at allowing one's money to grow at a nominal rate (Pritchard, 2017). These markets invest in short-term instruments that are less than 13 months and by investing in a shorter period, the chances of risk are reduced.

Shadow banks also play a critical role in the funding of small businesses as they offer credit to businesses who have been denied funding from traditional banks. This expands on the financial inclusion by a marginalized group of aspirant entrepreneurs who have ambitions of contributing to the growth of the economy by having small businesses and thus creating employment but do not enjoy the protection and investor confidence from traditional banks and other mainstream financial service providers.

As a direct competitor to the traditional banks, shadow banks also contribute meaningfully to the growth of the country's economy. Emerging markets such as South Africa and other

countries showed a rapid increase in shadow banks by 10% since the wake of these disruptive market changers (Financial Stability Board, 2015)

Although shadow banking institutions have provided a much-needed relief for unbanked consumers, there are risks to these industries. One of the risks attached to shadow banking is that since they are not subjected to regulatory oversight like traditional banks are, their consumers do not enjoy the regulatory protection that is enjoyed by consumers who are banked by the traditional banks.

The rise in business agility has given birth to new ways of thinking, being more creative, and innovative and finding ways to create disruption within markets in order to provide an alternative to the old dispensation. The increased growth and success of shadow banking institutions into the market has encouraged traditional banks to find ways of being more flexible in their product offering thus forcing them to cast their nets even wider.

In an ailing economy with a low GDP rate, the need for alternative banking and financial service providers is becoming more and more apparent and shadow banks have paved the way on how things can be improved within the global financial market space.

Blue Ocean Strategy

What is blue ocean strategy? Blue ocean strategy is about creating a new market. Competition becomes irrelevant in a blue ocean strategy as you would have created a completely new market. As an example of, Kim & Mauborgne (2004) explain the story of Cirque du Soleil circus which despite a long-term decline in the circus industry, managed to profitably increase revenue 22-fold over the last ten years by reinventing the circus. They were not confined by existing industry limits and instead created their own market in a space that was not contested, thus rendering the competition irrelevant and creating a blue ocean. With growth limitations impacting businesses in tightly contested markets, these businesses may consider exploring blue oceans.

The following are guidelines for companies pursuing blue oceans:

- Identify the key features/dimensions that currently define a product/ service,
- identify a group of customers who only value a subset of these features,

- make the product or service not as good on the dimensions less valued by new target customers,
- consider making the new product or service better on the dimensions valued by the new target customers and/ or introducing new features targeted to these new customers (Financial Times, n.d.)

This requires a great level of agility in order to learn these new markets and transform or achieve faster time to market delivery and claim these uncontested markets.

Disruptive changes (market and business)

Disruptions are usually caused by natural disasters (e.g., floods, earthquakes) and intentional or unintentional human actions (e.g., industrial accidents, terrorist strikes) (Bin & Qingying, 2016, p. 697). They are unexpected in nature and sometimes unplanned. The sudden change is what can destabilize life. Change by nature can be inevitable and may be viewed in business as a constant. Change occurs for many reasons. Marketplace, Government laws and regulations, Technology, Labour markets, Economic changes, Administrative processes and people problems are among the many drivers of change that exist in the world today (Lunenburg, 2010).

Businesses are taking a more client-centric approach in their strategies as we are in the age of the customer and they try to align more to customer needs. The pace of change is accelerating. Customer expectations, competitive shifts and regulatory changes are disrupting global markets—and the way you do business (CA Technologies, 2017, p. 2). The negative side of change is when it is disruptive, and businesses are not ready to make the sort of changes required on their side to keep up with the demands of the change.

The concept of “Disruption” describes a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses (Michael, Rory , & Christensen, 2015, p. 1). Clayton et al (2015) explain that the companies focused on product and service improvements for their most demanding clients, may exceed the needs of some segments and ignore the needs of others. New market entrants may capitalise on this and being more lean and agile offer a less expensive option and move up the ranks. This

is where mainstream customers start adopting these new market entrants and their offering. This typically disrupts large traditional businesses.

There are innovations that cause massive disruptions for traditional businesses. Disruptive innovators can radically simplify and cut the costs of previously expensive products and services, making them more accessible to the public at large. And this levels the playing field (Goslar, 2016, p. 1). There have been companies who seemed to do the right thing in industry but ended up failing, such as Kodak. Another example of disruptive change was when the world moved from the traditional typewriter to the word processor, which appealed a lot to people who were not professional typewriters.

Disruptive innovation has been credited as the strategy that led to Japan's dramatic economic development after World War II. Japanese companies such as Nippon Steel, Toyota, Sony and Canon began by offering inexpensive products that were initially inferior in quality to those of their Western competitors (Markides, 2012, p. 1). These Japanese companies infiltrated the low-end segment of the market and they improved their quality and started making inroads into the upmarket segment until they reached the very top and dominated them. Markides (2012) further explains that explains Scholars have reasoned that China and India are a showing similar disruption process in the emerging markets in recent times. Examples are cases such as when TATA Motors which introduced a low-cost and more affordable motor vehicle called the Nano and China had the Lenovo LePhone as a response to the Apple iPhone. Larger companies may be at threat and one may wonder what kind of responses they have prepared for such disruptions.

Christensen et al (2015) explain that disrupters create a market where none existed and can potentially turn non-consumers into consumers, with an example the story of how smaller photocopiers disrupted the market companies like Xerox dominated. Christensen is a professor at Harvard who created a theory of disruptive technology which talks to a market trajectory which different between customers. This may be for lower, midlevel and high performing products. The disruptor usually comes as the lower-end product and attracts a certain customer base but grows in quality and eventually topples the larger incumbents. These changes require incumbents to have a good level of readiness in order to manoeuvre and conduct business as usual. The impact of some changes may render other businesses uncompetitive. Goslar (2016) explains that the motivation to explore new or previously

ignored markets is stimulated by competition and that the oligopolistic nature of key sectors in South Africa presents a challenge.

Another example of disruption explains was when Bic (razor business) emerged as a huge, low-cost disruption to Gillette in the 1970s and quickly succeeded in capturing 25% of the disposable razor market by the early 1980s. Yet Gillette countered with its own line of inexpensive disposable razors, and Bic ceased being a major threat to Gillette in razors by the early 1990s (Markides, 2012).

The issues faced with Disruptors

An industry disruption is defined as a process whereby a smaller company with fewer resources is able to successfully challenge established incumbent businesses (Abbosh, Savic, & Moore, 2019, p. 1). A new market entrant cannot be ignored because they may bring something that may change the rules of the game, or the entire game itself. New entrants may have to deal with barriers to entry including key players who have been in the market for a long time. Regulations may also be a hinderance for new market entrants as it may favour the old traditional businesses. Fiscal policy and/or regulations should help create environments where new market entrants flourish. Innovating for new or underserved markets is hard and comes with higher risk and costs.

Uber entered the South African Market and caused major disruptions in the taxi industry. Goslar (2016) explains how the taxi industry is currently engaged in a daily struggle for the customer with Uber. The Taxi industry has not tried to enhance their existing service but instead have retaliated and strongly opposed to this disruption. Goslar (2016) further explains how the certain regulations may inadvertently increase the costs to deliver services, creating additional resistance in services delivery and keeping would-be new entrants / market disruptors at bay. Regulation also plays a role in creating the necessary conditions for market disruptors to thrive, however in South Africa regulation may be a limiting factor for disruption.

Disruptor don't necessarily need to be part of the same market or value network to compete as they can come with a different way to do things or create a new market altogether. They do face real challenges with existing market players as they may cause them to fail.

Legislation can also be used against them or can work in their favour. Goslar (2016) explains that legislation like the Consumer Protection Act and National Credit Act should protect consumers from abuses and ask how they can be better designed to relieve the consumer of the burden and cost of compliance. Regulatory compliance needs to evolve.

In a company facing disruption, the leadership needs to understand all the moving parts and deal with possible rapid changes to business models in order to respond to disruption. Given the growing complexity and the constant change in the global economy, all organizations need to develop higher levels of agility in order to manage the rapid changes in the market place (Srinivasan & Patary, 2017, p. 2). They would not want to lose customers or even employees just because they are unable to service their new and growing needs. As much as a company may be the disruptor, they also must consider being disrupted and losing business, a headache they caused for other businesses.

The Disruption Process

The Disruption process requires a product that meets two conditions, namely *starting out* as inferior in terms of the performance that existing customers expect, but superior in price (Markides, 2012). A low-cost product is not automatically disruptive. Let us consider the life of a new Product X that has recently entered a competitive market. Markides (2012) further explains that at the beginning some customers may not be interested in Product X but other customers who may not be consuming that product may be attracted by its inexpensiveness. The evolution of this product X as it improves in quality and competitiveness will cause the disruption.

The dynamic element is that what makes a product disruptive is how it develops over time and how incumbents respond to it (Markides, 2012, p. 1). Existing corporations can make the mistake of overlooking disrupters because they start on a small scale and can be ignored.

Disruptive innovations come to exist because incumbents overlook the markets *Low-end footholds* and *new-market footholds* (Christensen et al, 2015). Markides (2012) posits that to consider the potential of emerging-market innovations to be disruptive in more developed

economies, it must be established if emerging-market innovators will remain with substantial price advantage over competitors from more developed countries and understanding the factors that determine their answers by examining the success (or failure) of other disruptions. Christensen et al, (2015) further explain that incumbents typically attempt to prioritise the more lucrative and demanding clients with ever-improving products and services, neglecting less-demanding customers, thus opening the door to disruptors who come with a low cost and adequate offering. Christensen's Theory of disruptive technology talks to how smaller market players may compete in the lower end markets and grow.

Abbosh et al (2019) discusses four states of disruptions as follows:

- Viability – consisted of new or reborn industries that underwent a significant disruption.
- Volatility – consisted of industries facing high disruption levels.
- Durability – mainly consisted of efficient, mature industries.
- Vulnerability – mainly consisted of companies under increasing pressure to cut costs and to be more efficient.

Abbosh et al (2019) mapped industries across 2 axes and measured current level of disruption against susceptibility to future disruption score on scales of 0-1. The intention was to use this to help a company formulate better responses and strategize effectively on what disruptions to expect which can help inform a company's next steps.

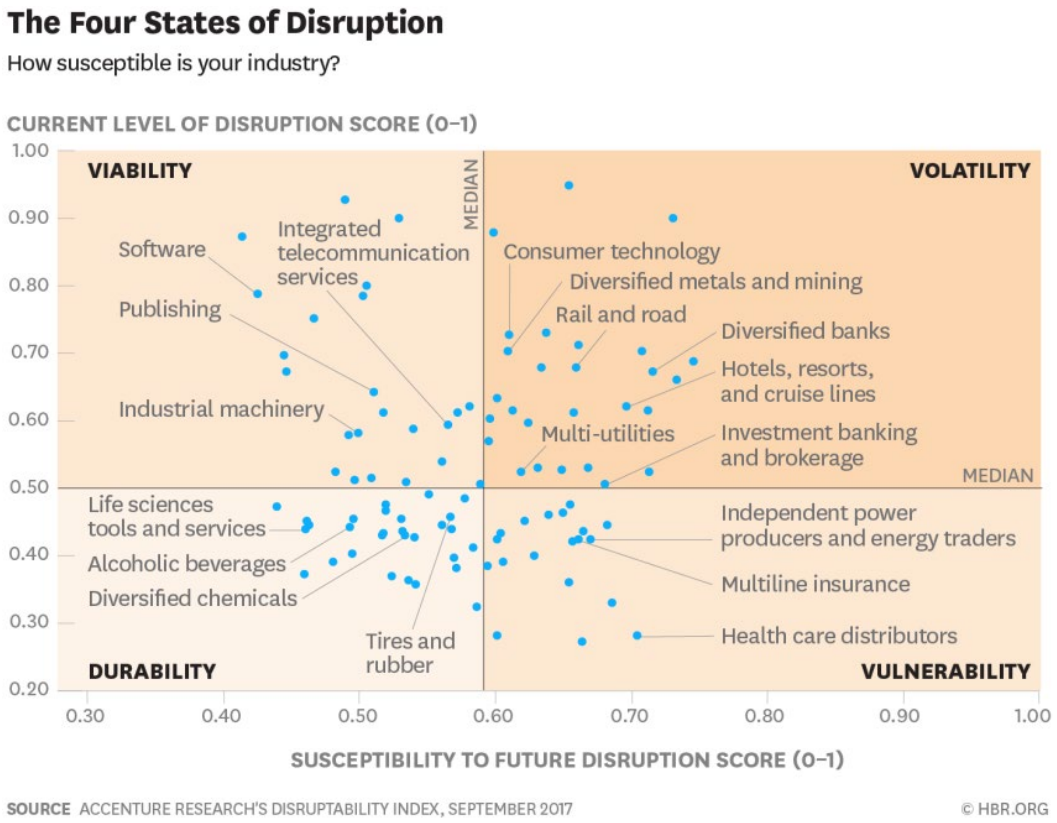


Figure 1. The four stages of disruption (Abbosh et al, 2019).

2. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

This section gives the background to the research problem by discussing the study location and context. The challenges and issues that were unearthed to motivate undertaking the study are also described in this section.

Organisations are constantly dealing with changes. The study looked at business agility in the South African business context. The sectors or industries studied were the Financial Services, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) environments. These South African business environments deal with millions to billions of Rands (ZAR) in expenditure and revenue combined. Change can have major financial implications and thus needs to be managed well. There are challenges and issues in several organisations where there is a certain degree of inflexibility when it came to managing change. Project management is a skill used to manage change within an organisation, however the challenge is the rate at which organizations can respond to change and the level of flexibility to implement that change.

The study looked at Financial Services, State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) from a South African context. The businesses varied from size, number of employees, products and services to revenue. Companies may spend a significant effort on new strategies to improve products and services to increase revenues and Return on Equity (ROE), however managing unexpected rapid changes can be a game changer. The typical barriers to effective response to market changes observed included red tape, bureaucracy, tedious processes of engaging multiple forums for approvals and resistance to change to name a few etc. However, agile organisations using leaner approaches are more flexible and respond quicker to such disruptive changes as they don't deal with such barriers. Participants in the study expressed frustration with such barriers in their organizations and the need for more agility from their management. Literature inadequately addressed the approaches or responses to curb problems with agility, the lack thereof or how to improve on them.

3. *THEORTICAL FRAMEWORK*

The section discusses and describes the theory underpinning the study and subsequently it provides the conceptual research framework that guided the study. The Theory of Change was chosen to underpin the study. This section describes the Theory of Change and provides an explanation of this theory. The main aim of the study was to understand business agility and ways to improve agility.

The Theory of Change was used as a lens in the study. Theory of Change is a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a specific context. It is focused particularly on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved (Center for Theory of Change, 2017, p. 1). Theory of Change provides a working model against which to test hypotheses and assumptions about what actions will best bring about the intended outcomes. (Taplin, Clark, Collins, & Colby, 2013, p. 2)

A Theory of Change approach provides a framework which encourages program staff and stakeholders to develop comprehensive descriptions and illustrations of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a specific context. It is outcomes-based and helps those involved to clearly define long-term goals and then map backwards to identify the necessary preconditions that will be required for success (Allen, 2016, p. 1). It can be very useful for a body of experts looking for solutions or strategic thinkers.



Figure 2. Linear pathway of the theory of change (ResultsForDevelopentInstitute, 2014).

Figure 2 shows the linear pathway of the Theory of Change (TOC) where the results are defined on one side, activities or steps on the other and the how to do in the middle. The pathway may not be linear. The assumptions which talk to the how is in the middle. The result that the organisation is trying to achieve is identified or defined by the Theory of Change. The theory of change defines a set of outcomes that an organization has control over to achieve the result. It looks at the result that the organization is trying to achieve, the steps and activities to get the results and how to get there. The third component is the information regarding how the activities shall lead to the intended results. These may be considered as assumptions or intermediary outcomes. (ResultsForDevelopentInstitute, 2014)



Figure 3. Use of a Theory of Change.

Theory of change can help articulate things for a project of strategy to be a success. With TOC you must define your results, activities and strategies for the duration of the project, define assumptions and consider the context. You can develop a TOC if you can define goals or Results you want to achieve (ResultsForDevelopentInstitute, 2014).

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Centre for Theory of Change (2017) maps out the initiative through 6 stages:

- Identifying long-term goals: These are outcomes which include Long-term Outcome, and Intermediate/Short-term Outcomes (Taplin et al, 2013). These are clearly articulated and quantifiable for the enterprise.
- Backwards mapping and connecting the preconditions or requirements necessary to achieve that goal and explaining why these preconditions are necessary and enough.

- Identifying your basic assumptions about the initiative. **Assumptions** may be based in the empirical knowledge of expert practitioners or in research evidence (Taplin et al, 2013, p. 7).
- Identifying the interventions that the initiative will accomplish to produce the desired change. In a Theory of Change, the term "intervention" may refer to single activities or whole programs, depending on how specific the group wants to be and how they want to use the theory with respect to a strategic plan or theory of action (Taplin et al, 2013, p. 6).
- An organization will likely discover that some current interventions are not aligned with the Theory of Change. This raises challenging questions about whether to continue with activities that cannot be shown to contribute significantly to the outcomes in the theory.
- Developing indicators to measure your outcomes to assess the performance of your initiative. This will answer the need to know whether an outcome has been reached. **Indicators**, which refer to measurable and observable phenomena, furnish the evidence of achievement and they may be quantitative (e.g. number of new jobs created) or qualitative (a description such as new characteristics of a community) (Taplin, 2013, p. 6). Indicators are quantifiable and measurable.
- Writing a narrative to explain the logic of your initiative. The **narrative** is a summary of the theory that explains the overall logic, highlights major assumptions, and presents a compelling case as to how and why the initiative is expected to work (Taplin et al, 2013, p. 8). The narrative efficiently articulates the major elements of the theory and the workings of the elements.

The Theory of Change defines a result that an organisation is trying to achieve, a set of outcomes that an organisation has control over and believe will help to achieve the result and the information regarding how the activities should lead to the intended results.

Elements of the Theory of Change

Allen (2016) mentions the following as elements of the Theory of Change:

- Context of the initiative
- Sequence of required events
- Underlying assumptions
- Intermediate Outcomes
- Long-term outcomes the initiative strives to support
- Logic model representing the sequence and captures the discussion

Conceptual research framework

The Theory of Change has six elements as seen in the preceding section. From the six elements, only three were deemed as appropriate lenses for the purpose of the study. These were *Context of the initiative*, *Sequence of required events and Intermediate Outcomes.* The study chose these 3 specific elements as they were best suited to incorporate into the research questions and to better aid the thematic analysis process. These specific elements resonated well as the study sought to describe business agility by addressing how business can respond better to disruptive changes and improve on their agility.

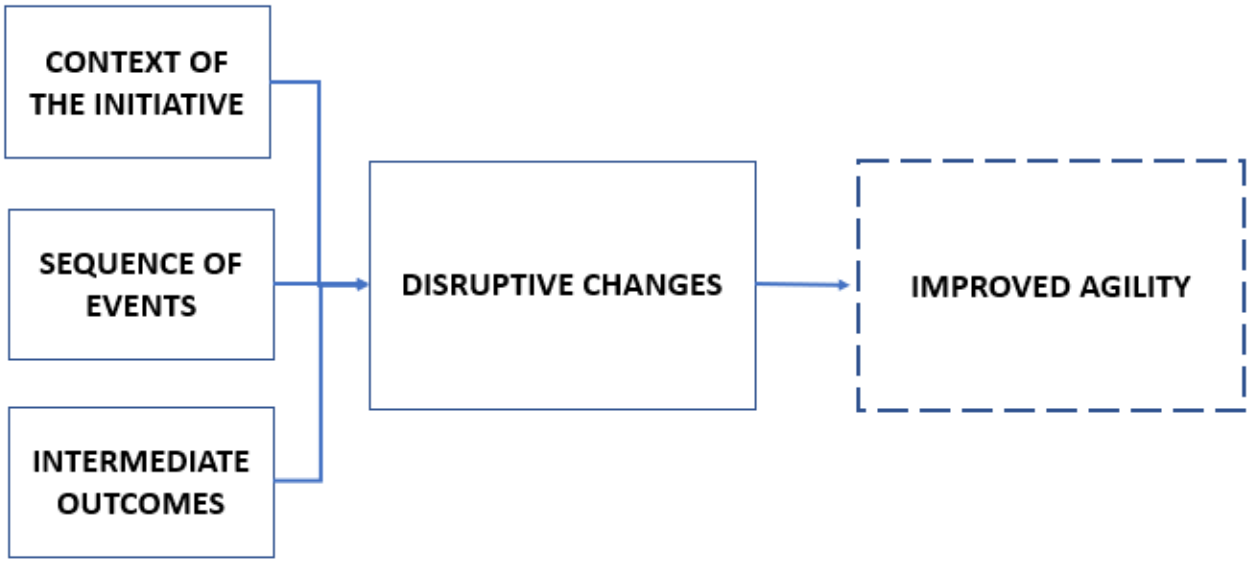


Figure 4. Conceptual Research Framework for this study.

The conceptual research framework comprises of the three elements from the Theory of Change as inputs to the Disruptive Change process. The sequence of events involves identifying and describing the disruptive market change activities. The context of the initiative involves understanding what disruptive market changes and agility were as well as what participants understood these concepts to be. The Intermediate Outcomes involves understanding what recommendations and improvements could be made in response to challenges and issues.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the research methodology followed. This includes the research philosophy, approach, strategy and design applied for the study.

Research Philosophy

The interpretive research philosophy was followed. The interpretive philosophy was appropriate because it seeks to understand how events, processes, and activities are perceived by participants and to understand participants' point of view (Ary et al, 2010). Interpretive philosophies are supported by observation and interpretation. Interpretivism is often associated with qualitative data. A basic interpretive study provides descriptive accounts targeted to understanding a phenomenon using data that might be collected in a variety of ways such as interviews, observations, and document reviews (Ary et al, 2010). Data was collected through the interviewing participants in their areas of work. Critical philosophy was not appropriate for this study as social, cultural and political domination were not constraints.

Research approach

The research approaches considered were Qualitative and Quantitative research. The study followed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research undertakes a subjective and inductive approach to conducting research. This includes methods such as observation and unstructured interviews to collect information.

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. (Creswell, 2007, p. 37). According to Ary,

In general, qualitative research is based on a relativistic, constructivist ontology that posits that there is no objective reality (Krauss, 2005, p. 760). Creswell (2007) explains that qualitative research is conducted to gain a complex, comprehensive understanding of an issue. Qualitative researchers seek to comprehend a phenomenon by concentrating on the holistic picture instead of breaking it down into variables. The goal is a holistic picture and

depth of understanding rather than a numeric analysis of data (Ary, Jacobs, & Christine, 2010, p. 29). Ary et al (2010) further explains that the Qualitative approach takes holistic view and deeper understanding than analysing data numerically. Smaller research samples may be used with no random selection and the primary data collection instrument being the researcher.

Creswell (2007) explains that qualitative research is conducted to tackle a problem or issue that needs to be explored and this involves study a group or population with the final written report or inputs of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a 'complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action. Qualitative data can come from three sources, namely semi-structured or unstructured interviews (individual and focus group), observations (ethnography) and documents (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009, p. 1264). Qualitative research methodology often relies on personal contact over some period of time between the researcher and the group being studied (Ruth, Rotich, & Bengat , 2015, p. 226).

Table 2: Comparison of Quantitative and Qualitative Research (Ary, Jacobs, & Christine, 2010, p. 35)

	Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Purpose	To study relationships, cause and effect	To examine a phenomenon as it is, in rich detail Design
Design	Developed prior to study Flexible	Flexible, evolves during study
Approach	Deductive; tests theory	Inductive; may generate theory
Tools	Uses preselected instruments	The researcher is primary data collection tool
Sample	Uses large samples	Uses small samples
Analysis	Statistical analysis of numeric data	Narrative description and interpretation

Qualitative research is known to be more subject to bias than quantitative research and the researcher's biases may be known to research participants. Researchers must be aware of their own preconceived notions or biases in order to actively seek out data that challenges these (Brod et al, 2009, p. 1265) The present study carefully selected the participants based on their characteristic to helps capture any varying perspectives and ensure meaningful data. Brod et al (2009) further emphasises the importance of developing best practices that maintain the scientific integrity of the research process to maintain credibility. This is because it is subject to bias and more challenging to structure than quantitative research. The use of proper research strategy, methodology and triangulation helped ensure that the researcher avoided bias and ensured that there was validity.

Research Strategy

Jacobs, & Christine (2010, p. 29) many different types of qualitative research approaches are used, and we consider eight of the most broadly used below:

- basic interpretative studies
- case studies
- document or content analysis
- ethnography
- grounded theory
- historical studies
- narrative inquiry
- and phenomenological studies.

The study employed a case study as a research strategy. A case study is a type of ethnographic research focusing on a single unit, like a single individual, one group, one organization or one program (Ary et al, 2010). The case study methodology aided the researcher in probing the area of interest which was disruptive changes and agility.

This strategy allowed the use of real-life scenarios where participants shared experiences from their respective organisations. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of agility and disruptive market changes. Ary et al (2010) explain that multiple data gathering methods such as interviews, archives and observation are used in case studies. Complex real-life scenarios are dealt with in detail when it comes to case studies. Real life scenarios were considered in this study which brought deeper understanding to the problem of business agility.

Research design

The unit of analysis refers to the organisation or body that will be analysed in a study. This may be the business, focus groups or locations. The unit of analysis for this study was organization, the business.

The aim of all qualitative sampling approaches was to draw a representative sample from the population, so that the results of studying the sample can then be generalized back to the population (Marshall, 1996, p. 522).. The sampling process involved selecting participants from that very population. The researcher used purposive sampling to select the sample and considered certain qualities of a population. This added value to the research questions. The participants comprised of a Senior Project Manager, a Programme Manager, Group Manager, a Legal Professional and a start-up company Chief Executive Officer/Director/Entrepreneur. Using this number of participants did not limit the research. Marshall (1996) explains that samples for qualitative investigations tend to be small and that a suitable sample size for qualitative studies is one that answers the research question adequately.

The participants were purposively sampled for the following reasons:

- Project/Programme manager deal with change and are always at the forefront of enabling strategy through projects and implementing change.
- The Group Manager in the aviation business deals with different kinds of disruptive changes or innovation at an international level.
- The Entrepreneur worked for large corporates before deciding to venture on their own. The exposure they have gained was valuable as to some degree they become a disruptor.
- The Law professional could provide meaningful insights into how agile law forms were to manage disruption brought on by smaller consulting firms.

Purposive sample was suitable to help the research to obtain accurate and rich data for the study. The collected qualitative data were coded, transcribed.

The data collection method used were interviews. Creswell (2007) describes the Qualitative data analysis process as a highly intuitive activity. Three fundamental types of research interviews exist; namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews.

Structured interviews are verbally run questionnaires whereby predetermined questions are asked. On the other hand, unstructured interviews don't reflect any predetermined theories or ideas and are performed with slight or no administration. Semi-structured interviews comprise of several key questions which help to outline the exploration areas while also allowing the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail (Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008, p. 1).

Qualitative research interviews are usually unstructured or semi-structured and are also flexible. Participant responses were captured verbatim. Participants were interviewed using open-ended questions. The conceptual research framework with the three elements of the Theory of Change was used to structure the interview questions.

To ensure validity and trustworthiness of the study, triangulation was used to connect the various data sources to eliminate bias. The strategies utilized in the study were confirmability, credibility and transferability. The research used open ended questions in order not to lead the discussion and show bias. The participants were not required to divulge sensitive information such as their identities and location as it would not add value to the research.

The research adhered to research ethics as approved by the University of the Witwatersrand. The study provided adequate information to the potential participants about the study to obtain their consent to participate. The benefits that could be realised from the study were explained to the participants. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section analyses the collected data and discusses the findings. The Theory of change underpinned the study. The elements of the conceptual research framework were used as themes. The collected qualitative data were analysed using thematic analysis. Data collection and analysis are interrelated and concurrent, rather than linear processes; analysis begins as soon as the first bit of data were collected (Brod, Tesler, & Christensen, 2009, p. 1265). The data were analysed and discussed following themes, aligned with the research objectives. The Theory of Change was used as a lens. The elements of the conceptual research framework used as lenses included Context of the initiative, Sequence of required events and Intermediate Outcomes. The analysis was done per research objective with the following themes and subthemes:

- A view of disruptive market change from a Context of the initiative perspective: Objective 1 and 3 (To analyse the sequence of events when disruptive market changes happen and to identify the factors influencing agility in organisations).
- A view of agility from a Context of the initiative perspective: Objective 1 and 3 (To analyse the sequence of events when disruptive market changes happen and to identify the factors influencing agility in organisations).
- A view of disruptive market change from a Sequence of events perspective: Objective 2 (To explore and describe the processes and activities involved in agility).
- A view of agility from a Sequence of events perspective: Objective 2 (To explore and describe the processes and activities involved in agility).
- A view of disruptive market change from an Intermediate Outcomes perspective: Objective 4 (To subsequently determine how business agility can be improved).
- A view of agility from an Intermediate Outcomes perspective: Objective 4 (To subsequently determine how business agility can be improved).

It is important to identify and describe the sequence of events of disruptive market changes the context of the initiative involves understanding what disruptive market changes and agility were and what participants understood these concepts to be. The Intermediate Outcomes involves understanding what recommendations and improvements could be made in response to challenges and issues identified in the study.

The next section analyses the data and discusses the findings per theme.
NB: Participant responses are in italics.

Theme 1: Context of the initiative for disruptive market change

Data revealed that market change relates to trade or exchange of goods and services. When that trade undergoes a change there is also a change in organizational focus towards the markets. This involves a buyer and seller. Market changes also involve consumer trends and behaviour in relation to the introduction of new products and services that are offered into the market.

"…Market change is a change in consumer trends and patterns resulting in a changed perception of consumer behaviour in relation to the introduction of new products and services that are offered in the market…"

A disruptive market change was considered a complete shift in how the market functioned. This may be the include new ways of doing things in business resulting in a different client experience as well or changing consumer behaviour. They come about from irregular movement in the market and through innovation. From the disruption new products can emerge that will compete or rival existing products.

"…A disruptive market change is when they are no longer following the traditional way, they are now using innovative ways to exchange goods and services …"

Disruptive market changes manifest through pressures from competition in the market and the introduction of new products, services or trends create disruptive market changes. The view was that expanding customer preferences contribute to disruptive change and companies use data analytics and business intelligence to detect these trends. The emergence of smaller consulting firms was noted as a disruptor given their dynamic and flexible approach and lower costs. Disruptive market changes also occur through engagements, research on the markets and examining information.

An organisation can initiate a disruption or be disrupted. Being a disruptor can give you the edge and lead start. Agility is managed poorly managed some organizations but managed through communication, workshops and engagements with external bodies and competitors. Better equipped and structured organization determines can manage disruptions better. This may be a smaller sized organisation with less bureaucratic processes. The challenges and issues experienced with regards to disruptive market changes in organisations include proper change management, insufficient or retroactive responses or, lack of agility, bureaucracy, legacy issues/mindsets, resistance to change/innovation, inflexibility to change, archaic ways of working.

"…limited buy-in from the rest of the organization, Difficult to keep up, Reactive response to the market changes…"

"…One by, challenged by bureaucratic processes, misaligned uhmmm management, misaligned understanding of business processes..."

The quick execution of new ideas creates uneasiness as some of these are not always well understood. This results in processes change and management can be in conflict. Managing a disruptive change presents a challenge when trying to comply to strict industry regulations.

Preparing for disruptive market change requires adapting to the change, innovation and collaboration to ensure sustained growth and development to survive or exploit disruptions. Becoming a disruptor can help counter future disruptions and stay ahead of the competitors thus getting new business.

"…*Service providers need to keep abreast with the market changes in their environment. They need to find ways of constantly evolving and finding innovative ways to keep up with the latest consumer trends…*"

Theme 2: Context of the initiative for Agility

Agility is understood to be an efficient way to answer change and how swiftly a company can respond to changes in processes, systems and other customer related changes. Key words such as adapting, rapid change, market growth, turbulence, incremental project delivery and review are associated to agility.

"…Agility speaks to the speed with which an organization can adapt or respond to changes. …"

Business Agility is understood to be the ability of a business to respond to changes and deliver on new products/services as per market demands. This may involve a staggered approach to test a new concept (prototyping) before going on a full-scale implementation and understanding customers' new needs or preferences and being ahead of them.

"…The ability that a business has to respond to changes to manage and improve the performance of the business…"

Special teams are assembled to ensure efficient delivery and improved customer experience through applying Agile Project management philosophies. Agility is also managed through proper communication and good rapport, business process reengineering, research and adequate budget to support innovation.

Challenges and issues experienced with regards to agility include Change management and scope management, getting the right agile focused skills/resources, business efficacy and growth, inadequate responses to unexpected change and funding.

Preparing for agility requires a solid change process and educating supporting people of that change, strategic vision and objectives and systems in place, upskilling you staff, embracing innovation, monitoring market trends and consumer behaviour, constant industry analysis and drawing lessons from competitor wins/losses. One participant explained that preparing for agility entailed having a strategy that considers the core business, business enablement and digitization of the business.

"*…the best way to prepare for agility is to constantly invest in the up skilling of employees within an organisation…*"

Theme 3: Sequence of events for disruptive market change

Data revealed that disruptive market changes happen through different market contenders bringing new products or services and ideas into the market. Disruptive innovations also bring about disruption to the market. Disruptive market changes also come about when new opportunities and gaps are identified within a market to enhance products and services for the better. Anomalous incidents and change in consumer preference are also a cause of disruptive market changes.

Disruptive market changes are identified through observations, market pressures, observations, research, possible indications such as revenue spikes, growth in certain products or services or increase in market share in relation to a specific service or product.
"…Identification is through observation of the way the new things are introduced…"

Activities involved in disruptive market change include project management as a key approach to manage the costs, timelines and activities involved in disruptive market changes, share prices fluctuations as companies are affected by change, increased consumer spending due to attraction of a specific product or service and rapid technological advancement. Other activities include information and competitor analysis and understanding the core business and why it exists.

Data revealed that disruptive market changes were analysed to through current competitors and newly introduced services or businesses, company performance, market trends, new product and spending habits of customers, data comparison and examining information at hand, bodies companies engage and seminars they attend and their established networks in industry.

"*…Increased share price, increased consumer spending due to an attraction for that particular product or service offering, rapid technological advancement…*"

"…Through professional research bodies who always provide information as to the trends in the global market, and also going out to seminars, going to network sessions with your peers in the industry…"

Preparing for a disruptive market change requires knowledge sharing and having relationships with all industry players.

"…-Network and collaborate with leaders in the market and other business outside of your industry"

Instead of waiting to be affected by a disruption, an organization can be the disruptor as they could always be better prepared by utilizing their business intelligence.

"…You introduce your disruptions into the market and that's the best way to prepare… An organisation could use business intelligence, or existing data to prepare…"

Data revealed that although there wasn't a universal way to prepare for disruptions, the best way was to possibly learn from other instances when it occurred in industry or business rivals and understand how they responded to it. Engaging research institutions and seminars was revealed a way to help companies prepare for disruptive market changes.

"…Always engage with those big research institutions such as the Gartner, Forester, CB's and also academic institutions who do a lot of research and engage in seminars by going there and understanding what is going on and then coming back and informing your own research and development department…"

Managing a disruptive market change requires deep understanding of the market and possible outcomes in response to change can help managed a disruptive market change, being highly competitive and complying with the required industry regulations. Organisations need to thorough examine information gathered during the disruption and use mechanism like workshops to prepare. Having a good strategy and innovation departments and a strong research development base may help manage a disruptive market change.

"…Understand the market, Understand the matrices that indicate a shift in the market, determine how the business will respond to these changes to remain competitive…"

Looking into examples where organisations experienced market changes revealed lost opportunities where competitors capitalised of a company's lack of foresight or ignorance to avail their service lower income markets. This was a case where disruptions create new markets. The competitors of the said company and market entrants took over a low-income earning market which the incumbent had not prioritised as they targeted more of the higher income earning customers. The lower income market proved lucrative as there were lower income earning clients than higher income earners. The experience to competing having a late start.

"…In my organisation the response to disruptive market change is very slow and not very effective but market changes that have come in and we have had to deal with is how we define ourselves as an organisation..."

Other major disruptors involve social media for marketing companies and customer services where self-service technology enhanced customer experience, and this could not be ignored.

Theme 4: Sequence of events for agility

Data revealed that Agility manifested through evolving requirements and the need to efficiently respond to growing customer needs. Business processes may change when addressing agility. Agility requires some collaboration, acceptance of new ways of doing things, intention and determination to manage change, requires commitment, action and results.

"…- Exponential and ever-changing requirements from the market…"

In some organizations there are frameworks and projects and programmes that use agile methodologies and are aligned to the company strategy.

Agility comes when there is a massive task or evolving ideas that need to be rendered manageable. There is an existing framework to deliver products in an agile manner and help

companies be better prepared (proactive) than to have to manoeuvre (reactive) on product/service optimisations.

Data revealed that the activities involved in Agility include analysing requirements and dealing with them in order of priority. There needs to be consideration for the size and culture of the organization, but it requires a project approach and managing/developing people in a motivating and rewarding manner. Other activities mentioned were commitment, action, dedication, research and development, innovation and strategic focus and enablement through projects as the activities involved in Agility.

Agility is analysed through the implemented changes that occurred and through effectiveness of the business activities and impact of the changes managed, examining information, exploiting it and reviewing outcomes. Audits and governance assurance may also reveal or help analyse agility.

"…-Change implementations over a period, issues raised, number of changes…"

"...through information analysis…action…through results…"

Data revealed that preparing for Agility requires buy in from key stakeholders on how to drive agility, training, encourage a "fail fast and learn quicker" approve to improve. There also needs to be thorough communication/awareness and guidance to prepare for agility. Preparing for agility requires drawing wisdom from lessons learnt, sharing that knowledge, corporate events, assessing the markets. Some research and development and best practice should inform the planning process for agility driven initiatives, however agile methods have been known to introduce some flexible approaches to getting delivery.

"…Continuous improvement of uhmmm previous lessons, previous business activities. It's through ehmmm sharing information, through workshopping, it's through market research…"

Managing agility requires a hands-on approach and empowering your employees with the necessary skill, knowledge and infrastructure to achieve agility. Interactive training and stakeholder engagement, collaboration and focus groups also help manage agility.

*"…*A lot of collaboration, interaction, and focus groups…*"*

Looking into examples where organisations experienced agility, data revealed company initiatives such as the introduction of innovation hub to nurture new ideas with change agents that demonstrated agility. One organization had to innovatively standardize their business processes to bring some efficiency to their business. For one organization, there was a time when their company operating model and this startled employees because of threats of retrenchments and cost cutting. Their organisation was able to retain employees and created opportunities for them (promotions), process improvement projects, improved remuneration and engagement unions. One organization had decided to change from a traditional waterfall methodology to be more agile methodology driven.

"…Move from delivering projects using Waterfall approach to agile..."

Theme 5: Intermediate Outcomes of disruptive market change

The aspects that data revealed were working well with disruptive market changes in organizations were support from senior management who supported or welcomed disruptive market changes. The acknowledgement of the importance or need for agility has improved and there are endeavours to be more effective in responding to disruptive market changes despite being behind their competitors. Adequate communication and stakeholder engagement about disruption and outcomes were cited as things that were working well with disruptive market changes as this allowed the disruptions to be managed well. Disruptive market changes have encouraged organizations to embrace change and technology and work hand in hand with it to grow. There were benefits cited from individuals who came from high performance organisations who had advanced knowledge and shared it (cross skilling).
"…There is an awareness to be agile because of external factors which is our competitors…"

Proposed recommendations for disruptive market changes include the need for operations to adapt and assignment of a change owner for these changes to ensure that they are tracked and well managed. Executive support and enthusiasm around managing market disruptions in an agile manner and effective communication from leadership to all stakeholders and buy-in from them are ways in which disruptive market changes could be managed better. It's important for companies to be involved from executive leadership and they should leverage off business intelligence and interactions to better understand the business/market needs and grow the business. Srinivasan & Patary (2017) explain that growing complexities and the continuous change in the global economy requires businesses to improve on their agility to manage the rapid market changes.

"…Continuous engagement of all stakeholders, all colleagues, all ehhmmm employees to continually engage on potential business eerrrr disruption…"

For disruptive market changes be improved, there needs to be information sharing, engagement and market research and detecting possible market changes. It may be difficult to prepare for disruptions or improve them, but an organisation needs to always be prepared to respond to them effectively.

The kind of opportunities disruptive market changes can present include new revenue streams, new network opportunities in the industry, exposure to new ways of doing things, new knowledge for an organisation if managed right. Disruptive market changes could improve business, detect vulnerabilities in a business and enable new developments and innovation. New solutions can be created and other advancements in technology.

"… they can enable or present better ways of doing business or they can enable or or actually identify weak links between the business processes and allow an enhancement or innovation aaaahh to take place…"

Disruptive market changes negatively affect business or productivity through numerous and rapid changes and placing a company in a difficult position when it doesn't have the right infrastructure to deliver and respond quickly enough or the inflexibility to manoeuvre.

"…too many changes that do not turn into commercial successes due to low adoption, too many changes at short intervals, business cannot cope with the changes in order to properly extract, value for the business…"

The lack of information sharing can negatively affect a business and how it can be construed to be a disadvantage. Knowledge sharing can lead to better preparation for a potential disruption. Disruptive market changes can negatively affect business or productivity by creating enterprise risk and audit finding given the deviation from governance and rules to respond to the disruptions and ne innovative.

Alternately, disruptive market changes positively affect business or productivity by bringing new knowledge, flexibility and business renewal and stimulate agility which would result in improved company performance and better remuneration for staff. This can present opportunities in the form of new revenue and they can be exploited to grow a business and introduce new products and services.

"…New knowledge areas, force business to redefine how value is captured in the ever-changing world, leverage off IP outside the business to augment the limitations of the business IP…"

Responding to disruptive market changes involves embracing the change as opposed to working against it helps including learning more about the markets to best prepare. Observing and learning from competitors and implementing based on those lessons to ensure success is how also one way respond to disruptive market changes.

"…Embrace change, collaborate with other organizations, conduct some level of research to have foresight of the market in order to know when to respond…"

An organisation can develop frameworks, research capabilities, innovation and partnerships with learning and research institutes in order to better informed and knowledgeable.

Data revealed that the kind of outcomes often experienced because of disruptive market changes are decreasing brand loyalty due to increased competitive and numerous alternative

options for customers, possible impact on company revenue, daily operations, revenue at an industry level and the economy. Newer and better solutions were an outcome of disruptive market change and there are numerous examples of the advancements in mobile technology and how they change human lives for the better.

Theme 6: Intermediate Outcomes of agility

Aspects that data revealed were working well with agility in businesses/organizations were the flexibility and open communication, innovation, productivity. Although progress was slow some businesses, stakeholders were conscious of agility and the good conversations about agility were happening. Other benefits revealed included better use of information to yield better results, efficiency and income generation, enabling innovation and better productivity.

The recommendations proposed for agility in more training, awareness, entrenchment of the agile values into organisations and applying it in a hybrid framework adopted from a traditional approach. A company should consider compliance/audit requirements but use the best elements of their old and new framework to deliver quicker and better.

Data revealed that the challenges with agility can be managed or resolved through continuous stakeholder engagement, reviewing the plan of action and ensuring mutual understanding, clarity and buy-in of what needs to be done. Having management support, adequate organizational culture change and improved communication could result in better decision making and improved agility. Agility needs to be embraced and valued.

"…Senior management buy in, change organizational culture, doing just enough for the customer…"

Agility can be through detailed examination of information and lessons learnt of other examples of agility in industry. From a south African context, there was a view that that the

defined global standards for agility overlooked the public institutions like State Owned Enterprises and government and that some institutions get penalised by auditors for deviating from governance because of agility. There is more scrutiny when it comes to the public sector because of public funds being used and the political atmosphere in the public institutions influence how agility is implemented in the organization.

"…-Coaching, evidence of success cases…"

"…Through analysis of information, through learnings of other…other business cases of other industries…"

Data revealed that the kind of opportunities agility can present include helping a business/organisation invest in the relevant type of initiatives and be more flexible in responding change, improved efficiency, improved internal and external engagement, relation and customer services by delivering in agile manner. Agility can enable innovation, collaboration strategic alliances, brainstorming, team cohesion and can create a new market or industry.

"…Respond to changes quicker, avoid overinvestment in something that might not be what the customer needs…"

Agility can negatively affect business or productivity through constantly changing requirements, resistance to change and lack of buy-in which can further result in decreased employees/stakeholder moral, slowing down productivity on projects and affect revenues therefore negatively affecting a business. Organisations need to ensure that they are keeping up with audit requirements while being agile and managing rapid changes which can lead to them deviating from governance.

"…Ever changing requirements can cause paralyses…"

Agility can positively affect business or productivity as it can result in improved revenues and salaries, improved decision making, project delivery and achieving new business.

"…Quick product implementation, respond to changes quicker, avoid waste…"

"…Improved engagement, improved business processes, nimble and fluid decision making processes therefore translating to delivery of outcomes or projects or services and products …"

In responding to agility, it is important to ensure strategic alignment in every endeavour and consideration to the value add or feasibility. This could involve rapid execution of possible opportunities and promptly acting on new leads or information. Keeping abreast with changes, researching and having the relevant knowledge are other ways an organisation could respond to agility.

"…By ensuring that I am always up to speed with what is happening in the industry I operate in, I research a lot and spend a lot of time in forums such as CEB forums and going to seminars…"

"…You get to have a taste of the product before the full solution is delivered and you can already have an idea

of how the solution is going to be for example…"

Data revealed that the kind of outcomes often experience as a result of agility included increased Business confidence but also frustration due to quick changes, some positive responses, rapid access to the mark and testing of information and prototyping.

6. INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

This section interprets the findings against literature. The implications of the findings to theory and practice is then given. This is followed by the recommendations. The interpretation of findings was done per the research question and the study objectives as themes. The 3 elements of the Theory of Change that were utilised for the study were the Context of the initiative, Sequence of required events and Intermediate Outcomes. The analysis was done per research objective with the following themes and subthemes:

The sequence of events when it came to disruptive market changes were important to identify and describe. The context of the initiative involved understanding what disruptive market changes and agility were and what participants understood these concepts to be. The Intermediate Outcomes involved understanding what recommendations and improvements could be made in response to challenges and issues identified in the study about disruptive market changes and agility.

Primary Research Question

How can businesses respond better to disruptive changes and improve their Agility?

Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions were produced to fully explore the primary research question and to assist in addressing the research question.

Agility and Disruptive market changes

This section interprets findings from studying agility and disruptive market changes.

Sequence of events

The first theme was the sequence of events. This section interprets the sequence of events in agility and disruptive market changes. A view of disruptive market change from a Sequence of events perspective is provided and covers Objective 2, which was to explore and describe the processes and activities involved in agility).

Research question 1 was: ***What is the sequence of events when disruptive market changes happen?***

This was articulated as research objective which sought to analyse the sequence of events when disruptive market changes occurred. Having reviewed and compared both literature and data, it was deduced that market changes can be triggered from the following:

- Regular business as usual trade or exchange of goods and services.
- New consumer trends and behaviour based on new products and services introduced into the market. This results in increased consumer spending due to attraction of a specific product or service. This may be in the form of overlooked markets as well. Disruptive innovations come to exist because incumbents overlook the markets *Low-end footholds* and *new-market footholds* (Christensen et al, 2015).
- Innovation or new ways of doing things in business. Rapid technological advancement is a factor as is may bring a different preferred client experience and can influence consumer behaviour.
- Irregular movement in the market.
- Market competitors or new entrants pressuring and disrupting incumbents through the introduction of new products, services or trends. These may emerge as smaller more dynamic companies with more flexibility to manoeuvre and less bureaucracy. Literature agrees with this as Michael et al (2015) explain

disruption as the process whereby established incumbent businesses are successfully challenged by smaller companies with fewer resources.

Context of the initiative

The second theme was the Context of the initiative. A view of disruptive market change from a Context of the initiative perspective is provided and covers Objectives 1 and 3, which were to analyse the processes and activities involved in agility and identify the factors influencing agility in organisations.

Research question 2 was*: What are the processes and activities involved in agility?*

The second research question enquired what processes and activities involved in agility were. This was articulated as research objective which sought to explore and describe the processes and activities involved in agility. Having reviewed and compared both literature and data, it was deduced that the processes and activities involved in agility include the following:

- Project management is as a key aspect that helps manage costs, timelines and activities involved in disruptive market changes. Share prices fluctuations was mentioned a factor as companies are affected by change, however literature did not adequately address this specific notion from data.
- Thorough research and competitor analysis assist in agility.

Research question 3: *What are the factors influencing agility in organisations?*

The third research question enquired what the factors influencing agility in organisations were. This was articulated as research objective which sought to identify the factors influencing agility in organisations. Having reviewed and compared both literature and data, it was deduced that the factors influencing agility in organisations include the following:

- proper change management, insufficient or retroactive responses or, lack of agility, bureaucracy, legacy issues/mindsets, resistance to change/innovation, inflexibility to change, archaic ways of working.
- Disruptive market changes negatively affect business or productivity through numerous and rapid changes and placing a company in a difficult position when it doesn't have the right infrastructure to deliver and respond quickly enough or the inflexibility to manoeuvre.

Intermediate Outcomes

The third theme was the Intermediate Outcomes of agility and disruptive market changes. A view of disruptive market change and agility from an Intermediate Outcomes perspective is provided and covers Objective 4, which was to subsequently determine how business agility can be improved).

Research question 4: ***How can business agility can be improved?***

This was articulated as research objective which sought to determine how business agility could be improved. Improving on business agility requires the following:

- Understanding how businesses could respond better to disruptive changes and improve their Agility
- Adaptability to change
- Innovation and collaboration
- Ability to survive or exploit disruptions.
- Staying ahead of the competition or becoming a disruptor
- Proper communication and good rapport, business process reengineering, research and adequate budget to support innovation.
- Agility requires a solid change process and educating supporting people of that change, strategic vision and objectives and systems in place, upskilling you staff, embracing innovation, monitoring market trends and consumer behaviour, constant industry analysis and drawing lessons from competitor wins/losses
- Good strategy and innovation

- Proactiveness
- Buy in from key stakeholders on how to drive agility, training, encourage a “fail fast and learn quicker” approve to improve.
- Hands-on approach and empowering your employees with the necessary skill, knowledge and infrastructure to achieve agility.
- Introduction of innovation hub to nurture new ideas with change agents that demonstrated agility.
- Adequate communication and stakeholder engagement
- Individuals who came from high performance organisations who had advanced knowledge and shared it (cross skilling).
- Executive support and enthusiasm around managing market disruptions in an agile manner and effective communication from leadership to all stakeholders and buy-in from them are ways in which disruptive market changes could be managed better.
- There needs to be information sharing, engagement and market research and detecting possible market changes
- Responding to disruptive market changes involves embracing the change as opposed to working against it helps including learning more about the markets to best prepare. Observing and learning from competitors and implementing based on those lessons to ensure success is how also one way respond to disruptive market changes.
- An organisation can develop frameworks, research capabilities, innovation and partnerships with learning and research institutes in order to better informed and knowledgeable.

Conceptual Framework for improved Business Agility

The interpretation of the research findings led to the conceptualized framework which depicts how business agility can be improved

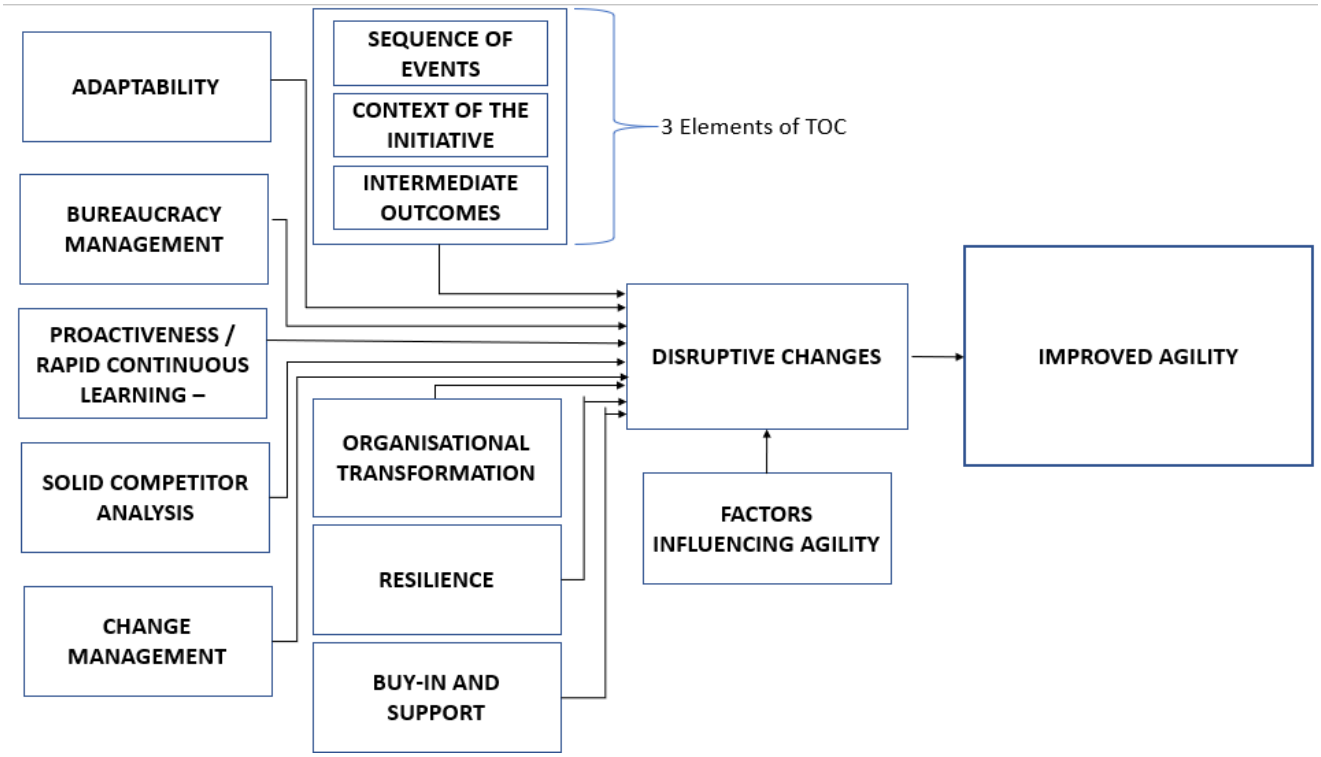


Figure 5. Conceptual framework for improved agility in response to disruptive market changes in South African business.

The literature and findings in the study were used to formulate recommendations to Improved Agility, depicted in Figure 5 above. The framework consists of activities that should occur when encountering disruptive changes. The following section explains each of these activities:

- Adaptability – this requires the right level of flexibility and balance to respond to market changes.
- Manage Bureaucracy – Red tape and too many cumbersome processes and rules need to be managed better or they will hinder agility. There needs to be a culture of collaboration to get things done and remove blockers.

- Proactiveness / Rapid continuous learning – A culture of learning and growing should be entrenched in order to embrace agility.
- Solid competitor analysis – incumbents must not relax because they own a large or comfortable market share. They need to always be surveying the market and assessing even the smallest market entrant or changing customer requirements. As literature showed, the power of technology has disappointed some incumbents.
- Change management – this entails solid change processes and adaptability to change whether you are disrupting or being disruptive, you need to adapt swiftly to survive.
- Self-Innovation – Companies need to always find ways of improving themselves and be deliberate about it. Literature mentioned the Blue Ocean strategy, where new undiscovered markets can be created. It is important to stay ahead of the competition in order to not be disrupted or become the disruptor. It would be good for incumbents to house innovation hubs to ensure that new ideas thrive.
- Resilience – Companies must mould or enhance themselves to have the ability to survive or exploit disruptions.
- Buy-in and Support – this is required at all levels of an organisation. Be it Executive support with enthusiasm for agility and embracing new ideas. Agility requires a paradigm shift for all, especially rigid leadership. This includes strategic buy-in.
- Organisational transformation – this refers to empowering and supporting people though change, strategic visioning and objectives and systems in place, upskilling / cross skilling among staff, embracing innovation, sharing information, monitoring market trends and consumer behaviour, constant industry analysis and drawing lessons from competitor wins/losses. An enabling environment will empower people and be a catalyst to achieving agility.

Recommendations for improved agility

In this paper we examined the disruptive market changes and business agility. After thorough survey of literature, data collection and analysis of the results, the following recommendations are made.

The application of the Conceptual Framework for improved Business Agility, depicted in Figure 5, can help businesses improve on their agility. The present-day results have indicated that businesses can respond better to disruptive changes and improve their Agility by understanding the forces of change that bring about disruption. Businesses need to understand customer requirements. Srinivasan & Patary (2017) explain that in today's economy, the ability to satisfy changing customer expectations is considered key to improving the bottom line for the organization and organisations that are not agile won't achieve this as customer expectations are never static. Moving forward, customer requirements and trends should be better monitored and analysed to ensure agility in response to these. The challenges and issues in responding to disruptive market changes involved pressures from competition in the market, the rapid introduction of new products, services or trends create disruptive market changes and emergence of smaller more flexible completing firms who can manoeuvre better than the incumbents.

Managing a disruptive change and trying to comply to strict industry regulations proves difficult as larger firms have more red tape, bureaucracy and stringent processes. Managing bureaucracy becomes important in removing barriers to agility. Other factors mentioned in the study included the need for proper change management, insufficient or retroactive responses or, lack of agility, legacy issues/mindsets, resistance to change/innovation, inflexibility to change, archaic ways of working. Literature mentions examples where new market entrants and cause major disruptions, like the case of Uber which Goslar (2016) explained heavily disrupted the taxi industry. Markides (2012) explains that disruptors may start as inferior but competitive in price, which attracts a certain market that the incumbents can't service or attract. Moving forward, better change management and solid competitor / market analysis should be conducted to ensure improved response or agility.

The study addressed the kind of activities involved in managing disruptive business change. The factors influencing agility in organisations included evolving requirements, stakeholder buy-in, collaboration, acceptance of new ways of doing things, intention and determination to manage change, requires commitment, action and results. These need to be applied to ensure agility.

The study also revealed that business agility could be improved through organisations trying hard to stay ahead of the curve and compete more. Moving forward, improved self-innovation and resilience need to be applied. If possible, incumbents should become the disruptor. They should embrace agility and not fear it and it should be something entrenched in the organizational culture. Other ways business agility can be improved include good stakeholder engagement and buy-in, proper/adequate planning, a good sense of clarity and management support, improved communication and better decision making. Literature mentions a Disreputability Index which helps measures an industry's level of disruption. The use of such a tool can add value to businesses when analysing the markets. CA Technologies (2017) explains that Agile methods achieved superior results compared to the least effective traditional methods as they ensure better cost, schedule, productivity, quality satisfaction and Return on Investment. Business agility needs to be embraced and requires organisations to learn more rapidly and adapt to change.

Recommendations for further research

For future considerations to the study, the following may be explored:

- Innovation as a disruptor or factor influencing agility can be expanded on and explored.
- Future studies could investigate other agile methodologies and their input or success rate when applied in business.
- Future studies may consider engaging a larger sample size to better reflect IS business agility South Africa.

- Future researchers could explore other ways how agility can be applied in other industries such as agriculture / farming, construction and mining, which this study did cover.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper addressed how businesses can respond better to disruptive changes and improve their Agility. It has also identified what the challenges and issues in responding to disruptive market changes were and the activities involved in managing disruptive business change. The factors influencing agility in organisations were also discussed and ways in which business agility could be improved. It was also discovered that some organisations did not have ways to respond to disruptive market changes and that smaller organisations had a greater deal of flexibility than larger organisations. Business agility and disruptive market change will remain growing significant phenomena in the world of business and cannot be ignored. Businesses should take an interest in learning about them and how to grow from them.

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