The role of crowdsourcing on digital transformation and operational performance in African financial services

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ABSTRACT

This research scrutinises the influence of Crowdsourcing (CS) in propelling Digital Transformation (DT) and bolstering Operational Performance (OP) within African Financial Service Providers (FSPs). While CS merges outsourcing, social networking, and mass collaboration to utilise a wide pool of intellect for complex problem-solving, its integration in DT is crucial for FSPs to harness global insights and expertise.

In Africa, DT is lagging, primarily due to low Digital Maturity (DM), restricted technology access, and cultural resistance. This study addresses these impediments by examining the role of CS in expediting DT and its subsequent effect on OP. The research methodology entailed semi-structured interviews with 15 stakeholders in the industry, involving CEOs, CTOs, and Senior Managers. Data was analysed using AtlasTi software, ensuring credible, informed conclusions through thematic analysis and triangulation with secondary sources.

Although the qualitative nature of this study limits its generalisability, it provides an intensive exploration of CS as a catalyst for DT and OP enhancement in the sector. Findings illuminate CS's pivotal role in the digital evolution of African FSPs, presenting a strategic path to overcome digital maturation challenges and stay competitive.

The study's theoretical underpinnings are based on the Diffusion of Innovation theory, positioning CS as an instrument for disseminating new ideas and practices vital for achieving OP in the digital era. It offers a strategic framework for FSPs to navigate digital maturity, access challenges, and cultural resistance. Ultimately, the study outlines how CS can be harnessed to accelerate the adoption of DT initiatives, thus refining operational efficiency, and securing a competitive edge in a dynamically shifting industry landscape.

KEYWORDS: *Crowdsourcing, Digital Maturity, Digital Transformation, and Operational Performance*

DECLARATION

I, Vishal Nayer, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Vishal Nayer Signature: 

Signed at Douglasdale, Johannesburg

On the 7 day of 02 2024

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family as a constant source of strength.

A special dedication goes to my sister, Priya Nayer, for your unwavering faith in me to complete this journey.

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This dissertation is wholeheartedly dedicated to those who have been the pillars of support and wisdom throughout this academic journey. To my supervisor, Michael Sony, whose expertise, and insightful guidance have been the compass that directed this research. The dedication and excellence that emanate from Wits Business School have left an indelible mark on my professional and personal growth. To my family, for their unwavering love, sacrifice, and belief in my dreams. It is your boundless support and encouragement that have fuelled my determination and resilience. To my colleagues at SystemicLogic, who have provided a nurturing environment that fosters innovation and learning, especially my Manager, Wole Mibiola, for providing me with unwavering support throughout this whole process. Your camaraderie and collaborative spirit have contributed immensely to both my study and my development within the professional sphere. And to my friends, for their companionship and understanding, especially during the moments when my commitments meant that I was less present. Your patience and motivation have been the source of joy and balance in this demanding pursuit. Each of you have contributed to this work in innumerable ways, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

APP	Application
BMC	Business Model Canvas
CS	Crowdsourcing
CX	Customer Experience
CDO	Chief Digital Office
CTO	Chief Technology Officer
DM	Digital Maturity
DOI	Diffusion of Innovation
DT	Digital Transformation
IC	Internal Crowdsourcing
FSP	Financial Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
IP	Intellectual Property
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

MVP	Minimal Viable Product
OP	Operational Performance
OE	Operational Efficiency
P&S	Product and Services
PMO	Project Management Office

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

This research study aims to examine how both internal and external Crowdsourcing (CS) can drive Digital Transformation (DT) in traditional Financial Service Providers (FSPs) in Africa. Additionally, this report aims to reveal how this impacts the operational performance (OP) of FSPs.

1.2 Background of the study

In recent years, CS has gained popularity as a technique used to access the combined intellectual resources of a large group of people to address intricate issues or accomplish demanding tasks (Bhatti et al., 2020). The term "Crowdsourcing" is a modern phenomenon that combines outsourcing, social networking, and large groups of people, resulting in an innovative approach to obtaining human intelligence (Saxton et al., 2013). This approach has been particularly effective in role that DT initiatives within companies, are affected CS as a method. Companies are able to gather and utilise the collective intelligence of people from different locations, offering individuals a chance to share their insights and expertise with a global audience (Bhatti et al., 2020).

Although the adoption of digital technologies can help organisations overcome many challenges they face, such as increased competition, changing customer needs, and the need for Operational Efficiency (OE), it can especially when it can be helpful to FSP's in the long run (Bhatti et al., 2020). DT has been slow in general within Africa and is due to several factors, including low levels of Digital Maturity (DM), limited access to technology and expertise, lack of concrete strategies that focus on addressing customer needs, uncertainty regarding where and how to expand their geographical footprint, weak regulatory frameworks, and cultural and organisational resistance to change. Organisations adopt digital technologies and are facing an

increasing amount of pressure to modernise their operations to remain competitive (Union, 2020).

Crowdsourcing has emerged as a promising tool for innovation and performance improvement in various industries, especially in the FSP's industry. By accessing diverse ideas and expertise, conducting rapid experimentation and prototyping, and enhancing customer engagement and loyalty, CS can enable FSPs to overcome cultural and company-wide barriers to innovation (Campos-Blázquez et al., 2023). Additionally, by fostering a more collaborative and open culture, CS can help overcome the challenges organisations face in their DT journey (Campos-Blázquez *et al*., 2023).

1.3 Research problem

The FSP industry in Africa is facing significant challenges in achieving DT and improving OP. While digital technologies offer numerous opportunities for innovation and growth, FSPs in Africa are struggling to adopt these technologies due to various barriers, such as limited access to intellectual knowledge, technology & expertise, weak regulatory frameworks, and cultural and organisational resistance to change. One significant challenge facing FSPs, is the presence of outdated legacy technologies that are costly to maintain and upgrade, placing these providers at a disadvantage (Sebastian et al., 2017). Operational Performance (OP) hinges on smooth execution across various elements, including technology integration, process efficiency, risk management, utilisation of data and analytics, and scalability. Addressing outdated legacy systems is a crucial part of enhancing OP (Sebastian et al., 2017). According to Sebastian et al. (2017), achieving sustainable Digital Transformation (DT) and OP requires FSPs to possess a range of capabilities, ensuring efficiency, scalability, reliability, and a focus on core operations throughout the journey. Consequently, the Financial Service Providers industry has experienced a sluggish pace of DT.

1.3.1 *Main problem:*

This research study seeks to address the lack of knowledge on how CS of ideas within FSPs, accelerate DT, and its impact on OP.

1.3.2 *Sub-research problem 1:*

The first sub research problem is a lack of knowledge on how CS of ideas, accelerates DT, and how is has a direct impact on OP.

1.3.3 *Sub-research problem 2:*

The second sub-research problem involves a lack of a unified understanding of best-in-class practices and the factors to consider for the successful implementation of CS in Financial Service Providers (FSPs) in Africa, along with understanding their role in the context.

1.3.4 *Sub-research problem 3:*

The third sub problem is there is a lack of a unified framework that FSPs can use to standardise the use of CS innovation initiatives, and what are the key components necessary to ensure CS of ideas is a success.

1.4 Research questions:

a. How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to solve strategic and operational issues?
b. How has the use of CS of ideas increased their drive towards DM, DT and OP?
c. Have they adopted any best-in-class practices to attain their desired objectives and become a leader in the African FSPs industry?

1.5 Research Gap:

CS has been identified as a vital tool for innovation and operational enhancement in various sectors, including FSPs. However, its efficacy within the African FSP sector remains under-researched (Union, 2020). The current landscape in Africa presents unique challenges and opportunities for CS, with its potential impacts on DT and OP being pivotal yet obscure. This study aims to elucidate the theoretical underpinnings of CS's role in the digital and operational advancements in African FSPs. It seeks to expand upon the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory by empirically exploring how CS facilitates the adoption and implementation of DT initiatives, thereby contributing to the

improvement of OP in the African financial services context. The expected theoretical contribution is to offer a nuanced understanding of CS's application within African FSPs, highlighting both strategic benefits and contextual limitations, thus providing a foundational framework for FSPs endeavouring to employ CS as a lever for growth and innovation.

1.6 Delimitations of the study?

The delimitations of this research study are:

a. The dissertation report will be limited to traditional operating FSPs in Africa.
b. Digital-only banks will be considered as examples/user cases however, most of the focus of this research report will be focused on traditional FPS.
c. Considering the restricted availability of articles or studies conducted regarding the research topic, feedback from user interviews will be used to provide reference points for several statements positioned during this research paper.

1.7 Definition of terms

The table below presents the definitions of the terms referred to in this research study:

Table 1 Definition of terms

Source: (Author presentation)

Term	Description
CS (Crowdsourcing)	Information Technology (IT) group-wide based activity that calls for open engagement from all participants within an organisation (Zuchowski et al., 2016).
Digital Maturity (DM)	The degree to which an organisation efficiently employs technology and digital capabilities to promote growth, profitability, and competitive edge (Bughin et al., 2018).

Term	Description
Digital Transformation (DT)	Leveraging or implementation of electronic technologies can bring about significant transformations across all domains of a business, such as operations, processes, competencies, and models. The primary target is to optimise the company's business model, enhance client experience, and future-proof its workforce engagement by introducing novel digital technologies (Gong & Ribiere, 2021).
Open Innovation	Leveraging information in flowing and out flowing to speed internal innovation and widen the use of creative solutions beyond the company, it promotes a broader and more collaborative approach to innovation (Chesbrough, 2012).

1.8 Assumptions

This research study is based on the following assumptions:

a. The respondents are assumed to be willing to share the required information.
b. If participants prefer not to disclose specific information or data, they will have the option to communicate their preferences to the researcher.

1.9 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the outline of the research. It encompasses the research's aims, context, problem statement, research objectives, and study's significance. Moreover, this chapter specifies the report's terminology and outlines any

presumptions made during the research. Additionally, it clarifies any topics that will not be covered in the study.

Chapter two highlights the theoretical frameworks that underpin the concept of CS, Internal CS (IC) and its role in DT and OP. Specifically, the chapter will explore how CS can impact strategies, OE, innovation, organisational performance, and change management.

Chapter 3 of this research report presents a holistic explanation of the model employed for this study. It included the research approach, design, population, sample, research instrument used, and the methods employed for data collection and data analysis.

Additionally, this chapter elucidates the process of collecting data, examining and making sense of the information provided, and the study's limitations, including transferability, dependability, ethical considerations and demographic information pertaining to the participants.

Chapter 4 will provide the research findings followed by critical examination and discussion of these findings that will be presented in Chapter 5. The report will conclude in Chapter 6 by answering the three research questions and presenting appropriate recommendations for future research, for FSP within the African environment that will foster a deeper help understanding of the research question.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is to critically assess the use of CS of ideas as a tool to expedite DT and enhance performance in African FSPs. To achieve this objective, the review will analyse the existing literature on the history and application of CS, Innovation Culture (IC), DT, and OP within the FSPs sector and examine their relevance in the African context. The chapter will present a logical flow of scholarly views of how CS can be adapted to solve problem statements within the FSPs sector in Africa and enable them to be market leaders.

Additionally, this review will examine the benefits and challenges of CS in the circumstance of DT and the components that lead to the successful implementation of CS initiatives in the FSPs industry within Africa.

2.2 The History and Development of CS

Crowdsourcing has its roots in the 18th century, during which time the British government put out an open invitation promising a cash prize of £20,000 to resolve the ongoing challenge related to Longitude. The ongoing challenge made navigating through high waters very hazardous, resulting in the loss of many lives due to the absence of navigational parameters. The open call resulted in the development of a solution by John Harrison, who invented the marine chronometer, a device that accurately determined longitude at sea helping the sailors to navigate the waters when travelling (Bhatti et al., 2020).

In 1810, a similar approach was used when Napoleon sought to expand his empire in Europe, and a significant number of soldiers were enlisted in the armies, necessitating the need to preserve food. In response, the French government announced a reward of Fr 12,000 to any individual who could devise a practical method to store and prevent food wastage. The reward led to the creation of canned food, and a prize was eventually awarded to the individual who provided a solution (Stol, LaToza, et al., 2017).

In 1955, the Prime Minister of New South Wales, Australia, announced a cash reward of £5,000 for the best design of a building to be constructed for the Sydney's harbour. A total of 233 submissions were received, and in which one designer emerged victorious. The building, known as The Opera House, has become an iconic symbol of Australia and a popular (Stol, LaToza, et al., 2017).

2.3 Theoretical review

2.3.1 *The concept of CS defined*

CS is focused on gaining input and content from a vast number of individuals via an online community to fulfil specific requirements in the form of a problem statement (Howe, 2006). This concept further expanded to say that CS is an internet-based activity, that calls for an open innovation approach, allowing all participants to engage in a collective manner towards a common goal or target within an organisation (Zuchowski et al., 2016). Combining these concepts, CS is a method or approach aimed at solving various problem statements by outsourcing and leveraging the wisdom of people across various geographical areas to ideate and solve a common problem, as enhanced by (Bhatti et al., 2020).

Ideation is a widely used concept in the open innovation approach, which calls upon the collaborative minds of a individuals or group of members to solve or contribute towards solving a problem statement (Paulus et al., 2018). In the report of Bhatti et al. (2020), the term highlights to three distinct elements: crowd, outsourcing, and social web. The aim of these elements is to express the notion of using the combined knowledge and expertise of a vast online community to address problem statement(s) or achieve organisational objective(s). Paulus et al. (2018) reinforces the sentiments expressed by Bhatti et al. (2020) and goes on to elaborate that the use of CS can enable businesses to leverage both internal and external knowledge sources. This, in consequence, broadens their existing knowledge repository and offers additional perspectives on practical challenges, leading to innovative solutions for the organisation.

2.3.2 *The concept of digital transformation defined*

Prior to an organisation embracing a DT journey, the organisation must first understand the concept of Digital Maturity (DM), which is a phenomenon that has come to light from the birth of the digital revolution and the evolution of Industry 4.0 (Aslanova & Kulichkina, 2020). DM is the capability of an organisation to leverage digital technologies therefore, in their attempt to remain competitive and adapt to the ever-changing world (Sakhnyuk & Sakhnyuk, 2020). Gill & VanBoskirk (2016) expanded to state that DM had four (4) dimensions which was used to assess an organisation in their DM position:

Table 2 Dimensions of DM

Source: (Author presentation)

Dimension	Description
Culture	Ability for the organisation to foster an innovative culture amongst employees, allowing them to leverage digital technologies.
Technology	Ability to use and adapt to emerging technologies into the organisations processes.
Insights	Ability for the organisation to leverage the digital technologies to draw valuable and actionable insights.
Organisation	Ability of the organisation to adapt a digital strategy, including the setting up or appropriate governance and execution structures.

Most organisations deem it essential to implement DT irrespective of their field of operations, over the years. Nevertheless, the term has been employed in such a broad and, at times, inaccurate manner that it has become perplexing and has deviated from

its intended conceptual meaning (Gong & Ribiere, 2021). Below is table 3 that provides definitions aimed at elucidating the concept of DT.

Table 3 Definitions of DT

Source: (Author presentation)

Definition	Author / Reference
Process that modifies entities attribute significantly with the goal of enhancing its performance, through the user of various technologies, including data, computation, communication, and networking.	(Mac Cathmhaoil et al., 2021)
DT entails implementation of digital capabilities to foster various changes across societal and industrial spheres.	(Gong & Ribiere, 2021)
The application of technology to significantly increase an organisation's productivity or influence.	(Westerman et al., 2014b)
The application of cutting-edge digital capabilities (such as big data and analytics, social media, mobile, or integrated technologies) to big organisation advances (like boosting CX, optimising processes, or developing cutting-edge organisation models).	(Fitzgerald, 2014)
Utilising digital technologies to facilitate notable improvements across the company, such as enhancing CX or innovating new business models.	(Piccinini et al., 2015)

The adjustments to the way an organisation operate that technological advances may make, leading to modified services, altered structures of operation, or automated procedures	(Piccinini et al., 2015)

2.3.3 *The concept of OP defined*

The general term "performance" refers to the assessment of the outcome in relation to an internal or external point of comparison. There are multiple interpretations of the term OP (Battesini et al., 2021). I) social/broader assessment (which refers to the extended/long-term impact), ii) individual assessment (the achievement of a strategic goal or a set of objectives), and iii) operational (describing how effectively the procedures addressing the needs of the customers and increase productivity). The concept of organisational performance is well-known in the business world, with a particular emphasis on how a company performs in comparison to its rivals (Silva & FERREIRA, 2017).

2.4 Theoretical frameworks and methodology of CS

To establish a systematic approach to CS of ideas, it is essential to implement a structured process that ensures consistent adoption throughout. In the CS process, interaction 1 involves the requestor, who is a person or division within an organisation that presents a problem statement to the broader community via an open innovation challenge, namely., the crowd (Niu et al., 2019). In addition to the key elements, the process can be further broken down into two interactions, with most of the focus placed on interaction one and interaction two, which are both part of the overall CS process (Niu et al., 2019).

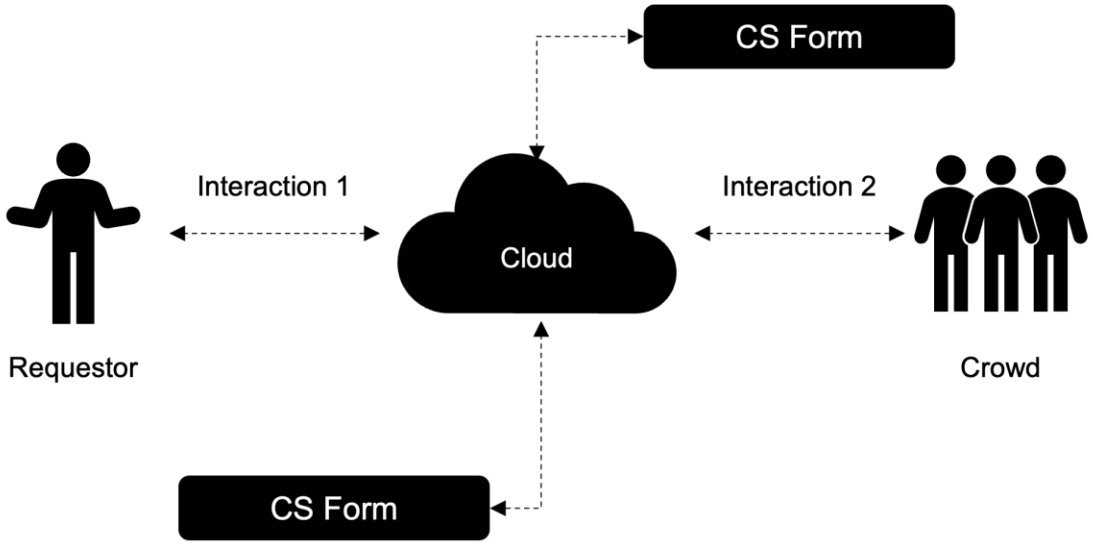

Figure 1 Elements of the CS process and interactions

Source: *(Niu et al., 2019)*

In the CS process, interaction 1 involves the requestor, who is a person or division within an organisation that poses a problem statement to the broader community through an open innovation challenge, namely the crowd (Niu et al., 2019). Interaction 2 involves the crowd, which refers to a large group of people or Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who contribute to the open innovation challenge through ideation periods. This simple process allows the requestor to present a problem statement via a user application/platform for the crowd to provide solutions or contribute to the statement. The selection of a platform is critical because it allows for the ease of ideation and the customisation of functionality to suit the CS environment (Dhinakaran et al., 2021).

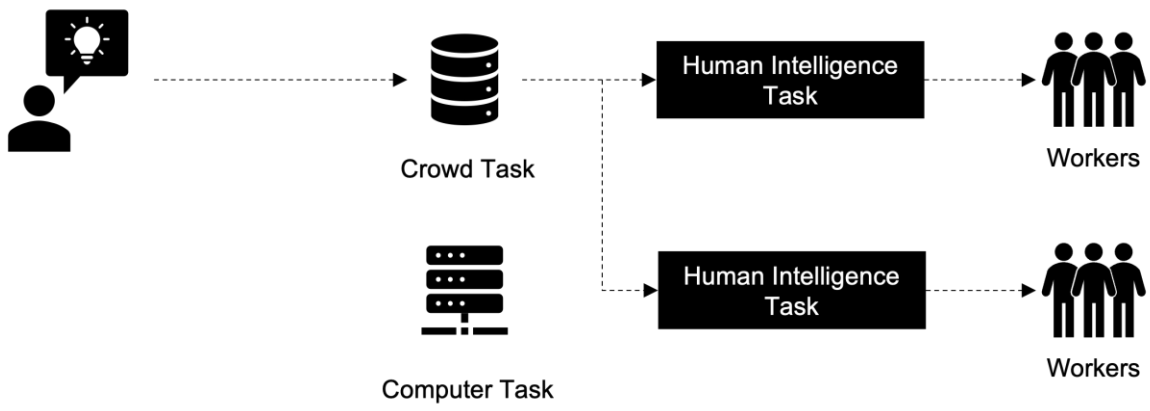

Figure 2 CS Application

Source: *(Dhinakaran et al., 2021).*

The development of the internet, particularly the social web, over the past decade has facilitated the interconnection of technology, ushering in a new era of interconnectivity. This has enabled easy access to the mass intelligence of like-minded individuals.

2.4.1 *Internal CS of ideas*

Much like external CS, internal CS unites individuals with shared interests to address organisational challenges, encouraging employees to actively contribute to the achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives (Villasalero, 2018). The internal CS of ideas provides a platform for employees to propose enhancements in processes, suggest software solutions, or recommend internal controls that streamline their daily operations. Additionally, it fosters the dismantling of silos, fostering heightened communication and knowledge exchange across various divisions (Villasalero, 2018).

2.4.2 *External CS of ideas*

The historical CS model leveraged the notion of open innovation, which brought together intelligence of a group of individuals or users to contribute to or solve a problem (Brabham, 2010). This implies that individuals from all around the world could contribute to the problem statement, regardless of their affiliation with a specific company, even if they were not associated with the organisation.

2.5 CS as an enabler in organisations

2.5.1 *Introduction*

CS has drawn much attention for businesses to leverage the brainpower and creativity of a diverse population to solve problems and drive innovation. CS projects have been used by many successful businesses to improve outcomes and enhance productivity. This essay will explore how CS can benefit organisations using examples from around

the world. however, due to limited internal and African research on CS, extensive case studies will be utilised.

2.5.2 *Developing a holistic ecosystem framework for CS*

In this section, the researcher will employ the framework developed by Niu et al., (2019) as the central framework. The supporting user cases and research articles will complement the framework and its various components. Niu et al. (2019) developed a framework that focused on CS within Small-to-Medium (SME) enterprises; however, the concept can still apply to large organisations in any environment. Developing a CS framework is not an easy task, as it requires multiple components that comprise the overall ecosystem (Niu et al., 2019). Figure 5 below shows Niu et al (2019) holistic framework for building a CS ecosystem that is self-sufficient and can operate as a continuous cycle for ideation and offers.

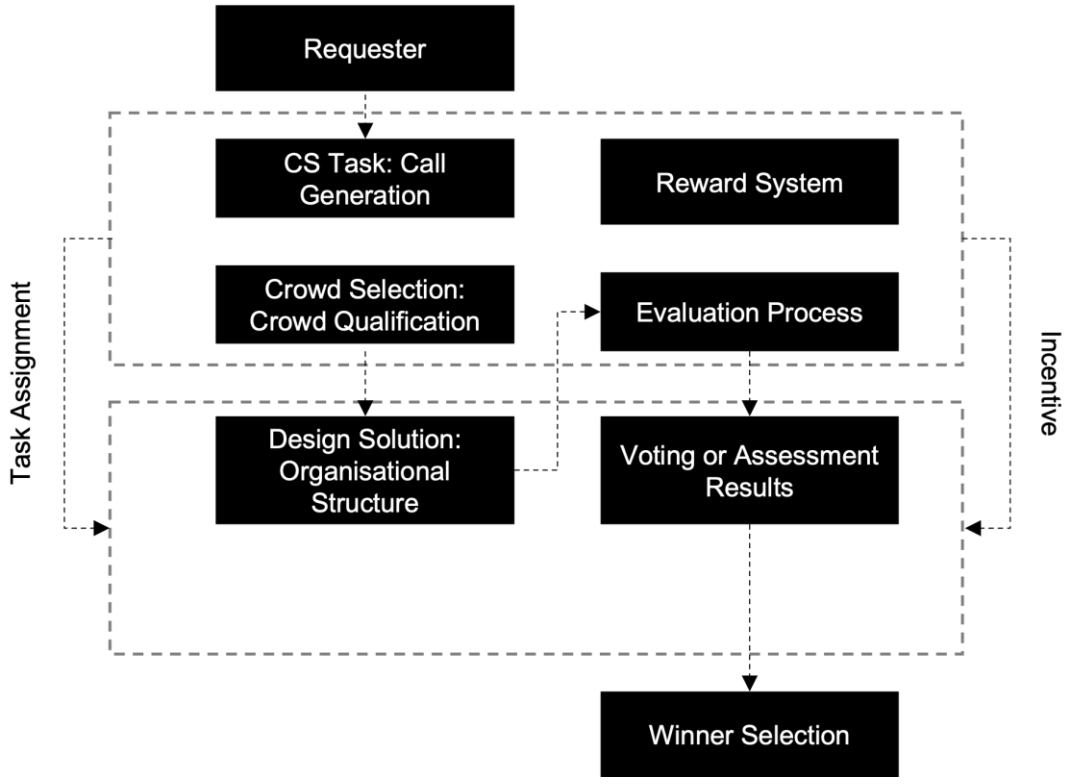

Figure 3 Ecosystem and process of CS

Source: *(Niu et al., 2019)*

Niu et al. (2019) highlighted five key techniques to CS which all form a deep dive into the following supporting literature.

Table 4 Five key techniques to CS

#	Stage or Technique	Description
1	Description	The text description of a task should provide an overview of the task background and its goals. This information is essential to help ensure that the crowd involved in the challenge/campaign understands its purpose and scope of the task and challenge statement.
2	Timeline	The period of each phase is well recorded and integrated into the CS list of activities.
3	Submission Requisites	The guidelines inform the crowd about the acceptable format for submissions, which may include a mock-up of the prototypes, pictures, or examples in the form of videos that meets the needs of the submission.
4	Judging and prices	The qualified submissions will undergo evaluation by a carefully chosen panel of judges. The criteria may vary for each prize, as each prize has its unique and distinct set of specific and concrete criteria for judging.
5	Criteria and disqualifications	The outlay of the parameters can be created based on the goals of the problem statement and the intended individuals, and typically includes three components: 1) the type of concepts being

#	Stage or Technique	Description
		sought, ii) the stage of development being considered, and the evaluation criteria.

Malhotra et al. (2017) conducted four research papers with participants from three large organisations, which a targeted aim of gaining an in-depth knowledge of the intricate process of customer service via CS. Although the study was focused on customer service, the research conducted by Malhotra and colleagues in 2017 demonstrated that combining internal and external CS methods complements the theories presented by Brabham (2010) and Villasalero (2018) regarding the use of internal and external CS. In stage one of the framework, it is critical to define the audience of the challenge/campaign statement who will be involved in the ideation process.

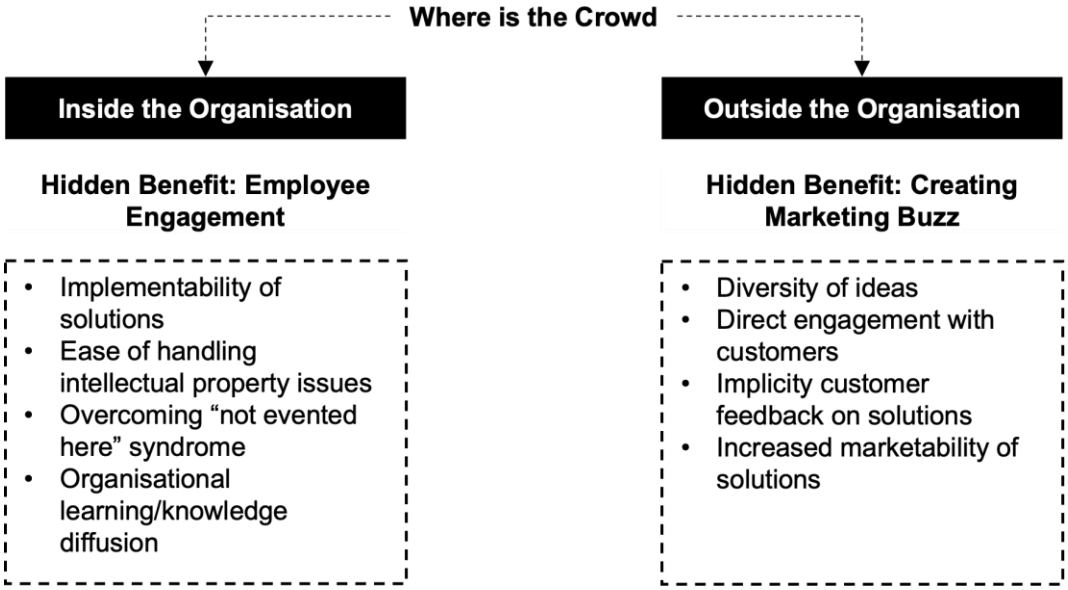

Figure 4 Comparing internal vs external Crowds

Source: *(Malhotra et al., 2017).*

CS is all about bringing both external and internal stakeholders together in one ecosystem. Malhotra et al. (2017) argued that internally CS ideas is more beneficial than externally CS ideas, as it fosters a sense of engagement and camaraderie among

employees, giving them the confidence to make a real difference in the company's performance. To be successful, IC programs need to be well-planned and managed. These efforts should include mechanisms for evaluating and implementing the best ideas, as well as clear participation guidelines and communication strategies (Malhotra et al., 2017). The practice of internally CS of ideas creates an avenue for employees to suggest process adjustments, software solutions, or internal controls that can improve their daily work operations. This approach facilitates the breaking-down of silos and fosters increased communication and knowledge sharing across various departments within the organisation. Villasalero et al. (2018) expressed similar views, emphasising that internally CS ideas allows employees to propose process improvements, software solutions, or internal controls that can simplify their work operations. Additionally, it promotes collaboration and communication between different departments, leading to a more effective sharing of knowledge. Niu et al. (2019) state that although there are multiple ways to CS ideas, the type of forms is critical as it allows for a greater understanding of the type of outputs, which all form the basis for the description section of the framework. Below is a table that breaks down each task into a form of CS of ideas.

Table 5 Type of tasks in CS

Form:	**Description:**
Micro Tasks	CS breaks down mundane tasks into smaller and more autonomous components, making them easier to manage and complete.
Macro Tasks	CS is like classical outsourcing (day-to-day operational ideas).
Challenges	Contests designed to address major inquiries in the fields of science, technology, business, or society.

Form:	Description:
Volunteer Campaigns	Programs aimed at soliciting concepts and contributions that benefit the public.
Contests	Requesting the crowd to work on a project and compensating only the victorious participant.

According to a literature review conducted by Stol et al. (2017) and cited in D. Geiger's book "Personalised Task Recommendation in CS Systems" (Springer, 2016), a Fortune 500 company's findings introduced the concept of various forms of CS. The study identified two dimensions to the taxonomy of CS of ideas: emergent vs. non-emergent and homogeneity vs. heterogeneity. The first dimension refers to whether the ideation value is derived from a group or community of problem solvers (emergent) or from individual contributions (non-emergent). The second dimension pertains to whether the contributions are fundamentally different in nature or similar (Stol, Caglayan, et al., 2017).

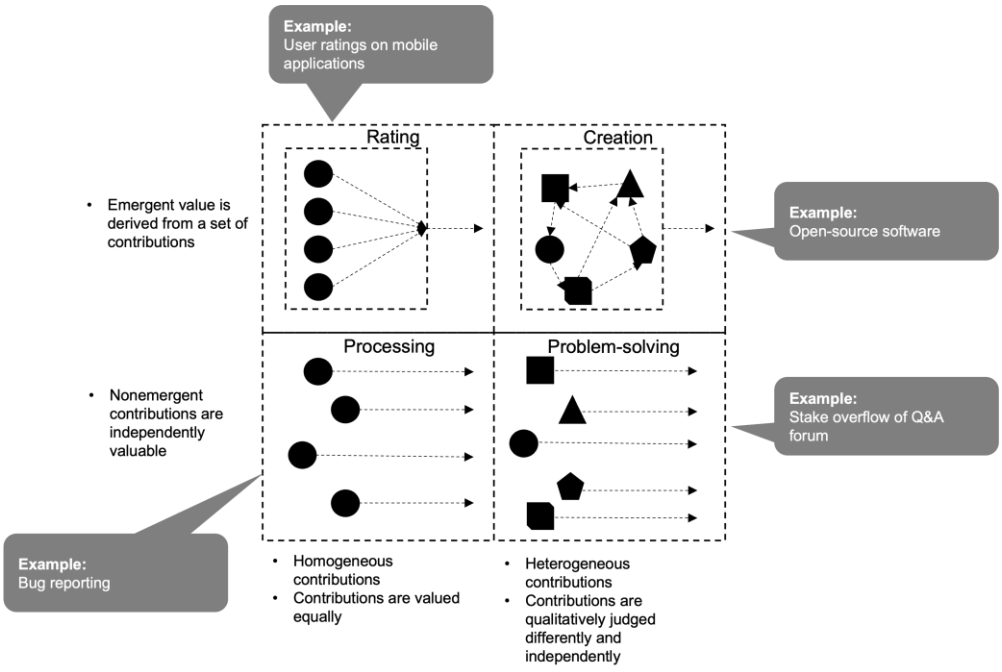

Figure 5 Taxonomy of CS tasks

Source: *(Stol, Caglayan, et al., 2017)*

According to Stol et al. (2017), there are four noticeable categories of crowd contributions: ratings, process, heterogeneous contributions, and problem solving. The first type, "ratings," involves allowing the crowd to rank and rate ideas based on their perspectives or relevance to the challenge statement. The second type, "process," enables the crowd to provide feedback on the ideation process based on their experiences, thus contributing to the process. The third type, "heterogeneous contributions," is a collection of various contributions that generate something of value when combined, such as ideas submitted to a challenge or campaign statement. Finally, "problem solving" involves evaluating individuals or groups of ideators based on their skills and rewarding them accordingly in a heterogeneous process.

Below is a table from Zeng et al. (2017) that highlights key motivational types and factors that align with CS mechanisms. One of the most critical motivators for CS is "reward," as humans are primarily driven by some form of recognition or compensation, be it monetary or non-monetary in form. Different theories drive the various motives behind CS mechanisms (Zeng et al., 2017).

Table 6 Motivational Types and motivators that align with CS mechanisms

Motivational Type	Motives
Extrinsic motivation	Reward (monetary value)
Internalised extrinsic	Recognition, acquiring new skills, seeking new job opportunities, building relationships, improving self-efficacy, goals achievements and gaining social recognition
Intrinsic motivations	Fun, curiosity, exploratory and addition

According to Flores et al. (2020), CS is a process of gathering unconventional ideas by utilising the collective intelligence of diverse groups of people who share their ideas to achieve a common objective or goal. One example of this is a hackathon, which involves bringing together like-minded individuals to collaborate on solving a specific problem within a given timeframe. Similarly, Naude et al. (2021) discussed how the Zindi data science content platform in Africa, with over 26,000 registered users, utilises the power of CS to obtain data solutions. Their paper, "CS Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Findings from a Machine Learning Contest," highlights the importance of using CS to solve complex problems and promote innovation (Naudé et al., 2021).

Zimnat, an insurance company in Zimbabwe, sponsored a challenge on the data science competition platform Zindi where participants were required to predict which insurance products current customers would be interested in next. The winning team would receive a cash prize of US$2,500 for their creative answer. With 29 insurance products available, participants had to create a recommender system that suggested options based on the individual's profile.

In a research paper by Naude et al. (2021), the authors held in-depth interviews with members from three different companies, and while the case study was focused on the automotive industry, the principles discussed are applicable across industries. Company X's primary objective was to create a CS initiative called "Gets Innovate," which initially focused only on CS ideas from two locations, Egypt, and India. The success of this initiative led Company X to expand it to multiple other locations (Naudé et al., 2021)

According to Naudé et al. (2021), the success of Company X's CS initiative called "Gets Innovate" was attributed to its implementation in various locations within the brand network. As a result, several projects were completed by the end of 2019, providing tangible proof that organisations that incorporate CS for innovation tend to be more productive and successful in accomplishing critical projects (Naudé et al., 2021).

2.5.3 *Proposition 1:*

The success of developing a CS framework is dependent on the careful consideration of multiple dimensions.

It is evident from the material that CS has become an increasingly popular and effective approach for organisations to engage with their customers (both internally and externally), leverage their creativity, and achieve their product development goals (Niu et al., 2019). however, organisations must not forget that the (requestor, crowd, task, and the platform) must work collaboratively with each other in their drive towards build a self-sustaining CS ecosystem (Niu et al., 2019).

CS has emerged as an effective way for organisations to engage with their customers, both internally and externally, to leverage their creativity and achieve their product development goals. Niu et al. (2019) emphasised that developing a CS framework is a complex process that requires careful consideration of multiple dimensions to ensure its success. They highlighted that the four main components of CS, namely the requestor, crowd, task, and platform, must work in synergy to build a self-sustaining CS ecosystem. Therefore, it is crucial for organisations to understand the interdependence of these components to fully harness the benefits of CS (Niu et al., 2019).

2.6 Theoretical frameworks and methodology of DT

The revolution of digital technologies has directed the disruptive power that has caused platform) must work collaboratively with each other in their drive towards building. The integration of digital capabilities into every part of an organisation has brought about a significant transformation in the market and the economy. This transformation has resulted in a fundamental change in the way businesses create and deliver value to their clients (Vial, 2019). Organisations must implement and adapt to the fast-paced changes of the market brought about by digital technologies and to address these quickly to the ever-evolving needs and preferences of their clients. This requires having a flexible and agile workforce that is equipped with the required skills, knowledge, and tools to innovate and implement new digital strategies. Failure to adapt to these changes can result in losing out on market opportunities and becoming irrelevant in the long run (Vial, 2019).

DT refers to the application the use of advanced digital capabilities, such as mobile devices, data, integrated systems, mesh computing, Internet of Things (IoT), and social

media platforms or CS platforms, to automate and optimise key business processes and functions (Fitzgerald, 2014). Organisations use digital technologies not only to replace or supplement the sales of traditional goods with services however,

to satisfy the demands of consumers by providing innovative solutions and collecting information about how they interact with goods and services. By leveraging digital capabilities, businesses can obtain a better comprehension of their customers and create more personalised experiences that meet their needs and preferences. Additionally, digital technologies enable companies to optimise their operations and increase performance, allowing organisation to pivot more quickly to changing market conditions and customer demands (Wulf et al., 2017).

Leveraging the use of cutting-edge capabilities, DT encompasses the use of big data analytics, Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, Augmented Reality (AR), robotics, cybersecurity, and many other technological tools. These technologies have significantly transformed the way organisations interact with stakeholders and gain insights into their operations (Kirillova et al., 2021).

Assessing an organisation's current DM is an important first step before embarking on a DT journey. This evaluation can help identify areas where digital capabilities can be utilised to improve operations, CX, and other key aspects of the business. Additionally, understanding the current level of DM can help determine the scope and scale of the transformation required, as well as the level of investment and resources needed (Berghaus & Back, 2016).

An overall framework that can be applied to assess an organisation's DM Model (DMM) consists of four dimensions. The first dimension is culture, which refers to whether the organisation empowers its employees to be innovative and adaptable to digital changes. The second dimension is technology, which involves the organisation's use and willingness to adopt digital technologies into its daily operations. The third dimension is organisation, which focuses on whether the organisation has a digital

strategy and implementation framework in place to support its DT efforts. The final dimension is insights, which is concerned with whether the organisation leverages its internal and external data capabilities to draw insights that inform its digital decision-making process. By evaluating their DM across these four dimensions, organisations can gain an in-depth knowledge of their current digital capabilities and identify areas for improvement (Gill & VanBoskirk, 2016). Once an organisation can resonate with the four dimensions, the organisation must now classify themselves in to four maturity segments.

Table 7 Levels of DM

Level of Maturity	Maturity Segment	Characteristic Behaviour
High	Differentiators	Utilising internal and external data sources while being customer-focused
Average	Collaborators	Cantered on minimising organisational silos
Medium	Adapters	Invest in the development of talents and the infrastructure
Low	Sceptics	At the beginning of their transformation journey

Westerman et al. (2014a) proposed a different approach for assessing an organisation's level of DM, using a framework that involves two dimensions and four archetypes. The first dimension, digital intensity, measures the depth of digital technology integration within an organisation. The second dimension, digital breadth,

measures the range of digital technologies utilised across various departments. Based on the levels of digital intensity and breadth, organisations are categorised into one of four archetypes (Westerman et al., 2014a).

Table 8 The two dimensions and DM archetypes

Source: *(Westerman et al., 2014a)*

Digital Enablement and Adoption	**Leadership and Intent**
Beginners	• Leadership has no buy-in or are unsure of the value of digital technologies. • Intent to deploy limited experiments to test the concept. • Poor/limited digital culture
Conservatives	• Digital vision is existing, however, still in its infancy states. • Limited advanced digital capacities are mature. • Matured digital governance procedures in place however across silos. • Drive towards building digital skills and culture from within
Fashionistas	• Multiple matured digital capabilities (such as social media, mobile enabled) however, in silos. • No group-wide vision or direction • Limited coordination activities • Siloed digital culture
Digirati	• Matured group-wide digital vision and direction • Excellent governance across silos • Digital capabilities have assigned measures of success.

	• Matured digital culture

(Vial, 2019) developed a framework that summarises all the various main components of a DT ecosystem journey, into a process map that shows the end-to-end journey based on eight (8) key building blocks. The framework summary, highlights the area of digital technologies play a central role within and can be used as a map to alter processes and operations to ensure value paths are created (Vial, 2019).

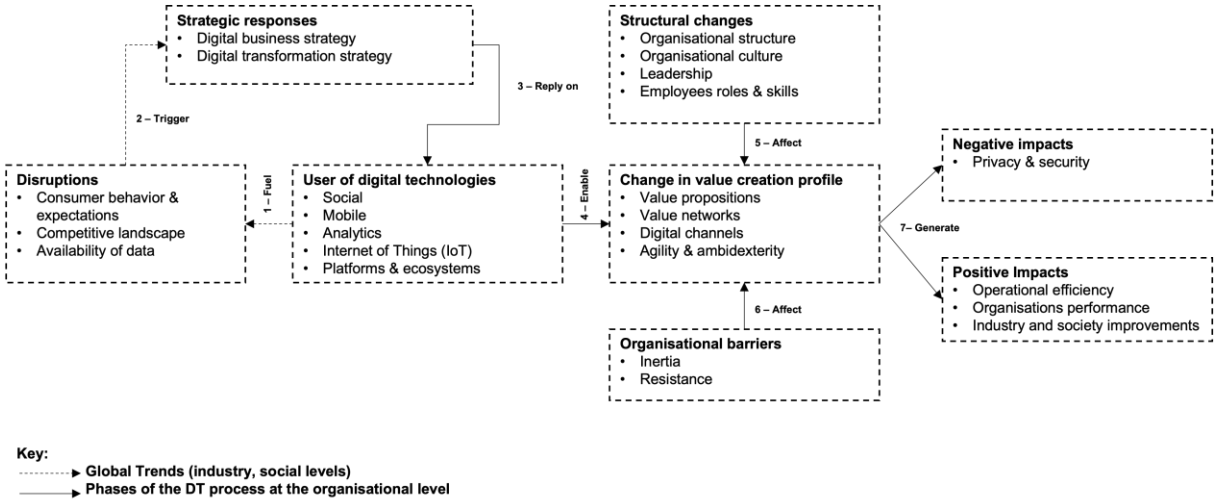

Figure 6 End-to-end DT ecosystem framework

Source: (Vial, 2019)

2.7 CS as an accelerator to DT in organisations

2.7.1 *Introduction:*

This section will explore how CS has become an effective tool for organisations to accelerate their DT efforts and its role in the process. CS allows companies to gather suggestions, ideas, and feedback from a large group of people, making it a powerful tool in the rapidly changing digital landscape. By leveraging the collective intelligence of their employees, customers, and even the public, organisations can gain valuable insights and ideas that can drive innovation and transformation.

2.7.2 *The value of employees*

While technology forms a crucial role in DT, it is critical to recognise that employees are equally valued to the various elements. DT requires a comprehensive strategy that includes employees, processes, and technology advancements to achieve sustained transformation. Organisations should not only focus on adopting new technologies however, on developing their employees' digital skills and fostering a culture of innovation to ensure successful DT (Grotherr et al., 2019).

While technology is an essential part of DT, it's not enough on its own. For sustainable transformation, organisations need to focus on developing a comprehensive strategy that includes people, processes, and technology. It's crucial to recognise that changes cannot be made solely through technological advancements. A successful DT requires a holistic approach that considers the organisation's people and processes in addition to technological advancements.

Grotherr et al. (2019) highlighted that organisations need to concentrate on the human aspect of DT and encourage collaboration among employees to ensure the sustainability of DT efforts. Removing organisational and cultural barriers is crucial in this regard. Idea CS is one strategy that can be used to bridge the gap between DT and technology. It allows staff members to contribute to the organisation's goals, share common experiences and success stories, and make significant contributions to the DT process. By encouraging employees to participate and contribute to the transformation process, organisations can create a culture of innovation and creativity that drives sustained DT efforts (Grotherr et al., 2019).

While there are potential benefits to using idea CS for businesses, there is a lack of understanding of effective methods for implementing and managing such systems. Additionally, there is limited knowledge on how sociotechnical evidence to support IC has evolved over time (Grotherr et al., 2019). By promoting employee involvement and enabling idea CS, organisations can foster a culture of innovation and collaboration, leading to increased employee engagement and ultimately driving business success. Organisations need to establish policies, rules, and initiatives to support the implementation and operation of idea CS systems, to maximise their potential benefits (Grotherr et al., 2019).

2.7.3 *The value of providing superior customer service*

A group of researchers from Westerman et al. (2014b) interviewed 157 executives from 50 businesses with various levels of DM. Their goal was to understand how different organisational levels could accelerate DT and enhance customer service (Westerman et al., 2014b). The researchers found that one bank has adopted a corporate Twitter account successfully to immediately resolve customer issues, problems, and ideas in real-time, removing the need for customers to physically visit a branch. The entire client experience was improved because of this endeavour. With the help of this input, the bank was able to start a two-way conversation with its clients, allowing management to pinpoint and fix any internal operational problems while increasing efficiency in the areas that mattered most to clients. Westerman et al. (2014b) provides guidance and insights to help other firms hasten their DT considering their findings.

In an interdisciplinary study they did in 2022, Yin et all (2022) and colleagues looked at foideal CS systemsof DT. According to the survey, selecting a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) is essential for businesses starting their journey toward digital transformation. The CDO should be horisontally and vertically integrated into the organisational structure to engage with employees at all levels and focus on the current task. This makes it possible for the CDO to spearhead DT initiatives and maintain contact with diverse teams inside the company (Yin et al., 2022).

2.7.4 *The value of the introduction of a Chief Digital Officer*

For the successful incorporate a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) ideas into an organisation's technological infrastructure, the study stressed the significance of collaboration between the CDO and Chief Technology Officer (CTO). The CTO and their team oversee commercialising and integrating the finished product into the organisation's technical infrastructure, even though the CDO may be adept at developing prototypes or Minimum Viable Products (MVPs). This process entails assessing the solution's technical viability, analysing the technical requirements for implementing the solution, and confirming compliance with security and compliance standards (Yin et al., 2022). As a result, the CDO and CTO must work well together for the project to succeed.

Yin et all (2022) recommends creating a special committee that focuses on all strategic decisions relating to Technology-Enabled Research (TER) to guarantee that TER is a crucial part of the organisation's DT. The CDO, CTO, and a representative of the Digital Centre, a distinct business that specialises in social data integration and integrated marketing, make up the committee known as the Digital Steering body. The goal of the Digital Steering Committee is to guarantee that TER remains a priority and gets the support and money it requires. A variety of TER-related topics are examined by the committee, which makes sure that the TER programme is in directly in line with the overarching aims or objectives of the organisation.

2.7.5 *Proposition 2:*

Leveraging CS as an initiative both internally and externally is a key factor to accelerating DT in multiple organisations.

The upfront content clearly shows that CS can serve as a direct accelerator of DT in organisations, regardless of their size or location. There are numerous approaches for organisations to realise their desired objectives by utilising CS to improve their systems, procedures, and offerings to be more digitally oriented and to promote the adoption of DT. Nevertheless, to become a true industry leader, it is essential to sustain the DT journey by incorporating employees, processes, and technological advancements.

2.8 Theoretical frameworks and methodology of OP

For an organisation to achieve it overall strategic objectives, a strategic plan must be created which will outline all the various success factors such as, divisional performance scorecard, business unit performance scorecard, team performance scorecard and many more (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018). Strategic plans are written to define the organisations goals, objectives and various approaches that will be implemented for the strategy to be realised. Strategic plans generates a sense of shared purpose among the members and guides the decision-making process and resource allocation (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018). Perez-Alvarez (2018) cited from a well-known author P.C. Smith, M. Goddard in the article “Performance management

and operational research: a marriage made in heaven?" that a strategic plan as depicted below, helps an organisation to break-down each component and identify key tasks that need to be done to achieve its desired goal. It comprised of three steps: i) convert the business strategy into measurements to be taken from the relevant processes using indicators ii) analyse the measurements iii) begin to implement or action based on the achievements of the organisation's goals and strategic intent (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018).

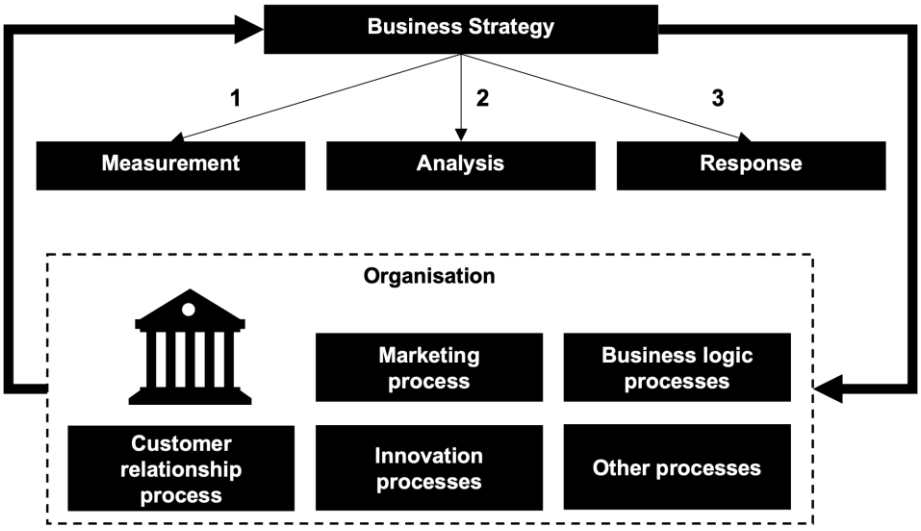

Figure 7 Performance Management Process

Source: (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018)

The operations performance theory or balance scorecard emphasises the importance of continuous improvement and can measurement by the implementation of KPIs. KPIs are used to measure the overall effectiveness of an organisation in terms of its performance in relation to its strategy (Chesney, 2017). KPIs can be defined as a collection of a set of metrices that concentrate on a organisations performance in areas that are most important for the organisations current and future survival (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018).

Pérez-Álvarez (2018) proposed the establishment of a method that involves KPIs by creating a comprehensive business plan that delineates all the organisation's objectives, which are subsequently translated into an operations plan containing the

specific goals, sub-tasks, and deadlines necessary to accomplish those objectives. Sections of a business plan explains all the set of activities that need to be actioned or taken into account by the organisation and explains how to achieve them (Pérez-Álvarez et al., 2018). Generally, KPIs are quantifiable indicators that measure the performance towards an intended result, for example, there are high-level indicators such as an overall organisations performance, and low-level KPIs which focused on a divisions performance, effectiveness of processes, and an employee's performance (Trendowicz et al., 2023). Employees are one of the most critical drivers that allow organisations to achieve their desired targets or goals and the assignment of KPIs towards their name is critical (Trendowicz et al., 2023). A simple process to assign a balance score card to an employee, i) measurement / goal ii) KPI iii) Key Resource Indicator (KRI) and an assignment iv) process or set of activities.

2.9 CS to improve OP.

2.9.1 *Introduction*

Organisations can use CS as a potent instrument to access the combined creativity and intelligence of a sizable group of people. Concept generating, issue solving, and feedback gathering are just a few examples of the many ways that CS can be applied. The gathering of concepts to enhance an organisation's OP is one use of CS. Organisations can get new views and creative solutions to operational problems by asking suggestions from a wide set of people.

While there has been some research on the use of CS to increase operational effectiveness, there have been few studies on how it might be applied in the context of African organisations. This can be because some regions of Africa have limited technology accessibility and relatively low levels of digital proficiency.

It is essential to delve deeper into the potential benefits and challenges of using CS to improve OP in African organisations, this article will draw on international examples. By examining case studies from different parts of the world, common themes can be identified that may be applicable in the African context.

2.9.2 *Using CS to collect customer insights:*

During a comprehensive set of in-depth interviews with senior managers and executives from eight Business-to-Business (B2B) organisations Zahay et al (2018) cited that CS both internally and externally has been instrumental to the overall development of New Product Development (NPD) for businesses. CS enabled the organisation to provide input and feedback into the designing process as customers (externally) can contribute to the design process, encompassing urgent client demands to be met, for example, features of a product or service that will be most useful to customers. CS, as opposed to conventional market research techniques, can be a more economical and effective way to acquire customer feedback, according to Zahay et al (2018). Traditional market research frequently entails paying agents to conduct surveys or focus groups on the field, which may be expensive and time-consuming. In contrast, CS enables businesses to get opinions and insights quickly and cheaply from a huge number of people.

2.9.3 *Using CS to collect to improve OP:*

Wilson et al (2018) conducted a research process to explore the connections between open innovation and novel operations. As part of the study, the researchers conducted interviews with 15 business executives. The results of the study showed that all 15 executives recognised a clear connection between open innovation and OP (Wilson et al., 2018). According to Wilson et al. (2018), Firm A was the middle-broker in a CS project involving a client and a large community of contributors. The main goal of the project was to collect data from Firm A, clean it, and label it in a way that could be easily understood and used by the client.

The data collection and processing method implemented by Firm A through CS proved to be highly effective and cost-efficient. By utilising a large community of contributors, the firm was able to collect and process data quickly while maintaining high quality standards (Wilson et al., 2018). Furthermore, the use of CS allowed for SMEs to participate in the project and leverage their skills to contribute to the success of the project. This not only improved the OP of Firm A however, provided opportunities for SMEs to earn rewards for their contributions. Overall, this approach to data gathering

process showcases the potential benefits of leveraging CS to improve Operational Efficiency (OE) and enhance data processing capabilities.

2.9.1 *Proposition 3:*

Leveraging CS as a method to address operational issues can lead to improved OP, beyond the benefits of traditional efficiency improvement methods.

In today's twenty-first-century environment, traditional methods of enhancing OE may no longer be enough. Leveraging the group of intelligence of the crowd may be a powerful tool to solve operational issues and improve performance. By tapping into the knowledge and diverse perspectives of a broad range of individuals, including customers, employees, and external stakeholders, organisations can gain fresh insights, generate creative ideas, and develop more efficient solutions to problems related to their daily operations.

2.10 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.10.1 *Theoretical Framework*

The Diffusion of Innovation theory (DOI), conceived by Everett Rogers will be used as the theoretical framework that unpins this study. The DOI Theory is a social science framework elucidating the process through which novel ideas, technologies, products, or innovations disseminate and gain acceptance among individuals and groups in a society as time progresses (Dearing & Cox, 2018). Diffusion represents a social phenomenon observed within a community when individuals become aware of and respond to an innovation, such as a novel evidence-based approach to enhance or advance healthcare. In its classical concept, diffusion revolves around the dissemination of this innovation through specific channels over time among members of a social system. As people learn about and adopt the innovation, it spreads organically throughout the society, shaping the way it impacts individuals and groups within the community (Dearing & Cox, 2018). A common S-shaped curve is used to show the initial rate of adoption, and how it progresses as time goes on during the lifecycle of the phenomenon.

There are five (5) distinct categories based on their timing of adoption, these groups are commonly known as Innovators, Early Adopters, the Early Majority, the Late Majority, and Laggards. Each category represents a different stage in the adoption process, reflecting the varying degrees of readiness and willingness to embrace new innovations (Rogers et al., 2014).

Table 9 Innovation adopter categories

Source: (Kaminski, 2011)

Category	Description
Innovators – Technology enthusiasts	• Short adoption period. • Considered "risk takers." • Proficient in applying technical knowledge and handling uncertainty. • Serve as change agents within their organisation or industry. • Attracted to high-risk, high-reward projects. • Eager to test and pursue innovation initiatives.
Early adopters – Visionaries	• Opinion leaders and drivers of thought leadership. • Natural desire to be trendsetters and role models within their expertise area. • Respected by peers and considered successful. • High-risk, high-reward takers. • Motivated to revolutionise their competitive industry.
Early Majority – Pragmatists	• Interact frequently with peers, serving as opinion leaders later in the process. • Prefer evolutionary changes to drive productivity. • Not fond of competition however, influenced by colleagues in the industry. • Avoid risk and opt for proven technologies from others.

Category	Description
	• Focus on staying within budget. • Embrace a slow, steady approach with a need for user-friendly training.
Late Majority – Conservatives	• Prone to respond to peer pressure within the company or industry. • Reactive to economic changes. • Sceptical and cautious in their actions. • Highly cost-sensitive, demanding bullet-proof solutions before implementation. • Rely on trusted advisors to guide the process. • Often influenced by laggards in their decision-making.
Laggards – Sceptics	• Isolated from opinion leaders and tend to look to the past as their point of reference. • Suspicious of innovation and hesitant to embrace change. • Decision-making process is very lengthy due to adherence to tradition and limited resources. • Only invest in technology when all other alternatives have been exhausted.

Once organisations have clearly understood the s-curve and its characteristics, it is important to understand the rate of characteristics of innovation which helps to unpack the rate of adoption from individuals and organisations (Lundblad, 2003). The below, table helps to break-down each of the various characteristics of innovation.

Table 10 Characteristics of the innovation

Source: (Lundblad, 2003)

#	Characteristics	Description
1	**Relative advantage**	Looks at the perceived improvement that an innovation offers compared to the existing alternatives it aims to replace or enhance. The more significant this perceived advantage is, the quicker the innovation is likely to be adopted by individuals or groups. In other words, the extent to which people believe that the innovation brings valuable benefits compared to what they are currently using influences the speed of its adoption.
2	**Compatibility**	Is the degree to which the innovation aligns with the experiences, values, and needs of the individuals or groups who are considering adopting it. When an innovation is highly compatible with the existing practices and beliefs of potential adopters, it facilitates a smoother and quicker adoption process. In essence, the greater the compatibility between the innovation and the adopters' existing context, the faster the adoption is likely to occur.
3	**Complexity**	Is the level of difficulty or simplicity associated with understanding and using an innovation. Innovations that are relatively easy to grasp and implement are generally adopted more quickly than those that are perceived as complicated or difficult to understand.

#	Characteristics	Description
4	**Trialability**	Is an essential characteristic of an innovation in the DOI, refers to the degree to which potential adopters can experiment with and evaluate the innovation before making a full commitment to adopt and implement it.
5	**Observability**	Is the key element in the DOI, refers to the extent to which the results, benefits, or usage of an innovation are visible and easily noticeable by others within a social system.

2.10.2 *Organisation application*

The DOI theory can be highly relevant and applicable to organisations, including FSPs. In the context of FSPs, the theory helps to understand how innovations, technologies, or practices are adopted and integrated into their operations. Organisational culture, as part of the theory allows for an innovative culture to be formed by undertaking various interactions promoting people to champion innovation, open communication lines and expands from one department to another over time (Makovholo et al., 2017). Many FSPs are undergoing DT to improve their services, operations, and CX. The theory can guide the implementation of digital innovations within the organisation and identify potential barriers that might slow down or hinder the adoption process (Makovholo et al., 2017). Most organisations in this era are focusing on building OP by leveraging resources most effectively as possible. The DOI theory, can improve productive, resource allocation and training and development to achieve their strategic goals via OP (Alyoubi & Yamin, 2021).

2.11 Conclusion of literature review

The comprehensive review of the literature underscores a crucial shift from conventional innovation pathways to more open, collaborative approaches through CS. This shift is particularly pertinent for FSPs in Africa where traditional models have proven inadequate in addressing strategic and operational issues. CS, as the literature reveals, offers a bridge to enhanced DM, DT, and OP core elements underpinning the first research question. The second research question, has enhanced the first research question by providing evidence of how CS has impacted their drive towards DT, DM, and OP.

In addressing the third research question, the literature suggests that some African FSPs are not merely participants in the digital arena but are shaping it through the adoption of best practices. These practices, which include engaging collective intelligence and fostering open innovation ecosystems, have positioned them as potential leaders within the African financial sector. Moreover, CS's role in cutting costs, enriching CX, and uplifting product or service standards emerges as a recurrent theme.

However, to harness CS's transformative power, FSPs must navigate an intricate landscape of implementation, marked by a need for robust digital infrastructure and a clear framework to manage intellectual property, privacy, and quality control concerns. The potential of CS to reconfigure organisational innovation and problem-solving strategies is substantial, signaling a paradigm shift for FSPs that can adeptly apply these insights.

In synthesising these findings, it is evident that CS is not merely an operational tactic but a strategic imperative for FSPs in Africa seeking to thrive amidst digital upheavals. This study's foray into how FSPs utilise CS to solve crucial strategic and operational challenges, and whether they have incorporated leading practices to achieve and sustain industry leadership, will provide valuable theoretical and practical contributions. As FSPs in Africa navigate the journey towards increased DM, DT, and OP, this research will offer insights into the dynamics of CS as a tool for fostering innovation, growth, and a competitive edge.

2.11.1 *Proposition 1:*

Developing a CS framework is no easy task, as it requires multiple dimensions that carefully need to be considered for the process to be a success.

2.11.1 *Proposition 2:*

Leveraging CS as an initiative both internally and externally is a key factor to accelerating DT in multiple organisations.

2.11.1 *Proposition 3:*

Leveraging CS as a method to address operational issues can lead to improved OP, beyond the benefits of traditional efficiency improvement methods.

CHAPTER 3. Research Methodology

This chapter presents the ethical considerations of the study, outlines the methodologies employed for data collection and analysis, and elucidates the criteria used to assess the findings. Within the academic realm, research holds a paramount position. Scholars emphasise that the research process involves various stages, encompassing the identification and redefinition of problems, formulation of hypotheses for potential solutions, data collection, drawing conclusions, and testing the consistency of those conclusions with the developed theories.

Research methodology is an essential component because it offers a structured framework for doing research and collecting solid information to address the research propositions. An outline of the research technique that will be used to examine the connection between idea CS, DT, and OP is highlighted in this chapter.

3.1 Research Approach

The research methodology employed for this study will adopt a standard qualitative approach, involving structured interviews for the data acquisition process. The decision to use a qualitative research approach was made based on the nature of the research topic and the limited existing knowledge. The feedback obtained from the interviewees will serve as the foundation for testing, validating, and enhancing assumptions previously posited by other authors to align with the current and updated context.

The choice of a standard qualitative research methodology, specifically utilising structured interviews for data acquisition, is justified by several key considerations. Firstly, the nature of the research topic demands a nuanced understanding that goes beyond quantitative metrics. Qualitative methods, such as structured interviews, provide a platform for in-depth exploration of the subject matter, allowing for a richer and more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. The decision to employ a qualitative approach is influenced by the limited existing knowledge in the field. The research topic may be relatively unexplored or not thoroughly covered in the existing literature. Qualitative research allows for the exploration of new perspectives, the identification of emerging themes, and the generation of insights that may not be captured through quantitative means alone.

Structured interviews are chosen as the data collection method due to their ability to provide a systematic and standardised approach while still allowing for flexibility in probing and follow-up questions. This approach ensures that relevant information is gathered in a consistent manner, enhancing the reliability and validity of the findings.

The feedback obtained from the interviewees will serve as a crucial foundation for testing, validating, and enhancing assumptions proposed by other authors. This iterative process not only contributes to the refinement of existing theories, however, ensures that the research findings are grounded in the current and updated context. By incorporating the perspectives and experiences of individuals through qualitative interviews, the study aims to provide a more nuanced and contextually relevant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

3.2 Research design

Research design encompasses both theoretical and methodological purposes. The theoretical purpose involves either theory development or theory testing, aiming to contribute to existing knowledge or validate established theories. Methodological purpose prioritises generalisability, precision in control and measurement, and authenticity of context. Generalisability focuses on applying research findings beyond the specific study sample or setting (Turner et al., 2017).

The qualitative research design aims to obtain profound understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and challenges associated with CS in the African financial service industry. The research process commenced with an extensive literature review, established a theoretical foundation by identifying key concepts and frameworks relevant to CS, DT, and OP within the financial service sector in Africa. This literature review served as a solid background and guide to information collected and used for analysis purposes.

Data collection will primarily involve conducting interviews using semi-structured format with key stakeholders, including senior management, employees, and experts from financial service providers across Africa. Participant selection will be in accordance with their direct experience and participation in CS initiatives and DT efforts within their respective organisations. The interview format will be designed to

explore the perspectives of participants and probe deeper regarding the benefits, challenges, and outcomes associated with CS in facilitating DT and enhancing OP.

This study will employ a grounded theory-based design, involving the systematic collection and analysis of data from interviews (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The grounded theory approach will follow an iterative process, with the researcher aiming to identify patterns, themes, and underlying concepts related to how Customer Service (CS) has influenced Digital Transformation (DT) efforts and Organisational Performance (OP) within the African financial services sector. The interviews will center on understanding the experiences, challenges, and successes of institutions in adopting CS practices and the observed impacts on their overall DT journey and operational efficiency.

3.3 Data collection methods

The primary information for this study will be aimed gathered through online Microsoft Teams interviews using a semi-structured interview guide format. The semi-structured interviews (as highlighted in Appendix) that will be conducted with key stakeholders, will explore their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the impact of CS on DT and OP.

3.4 Population and sample

3.4.1 *Population*

Sample population will consist of individuals who have extensive experience with CS, DT and OP initiatives both internally and externally within organisations across the African continent. To form part of the interviewee list, the authors will leverage their existing relationships within their respective company.

3.4.2 *Sampling and sampling method*

Qualitative research methods typically employ smaller sample sizes compared to quantitative research methods. This is primarily because qualitative research aims to delve deeply into understanding specific phenomena, focusing on the intricacies of

meaning and exploring the "how" and "why" aspects of a particular issue, process, situation, subculture, scene, or set of social interactions (Dworkin, 2012). By prioritising depth over breadth, qualitative researchers seek to uncover rich insights and heterogeneous perspectives, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of complex social phenomena. The smaller sample sizes facilitate in-depth data collection and analysis, enabling researchers to thoroughly examine and interpret the intricacies and nuances of the subject under investigation (Dworkin, 2012).

The present study will employ theoretical sampling, a strategic approach commonly utilised in qualitative research. The essence of theoretical sampling lies in the deliberate selection of participants or data sources, guided by emerging theoretical insights and concepts (Sandelowski, 1995). Unlike random sampling, theoretical sampling is driven by theoretical considerations rather than chance. Its purpose is to collect data that aids in the development or refinement of theoretical categories, relationships, and concepts that emerge during the ongoing data analysis.

Understanding of the term it very important as it allows users to better understand a qualitative sampling exercise, and allows the author to select the informants and methods to obtain the data (Gentles et al., 2015). The interviewee will be selected based on their contribution towards the subject and their position within the organisation, the selected sample size will range from 15 respondents who hold the position of senior manager and above, in their relevant fields.

The nature of the research topic, focusing on the role of CS in FSPs, demands a thorough exploration of individual cases within the financial services industry. By selecting a sample size of 15 participants, the researcher can ensure a more in-depth examination of individual experiences and perspectives. This approach is particularly advantageous when seeking to understand the unique and diverse ways in which FSPs have adopted CS practices and its subsequent impact on their DT and OP (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, a smaller sample size allows the researcher to dedicate more time to each interview, fostering a deeper connection with the participants. Building a strong rapport with interviewees is essential in qualitative research, as it encourages open and candid responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By taking the time to understand the intricacies

of each participant's perspective, the researcher can extract valuable and nuanced information from the data, contributing to a comprehensive and meaningful analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018)

Adopting a sample size of 15 interviews aligns with the goals of this qualitative study, which seeks to explore the complexities and challenges faced by FSPs in the context of DT through CS. By carefully selecting a smaller yet focused sample, the researcher can gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon, achieve data saturation, and engage in thorough analysis, leading to robust and insightful research findings.

The below table will break-down the list of interviewees based on their position, role in the topic and knowledge.

Table 11 List of the position and number of interviewees

Source: (Author Presentation)

Position	**Number of interviewees**
CEO & Co-founders	2
CTO	1
Head of innovation	2
Innovation Consultant	1
Senior Managers	5
Consultant	5

There are several benefits listed below to having a small sample size during a qualitative study:

1. **In-depth understanding:** By employing a small sample size, researchers can allocate more time and attention to each participant, facilitating a thorough exploration of their experiences, perspectives, and insights. This approach fosters the collection of comprehensive and nuanced data, enabling in-depth analysis (Boyce & Neale, 2006).
2. **Time and resource efficiency:** Qualitative research endeavours, such as conducting interviews, transcribing data, and analysing qualitative data, demand significant time and resources. Utilising a small sample size allows researchers to manage these tasks more efficiently, ensuring meticulous analysis within a manageable timeframe (Marshall et al., 2013).
3. **Saturation point:** In qualitative research, the concept of data saturation is important. Saturation arises when the collection of information does not provide new or significant insights. In some studies, saturation may be achieved with a small sample size, indicating that further data collection is unnecessary (Boyce & Neale, 2006).
4. **Intensive exploration:** A small sample size enables researchers to conduct more intensive and focused exploration of the research topic. They can engage in prolonged discussions with participants and even observe contextual factors, leading to overall understanding of the investigation (Marshall et al., 2013).

3.5 The research instrument.

The chosen method will involve the utilisation of semi-structured interviews conducted virtually via an online medium. The interviewing process will be semi-structured, meaning that a predefined set of questions will be prepared in advance. however, the researcher will have the flexibility to seek further information or request clarification on certain responses provided by the participants. The addendum contains a comprehensive list of unrestricted questions, designed to enable the interviewer to gather valuable insights, personal encounters, and opinions from the interviewees. By utilising an open-ended structure, these questions provide an opportunity for the interviewers to delve deeper into various topics discussed during the interview.

3.6 Procedure for the data collection

The researcher will select interviewees based on established working relationships with individuals who have been professionally engaged with the researcher. These existing relationships will serve as gateways to arrange 45-minute meetings via an online channel, such as MS Teams or Zoom.

The process for conducting the interviews will be as follows:

- Contacting potential interviewees to determine a suitable date and time based on their availability.
- Sharing meeting invites one week prior to the scheduled meeting with the intended interviewee.
- Providing a list of semi-structured questions before the meeting, allowing the individuals to familiarise themselves with the content and reflect on the topic.
- Requesting participants to sign a consent form before the online meeting, ensuring compliance with ethical guidelines.
- Informing participants that the meeting will be recorded to accurately capture all comments, opinions, and suggestions shared during the session.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The data analysis section of this research study will utilise an inductive thematic analysis approach to analyse the qualitative information gathered from online interviews. This approach allows for the exploration of common themes and patterns that emerge directly from the interviewees' responses, without imposing any preconceived categories or academic theoretical frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process begins with the researcher becoming immersed acquainted with the information by understanding the recorded interviews, noting down the questions asked and the corresponding answers. The interviews will then be transcribed and organised using a comprehensive qualitative study software call “NVivo”. NVivo is a valuable software tool, offering the capability to import and support various formats and data types. It proves helpful in efficiently sorting, organising, and analysing qualitative data (Dhakal, 2022).

Next, the researcher will category's common themes and patterns that emerge from the data. This involves examining the transcribed data, looking for recurring ideas, concepts, or experiences. The researcher will code the data, assigning labels to segments that relate to specific themes.

Once themes have been identified and noted down, the researcher will interpret the data within each theme, exploring the connections and relationships between different segments. This interpretation process aims to attain a profound comprehension of the participants' perspectives and experiences.

To enhance the validity of the research, the secondary findings and literature will be used to analyse the primary data collected. This will involve comparing the emerging themes with existing theories, concepts, and research findings. By triangulating the data with the secondary sources, the researcher can draw well-informed conclusions and insights (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Overall, the data analysis process will involve a systematic and rigorous examination of the qualitative data through thematic analysis. This will allow for a comprehensive comprehension of the participants' viewpoints and facilitates the extraction of meaningful findings that contribute to the research aim.

3.8 Limitations of the study

Due to time constraints, this study will primarily utilise a qualitative research method. It is crucial to acknowledge that the absence of quantitative data may limit the generalisability of the findings.

3.9 Transferability and dependability

3.9.1 *Transferability*

The term "translatability" describes how easily research results can be adapted to different situations or locations. The ideas and knowledge gleaned from the qualitative research can nevertheless offer useful information for comparable environments or organisations, despite the study's potential limitations in terms of quantitative data and

generalisability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The study will ensure that all information provided during the online interviews will conform to the ethics code, and no sensitive data will be disclosed without the consent of the interviewee.

3.9.2 *Credibility*

Credibility pertains to the reliability and believability of the research findings, particularly in qualitative research process. Establishing credibility is vital to ensure that the outcomes truly reflect the opinions and views of the individuals or participants involved in the study. To validate the finding expressed during the online interviewees, the author will conduct a triangulation exercise to ensure the comments, insights and feedback can be supported by secondly data. Secondary data will comprise of desktop research, management consultancy publications and academic journals.

3.9.3 *Dependability*

The dependability of the findings emphasises the unified format of the outcomes throughout all of the interview process, to ensure there is a standardisation process and all posed discussions are similar to each other (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To ensure reliability, a systematic data analysis process will be implemented, allowing future researchers to replicate this study. It is important to acknowledge that the dynamic nature of the subject matter may introduce changes that could affect the ability to replicate this study accurately.

3.10 Demographic profile of the interviewees

The demographic characteristics of the interviewees for the thesis topic will depend on the specific research objectives and target population. however, a diverse range of participants will be sought to capture various perspectives and experiences related to the impact of CS on DT and OP. Both genders will be considered for the sample base, non-dependent of their role or positions.

3.11 Ethical considerations

All participants will be given with a clear exposition of the research study's objective, and their participation will be contingent upon signing a consent form. The researcher will ensure the maintenance of participants' anonymity, referring to them as participant 1, 2, 3 to uphold confidentiality. It will be emphasised that identified participants have the option to decline participation or exclude themselves from the study at any point in time.

Permission letters will be drafted and completed in accordance with the requirements set by the University of Witwatersrand. To maintain confidentiality, the organisation's name will remain undisclosed in the final report. Instead, it will be referred to as a "traditional bank" or a "large financial institution" to ensure anonymity. The researcher will adhere to academic integrity principles by signing the plagiarism declaration form and providing a Turnitin report to demonstrate that no plagiarism has occurred in the study.

CHAPTER 4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The data analysis section of this research study will utilise an inductive thematic analysis approach to analyse the qualitative information gathered from online interviews conducted over a period of two months. The process leveraged a well know qualitative analysis tool “AtlasTi” which was used determine themes based on the outputs of the interviews, to conduct correlation and strategies to determine linking themes to the three main research questions, and sub themes with verbatim answers to the multiple questions asked during the interviews.

4.2 Participants demographics breakdown

Data were collected from 12 participants using structured interview questions. In this section, participants were described by their experience and involvement in CS across various industries. The operational and strategic activities they were involved in were described. The primary three research questions will be explored through a detailed presentation of the analysis and related findings, structured under each for clear understanding.

Table 12 Participant descriptions

Source: (Author presentation)

Code	Age	Role	Work experience
P1	55	Group head of strategy at an SA insurance company	31
P2	44	Private innovation consultant	19
P3	24	Works a fintech - Nigeria	4
P4	41	Previous position was an MD of a biotech start-up	14
P5	40	CEO at an insurance investment company SA	17
P6	40	Senior manager, beverage manufacturing company SA	8
P7	34	Non given	10
P8	NS	Head of a fintech - Nigeria	NS
P9	43	Pharmaceutical Project Management Office team leader	2
P10	NS	Chief Technology Officer, at a London-based software company	10
P11	45	Chief Digital Officer, African fintech	23
P12	44	Principal product owner - automotive company SA	13

In terms of age, they ranged from 24 to 55 years. P1 and P5 were from the insurance sector. P3, P8 and P11 were from the banking and fintech sector. P2, P4, P6, P9, P10 and P12 were from various industries. In terms of experience, they ranged from 8 years for P6 and 31 years For P1. Selected participants wished not to provide certain personal information, therefore during the analysis Not Stated (NS) has been used.

4.3 Research Questions: Analysis Breakdown

In Chapter 4, the author presents a structured approach that interlaces the multitude of questions surfaced during the interview phase, subsequently organising them in line with the central research questions and weaving in the sub-questions. This systematic methodology is pivotal for sustaining a logical sequence, advancing from formulating research questions to the thorough analysis that substantiates the discussions and findings articulated in this chapter and Chapter 5. By adopting this strategy, the author constructs a resilient framework that bolsters the credibility of the conclusions and augments the reader's comprehension of the investigative journey.

Moreover, this chapter will shine a light on the interconnections between the thematic frameworks extracted from the interview data and the primary research objectives. Through a careful process of classification and linkage, the author lays down a firm basis for the analytical dialogue. The ensuing examination is deeply entrenched in empirical data, enabling a comprehensive debate that adeptly addresses the research objectives and makes a significant contribution to the existing scholarly literature.

Table 13 Emergent Themes

Source: (Author accessed from AtlasTi)

Themes	Research questions
CS and operational performance outcomes	(1) How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to **solve strategic** and **operational issues**. (2) How has the use of CS of ideas **increased** their **drive towards** DM, DT and OP?
CS and strategic outcomes	(1) How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to **solve strategic** and **operational issues**. (2) How has the use of CS of ideas **increased** their **drive towards** DM, DT and OP?
Practices, tools and frameworks	(3) Have they adopted any **best-in-class practices** to attain their desired objectives and become a leader in the African FSPs industry?
Risk and change management in CS	(1) How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to **solve strategic** and **operational issues**. (2) How has the use of CS of ideas **increased** their **drive towards** DM, DT and OP? *(proposed SUB-Question: What dynamics are involved in CS)*
Participant description and experiences	(1)How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to **solve strategic** and **operational issues**. (2) How has the use of CS of ideas **increased** their **drive towards** DM, DT and OP? (*proposed SUB-Question: What is the understanding on CS, DT and OP among FSP managers)*

In the pursuit of dynamics surrounding FSPs in Africa, this study set out to explore a mosaic of themes that have emerged through rigorous qualitative analysis using AltasTi. The research questions guiding this investigation including scoping the realms

of CS, operational performance outcomes, strategic outcomes, practices, tools, frameworks, risk and change management in CS, and participant descriptions and experiences.

The focal point of inquiry revolves around how FSPs in Africa utilise CS ideas to address both strategic and operational challenges. The first research question seeks to understand the mechanisms employed by FSPs in leveraging CS ideas, shedding light on their approaches to solving issues that span the strategic and operational spectrum. The second research question explores the tangible impacts of these CS ideas on the FSPs' pursuit of increased DM. DT and OP.

proposed SUB-Question: What is the understanding on CS, DT and OP among FSP managers)

This research study navigates the landscape of practices, tools, and frameworks adopted by FSPs to attain their desired objectives and establish themselves as leaders in the African FSP industry. It aims to uncover best-in-class practices that have been embraced to shape strategic outcomes and drive operational excellence. An exploration into risk and change management in the context of CS is undertaken. The proposed sub-question seeks to unravel the dynamics involved in CS, unravelling the complexities and intricacies that shape the decision-making processes of FSPs in Africa.

This research study ventures into participant DT, and OP among FSP managers. The proposed sub-question within this theme seeks to provide insights into the perceptions and comprehension levels of FSP managers regarding CS, digital transformation, and operational performance.

Through this thematic journey, the researcher aimed to not only answer the posed research questions however, to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions that constitute the intricate landscape of financial service providers in Africa, fostering a comprehensive understanding of their strategies, challenges, and achievements.

The themes with the associated question are presented below:

4.3.1 *First Research Question Analysis: How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to solve strategic and Operational issues.*

To fully understand research question one, interviewees displayed a wealth of knowledge, that focus on setting the foundational basics to CS ideas, to solve both strategic and operational issues, as well as its impact towards increasing DM, DT and OP.

4.3.2 *Foundational knowledge and basics to leveraging CS.*

Table 14 Can you share any previous experience or involvement in CS initiatives or DT journey within your current or previous organisation?

Source: (Author presentation)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Banking/fintech	m	m	m		m		m	m	m	m	m	m
Insurance				m	m					m		m
Life insurance					m							
Retail					m							
Not specified												

M= explicitly mentioned

Most of the participants had engaged in CS within the mainstream banking sector. This was both within the South African and international banking space. Several had been involved in CS in the insurance sector and these were P4, P5, P10 and P12. P5 had CS experience within the financial technology (fintech) industry.

4.3.3 *Participants involvement in CS by activity*

Table 15 Participants involvement in CS by activity

Source: (Author presentation)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Change management				m						m		
General organisational problems	m											
Internal innovation		m		m								
Digital innovation			m		m		m	m	m			m
Cultural transformation				m								
Business start-up					m							
Customer problem research											m	

M= explicitly mentioned

P1 had been involved in CS to resolve specific "selected problems within the organisation."

Most participants had been involved in CS for digital innovation and transformation. These included P3, P5, P7 and P12. Taking the P7's words as a general example they run a CS platform with DT as a main goal:

"In my previous life, we ran multiple innovation journeys that was run within banks in Africa. The CS platform was the centre of this process, which resulted in digital transformation" (P7).

P2 and P4 were involved in other forms of internal innovation that were not necessarily digital in nature as P2 described themselves as being part of *"a strong internal innovation program"* within their organisation while P2 mentioned their involvement in *"open innovation projects." P4 had been involved in CS activities designed to bring "cultural transformation" to their organisation.*

P5 had experience in using CS to support business start-ups and innovation. P11 had worked on projects "focused on trying to understand problems, that our customers are dealing with."

P4 and P10 had been involved in CS to support organisational change management. P10 described that they were involved in *"CS-oriented change management programs."*

P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P10 and P12 had been involved in internal CS involving organisational members. P3, P5 and P8 had experience in external CS while P9 and P11 did not specify.

Table 16 What is your understanding of CS, DM, DT and OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Idea gathering	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	
Gives feedback						m			m	m		
Skills gathering									m			
Delegation of work												m
Internal	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m			m	m
External	m	m	m	m	m	m		m			m	m
Large/wide									m		m	

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Openness							m	m				
Diverse			m	m			m	m			m	m
Problem-solving goal			m		m							m
Digital initiative goal								m				
OE								m				
Project-focused goal									m			m

The participants defined, described, or explained CS from their understanding and experiences. The key concepts in their definitions are captured in Table 17 below. Further, the table breaks down their definitions and descriptions into processes, features, and goals of CS.

In terms of process, CS involves the gathering of ideas or information which is the basic view shared by all participants except P12. P9 believed that it gathered actual "skills", besides just ideas and improved OE through saving "time and money".

Ideas and knowledge can be gathered internally or externally from a group or network of stakeholders who include *"internal employees or external networks, customers, suppliers and the general public." P2.* P9 stated that this could include "people of the community, all parts of the business, or all parts of the globe." The crowd is therefore open, wide, and diverse, in the participants' views:

"CS is about tapping into the ecosystem, and you can define it in however many of those you want to tap into the ecosystem that might be your employees, might be your clients, might be advisers, in the insurance context, it might be any other stakeholders.

And a good compromise the crowds and the thinking to the ecosystems wisdom and their contribution to solving a particular problem that you might have." P1

P8 stated that:

"CS, in the context of digital transformation and operational performance, is a practice that involves harnessing the wisdom and ideas of a wide range of people. It's about tapping into the collective intelligence of a diverse group, often facilitated through online platforms or open invitations for participation. The primary objective of Crowd Sourcing here is to address the challenges of integrating digital technologies and optimising operational performance." P8

In terms of the goals or motives behind CS, it was associated with the problem-solving goal (P3, P5, P8, P12) and the project-focused goal (P9, P12). P8 associated it with the OP goal and the digital initiative goal in the above extract.

P12 who gave a unique view of CS believed that CS means:

"You are essentially delegating work to a group of people to accomplish some sort of task. Like solving a problem for instance. These people typically come from different backgrounds and areas of experience to provide their own unique perspective or angle on a problem" P12.

The key concept behind CS was therefore the generation of ideas from a wide, open source of internal and external contributors. Minor differences were on whether the crowd was on the primary goals of the process, specifically problem resolution versus general project management.

Table 17 What is your understanding of CS, DM, DT and OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

Participants	Definition of DM
P1	Using digital tools to achieve measurable organisational goals
P2	Evolving from basic digital use to strategic use
P3	Applying digital systems for profit and competitive advantages
P4	Building a robust digital foundation for growth and evolution
P5	Business strategy convergence with digital systems effectiveness and measurability
P6	Using digital tools effectively across the organisation
P7	Transitioning from traditional to digital solutions
P8	Embracing digital technologies in all aspects of the organisation
P9	The degree of digital implementation, with a focus on culture
P10	The extent to which an organisations operations have moved towards the digital
P11	Measurability of how digital systems create strategic advantages
P12	Not specified

DM was associated with the use, acceptance, and application of digital technologies in operational and/or strategic areas of an organisation. It was described as a measure, level, extent, or degree indicating an element of evolution from a manual system towards a fully digitalised one. however, maturity was not only determined by the level of use, however, by acceptance as well.

"Digital maturity…for me is within an organisational context, it would be the degree to which the organisation has progressed to the point where it actually uses digital in millions of use cases to really like, you know, achieve organisational goals" P1.

"Digital maturity is I think like a business's journey from learning how to use tools to becoming a master craftsman. It's about evolving from basic digital adoption to wielding technology in an expert and strategic way." P2

"I think, it would be the measure of how effectively an organisation uses digital technologies to create new and modified existing processes, culture and or customer experiences to meet changing evolving markets, business and market, you know, requirements." P11

Descriptive that highlighted evolutionary growth included "Progressed (P1), evolved (P2), "transitioning" (P5) and "Understanding" (P3).

Table 18 What is your understanding of CS, DM, DT and OP

Source: (Author presentation)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Re-engineering/creation	m									m	m	m
Optimisation		m										
Integration			m				m					
Convergence					m							
Digitising/transformation						m		m		m	m	m
Modification									m		m	
Automation										m		m
Customer satisfaction	m	m			m			m	m		m	
All organisation aspects			m		m							
Operational goals								m		m		
Culture											m	
Innovation								m	m			
Adaptation								m				
Efficiency	m	m					m	m				

DT, as a concept was associated with a change from the manual towards the digital and encompassed words and descriptive associated with positive change. These were

creation, (P1, P10, P11, P12) optimisation (P2), integration (P3, P7), convergence (P5), digitisation (P6, P8, P10, P11, P12) modification (P9, P11), automation (P10, P12). Thus, while some words used related to change from one state to another, others highlighted improvement and increased complexity in digital systems use. These were words like convergence and integration. The main goals behind DT were *"more efficient at what you do and provide better customer service, customer satisfaction"* (P2), and competitive edge-creation by moving *"ahead of the curve in the fast-paced world of technology."* It had broad organisational and strategic goals and was applicable to almost all organisational areas (P3, P5). Some of the definitions that captured most of the concept below were from P8, P12 and P9:

"Digital transformation is about embracing digital technologies in every facet of an organisation, leading to a fundamental shift in how the organisation operates and adds value to its customers. The purpose of this transformation is multi-faceted, aiming to enhance efficiency, elevate the quality of customer experiences, foster innovation in products and services, and adapt to the demands of the digital age. Key technologies like cloud computing, data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation play a crucial role in this process." P8

"Digital transformation on the other hand is as the term suggests transformation from a "non-digital" state to a "digital state". This can mean so many things really, however, I would venture to say that common transformations would involve process automation and moving away from paper-based business processes to name a few." P12

"Digital transformation, it's a process, it's a digital-first approach, so using digital technologies to create new business processes and culture or business models or alternatively, using digital technologies to modify existing business models and customer experiences." P9

Generally, it is a complex process that includes moving into the fourth industrial revolution as highlighted by P8.

Table 19 What is your understanding of CS, DM, DT and OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Efficiency	m		m	m				m		m	m	
Effectiveness			m	m				m		m		
Security	m											
Goal achievement		m	m			m						m
Optimal outcomes	m						m					
Profitability											m	
Process improvement		m				m	m		m			
Specific functions						m						
Measure/metric										m		m
Stability					m							

OP was associated with bringing efficiency (time and cost) and effectiveness to an organisation through improving (P6), optimising (P1, P7), securing (P1), stabilising (P5) and organisation's "day-to-day processes' (P2). These views are widely captured in the participants' definition with P8 stating the following:

"Operational performance, on the other hand, assesses an organisation's capability to carry out its day-to-day activities efficiently and effectively. It's about how well an organisation manages its resources, delivers its products, or services, meets customer

expectations, controls costs, and continually refines its operations to stay competitive and achieve long-term success." P8

"Operational performance is how do we how do we improve on specific Functions within the organisation, so operations could be maybe you're improving. How you gather inputs and produce outputs, how do we make that better within an organisation or how do we produce results at a faster rate" P6

Efficiency resulted "in profitability" and the achievement of organisational goals (P3, P12) and improvement in functions and activities (P4, P5, P6). It affects "operating models", "operating structure" (P1), "day-to-day processes" (P2), "activities" (P3), and processes (P3, P4). P10 looked at OP as a metric of efficiency and effectiveness rather than as a function:

"Operational performance, my understanding is it's the extent to which the, the, how you measure, the extent to which you are operational, operational, effective and efficient." P10"

This was shared by P12 who took it to be a *"score-based"* activity that focuses on measuring how well an organisation's operations were going. OE was therefore broadly associated with the coat and time efficiency and effectiveness of organisations of their processes and functions with the overall goal that included the attainment of business strategies or profitability.

Table 20 Can you share specific instances of CS initiatives that have been implemented within your current or previous organisation to drive DT and improve OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

Participants#	Activity/Role	Quotation
P1	Ran a program called MMIgine to enhance DT posture	"We ran a program called MMIgine, was an example of a CS initiative which looked at enhancing our digital transformation posture."

Participants#	Activity/Role	Quotation
P2	Implemented Basement a program to optimise internal processes.	“Looking at outside suppliers who could analyse your data more efficiently and more effectively than could be done internally because of the level of expertise”
P3	Gained insights from employees to drive DT and OP	"The deployment of a CS program that looked at gaining insights from the employees which was specifically to drive digital transformation and operational performance within an insurance organisation."
P4	Used CS to get ideas from employees to solve business issues	"So, we can an innovation journey initiative, that leveraged CS to obtain ideas from employees
P5	Deployed an innovation journey using a CS platform	“An innovation journey initiative, that leveraged CS to obtain ideas from employees”
P6	Implemented an innovation journey with Access Bank	“An innovation journey within our division, which leveraged a CS platform to help businesses get solutions, from you know employees, people around the business and management”
P7	Ran some programs at insurance companies in South Africa	"We ran a number of those approaches as well, you know, at insurance companies within South Africa”
P8	Leads the Basement CS initiative at Access Bank	“To encourage all staff members of the bank to submit innovative ideas that have the potential to enhance operational efficiency and improve the customer experience”

Participants#	Activity/Role	Quotation
P9	Was involved in two CS initiatives at Access Bank Nigeria and Innovation Group South Africa	"I was involved in two CS initiatives one was Access Bank Nigeria, and the other was Innovation Group, South Africa"
P10	Was involved in three CS initiatives that focused on obtaining ideas from the crowd	"As I mentioned I was involved in three CS initiatives which primary focused on obtaining ideas from the crowd within those specific businesses."
P11	Implemented a program called Basement and built the African FinTech Foundry	"We implemented a CS program called Basement to crowdsource ideas, and then built the African FinTech Foundry to help build those ideas outside the bank"
P12	Used CS to source idea for improving efficiency or effectiveness	“CS was used as a method to source ideas that linked to strategic themes in client, those strategic themes always ended up relating to some form of improvement in efficiency or effectiveness”

P1 Ran a program called MMIgine used to enhance DT in the insurance industry. P2 and P8 were involved in CS using a platform called Basement, a project which the latter led. P3 and P4 used CS to get views from employees on how to improve OP. P5 was involved in the deployment of CS as part of an organisational “innovation journey” while P6 was involved in the implementation of this in Access Bank. P7 ran some CS programs at insurance companies in South Africa. P9 was involved in two CS initiatives at Access Bank Nigeria and Innovation Group South Africa. P10 was involved in the collection of ideas from the public. P11 implemented a program called

Basement and built the African FinTech Foundry while P12, like P10, used CS to source ideas for improving efficiency or effectiveness.

Table 21 What were the primary goals or objectives that these initiatives to achieve?

Source: (Author presentation)

Category	Goal	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Innovation	Foster a culture of innovation								m				
	Encourage experimentation	m											
	Develop innovative solutions								m			m	
Business processes	Problem resolution								m				
	Improve efficiency and effectiveness			m									
	Modernise banking processes			m									
	Drive digital transformation								m				

Category	Goal	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
	Optimise services and processes									m			
	Reduce costs and increase profit						m						
Employee	Create a place for employee contribution		m										
	Increase employee engagement and morale								m				
	Enhance employee experience					m							
	Increase employee retention				m								
Customer	Improve brand image and market perception					m							
	Understand customer											m	

Category	Goal	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
	problems and needs												
	Stay ahead of the competition		m										
	Enhance CX								m				m

In terms of innovation and creativity goals, P8 mentioned that the CS initiatives fostered a culture of innovation by encouraging *"all staff members to* think creatively and contribute innovative ideas" P1 thought its goal was to encourage experimentation in an environment where employees were "all staff members to think creatively and contribute innovative ideas" afraid to fail". P8 and P11 asserted that the initiative's main goal was supporting any form of innovation.

Another set of goals related to business process improvement. These were problem resolution (P8), Improving efficiency and effectiveness (P3), modernising banking processes (P3), driving DT (P8), optimising services and processes "services or processes" (P9) and reducing costs and increasing profit (P6).

Another set of objectives focused on employees. CS was considered a program that had various positive outcomes for employees. These included creating *"a place for employees to help contribute to the overall view"* (P2), increasing employee engagement and morale *"By recognising and rewarding employees for their contributions"* (P8), enhancing employee experience (P5) and overall increasing employee retention (P4).

The fourth set of objectives is related to customers. CS helped to Improve brand image and market perception or "how we show up in the market" (P5). It supported the process to "identify, to understand the problems that customers were dealing with" (P11) which was a goal, market competitiveness (P2) and enhancing the overall CX

(P8). According to P8 it "significantly improves operational efficiency, enhances the customer experience".

Table 22 How do you manage and evaluate the quality of CS ideas to ensure their effectiveness in driving DT and OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

Criteria/Method	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Team selects ideas	m					m	m					
Crowd rating											m	m
Ease of implementation/feasibility		m				m		m		m		
Cost/resources/budgets		m	m	m						m		
Customer benefit		m										
Synergies		m										
Impact			m					m		m		
Risk			m					m				
Clear evaluation criteria			m					m				
Concept clarity/concept roof			m					m				
Market viability				m								
Alignment with strategy				m	m	m			m			
Innovation engagement				m								

Criteria/Method	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Strategic and financial models					m		m	m	m			m
Innovation metrics							m					

Several methods and tolls were discussed, and these were not necessarily mutually exclusive. 1, 6 and 7 mentioned the use of teams to manage and evaluate CS ideas. 11 and 12 mentioned that whole crowds could be such evaluators, however, this needed systematic tools they would use for this ranking:

"One approach is to use the crowd to rate ideas and have a tool that can aggregate and rank these ideas, identify the top ranked ideas and evaluate them" 12.

Ideas could be evaluated using Ease of implementation/feasibility (2, 6, 8, 10), Cost/resources/budgets (2, 3, 4 and 10) and Customer benefit (2). Other criteria were Synergies (2), Impact (3, 8, 10), Risk (3, 8), Clear evaluation criteria (3, 8) and Concept clarity/concept roof (3, 8). Most of these are captured below:

"OK, so for each of these ideas we developed clear evaluation criteria for each of these ideas, we had the relevant teams to look at and just get to work on it. We did the roof of concept, so it's like a small focus group we applied to solutions to see how far the ideas would be before we used them in the bank properly. We did proper assessment of the impact and risk analysis as well as cost benefit analysis to ensure that solutions were more expensive and in applying what we already have" P3.

Market viability (4), Alignment with strategy (4, 5, 6, 9) and Innovation engagement (4). Various strategic and financial models that included "structured problem statements business model canvas and design thinking process among others could be used.

4.3.4 *Second Research Question Analysis: How has the use of CS of ideas increased their drive towards DM, DT and OP?*

Once having investigated the fundamentals, and how CS is used to solve strategic and operational issues, the second research question focus on how CS of ideas has increased their drive towards DM, DT, and OP.

Table 23 Did the implementation of these CS initiatives result in improvements in efficiency, quality, flexibility, innovation, or customer responsiveness?

Source: (Author presentation)

Result	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Efficiency	y	y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Quality	y	y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	n
Flexibility	y	y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y
Innovation	y	y	Y	y	y	y	y	y	n	y	y	y
Customer response	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y	y

The participants were generally positive that CS had resulted in improvements in efficiency, quality, flexibility, innovation, or customer responsiveness.

Improvements in efficiency

Almost all participants agreed that CS improved efficiency in their organisations. While some simply agreed with the question, others gave examples and references to this improvement. P7 and P8 stated that:

"Yes, there were improvements in efficiency, such as reducing the time to open an account from 5 days to 1.5 days" (P7).

CS helped streamline internal processes and optimise workflows, leading to increased operational efficiency (P8).

Improvements in quality

As an example of how quality had improved, R8 referred to the observed product quality improvements in their organisation:

"CS created an environment where employees were encouraged to propose solutions that enhance the quality of products and services…This resulted in delivering a higher standard of products and services to customers" (P8).

In contrast, P12 doubted any improvements in quality outputs. In their opinion "*The quality of the CS initiative outputs (i.e., generated ideas) were not particularly improved." This was attributed to "the constrained scope of experience and understanding of the average employee and how clearly the problem statement was defined."* Thus, poor training and skills capacity in the employees and poor problem definition were considered too weak to positively impact CS quality. The same participant however believed that the other facets (efficiency, innovation, responsiveness, and customer response) had resulted in organisational improvements.

Improvements in flexibility

In terms of flexibility, P8 mentioned that their bank had become *"more adaptable and responsive to changes in the industry."* P4 shared a view that the leadership in the organisation was able to be their organisation had become more flexible when *"changing of mind or changing of strategy."*

Improvements in innovation:

According to P9, there were no improvements in innovation even though it was widely supported and promoted. This was because of poor implementation methods:

"So, it's that methodology. So. The implementation of these CS initiatives results in improvements. No, because they were being implemented incorrectly" P9.

This contrasted with P8 who saw it as bringing “ground-breaking solutions to industry-specific problems”.

Improvements in customer responsiveness

Many participants like P6 believed that CS had improved customer responsiveness. They later stated that it had a positive effect “around the innovation and customer responsiveness” of their organisation. According to P8 had evidently supported an improved sense of customer satisfaction through its capacity to *“enhance the bank's ability to respond to customer needs.”*

Overall, P1 believed that while there were improvements across the five facets, this was not very impressive: *“Like I said, definitely...it wasn't OK, clearly measurable improvement.”* P2 cited that the improvements were there however, they were not easy to measure effectively: *“It did result in an improvement in all those categories, the harder thing is to measure exactly what improvement, because it's for example team collaboration in the way of innovation.”*

Table 24 What were the specific benefits or improvements observed in your organisation's OP because of implementing CS for DT?

Source: (Author presentation)

Benefits/Improvements	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Innovation and market position	m										m	
Customer-centric solutions									m			
Customer acquisition and engagement						m	m					
Cross-functional collaboration									m			

Benefits/Improvements	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12
Speed and efficiency				m		m						
Power and ownership					m							
Cost efficiency		m				m						
Process efficiency and performance metrics									m			
Adaptability and responsiveness									m			
Democratisation of Decision-Making								m				
Employee engagement and collaboration			m									
None										m		m

The specific benefits were innovation and market position highlighted by P1 "We only implemented one idea, however, it led to significant improvements in innovation and market position." and P11, customer-centric solutions by P9 and customer acquisition and engagement by P6 and P7. These were related to customer satisfaction and market growth.

On the business and operational side, P9 highlighted the benefit of "cross-functional collaboration, breaking down silos and improving communication and coordination between teams. The same participant mentioned Process Efficiency and Performance Metrics and Adaptability and Responsiveness as realised specific benefits.

P4 and P5 highlighted speed and efficiency as benefits while P2 and P6 talked about cost savings. In this regard, P2 stated that they had " achieved cost savings of 5-10 million through simple ideas submitted in a CS challenge."

In relation to employees who were part of the crowd, P8 and P3 mentioned the democratisation of decision-making and employee engagement and collaboration respectively. In specific terms, P8 stated that:

"CS democratised decision-making, new product development, and business case development, involving more people in the process."

P10 and P12 argued that there had been no observed specific benefits in their organisations. According to P10, this was because in their organisation, their CS "project was not mature enough we were not able to see any tangible benefits".

Table 25 Can you provide specific examples or share your views on how the success of CS initiatives could be measured?

Source: (Author presentation)

Category	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Participation and engagement	Number of ideas submitted	m		m			m						
	User engagement and platform participation				m		m				m		m
	Source of ideas				m								
	Crowd education level												m
	Employee engagement and satisfaction			m				m	m				
Idea quality and impact	percentage of implemented/improved ideas			m					m				

Category	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Quality and impact of ideas			m									
	The commercial value of ideas				m								
	Alignment with organisational strategy				m								
	Revenue impact	m											
	Type of innovation (incremental vs. leapfrog)				m								
Implementation and results	Number of ideas implemented						m					m	
	Tangible outcomes							m	m				
	Customer satisfaction with new products/services							m	m				
Culture and continuous improvement	Before/after cultural assessment							m					
	Feedback from participants and stakeholders								m		m		
Strategic alignment	Setting objectives and aligning with the vision									m			

Category	Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Dedicated team and project plan									m			

From the data, measures to assess CS could be classified into the following: participation and engagement, idea quality and impact, implementation and results, culture and continuous improvement and strategic alignment measures.

Participation and engagement measures suggested were number of ideas submitted (1, 3, 6), user engagement and platform participation (6, 10, 12), crowd education level (12), idea source (4) and employee engagement and satisfaction (3, 7, 8).

Participant-suggested measures for idea quality and impact were percentage of implemented/improved ideas (3, 8), quality and impact of ideas (3), Commercial value of ideas (4), Alignment with organisational strategy (4), Revenue impact (1) and Type of innovation (4). 4 who contributed most suggestions under this category stated:

"I think that there are there are many types of things, so you know, if we look at saying what type of innovation was it, we could maybe inside there and then say is it a disruptive innovation and basic research or incremental? I think there's that there is the value, the range value against sent on the project. I think it's there, and I think it would be interesting to check where the ideas come from in the collaboration ecosystem." (4)

Some measures should focus on implementation and results, and these were: Number of ideas implemented (6, 11), Tangible outcomes (7, 8) and Customer satisfaction with new products/services (7, 8).

Culture and continuous improvement measures highlighted in the study were: Before/after cultural assessment stating that there should be a measure "testing whether or not there's been a shift or change in culture" 7 and Feedback from participants and stakeholders (8, 10).

9 mentioned strategic alignment measures. These were Setting objectives and aligning with vision and dedicated team and project plan. 9 stated that:

“I'd say what is this strategy...They have objectives in line, so once you know where you go, is to set objectives in the way have a project plan against it and then have a dedicated team. That on measuring what you said you wanted to do, are you doing?”

Table 26 Can you describe the key components of the CS framework you utilised to accelerate DT and OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

Group	Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Processes	Data analytics and insights								m				
	Iterative process								m				
	Campaign management			m				m				m	
	Idea mobilisation and activation							m				m	
	Implementation and integration												m
	Data security and privacy								m				
Resources	Technology infrastructure								m				
Stakeholders	Stakeholder engagement								m				
	Community managers				m								

Group	Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Idea evaluators			m									
Systems	Ideation platform	m			m								
	Feedback mechanisms								m				
	Reward and recognition mechanisms (gamification)		m		m	m						m	
	Innovation management system						m		m				
	Change management framework		m			m							
	CS framework			m						m	m		
	Performance management					m							
	Risk and compliance structures					m							
	Feasibility/strategic assessment					m							m
Values	Clear objectives and goals								m				

Group	Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Transparency								m				

In terms of processes, the participants mentioned Data Analytics and Insights, Iterative processes and data security and privacy all by 8. Under processes Campaign management (3, 7, 11), Idea Mobilisation and Activation (7, 11) and Implementation and integration (12). 8 talked about technology and infrastructure as art of the framework. included were Stakeholder Engagement (4) Community Managers (8) and Idea evaluators (3). Several subsystems were mentioned as components of the CS frameworks that the participants had implemented. These were Ideation platform (1), Feedback Mechanisms (4), Reward and Recognition Mechanisms (2, 5, 6), Innovation Management System (6, 8), Change management framework (2, 5), performance management (5), Risk and compliance structures (8) and Feasibility/strategic assessment (5, 12).

4.3.5 *Third Research Question Analysis: Have they adopted any best-in-class practices to attain their desired objectives and become a leader in the African FSPs industry?*

In exploring the third research question, participants detailed a range of tailored interventions and practices that have been instrumental in the success of their CS programs, particularly those adapted to their unique operational contexts. These customised strategies are reflective of the organisations' agility in responding to specific environmental demands and challenges. Furthermore, the interviewees underscored the significance of aligning these interventions with the company's overarching objectives to foster a customer-centric culture.

Additionally, the adaptability of these practices suggests a dynamic approach to CS, one that evolves with changing market conditions and customer expectations. The effectiveness of such interventions hinges on continuous monitoring and assessment, ensuring that the programs remain relevant and effective over time. It is through this

iterative process that organisations can maintain a competitive edge in delivering exceptional customer service.

Table 27 Were there any change management interventions that needed to be deployed to drive the desired behaviours during the implementation of CS initiatives?

Source: (Author presentation)

Interventions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Communication and awareness			m			m	m	m				m
Leadership support								m				
Pilot program			m	m				m				
Training and skills development				m				m			m	
Incentives and rewards			m	m				m	m			
Engagement Strategies			m	m								
Change management plan/strategy					m	m						
Cultural assessment and shift										m		
Formal integration												m
Gamification	m											
None		m										

The participants mentioned several change management interventions that needed to be deployed during their respective organisations' deployment of CS. Several mentioned communication and awareness as critical interventions they put in place and these included P3, P6, P7, P8 and P12 despite P12 being negative about these aspects' abuse in autocratic systems:

"Some of my experiences suggest that a stronger autocratic approach is sometimes utilised where the entire CS initiative is controlled by an executive body. Communication is therefore broadcast across all stakeholders in the business to dictate activities." P12

Other interventions included "Leadership support" (P8), the pilot program (P3, P4, P8), training and skills development (P4, P8, P11), rewards and incentives (P3, P4, P8, P9). Unique engagement methods like gamification (P1, P3, P4), and change management strategies (P5, P6). P5 associated the strategy with a "Change plan, communication plan, engagement plan.", cultural shift assessment through "Canvasing the existing company culture and shift it" (P10) were mentioned.

Table 28 How does or did your organisation measure the success or effectiveness of CS initiatives in accelerating DT and improving OP both internally and externally?

Source: (Author presentation)

Measurement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of submitted ideas	m		m									
Quality of ideas			m	m								
Employee/participant interest	m		m	m		m				m		
Customer satisfaction			m									

Measurement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of participants				m			m		m			
Idea alignment with organisational strategy/KPIs		m		m				m				
Type of innovation				m								
Seed of idea to MV/OC					m							
Solution development											m	
None mentioned												m

participants' organisations measured the number of submitted ideas (1, 3), quality of ideas (3, 4) and employee/participant interest (1, 3, 4, 6 and 10). According to 3:

"We had the KI's which we used to find out the number of ideas submitted. So, this showed how the value of each employee put into the quality of ideas…The quality and impact of these ideas showed employee engagement and showed how much they were interested in it."

3 mentioned that they *"measure customer satisfaction rates"* as one of the metrics. 4, 7 and 9 mentioned the number of participants involved in the CS program as an important metric. Others like 2, 4 and 8 stated that they measured the alignment between ideas generated and organisational strategies and KIs. 4 mentioned that they measured "type of innovation", distinguishing between "incremental innovation" and "total leapfrog." P6 mentioned the rate at which ideas transformed into action or "The speed at which we could move from IDEA to MV or OC" and 11's organisation measured "solutions in cases where solutions are required."

Table 29 How does or did your organisation measure the success or effectiveness of CS initiatives in accelerating DT and improving OP both internally and externally?

Source: (Author presentation)

Measurement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Number of submitted ideas	m		m									
Quality of ideas			m	m								
Employee/participant interest	m		m	m		m				m		
Customer satisfaction			m									
Number of participants				m			m		m			
Idea alignment with organisational strategy/KIPs		m		m				m				
Type of innovation				m								
Seed of idea to MV/OC					m							
Solution development											m	
None mentioned												m

participants' organisations measured the number of submitted ideas (1, 3), quality of ideas (3, 4) and employee/participant interest (1, 3, 4, 6 and 10). According to 3:

"We had the KI's which we used to find out the number of ideas submitted. So, this showed how the value of each employee put into the quality of ideas…The quality and impact of these ideas showed employee engagement and showed how much they were interested in it."

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Table 30 Could you elaborate on the role of incentives or rewards for contributors and describe how these impacted the success of your DT and OP initiatives?

Source: (Author presentation)

Role of incentives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Motivation and participation	m			m	m	m	m	m	m	m		
Encourage change acceptance		m					m					
Quality of contributions								m				
Quantity of contributions								m				
Diverse and valuable perspectives								m				

Role of incentives	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Sustainability and long-term engagement								m				
Recognition and community building								m		m		
Enhanced collaboration								m				
Measurable returns								m				
Drawbacks and considerations												m
Alignment with strategic goals			n								n	

Incentives or rewards for contributors were considered important for motivating the engagement and participation of contributors. 1 stated that they were positive for keeping “the crowd motivated to submit ideas” This was shared by, among others 4, 5, 6, 9 and 10. 2 saw incentives as “critical for changing behaviour” a view shared with 7. 8 provided a long list of how incentives or rewards for contributors impacted DT and OP initiatives success. These were through improving the “quality of contributions”, the “quantity of contributions”, diversity of contributions, long-term ideators or contributor engagement, collaboration, and CS measurability. On measurability 8 stated that "Organisations can track the return on investment (ROI) of their incentive programs..." 12 was however cautious that incentives had drawbacks and these included cheating – “people were likely to “game” or cheat the system”.

Table 31 What lessons have you learned from implementing CS initiatives for DT, DM, and OP that you would like to share with other organisations?

Source: (Author presentation)

Lessons learnt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Platform visibility	m											
Emphasis on engagement	m			m								
Resource the structure	m			m		m						
Culture of openness		m										
Follow a proven approach			m									
Measure and evaluate results					m							
Implement winning ideas						m						
Embed innovation in culture and strategy									m			
Start with third-party deliberation											m	
Assess organisational readiness												m
Impartiality matters												m

Lessons learnt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Not mentioned							n	n				

According to 1 and 4 building a well-resourced platform and effectively engaging the crowd or ideators was a core lesson for them. In 1's words: *"Implement a platform, engage the crowd, gamify it. however, you need funding and resources."* 2 mentioned "Building a culture where employees can freely share ideas to solve problems" recoded as a culture of openness above. 3 learnt the importance of "Following a tried and tested approach" in building a CS structure. In 5's experiences "Measuring results is crucial for data-driven decisions and refining strategies" while 6 emphasised allocating enough resources to implement "winning ideas to motivate employee participation." 9 mentioned the importance of integrating innovation into an organisation's strategy as a key lesson. This demanded a cultural change:

"Integrate innovation into the fabric of the organisation's strategy, talent management, performance agreements, and compensation. This requires cultural change and business model adjustments." 9

11 encouraged getting the views of the CS structure stakeholders as a way of improving quality and outcomes. In 11's views, *"This helps test expected outcomes, question quality, and avoid dominant views."* 12 had learnt that not all organisations are ready for CS as a way of enhancing DT, DM, and OP. There was an internal need to "Assess an organisation's readiness before starting a CS initiative." external companies should be considered in running CS programs "due to trust issues with internal teams" (12).

Table 32 In your opinion, explain key success factors that need to be considered for implementing CS of ideas to accelerate digital transformation/maturity and achieve sustainable OP?

Source: (Author presentation)

Key success factors	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Implementation commitment	m			m								
Strategic Alignment		m										
Consider impact			m									
Technology and Infrastructure												m
Monitoring and evaluation					m			m				
Strategic Alignment		m										
Consider impact			m									
Legal and Ethical Considerations								m				
Employee Engagement/focus									m			
Scalability								m				
Clear Objectives										m		
Clear understanding of CS						m						
Cost efficiency									m			
Customer Focus											m	
Reward and recognition							m					
Senior Management Buy-In							m					m

1 and 4 mentioned the significance of implementation commitment as a KSF. In 1's words:

"It's all about the implementation of ideas, that for me is the biggest success measure. If the ideas are not being implemented, you will not get anywhere." 1

2 mentioned the integration of organisational objectives with "the CS strategy" as a KSF for CS. Other important KSFs were adequate and appropriate technology (12), monitoring and evaluation to enable "data-driven decisions" (5, 12). 8's list of KSFs included scalability or the "flexibility to accommodate growth." 8 mentioned the importance of transparency as a KSF. 10 listed clear measurable goals while 6 mentioned that it was important for organisations to clearly understand CS as a concept and practice. 12 mentioned the importance of "senior management buy-in" and 7 "Leadership involvement" in addition to "Reward and recognition" (7). 9 highlighted employee focus and cost efficiency as KSFs.

Table 33 In your efforts to achieve your goals and objectives, can you share any noteworthy best practices, frameworks, or strategies you incorporated into your approach?

Source: (Author presentation)

Best practices	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**
Leadership Buy-in and Sponsorship	m								m			
Communication and early Adopter Involvement		m										
Alignment with organisational Goals			m									
Gamification, Ease of Use, and To-Down Approach							m					
Rewards and Recognition			m	m								

Best practices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Openness to External participation												
Design thinking and problem statement development					m							
Mentorship and partnerships for Skill Gas						m						m
Benchmarking and ecosystem Scouting											m	
Strategic organisational analysis								m				
Continuous improvement								m				
Network building								m				
Agile approaches								m				
Originality of CS framework										m		
Change management practices									m			

1 and 9 mentioned leadership involvement as an important best practice in CS. 9 expanded the leader needed to “actively participate in the CS platform, encouraging and supporting employee contributions.” 2 highlighted that communication and early adopter involvement “ensure holistic outputs and ongoing input.” 3 considered alignment of CS frameworks with organisational goals. 4 noted that the quality of Gamification, its ease of use, and to-down approaches in implementing CS were practices they recommended. The importance of rewards and recognition was raised

gain by 3 and 4. These encourage and motivate participation in CS. In 5's views, "Design thinking and other problem-solving frameworks are used to develop and refine ideas" and "Development for problem statements" were practices that could assist in the achievement of CS/OP outcomes. 6 took mentorship by business executives and leaders as a practice that could "provide guidance and support to idea owners." Organisations needed to develop "benchmarks and learn from other organisations that are successfully using CS" (11). It Was therefore important to focus on how the wider CS ecosystem was working. 8 listed strategic organisational analysis, continuous improvement, network building and agile approaches as best practices. 8 noted the importance of "Building a strong professional network has been invaluable in gaining insights, support, and opportunities." 10 discussed the practice of enhancing the originality of the CS framework rather than copying it from other organisations that have different dynamics and 9 mentioned effective "change management practices" as a necessity in CS application.

CHAPTER 5. Research Questions Discussion

5.1 First Research question: How do FSPs in Africa use CS ideas to solve strategic and operational issues?

The financial services landscape in Africa is undergoing a profound transformation, driven by the twin engines of DT and OP shifts. Amidst this backdrop, FSPs are increasingly harnessing the collective intelligence of CS to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital age. CS, an emergent paradigm of problem-solving and idea generation, is reshaping how FSPs approach strategic and operational dilemmas, enabling them to tap into a wellspring of diverse insights and solutions. This practice has become a cornerstone for FSPs in their pursuit of DM, encompassing the adoption of digital technologies to redefine their business models and operational processes.

In this vibrant context, a critical question arises: How are FSPs in Africa utilising CS to address their strategic and operational issues, and what impact does this have on their drive towards heightened DM, DT, and enhanced OP? This question invites an in-depth exploration of the multifaceted role of CS within the African financial services sector. It prompts an examination of the tangible ways in which FSPs are integrating CS initiatives into their strategic frameworks and operational methodologies, thereby catalysing their digital evolution, and fortifying their market positions and benefits realised in their drive towards their ambitions.

Van Niekerk et al. (2020) noted in a recent study that there exists a wealth of knowledge regarding CS and its advantages, especially within High-and Middle-Income Countries (HMICs). Highlighting that there is a notable scarcity of knowledge regarding its utilisation and benefits in Low-and Middle-Income Country (LMICs) contexts (van Niekerk et al., 2020). LMICs can be defined especially in the African context, as referring to various environmental and non-environmental conditions associated with poverty, poor education levels, unstable income rates, high crime rates, lack of access to basic healthcare, poor living conditions and high number of unemployed individuals (Banks et al., 2017). Creating a view that due to the number

LMICs in Africa, they have limited to non-awareness or knowledge of CS. This study is limited to focus on FSPs in Africa, however, can be applied to multiple other industries within the African context or even global content if needed. The above statement made by van Niekerk et al. (2020) provided to be inaccurate as all participants of the study had inadept knowledge around CS and its benefits towards DT, OP and have expertise across multiple fields/industries around Africa. In Table 37, the participants exhibited a profound comprehension and knowledge of CS, DM, DT, and OP. This information has been summarised to emphasise the different categories that were well-understood, major themes, and relevant quotations provided by the participants to substantiate the major identified themes.

Table 34 Overview understanding of CS, DM, DT, OP

Source: (Author presentation)

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
CS	Collective Intelligence	Participants describe CS as leveraging a broad audience for innovative problem-solving.	• " CS... involves gathering ideas from either internal employees or externally networks customers suppliers and the public." (P2) • "CS... is the practice way of decisions or individual source idea solution contribution from a group of people... to leverage collective intelligence." (P3)

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
			• “CS... is taking a democratic approach to getting ideas within an organisation." (P7) • "CS is leveraging what someone referred to as the wisdom of the crowd for insights." (P10)
	Engagement and Diversity	Recognised for its ability to engage diverse perspectives to CS ideas	• "CS one can be away within an organisation to tap into the IP of your employees and ask them to solve key business problems." (P5) • "My understanding of CS is that it is where ideas need to come from a diverse group of people." (P4) • "CS... involves gathering ideas from either internal employees or externally networks customers suppliers." (P2)
	Efficiency and optimisation in	Valued for generating a wealth of ideas	• "CS... allows you to save time and money by tapping

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
	Idea Generation	quickly, leading to efficient solutions.	into the people of the community all parts of the business or all parts of the globe." (P9) • "CS is how do we gather information ideas feedback from a group of internal and external people." (P2)
DM	Integration of Digital Tools	Seen as the extent of digital technology use within an organisation.	• "Digital maturity is about using digital tools to do something and after that how mature are you from a digital whole organisation point of view." (P1) • "Digital maturity signifies building a robust digital foundation that supports the growth and evolution of your business." (P4) • "Digital maturity... refers to an organisation's level in leveraging digital technologies to achieve its business objectives." (P8)

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
	Strategic Application	Emphasised as using DM for a strategic competitive edge.	• "Digital maturity would be understanding that technology is not just a cost centre however, a source of competitive advantage." (P3) • "Digital maturity... would be the measure of how effectively an organisation uses digital technologies to create new and modified existing processes." (P11) • "Digital maturity... is about evolving from basic digital adoption to wielding technology in an expert and strategic way." (P2) • "Digital maturity... refers to an organisation's level in leveraging digital technologies to achieve its business objectives." (P8)
	Evolutionary Process	Described as an evolutionary journey from basic use to	• "Digital maturity is like a business's journey from learning how to use tools to

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
		strategic application of digital tools.	becoming a master craftsman." (P2) • "Digital maturity in its simple form is like transitioning from the traditional bank branch experience to offering digital products. (P7)
DT	Business Process Reengineering	Involves the integration of digital technology into all areas of a business.	• "Digital transformation is taking a business process and marrying that with technology." (P7) • "Digital transformation is quite a broad one because it can speak to internal processes and how to automate and digitise what an organisation does internally." (P4) • "Digital transformation... involves the seamless integration of digital tools processes and strategies across all aspects of the organisation." (P8)

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
	Adaptation and Innovation	Seen as essential for creating new business models and improving digital technologies	• "Digital transformation as I see it is like giving a traditional business a tech-savvy makeover." (P1) • "Digital transformation... is about embracing digital technologies in every facet of an organisation." (P8) • “Digital transformation is the convergence of business strategy and tech towards solving business delivering results.” (P5)
	Ongoing Transformation	Recognised as a continuous process to keep pace with technological advancements.	• "Digital transformation is just a journey that organisations are going through of how they shift from the system they're using into more digital processes." (P6) • "Digital transformation it's a process it’s a digital first approach so using digital technologies to create new

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
			business processes and culture." (P9) • "Digital transformation... is integrating digital technologies into all aspects of an organisation." (P3)
OP	Efficiency and Effectiveness	Focused on optimising business processes and resources.	• "Operational performance is organisational ability to carry out state efficiently and effectively to the activity of processes." (P3) • "Operation performance... signifies some achievement or score based on a set of defined measures that applies to an operational set of processes." (P12) • Operational performance is how do you become a little bit more well how do you become more effective and efficient? So that is one how to use digitalisation, however, how do you

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
			minimise the time and therefore even the cost of doing approving a claim. Is that less time, is it building robots in the background? Is it using fewer human beings? (P4)
	Process Optimisation	Involves evaluating and improving day-to-day processes for effectiveness.	• "Operational performance again if we stick with the insurance example is to say if a claim process used to take five days and how do we even speed that up to be a one hour?" (P4) • "Operational performance is just saying how do we optimise it right? It's really for me my understanding is optimisation." (P7) • "Operational performance... it's adopting one singular perspective for every process which is it must have an input or set of inputs or a set of outputs and must consistently

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
			optimise the process." (P11)
	Measurement and Metrics	Emphasises the importance of having clear success metrics and achieving optimal performance.	• "Having a well-run business with all metrics performing in the green or I like to call it the Blue Zone (In the bragging zone)." (P5) • "Operational performance... it's adopting one singular perspective for every process which is it must have an input or set of inputs or a set of outputs and must consistently optimise the process." (P11) • "Operational performance is about how well an organisation manages its resources, controls costs and continually refines its operations." (P8) • Broad themes were identified as measures to measure the success of the

Category	Subcategory	Collective understanding of the concept	Significant Interviewee Insights
			CS initiative: Number of ideas submitted, quality of ideas, employee participation, number of participants on the CS platform, solution development and alignment to business KPIs. (P1 – P12)

Bhatti et al. (2020) and Campos-Blázquez et al. (2023 emphasise the central role of CS as a crucial instrument for fostering innovation, driving DT, and enhancing OP. They contend that CS enables organisations to tap into a wide array of ideas and expertise, aiding in the resolution of “digital” and “operational challenges”, and facilitating progress along the journey toward DT maturity, linking to the well know DOI theory founded by Everett Rogers, stating that social science framework elucidating the process through which novel ideas, technologies, products, or innovations disseminate and gain acceptance among individuals and groups in a society as time progresses (Dearing & Cox, 2018). CS can be seen as a catalyst within the DOI framework, accelerating the spread and adoption of innovations. These individuals often contribute novel ideas and solutions that can lead to significant technological advancements and operational efficiencies. As these ideas are implemented and their benefits become observable, they are more likely to be adopted by the early majority, followed by the late majority and eventually the laggards, thus completing the diffusion cycle. The role of CS in the DOI framework extends to reducing the time gaps between these adopter categories. By harnessing the collective intelligence and diverse perspectives of a large group, organisations can not only source innovative ideas, however, gain insights into potential barriers to adoption. This knowledge enables them

to tailor their strategies to facilitate smoother adoption curves and achieve a faster rate of diffusion.

P1 sets the foundational views linked to the research question and sub research 1 question which directly collaborates to research question one, by highlighting that "*CS initiatives have been instrumental in advancing our DT. We've been able to innovate more effectively by harnessing ideas from a broader audience*". Incorporating a variety of perspectives from a group of people, FSPs can develop more innovative and effective digital solutions by addressing real problems currently being faced, creating solutions that will accelerate DT and passivity impact OP for the organisation.

One Innovation Expert further builds on P1's views on collaboration via CS by highlighting the following:

"For me… one of the biggest benefits…starting to develop those relationships and starting to work together towards common goals… collaboration was one of the biggest benefits, in that early stage of the innovation journey, helping to breakdown the silos between business units, business departments within a function to help to collaborate a lot faster innovation and have a common goal".

P8 built on P1's statement starting that "*harnessing the collective intelligence and expertise of the bank's employees, to find effective solutions to industry-specific issues…common banking challenges*" directly link to statements made by Bhatti et al., (2020) and Campos-Blázquez et al., (2023), who both emphasise that CS is essential for the success of any organisation's digital ambitions. The comments above, have set the foundation that all the participants in this study have a wealth of knowledge around CS and its benefits towards DT and OP. One Innovation Expert quoted that "*the bank has become more adaptable and responsive to changes in the banking industry by CS ideas*". P9 expanded by quoting that the CS ideas "*helped the organisation… think more differently about how those ideas have an impact, how those ideas would change the current way of what we are doing right now*". P12 stated that DT is the "transformation from a non-digital state to a digital state", providing the foundation for FSPs to pivot quickly when needed, ensuring that it remains competitive and relevant in a rapidly evolving financial landscape and African context.

5.1.1 *CS for Strategic Alignment*

CS has been an integral part integrated into the decision-making process in majority of the FSPs around Africa, whereby participants range from CEOs, CDOs, COOs, Heads of Innovation, all noticed the need for innovation by working together with senior managers, employees, and customers all working together to solve strategic related issues and planning. This is exemplified by the "MMIgine" program at Momentum Metropolitan Holdings, which spearheaded by P1, which was specifically crafted to bolster the digital posture of the insurance company and take innovation to the next level. P1 highlighted that the programme was inspired by the famous individual Michael Jordaan, who previously was the CEO at First National Bank (FNB) South Africa and helped the bank to win the prestigious title of “World’s Most Innovative Bank in 2012”. This shed light in the direction for the MMIgine program which was focused on solving strategic issues that the insurance company in South Africa, was currently facing, this could be seen through the type of CS campaigns that we uploaded onto the MMIgine CS platform.

P7 who was a part of the Basement CS platform at Access Bank in Nigeria, emphasised to say that the campaign formulation process, was designed to solve the strategic objectives of the business, that needed solving. For example, one campaign was focused on “*how do we increase revenue”*, which at the point in time was the strategic issue that needed solutioning of, from a management level. Once the desired outcomes of a campaign are established, the formulation process for the CS initiative must be meticulously designed to be straightforward and comprehensible. This clarity enables employees or innovators to focus their creative efforts on solving specific issues directly aligned with the strategic objectives, thereby avoiding the generation of ideas that do not contribute to the desired outcomes. Ensuring that the problem-solving tasks are clearly defined and relevant, helps in harnessing targeted and valuable contributions that advance the goals of the organisation. The above sentiments, validate the claims made by Perez-Alvarez (2018), that strategic plans must be well defined to link to the organisation’s goals, objectives that need to be implemented for the strategy to be realised.

CS can be instrumental in dismantling the siloed mentality that often pervades large FSPs, not only in Africa however, globally. This entrenched mindset, characterised by

segregated departments operating independently, can significantly impede the collaborative flow of ideas, information, and innovative concepts within the ideation period of on the CS platform. Through CS, FSPs can create an interconnected environment where cross-departmental collaboration is not just encouraged however, becomes an integral part of the organisational culture. This approach leverages the diverse expertise and perspectives within the company, fostering a more unified and efficient problem-solving process that aligns with the strategic objectives of the institution.

By using CS as a platform for idea exchange and development, FSPs can mitigate the issue of duplicated efforts across different departments. As highlighted by P7, when someone spots an idea on the platform, they can identify if similar initiatives are underway in other divisions. This recognition can spark cross-departmental conversations, leading to collaborative efforts that maximise resources and expertise. CS, in this sense, acts as a central hub for innovation, encouraging departments to build upon each other's work rather than inadvertently competing or replicating efforts. This not only optimises resource utilisation, however, accelerates the development and implementation of solutions, enhancing the overall strategic ambitions and efficiency.

Within the dynamic and competitive landscape of FSPs, CS is a key driver for strategic innovation and problem-solving. The following table encapsulates a selection of notable responses from various participants who have harnessed the power of CS to address complex strategic issues within their organisations. These entries not only highlight the specific challenges tackled however, shed light on the consequential shifts in strategic direction that such endeavours precipitate.

Table 35 Impact of CS on FSP for Strategic Dynamics Resolution

Source: (Author presentation)

Participants #	Strategic Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Strategy
P7	**Response to changing market conditions**	"Additionally, CS has been instrumental in spurring innovation within our organisation…gather insights and ideas from a wide array of sources, making us more agile and responsive to changing market conditions…we've been able to identify new opportunities and address challenges more effectively".	The utilisation of CS for innovation markedly bolsters the strategic agility of an FSP, enabling swift adaptation to evolving market demands, customer needs and securing a competitive advantage. This process not only informs and enriches the strategic planning process, helping to fortify the organisations responsiveness to future challenges.
P8	**Product Innovation**	"External CS can result in the development of customer-focused digital solutions and services...engaging with the variety of people who use or are affected by these digital offerings…tailor its products and services to meet customer needs and expectations"	Adopting external CS fortifies the FSP's strategic focus on customer-centricity, enabling the creation of digital solutions finely tuned to user needs and fostering deeper customer engagement. Resulting into increased customer loyalty and market differentiation, as products and services are

Participants #	Strategic Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Strategy
			directly tailored to the needs of their clients.
P8	**Risk Management Strategy**	"Identify potential risks associated with implementing each idea and develop risk mitigation strategies"	Allow for the integration of risk management into the DT journey, by allowing the FSP to strategically evaluate the idea or concept for any risks prior to it being implemented to the broader audience, safeguarding the FSP for setbacks, financial loss and risk associated with the idea or concept.
P8	**Investment Strategy Redefinition**	"Performs a cost-benefit analysis to determine the expected ROI for implementing each idea….and ongoing maintenance".	Embedding cost-benefit analysis into the strategic evaluation process, ensures that FSPs prioritise initiatives with the highest potential for ROI, aligning financial foresight with strategic innovation and the benefits that arise from DT.
P5	**Sustainability Strategy**	"Big focus…simple ideas that maybe wouldn't even take technology the	Strategically allows their DT efforts to leverage CS of ideas

Participants #	Strategic Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Strategy
		reutilisation of stationery or how paper is being used or the greenness of the building".	to build an environmentally and socially responsible business.
P11	**Data collection**	"Gamification was an incentive. We used it as an incentive because we realised that customers, all respondents would enjoy that trill, one game that we try to do interestingly, was Pokémon go…creating an illustration of Pokémon Go. So that people across the city would go hunting for the Pokémon's, however, what they were doing was collecting data about mobility".	Data being collected, would provide valuable insights to FSPs around the number of people in certain locations, people that have downloaded the mobile banking application with the Pokémon go feature, how people travel around the city and popular visited locations.

The strategic embrace of CS within the FSPs in the African sector signifies a transformative shift, not merely in operational tactics, however, in the foundational approach to strategy formulation and execution. FSPs across the continent have recognised the potency of CS as a tool for harvesting a wealth of insights, which in turn fuels innovation and agility. Programs like "MMIgine" at Momentum Metropolitan

Holdings, strategic innovation informed by visionaries such as Michael Jordaan, stand testament to the successful integration of CS into strategic planning, propelling digital advancement and innovation to unprecedented levels. Similarly, Access Bank's "Basement" platform exemplifies how CS campaigns are meticulously crafted to tackle pressing strategic questions, like revenue enhancement, aligning the creative force of employees with the strategic goals of the business.

The transformation within the financial sector has been marked by a transition from isolated, department-focused strategies to a more integrated and cooperative approach to idea generation. FSPs are harnessing the power of CS platforms to break down traditional organisational divisions, creating a network of cross-functional collaboration that enhances the use of resources and accelerates the implementation of strategic solutions. This shift towards a more unified and innovative corporate culture not only increases the effectiveness of strategic planning, however, establishes CS as a pivotal engine for innovation across FSPs. Consequently, the strategic trajectory for FSPs in Africa is now defined by their agility and proactive strategies, equipping them to adeptly manage the fluidity of the market with resilience and strategic acumen.

5.1.2 *CS for Smoother Operations in FSPs*

In the realm of African FSPs, CS has transcended its conventional boundaries, evolving into a critical operational strategy. It embodies a systemic approach, integrating the collective expertise of diverse stakeholders to inform and elevate operational processes currently in stilled in the business. Bhatti et al. (2020) in Chapter two of the research provide a foundational view that CS is instrumental in enhancing OP, which was clearly articulated by P2 who started that "*OP, is the day-to-day processes that you need to contact to achieve your objectives of an organisation".* An Innovation Expert provided a straightforward illustration of transitioning from a manual accounting system to an online one, resulting in a significant reduction in task completion time, bringing the process within a mere two-hour timeframe, as opposed to long turnaround times. This instance underscores the idea that even minor operational adjustments can have a profound impact on overall business productivity. Implementing solutions that simplify employees' work, streamlining processes for faster execution, developing software to enhance technology infrastructure, and

leveraging technology for quicker and quality-assured delivery are all ways to achieve this goal.

P12 underscored that businesses utilising CS to generate ideas aligned with their strategic themes consistently observed direct enhancements in efficiency and effectiveness. These improvements were commonly realised through the implementation of digital technologies that optimised operational processes, thereby bolstering OP. P3 stated that:

"*The primary goal was basically as much as we emphasis wanted to make our job easier, we wanted to be more efficient. Our tagline at Access Bank is to be modern banking and to do that we had to make sure their processes that we can do more, we can do even better. We do not have to take the long route to achieving success*".

This ethos meant continually refining processes to enhance productivity and deliver superior value. The drive for innovation was not just about doing things right; it was about doing them smarter and faster, thereby streamlining the path to success without compromising on quality or service delivery. This vision for modern banking encapsulates a commitment to leveraging technology and creative insights to stay ahead in a competitive financial landscape as indicated by Sakhnyuk & Sakhnyuk (2020). One innovation consultant focused on how pivotal the Basement CS platform has been instrumental in facilitating cross-functional collaboration, breaking down silos and enhance the sharing of knowledge and expertise. The resulting synergy between different departments and teams has been integral in improving OP by fostering better communication and coordination and allowing of different departments to collaborate with each other.

Having explored the transformative strategies adopted by FSPs, it is vital to now reflect on the specific insights and implications these methods hold. The table below synthesises the key strategies implemented, amalgamates stakeholder insights, and scrutinises the ensuing effects on OP:

Table 36 Impact of CS on FSP for Smoother Operations

Source: (Author presentation)

Participants#	Operational Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Operations
P8	**Efficiency & Adaptability**	"Led to significant improvements…in terms of efficiency, the initiative has played a pivotal role in sourcing and implementing innovative ideas from employees. As a result, many internal processes have been streamlined, reducing manual tasks and optimising workflows. This has translated into increased operational efficiency, allowing the bank to do more with fewer resources"	The strategy of harnessing internal creativity has notably enhanced the operational prowess of FSP. By streamlining innovation and process refinement, these institutions have achieved greater efficiency, thereby boosting productivity with judicious resource use.
P6	**Product Enhancement**	"Understand some of our products…got a new insight into some of the products…getting feedback from the people who built the product, who	Insights from product creators have provided FSPs with a fresh understanding of their services, emphasising the importance of internal feedback for operational advancement by

Participants#	Operational Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Operations
		had who we had often overlooked as are they part of the customer base"	continuously refining P&S and fostering innovation across the organisation.
P11	**Customer-Centric solutions**	"Finding a way to identify, to understand the problems that customers were dealing with…money paying customers or internal customers…CS was fantastic one to give us a different perspective to give us a platform where we could, to craft new perspectives to the customers and collect feedback from them…brought different perspectives…using it to identify, most optimal solutions"	Enables FSPs to establish a dynamic approach to discerning and solving customer issues. This strategy not only harvested diverse viewpoints however, facilitated the development of tailored, customer-centric solutions, thereby enhancing the OE and responsiveness of the FSP towards servicing their customers' needs.
P8	**Innovation in Service Delivery**	"Adoption of ideas sourced…resulted in increased process efficiency. Many of these ideas have led to	Ability to significantly enhanced process efficiency within FSPs, leading to more streamlined operations, diminishing routine

Participants#	Operational Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Operations
		streamlined and more efficient processes, reducing bottlenecks and manual tasks…result, the bank's operational performance has seen substantial enhancements, with tasks being completed more swiftly and with fewer resources"	bottlenecks, and lessening the reliance on manual procedures.
P5	**Risk Assessment & Mitigation**	"CS has allowed us to enhance our cybersecurity measures, safeguarding sensitive data and ensuring the trust of our clients".	Facilitated the enhancement of cybersecurity protocols within FSPs, leading to strengthened data protection measures and reinforcing client trust in the institutions' commitment to safeguarding sensitive information both internally and externally.
P12	**Streamlined Digital Channels**	"Main goals of these initiatives were to address customer "stickiness" through improved products or product experiences. This in tum	Aimed at increasing customer engagement and loyalty by refining products and UX, with a focus on mobile-based solutions, implicate a strategic shift for FSPs towards greater

Participants#	Operational Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Operations
		linked to the concept of mobility i.e., being able to create mobile based solutions that would cater for all a customer's financial needs. Efficiency would then be used as a theme…be leveraged to determine mobility-related ideas in which customers would rather leverage their mobile devices to use service as opposed to visiting local "brick-and-mortar" branches"	mobility. This aligns with the evolving needs of customers, ensuring that FSPs offer comprehensive, on-the-go financial services, which is crucial for operational competitiveness and customer satisfaction.
P11	**3rd Party Collaboration for streamlined Execution**	"Send out polls, surveys to customers to external or internal customers consolidate the data and try to categorise them into problem areas and then attempt to collaboratively solve the problem with the team. In the cases where we couldn't take it to a hackathon, test the	This collaborative approach enables FSPs to problem-solving, coupled with the practice of engaging innovators and ideators within the network, enables the precise targeting of a subset of customers for experimental solutions, thereby refining operational

Participants#	Operational Issue Addressed	Significant Interviewee Insights	Implications for FSPs Operations
		industry, with within the network there were several innovators, ideators that we generally exchanged ideas with one another and then identify a small segment of customers or partners of the bank that we could experiment with".	effectiveness and fostering a culture of innovation.

Bridging internal innovation with external insights, FSPs recognise the invaluable role of customer feedback that shapes their operational strategies. This customer-centric approach is the cornerstone of CS efforts, enhancing every facet of service delivery. It represents a strategic pivot, placing CX at the heart of operational enhancements. As echoed by the insights in Chapter 2, operational development is intricately linked to customer engagement, underpinning the evolution of P&Ss that align more closely with customer needs and expectations. This transition from inward-focused innovation to outward-directed improvement underscores the holistic impact of CS, as FSPs leverage both internal and external wisdom to refine their operations. Prior to FSPs gaining insights into new ideas from external stakeholders, one participant highlighted that as an organisation, there is a need to understand our existing internal products, and this is by getting feedback from the people who developed of built the solution and was overlooked during the development phase. This reflective practice of internal review ensures that FSPs can fully harness the potential of their existing solutions, evaluate their quality, useability, feasibility however, most importantly resolve any technical issues, prior getting feedback from customers. This foundational work, as conceptualised by Zahay et al. (2018), lays the groundwork for expansive innovation.

Building on this, participants all stressed the point that in their ability to innovate and respond to customer needs more promptly, it was recognised that by revisiting and refining their products, they unearthed challenges previously unnoticed during the initial development. One participant introduced a unique concept of how product offering can be revolutionised thought the collaboration of multiple divisions and the breaking down of silos to help evolve products that FSP offer:

"Organisational silos had obscured the comprehensive understanding of how different divisions could synergistically work together to boost efficiency. Instead of confining themselves to one segment of the product, they initiated a cross-organisational dialogue aimed at collective improvement, which greatly contributed to the enhanced functionality and overall performance of their offerings".

P6 commented on the organisational culture shifting from isolation to collaboration, noting that traditionally, the compartmentalised structure of organisations impeded cooperative efforts across various sectors, which was counterproductive to enhancing efficiency. The emerging direction encouraged cross-organisational engagement, fostering collective efforts to improve product quality. This collaborative spirit facilitated the identification and resolution of issues that had been overlooked during the product development lifecycle, leading to more refined outcomes. This cooperative ethos not only unearthed and resolved previously undetected issues within the product development process however, led to more polished and sophisticated outcomes. This aligns with the concept posited by Niu et al., (2019), which advocates for gaining deeper insights into product development objectives by leveraging both internal and external crowds.

Reflecting on the discussions, one participant highlighted the reality that realising the full potential of OP improvements from CS is not instantaneous. It often spans multiple years to fully appreciate the benefits stemming from CS-derived projects. While smaller organisations may witness progress within the first six to twelve months, FSPs, with their complex processes and the adage "time is money," may experience a longer timeline for implementation. FSPs tend to prioritise projects with quicker ROI allocating resources to longer-term projects as time and resources permit.

P9 highlighted the complexity within large FSPs, noting that the Project Management Office (PMO) often juggles over a “hundred projects” at any given time. Therefore, it is crucial to prioritise projects strategically to prevent CS ideas from being overlooked or unimplemented. To elaborate further, seamlessly weaving CS into the operational fabric of an FSP calls for a nuanced strategy that weighs short-term imperatives against long-term innovation aspirations. FSPs need to conduct a thorough assessment to determine which CS initiatives are in sync with their immediate strategic objectives and are likely to quickly bolster OE, enhance customer satisfaction, or lead to cost savings. P8, stressed the important of selecting certain ideas for quick implementation, referred to as "quick wins," is crucial for FSPs starting their innovation journey. By prioritising small-scale or easily implementable ideas, FSPs can demonstrate progress and inspire confidence among management, employees, and selected external customers who have contributed to the CS process. These incremental however, visible changes play a pivotal role in reinforcing the commitment of all stakeholders to continuously engage in the CS of ideas, nurturing a culture of innovation and collaboration.

Initiatives with potential long-term benefits may require a structured approach, including a phased roll-out, dedicated resources, and regular evaluations to ensure they remain in step with the FSP’s dynamic business goals and the shifting terrain of the financial sector. Such discerning selection and management of projects are vital to the enduring impact and viability of CS efforts in the intensely competitive domain of financial services.

The incorporation of CS within African FSPs has been a game-changer, redefining the landscape of OP. The methodical gathering and application of broad-based insights have resulted in improved OP and the cultivation of a deeply innovative environment. It has become evident that such inclusive approaches in problem-solving and ideation are not merely beneficial however, essential for FSPs striving to maintain a competitive edge in an increasingly digital and customer-centric market.

Furthermore, the nuanced strategies employed in leveraging both employee-generated ideas and customer feedback have led to substantial advancements. The operational frameworks have evolved, becoming more agile and resilient, and are driven by a newfound synergy between various divisions within FSPs. The commitment

to modernising banking through technology and collaborative efforts has clearly paid dividends, with significant improvements noted in service delivery and internal processes. This strategic reorientation towards CS has undoubtedly set a foundation for continued growth and innovation in the sector.

5.2 Second Research question: How has the use of CS of ideas increased their drive towards DM, DT, and OP?

CS has established itself as a strategic pillar for FSPs in Africa, significantly influencing DM, DT, and OP. It has enabled these institutions to draw upon a vast spectrum of ideas and insights, facilitating innovation and adaptability in their operations. This strategic alignment of CS initiatives has led to observable benefits, streamlining processes, and reinforcing the capacity of FSPs to meet the demands of a dynamic financial landscape, thus delivering enhanced value to their clientele. The impact of this paradigm shift is profound and multifaceted. As FSPs navigate the digital age, the use of CS has emerged as a cornerstone in their quest for enhanced strategic efficiency and OP. It has enabled these institutions to not only respond to however, proactively shape market dynamics, ensuring sustained competitiveness and growth in their pursuit to be market leaders.

Table 37 Impact on DM, DT and OP

Source: (Author presentation)

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
DM	Market Leadership and Positioning	• "Implementation of ideas originating from Basement has garnered recognition and awards for the bank, such as the Digital Banker Africa's Most Innovative Digital Bank in Nigeria in 2023" (P8) • "The Thought Leadership and Strategy Team, composed of experts deeply entrenched in industry trends, acted as a strategic partner for the Basement project. They remained at the forefront of monitoring

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
		and analysing industry trends, technological advancements, and digital innovations. Their insights provided valuable guidance, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve and align our CS initiatives, especially Basement, with the prevailing industry challenges and trends" (P3)
DT	New Product Development	• Basement has played a pivotal role in driving innovation within Access Bank…one of the remarkable outcomes of this CS platform is the birth of Quickbucks, which is Access Bank's digital lending platform. Quickbucks offers a diverse range of instant loan services, including PayDay Loans, Salary Advance, Small Ticket Personal Loans, Device Financing, and more…Quickbucks has emerged as one of the bank's top sources of revenue since its implementation, underscoring the tremendous impact of Basement on Access Bank's digital transformation and financial success" (P8) • AFF, we hold bi-monthly innovation sessions that bring together team members to brainstorm and develop digitally focused solutions…One of the notable outcomes of this innovation initiative is Access Rewards, which stands as Access Bank's loyalty program. Access Rewards is integrated into Access More, the bank's mobile banking super app. Since its launch, the program has seen impressive results, with over 1.38 million users subscribing to the service and over 147 million reward points awarded. This initiative has not only increased customer

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
		engagement, however, has led to a remarkable 25% growth in Access More users". (P8) • "One of the ideas that came in was to say a lot of people don't know how to do their tax return. So, they would either outsource to the tax consultant or attempt to do it and one of the projects was how do people get people to just upload onto a tax platform in app and the app reads the documents uploaded in and calculates for them if there's anything on the tax front. This would send even notifications when bank tax certificates were ready to say we can do your taxes just upload onto our third-party platform" (P4)
DT	Process Digitisation	• "The initiative itself lead to the development of additional mobile based features that ultimately had increased revenue benefits" (P12) • "To open accounts before the bank would have you come and fill up filling the sheets. however, someone spoke up and said if we can digitise this process and our customers can open a tier one account and then we can get them to sign and get relevant documents for upgrade…it is more around digitising the process to make sure that everything was streamlined" (P3) • In Nigeria, for example, pay with capture, which allowed people to authorise a payment with a selfie, a digital selfie and being the first bank in Nigeria to do that…the bank just kept looking for new and better ways of getting things done" (P7)

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
DT	Revenue/Sales Generation	• "Our rate on closing out, closing off leads…improved upsell turnaround times by 15%...looking more at the, the processes supporting sales and those processes were optimised. So, there's more, the process sales process with the value chain was optimised. Yeah, they could get a target people better. Previously it was just a sort of call and hope, you know, there was no real expertise around the leads identified and now it became a process where the expenses you're incurring to contact those customers" (P2)
OP	Cost Savings	• "It has significantly enhanced cost savings through the identification and implementation of cost-effective ideas. To date, innovations stemming from Basement have generated over $1.5 million in savings, bolstering the bank's financial efficiency and stability" (P8) • "Small cost efficiencies challenge and their it was really simple ideas that people had put forwards that did manage to save R5 million, R10 million" (P2)
OP	Employee Engagement	• "Basement has motivated the workforce to actively participate in the innovation process, resulting in a more motivated and enthusiastic staff, positively impacting the bank's overall performance" (P8)
OP	Process Efficiency	• "The use of the use of paper to open accounts was scrapped and a digital a more digital approach was introduced…the amount of time that it took to open

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
		an account went for went from for example, five days to about a day and half…meant that data was more accessible and decisions around things like customers affordability was improved…faster decision making and faster execution, faster outputs in terms of you know yes or no decisions for whether or not people could get loans or get their accounts opened or get a new financial product" (P7) • "The impact of Basement is evident…reduced error rates, faster processing times, and higher customer satisfaction scores, all of which directly contribute to improved operational performance" (P8)
OP	Execution Readiness	• "Efficiency managing resources so there was focus, we knew exactly by the time we got into project execution phase the requirements and the scope of work were very clear, which means the team or the squad that worked on any of those initiatives were focused, they understood what improved somewhat outputs were expected. It will cost effective for us as an organisation because of that and the chances of getting it right first time was easier" (P11) • "The implementation teams became smaller and more focused on the idea. So that then became a human resource saving and operationally therefore and overall saving" (P4)
OP	Increased Decision-Making	• "The CS initiative itself was considered more efficient, in terms of time when it came to generating

Category	Impact Theme	Business Impact or Outcome
	Turnaround Time	and evaluating ideas compared to a committee-based approach" (P12)

The section synthesises the profound impact CS has had on FSPs in Africa, addressing how CS has been pivotal in solving strategic and operational issues while driving DM, DT, and OP. Based on the findings, specific improvements such as innovation and market position, customer centric solutions, speed & efficiency, process efficiency, and most importantly the ability to adapt and be respond to the ever-evolving environment.

It highlights the strategic alignment achieved through CS, showcasing programs like "MMIgine" and "Basement," which have significantly contributed to strategic innovation and OE. The discussion emphasises the break from siloed operations towards a collaborative, efficiency-focused approach, with CS fostering cross-departmental cooperation and streamlining processes. Operational enhancements have been realised through inclusive problem-solving and ideation, underscoring the necessity for FSPs to maintain competitiveness in a digital, customer-centric market. This has led to improved service delivery, risk management, and customer engagement, firmly establishing CS as an engine for innovation and growth within the sector.

As FSPs continue to navigate the intricacies of the digital age, the adoption of CS has proven to be a strategic imperative. The move towards digitalisation, facilitated by employee and customer engagement through CS platforms, has led to enhanced decision-making processes and more customer-centric services. This alignment of CS initiatives with business goals has fortified the operational capabilities of FSPs, enabling them to deliver enhanced value to their clients and stakeholders.

The strategic integration of CS within FSPs in Africa has driven a transformative impact on the sector's dynamics, embedding a robust framework for continuous improvement and innovation. The clear demonstration of increased DM, transformative processes,

and operational proficiency through CS establishes it as a cornerstone for future growth and sustainability in the rapidly evolving financial landscape.

5.3 Third Research question: Have they adopted any best-in-class practices to attain their desired objectives and become a leader in the African FSPs industry?

In the dynamic landscape of African FSPs, the adoption of best-in-class practices stands as a cornerstone for organisations striving to attain their strategic objectives and establish themselves as industry leaders. This section delves into the myriad ways in which innovative FSPs have embraced and implemented such practices, particularly through the lens of CS initiatives such as Basement, MMIgine and in addition other practices which have been identified has critical elements of the CS journey for these FSPs to become leaders. This section, the aim is to unravel the intricacies of CS platform, gamification, reward, and recognition (including KPIs), leadership, change management, 3rd party collaboration and lastly implementation or commercialisation.

Before delving into the exemplary practices and leveraging sub-question two problem statement, Niu et al. (2019) present a comprehensive framework in Chapter Two. This framework is suggested for implementing various CS initiatives as part of top-tier practices. It describes a methodical process starting from engaging the requester to brainstorming ideas, and it continues through to the dispensing of rewards, acknowledgment, and, finally, choosing the victors. Niu et al. (2019) invaluable insights into the methodical approach of needing to foster innovation and strategic problem-solving to help guide companies that wish to embark on this journey, by using the ecosystem framework as a basis. During the analysis, it became evident that perfecting the CS framework is a challenging endeavour. Each component must be meticulously evaluated, considering the specific environment and organisation. While a unified set of dimensions may not exist, there are essential components and techniques that must be incorporated into the development of a CS framework to build a best-in-class CS process, realising the intended benefits.

This introduction sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of each technique, offering a narrative on the collective understanding and noteworthy responses from the

interviewees, thereby shedding light on the several dimensions that propel the framework forward, which will enable organisations to incorporate best-in-class practises.

Table 38 Collective Understanding of the stage or technique required

Source: (Author presentation)

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
1	**Description**	Strategy	CS campaigns within organisations are systematically aligned with essential strategic objectives, such as revenue enhancement, cost optimisation etc. The creation of these campaigns is a deliberate process,	• "Campaign formulation and so a campaign will be basically a strategic objective that the business had that needed solving…an example would be how do we increase revenue…campaign will be formulated, and that campaign will then be put onto the innovation platform" (P7) • "So, campaigns are not just wishy-washy thoughts that managers put on the platform because the bored or they want the employees engaged…these are tied to strategic objectives or strategic initiatives that get cascaded down from management to the different business units…problems have a KPI right, so in in formulating

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
			grounded in the company's strategic planning and objectives set forth by management.	the campaign, it's important to put a measure of success or what success looks like" (P7)
2	**Timeline**	Ideation period and Check points	Overarching goals must be created and deconstructed into smaller, manageable milestones, which serve as progress indicators throughout the project lifecycle.	• "Once the objectives are established…break down the larger goals into smaller, manageable milestones. These milestones act as intermediate checkpoints that indicate progress" (P8)
3	**Submission requirements**	Ideation and Gamification	Establishment of a platform that fosters idea sharing and collective enhancement,	• "To ensure clarity in the submission process, we created clear submission guidelines for employees. These guidelines required employees to specify problem statements or focus

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
			underpinned by a crowd-based rating system for idea ranking. Gamification techniques, including rewards like badges and points redeemable in a digital store, are integrated to incentivise, and acknowledge participant engagement and drive platform ideation.	areas, providing an example of the required structure. Employees were encouraged to provide detailed information, including the problem's context, potential impact, and implementation feasibility. This step helped streamline the submission process and ensured that ideas were well-structured and informative from the outset" (P8) • "We had KPI's which we used to find out the number ideas submitted…measured the quality and impact…measure how well relevant these ideas were, so we had like voting system we had people submit their votes on each of these ideas, at the same time we had, we mentioned how effective the ideas were to our customers" (P3) • "Building and creating a platform where people can openly share their ideas…people participate and encourage each other and

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
				give each other ideas and grow their ideas and explore the viability themselves, off the idea to strengthen the idea and give the originator confidence in in the idea" (P4) • "Use the crowd to rate ideas and have a tool that can aggregate and rank these ideas, identify the top ranked ideas" (P12) • "Essentially delegating work to a group of people to accomplish some sort of task. Like solving a problem for instance. These people typically come from different backgrounds and areas of experience to provide their own unique perspective or angle on a problem" (P12) • "The team…created lots of interventions like on the platform itself, gamification was one of those" (P1) • **"**Initially like using things like online badges that you could earn. As you progressed you would earn points to buy things in a digital store" (P12)

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
				• "A simple example from experience was employees could win a tablet if their idea received the most votes". (P12)
4	**Judging and prizes**	Investment committee and reward & recognition	Ideas within the organisation undergo a rigorous process of ranking and evaluation, leading to business case development and assessment by an investment committee, before being transformed into tracked projects. Incentives play a pivotal role in this ecosystem,	• "So once the ideas came out and they were ranked and rated and went through, the whole innovation funnel going through the business case development, presentation to Dragons Den, which is effectively an investment committee, those ideas then got translated into projects that which that was then tracked by the project management office" (P7) • "Incentives are critical for changing behaviour and need to be relevant" (P4) • "So, for me the reward structure was important, it's all about how do you get the crowd motivated to submit ideas? How can we get them to share their knowledge to solve the problem and how can we keep people motivated. We have various

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
			with rewards ranging from monetary gains to recognition and physical prizes, which are instrumental in motivating the crowd to contribute ideas and maintain engagement.	rewards from money to recognition to physical prizes yes, they did keep the crowd going, however, when they saw their ideas were not being implemented it kind of demotivated them" (P1)
5	**Criteria and disqualification**	Evaluation, Criteria, Impact and Feasibility	The evaluation criteria play a crucial role in the evaluative phase of the idea management process, where a panel of experts conducts rigorous	• The Dragons Den, however, stood out for its pivotal role in meticulously evaluating and screening the ideas. This committee of experts rigorously assessed submissions, ensuring that only the most impactful and feasible ideas progressed toward implementation. By employing a thorough screening process, the Dragons Den helped guarantee

#	Stage or technique	Sub-theme	Collective understanding of the stage or technique	Significant Interviewee Insights
			assessments to ensure only the most impactful and practical ideas are selected for implementation, directly supporting DT and OP goals. It is imperative for the evaluation criteria to be explicitly aligned with the desired outcomes.	that the ideas selected for production had the potential to make a substantial difference in our DT and OP objectives" (P3) • "So that really starts, I think, with what it is you're setting out to do. And we need to be very clear on what it is that you would like to improve. And align your evaluation criteria to those factors. So, say for example you want to increase your brand awareness. Um, digitally, you know your evaluation criteria is probably going to be how many of our customers will be able to reach via our target customers? Because each of your customer groups are going to have different media channels that they primarily use, evaluation criteria must be specific to what you're doing" (P2)

Interviewees highlighted the importance of certain techniques for ensuring that the generation, alignment with strategic objectives, effective evaluation, and appropriate rewarding of ideas all contribute to successful outcomes in CS. In Chapter two Niu et al. (2019) proposed a framework that allows organisations to develop a holistic

ecosystem to ensure a self-sustaining system is developed and that the CS initiative is a success.

Drawing on empirical evidence from interviews and literature, this section will examine the tangible actions FSPs have taken to foster environments where creativity and innovation are not just encouraged however, systematically integrated into their operational fabric. This approach not only seeks to meet immediate business needs however, positions these FSPs to adeptly navigate and shape the future of the industry in Africa. In the subsequent subsections, this paper will delve into key components of the CS journey. These components are recognised as best-in-class practices or are recommended to be adopted as such for organisations contemplating the initiation of a CS venture.

5.3.1 *Harnessing the Power of CS Platforms: Best-in-Class Practices to drive Innovation within African FSPs*

Niu et al., (2019) in Chapter two, discussed the importance of establishing a compressive CS framework in which organisations particularly focusing on the integration of a structured process and clear objectives. The framework is crucial for the successful implementation of CS initiatives, ensuring that ideas generated are not only innovative however, targeted to align with the FSP strategic goals, aligning with the DOI theory positioned by Dearing et all (2018). The adoption of such a well-structured approach allows FSPs to efficiently manage and implement CS ideas, therefore, maximising their impact on the organisation's overall OP. Furthermore, a well-defined CS framework aids in the clear communication of the organisation's goals and objectives, ensuring that all stakeholders both internally and externally are aligned and contributing effectively towards the organisations vision.

To spur innovation within their wealth customer segment, FNB utilised the renowned CS platform "IdeaBounty", a global think tank where individuals can submit ideas and receive rewards for their contributions (Muller, 2008). The objective of the CS campaign was to harness collective intelligence globally, inviting suggestions from internet users worldwide on strategies to encourage premium clients to use online banking services. The initiative gained traction through social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, with additional publicity from local online influencers. This

venture into CS attracted 800 registrations and yielded 130 idea submissions. Guillaume Martin's standout proposal earned him a $2500 reward and was subsequently adopted by the bank. (Muller, 2008). Leveraging this as a best-in-class practice or framework P1, stated that the MMIgine program was implemented to leverage innovation and enhance their DT posture to ensure they become a market leader within the insurance place in South Africa by leveraging their internal employees and external stakeholders to help them achieved their desired end goal. P1, stated that the FNB CS program was a success "*Because the leaders really bought into it like Michael specifically and because like I took the good ideas forward and implemented them*" and leadership was visible on the platform. however, despite the MMIgine program being short lived, the programme was able to CS thousands of ideas, one idea was only implemented "*because it was like a very clear business unit need and there was a really, really decision made to put some funding and resources behind it*". P1 highlighted that an important lesson learnt, which needs to be considered as a best-in-class practice moving forward:

"Depending on your operating model, you may have to actually…develop that idea a little bit to be in the center like take it far enough forward that the business unit within the bigger group, actually see the benefit of this…So what I'm saying is you needed an illustration of the business case and that it came be successful, before the idea can really get traction and get properly activated and implemented".

P5 and P6 both stress the point around leveraging the Business Model Canvas (BMC) to enable the innovators to help flesh their idea when submitting it to the CS platform. The BMC helps innovators to structure their idea according to a set of key elements which will not only help the innovator to think holistically and about their idea, however, allow the crowd to better understand the idea and all its various idea propositions. P4, introduced a barrier that innovators "*didn't necessarily trust that their ideas are safe… lot of people hold on to the idea until they've either protected the IP*". In addition to the issue around Intellectual Property (IP), P4 mentioned that innovators may be discouraged to participate due to the fear of their ideas being copied, which can result in the discouragement of even the most talented innovators from participating in the CS of ideas process.

P3, stressed the point that training the staff on how to submit ideas is critical to the CS process, as it will allow employees to submit ideas that are well thought-out, which in turn will result in the acceleration, streamlined idea screening process, by providing input and feedback driven improvement suggestions to refine the idea or concept. In addition to the refinement of ideas, the robust selection process ensuring that ideas selected are not only aligned to the strategic goals of the campaign, however, allows for the committee or implantation team to implement the ideas within a “predefined timeline”. Additionally, participants highlighted that CS can be used to focus not only on gathering ideas however, on acquiring skills, solving problems, achieving digital initiative goals, enhancing OE, and driving project-focused objectives, all aimed at leveraging CS to address strategic issues.

In summary, African FSPs have effectively harnessed CS platforms to foster innovation, align with strategic goals, and bolster OP. The success of initiatives like FNB's CS platform IdeaBounty initiative and the MMIgine and Basement programs underscores the importance of structured idea management and leadership buy-in. The use of the BMC by innovators further ensures ideas are well-articulated and understood, making CS a critical tool for sustaining competitive advantage in the financial sector.

5.3.2 *Implementing change management excellence: Best-in-Class practices for transformational innovation in African FSPs*

P7 started as part of their best-in-class practices would be to implement a focused change management strategy, that focuses on moulding the employees to think of side of the box, as mentioned in the sub research questions it is a critical key component to ensuring the success of the CS initiative. P7 emphasised that before launching the CS platform, it is imperative for the innovation team to collaborate with the change management team to carry out a cultural 'dipstick' assessment or barometer. This assessment, which can be conducted through focus groups and surveys, will gauge the organisation's innovation culture, and determine the crowd's readiness to use the CS platform as a tool for innovation. P10 agreed with P7s statement by stating the below:

"*I am not a change management expert here; however, I think at the very minimum you one should canvas start to understand and before we even get to generating ideas and CS feedback, start by surveying and understanding the company culture, the existing company culture get as sort of a gauge of what to do next. Because when you launch the thing, you almost want it to be sold already, like everyone should be excited to answer. And so, understanding what the existing company culture is and then shifting that to a place where it's going to be, support an initiative is probably where one should start*".

P9 provided further perspective, noting the necessity for the organisation to adopt a change management strategy that is designed to transition employees from a traditional, limited mindset to a broader, more innovative way of thinking that fosters the exploration of ideas with the potential to revolutionise the industry. P4, P5, P6, P8, P10 and P11 further noted that, following the implementation of the CS tool, the change management team should perform regular assessments to ascertain whether a cultural shift has occurred and if the employees' mindset is evolving, therefore showing tangible value of the CS program.

In conclusion, the integration of change management strategies with CS initiatives is identified as a pivotal best-in-class practice among African FSPs. Emphasising the shift from conventional to innovative thinking, these strategies involve preliminary cultural assessments and ongoing evaluations to ensure employee readiness and sustained cultural evolution towards innovation. This holistic approach ensures that the transformative potential of CS is fully realised, fostering an environment ripe for industry revolutionising ideas.

5.3.1 *Driving participation through gamification: Best-in-Class Practices to motivate FSPs employees.*

To motivate employees to participate on the CS platform and innovation journey, it is crucial to add a gamification aspect. Gamification within the platform played a pivotal

role in fostering user engagement. By incorporating game-like elements such as badges, point scoring, competition with others, and rules of play, it added an element of fun and excitement to participation. P12 emphasised that the program must have various gamification aspects to the CS process, by "*using things like online badges that you could earn. As you progressed you would earn points to buy things in a digital store*". This process of gamification is instrumental in galvanising participants to engage with CS platforms actively. It incentivises not just the generation of creative concepts, however, cultivates a spirit of competition, driving participants to ascend the leader boards and accumulate badges as tokens of their accomplishments. Additionally, this approach taps into the innate human desire for recognition and progress, further embedding a sense of community among contributors. By turning the process into a challenge, gamification ensures a steady flow of diverse input, essential for innovation and problem-solving.

Considering the above, P11 highlighted a unique technique "*Gamification was an incentive. We used it as an incentive because we realised that customers, all respondents would enjoy that trill, one game that we try to do interestingly, was Pokémon go…creating an illustration of Pokémon Go. So that people across the city would go hunting for the Pokémon's, however, what they were doing was collecting data about mobility*".

The game not only drove people to leverage a digital Application (App), however, the data being collected, would provide valuable insights, into number of people in certain locations, people that have downloaded the mobile banking application with the "Pokémon go" feature and how people travel around the city. however, gamification features have negative effects as state by P12 "*People were likely to "game" or cheat the system if it was easy enough. A simple example from experience was employees could win a tablet if their idea received the most votes. Employees would then game the system and found ways to lobby people for votes, even if the idea was trivial and not value-adding to ultimately receive the reward*".

5.3.2 *Acknowledgement and Incentivisation: Best-in-class practices to reward for participation and idea generation.*

The research presented by Zeng et al. (2017) illuminates the variety of motivators that influence individuals' participation, with the aspect of reward serving as a pivotal motivator. Humans are fundamentally driven by the desire for recognition and various forms of reward, whether monetary or symbolic. P10, noted some of the ways that was used to incentives and motivate employees:

"So, we always tried to give rewards that are aligned to why these third parties are with us. So, for example, while I worked for a bank, we found that people would be more interested in financial rewards, yeah, because that's all I think about when they go to a bank. I think in number of times we had experimented which was very different in banks because we are very stingy. We had experimented, you know, offering simple things like 0.8% x discount on your interest. Or maybe give you feel free banking for 30 days or something like that. There were cases where that it would work and in some cases they would not didn't work. however, I think in Africa or yes, in Africa, what has been my most interesting incentive, is something that we used to do while I work for telcos, and I was giving airtime for phone calls and Internet usage. Even when I work for banks, I found it very useful, very well appreciated by customers, so by contributors, even in that case, I think you know in Africa what I would say is data and airtime to connectivity, has been the biggest value in incentives we will do with tried a few other things like reducing interests or free banking you know".

The results shows that participants respond to different incentives or rewards, which shape specific behaviours within the crowd. Key motivators include the drive to take part, the pursuit of submitting high-quality ideas, the provision of valuable feedback, fostering long-term engagement, and promoting ideas with significant measurable returns. These factors collectively contribute to advancing DT and enhancing OP. P2, stated that "incentives are critical for changing behaviour and need to be relevant - employees want to make a difference and feel like what they are doing is meaningful - communicating the benefits/efficiencies of the changes implemented and their impacts help employees achieve this need. And demonstrates that as an employee - you have a voice, and you can contribute to change vs being swept up in the changes only being dictated by the organisation. P1, views closely aligned to the views of Zeng et al.

(2017), "*So for me the reward structure was important, it's all about how do you get the crowd motivated to submit ideas? How can we get them to share their knowledge to solve the problem and how can we keep people motivated. We have various rewards from money to recognition to physical prizes yes, they did keep the crowd going*".

P2 noted that enhancing skills and creating prospects for viability across the broader organisation are highly appealing incentives. Such opportunities lead to collaborators from varied backgrounds joining forces to craft more comprehensive solutions. These collaborative efforts result in offerings that are better received upon implementation. P7, emphasised that incorporating leaderboards has been identified as a crucial element due to the competitive nature they foster among participants, who are keen to see their names ranked highly. Acknowledgment of those who exert significant effort is crucial, as it not only maintains their own engagement, however, ignites a desire in others to achieve similar recognition. Additionally, tangible incentives such as monetary rewards, gifts, or even non-material benefits like additional time off serve as significant motivators. These rewards create a compelling draw, encouraging more individuals to participate in the platform, thus proving to be an essential component of its success.

The research highlights the diversity of motivators for participation, with rewards playing a central role in driving engagement. Financial incentives, symbolic recognition, and practical rewards like airtime and data connectivity have proven effective, particularly in the banking and telecommunications sectors in Africa. These incentives are not only crucial for driving immediate participation however, for fostering a culture of innovation and sustained contribution towards DT and OP efforts through using CS and an enabler. The success of these incentives underscores the importance of aligning rewards with contributors' values and the operational context of the organisation. Ultimately, a well-structured incentive system can lead to the development of solutions that are holistic, innovative, and well-integrated upon deployment, thereby advancing the overall objectives of the organisation, driving it towards its goals of DT, and OP.

5.3.3 *Pioneering Prototyping and Strategic Partnerships: Best-in-class practices to leveraging Third-Party Collaboration for Executing Innovative Ideas in African FSPs*

Factoring research Proposition 2 of "Leveraging CS as an initiative, both internally and externally, plays a pivotal role in accelerating DT across various organisations such as FSPs". This proposition underscores the significance of harnessing CS as a strategic approach to drive DT efforts. To further elaborate on this point and provide a segue to the next paragraph, it can be noted that successful implementation of CS initiatives not only fosters innovation within an organisation, however, facilitates collaboration with external third-party stakeholders. This collaborative approach can lead to discovering valuable insights, creative solutions, and enhanced digital capabilities, all of which are essential components of a successful DT journey. In the upcoming information, the analysis will delve into concrete examples that illustrate how FSP's have effectively utilised CS to advance their DT goals via third-party partnerships.

P1 highlighted a significant shortfall in the MMIgine program: the successful generation of ideas did not translate into effective execution. P1 quoted "*we did…see an improvement from an innovation and market posture position, however we only implemented one idea*. P1 highlighted a gap in their process by stating that "*we saw a lot of people thinking out of the box, people we are submitting ideas that were relevant to the business however, if those ideas are not implemented the innovation within the business is limited*". P4 built on this and said "*challenge is the speed at which organisations execute*" highlighting the need for organisations to executing to maintain the momentum of the innovation journey.

Based on the above issue around the lack of implementation, speed, and execution, Gong & Ribiere (2021) highlighted that should organisations wish to digitally transform their business, digital capabilities must be implemented to not only remain relevant in the market, however, improve internal operations at the same time. P8 emphasised the necessity for organisations to demonstrate progress and influence from their CS efforts by the implementation of solutions through rapid-solving techniques:

"*Quick wins and agile implementation of ideas originating from the initiative have enabled the bank to pivot and respond swiftly to emerging challenges and*

opportunities. This enhanced flexibility has been a crucial asset in maintaining competitiveness…this agility in addressing challenges and opportunities promotes collaboration as teams can quickly respond to emerging issues. This nimbleness has allowed the organisation to be more responsive to changes in the business landscape, leading to more effective collaboration in devising solutions".

This strategy maintains the forward drive while concurrently developing more complex ideas that require detailed business cases and have lengthier implementation timelines. Ideas that require business cases, often require large amounts of funding or capital "*usually approved at a similar judging environment as to the Dragons Den*" to build the digital solution or adjust existing software or hardware within organisations. Building on the statement P2 expanded to highlight "*Our use of CS for rapid prototyping has significantly sped up our DT initiatives, positively impacting our OP*." Which supports the literature in Chapter two by Bhatti et al. (2020) and Campos-Blázquez et al. (2023) who both highlight CS as a vital tool for innovation and DT. By accessing diverse ideas and expertise, CS enables FSPs to conduct rapid experimentation and prototyping, enhancing DT and OP posture. Post the development of a prototype or a MVP, it is critical to pilot the solution with a small group of people or users to allowed for adjustments and refinements via feedback, minimising potential challenges during the full implementation.

P7 cited the example of the African FinTech Foundry (AFF), an innovation hub established independently of Access Bank's main structure, dedicated to the swift development and sandbox testing of ideas before market release. This external entity that acted quickly to accelerate the development of those ideas, thought a rapid prototyping process with a 'fail fast, fail cheap' approach. It offers a controlled setting where concepts are iteratively tested and refined until they meet all necessary criteria for commercialisation to the bank's clientele or within the organisation itself. This type of rapid prototyping can leverage well know methodologies such as design thinking, google venture sprints, lean start-up methods or agile ways of work as indicated by P9. P8 and P11, used the concept of partnering with local or international 3rd party start-ups or FinTech's to aid the development of solutions as part of their best-in-class approach to churning out solutions to stay relevant in the market or address the ever-evolving needs of the market.

Table 39 Start-up/3rd Party Collaborations to Accelerate Product Development

Source: (Author presentation)

FSP	Start-up/3rd Party Provider	Business Impact or Outcome
Access Bank	**Internal Division**	"Though Leadership and Strategy team in Africa Fintech Foundry. This collaboration played a pivotal role in navigating the ever-evolving landscape of www.accessbankplc.com technology and digitisation, enabling us to leverage expertise and gain critical insights into industry trends. The Thought Leadership and Strategy Team, composed of experts deeply entrenched in industry trends, acted as a strategic partner for the Basement project. They remained at the forefront of monitoring and analysing industry trends, technological advancements, and digital innovations. Their insights provided valuable guidance, allowing us to stay ahead of the curve and align our CS initiatives, especially Basement, with the prevailing industry challenges and trends. The partnership ensured that the ideas generated through Basement were not just innovative however, aligned with the strategic direction of the bank and the industry at large. Insights provided by this Team guided the evaluation process conducted by Dragon's Den, ensuring that selected ideas were not only inventive however, had the potential to address pertinent industry challenges".
Access Bank	**Not Disclosed**	"I remember an instance in Nigeria, where we were trying to do when you were looking into create payment options, online payment options for micro, small and medium enterprises.

FSP	Start-up/3rd Party Provider	Business Impact or Outcome
		So, there was business that all have no online presence. All they have at best is their bank accounts and we wanted a quick way of using that bank account to take payments and relate the payments back to a product. So, we were trying to lock three things: One is identified who has paid? Two is to identify what has been procured? Three and collect the money into bank accounts that the merchants can access. We had to solve all those three problems and we felt like we could go into several ideation sessions and my guys came back with several partners that could accelerates the work that needed to be done. What I had thought would take us maybe six months ended up taking, you know, two to three weeks because we had partners who were, who had solutions".
Access Bank	**Microsoft and CX Unicorn**	"The partnership with Microsoft and CX Unicorn teams was pivotal in the creation of the ID8 portal. This collaboration allowed Access Bank to leverage Microsoft's technology stack and CX Unicorn's expertise in customer experience design for ideation submissions within the Access Nation".
Access Bank	**Coronation**	"The collaboration with Coronation facilitated the development of the Wealth and Investment Management feature on Access More. By leveraging Coronation's wealth management expertise, Access Bank was able to offer its customers a sophisticated wealth management platform,

FSP	Start-up/3rd Party Provider	Business Impact or Outcome
		expanding its service portfolio and attracting high-net-worth clients".
Access Bank	**Interstellar**	"The partnership with Interstellar for the Blink Network project is another example of Access Bank's successful collaborations. The Blink Network is a blockchain-based payment platform that enables cross-border transactions. Interstellar's expertise in blockchain technology and financial services was invaluable in creating a secure and efficient cross-border payment system".

Drawing upon the insights and case studies presented in table 42, it is evident that African FSPs are embracing best-in-class practices through pioneering prototyping and strategic 3rd party partnerships to execute innovative ideas with agility and precision. The MMIgine program, despite its shortcomings in idea execution, provided a valuable lesson in the importance of transitioning from idea generation to tangible outcomes—a transition bolstered by the swift and strategic implementation of ideas and 'quick wins'. This approach has proven essential in maintaining the momentum of innovation, allowing for the agile development of ideas into market-ready solutions.

Access Bank's model of partnering with entities such as Microsoft, CX Unicorn, and Interstellar underscores the significant business impact of such alliances. These partnerships have not only expedited product development, transforming a six-month project into a matter of weeks however, enriched the bank's service offerings, from sophisticated wealth management segment to secure blockchain-based payment systems. The African FinTech Foundry (AFF) exemplifies the benefits of an independent innovation hub, fostering a 'fail fast, fail cheap' ethos that accelerates the

prototyping process. Collectively, these strategies embody a robust framework for FSPs to stay at the forefront of market relevance and address the evolving needs of their consumer base, proving that the strategic fusion of rapid prototyping, building of MVPs and external collaborations is indeed a best-in-class practice for transformational innovation in the sector, in their drive towards being positioned as a market leader and be a DM FSP.

5.3.4 *Commercialisation of innovative Ideas: Best-in-class practices to drive materialisation*

Lastly, a critical component discussed during 5.2.3 “Pioneering Prototyping and Strategic Partnerships” the process of CS ideas is the aspect of implementation or commercialisation, without the ideas being implemented the CS journey would not hold any results and be marly an employee value proposition initiative. P8 indicated that the implementation of ideas is critical to the process and has a significant impact as “*internal processes have been streamlined, reducing manual tasks and optimising workflows. This has translated into increased operational efficiency, allowing the bank to do more with fewer resources*”. P12, brought in another perspective to state that “*CS may only be used in the idea generation phase of an innovation initiative, however, may stop once the implementation starts. The measures in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, operational excellence, quality, and revenue generation will remain unchanged, as they are only the result of the CS initiative outcomes”.* This statement argues that CS of ideas as a concept stops at ideation, and the implantation of those ideas are an entirely different/separate process, which is contradicting the statement of soliciting feedback on existing P&S.

P1 noted that while gauging participation on the platform is necessary, it is paramount to assess the actualisation of those ideas. This involves determining the tangible benefits derived from an idea, whether it enhances revenue, betters OE, or contributes to cost reductions and understanding how these improvements or savings are achieved following the idea's implementation, and results in a drive towards being a market leader.

In conclusion, the commercialisation and implementation of ideas generated through CS are essential to realising tangible outcomes and driving market leadership. It is not

merely the volume of participation that is indicative of success, however, the effective materialisation of ideas that can enhance OE, reduce costs, and increase revenue. P8's observation underscores the necessity of translating CS ideas into practical improvements within the bank's internal processes. Meanwhile, P12's insights serve as a reminder that the real measure of a CS initiative's success lies in the end results of implementation, such as operational excellence and revenue generation, rather than the ideation phase alone.

5.3.5 *CS Maturity in Africa: Are they ready?*

While majority of the participants agreed having in-depth knowledge around CS of ideas within the FSP, majority of the participants highlighted that Africa as a continent has an enormous journey, for it to be ready to embrace various CS initiatives:

"*I don't really know, however, if it's a relative question compared to the US, I would say quite low, I guess. Compared to the UK and Europe we are low, however, like compared to Asia, I think it's probably like a lower. Although you know, I must say there is a lot of potential. Definitely I think that as Africa, we have a lot of a long way to go in terms of CS*". (P1)

"*Hmm I think Africa has a long way to go, for me it's about teaching people how to use this form and give them that knowledge because if they don't know how to do it properly, it will never work*". (P6)

"*In Africa, the level of maturity of CS varies across countries and sectors. While some African countries and organisations have embraced CS and actively leverage it for various purposes, others are still in the early stages of adoption. Several key observations can help illustrate the current state of CS in Africa:*

Regional Variations: The level of maturity differs between African regions. For example, countries in North Africa, such as Tunisia and Egypt, have made significant strides in CS for civic engagement and innovation. In contrast, some sub-Saharan African countries are in the early stages of adopting CS practices. Government Initiatives: Some African governments have initiated CS efforts to address specific challenges, such as health crises or public service delivery. These initiatives often

involve citizens' participation in providing solutions or ideas. Innovation Hubs and Start-ups: Innovation hubs and start-ups in African countries, particularly in tech-savvy cities like Nairobi and Lagos, are actively promoting CS to drive innovation in areas like agriculture, healthcare, and fintech. Agriculture and Healthcare: CS platforms and initiatives related to agriculture and healthcare are relatively mature in Africa. Farmers and healthcare providers in several countries are using mobile apps and platforms to access information and share knowledge.

Challenges: Challenges to the maturity of CS in Africa include limited internet access in rural areas, concerns about data privacy and security, and the need for greater awareness and education about the benefits of CS. Organisations, governments, and communities in Africa are increasingly recognising the potential of CS to address local challenges and drive innovation. Efforts to mature the practice are ongoing, and the level of maturity is likely to continue evolving as awareness and adoption grow across the continent" (P8)

Majority of the participants expressed their views that Africa is not ready for CS programs, however there is a fine balance that if its implemented correct, knowledge and training is provided, it can become a success.

5.4 Conclusion

In the rapidly evolving landscape of African FSPs, the strategic implementation of CS has proven to be an indispensable catalyst for innovation and leadership. Through the detailed examination of various FSPs' experiences, this chapter underscores the power of CS in bridging the gap between ideation and execution. The MMIgine and Basement program, despite its challenges in idea implementation, highlighted the critical need for a structured approach to operationalise innovative concepts. The programme's success in fostering out-of-the-box thinking and its direct impact on the market position sets a precedent for future initiatives. The recurring theme of 'quick wins' alongside the strategic development of complex ideas with longer timelines emphasises the importance of agility and flexibility in maintaining innovation momentum. This is further assertion of the necessity for digital capabilities to stay relevant and improve internal operations.

The African FinTech Foundry (AFF) emerges as a beacon of best practices, with its dedicated approach to rapid prototyping within a controlled 'sandbox' environment, enabling the swift development and testing of ideas. This approach, leveraging methodologies such as design thinking and agile workflows, encapsulates the essence of a fail-fast philosophy, reducing the risks and costs associated with innovation. Strategic partnerships with third-party providers, as evidenced by Access Bank's collaborations, have significantly reduced time-to-market for new product developments, demonstrating the profound impact of such alliances. These collaborations not only streamline product development, however, infuse the bank's offerings with cutting-edge technology and expertise, as seen with the ID8 portal and the Blink Network projects.

In conclusion, it is the synthesis of CS platforms, change management strategies, and prototyping partnerships that fosters a culture of continuous innovation and positions African FSPs as leaders in the industry. The lessons drawn from the MMIgine, Basement program and the AFF, alongside the successful third-party collaborations, provide a strategic blueprint for FSPs aiming to achieve market leadership through innovation. These components, when effectively integrated, enable FSPs to navigate the complexities of the digital age, remaining relevant and competitive. This chapter not only reflects on the current state of digital and operational advancements driven by CS, however, sets the stage for ongoing evolution, ensuring that African FSPs remain at the forefront of financial innovation, DT and OP.

CHAPTER 6. Conclusion for CS and its effect on DT and OP

In this chapter, utilising the empirical findings and insights garnered from the research project, the author introduces a comprehensive conceptual and practical model. This model is designed to serve as a valuable framework for African FSPs seeking to harness the potential of CS for their DT and OP endeavour's. The chapter extensively explores the pivotal role of CS is not a stand-alone initiative, however, forms part of a broader ecosystem that takes ideas from the CS platform, and evolves it into a finalised, implementable idea. Considering the insights, learnings, and best-in-class practices discussed above, the following is a proposed consolidated framework that organisations, particularly FSPs, can employ to accelerate their DT and OP initiatives. This framework draws from Niu et al., (2019) CS ecosystem and process, as presented in Figure 3 in Chapter two, serving as a foundational reference for an updated model. This model aims to standardise the CS journey for FSPs not only in Africa however, on a global scale.

Drawing from the literature review in Chapter two, insights gathered from interviews and participant feedback, link the findings in Chapter four and discussions in Chapter five, this framework incorporates crucial 'best-in-class practices' and essential components that play a pivotal role in the context of CS as shown in Fig 8. Additionally, it introduces novel elements that must be considered in the context of CS's role in advancing an organisation's DT and OP efforts. This model represents an evolved framework, building upon the work of Niu et al. (2019).

6.1 Recommendations

In charting the course for future development within African FSPs, the following recommendations are offered as a strategic compass. They are derived from a comprehensive analysis of current practices and offer a trajectory for harnessing CS to achieve DT and enhance OP. As FSPs endeavour to navigate the complexities of the digital landscape, these guidelines aim to direct their efforts towards effective integration of CS into their organisational fabric, ensuring that the transition towards digital maturity is both innovative and in line with strategic objectives. Moreover, these

recommendations consider the intricacies of organisational culture, the necessity of aligning internal capabilities and external partnerships, and the importance of regulatory compliance. Together, they constitute a holistic approach to fostering a dynamic and innovative CS ecosystem within the African FSP sector.

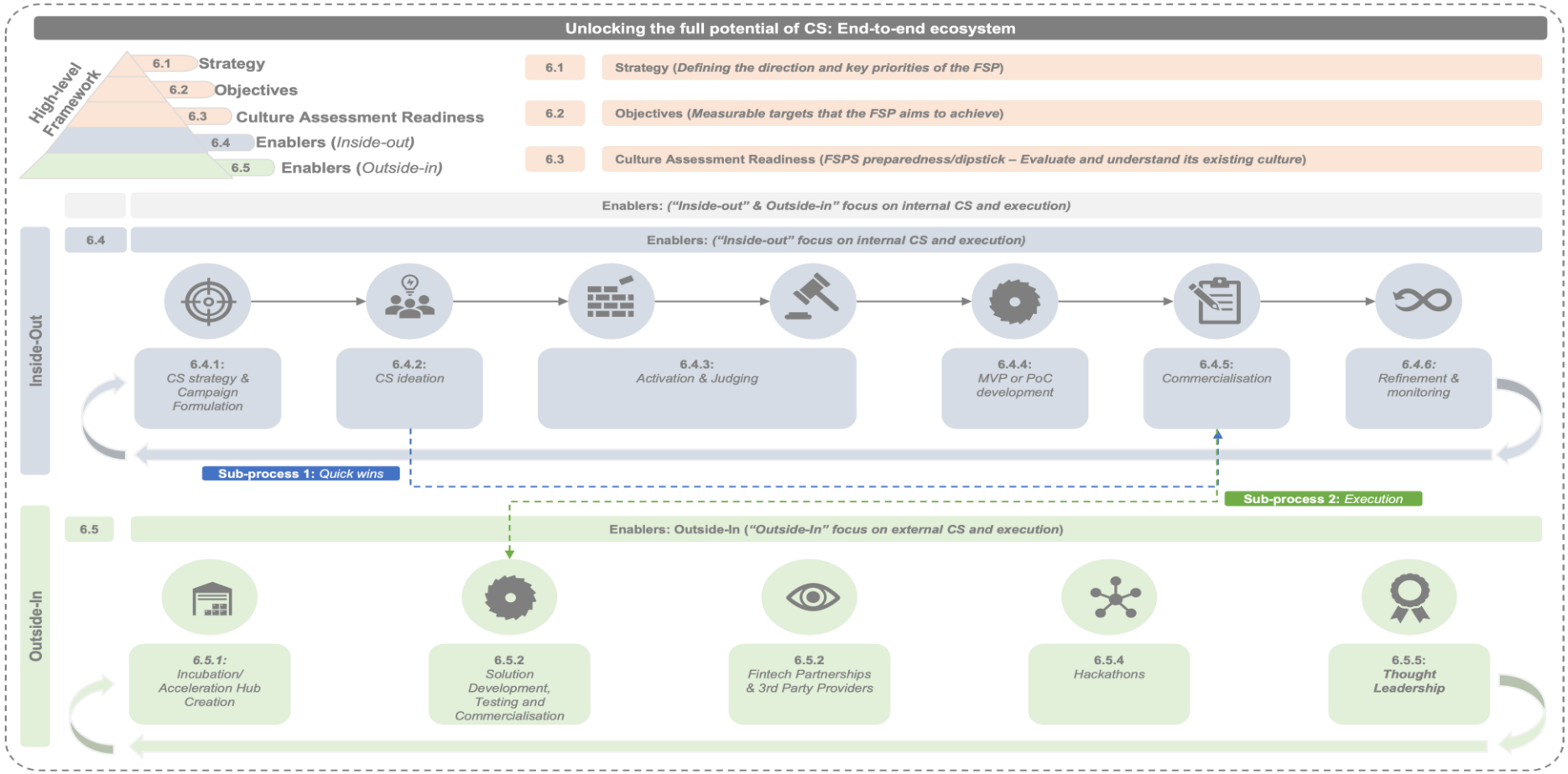

Figure 8 End to End Ecosystem Holistic CS Ecosystem Framework

Source: (Author presentation)

The presented framework in Fig 8, commences with a well-defined strategy, establishing a clear direction and setting key priorities for FSPs embarking on the journey of enhancing their CS. This strategy acts as a guiding light, ensuring that every effort is directed towards the organisation's core vision and CS objectives. These objectives are more than just aspirations; they are concrete, measurable targets that the FSP aims to achieve, providing a roadmap for progress and a means to measure success along the way. Underpinning this strategic approach is the recognition of the organisation's culture as a critical enabler of CS. The framework incorporates a Culture Assessment Readiness to gauge the existing ethos and adaptability of the organisation to the new CS strategy. Following this internal cultural alignment, the framework identifies two streams of enablers: "Inside-Out", focusing on mobilising internal capabilities to execute the CS strategy, and "Outside-In", which looks beyond the organisation to leverage external partnerships and innovations. These enablers are pivotal in actualising the strategy and objectives into tangible outcomes, driving the FSP towards a holistic and dynamic CS ecosystem.

6.1.1 *Strategy:*

The strategy for a FSPs serves as the overarching blueprint guiding its market engagement and operational ethos. It will encompass the market positioning, ambitions and the direction which would focus on achieving its set out goals (Smith et al., 2012). This activity strategic phase would be to leave trends, insights, and market direction to establish a clear direction, and how innovation would play an integral role in the process, focusing of the DT and OP issues that the FSP is currently experiencing. FSPs must not forget to leverage its current customer insights which is paramount to create customer loyalty through superior service, personalised financial advice, and a seamless integration of services across digital and physical channels as stated by Wilson et al (2018) and Kirillova et al (2021).

6.1.2 *Objectives*

Objectives set for FSPs translate the overarching strategy into quantifiable and actionable goals, which are essential for tracking progress and guiding operational decisions. Financial objectives may include specific targets for revenue growth,

profitability, and cost efficiency, providing clear financial direction for the organisation. (Indounas, 2018). Customer-focused objectives are crucial, aiming for heightened acquisition rates, improved retention, and higher satisfaction scores, which are pivotal for expanding market share and fostering loyalty (Indounas, 2018). Operationally, goals revolve around enhancing service speed, accuracy, and overall process optimisation to elevate the CX. Compliance objectives ensure strict adherence to regulatory mandates, minimising risk, and upholding governance standards. Innovation objectives drive the organisation to remain competitive through the development of pioneering financial products and the adoption of transformative technologies (Indounas, 2018). These multi-faceted objectives work in concert to propel the financial service provider towards achieving its strategic vision (Smith et al., 2012).

6.1.3 *Culture Assessment Readiness:*

In this initial stage of the CS journey, the organisation conducts a thorough assessment of its innovation readiness. This assessment spans across business units and the entire organisation to gauge the prevailing culture. The results are meticulously formulated and analysed to determine the extent of culture transformation required. Subsequently, an awareness roadshow journey is developed to engage and educate all members of the workforce, ensuring alignment with the innovation agenda and highlighting the process of the CS initiative to ensure alignment and knowledge is transmitted to all the relevant stakeholders (Dervitsiotis, 2010). These questions can comprise of employee satisfaction, employee cooperation, level of trust, risk attitude, learning, innovation maturity and many more (Dervitsiotis, 2010). This process can be accompanied by workshops and learning and development material to help support stakeholders from end to end of the CS journey.

6.2 Inside-Out Process:

6.2.1 *CS strategy & Campaign Formulation*

The strategy stage serves as the guiding force for the entire CS initiative. A campaign team is carefully assembled, consisting of subject matter experts and professional's adept in change management. Together, they formulate a clear strategic alignment, defining goals, campaign timelines, and an overall framework for the journey (Kirillova et al., 2021). Key components of this stage include establishing change management interventions, designing reward and recognition mechanisms, selecting judges or "Dragons Den" members, and securing the necessary budget and organisational support. This stage is critical in the process, as campaigns are formulated to ensure that the organisations DT and OP agenda is solutioned for, to ensure the role of the CS imitative helps to evolve the organisation into a DM organisation, while addressing internal OP issues. Lastly, it is imperative for FSPs to engage with banking regulatory authorities when devising specific campaigns or formulating problem statements for CS. This collaboration ensures that the solicited ideas do not inadvertently contravene existing or forthcoming regulatory policies, thereby mitigating potential risks and ensuring implementability. Furthermore, such partnerships can offer valuable insights into the regulatory landscape, guiding the development of CS initiatives that are compliant however, forward-looking. By doing so, FSPs can navigate the complex interplay between innovation and compliance, fostering an ecosystem where crowdsourced ideas can flourish within the boundaries of regulatory frameworks. This proactive approach can serve to streamline the innovation pipeline, ensuring that the resultant strategies and solutions are both effective and sustainable in the long term.

6.2.2 *CS Ideation:*

Ideation is the stage where creativity and innovation take centre stage on the CS platform. The CS campaign is launched on a dedicated platform, accompanied by targeted marketing and communication efforts, which encourages participants to submit their ideas, which are then assessed, ranked, and rated based on the merit and quality of their ideas as mentioned both Brabham (2010) and Villasalero (2018). Implementing a BMC framework, when submitting an idea is critical as it allows the

ideators to critically think about their idea, however, give it enough detail for the campaign team and innovators to understand the idea or concept. The campaign team actively monitors and provides feedback, ensuring a robust selection process that identifies the most promising ideas. Gamification plays a pivotal role in motivating ideators to actively participate in the CS platform. It not only encourages the submission of innovative ideas, however, fosters a competitive environment, where individuals strive to top the leader board and earn badges for various achievements. Furthermore, rewards and recognition are offered based on performance. One innovative approach involves the introduction of an online marketplace, where participants accumulate points through their CS platform activities. These points can then be exchanged through a virtual currency exchange rate, allowing innovators to redeem tangible and intangible products based on their accumulated points on a digital online mall platform.

To proceed with the activation phase, a meticulous selection process is employed. This selection is guided by predetermined criteria established by the campaign team during “strategy” stage. The objective is to ensure that the chosen ideas align with the specified criteria and meet the expectations of the judges or participants in the 'Dragons Den' evaluation. Active leadership participation on the platform is crucial as it serves as a direct source of motivation for innovators to present their creative and innovative ideas. When leadership actively engages with the platform by providing comments and feedback, it significantly contributes to nurturing an innovative CS culture within the organisation. This visible leadership presence not only encourages ideators however, demonstrates a commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and collaboration. The utilisation of CS not only fosters innovation, however, contributes to the flattening of the organisational hierarchy. On the CS platform, individuals from various roles and hierarchical levels are encouraged to contribute their ideas, creating a level playing field for innovation. This inclusive approach empowers employees, promoting a sense of ownership and collaboration within the organisation. It breaks down silos and encourages cross-functional cooperation, fostering a culture of collective innovation by embracing diverse perspectives and solutions, CS enhances the organisation's DT and OP goals. Should selected (sub-process 1) ideas during the ideation phase be identified as quick-wins, it will either go into MVP or PoC

development or commercialisation if not development is required or will be transferred to the Outside-in process.

6.2.3 *Activation and Judging*

Activation is where ideas start to materialise into potential tangible projects. Dedicated campaign teams are assigned to selected ideas, providing them with the support and resources needed for development. This stage includes learning and development interventions and workshops for ideators and judging panel members. Detailed business cases and financial projections are crafted, and winning ideas are chosen based on the assessments and scores provided by the judge (Niu et al., 2019). The individuals behind these winning ideas are duly rewarded and recognised for their contributions. Following the activation stage, it is advisable to establish a Digital Steering Committee. This committee brings together top-level executives, business leaders, CDOs, COOs, and CEOs to deliberate on ongoing innovations within the organisation. This forum provides a platform for influential stakeholders to intervene and make decisions promptly, ensuring that the ideation and implementation processes proceed smoothly without any impediments, thus facilitating the seamless progression of the CS realisation journey.

6.2.4 *MVP or PoC development*

Moving forward, the MVP or PoC development stage takes shape. Collaboration becomes vital as ideas are refined and developed into MVPs or PoCs. This process will involve working side by side with the internal technology team to begin to develop and build the ideas into projects or digital solutions (Yin et al., 2022). This may involve establishing partnerships with third-party entities or incubation partners or the external outside-in division (6.5), this will occur if the internal capabilities may not be available, or funding sits in the Outside-in. The development process includes MVP or PoC development and rigorous UAT to ensure the readiness of these innovative solutions (Yin et al., 2022). Collaborating closely with the PMO team is essential to ensure the smooth implementation of innovative concepts without falling behind schedule. Prioritising regular projects alongside the implementation of innovative ideas is crucial to strike a balance that ensures both aspects receive the necessary attention as well

as including ideas from sub-process 1, should ideas not be able to be developed internally. This equilibrium guarantees that innovative ideas are executed efficiently while preventing any delays in the execution of BAU projects. Ultimately, this approach accelerates the FSP progress towards its DT and OP objectives.

6.2.5 *Commercialisation*

In the final stage of Commercialisation, the organisation embarks on the development of a full-scale solution that has emerged from the earlier stages of ideation and MVP development. This comprehensive solution undergoes meticulous testing and refinement through a final UAT process, ensuring it aligns with regulatory requirements. Once the solution has been fine-tuned and is ready for deployment, the organisation proceeds to roll out the full-scale digital solution both internally and externally (external customers) (Yin et al., 2022).

6.2.6 *Refinement & monitoring*

Additionally, an essential aspect of this stage involves monitoring the implemented ideas to track their ROI and performance against predefined targets. This monitoring process allows the organisation to assess the real-world impact of the ideas brought to life through CS. It provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of the implemented solutions, enabling data-driven decisions and adjustments to ensure the organisation continues to progress towards its DT and OP objectives.

As ideas mature and digital solutions take shape, gathering feedback from valuable stakeholders becomes paramount. This feedback loop facilitates a collaborative approach, enabling the business to refine its digital offerings and enhance internal P&S based on the insights and recommendations provided. It serves as a valuable mechanism for aligning the organisation's innovations with the evolving needs and preferences of its key stakeholders. This iterative process ensures that the implemented solutions remain agile and adaptable, ultimately contributing to the organisation's sustained success in the ever-evolving landscape of DT and OP plus modernising less mature banking infrastructure.

6.3 Outside-In Services:

6.3.1 *Incubation/Acceleration Hub Creation:*

The creation of an Incubation/Acceleration Hub is a dedicated space, positioned external to regular business operations, serves as a specialised environment for nurturing innovative ideas from internally and externally. It is equipped with the resources and expertise necessary to cultivate and accelerate innovative concepts, providing them with the ideal conditions for growth and development. The advantage of this function is to allow for the rapid development and testing of solutions to ensure that the concept is tested in a controlled environment, budget is set aside of the digital solution and is away from all the red tape that can be encountered in the FSP.

6.3.2 *Solution Development, Testing and Commercialisation:*

In parallel with the Inside-Out, commercialisation stage, the Outside-In Services stage focuses on the refinement and testing of digital solutions, via the incubator/accelerator hub should it not be possible to develop the solutions internally in the “Inside-Out” process. The organisation fine-tunes these solutions, conducts comprehensive UAT, and ensures alignment with regulatory requirements. Moreover, gathering feedback from end-users plays a pivotal role in enhancing and optimising these solutions, paving the way for their full-scale implementation.

6.3.3 *Fintech Partnerships & 3rd Party Providers:*

The exploration of Fintech partnerships and third-party providers represents a pivotal phase in expanding the organisation's horizons beyond its internal capabilities. During this stage, a comprehensive search is conducted to identify potential partnerships with innovative Fintech firms and third-party solution providers that align with the organisation's strategic objectives. These partnerships are not merely transactional; rather, they are cultivated as collaborative relationships aimed at fostering mutually beneficial outcomes. The goal must be focused on tapping into cutting-edge technologies and external expertise that can significantly enhance the organisation's digital ecosystem. This involves a meticulous evaluation of potential partners' offerings,

capabilities, and compatibility with the organisation's goals. Through these strategic alliances, the organisation gains access to specialised resources, knowledge, tools, and insights that can catalyse innovation and DT initiatives to greater heights. These partnerships extend the organisation's capabilities, allowing it to leverage external innovation while complementing its internal strengths. By harnessing the strengths of both internal and external resources, the organisation creates a dynamic ecosystem that propels it towards achieving its DT and OP objectives with agility and effectiveness.

6.3.4 *Hackathons:*

Hackathons serve as the crucible for innovation, offering a platform for creative problem-solving and digital solution development. The organisation regularly organises hackathons to address specific challenges. This stage includes the creation of business cases for digital solutions if required, along with thorough UAT and diligence processes. Regulatory compliance is a paramount consideration, ensuring that solutions are ready for full-scale deployment, and the development process is not delayed.

6.3.5 *Thought Leadership:*

The journey culminates in the thought leadership stage, where the organisation positions itself as an industry visionary. Annual conferences serve as platforms to showcase thought leadership, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders. Additionally, a roadshow journey is executed to interact with stakeholders and disseminate insights and innovations across the industry, solidifying the organisation's role as a forward-thinking leader.

In this dynamic and comprehensive journey, each stage plays a crucial role in driving innovation and leveraging CS to its full potential. These meticulously planned and executed stages collectively contribute to the organisation's success in achieving its DT and OP objectives. Formal Conclusion CS Pivotal Role in African FSPs DT and OP journey

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter presents a holistic framework and roadmap for African FSPs aiming to harness the power of CS to DT and enhance OP. Drawing on empirical findings, insights from interviews, and participant feedback, this model encapsulates 'best-in-class practices' and essential components pivotal in the context of CS. It introduces novel elements that underscore the evolving role of CS in advancing an organisation's DT and OP efforts.

This study significantly contributes to the DOI theory by providing empirical evidence of how CS as a process can act as an accelerator for the adoption and dissemination of innovations within the context of African FSPs. By examining the integration of CS into the strategic, operational, and cultural facets of FSPs, the research showcases how a collective intelligence approach can surmount traditional barriers to innovation. It highlights the role of CS in facilitating a broader and more rapid uptake of DT and OP enhancements, resonating with the DOI's core stages of innovation adoption. The findings suggest that CS can effectively bridge the gap between early adopters and the early majority, thus smoothing the innovation adoption curve within the FSP sector. Furthermore, the study's insights into strategic alignment, cultural readiness, and the activation of internal and external innovation enablers expand upon DOI theory by illustrating practical mechanisms through which diffusion can be operationalised and measured in the organisational context to allow for FSPs in Africa to advance their DM postures.

The 'Inside-Out Process' initiates with a culture assessment, fostering an innovative culture within FSPs. The creation of an Incubation/Acceleration Hub outside regular business operations accelerates innovation. The Strategy stage outlines the campaign team formulation, alignment goals, and strategic planning. Ideation encourages creativity and utilises gamification to motivate ideators. Activation transforms ideas into tangible projects, and MVP Development fine-tunes innovations for implementation. Additionally, the implementation process includes continuous feedback and monitoring, allowing the organisation to assess the RO) and performance of implemented ideas against predefined targets. This feedback loop ensures data-driven decisions and ongoing adjustments to maximise the impact of CS on DT and OP within FSPs.

Simultaneously, 'Outside-In Services' ensures the refinement and testing of digital solutions through Solution Development & Testing. Fintech partnerships and third-party providers extend capabilities. The emphasis on hackathons highlights the significance of co-creation and problem-solving. These events serve as catalysts for identifying and nurturing digital solutions that address real-world challenges. Thought leadership initiatives demonstrate the commitment to knowledge-sharing and industry leadership, further solidifying the role of FSPs as visionary players in the African FSP.

This dynamic and comprehensive journey underscores the pivotal role of CS in driving DT and OP within African FSPs and its role lays the foundation for innovative thinking, fosters collaboration, and positions FSPs on the path to DM and operational excellence. As CS evolves, so does its role in reshaping the landscape of African Financial Services, offering a competitive edge and an agile response to the evolving industry demands.

In summary, this chapter underscores that the role of CS extends beyond a mere tool for idea generation; it is a strategic enabler of DT and OE. It empowers FSPs to adapt, innovate, and thrive in a rapidly evolving environment. As FSPs embark on this journey, they position themselves at the forefront of industry transformation, leveraging CS as a key driver of success.

6.5 Study Limitations

Given the constraints of time, the proposed framework depicted in Fig 8, was not circulated amongst the interviewees for evaluation and feedback within the duration of this interview stage. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the framework's validity, as its development is anchored in the comprehensive literature reviewed in Chapter 2, the empirical findings presented in Chapter 4, and the analytical discussions in Chapter 5. The framework is thus a distillation of extensive research and thematic analysis, assuring its relevance and applicability despite the absence of participatory evaluation during the research phase. Future research could benefit from involving stakeholders in a feedback loop to refine and enhance the framework's practicality and effectiveness in real-world applications.

6.5.1 *Scope for future studies*

The realm of CS for DT and OP within African FSPs presents a fertile ground for academic inquiry. For students and scholars embarking on a thesis or study in this dynamic field, the following research questions are pivotal. Future Research Questions Breakdown:

1. What are the long-term effects of CS of ideas on the financial performance of African FSPs, and how might these influence strategic decision-making over time?
2. How does the cultural context within African FSPs influence the adoption and effectiveness of CS for driving DT and enhancing OP?
3. How do internal stakeholder perceptions and engagement levels affect the success of CS initiatives in accelerating DT within FSPs?
4. What role does leadership play in fostering an environment that supports CS of ideas for DT and improved OP?
5. Are there any sector-specific challenges (client segments) or benefits that African FSPs encounter when leveraging CS for DT and OP improvement?
6. How do external factors, such as regulatory environments or economic conditions, impact the effectiveness of CS in driving DT and OP in African FSPs?
7. What measurement frameworks can be developed and applied to accurately assess the impact of CS on DT and OP in the context of African FSPs?
8. How can FSPs balance the need for innovative CS approaches with the risk management practices inherent to the financial industry?
9. What collaborative models between African FSPs and third parties can maximise the benefits of CS for DT and OP?

They delve into the enduring impacts of CS on the financial robustness of FSPs, the intricate interplay of cultural nuances, and the technological advancements that can propel the CS process. Further, these inquiries examine the internal and external influences shaping the success of CS initiatives, from stakeholder perceptions and leadership roles to regulatory frameworks and economic variables. These questions aim to dissect the sector-specific hurdles and advantages, the strategic equilibrium between innovation and risk, and the potential for collaborative synergies. Collectively,

they form a comprehensive guide for scholarly exploration that promises to contribute significantly to the body of knowledge on CS, DM, DT, and OP within the African financial sector.

CHAPTER 7. Study contribution to theory

This study has made a significant theoretical contribution by applying and extending the Diffusion of Innovation theory within the specific context of FSPs in Africa. It has explored CS not only as a digital tool but as a socio-technological phenomenon that accelerates DT and enhances OP. The research has illuminated the nuanced ways in which CS, as a mechanism of open innovation, intersects with and propels the diffusion of new technologies and practices in the FSP sector a sector marked by unique challenges of digital maturity and cultural barriers to technology adoption.

Through qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with key industry stakeholders, the study has deepened the understanding of how innovations diffuse within organisations and across the industry. It has shed light on the strategic and operational ramifications of CS, offering empirical evidence to support theoretical claims. By identifying the factors that influence the adoption of CS, such as organisational readiness, regulatory environments, and cultural nuances the research has expanded the Diffusion of Innovation theory's applicability in the digital age.

Moreover, the study has contributed to theory by suggesting a framework for FSPs to navigate the complexities of CS adoption. In doing so, it provides a theoretical foundation for future research to build upon, particularly in emerging economies where research is still burgeoning. The study also poses implications for theory development by identifying areas where the traditional models of innovation diffusion may require revision or expansion to fully encapsulate the dynamics of CS in enhancing DT and OP.

In sum, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in its contextualisation of CS within the framework of innovation diffusion, offering a robust model for understanding and leveraging CS as a transformative force in the African FSP industry.

CHAPTER 8. Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Research question

The researcher will commence the interview with an introduction, providing a concise overview of the objective of the master's topic. The main emphasis of this research is to explore the influence of utilising CS of ideas as a driving force for DT and enhanced OP within FSPs operating in Africa.

The thesis topic aims to delve into the utilisation of CS both internally and externally within FSPs, examining how it serves as a catalyst for DT. By harnessing the collective intelligence and diverse perspectives of a crowd. This study aims to comprehend the process of gathering ideas from various stakeholders for an organisation can lead to innovative solutions, improved efficiencies, and operational excellence.

Part A:

Background and Demographics:

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself, by stating your name (optional) age, current position within your organisation?
2. How long have you been working in the FPS industry, specially within the African context?
3. Can you share any previous experience or involvement in CS initiatives or DT journey within your current or previous organisation?

Part B:

Interview questions:

1. What is your understanding of CS, DT and OP?
2. Can you share specific instances of CS initiatives that have been implement within your current or previous organisation to drive DT and improve OP?
    a. What were the primary goals or objectives that these initiatives to achieve?

    b. Was the initiative(s) well accepted by the employees (crowd) within your organisation?

3. What were the specific benefits or improvements observed in your organisation's OP because of implementing CS?
4. Did the implementation of these CS initiatives result in improvements in efficiency, quality, flexibility, innovation, or customer responsiveness?
5. What were the specific benefits or improvements observed in your organisation's OP because of implementing CS for DT?

6. How did CS contribute to enhancing collaboration and fostering innovation within your current or previous organisation?

    a. In your perspective, did the implementation of CS initiatives improve collaboration? If so, in what ways did it enhance collaboration within the organisation?

7. How did CS contribute to enhancing innovation within your organisation?
    a. Could you provide specific examples or instances that highlight how CS initiatives enhanced your organisation's innovation capability?
    b. Which preferred method of CS of ideas did you find most valuable? Internally or externally?
8. What challenges or obstacles did your organisation encounter when implementing CS initiatives for DT and OP?
    a. How were these challenges addressed?
    b. Were there any change management interventions that needed to be deployed to drive the desired behaviours during the implementation of CS initiatives?
9. How does or did your organisation measure the success or effectiveness of CS initiatives in accelerating DT and improving OP?
    a. Can you provide specific examples or share your views on how the success of CS initiatives could be measured?
10. What factors do you consider when selecting the crowd or participants for CS initiatives? How do you ensure their relevance and expertise?

11. How does the integration of CS ideas into DT strategies impact the decision-making procedures within your organisation?
    a. In your opinion, did the decision-making procedures improve? Or did the decision-making procedures get further delayed due to the initiative?
12. How do you manage and evaluate the quality of CS ideas to ensure their effectiveness in driving DT and OP?
13. Have you observed any potential risks or limitations associated with CS for DT? How do you mitigate these risks?
14. What lessons have you learned from implementing CS initiatives for DT that you would like to share with other organisations?
15. In your opinion, explain key success factors that need to be considered for implementing CS of ideas to accelerate DT and achieve sustainable OP?

8.2 Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet (PIS)

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Vishal Nayer, I am a master's student (Student Number: 1913117) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr Michael Sony, I am conducting a research study on the impact of CS on Digital Transformation and Operational Performance in African Financial Services.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview. If you decide to take part, your participation in this research study will last about 1 hour. The interview will take place on a MS Teams Video Conferencing tool, time to be determined on your availability.

During the research activity, I will need to ask for personal information about you, including name (optional), age, current position within your organisation. The interview will be confidential and anonymous. When I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you. With your permission, other researchers may use the data collected from this research study, however, your name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.

If you decide to take part in the research study, it should be because you want to volunteer. You do not have to take part. You can stop being in the study at any time.

You do not have to answer any questions if you do not want to. You will not get any direct benefits if you choose to join the research study. You will not lose any services, benefits, or rights you would normally have if you decided not to join. Taking part in the research study will not cost you anything. You will not be paid for being in this research study.

This research study will be written up as a research report. The report will be available on the university library website. If you would like to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below.

Vishal Nayer: 1913117@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor (Michael Sony): michael.sony@wits.ac.za

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za.

Yours sincerely,

Vishal Nayer

Researcher:

Vishal Nayer (1913117@students.wits.ac.za

Supervisor:

Dr Michael Sony michael.sony@wits.ac.za

8.3 Appendix C: Consent Form for Participation in Research Study

Title: The impact of CS on Digital Transformation and Operational Performance in African Financial Services

Researcher: Vishal Nayer

Contact Information: 1913117@students.wits.ac.za

Introduction:

I am a master's in digital business student at University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, conducting research for my master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyse the impact of CS on digital transformation and operational performance in African financial services. The study aims to investigate how the utilisation of CS methods and platforms influences the digital transformation efforts of financial service organisations in Africa. It further aims to understand the effects of CS on various dimensions of operational performance, including efficiency, quality, flexibility, innovation, and customer responsiveness, within the African financial services context.

Procedure:

If you agree to participate, you will be requested to provide information through interviews and other data collection methods. The research will examine the experiences, perspectives, and outcomes related to the implementation of CS initiatives in African financial service organisations.

Confidentiality:

Your participation in this study will be strictly confidential. Any personal information or data collected during the research process will be anonymised and stored securely. Only the researcher and authorised individuals involved in the research will have access to the data. The findings of this study will be presented in aggregate form and will not identify individual participants.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw:

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time during the study without penalty or consequences. Your decision to participate or withdraw will not affect your relationship with University of the Witwatersrand.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. however, the research may contribute to advancing knowledge and understanding in the field of CS, digital transformation, and operational performance in African financial services, potentially benefiting future students, researchers, and the wider community.

I agree to the following:

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	Yes	No
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	Yes	No
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	Yes	No
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	Yes	No
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report	Yes	No
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview	Yes	No

Contact Information:

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please feel free to contact me, Vishal Nayer at 1913117@students.wits.ac.za. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant.

By signing below, I confirm that:

- I have read and understood the information provided in this Consent Form.
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have received satisfactory answers.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that my participation is confidential and that my identity will be protected.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I agree to allow the researcher to use the data collected for the purposes of this study.

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

8.4 Appendix D: Ethics Clearance Certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number:	WBS/DB1913117/790

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

Project title	The role on Crowdsourcing on Digital Transformation and Operational Performance in African Financial Services
Investigator / Researcher	MR Vishal Nayer
Nature of Project	MM (Digital Business)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are advised that anonymity and confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
Issue Date of Certificate	06/09/2023
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 pius.oba@wits.ac.za

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Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethi Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research an guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature _____ Date: _____

8.5 Appendix E: Turnitin Report

turnitin

Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author:	Vishal Nayer
Assignment title:	Research Report
Submission title:	MMDB_1913117_Vishal_Nayer_Final.docx
File name:	MMDB_1913117_Vishal_Nayer_Final.docx
File size:	2.29M
Page count:	194
Word count:	42,926
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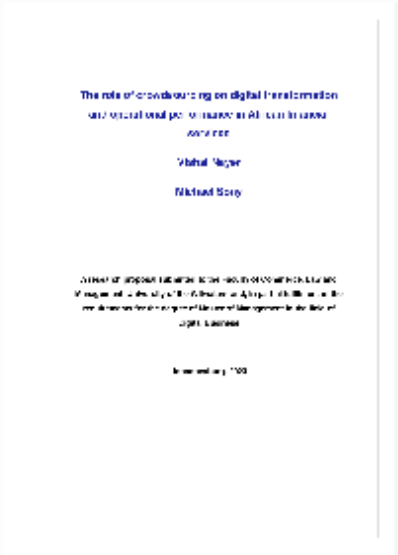
Submission date:	07-Feb-2024 02:45PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID:	2288686659



Dr Michael Sony

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