Crisis management in the subscription video on demand industry in sub-Saharan Africa

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is a tribute to my parents, whose steadfast love, encouragement and support have been instrumental in my journey. I appreciate the countless sacrifices you've made and for your unwavering belief in me every step of the way. Kagiso le lerato di nne le lona, khumo le kalafi di lo aparele.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aimed to explore crisis management approaches in the sub-Saharan Africa subscription video on demand industry by investigating past crisis experiences of subscription video on demand organisations. The study gathered insights from multiple sources, including literature and crisis management strategies, to provide informed data that the subscription video on demand industry can use to develop successful crisis management strategies. The subscription video on demand industry has high prospects of growth in sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose of the study was to create a multidisciplinary crisis management guideline for the subscription video on demand industry to handle crises effectively. The primary research question was to identify the appropriate crisis management approach for the subscription video on demand industry. The sub-questions related to the selected organisation's previous crisis management experiences, proactivity to avert crises, and the preparation for and coping with future crises in the sub-Saharan Africa subscription video on demand industry. The study aimed to bridge the gap found in published literature by exploring and investigating these research questions.

KEYWORDS

Creeping crisis, crisis, crisis management, organisational crisis, subscription video on demand, video streaming technology

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1. CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Statement of purpose

The main objective of this qualitative research was to acquire business knowledge from multiple sources, such as a leading subscription video on demand (SVOD) organisation operating in sub-Saharan Africa, literature, and crisis management approaches. This study aimed to examine how the SVOD business, when faced with a crisis, could survive the crisis and manage it effectively. The study investigated and gathered valuable insights and learnings that have been established through past crisis experiences. Furthermore, it aimed to explore how the industry can harness these befitting learnings, fostering organisations with strategies on how to react and manage future crises successfully. The study used a qualitative explorative methodology approach to efficiently offer informed business data on crisis management that the SVOD industry can use.

1.2. Background of the study

Since the beginning of modern management, organisational crisis and crisis management have been ubiquitous research topics in academia and business due to the ever-changing and complex landscape of business and the alarming incessant pace at which regional and global crises have been unfolding (Bundy et al., 2017; Fartakh, 2022). The study of organisational crisis and crisis management was intended to (i) provide an understanding of the origins of a crisis (how and why it came to be); (ii) how organisations can survive a crisis; (iii) how they can limit their exposure to it; and (iv) how they can detect it in future (Bundy et al., 2017). The most recent and unprecedented COVID-19 crisis was a rude reminder to organisations and their leaders across the globe, including the importance of crisis preparedness (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021). The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on organisations in the sub-Saharan countries in Africa, which are predominately characterised as developing countries has been more pronounced based on pre-existing economic challenges and weaknesses.

Keown-McMullan (1997. p. 17) in her article "Crisis: When does a molehill become a mountain", states that in 1972 C.F. Hermann raised concerns about the word "crisis" not having a common meaning. Subsequently, three characteristics of a crisis were proposed, namely "high threat", "short decision time", and the "element of surprise". Since C.F. Hermann's proposition, there have been countless renditions of the meaning of the word crisis, depending on the particular field of study or discipline. For this paper, a case study was adopted, using Bundy et al.'s, (2017, p. 1662) definition of an organisational crisis as "an event perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive". Fartakh (2022) adds that the crisis must pose a financial and reputational risk for the organisation. For this study, by drawing on Bundy et al.'s (2017) and Fartakh's (2022) explanations of organisational crisis, definition of crisis management was suggested as "an incident where an organisation faces a significant and unexpected event that could potentially cause financial, reputational harm, and disrupt the organisation's operations." In brief, crisis management involves developing a plan or process for managing and preventing crises, preparing for crises, responding to crises when they occur, and learning from the experience. This definition, as proposed by Mikušová and Horváthová (2019), is the foundation for the chosen definitions of organisational crisis and crisis management which are discussed in the literature review. The rationale for the adoption of the suggested definitions of organisational crisis and crisis management is unpacked in the literature review.

As has been witnessed, the COVID-19 crisis was opposing in nature; where, on one hand, some organisations experienced devastation and loss; on the other hand, others discovered great opportunities. One such opportunity was borne from the lockdowns imposed by governments to curb the spread of the virus. The lockdowns accelerated the global adoption of technology and changed consumer behaviour concerning the consumption of online services (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021). One such technology, Internet-distributed video technology (video streaming technology), initially emerged in the early 2000s in the West and has been on a steady rise since then (Lobato & Lotz, 2021). Video streaming technology is at the core of the SVOD industry, which has been commercialised on a global scale by Netflix and recently on an African scale by Showmax (Onyango, 2022; Sun, 2022). The SVOD market in sub-Saharan Africa is largely undeveloped, however, its adoption by millions of subscribers, particularly during and post the COVID-19 crisis, is evidence of the industry's high prospects of growth (Onyango, 2022). According to Nozizwe (2020), Showmax, a sub-Saharan Africa SVOD operator in the region, started providing its SVOD facilities in August 2015. Shortly after, Netflix also initiated its services in Africa. The green field nature of the SVOD industry in sub-Saharan Africa is illustrated by an empirical statistic, indicating that despite a population of one billion people in Africa, the number of SVOD users or customers is only five million (The Rise of Digital Streamers in Africa, 2022). Nevertheless, it is expected that this count will grow significantly by 2026, with approximately 15.6 million people in Africa predicted to use these services, with most of them being from the sub-Saharan region (The Rise of Digital Streamers in Africa, 2022). The sub-Saharan region has seen SVOD both multinational and new local players entering the industry; further confirming the untapped business potential in sub-Saharan Africa.

The SVOD player who was interviewed for this research paper has been active in the sub-Saharan Africa industry since 2015. Even though this industry's growth has skyrocketed since the emergence of COVID-19, organisations in the industry should not depend on a false sense of security and preparedness. They must be cautious, vigilant and equipped to handle a crisis should it occur. As Boin et al. (2021) highlight the sophistication of innovative systems, such as artificial intelligence, and Internet-distributed video services, cyber-infrastructure can reach an intricate level where they exceed the understanding of even those who operate and develop these systems. The systems then reach a "tipping point", increasing their complexity and ultimately leading to a disastrous outcome (Boin et al., 2021, p. 6). Therefore, this case study aimed to propose a multidisciplinary crisis management guideline for the SVOD industry in sub-Saharan Africa.

1.3. Research problem

Boin et al. (2021) and Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2021) identify that in as much as new technologies usher in advancement and sophistication, these same technologies introduce new risks which have the capacity or ability to evolve into crises. This calls on organisations using such advanced technologies to not only be mindful of the dangers but also to be proactive and plan for creeping crises. One such recent technology is SVOD video streaming technology. It has been observed that there is a lack of published literature about the risks and hazards faced by the SVOD industry and how these can be prevented or mitigated with crisis management processes or approaches; there is even less published information about the industry in sub-Saharan Africa. To guarantee the continuous sustainability of organisations in the sub-Saharan Africa SVOD industry and to weather the impacts of crises, it is essential to develop a crisis management strategy that specifically suits this industry. Therefore, the primary research gap identified was the need for an industry-tailored crisis management technique. This exploratory study's primary goal was to investigate this research issue.

The SVOD video streaming technology is relatively new and still in its developing stage, yet has attracted many multinational streaming service providers to sub-Saharan Africa. Since the emergence of the COVID-19 crisis, it has become a significant region for further growth, along with similar local service players (Onyango, 2022). The selected organisation for this study holds a considerable share of the sub-Saharan Africa SVOD industry but recently has experienced increased competition for subscribers due to the entry of multiple international players in this market.

Research questions

The main research question for this study was:

What appropriate crisis management strategy or approach is suitable for the SVOD industry?

To determine the crisis management approach, the following sub-questions were identified:

(i) How is the Organization taking proactive steps to avert creeping crises?

(ii) How has the Organisation managed and resolved previous crises experienced?

(iii) How does the Organisation prepare for and cope for future crises?

(iv) What is the Organisation's culture and leadership style?

1.4. Rationale

The motivation to address the research problem is outlined in Section 1.3. The reasons were: first, the aim was to contribute to the existing body of research on organisational crisis management. Second, it was specifically intended to examine these concepts from the perspective of the sub-Saharan Africa SVOD industry, which is a new technology-driven industry that has gained tremendous popularity since the COVID-19 pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, the sub-Saharan Africa SVOD industry is relatively underdeveloped, presenting novel research opportunities. It was hoped that the findings of the study would offer insights and practical applications for crisis management strategies specific to the sub-Saharan Africa SVOD. The goal was to develop a blueprint that the industry could use to manage crises and ensure its continued growth and sustainability.

1.5. Delimitations of the study

The scope of this study was delimited to:

(i) Region: sub–Saharan Africa

(ii) Market sector: subscription video on demand industry

(iii) Technology: Internet-distributed video technology

(iv) Methodology: qualitative.

(v) Subject matter: organisational crisis and crisis management

(vi) Three stages of organisational crisis and crisis management explored: Pre-crisis (preventative and preparation), in crisis (management and survival) and post-crisis (learnings and audit).

1.6. Definition of terms

The key words and their operational definitions used in this study are as follows:

(i) Competition - the act or process of competing (Merriam Webster, 2023)

(ii) Creeping crisis - is an incremental emergent threat which develops over time and space (Boin et al., 2021)

(iii) Crisis - means a high threat shocker which affords one a short decision period (Keown-Mcmullan, 1997)

(iv) Crisis management - crisis management entails strategising and drawing-up a plan or process to address (i) the prevention of a crisis; (ii) the preparation for a crisis; (iii) the response to a crisis; and (iv) learnings gained from enduring a crisis (Mikušová & Horváthová, 2019)

(v) Organisational crisis - “an event perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive” (Bundy et al., 2017, p. 1662)

(vi) SSA - sub-Saharan Africa

(vii) SVOD - Subscription video on demand (Lobato & Lotz, 2021); and

(viii) Video streaming technology - internet distributed video technology (Lobato & Lotz, 2021).

1.7. Chapter outline

This study document is structured as follows:

(i) Chapter 1: The introduction of the study as outlined above

(ii) Chapter 2: The literature review where relevant literature is analysed and used to answer the research questions

(iii) Chapter 3: The research methodology outlines how the research was conducted and the data interpreted

(iv) Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

(v) Chapter 5: Discussion of findings

(vi) Chapter 6: Conclusion

(vii) Reference list

(viii) Appendices

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is organised as follows: the first section covers the theoretical review of the literature, focusing on the definitions of the key terms and the appropriate approaches to crisis management. The second section addresses the empirical review, consisting of a SWOT analysis of the SSA SVOD industry and examples of organisations that have faced creeping crises, along with the lessons learned from these experiences. The following sections will cover the analytical framework and the conclusion of the literature review.

2.2. Literature review

It is crucial to differentiate between crisis management, business continuity, and risk management before exploring the literature on organisational crisis and crisis management. This will avoid any confusion caused by the similarities in these concepts, and instead, provide clarity by emphasising their differences.

Crisis management: Entails strategising and drawing up a plan or process to address (i) the prevention of a crisis; (ii) the preparation for a crisis; (iii) the response to a crisis; and (iv) learnings gained from enduring a crisis (Mikušová & Horváthová, 2019).

Risk management: The Institute of Risk Management defines risk management as "the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling risks that arise from the operations, assets, and activities of an organization." (Institute of Risk Management, n.d.).

Business continuity: According to the Business Continuity Institute, business continuity is "the capability of the organisation to continue delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following a disruptive incident" (The Business Continuity Institute, 2023).

Chapter 1 of this paper highlights that academics have studied and discussed the concepts of organisational crisis and crisis management (collectively referred to as the “Principles” in this chapter. Various experts in this field have presented their unique methods and perspectives to interpret and implement these principles. These discussions and analyses have resulted in a significant body of knowledge that can help organisations in a variety of industries to implement effective crisis management strategies. During the research process, several trends were observed regarding the application of the principles. Various academic papers have been published that illustrate how the principles are applied in different sectors of the economy, such as the construction, hospitality and tourism, and petrochemical industries (Sahin et al., 2015; Salehi et al., 2020; Wut et al., 2021). Based on these studies, it was deduced that scholars narrowed their focus to crisis management in a specific industry to easily access relevant research that highlights what is necessary for successful crisis management strategies in that environment. Crisis management tactics or techniques that are successful in one industry may not necessarily work in another. Crisis management tactics that are tailored to a particular industry recognise the specific needs and obstacles, which then facilitates organisations to mount an effective response.

After carefully considering the crisis management literature, there is agreement with Bundy et al.'s (2017) observation that there is limited consensus and integration across fields of study. This resulted in conflicting prescriptions, and continued debates regarding the relevant antecedents, processes, and outcomes associated with organisational crises and crisis management. To address this challenge, the following definitions were used: crisis (Keown-McMullan, 1997); organisational crisis (Bundy et al., 2017; Fartakh, 2022); crisis management (Mikušová & Horváthová, 2019); and creeping crisis (Boin et al., 2021).
In addition to the above, the literature review provides an analysis of the concepts of the crisis management process, generally categorised into proactive and two crisis management approaches, namely the proactive and reactionary approaches, as elaborated by Vašíčková (2019). These concepts, which are the basis of the literature review, are discussed below. Overall, adopting these definitions and exploring the crisis management process and approaches provides a clear framework for understanding the concepts of organisational crisis and crisis management and their applications to the SVOD industry. This approach also enabled making informed conclusions and practical recommendations for successful SSA SVOD crisis management strategies.

2.2.1. Key terms

Crisis

Keown-McMullan (1997) acknowledged Herman's (1972, p. 1) concern that "crises did not have a common meaning" and identified three features of a crisis, namely "high threat", "short decision time", and the "element of surprise". This definition is supported by Mikušová and Horváthová (2019) who suggest that a crisis may not always stem from a problem. They propose that organisations define their criteria for identifying problems that may escalate into a crisis, which aligns with Vašíčková's (2019) view of crisis management as a framework.

Organisational crisis

Bundy et al. (2017, p. 1662) proposes that an organisational crisis is an event that managers and stakeholders view as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive. However, it is believed that incorporating Fartakh's (2022) definition is necessary to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the term. According to Fartakh (2022), a crisis must pose a financial and reputational risk to the organisation concerned. Therefore, the all-inclusive definition of an organisational crisis is "an event perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected and potentially disruptive, which exposes the organisation to financial and/or reputational risk" (Fartakh, 2022, as cited in Bundy et al., 2017, p. 1662).

Crisis management

Mikušová and Horváthová (2019) and Vašíčková (2019) state that crisis management entails strategising and drawing up a plan or process to address (i) the prevention of a crisis; (ii) the preparation for a crisis; (iii) the response to a crisis; and (iv) the learnings gained from averting a crisis. Mitroff et al. (1988 as cited in Vašíčková, 2019) cautiously emphasise that the application of crisis management does not necessarily apply to the organisation by preventing the crisis from occurring. Instead, the practice of crisis management has the potential to significantly mitigate loss. Vašíčková (2019) likens crisis management to strategy, in that they both entail consistent analysis of the internal and external factors of the business. This is generally viewed as a proactive approach, which is discussed in the section that deals with crisis management approaches (Vašíčková, 2019).

Creeping crises

According to Boin et al. (2021), slow emerging threats are referred to as "creeping crises." Unlike the conventional notion of a crisis, creeping crises have prolonged incubation periods. The term “creeping” is used to describe the gradual pace of the emergence of the threat. Nevertheless, as Mitroff et al. (1988, cited in Vašíčková, 2019) indicate, not all creeping crises come to fruition. Vašíčková (2019) provides an unconventional interpretation, suggesting that unlike traditional crises, creeping crises are already known. Their known nature makes them predictable as they gradually grow from creeping crises to fully-fledged crises.

2.2.2. Classification of the crisis management field into two areas of focus:

The process of crisis management involves a series of steps and protocols aimed at predicting and identifying potential crises early on, understanding the nature of a crisis situation, and resolving it effectively and promptly (Vašíčková, 2019). This process illustrates the proactive nature of crisis management. Crisis management should be considered a crucial aspect of organisational management, which aims to facilitate crisis prevention, as well as successful resolution in case of a crisis (Vašíčková, 2019).

The field of crisis management encompasses various approaches and models that have been commented on and developed by numerous authors. Generally, crisis management can be classified into two principal categories: reactive and proactive approaches (Vašíčková, 2019). The reactive approach to crisis management is based on responding to an incident that has already occurred, typically employing policies.

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The field of crisis management encompasses various approaches and models that have been commented on and developed by numerous authors. Generally, crisis management can be classified into two principal categories: reactive and proactive approaches (Vašíčková, 2019). The reactive approach to crisis management is based on responding to an incident that has already occurred, typically employing policies and guidelines to stabilise the situation and minimise any damage to an organisation's reputation or operations. In contrast, the proactive approach focuses on predicting, assessing, and mitigating potential crises before they occur. This approach entails developing contingency plans and protocols for managing crises, emphasising early warning systems, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure that an organisation's resilience is maintained (Vašíčková, 2019).

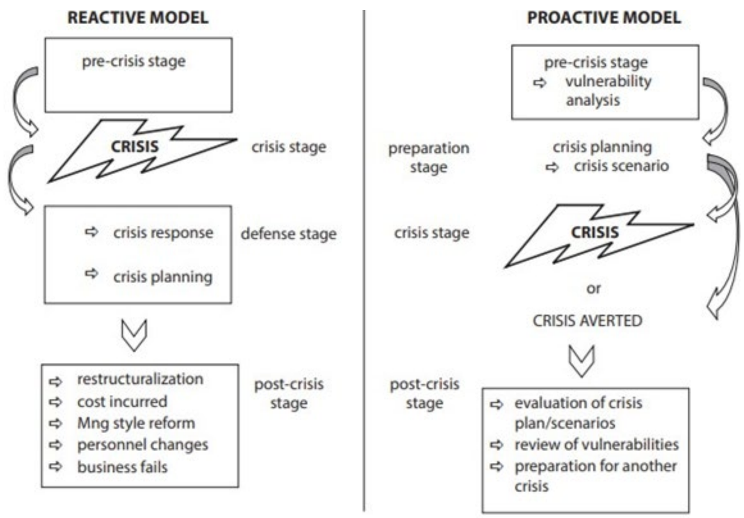

Figure 1: A summary of the differences between the reactive and proactive models of crisis management (Vašíčková, 2019, p. 69)

Crisis management scholars suggest that companies with more experience in dealing with crises are better equipped to respond quickly and efficiently to subsequent crises. An organisation's prior experience enables it to develop a set of skills, knowledge, and procedures that can be applied to different crises situations. Consequently, organisations that have successfully weathered multiple crises are likely to be well-prepared and equipped to handle future challenges with greater effectiveness and ease (Vašíčková, 2019). A visual depiction of these two models is shown in Figure 1.

2.2.3. Empirical review: SWOT analysis of the SSA SVOD industry

A variety of articles regarding the SVOD industry in SSA were explored to perform a SWOT analysis of the industry's environment. Using the SWOT analysis as a reference, several advancing creeping crises were identified, such as talent loss or poaching by multinational competitors, cybercrime, the menacing threat of non-application of positive transformational crises management, piracy, data privacy breaches, and the significance of upholding public perception to retain status as a technological or product advancement leader. The subsequent section examines these threats or creeping crises.

There are many strengths and opportunities in the SVOD industry in Africa that can be leveraged to achieve growth and overall success. The growth in the region's population presents a significant opportunity, as a growing middle class contributes to an increasing number of Africans being able to afford the Internet and streaming services. This creates room for SVOD platforms to expand their customer base and increase revenue in the region. This presents an opportunity for investment in this field for companies looking to expand their wings beyond their existing markets (Biljan, 2022).

Another opportunity for the SVOD industry in Africa is the potential for localised content production and distribution due to the region's diverse cultures and languages. The production of content that resonates with local audiences through storytelling, character development, and the inclusion of themes that reflect local traditions and values, could lead to more culturally-relevant entertainment, attracting and retaining subscribers in the region (Biljan, 2022). This presents a great opportunity for SVOD platforms to differentiate their brands from the competition and build stronger brand loyalty among African audiences.

Moreover, partnerships with telecom providers offer an opportunity for SVOD platforms to expand their reach and increase exposure to potential users. These collaborations could prove mutually beneficial, as telecommunication companies can capitalise on the opportunity to differentiate themselves from the competition while providing additional value to their subscribers (Biljan, 2022). On the other hand, SVOD platforms can leverage telecommunication partnerships to reach a wider audience and drive growth in revenue, increasing brand recognition among African audiences.

Weaknesses and threats

Despite a growing middle class and population, the SVOD industry in Africa still faces several hurdles that could deter its potential growth and success. One of these weaknesses is the lack of an affordable and reliable broadband infrastructure that plagues many areas across the continent. As a result, several Africans find it challenging to access high-quality streaming services due to the absence of a conducive infrastructure for SVOD platforms to expand their reach, incurring additional costs to deliver reliable services (Biljan, 2022).

Another significant threat to the SVOD industry in Africa is the high rate of piracy. Due to the inadequate enforcement of intellectual property laws and inadequate provisions, it is becoming increasingly easy for platforms to distribute pirated content, resulting in revenue loss for SVOD platforms. This threat does not only impact the financial sustainability of the industry but also has the potential to discourage investment in new content production and distribution (Biljan, 2022).

Moreover, the demographics of many African countries present a challenge with many low-income users, which may impact the profitability of the SVOD industry (Biljan, 2022). A considerable number of households do not have the funds to pay for premium streaming services, thus limiting growth opportunities and reducing the average revenue earned by platforms.

2.2.4. Empirical Review - Lessons learnt from other organisations

There are case studies that showcase what not to do during a crisis (Keef & Darling, 2008). There are studies on how Netflix, the selected organisation's biggest competitor, responds to potential threats and challenges that could evolve into a crisis (Chowdhury, 2020; Xinyang, 2022). These case studies provide valuable insights, and the lessons learned can be adopted by organisations based on relevance. Overall, the case studies demonstrate how to practically put theory into practice and derive new theory from practice. The combination of academic studies and practical case studies illustrates the importance of thoroughly implementing crisis management strategies in organisational settings (Nohria, 2021).

To enhance the research analysis, four relevant case studies were carefully selected to examine. These case studies included the Microsoft case study on talent loss, the Nokia versus Apple comparison, the Toyota recall case study, and a set of case studies on Netflix that illustrate the organisation's response and strategies during challenging times. These are discussed below.

Microsoft case study on talent loss

In 2008, Microsoft faced a crisis when many talented employees were leaving the company, prompting the organisation to investigate the underlying reasons. The case study explored how Microsoft employed transformational crisis management strategies to address the problem of talent loss, which involved revising the leadership, culture, and talent development practices (Keefe & Darling, 2008). By successfully managing the crisis, Microsoft created an opportunity for organisational growth and development. The case study illustrates how an organisation can turn a crisis into a positive outcome through proactive measures and strategic planning (Keef & Darling, 2008).

Nokia versus Apple case study

The case study discusses the significance of positively managing crises to facilitate growth and development amidst emerging technologies and competition in the consumer electronics industry (McCray & Gonzalez, 2010). The article cites the example of Nokia's inability to respond suitably to Apple's innovative combination of Internet content, iTunes, iPhone, and applications. It underscores recognising and responding effectively to a crisis at its initial stage to enable positive growth and development. The article also explores the crucial role of leadership in contrast to the management of successful crisis management. Lastly, it concludes that crises can provide opportunities for creative change and development in manufacturing organisations.

Toyota recall case study

This explores the role of corporate websites and internet communication tools in crisis management, by analysing the 2010 Toyota recall crisis as a case study (Liker, 2011). The study finds that Toyota's website and multimedia tools were effectively used to communicate with customers during the crisis, employing apology strategies and corrective actions to protect their reputation. The study also reviews past research on crisis management and identifies several factors and strategies that can influence the effectiveness of crisis communication (Liker, 2011). Ultimately, the study highlights the importance of leveraging modern communication tools, like the Internet to engage with customers during a crisis.

Piracy versus Netflix

The article explores the relationship between SVOD services and online piracy. Despite the success of services, like Netflix, piracy traffic numbers for movies and series continue to rise (Riekkinen, 2018). The article aims to understand consumer decision-making between legal and illegal video consumption alternatives by drawing from cognitive dissonance and neutralisation theories. A research model featuring SVOD satisfaction and dimensions of SVOD quality as antecedents of video piracy neutralisation and attitudes is developed and tested through an online survey among Finnish SVOD users. The study finds that content quality primarily determines SVOD satisfaction, which has a small negative effect on attitudes toward piracy through decreased piracy neutralisation. However, legal frameworks are not considered true alternatives to illegal sources of video content (Riekkinen, 2018).

Netflix’s business strategy and how the company copes with the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis

The article analyses Netflix's business strategy and how it coped with the challenges posed by the coronavirus crisis. It traces Netflix's evolution from a DVD-rental service to a pioneer of streaming. It also examines the company's adaptive strategies to changes in the market. The article explores Netflix's successful response to the pandemic crisis, including innovative strategies, such as targeting different markets and understanding audience needs and expectations. The article emphasises Netflix's focus on customising its services to cater to the unique socio-economic-political-cultural factors of different countries.

2.3. Analytical framework

2.3.1. Applicable crisis management theories and models

Although crisis management theories and crisis management models are commonly used interchangeably, they are separate concepts. According to Marker (2020) and Fartakh (2022), crisis management theories are abstract frameworks that originate from various fields, such as public relations, management, and complexity science. In contrast, crisis management models describe the structure and implementation of practical strategies for managing crises. Crisis management theories serve the purpose of comprehending crises and their successful management, while crisis management models provide practical procedures for handling a crisis (Marker, 2020). Table 2.1 is a summary of prominent crisis management theories and models.

Table 1: Crisis management theories collected from various sources

	CM Theories	Description
1.	Attribution theory	When a crisis occurs, there is an assumption that individuals and stakeholders will usually hold the organisation accountable or find someone to blame. As Fartakh (2022) and Maker (2020) point out, such situations generally result in negative sentiments amongst the public and external stakeholders towards the organisation. This negative public opinion may lead to a decline in demand for the company's services or goods and harm its reputation overall (Fartakh, 2022; Marker, 2020).
2.	Crisis situational communication theory	Coombs and Holladay (2018) produced a hypothesis as an extension to the attribution theory, which suggests that in a crisis an organisation should swiftly and strategically engage with the public or relevant stakeholders by anticipating their probable responses during such events. According to Coombs and Holladay (2018), this proactive approach seeks to minimise the adverse effects of assigning blame by addressing stakeholder concerns and presenting a clear and truthful account of the situation. With this approach, the organisation can take charge of the narrative, maintain its legitimacy and trustworthiness, and prevent any reputational harm (Coombs & Holladay, 2018).
3.	Image restoration theory (repair theory)	William Benoit's image restoration theory states that organisations need to take active measures to restore their reputation in the aftermath of a crisis. The theory suggests five possible response strategies: denial, evasion of responsibility, compensation, organisational corrective action, and mortification. As Marker (2020) and Fartakh (2022) note, these strategies can be employed based on the nature of the crisis and its severity. The aim should be to minimise damage to the organisation's reputation and rebuild trust with stakeholders. The effectiveness of an organisation's crisis management efforts depends on selecting the appropriate response strategy.

4.	Apology, corporative apologia theory	Fartakh (2022) defines apologia as a communication strategy employed by organisations during crises to communicate the situation to stakeholders and ask for their empathy and understanding. This approach highlights the organisation's efforts to mitigate crisis effects, seek forgiveness, and restore its reputation. Organisations can generally take three approaches to this theory. They may either deny wrongdoing, emphasise the good they have done in the past or turn the negative consequences into a positive situation.
5.	Contingency theory of conflict management	Marker (2020) argues that crisis managers must develop flexible and adaptable strategies to manage crises effectively. This theory advocates that responses to a crisis should be contingent upon real-time ever-changing circumstances (Wroblewski, 2021).
6.	Complexity theory	This approach acknowledges the multifaceted nature of crisis management and the significance of engaging diverse stakeholders. This viewpoint recognises crisis response as a complex procedure that encompasses several elements, including signal detection, prevention, damage control, recovery, learning, and redesign (Fartakh, 2022). Managing an emergency efficiently requires the cooperation and coordination of numerous parties, ranging from top management to employees, external stakeholders, media, and even the public. This approach highlights the importance of readiness, adaptability, and an ongoing commitment to continuous development and learning.

7.	Resilience theory	According to the resilience theory, individuals can overcome adversity and sustain less harm by possessing one or more protective factors (Marker, 2020). While other theories have been developed for different fields, the resilience theory's application in child psychology makes it an apt framework to draw upon for managing crises. The resilience theory in crisis management suggests that organisations should develop five critical traits to recover effectively from a crisis. These traits include restoring normalcy, acknowledging internal roles, emphasising effective communication, adjusting to a new way of working brought on by the crisis, and emphasising small victories rather than focusing on the negative (Marker, 2020). The resilience theory has contributed to the development of business continuity planning, which aims to make companies capable of withstanding failure. Risk management is another business approach that bolsters resilience**.**
8.	High-reliability theory	The scholars of the high-reliability theory have examined sophisticated technological systems that necessitate reliability because they often do not have the opportunity to retry in their surroundings (Shrivastava et al., 2009). Although this school of thought has not clearly defined reliability, a consensus has been reached that reliability means the ability to maintain and execute tasks without mistakes (Shrivastava et al., 2009). To ensure reliability, certain requirements are necessary, such as strategic prioritisation, redundancy, continual training usually through simulations, fostering a culture that promotes alertness and responsiveness to accidents, decentralised decision-making, and precise designs and protocols. Mindfulness has also been suggested to play a role in satisfying sufficient conditions for reliability, involving a focus on failures, avoiding oversimplifications, and a dedication to resilience (Shrivastava et al., 2009).

Note: Data compiled from multiple sources for this study

2.3.2. Crisis management theories suited for specific industries

The application of the contingency theory to crisis management in the construction industry

The contingency theory emphasises adaptability in making choices to survive or succeed in uncertain environments. The theory posits that there is no best way of doing this and that a strategy in some situations may not be effective but successful in others. Generally, the construction industry is perceived as slow in adjusting to environmental changes. Abu Baker et al. (1993) believes that to survive and excel in such environments, it is imperative for construction companies to be highly sensitive to environmental changes, outline conceivable scenarios, and develop the necessary adaptation strategies. During crisis management, the contingency theory is useful in the construction industry by accounting for three contingency elements; namely size, technology, and operating environment. Flexibility in structure adjustments, such as increasing or decreasing the company's size due to unpredictable circumstances, is critical. The theory advises that crisis management should be adaptable to changes, and companies must be prepared to adjust their structure to survive (Abu Bakar et al., 2008).

The application of the situational crisis communication theory and contingency theory to crisis management in the tourism industry

Pforr and Hosie (2010) propose that the situational crisis management theory and the contingency theory are suitable theories for the tourism industry, where there is a need for appropriate communication strategies and flexible structural adjustments to adapt to changes and survive a crisis. Situational crisis communication theory is used to identify the type of crisis and a guide on the appropriate communication strategies for each. Informing the stakeholders accurately and adequately reduces the potential for panic and miscommunication (Pforr & Hosie, 2010).

Selected crisis management theories for the SSA SVOD industry

It is believed that the combination of the high-reliability theory and the resilience theory provides a suitable conceptual framework for crisis management in the SSA SVOD industry. This is because the SVOD industry faces complexity and a variety of high-risk creeping crises encompassing multinational competitors, cybercrime, piracy, data privacy breaches, content licensing, and country-specific regulations. The high-reliability theory indicates that reliable systems typically do not fail, even in complex and high-risk environments, like the SVOD industry. This theory can help the industry develop dependable systems that proactively manage crises. Figure 2 below is a visual depiction of the high-reliability theory.

Figure 2: The mind map of Weick and Sutcliffe's (2017) work on high-reliability organisations as an overarching, organising framework (Lekka, 2011) (Williams, et al., 2017).

The resilience theory as visually depicted in Figure 3 below, highlights the significance of possessing an adaptive capacity, especially in an environment where various unexpected crises are likely to occur. This theory enables the SSA SVOD industry to develop the capacity and aptitude needed to endure crises. In addition, the resilience theory can be employed to identify areas in the business where additional reinforcement and strengthening are necessary.

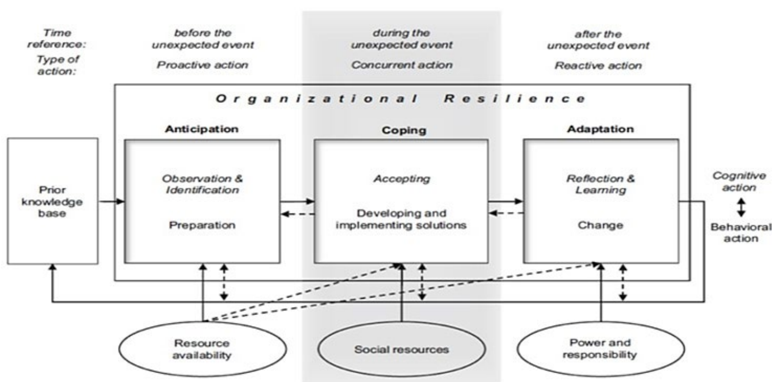

Figure 3: Duchek's (2020) organisational resilience model.

Therefore, if these theories (high-reliability theory and resilience theory) are applied in tandem as a unified framework, there is a strong likelihood that this will lead to managing the dynamic and intricate essence of crises and, at the same time, strengthening resilience in the SSA SVOD organisation.

2.3.3. Proposed SSA SVOD conceptual framework

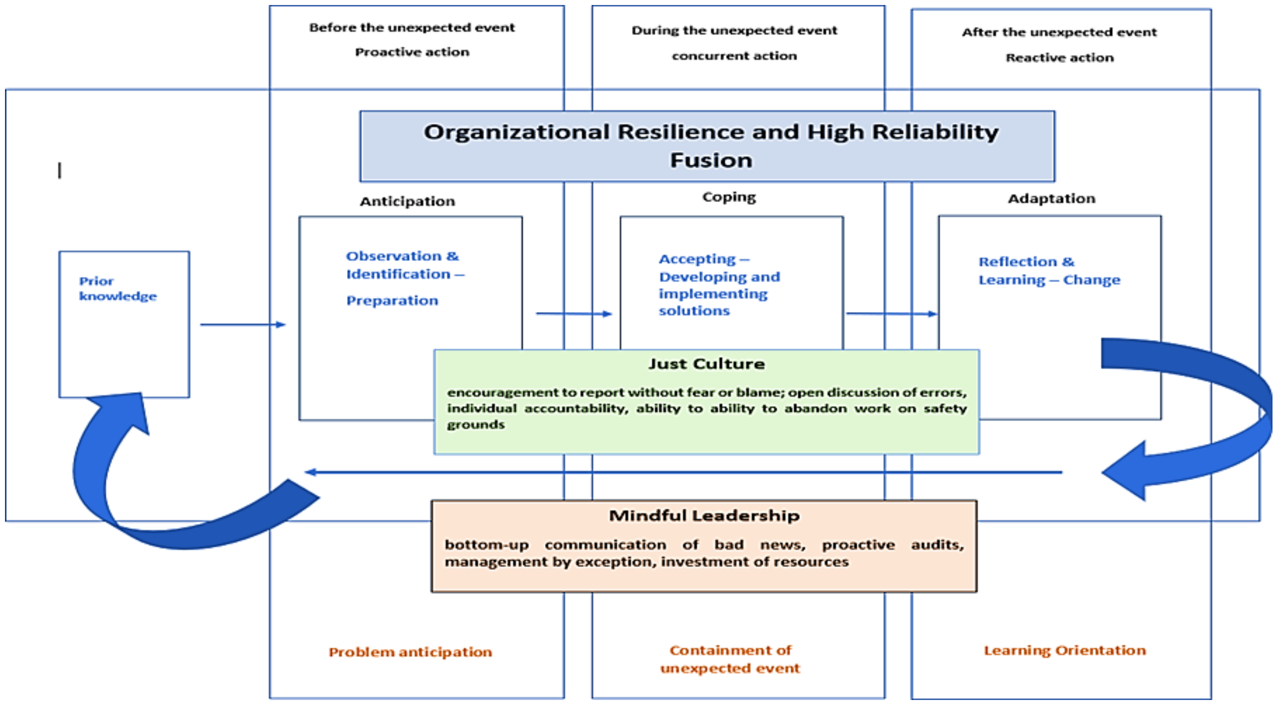

Figure 4: Organisational resilience and high-reliability crisis management fusion – Source: Study's modification of the resilience theory (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2017) and high-reliability theory (Duchek, 2020).

The process of resilience begins with anticipation, where an organisation must vigilantly monitor internal and external environments to proactively detect potential crises (Duchek, 2020). However, detection does not always prevent the threat, but it allows for a timely response to minimise negative consequences. Anticipation creates a resilience potential (Duchek, 2020). The next step is coping with the crisis, where the ability to manage unforeseen events is crucial for resilience (Duchek, 2020). The third step is accepting the crisis, as denial can hinder resilience. Organisations should accept the problem and develop solutions promptly. Scholars highlight that collective sensemaking is crucial for resilience (Duchek, 2020). The fourth step is adaptation, which involves reflecting on the crisis to extract learnings and drive organisational change (Duchek, 2020). Alongside these steps, an internal environment with a just culture is essential for resilience. Encouraging open discussions of errors, promoting accountability, and investing in training on crisis management is necessary to develop a high reliability and resilient organisation (Lekka, 2011). Effective leadership is fundamental in creating this kind of environment by engaging with all staff and allowing for bottom-up communication of problems (Lekka, 2011). Figure 4 is a visual representation of aforementioned description of the proposed SSA SVOD conceptual framework.

2.4. Conclusion

The process of crisis management involves predicting, identifying, and resolving potential crises promptly and effectively. Crisis management is essential for organisational management since it aims to facilitate crisis prevention and resolution. Various approaches and models have been developed for crisis management, which can be classified into reactive and proactive approaches. Reactive crisis management responds to an incident that has already occurred and aims to stabilise the situation and minimise damage to an organisation's reputation and operations. Proactive crisis management aims to predict, assess, and mitigate potential crises before they occur. It involves developing contingency plans and protocols, early warning systems, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to maintain an organisation's resilience.

The SWOT analysis of the SSA SVOD industry identifies several strengths and opportunities that can benefit the industry, such as the region's growing middle class and the potential for localised content production and distribution. Partnerships with telecom providers also offer opportunities to expand the reach and increase exposure to potential users. However, the SVOD industry in Africa faces several weaknesses and threats, including the lack of an affordable and reliable broadband infrastructure, high piracy rates, and low-income users. These challenges could impact the industry's financial sustainability, reduce investment in new content production, and limit growth opportunities.

Organisational lessons:

The Microsoft case study explores how Microsoft used transformational crisis management approaches to tackle talent loss, leading to positive organisational growth and development. The Nokia versus Apple case study examines how an organisation's response to innovation and competition affects growth and underscores the importance of effective leadership in crisis management. The Toyota recall case study analyses how corporate websites and multimedia tools can be used effectively for crisis communication and identifies key factors that influence the effectiveness of crisis communication. Piracy versus Netflix explores how consumers make decisions between legal and illegal sources of video content by drawing on cognitive dissonance and neutralisation theories. Netflix's business strategy and COVID-19 analyses how Netflix's business strategy coped with the pandemic crisis by targeting different markets and catering to the unique socio-economic-political-cultural factors of each country.

Overall, the application of a unified framework combining the high-reliability theory and the resilience theory has a strong potential to help SSA SVOD organisations manage the complexity and dynamics of crises while building resilience and reliability.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology that was used in this study. The research approach is discussed first, followed by the research paradigm, research design, the data collection methods employed, sampling, research instrument, quality assurance and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research approach

The research problem was centred around examining the multidimensional (across various departments, such as finance, marketing, products) experiences of people who operate in the SSA SVOD industry. This study employed an exploratory approach using qualitative methodologies. Participants from the Organisation provided first-hand experiences of how they had anticipated various crises or creeping crises in the past, how they had coped with a crisis, and how they adapted post the crisis. Aspers and Corte's (2019) definition of qualitative research is an iterative process that produces new distinctions resulting from a closer examination of the phenomenon being studied. On the other hand, it has been emphasised that the focus of qualitative research centres on the comprehension of people's attitudes, behaviours, interactions, and beliefs to produce non-numeric data (Foley Library, 2023). While some argue that qualitative research tends to produce biased results due to its subjectivity, others contend that if performed correctly using ethnographic field methodologies, it can produce more accurate findings than quantitative studies (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Research paradigm

In research there are four research paradigm categories, namely (i) positivist paradigm which is commonly used in quantitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); (ii) interpretive paradigm emphasises understanding subjects' experiences and perspectives, which is commonly used in qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017); (iii) critical paradigm is premised on questioning and transforming socio-economic and socio-political constructs to give rise to equity, is generally adopted in quantitative research (Guba, 1998); and lastly (iv) the postmodern paradigm, which seeks to consider diverse experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Guba, 1998). The latter is premised on the understanding that there is seldom ever a single truth. This paradigm is commonly adopted in qualitative research. In this study, the interpretive paradigm was used as it was appropriate for investigating complex social phenomena, like crisis management. This paradigm enables the collection of detailed and in-depth accounts of individual experiences using interviews.

3.3. Research design

This research was a case study of an SSA-based SVOD organisation. Interviews were conducted with its senior employees from departments which are considered vital in the operation and successful running of the organization. This organisation was used as a representative case of a broader category of SVOD organisations in SSA. Although case studies are often criticised for their lack of generalisability due to limited external validity, proponents of case studies argue that the focus should be on the quality of theoretical reasoning and generating an in-depth analysis of the case (Bryman, 2012).

Case studies allow for triangulation, where data from multiple sources, such as interviews, policy documents, and other relevant case studies, can be used to validate the findings (Bryman, 2012). Chapter 2 of this paper alluded to the use of triangulation by analysing data from the SWOT analysis of the SSA SVOD industry, relevant policy documents of the studied organisation, selected relevant case studies, and interviews with experienced personnel to validate the findings.

3.4. Data collection method

Interviews are intended to extrapolate the participants' experiences, their perspectives and opinions (Deakin University, n.d.). The interviews were conducted following a semi-structured format. A list of questions and topics were prepared to guide the interviews. The benefits of conducting the interviews in this way are that they bolstered responsiveness and flexibility whilst keeping to the roadmap crafted (Deakin University, n.d.). The structure of a semi-structured interview fosters reliability and credibility. This type of interview is known to be the most common method in qualitative research (Deakin University, n.d.). The strengths of interviews as a form of research methodology are that they are (i) flexible, and (ii) a fast way to collect data (Deakin University, n.d.). In contrast, the weaknesses or limitations are (i) participants can vary concerning clear articulation, and (ii) the questions must be crafted carefully to reduce response bias (Deakin University, n.d.).

3.5. Sample

For this case study, a purposeful stratified sampling approach was used to select the research participants (Participants) based on predetermined study criteria (Bryman, 2012). This method generates a diverse sample while guaranteeing enough participants from each category and striving to balance sample representation and produce authentic data. Ultimately a great balance of sample representation was achieved, which produced rich authentic data. Considering the proposed conceptual framework in Chapter 2, the following people were selected from the case study organisation (Table 3.1):

Table 2: Participants

Department	A mixture of personnel in senior and executive roles
Product / Engineering	2
Operations	3
Human Resources	1
Content	1
Legal	2
Partnerships	2
Marketing / Public relations	3
Total	14

3.6. The research instrument

The research instrument was the interview guide, which included a list of questions related to crisis management, as well as questions which tested the proposed conceptual framework (Bryman, 2012). A majority of the Participants concluded their interview by stating that they found the interview guide to be robust, well thought out and intellectually stimulating. They expressed a desire for the study's findings to be shared with them upon completion, as each Participant was curious to understand the perspectives of the other Participants in different workstreams regarding the themes the guide explored.

3.7. Procedure for data collection

Most of the interviews were face-to-face and recorded on the Teams video conferencing app for transcription purposes; in instances where the Participant was unable to convene in person, Teams was utilized to conduct and record theinterview. The benefits of the Teams app in the collection of data, is the fact that it has the recording and transcription functionality, which aids in recording the Participants accurately and the fact that one could refer to the video recording and transcription when drafting the findings and analysis chapters of the study. The added benefit realised about the face-to-face interviews was that one witnessed the Participants' verbal and nonverbal cues including body language and behaviour. This form of data collection provided the study author with better control of the process, with no distractions during the interviews, which is confirmed by De Franzo (n.d.).

3.8. Data analysis strategy

The collected data from the Participants was analysed using coding. Bryman (2012) states that coding entails reviewing transcripts and notes, giving labels to similar codes which are relevant to the research problem. Each stage of the coding made it possible to go deeply into the data and select crucial findings.

3.9. Quality assurance

Reliability and validity are said to be yardsticks in establishing and assessing the quality of quantitative research. However, the criteria are not appropriate for assessing qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) propose two criteria for assessing qualitative research namely, trustworthiness and authenticity. Credibility speaks to ensuring ethical compliance and obtaining participant confirmation of social reality is necessary to establish the credibility of research findings. With respect to dependability, researchers are required to adopt an "auditing" approach. This involves retaining comprehensive records of each stage of the research process, such as problem formulation, participant selection, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, and data analysis decisions. Due the well transcribed interviews, the conclusions derived from the study confirmed that they were not substantially shaped by personal values or theoretical preferences. The interview responses adequately incorporated and presented the diverse viewpoints of the Participants with the Organisation's social environment (Bryman, 2012).

3.10. Ethical considerations

The dignity of the Participants was always preserved. Before starting the study, permission was sought from each of the Participant, the Organisation's legal team, the Organisation's chief operating officer, and the Wits Business Research Ethics Committee. The Participants were not influenced unduly nor was there any pressure for them to participate in the study; they participated voluntarily. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw from the study any time without any obligation to continue, which they acknowledge and signed for, before commencement of interviews.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Introduction

The aim of the study was to develop tailored crisis management approaches for the SVOD industry in sub-Saharan Africa, to ensure sustainability of organisations in the sector. The research questions were adapted into overarching themes, with related subthemes, which are unpacked in the subsequent research findings section below. This chapter will be organised as follows: (i) a discussion on Participant demographics; (ii) research findings; (iii) further research insights; and (iv) lastly a summary of the chapter.

4.2. Demographics

All Participants interviewed hold senior management positions within the Organisation. They have been in the Organisation for more than three years and have a minimum of twelve years in their respective fields. They have directly interfaced with some of the historic crises recorded.

The Participants belong to vital workstreams in the Organisation, including, the commercial/partnership, legal, public relations (PR) and communications, product and engineering, marketing, content, and human resource (HR) teams, respectively. The Participants encompassed a mix of both male and female members.

4.3. Findings

4.3.1. The Organisation's approach to preventing creeping crises from escalating into full-blown crises

The proactive and reactive organisational and departmental spectrum

Out of the total of fourteen Participants, eight were of the view that the Organisation takes proactive measures in preventing potential crises. The operations team member "Participant P3", is cited as saying:

"*I would say yes, in my opinion, because one of the things that we do during integrations is actually defining use case scenarios of what could go wrong and try to preempt what the end customer would be experiencing when we deliver the solution. So, we go from the normal use cases to your edge cases, which would be the worst cases. So, you put yourself in the customer's shoes and you define it backwards.*"

The claim that the Organisation is proactive is further supported by "Participant P8", a member of the legal team, in the following statement:

"Yes, definitely. So, one of the biggest crises I think we've faced is the power crisis in South Africa. I mean the impending or possible impending total grid failure, which is something that is in the minds of all companies that operate in South Africa, especially in the technology space, which requires power in order to render the services. I think … took proactive steps together with the… group. In fact, we made sure that we first have backup power at the office. We also increased the capacity of storage of diesel within the premises as well within the allowable limits."

Lastly, from the perspective of data analytics, "Participant P6", responded to the common belief among Participants that the Organisation takes proactive measures, by saying the following:

"*From a slightly more operational standpoint as well. So, I'm gonna [sic] actually say yes. We do create business plans which are actively managed within the tenant management process. There is succession planning as well and we do often look at essentially forecasting to anticipate what would happen. So, it is proactive. However, the caveat here is how well is it actually done, and on that front, I'm gonna [sic] say there's definitely a lot of room for improvement.*"

In contrast to the aforesaid, two out of the fourteen Participants, asserted that the Organisation is in fact reactive in nature when tackling creeping crises. The following is cited from "Participant P5" in the data analytics work stream:

"No, at the moment, we are a very reactive business. As things happen, we adjust, or we wait. We [the data analytics team] are only now moving into a more strategic role. We [the business] places all our money on one show [production] or one particular event that will make it happen for us and make us win in something, versus a more balanced approach."

"Participant P13", an HR practitioner in the Organisation expressed the same sentiments:

"I would say no to this, just as a blanket answer. Of course, it is where it [the Organisation] is now because it's done our default position most of the time."

When it came to determining whether the Participants' particular departments or work streams addressed potential threats proactively, the majority of the Participants, eight in total, stated that their teams have taken a proactive approach to creeping crises. "Participant P6" mentioned the following:

"We try to be for sure. We are definitely looked to by the business to be that early alert, to be the warning system, not just for good things, but for bad things as well."

Whilst the balance of the Participants believed that their departments were not entirely proactive and included a reactive element to them, their responses to possible threats were fundamentally a hybrid of proactive and reactive. "Participant P2" from the partnership team said the following on this theme:

"...sixty percent proactive and forty percent reactive. What I've observed, there's a lot of the proactive approach, however feedback is not taken seriously early enough, and we only react when the crisis is at the front door."

From the perspective of "Participant P4", a business analyst from the operations team, the following insight was shared on the issue:

"It's a tricky question, yes, we do play a role. We could take a lead in understanding how the ecosystem works and identifying those gaps and recommending to the business how they can be resolved. We are sitting at thirty percent as a department. The reason why the business analyst department is at thirty percent is a capacity issue and resource issue. We are spread thin and not prioritising crisis management."

Assessments of creeping crises

On this theme, 11 Participants confirmed that creeping crises assessments were conducted within their workstreams, while 3 Participants responded in the negative. Here are supporting quotes for each stance. For the affirmative stance, "Participant P2" said the following:

"Yes, we do, however it's not formalized. In our process of developing a business case for each partnership deal, one of the factors that are considered as part of the process is conducting a creeping crises assessment and solving for them."

For the contrary position, "Participant P9" from the product and engineering team, the following was said:

"No, I don't think we have enough of them, and I think it's also just the organisational culture. We have split cultures between the territories which we operate in, i.e., the Prague team is very risk averse, and they do thorough assessments frequently."

Top 4 creeping crises' and new emerging creeping crises

The Top 4 selected creeping crises from the list the Participants were provided with were: (i) multinational competitors; (ii) customer financial inequality; (iii) piracy and (iv) talent poaching.

4.3.2. The Organisation's historical approach to managing and resolving crises encountered

Memorable crises

According to the Participants' responses provided in the Interview Transcription (2024), the most memorable crises that they had witnessed related to the following topics:

(i) "Participants P1 and P11" reported on the delayed new platform readiness issues encountered during the Organisation's relaunch earlier this year;

(ii) "Participants P2, P9 and P10" mentioned difficulties with payment integrations with third party processors;

(iii) "Participants P4 - P8" referred to the COVID-19 pandemic; and lastly

(iv) "Participants P12 and P14" highlighted streaming functionality faults.

It is worth noting that Participants named at least three departments that were affected by the aforementioned notable crises.

Crisis foresight

The Participants' responses were evenly split on whether the crises outlined were foreseeable or not.

4.3.3. The Organisation's attitude towards preparing for and managing future crises

Crisis post-mortems

Three outcomes were observed from the Participant replies in relation to this theme, categorized: (i) conducted; (ii) partially conducted, and (iii) not conducted.

Conducted

7 Participants confirmed that their departments did periodically conduct crisis postmortem, below are two confirmatory statements.

"Participant P3" in the operations team said this, "*Yes, we do that a lot of have sessions or workshops of, you know, what went wrong.*"

"Participant P12" from the PR and communications team had this to say, "*Yes, not as frequently as we like, but when something does happen, then absolutely we document it. Most recently we had a very tough event as the PR team…The Monday afterwards we sat around a table and we went, OK, what went wrong? How can we do it better next time? And we documented that and now we actually use that document as a checklist. Every time we do an event.*"

Partially conducted

3 Participants conceded to partially conducting crisis post-mortems. "Participants P9 and P4" said, "*I think if time allows, yes, we do. We don't do it enough though*"; and "*We are below fifty percent, we're in partial compliance.*"

Not conducted

4 Participants admitted to their department's not conducting crisis reviews. Participants P13 and P1 had the following to say respectively:

"*No, not like intentionally, like oh, let's sit down. and review, no.*"

"*Nobody does that, which is a bad* thing*.*"

Adoption of learnings from crises

From the interview responses, more Participants were of the view that learnings are better adopted in their departments, as opposed to the Organisation as a whole.

Areas in the Organisation that require strengthening

The Participants raised the following as areas in the Organisation that need improvement, to ensure that it copes with future crises:

(i) Troubleshoot more often

"Participant P3" said, "*We could invest more in troubleshoot more effectively before implementing a requirement.*"

(ii) Better employee onboarding

"Participant P11" stated, "*You walk in the door, and everyone expects you to know processes of the* organisation. *There's no training. No one actually takes you through from an onboarding perspective.*"

(iii) Early collaboration between commercial and legal teams

"Participant P8" highlighted the fact that, "*…legal is not being involved early enough in the structuring of deals.*"

(iv) Commitment to ongoing staff training

"Participant P10" mentioned that, "*They need to prioritise enrolling staff in continual training and refresher courses to keep abreast of new advances in the industry.*".

(v) Organisational processes

"Participant P5" from the data analytics team and this to say, "*Our processes, internal systems and structures need a lot of work or improvement, in order to effectively manage our day-to-day operations.*"

"Participant P11" from the marketing echoed similar sentiments, "*I think all our processes need more work honestly. I think as we start scaling, we need proper robust processes; however processes that allows us to also be agile*".

4.3.4. The organizational culture and leadership style

The experienced culture

The significant themes revealed in the interviews included the observation that, several Participants perceived the organizational culture as "*Collaborative...*" – "Participant P11", "*solutions driven*" – "Participant P10; embodying a "*build the plane as it flies"* approach – *"*Participant P1*"; and being "positive and creative*" - "Participant P7".

Leadership transparency and approachability

A majority of the Participants were optimistic about the new leadership. Some of the positive sentiments expressed about the new leadership included:

(i) that it *"…engages with everyone regardless of what level they belong to. They don't pretend to know it all*", "Participant P1" stated;

(ii) that "*there is an open-door policy. We operate in an open plan setting which also speaks to the intention to remove barriers*", in the words of "Participant P2"; and

(iii) "*…there is more engagement and transparency. Change happened in October/November*", as per "Participant P5".

Two Participants expressed skepticism on whether leadership was genuinely open to engaging its subordinates more meaningfully, their responses read as follows:

"*They like to say they are.* I'm *not sure they are*" according to "Participant P13"; and

"*To a certain degree. There are some leaders that hold back on honest conversations. I do find that mostly, just* like *in town halls, there's a lot of diplomatic answers to questions. I feel like the culture that we've built as an organization is more at execution level, like the execution teams. But at a leadership level, I don't think the right conversations are happening*"; according to "Participant P3".

Organisational resilience

All Participants agreed that the Organisation's workforce is resilient, which has propelled the business forward. Below are a few of the responses:

"Participant P3" stated "*Definitely, we have a resilient spirit as an execution team. We have the ability to deal* with *the crisis while also running the business from a day-to-day perspective.*"

"Participant P9" also mentioned the following: "*I think … is resilient and it stems from its people who keep pushing despite the challenges faced.*"

4.4. Further insights

4.4.1. Participants' understanding of crisis management

According to the responses to the question in the preliminary questions section of the questionnaire about what Participants understood as crisis management, 11 Participants chose Option 3, and 2 Participants, "Participants P4 and P2" chose Options 1 and 3.

4.4.2. New emergent creeping crises

Participants were asked to share any new emergent creeping crises that they believe are significant and should be taken seriously. The most notable are as follows:

"*Exchange rate risk, because we buy international content in dollars and sell subscriptions in local currency" and "The devaluation of currency, especially where there is localisation*"; highlighted by "Participant P2 and Participant P7" respectively;

"*Streaming functionality faults*" and "*Our worst nightmare a platform shutdown*", emphasised by "Participant P14; and Participant P12" respectively; and

"*The attention economy*", where "*there are five or six or seven streamers, and people just don't have that much attention to give to all the content that is being made. It's more likely to become desensitized to our product*", as brought to the fore by "Participant P12".

4.5. Summary

4.5.1. The Organisation's approach to preventing creeping crises from escalating into full blown crises

A majority of the Participants were of the view that the Organisation as well as their respective departments are proactive to prevent crises. Two Participants had a dissenting view to the assertion by the majority. Eight Participants confirmed that their departments do conduct creeping crisis assessments, although there were a few Participants stated that their departments employed a hybrid approach, being somewhat proactive and partially reactive. 11 Participants reported conducting crisis assessments, with the top four identified creeping crises including, (i) multinational competitors; (ii) customer financial inequality; (iii) piracy and (iv) talent poaching.

4.5.2. The Organisation's historical methodology for managing and resolving crises encountered

The most memorable crises recalled by the Participants were: the delayed new platform readiness issues; payment integration challenges; the COVID-19 pandemic; and streaming functionality faults. Half of the Participants believe that the crises were foreseeable, and the other half believe that they were unforeseeable.

4.5.3. The Organisation's attitude towards preparing for and managing future crises

Learnings are believed to be better adopted more effectively within departments instead of accross the Organisation. Participants flagged five areas that need strengthening, relate to the following: troubleshoot more frequently; employee onboarding on ways of work; commercial and legal teams collaborating sooner rather than later with respect to deal/project structuring; and the Organisation's commitment to ongoing staff and organisational process training.

4.5.4. The organizational culture and leadership style

A majority of the Participants see the organisational culture as positive, collaborative, and agile. They applauded the leadership for consciously connecting with subordinates and being accessible. All Participants attributed the Organisation's success to its employees' resilience.

4.5.5. Further insights

Many of the Participants chose the Option 3's definition of crisis management. When discussing new emergent creeping crises, Participants highlighted risks such exchange control risk, streaming functionality faults, and over-saturation of available content, as risks which the Organisation should prioritise.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1. Introduction

The research objective was to gather insights from multiple sources, including literature and insight from seasoned professionals working in a successful SVOD business in sub-Saharan Africa, for purposes of creating a tailored, well informed, and multidisciplinary crisis management guideline for the sector. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, some face-to face others through Microsoft Teams, to glean insights from the Participants' experiences, perspectives, opinions, and expertise.

Anticipating the need to analyse the gathered data after the interviews, the interview guide was carefully designed with the proposed SSA SVOD conceptual framework in mind. The interview questions (which are inspired by the proactive approach to crisis management) along with the sub-questions were grouped into themes aligned with the high reliability theory and the resilience theory proposed in the SSA SVOD conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2 of this study. This chapter will be organised as follows:

(i) Data and comparative analysis – this section is structured according to Chapter 4's themes (found in 4.3 and 4.4). After discussing the findings related to each theme, the analysis will proceed to compare the findings with relevant literature and theoretical frameworks discussed in Chapter 2.

(ii) Conclusion – a summary of the chapter.

5.2. Data and comparative analysis

5.2.1. The Organisation's approach to preventing creeping crises from escalating into full-blown crises

Despite the fact that a majority of the Participants expressed the belief that they perceive the Organisation to be proactive, the fact that there were a few, despite being in the minority, who painted a contrasting picture on the Organisation's ability to employ proactive measures to addressing creeping crises, brings to the fore that the Organisation's position in this regard is somewhat inconsistent and demonstrates some weakness in this area. Participants raised the fact that while a number of the workstreams perform (to some degree) scenario planning and risk identification, it would appear that the Organisation is slow in considering the outcomes, which in turn potentially exposes it to the likelihood of identified creeping crises evolving into crises.

Vašíčková (2019) emphasises that the proactive approach of crisis management necessitates the creation of contingency plans and protocols for handling crises. Early warning systems, ongoing monitoring, and assessments can guarantee the preservation of the organisation's resilience.

5.2.2. The Organisation's historical approach to managing and resolving crises

The most memorable historical crises identified by Participants, span from payment integrations with third party payment processors to streaming functionality faults, which given their nature, explain why they would be notable and also classified as crises. The Participants presented accounts on how the crises were managed, which was largely attributed to the resilience of staff members collectively. It cannot be overstated that for an Organisation to survive the test of time and thrive, it must be resilient.

Literature suggests that organisations that have successfully weathered several crises are probably well prepared to manage more in the future; that is, if they use their past experiences to create protocols and competencies for application in the future. The Microsoft case study on talent loss demonstrated how a crisis can be turned into a positive outcome through proactive measures and strategic planning (Keef & Darling , 2008).

5.2.3. The Organisation's attitude towards preparing for and managing future crises

Although a majority of the Participants reported that crises post-mortems are undertaken, the few that gave mixed replies of partial compliance and non-compliance, emphasise the Organisation's need to take this issue more seriously. It is concerning, however, that even though most Participants indicate that post-mortems are conducted, most statements are accompanied with an exception, that the post-mortems are either performed infrequently, insufficiently or unintentionally.

The Participants noting the fact that learnings from crises are not widely adopted across the Organisation generally, but are more efficiently implemented departmentally, is another red flag the Organisation ought to take seriously. It is understood that the sourcing of learning from crises facilitates organisations in adequately preparing for future crises. According to a majority of the Participants, the Organisation should make a concerted effort in its commitment to continuous staff and organisational process training, to reinforce reliability, bolster organisational resilience and improve efficiencies.

On consideration of identified areas of improvement, it is evident that the Organisation's corporate governance is compromised, as such lowering the Organisations immunity to creeping crises and rendering it vulnerable to more destructive impacts of crises they may encounter in the future.

For this theme, the same literature referred to under paragraph 5.2.3 above is appropriate.

5.2.4. The organizational culture and leadership style

The Participants' responses to the leadership transparency and approachability theme show that this is an area that the leadership team is so far excelling in. The two skeptical Participant responses do not imply that leadership is not performing as asserted by the majority; rather they err on the side of caution or indicate a need for additional effort.

The high-reliability theory discussed in the literature review, advocates for leadership that drives a just culture, where there are discussions of errors, there is promotion of accountability, and bottom-up communication of concerns takes place (essentially where leadership engages staff). The literature aligns well with this finding of the study.

5.2.5. Further insights

The Participants were asked to choose the most relevant or appropriate definition of crisis management from three options: option 1 related to business continuity, option 2 spoke to risk management, and option 3 crisis management, all of which are discussed in detail in Chapter 2.2 – Literature review. The Participants were not told what the options represented. The fact that 11 Participants chose the correct definition of crisis management (unknowingly) while two selected option 1 and 3; suggests that the Participants are familiar with the concept of crisis management.

From the three new emergent creeping crises identified, one of the creeping crises is a risk that all SVOD businesses are alive to, namely, the potential of streaming functionality faults or the worst-case scenario of a complete shutdown. The other two risks (exchange rate risk and the over saturated customer attention economy) are brought about by two external forces which are not entirely in the Organisation's control, however, the Organisation's profitability is at stake should these threats be unmanaged.

In a study on the asymmetric effect of exchange rate volatility on trade in SSA countries it was found that "*positive or negative exchange rate volatility*" has the same net effect of impacting trade negatively (Dada, 2021, p. 158). Dada (2021) proposes that policy makers in SSA territories should adopt band fixing of an exchange rate to improve gross trade in the region. Given this, it is in the Organisation's best interest to ethically lobby relevant governing bodies in SSA territories to deliberately assess Dada's recommendation; in order to maintain stability and profitability within those regions.

In an article titled "*Paying Attention; The Attention Economy*", the Berkeley Economic Review, introduces the reader to the term "*attention economy*" which we are told was formulated by a Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon (Berkeley Economic Review, 2020). The term according to the article, essentially relates to the fact that our economy is becoming more dependent on attention and that "*our attention has always been limited, valuable and scarce*". Furthermore, modern day technologies are now more than ever targeting to capture our attention (Berkeley Economic Review, 2020). Businesses now understand the scarcity of their customer's attention, and as such they have started adapting their business models to capitalise on this (Berkeley Economic Review, 2020). In conclusion the article states the following: "*As we continue to drown in a surplus of stimuli trying to capture our attention, perhaps we must focus on paying attention to what we pay attention to*" (Berkeley Economic Review, 2020).

The Organisation is in the business of technology, with a growing number of competitors which have a common goal, amongst others, of capturing their audience's attention. Its business model needs to adapt, if it hasn't done so already; to capitalise on the scarcity of its customers' attention, such as looking into the model implemented by Spotify; of having two revenue streams, where customers can pay to have their listening without ads or pay with their attention and listen to them (Berkeley Economic Review, 2020).

5.3. Conclusion

The Organisation's semi-proactive character has revealed inconsistencies. To better prepare for future crises, the Organisation will need to implement well-structured crisis post-mortem policy that calls for regular team meetings and organisation wide post-mortems to be convened. It is advisable that the learnings from crises be discussed in the same meetings as the crisis post-mortems. Corporate governance needs to be strengthened, through the establishment of a crisis management department or portfolio, amongst other measures. Most Participants understanding what crisis management is, is beneficial to the Organisation. Leadership is encouraged to continue on its current path and trajectory, in terms of employee engagement. Additionally, the Organisation should prioritise ongoing training efforts as this can only improve resilience, reliability and efficiencies. Keeping a keen eye on current/new market trends will help the Organisation stay ahead. Ethical policy lobbying has the potential to sustain the Organisation and foster relationships with key stakeholders. The Organisation has proved that it is agile, it however needs to shift its focus onto establishing strong reliable processes in order to be resilient and successful. The findings appear to support the proposed SSA SVOD conceptual framework; if applied by the Organisation and other SVOD players operating in SSA, its predicted that there is a likelihood that they will overcome crises encountered and thrive.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

In this final chapter of the study, as the author I will share my views and opinions on the main themes, new insights discussed and recommendations regarding how the findings could be furthered more practically from an organisational standpoint, my research limitation experiences, and what areas in the study other scholars might find interesting to explore further. Chapter 6 will be organized in the same chronology: (i) Thoughts on main themes, new insights and practical implications; (ii) Limitations; and (iii) Future studies.

6.2. Thoughts on themes, new insights and practical implications

By enhancing corporate governance and formally adopting crisis management practices, such as the implementation of in-depth, regular and organisation-wide crisis post-mortems; and regular documenting and adoption of crisis learnings; I'm of the view that this will bolster the Organisation's immunity against creeping crises and will effectively assist the Organisation in preparing adequately for future crises. The Organisation's new leadership's efforts toward engaging employees and creating a safe and transparent environment is truly commendable and the leadership is encouraged to continue with this leadership style in order to get the most out of its resilient workforce. I personally believe that prioritising continuous staff training as suggested by the Participants, will better prepare the Organisation in meeting obstacles and enable it to adapt to the ever-changing SVOD landscape. The recent Spotify business model discussed in Chapter 5 and the literature on the attention economy, are market trends which I implore the Organisation, from a strategic standpoint, to consider as a means to create a new stream of revenue. I'm of the view that the Organisation should look into fleshing out its corporate affairs strategy in order to get the necessary support it needs from relevant SSA regional policy makers for issues such as the exchange rate volatility. Exchange rate volatility is a real risk for the SVOD industry and trade, efforts to contribute towards addressing it will prove beneficial. Finally, I believe that the proposed SSA SVOD conceptual framework is a thorough crisis management manual.

6.3. Limitations

The Organisation which served as the case study's subject, underwent a business restructuring in the second half of 2023. All Participant departments were tasked with implementing the restructure and migrating existing customers to a new platform. This was an extremely stressful period for the Participants.

In addition to the restructuring, the Organisation embarked on a strategy to relaunch its brand, involving all Participants in the planning and execution. The brand relaunch was initially scheduled for December 2023. However, due to unexpected events the relaunch had to be postponed to 16 February 2024. Consequently, interviews could only be conducted during the times the Participants were available, which was from the second week of January 2024 to the 27th of February 2024. This meant that the results could only be synthesised and analysed from the 29th of February 2024.

I had initially anticipated that I would be able to recruit at least seventeen participants for the study; however, only fourteen interviews were carried out due to unavailability primarily stemming from work commitments. The research instrument and the interviews took longer than expected, lasting between fifty minutes to an hour fifteen minutes. Due to the length of time required for each interview, some interviews had to be split into two sittings of forty-five minutes and thirty minutes at a time, scheduled based on mutual availability. In addition to everything mentioned above, my ethics clearance was issued a month later than expected,

6.4. Future studies

The two recommendations for academics to consider exploring in further studies; are: (i) investigating how external forces such as exchange rate volatility and customer attention saturation can impact business stability and profitability in particular markets on the African continent, like a large and complex economy such as Nigeria or even from the South African context; and (ii) investigating the implications of the attention economy on customer value management in technology driven industries.

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APPENDIX 1 – RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">Preliminary questions and participant orientation:

These questions were posed to the participants prior to delving into the interview schedule. They were intended to orientate and prepare the participants for what to anticipate in the substantive interview.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">1.</td><td rowspan="3">Which of the definitions do you understand as ‘Crisis Management’:</td><td>Option 1: the organization’s capability to sustain the delivery of products or services at acceptable predefined levels following a disruptive incident.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Option 2: the process involves identifying, assessing, and controlling risks that arise from the operations, assets, and activities of an organization.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Option 3: entails strategizing and drawing-up a plan/process to address the following: (i) the prevention of a crisis; (ii) the preparation for a crisis; (iii) the response to a crisis; and (iv) learnings gained from experiencing a crisis.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">2.</td><td rowspan="3">Which of the definitions do you understand as ‘Organisational Crisis’?</td><td>Option 1: a significant disruption or interruption in the normal operations and functioning of an organization may involve various factors such as technical failures, supply chain disruptions, or internal issues that impede the organization's ability to operate effectively.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Option 2: An organizational situation with significant strategic obstacles and difficulties that impede long-term goals and objectives, including market changes, competitive pressures, and unforeseen external factors impacting strategic direction.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Option 3: an event perceived by managers and stakeholders as highly salient, unexpected, and potentially disruptive, which exposes the organisation to financial and/or reputational risk.</td></tr>
<tr><td>3.</td><td>What is a ‘Creeping Crisis’?</td><td>Is an incremental emergent threat which develops over time and space.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Substantive Interview Questions:</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">4.</td><td rowspan="5">Research Question 1:

How is the selected organization taking proactive steps to avert creeping crises? (Anticipation, observation and identification)</td><td>4.1 - In your opinion does the Organisation take proactive steps to avert potential crises?</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.2 - In your opinion, does your department take proactive steps to avert potential crises?</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.3 - Does your department conduct creeping crisis/risk assessment exercises? If not, why not?</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.4 - In your view, do you think it’s important to conduct these types of assessments? if so, and why?</td></tr>
<tr><td>4.5 – Which of the creeping crises list do you think has the potential to impact your department the most?</td></tr>
</table>

		(i) Multinational competitors; or (ii) data privacy breaches; or (iii) piracy; or (iv) access to data (internet connectivity); or (v) customer financial inequality; or (vi) talent poaching (within the organisation or from our production cast members)?
		4.6 - Are there other creeping crises which are not on the list provided in question 4.5? What potential crisis or crises could the Organisation face in the future, and why?
		4.7 - In your opinion, how do you think the Organisation should cope or deal with the prominent discussed potential crises/creeping crises?
5.	Research Question 2: How has the Organisation managed and resolved previous crises experienced? (Coping, accepting, developing, and implementing solutions)	5.1 - What crisis or crises has the Organisation experienced during your employment?
		5.2 - How was your department impacted by the crisis? Which other departments were impacted by the crisis?
		5.3 - In you view, was the crisis foreseeable?
		5.4 - how was the crisis resolved? How do you think the crisis should have been resolved?
6.	Research Question 3: How does the Organization prepare for and cope for future crises? (Adaptation)	6.1 - Does your department typically conduct post-mortems or reflect on past challenges or crises encountered?
		6.2 - Do you think that the learnings from a crisis are easily adopted by the Organisation? Are you of the view that the learnings from a crisis are easily adopted by your department?
		6.3 - What areas do you think need strengthening in the Organisation regarding its ability to prepare and cope for future crises?
		6.4 - Do you think that the Organisation's systems and processes are dependable or reliable? Are your department's systems dependable or reliable?
Concluding Questions:		
7.	Research Questions 4: What is the Organisation's culture and leadership style?	7.1 - What would you say the Organisation's culture in relation to crisis management is? What is your experienced culture?
		7.2 - Are you of the view that leadership is open to suggestions or the views of the various levels of employees in the Organisation?
		7.3 - Do you feel comfortable with openly discussing errors you have committed? Are you encouraged to disclose bad news without fear of blame?
		7.4 - Do you think that the Organisation is resilient?