

DETERMINANTS OF ORGANISATIONAL AGILITY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN COMMERCIAL CLEANING COMPANY

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ABSTRACT

Organisations today operate in a dynamic environment where there are high levels of competition, shifting customer preferences, globalisation and rapid technology development (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015). The complexity, volatility and unpredictability of the business environment today has led to the failure of many organisations (Tseng & Lin, 2011). Today's organisations are tasked with not only responding to rapid changes in their environments (PWC, 2015), but also with the reality of constantly re-aligning their organisations with this ever-changing context (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). The South African commercial cleaning industry is no different; the industry has continuously been evolving, with new players and new products disrupting the market by providing more efficient ways of cleaning at more affordable prices.

The challenge of adapting to unforeseen changes has led to the evolution of one of the latest concepts in business strategies, referred to as agility. Organisational agility refers to an organisation's ability to rapidly and efficiently adjust to any unexpected or sudden changes in its environment (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009). The key objective of this study was to provide a better understanding of the concept of organisational agility by identifying its determinants. Using a qualitative research method, specifically a single-site case study approach, the research set out to identify the internal determinants of organisational agility based on the perspective of Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions' management team.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted and the themes that emerged from the interviews validated and supported the findings from the literature review. The literature review identified adaptable organisation designs, agile and adaptive workforce, adoption of technology, and fast organisational learning as key determinants of organisational agility. The research results also identified three of these factors but did not identify adaptable organisation designs as one of the factors that affected a company's ability to be agile. However, when the respondents were asked if the structure of the organisation affected its ability to be agile, they were unanimous that the structure of the organisation did indeed determine whether it is responsive and adaptable to change.

DECLARATION

I, Charity Mguni, 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 Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Charity Mguni

Signed at Wits Business School

On the 31st day of March 2017

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my father, Linoce Mguni, for sacrificing so much for his children. May your efforts and hard work continue to shine through your girls.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband, Lester Tawodzera, who has motivated me through every test, exam and assignment, thank you for your understanding, patience and unwavering support. You are my pillar of strength and I would not have done this without you. Your support has been paramount for me in this journey.

A special thanks to my parents for all their sacrifices, and for always wanting and encouraging me to be more. To my sisters, thank you for your support, encouragement and love. A special thank you to my eldest sister for always being a good example, and for inspiring me to take up this challenge.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify the determinants of organisational agility, specifically within the context of a South African contract cleaning company.

1.2 Context of the study

In a fast moving unpredictable business environment characterised by increasing volatility and complexity, the ability of an organisation to adapt to unexpected changes is critical to achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009). The complexity, volatility and unpredictability of the business environment today has led to the failure of many organisations (Tseng & Lin, 2011). Furthermore, the frequency of economic shocks and the speed of technological advances are evidence pointing to volatility having increased significantly since the 1990s (Sull, 2009). Today's organisations are tasked with not only responding to rapid changes in their environments, but to also accurately sense change in their markets and respond quickly and appropriately to it (PWC, 2015). The challenge of adapting to unforeseen changes has led to the evolution of one of the latest concepts in business strategies, referred to as agility (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009).

Agile organisations are able to embrace change by moving quickly, decisively and effectively to take advantage of the change, yet remain robust enough to absorb any setbacks (Mourougan, 2015). Research has found that more than 50% of established businesses fail in the first four years (Butler & Surace, 2015). Consequently, agility is not just about being fast or outperforming your competition, but also entails an organisation's ability to weather and survive the economic and environmental storms (Worley & Lawler, 2010).

1.2.1 *The commercial cleaning industry in South Africa and its fluctuation*

The South African commercial cleaning industry is continuously evolving, with new players and new products disrupting the market by providing more efficient ways of cleaning at

more affordable prices. The market is demanding more value for their spend as they have a larger pool of suppliers to choose from (Lazenby, 2010). There were two significant factors that affected the contract cleaning market in South Africa in 2015 and 2016: the first was a demand for a more environmentally-friendly approach to cleaning. This not only encompasses cleaning products, but also equipment that can reduce water usage (Euromonitor, 2016). In line with this trend, more contract cleaners are now requested to provide sustainability reports for their larger clients with contractors having to show the ways in which they are taking steps to address environmental concerns. A second factor relates to the amendment of the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act and codes from 1 May 2015, which states that institutions have to demonstrate higher compliance, either level 1 (100% black ownership) or level 2 (51% black ownership), in order to win a government contract or any contracts when seeking to do business with government organisations (Euromonitor, 2016).

1.3 Problem statement

Identify the determinants of organisational agility in a South African contract cleaning company.

1.4 Significance of the study

There are a number of scholars who have studied the subject of organisational agility in the past, however, there is still a call from businesses and academics alike for a better understanding of what this subject entails, how it came into existence, its consequences and how it has evolved over time (Worley & Lawler, 2010). The recent global financial and economic crisis has left organisations and policy makers wondering how to predict and best respond to the next economic crisis. The concept of organisational agility encourages organisations to embrace the inevitable change and unpredictability of their environments by creating a highly responsive and adaptable organisation (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the concept of organisational agility by identifying its determinants. Further, the study will contribute to the pool of knowledge of Bidvest Prestige in areas of operational strategies and organisational agility.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This study focuses on identifying the determinants of organisational agility, specifically in a listed South African commercial cleaning company from the perspective of management. This study only looks at the perspective of management as they are believed to have the necessary knowledge and information sought by the study. However, this study does not evaluate the relationship of these determinants nor does it look at the extent to which they affect the level of agility in an organisation. Some conceptual models of organisational agility show that there are both internal and external factors or determinants that affect organisational agility, however for the purpose of this research we only look at internal factors or determinants.

1.6 Definition of terms

- **Agility** – “Ability to think, understand and move quickly with ease” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016)
- **Determinant** – “A factor which decisively affects the nature or outcome of something” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016).
- **Management** – In this study, refers to senior management, middle management and junior management.

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made regarding the study:

- a. The respondents had the required information, and were willing to share it.
- b. The respondents understood the meaning of organisational agility, and its impact on the organisation’s success, and growth.
- c. The respondents identified the determinants of organisational agility in their company.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the work that has previously been done in relation to organisation agility. A detailed review of literature is presented on the concept of organisational agility and its determinants.

2.2 Background discussion

Organisations today operate in a dynamic environment where there are high levels of competition, shifting customer preferences, globalisation and rapid technology development (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015). This crisis has left organisations struggling with the unpredictable nature of the changes in their environment and the impact of these changes on their businesses. Leaders are faced with the reality of the need to re-align their organisations with this ever-changing context (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). The best leaders are the most insatiable learners (Taylor, 2012). Organisations that are highly agile are able to respond positively when faced with changes in their environment, such as new competitors and technologies or changes in market environments. By being alert to these changes, both positive and negative, an agile organisation is able, through the strategic use of its resources, to respond to such changes in a way that is beneficial to it (Seethamraju & Sundar, 2013).

2.3 Overview of organisational agility

2.3.1 *What is organisational agility*

Agility is defined as the ability to think, understand and move quickly with ease (Oxford English Dictionary, 2016). An agile organisation is one that is able to rapidly and efficiently adjust to any unexpected or sudden changes in its environment (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009). The origin of the concept of agility is rooted in the manufacturing industry, where adaptability and flexibility to changes in the supply chain required an organisation to be both

flexible and nimble to meet varied customer demands in terms of price, specifications, quality, quantity and delivery (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015). In the late 1900s, Yusuf, Sarhadi and Gunasekaran defined agility as a firm's successful application of its competitive bases such as speed, flexibility, innovation and quality through integration of resources and best practices of a knowledge-rich environment to provide customer-driven products and services in a fast changing environment.

Subsequent studies by Dove (2001) and Goldman et al. (1995) were pivotal in the introduction of the concepts on agile enterprise strategy and vision. Goldman et al. (1995) described organisational agility as a firm's ability to cope and operate profitably in an environment of continually and unpredictably changing customer needs and opportunities. Dove (2001) identified four key dimensions of the concept of agility: cost, time, quality and scope. According to his research, the agility of an organisation encompasses a perfect balance of these dimensions. Further definitions of agility refer to a firm's ability to identify and capture opportunities faster than their rivals (Sull, 2009) which requires a firm to respond quickly to change and uncertainty in the environment by being able to overcome obstacles and successfully exploit opportunities as they arise (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015).

Table 1 summarises several definitions of agility and highlights essential characteristics embedded within these definitions. While most of these definitions of agility cover the essential characteristics of time, flexibility of the system, and the ability to respond (responsiveness), it is the definitions by Yusuf et al. (1999) and Dove (1999, 2001) that take into account all the essential characteristics of agility. After conducting a comprehensive literature review, the following definition of agility provided by Dove (1999, 2001) was used as the framework for this research: an effective integration of response ability and knowledge management, in order to **rapidly, efficiently** and **accurately adapt to** any unexpected (or unpredictable) change in both proactive and reactive business/ customer needs, and opportunities without compromising the cost or the quality of the product/ process.

Table 1: Summary of some definitions of agility (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009, p. 412)

Reference	Definition	Speed / Time	Cost	Responsive -ness	Flexibility	Quality	Customer Needs
Lacocca / Lehigh (1991)	A system that shifts quickly among product models/lines, ideally in real time in order to respond to customer needs	x		x	x		x
Goldman et al. (1995)	Capability of an organisation to operate profitably in an competitive environment comprised of continually changing customer habits			X	X		x
Yusuf et al. (1999)	A successful exploration of competitive bases (speed, flexibility, innovation proactivity, quality and profitability) through the integration of reconfigurable resources and knowledge management to provide customer driven products and services in a dynamic environment.	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dove (1999, 2001)	Ability of an organisation to respond efficiently and effectively to both proactive and reactive needs and opportunities on the face of an unpredictable environment	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sambamurthy et al. (2003)	Ability of a firm to redesign their existing processes rapidly and create new processes in a timely fashion in order to be able to take advantage and thrive of the unpredictable and highly dynamic market conditions	x		x	x		x
Gartner Research Grp (Ashrafi et al., 2005)	“An organisation’s ability to sense environmental changes and respond effectively and efficiently to that change”	x		x			x
Mathiyakalan et al. (2005)	Ability of an organisation to detect changes in its business environment and hence providing focused and rapid responses to its customers and stakeholders by reconfiguring its resources, processes and strategies	x		x			x

2.3.2 Existing conceptual models on organisational agility

There are a number of conceptual models that have been proposed to illustrate how organisational agility depends on several variables. In this section three conceptual models are identified and discussed: (1) Model of Sharif and Zhang (1999), (2) Model of Lin, Chiu and Tseng (2006) and (3) Model of Alzoubi, Al-otoum and Albatainh, (2011)

2.3.2.1. Model of Sharif and Zhang

This model was proposed by Sharifi and Zhang (2001) and it identifies four aspects of an agile organisation: (1) agility drivers, (2) strategic abilities, (3) agility providers, and (4) agility capabilities (See Figure 1.). The conceptual model suggests that agility results from the successful integration of these four aspects of an agile organisation (Lin, Chiu, & Tseng, 2006).

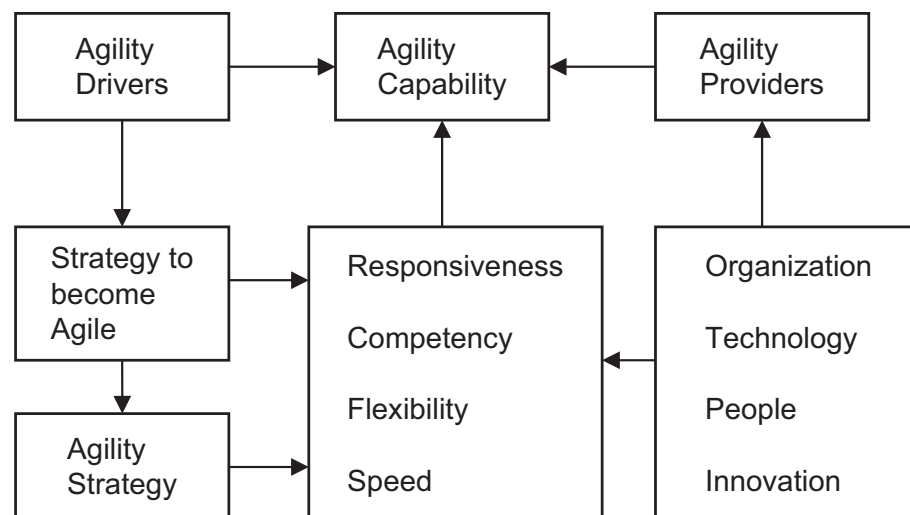


Figure 1: Conceptual model for agile manufacturing by Sharif and Zhang (Sherehiy, Karwowski, & Layer, 2007, p. 449)

The agility drivers are external environmental factors that drive change within an organisation. Agility drivers would force a company to revise its strategy so as to adopt a business strategy that allows it to be more agile. Strategic abilities or agility capabilities such as responsiveness, competency, speed, and flexibility are considered to be the main attributes of agile organisations that allow them to successfully deal with change. This

model identifies organisation designs, technology, people and innovation as agility providers of agile organisations. Agility providers are internal factors that enable an organisation to be agile (Sherehiy, Karwowski, & Layer, 2007).

2.3.2.2. Model of Lin, Chiu and Tseng

According to Lin, Chiu and Tseng (2006), agile organisations possess essential capabilities that enable them to respond appropriately to changes in their business environments. These capabilities comprise four critical elements (Yusuf, Sarhadi, & Gunasekaran, 1999): (1) responsiveness, the ability to see/identify changes, to respond quickly, reactively or proactively, and to recover; (2) competency, the efficiency and effectiveness of an enterprise in reaching its goals; (3) flexibility/adaptability, the ability to implement different processes and achieve different goals with the same facilities; and (4) quickness/speed, the ability to culminate an activity in the shortest possible time (Lin, Chiu, & Tseng, 2006).

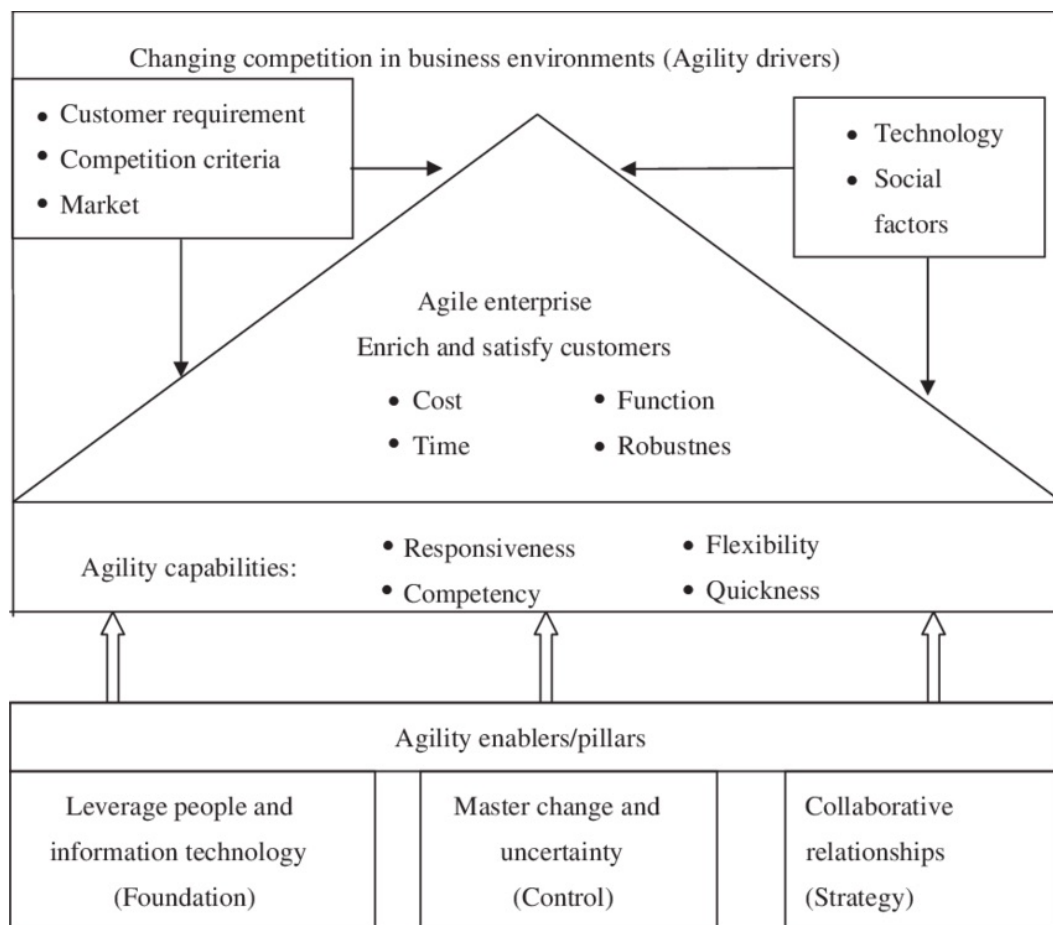


Figure 2: Conceptual model of an agile organisation by Lin et al. (Lin, Chiu, & Tseng, 2006, p. 356)

In this model, the primary driving force behind agility is change. It is increasingly more and more difficult to accurately predict change, its timing and impact (Tseng & Lin, 2011). In the conceptual model above, Tseng and Lin (2011) identify five external factors that drive agility: (1) market volatility caused by growth in the market niche, increasing the introduction of new products, and product life; (2) intense competition caused by rapidly changing markets, pressure from increasing costs, international competitiveness, Internet usage and a short development time for new products; (3) changes in customer requirements caused by demands for customisation, increased expectations about quality and a quicker delivery time; (4) accelerating technological changes caused by the introduction of new and efficient production facilities and system integration; and (5) changes in social factors caused by environmental protection, workforce/workplace expectations and legal pressure (Tseng & Lin, 2011).

Achieving agility requires responsiveness in strategies, technologies, personnel, business processes and facilities (also referred to as agility enablers). The level of agility/responsiveness of these internal aspects of the organisation will determine how agile an organisation will be (Lin, Chiu, & Tseng, 2006).

2.3.2.3. Model of Alzoubi, Al-otoum , and Albatainh

Figure 3 is a conceptual model developed by Alzoubi et al. that identifies two types of variables that influence organisational agility, namely dependent and independent variables. The dependent variable is product development and the independent variables are factors that are believed to enable organisational agility in the development of the products. These independent factors are organic structure, customer oriented culture, IT, employee empowerment, and learning (Alzoubi, Al-otoum, & Albatainh, 2011). According to this model, there is a strong relation between organisational agility with its variables (Employees Empowerment, Customer Oriented Culture, Information Technology, Organic Structure, and learning organisation) on product development at the organisation (Alzoubi, Al-otoum, & Albatainh, 2011).

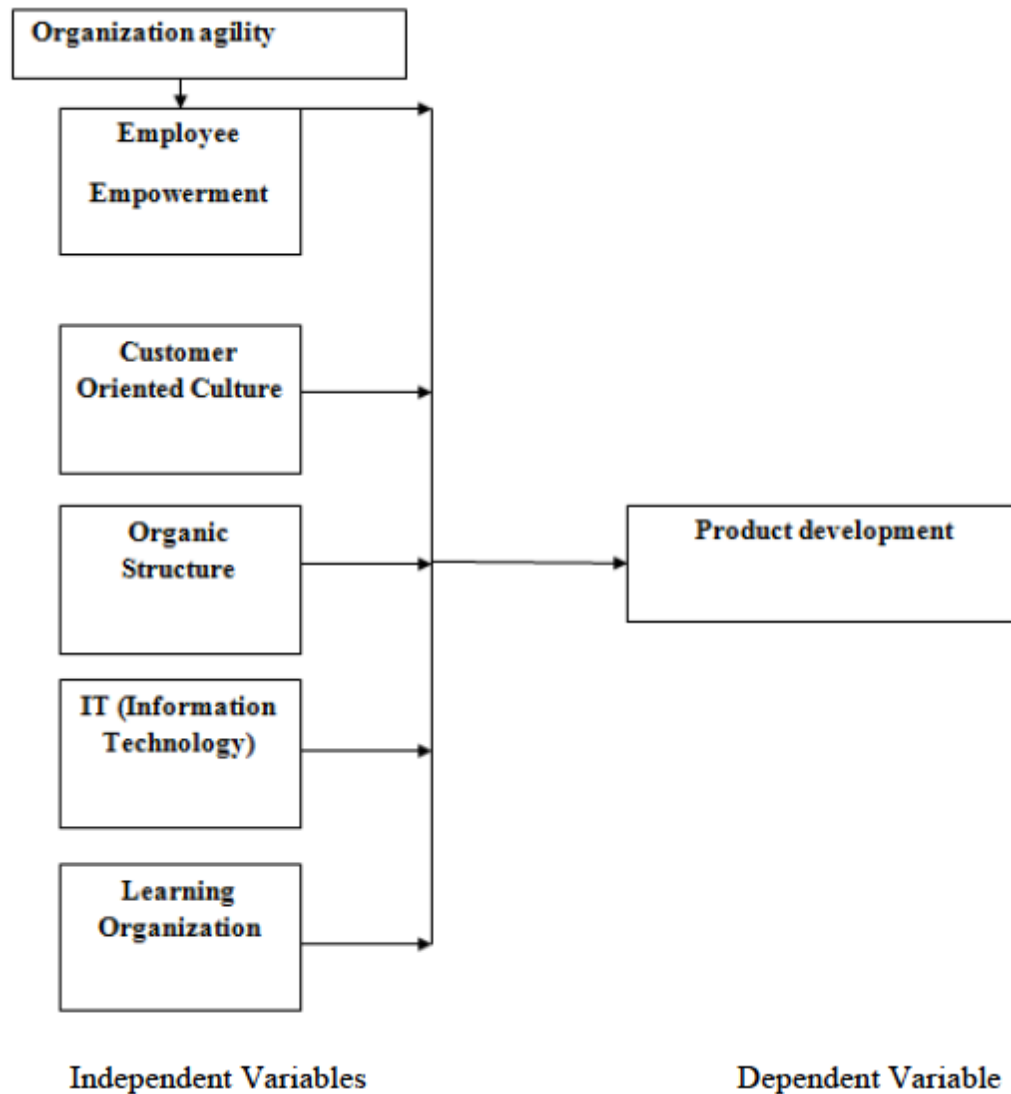


Figure 3: Conceptual Model of Independent and Dependent variables of organisational agility by Alzoubi et al. (Alzoubi, Al-otoum, & Albatainh, 2011, p. 507)

2.3.3 Determinants of organisational agility

Determinants of organisational agility are factors within and outside the organisation that play a pivotal role in determining how agile an organisation will be. There are several determinants that affect the ability of an organisation to be agile however, in this section only the **internal determinants** are identified and discussed. The conceptual model of manufacturing by Sharifi and Zhang (2001) identifies organisation designs, technology, people and innovation (internal factors) as agility providers that enable an organisation to be agile, while Lin, Chiu and Tseng (2006) in their model, identify both internal and external

determinants/factors that affect an organisation's ability to be agile. The external determinants are referred to as the drivers of agility, while the internal determinants are referred to as the enablers of agility (responsiveness in strategies, technologies, personnel, business processes and facilities). The third conceptual model by Alzoubi et al. (2011) builds on a similar notion by identifying organic structure, customer oriented culture, IT, employee empowerment, and an organisation's ability to learn as critical factors that affect an organisation's ability to be agile. This paper integrates different aspects and components of all three conceptual models and identifies four primary determinants of organisational agility: (1) adaptive organisational design and structure, (2) agile and adaptive workforce, (3) fast organisation learning and (4) adoption of IT systems.

2.3.3.1. Adaptable organisational design and structure

The organisation's design is the cornerstone of an organisation's competitive advantage and performance (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Strategies alone cannot deal with the "escalating imperatives for speed and flexibility" (Liedtka, 2000, p. 8) in today's highly dynamic business environment. Worley and Lawer (2010) are of the opinion that even the most cunning strategy will not reach its potential if an organisation's structures, processes, and systems do not support it. The power of creating the right internal environment to drive organisational agility is often overlooked (PWC, 2015). Executives today are faced with the challenge of designing organisations that are able to achieve their short-term operational goals but are flexible enough to sustain performance over the long-run (Worley & Lawler, 2010).

Adaptable designs have structures, processes, people, and rewards that capture value from a flexible intent and support the idea that the implementation and re-implementation of a robust strategy is a continuous and normal process (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Agile organisation designs are defined by their features - maximum surface area structures, transparent information and decision-making processes, and flexible talent and reward systems (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Rather than being locked into structures, agile organisations create designs that encourage rapid re-configurability within the organisation in response to changes in the environment or to a shift in strategic intent (Dyer & Shafer, 1998). Adaptable designs allow organisations to quickly realign their businesses in response to changing internal and external circumstances or shifts in customer values and

needs (Waal, 2007). Equally important is the organisation's ability to communicate these changes internally to all levels within the organisation, who in turn, must have the ability to pivot quickly to execute the desired strategy (PWC, 2015). According to Harraf, Wanasika, Tate and Talbott (2015), decision making and overall effective leadership needs to be supported by good communication channels. Agility requires organisations to create a highly interactive internal communication system that promotes a culture of transparency, openness and open sharing of information (Waal, 2007). This approach builds trust in teams and creates an environment where people are more comfortable and adaptable to change (Wasserman, 2016).

Wendler and Dresden (2014) define structural agility as an organisation's ability to flexibly adapt and change itself, in addition to having an organisational culture that fosters teamwork and breaks down departmental silos that tend to exist in traditional institutions. An article published by McKinsey and Company stated that the subject of organisational structure encompasses three core areas within the organisation which are: how resources are distributed within the organisation, the governance that dictates how decisions are made, and the processes which determine how things are done (Aghina & De Smet, 2015). The structure and culture of the organisation must encourage employees to strive within the organisation's systems while strategically realigning resources and continuously improving their capabilities in pursuit of agility (Seo & La-Paz, 2008).

Research on organisational structure has shown that there are mainly two types of organisational structures: mechanistic structures (characterised by rigid organisational structures and processes that operate in predictable environments) and organic structures (less rigid organisational structures that are more readily adaptable to change within volatile environments) (Burns & Stalker, 1961). According to Waal (2007), most high performing organisations simplify and flatten their structures so as to reduce boundaries and barriers between their employees, thus getting rid of bureaucracy and organisational complexity. Most agile companies tend to have flatter structures, with fewer layers, minimal hierarchy and broader spans of control (Worley & Pillans, 2015). Agile organisations continuously simplify and improve their processes so as to eliminate unnecessary procedures, work and information overload (Waal, 2007). According to Aghina, De Smet and Weerda (2015), start-up companies are usually nimble, while large and established companies often become bureaucratic because of rules, policies and layers of management that hamper

their ability to move fast.

In a dynamic environment, the best fitting organisational structure is organic which is typically an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1992). Adhocracies tend to be low in formalisation, are decentralised and their primary goal is innovation and rapid adaptation to changing environments (Lunenburg, 2012). A more recent and comprehensive practice for structuring, governing, and running an organisation in a dynamic environment is holacracy. This is a structuring framework that is organic in nature and replaces artificial hierarchy with fractal “holarchy” of self-organising teams (“circles”) (Bernstein, Bunch, Canner, & Lee, 2016). It enhances organisational agility by redistributing the power of decision-making throughout the organisation that, in turn, ensures that decisions are made quickly and incrementally with maximum information, and can be adjusted continuously as new information emerges along the journey (Robertson, 2007).

2.3.3.2. Agile and Adaptive workforce

A significant amount of research is of the opinion that an agile workforce is the main determinant of whether an organisation will be agile or not (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015). Breu et al. (2001) stated that organisations alone cannot be agile, but their employees can be. Logically, this implies that organisations can only become agile if those who control them are agile (Seo & La-Paz, 2008). Previous research has shown that although agility and responsiveness of an organisation can be driven by sophisticated technologies, agility is driven more by people as opposed to technology (Youndt, Snell, Dean, & Lepak, 1996). Logically organisations that have an agile workforce are more likely to become agile because the collection of individual mindful agility becomes part of organisational agility (Seo & La-Paz, 2008).

According to Nijssen and Paauwe (2012), a highly adaptable workforce is a key competence for organisational agility. Adaptive workforces require assumption of multiple roles to perform in different capacities across levels, and projects often simultaneously move from one role to another very quickly. The employees have to simultaneously learn in multiple competency areas and educate by actively sharing of information and knowledge (Sherehiy, Karwowski, & Layer, 2007). Allworth and Hesketh (1999) stated that an adaptable workforce is able to cope with change and transfer learning from one task to another as the job demands vary. In another research, Yusuf, Sarhadi and Gunasekaran

(1999) established that agile workforces capitalise on their human resources by proactively innovating their skill base ahead of need. The workforce has to be multi-skilled in order to reorganise itself under changing conditions (Wendler & Dresden, 2014). The employees need to develop multiple skills by sharing information and knowledge with their peers. The most efficient way of getting work done in agile environments is dependent on teams that come together and collaborate (Wasserman, 2016).

Van-Oyen, Gel and Hoop (2001) found that employee empowerment and autonomy in decision-making is what makes a workforce truly agile. High performing organisations empower their workforce and give them freedom to make decisions within established boundaries (Waal, 2007). When lower-level employees are empowered, they respond to the environment faster and more accurately (Van-Oyen, Gel, & Hopp, 2001). The advantage of employee autonomy at lower levels is that it improves the organisation's overall responsiveness, increases its effectiveness and improves employee engagement (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015).

Dyer and Shafer (2003) also found that organisational agility is driven by employees, with three types of behaviour: proactive, adaptive and generative. Proactive behaviour entails having initiative and being able to improvise. Employees that are proactive actively search for opportunities that could drive the success of the organisation. Adaptive behaviour relates to employees being able to perform and move quickly between multiple roles within the organisation. According to Waal (2007), successful agile organisations prioritise cross-functional and cross-organisational collaboration by stressing the importance of teamwork, team commitment and establishing a sense of shared responsibility. Successful teams find cross-functional collaboration important in ensuring that the organisation has the right human resources available at all times (Wasserman, 2016). Management, on the other hand, have to manage change appropriately and swiftly. Managers have to act with a long-term vision, inform people within the organisation accordingly and inspire them to embrace the change (Wendler & Dresden, 2014).

2.3.3.3. Fast organisational learning

The challenge for most businesses today is not just how to out-manoeuvre or out-muscle the competition, but rather how to out-think them by developing unique points of view about the future and getting there faster. This requires organisations and leaders to never stop

learning in a world that never stops changing (Taylor, 2012). Jack Welch, one of world's most respected and celebrated businessman, once said, an organisation's ability to learn, and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage. Jack Welch also said, when the rate of change outside an organisation is greater than the change inside, the end is near. Organisations need to continuously learn faster than their competition and seek inspiration from unique sources in order to be different from everyone else (Taylor, 2012). They need to constantly scan the outside world so as to proactively obtain knowledge about their dynamic environment. Having real-time, up-to-date information on the dynamics of the environment is required to be able to respond to these dynamics (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012).

Seo and La Paz (2008) defined learning as an organisation's ability to capitalise on their existing knowledge, to constantly develop and being better prepared to deal with a dynamic environment. Organisations should create a learning environment by continuously investing in training, upgrading of skills, investing in management development and constantly identifying and accessing new competences (Waal, 2007). Continuous education and training is very important in leveraging the skills and knowledge of people (McGaughey, 1999). Learning organisations create systems and support mechanisms at the team level, which are constantly evaluated, modified and improved. The evaluation process enables leaders to watch for lessons learned, apply what they learned and move on (Wasserman, 2016).

A study done by Brue et al. (2002) established that the most important factors for workforce agility are speed of developing new skills, responsiveness to changes in customer needs and market conditions, and the speed of acquiring the skills needed for business process change. This is in effort of changing or modifying oneself to better fit to a new environment which often includes new learning, interpersonal and cultural adaptability (Sherehiy, Karwowski, & Layer, 2007).

The key to agile thinking is the integration of an organisation's competencies and capabilities with learning. An agile organisation needs to ask, "What do we need to learn?", "How do our capabilities need to evolve?", "What new capabilities do we need to develop" and "What do we need to do better so we can add value in the future." Furthermore, Seo

and La Paz (2008) emphasised that it is important for learning organisations to continuously evaluate how they do things so as to weed out bad practices and improve the good ones.

2.3.3.4. Adoption of IT systems

Changes in technology have contributed to market uncertainty, globalised competition and competitive intensity. Digitalisation enables global connectivity, influences the markets preferences and affects the lifecycle of products (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015). Information technologies provide superior information management capabilities, analytical decision support, and enhanced communication. In today's highly competitive business environment, an organisation's technology must support the activities and tasks that enable the organisation to continuously meet changing customer needs. One technical subsystem of particular importance to agility in our high-tech, connected world is information technology (IT) (McGaughey, 1999). Organisations that have access to efficient information technologies are able to access real-time information that enables them to move and respond quicker to market demands (Dyer & Shafer, 1998). Seo and La Paz (2008) also argued that information systems and technologies play an important part in the pursuit of organisational agility. The benefit of agile systems is having high information capacity and the ability to effectively share this information throughout the organisation (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015).

Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj and Grover (2003) noted that IT applications, such as Internet computing, customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, and supply chain management, allow firms to rapidly detect changes, flexibly alter their market strategies, and thus respond more quickly to customers' changing requirements thereby attaining competitive advantage. However, the ability of firms to harness the power and functionality of information technologies depends on their ability to make appropriate decisions about the acquisition, implementation, and use of the appropriate technologies.

Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj and Grover (2003) also noted that for organisations to be competitive, their IT management capability should be such that they acquire, utilise, and manage information technologies in support of their business processes and activities adequately. In today's modern world, IT resources are accessible to everyone, hence the way that these resources are managed will determine whether they create a competitive advantage to the organisation.

2.3.4 *The benefits and one limitation of Organisational agility*

Organisations need to be continuously aware of what is happening in their environment so that they are able to take the appropriate steps through realignment of resources, processes and objectives while keeping in mind the possible impact that different changes in the environment may have on their organisation (Seo & La-Paz, 2008). The inherent necessity for an organisation to grow and compete successfully within their industry depends on the organisation's ability to be adaptable and responsive to the changes in the market (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015). According to a survey carried out by McKinsey, some of the advantages of organisational agility include increase in productivity, accelerated product delivery, increase in employee engagement, enhanced ability to manage change priorities and quicker response to the market (Sull, 2009).

According to Sherehiy, Waldermar and Layer (2007), multi-skilled employees can increase the production flexibility of an organisation. They tend to be self-motivated and capable of enacting process changes that promote organisational agility (Goldman & Nagel, 1993). A workforce with a larger set of skills would perform more efficiently, a wider range of tasks, and is likely to prevent fatigue or the boredom created by repetitive tasks. Multi-skilled workers are able to simultaneously learn and educate. They continuously pursue the attainment of proficiency in multiple competencies while avoiding the temptation of over-specialisation or complacency (Dyer & Shafer, 2003).

In a McKinsey article, Sull (2009) states that in his previous work over the past decade, he has analysed both successful and less successful companies in both developing and developed countries across the world. His research revealed that there are three distinct types of agility: strategic, portfolio and operational. He also found that most companies rely on a single form of agility, but overreliance on a single type of agility can be dangerous (for example, an operationally agile company is at risk if its core business becomes less attractive).

2.3.5 Agility and competitiveness in the commercial cleaning industry in South Africa

There are approximately 1,750 contract-cleaning companies countrywide, of which 400 are members of the National Contract Cleaners Association (NCCA). A few of the larger companies employ between 18,000 and 20,000 cleaners. Many medium-sized companies employ around 1,000 cleaners. However, around 70% of the cleaning industry is comprised of small and micro enterprises, employing fewer than 50 cleaners. The leading three players in this industry are Bidvest Prestige Cleaning, Supercare and Elite Cleaning Services, which account for a combined 20% market share. Of these, Bidvest Prestige Cleaning is the largest, most specialised and one of the fastest-growing cleaning companies in South Africa. The company has been present in the country for over forty years and employs 35,000 cleaners nationally. Its scale gives it the ability to mobilise and deliver services throughout the country. It is also present across a range of industry sectors, including the commercial, retail, hospitality, health care, industrial, mining and food and beverage industries.

The cleaning industry comprises two market groups, namely the consumer segment (which focuses primarily on the residential house cleaning services) and the commercial segment (predominantly focuses on providing cleaning services on a daily basis to corporate clients). The barriers of entry to this industry are very low hence competition is fierce. It is paramount that the organisations within this industry continuously innovate and increase their speed to market to capture and retain customers. Executives are continuously seeking ways to drive performance in the short run but be flexible enough to sustain performance over the long run.

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

Despite the lack of consensus in the definition of organisational agility, all definitions emphasise speed, flexibility and an organisation's unique capabilities as the primary attributes of an agile organisation. Organisational agility is an on-going process that requires strategic responsiveness, flexibility as well as a cross-functional approach. Correctly linking strategy to execution within the right environments is key to true organisational agility. (PWC, 2015). We have also identified adaptable organisation

designs, adoption of technology, agile and adaptive workforce and fast organisational learning (innovation) as the determinants of organisational agility (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999).

2.5 Research Question:

In the company selected for the single-site case study research, according to management's perspective, what are the determinants of agility in their organisation?

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research methodology, including design considerations, data collection techniques, sampling and procedures for data analysis. Finally, the limitations of the study, its validity and reliability are discussed.

3.1 Research methodology

This study was based on a qualitative research methodology. This method was used so as to establish the perceptions of a group of people with regard to a specific issue. Qualitative research is a form of social inquiry that focuses on words and feelings, the quality of an event or experience (Page & Meyer, 2005). According to Kumar (2014, p. 14), the qualitative approach is based on “the philosophy of empiricism; it follows an open, flexible and unstructured approach of enquiry; aims to explore diversity, emphasizes the description and narration of feelings and perceptions.” The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to interpret and assess the information as it was collected which allowed the researcher to become an active part of the research.

A report produced from a qualitative study voices the opinions of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher and the complex description and interpretation of the problem (Creswell, 2013). The design of the study is therefore often based on deductive rather than inductive logic; it is flexible and emergent in nature, and often non-linear and non-sequential in its operations (Kumar, 2014). One of the advantages of qualitative research is that it enhances the researcher’s depth of insight on the subject under review by allowing him/her to immerse themselves in another’s world (Patton, 2015). This method allows the researcher more freedom with regard to the information to be collected from the respondents thus enabling the enquiry to evolve as the data collection progresses. Kumar (2014) says the most distinguishing feature of qualitative research is its adherence to the concept of respondent concordance, whereby a researcher makes an effort to seek alignment of the respondents with his/her interpretation and conclusion. The ‘power gap’ between the researcher and the study population in qualitative research is smaller compared to quantitative research (Kumar, 2014).

Some of the disadvantages of qualitative research are as follows: the quality of the data collected depends greatly on the methodological training, skill, sensitivity and integrity of the researcher. Secondly, generating meaningful and useful qualitative findings through observation, interviewing and content analysis requires discipline, knowledge, training and experience. Other critics of the qualitative enquiry argue that this approach is too subjective and could be biased to the researcher's personal perspective (Patton, 2015). Qualitative studies are difficult to replicate precisely because they are unstructured and hardly have any standard procedures to be followed. The scope of the findings of qualitative studies is often restricted to the specific research population hence the findings cannot be generalised to other settings (Bryman, 2012).

However, from the perspective of advocates of qualitative research, subjectivity is the very antithesis of scientific enquiry (Patton, 2015). For the purpose of this research, the subject under study required a methodology that allowed the researcher flexibility to ask follow-up questions and when necessary provide clarification on research questions (Creswell, 2013).

3.2 Research Design

The methodology approach adopted for this research was that of a case study, more specifically a single-site case study using the holistic design approach (Yin, 2014). Gerring (2004, p. 341), defined a case study as “an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalise across a larger set of units.” This approach enables the researcher to gain an holistic understanding of complex issues by allowing him/her to explore an area through purposive and judgmental sampling techniques. It is based on the supposition that the case being studied is typical of cases of a certain type and therefore a single case can provide insight into the perceptions and situations prevalent in a group from where the case has been drawn (Kumar, 2014). According to Yin (2012), the primary differentiation of case studies is whether they are single- or a multiple-case study designs. The design of the case study will inform how the data will be collected, whether the researcher will use a single case or multiple cases to explore the subject under study. The single-site case study is used in a number of situations and conforms to one of “five single-case rationales – that is, having a critical, unusual, common, revelatory or longitudinal case” (Yin, 2014, p. 51).

This research approach facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon using a variety of data

sources within a specific space. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). They are flexible in that they have no specific format to follow (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006). This approach is of immense relevance when one wishes to have an in-depth understanding of a specific case. The advantage of the case study design is that it enables the researcher more in-depth interrogation of a subject than would be possible if one is studying a larger sample. This approach deals candidly with the specific case in its actual context and allows the researcher to get as close as possible to the subject of interest (Yin, 2016).

The down side of this method is that one cannot claim to make any generalisations to a population beyond cases similar to the one studied (Kumar, 2014). The holistic single-site case study has been considered by some critics to hold the least or no generalisation value of all the case study approaches. A further potential challenge with the holistic single-site case study is that due to the global approach nature of method, the researcher may avoid probing a particular phenomenon and rather explore it at an abstract level which would result in the case study lacking substance (Yin, 2014). However, advocates of this method argue that this method affords the researcher an opportunity to really focus on the subject of interest allowing him/her to pay considerable attention to data collection and analysis (Yin, 2012). Case studies can also be too lengthy and may find it difficult to hold a reader's interest. There are also concerns that case studies lack rigour as some people still consider them as unscientific. Case study researchers have not been systematic in their data collection in the past and have also allowed bias in their findings (Neale, Thapa, & Boyce, 2006).

The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews to ascertain what management perceived to be the determinants of agility within their organisation. The semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to focus the interview process on the intended subject and avoid irrelevancies while it provided the respondents an opportunity to openly share their views on the subject (Bryman, 2012). The semi-structured interviews were guided by the interview guide with prescribed open-ended questions (see Appendix A) to ensure consistency from one respondent to another. According to Patton (2015), open-ended questions allow in-depth responses about people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings and knowledge.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Single-case study of identifying determinants of organisational agility in a South African cleaning company - Bidvest Cleaning Solutions*

This research was conducted at a company called Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Services, which is located in the northern parts of South Africa with the head office in Randburg. Bidvest Prestige Cleaning is the largest, most specialised and one of the fastest growing cleaning companies in South Africa. The company has operated in the country for over forty years and employs over 35,000 cleaners nationally. Its scale gives it the ability to mobilise and deliver services throughout the country. It is also present across a range of industry sectors that include commercial, retail, hospitality, health care, industrial and mining and food and beverage industries (Euromonitor, 2016).

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

The target population for this study was the management team of Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions senior. The research used stratified purposive sampling to select the study sample. In purposive sampling, the researcher does not necessarily select participants on a random basis but rather in a strategic way so that those sampled are relevant to the questions posed. The goal of selecting specific participants is to ensure that the sample selected yields the most relevant information and that the researcher obtains a broader perspective on the subject under study (Yin, 2016). In this study, the management team of Bidvest Prestige was selected as they were believed to have the necessary knowledge and information sought by the study. The target population at Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions was stratified into three groups (senior level, middle level and junior management). From a total population of 39, a random sample of 23% from within each sub-group was selected. The purposeful stratified sampling technique is used when the population of interest is not purely homogeneous and can be subdivided into groups or strata to obtain a representative sample (Bryman, 2012).

The distribution of management team of Bidvest Prestige was as follows:

Table 2: Profile of respondents.

Management levels	Population (Frequency)	Sample Ratio	Sample Size (Rounded up)
Senior management	25	0.23	5
Middle management	7	0.23	3
Junior management	7	0.23	3
Total	39		11

Source: HR Department, Bidvest Prestige (2016)

3.4 The research instrument

The research instrument used in this study to guide the interview process was an interview guide. Bryman (2012) defines an interview guide as a research tool that has a brief list of memory prompts of areas to be covered, issues to be addressed or questions to be asked in semi-structured interviews. This research tool is important as it helps to ensure that the desired areas of enquiry are covered and that there is comparability of information across respondents during the interviews (Kumar, 2014).

See appendix A for the interview guide and the cover letter to research study participants.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

Semi-structured interviews were scheduled by telephone and email, and conducted by meeting face-to-face with the selected research participants. In the event that a selected research participant was unavailable during the interview period, a suitable alternative participant was selected to replace him/her. The interviews were conducted at the Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions Randburg office because of the convenience of the location. The interviews were audio-recorded and interview notes were taken during all the interviews. The advantage of recording and transcribing the interviews were as follows: it helped to support the interviewer's inherent memory limitations, it allowed for an in-depth analysis of the information collected and repeated examination of its critical details and

provides an opportunity for scrutiny by other interested scholars in the future (Bryman, 2012).

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

This section describes how the data collected was analysed. The interview recordings were transcribed and formed the basis from which the analysis was conducted. The data was first cleaned before any further analysis could be done. The process of cleaning the data is called editing and it is aimed at freeing the data from any inconsistencies and omissions (Kumar, 2014). Once the data was cleaned, it was then subjected to thematic analysis. The data was analysed using the constant comparative method where key themes were identified. These themes were identified directly on the interview transcript, marked with a highlighter then later summarised into a table format. This process assisted the researcher to identify the main themes that emerged from the answers received from the respondents (Kumar, 2014). The results were further refined by tabulating the key themes to create a simple visual interpretation of the results.

Thematic analysis closely resembles content analysis in that the researcher looks for common and recurring themes in the data (Burns, 2000). Content analysis refers to the systematic reduction of qualitative data into meaningful information that is grouped into core consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2015). Bryman (2012) explained it more simply as an approach of analysis that quantifies research data according to predetermined themes in a systematic and replicable way.

The process of content analysis included the following steps (Kumar, 2014):

- Identifying the main themes that emerged from the answers received from the respondents.
- Classifying responses under the main identified themes
- Analysing the themes and responses and incorporating them into the report of findings to support or contradict the research argument.

The findings of the study were written and communicated as follows:

- First identifying the main themes that surfaced during the interviewing process and from the field notes.

3.7 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this research were

- The single-site case study approach used in this research only looks at one company, which impedes the application of the findings to other organisations and other industries.
- The study explored the perspective of only 11 of the 39 managers from Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions. Critics may challenge this sample size and view it as insufficient to fairly represent the perspective of the collective.
- The success of the study was dependent on the effectiveness of the data collection process from the study participants.
- There was possible risk of interview cancellation especially due to the involvement of management by nature of their demanding roles within the company.
- The sampling approach in the study was influenced by convenience and professional judgement rather than pure theoretical rationale. The researcher could have been biased towards selecting individuals who were more likely to be available for the interview rather than those who were not.

3.8 Validity and reliability

3.8.1 *External validity*

The concept of validity is concerned with the integrity of the research findings that are generated from a piece of research (Bryman, 2012). Kumar (2014) says validity refers to whether an indicator or instrument that is devised to measure a concept actually succeeds in measuring it. In simpler terms, validity of findings refers to the correctness or precision of

research findings. External validity relates to the extent to which the study findings can be generalised to the population (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014).

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

Internal validity relates to the extent to which casual statements are supported by the study (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2014). This concept questions our confidence in whether independent variables of a study are truly responsible for the variation identified in the dependent variable (Bryman, 2012). Internal validity seeks to ensure consistency throughout the data collection process. The study ensured internal validity by conducting one-on-one interviews using pre-set questions to ensure consistency when dealing with each study individual.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

According to Bryman (2012), reliability refers to the extent to which the results of a study are consistent and repeatable. To ensure that the data and results of this study were reliable, all the interviews were conducted according to the guidelines stipulated in the research instrument so as to ensure consistency in all the interviews. The researcher also recorded all the interviews using a recorder in order to be able to play back the interviews at a later stage to ensure that the correct information has been recorded. All the data collected during the interviews is being kept safe in its completeness for future reference and scrutiny.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

To avoid duplication of the information from the chapters that present and discuss the results, presentation and discussion of results have been combined into a single chapter for simplified reference. This chapter presents and discusses the main themes and factors that emerged from the semi-structured interviews to determine any underlying messages. The results are presented in the form of a discussion, tables and direct quotations from the transcriptions of the respondents. These results are compared and linked to the findings of the in-depth Literature Review in Chapter 2.

This chapter starts by looking at the demographic profile of the respondents in order to give a background to why the sample selected was ideal to give informed responses to validate the theoretical findings of the literature review in chapter 2. This is followed by a review of the research question posed at the end of chapter 2. In this session, the theoretical findings according to the literature review are linked to the key themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews and the content that was extracted from the thematic analysis conducted by the researcher. Lastly, this chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

4.2 Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 11 interviews were conducted with senior, middle and junior managers who are employees of Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions. All interviews took place at the Bidvest Prestige offices to ensure that the respondents were as comfortable as possible. Preceding the interview, the interviewer asked the respondents if they were comfortable with the interview being recorded for purposes of transcribing and they all confirmed that they were. The respondents have been employed by the company for an average of seven years and have been in their current position for an average of five years. One can infer that the respondents were familiar with their organisation and have the necessary knowledge, qualification and experience that enabled them to answer the research questions on the subject on organisational agility. The key demographic profile of the respondents is summarised in the tables below.

Table 3: Positions of respondents

Management Level of respondent	Number of respondents
Senior management	5
Middle Management	3
Junior Management	3

The average number of years that the respondents had been with their company was seven years, while the average number of years that the respondents had held their current positions at the time of the interview was five years.

Table 4: Average service years at company and in current position

Average Number of years at company	Average number of years in position
7	5

Table 5: Qualifications of respondents

Qualifications of respondents	Number of respondents
Postgraduate Degree (Masters)	1
Undergraduate Degree (Bachelors)	4
Diploma	4
Certificate	2

4.3 Key themes that emerged during the semi-structured interviews

Table 6 is a summary of the themes respondents referred to when asked to define organisational agility and tables 7 to 11 are a summary of the themes respondents referred to when asked to identify the determinants of organisational agility. The columns 1 to 11 represent the different respondents that were interviewed. The column titled 'Literature review' are the themes that appeared in the literature review in chapter 2. A dot in a respective column indicates that a specific theme was referred to by the respondent. The respondents did not always agree on the details of a particular theme. In some cases, respondents made reference to the same theme but some had positive views, while others had a negative view. The different responses have been distinguished by the colour of the dot. A blue dot represents a positive reference while a red dot represents a negative reference.

Table 6: Themes identified by respondents with regard to the definition of organisational agility

Theme		Respondents										
	Literature Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Ability to move quickly	●	●					●	●	●	●	●	
Ability to adapt to change	●						●		●	●	●	●
Flexibility	●	●	●						●		●	
Ability to change	●	●	●							●	●	
Response to external environment	●				●		●	●				
Being innovative	●				●	●						

● Positive referral to theme

● Negative referral to theme

Table 7: Themes identified by respondents with regard to what they consider to be determinants of organisational agility in their company

Theme		Respondents										
	Literatur e Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Adoption of new technologies	●	●		●					●	●	●	
Agile work force	●	●	●				●		●			●
Learning organisation through training	●			●		●	●			●	●	
Continuous innovation	●				●					●		
Transparent and honest communication	●			●		●						●
Effective change leadership						●	●					

● Positive referral to theme

● Negative referral to theme

Table 8: Themes identified by respondents with regard to adaptable organisational design as a determinant of organisational agility

Theme		Respondents										
	Literature Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
An organisation's structure does affects its ability to be agile	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Flat structures are more agile that hierarchical structures	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Key decisions are made very quickly	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Key decisions are communicated effectively	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Processes are simplified and better streamlined	●	●				●	●			●	●	●

● Positive referral to theme ● Negative referral to theme

Table 9: Themes identified by respondents with regard to agile and adaptable workforce as a determinant of organisational agility

Theme		Respondents										
	Literature Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Employees encouraged to continuously find better ways of doing things	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Employees are empowered to perform their duties	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Employees are encouraged to move between different departments and roles	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Employee adoption to change	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Positive referral to theme

● Negative referral to theme

Table 10: Themes identified by respondents with regard to fast organisation learning as a determinant of organisational agility

Theme		Respondents										
	Literature Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Company provides training	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Company regularly reviews its processes and procedures	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

● Positive referral to theme

● Negative referral to theme

Table 11: Themes identified by respondents with regard to adoption of IT systems as a determinant of organisational agility

Theme		Respondents										
	Literature Review	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Improves communication within the organisation	●				●		●	●		●		●
Work has become more mobile	●				●	●						
Improves productivity of employees	●				●	●		●				●
Enables access to information and resources	●				●	●	●		●	●	●	●
Processes have become easier and faster	●	●	●	●				●				
Enabled the company to adapt	●	●										
Improved and simplified processes	●					●		●	●		●	●

● Positive referral to theme ● Negative referral to theme

4.4 Results and discussions pertaining to the definition of organisational agility

When asked to define organisational agility, the respondents did not arrive at one common definition, however most of the definitions given covered some of the essential characteristics of agility, which include speed, flexibility of the system, the ability to respond and adapt to environmental change. The most prominent themes to emerge in response to this question, as shown in **Table 6**, were an organisation's ability to move quickly, adapt to change, be flexible and responsive to change. A significant number of respondents, (six of the eleven) said that organisational agility entails being able to move quickly with ease. They defined organisational agility as a company's ability to move quickly and efficiently in response to the market while retaining its customers and maintaining the quality of the goods and services it offers. Other respondents thought that organisational agility referred to how quickly a company reacts and adapts to change, and how quickly it is able to realign its employees, internal systems, and company strategies in response to that change. Two respondents felt that an organisation also needs to be innovative, constantly seeking to find disruptive products and better ways of doing things in order to stay ahead of the pack. These definitions are in line with the views of Dove (1999, 2001), who defined organisational agility as an effective integration of an organisation's response ability and knowledge management in order to **rapidly, efficiently and accurately adapt to** any unexpected changes in the environment while taking advantage of any opportunities as they arise and meeting customer needs without compromising the cost or the quality of the product/ process

In chapter 2's literature review, Ganguly, Nilchiani and Farr (2009) stated that an agile organisation is one that is able to rapidly and efficiently adjust to any unexpected and sudden changes in its environment. According to Lin, Chiu and Tseng (2006), agile organisations possess essential capabilities that enable them to respond appropriately to changes in their business environments. These capabilities comprise four critical elements (Yusuf, Sarhadi, & Gunasekaran, 1999): (1) responsiveness, the ability to see/identify changes, to respond quickly, reactively or proactively and to recover; (2) competency, the efficiency and effectiveness of an enterprise in reaching its goals; (3) flexibility/adaptability, the ability to implement different processes and achieve different goals with the same

facilities; and (4) quickness/speed, the ability to culminate an activity in the shortest possible time.

All the respondents made a positive reference to the subject of organisational agility and all agreed that it was important for organisations to be agile if they are to survive and thrive in today's highly competitive business environment. The literature review also highlighted that the ability of organisations to adapt and respond to unexpected change is critical to surviving as well as maintaining a competitive advantage (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009).

4.5 Response to research question

The research set out to identify the determinants of organisational agility in a listed South African contract cleaning company. When the respondents were asked to identify the determinants of agility in their organisation, the most prominent themes (summarised in **Table 7**) that emerged during the semi-structured interviews were: (1) having an agile workforce, (2) an organisation's ability and willingness to continuously learn and (3) adoption of technologies that create a competitive advantage. These determinants are discussed further below.

4.6 Results and discussions pertaining to the determinants of organisational agility

The most prominent themes elicited by this question were: having an agile workforce, an organisation's ability and willingness to continuously learn and adoption of technologies that create a competitive advantage.

4.6.1 Agile workforce

Five of the eleven respondents identified workforce agility as a key factor that will determine whether their organisation is agile or not. The respondents said that people are the ones that essentially drive change within an organisation. They acknowledged that a company as big as Bidvest has a lot of processes and technologies in place in order to create an enabling environment. However, they think that fundamentally all these tools are meaningless if the organisation does not have an agile workforce to exploit them. This is in

line with the assessment of Alhadid and Abu-Rumman (2015), that said an agile workforce is the main determinant of whether an organisation will be agile or not. Breu et al. (2001) also stated that organisations alone cannot be agile, but their employees can be. Logically, this implies that organisations can only become agile if those who control them are agile (Seo & La-Paz, 2008).

When asked how well they respond and adjust to change, over 73% of the respondents responded positively and said they adjust fairly well to change. They also recognised that change is inevitable in the business environment and it is important for one to be able to adjust in order to stay relevant and grow. The remaining 27% had mixed feelings about change. They said they found it difficult to adjust and preferred to have things explained well before they are introduced. However, when asked how well the overall company adapted to change, the results showed a lack of consensus as half of the respondents answered that the company embraced change well, while the other half thought that most of the employees who have been in the company for an extended number of years struggled with changing from the old way of doing things. Allworth and Hesketh (1999) stated that an agile workforce is one that is able to cope with change and transfer learning from one task to another as the job demands vary.

In another question relating to employee agility, the respondents were asked if they were empowered to make decisions within the scope of their work. Six of the eleven respondents were happy and answered that they felt empowered to perform their responsibilities while the other five answered that they felt they were not empowered to make decisions regarding their work which hampered their initiative to be innovative. This group of respondents felt that decision making was a luxury restricted to senior management and the few employees who were empowered to make decisions were often too afraid to do so.

The literature review revealed that employee empowerment and autonomy in decision-making are what make a workforce truly agile (Van-Oyen, Gel, & Hopp, 2001). High performing organisations empower their workforce and give them freedom to make decisions within established boundaries (Waal, 2007). When lower-level employees are empowered, they respond to the environment faster and more accurately (Van-Oyen, Gel, & Hopp, 2001). The advantage of employee autonomy at lower levels is that it improves the

organisation's overall responsiveness, increases its effectiveness and improves employee engagement (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015).

The respondents were also asked if the company encouraged employees to move between different departments and roles within the organisation. Seven of the eleven respondents answered that the company did create opportunities for employees to move within the company as well as to participate in projects that do not necessarily relate to their current responsibilities. Six respondents said it was not customary for employees to move around the organisation and in their experience, it is also difficult for employees to branch out to other responsibilities as they often preferred to specialise and master their own work to ensure job security. A few of the respondents considered themselves to be multi-skilled and confirmed that the company had in the past made use of their skills other than those for which they were employed. In the literature review, Nijssen and Paauwe (2012) mention that a highly adaptable workforce is a key competence for organisational agility. The workforce has to be multi-skilled in order to reorganise itself under changing conditions (Wendler & Dresden, 2014). Employees need to develop multiple skills by sharing information and knowledge with their peers (Wasserman, 2016).

4.6.2 *Fast organisation learning*

The respondents were asked how frequently the company reviewed its processes and procedures. All the respondents agreed that the company reviewed their processes and procedures regularly, particularly if a new product or technology is introduced. According to Seo and La Paz (2008), learning organisations should continuously evaluate how they do things to weed out bad practices and improve the good ones. Agile organisations continuously simplify and improve their processes in order to eliminate unnecessary procedures, work and information overload (Waal, 2007).

In another question, the respondents were also asked if their company encouraged employees to continuously find better ways of doing things. Seven of the eleven respondents answered that the company did indeed encourage employees to think out of the box and be innovative, however the rest of the respondents thought that as much as innovation is often encouraged, there had been no real commitment from their company to support such initiatives, let alone empower employees to do so. Our literature review

revealed that agile organisations need to constantly ask, ‘what do we need to learn, how do our capabilities need to evolve, what new capabilities do we need to develop and what do we need to do better so we can add value in the future’ (Seo & La-Paz, 2008).

The respondents were also asked how frequently they received training to ensure that they are able to do their work. Five of the eleven respondents said they receive training on a regular basis while six of them said they have not received any training since they joined the company. However, all the respondents confirmed that the company had an in-house training centre that ran training and up-skilling programmes mainly for functions relating to the core activity of the business. People in operations are trained on a regular basis whereas most of supporting staff are trained when they join the company only. The six respondents that said they did not receive any training from the company, however confirmed that they have attended training in their individual capacities at other institutes so as to up-skill or attend refresher courses.

All the respondents acknowledged that training and constant up-skilling of employee skills is critical in an industry like theirs as it ensures that people are able to perform their roles in the most efficient and cost effective way. This observation is consistent with the literature review in chapter 2, that said continuous education and training are very important in leveraging the skills and knowledge of people (McGaughey, 1999). Organisations should create a learning environment by continuously investing in training, upgrading of skills, investing in management development and constantly identifying and accessing new competences (Waal, 2007). A study done by Brue et al. (2002) established that the most important factors for workforce agility are speed of developing new skills, responsiveness to changes in customer needs and market conditions and the speed of acquiring the skills needed for business process change. This is in an effort of changing or modifying oneself to better fit to a new environment (Sherehiy, Karwowski, & Layer, 2007)

4.6.3 *Adoption of technologies*

The most prominent themes that emerged throughout the interview from questions relating to the adoption of technologies in Bidvest are that adoption of technology has made work more mobile thus increased productivity of employees, it has improved communication and enabled better access to information and other resources. All the respondents agreed that

technology had revolutionised the way they did their work at Bidvest. When asked what they considered to be the key competences of their information technologies at their company, all the respondents said they considered themselves to have the latest information technologies at their disposal that has enhanced and quickened communication, simplified processes, improved core business areas such as inventory management and enabled the company to be more responsive to change. In the literature review, Seo and La Paz (2008) said information systems and technologies play an important part in the pursuit of organisational agility. Furthermore, Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj and Grover (2003) noted that IT applications, such as Internet computing, customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, and supply chain management, allow companies to rapidly detect changes, flexibly alter their market strategies and respond more quickly to customers' changing requirements, thereby attaining competitive advantage.

The respondents were also asked to what extent they thought the adoption of IT systems had enhanced their company's ability to be agile and responsive to change. Eight of the eleven respondents responded positively to this question while two respondents had negative experiences regarding their IT systems. Nine respondents said the adoption of technologies had allowed the company to be more flexible, more responsive to change and customer needs, it had also significantly improved communication and access to information. In line with this notion, McGaughey (1999) said an organisation's technology must support the activities and tasks that enable the organisation to continuously meet the changing needs of customers. Information technologies provide superior information management capabilities, analytical decision support, and enhanced communication. Organisations that have access to efficient information technologies are able to access real-time information that enables them to move and respond quicker to market demands (Dyer & Shafer, 1998).

Another theme that surfaced during the interviews is that technology has increased productivity due to processes being made easier and faster and work becoming more and more mobile. The respondents said the company had invested in iPads for employees that normally work out of the office. This has enabled them to access and send information wherever they are. In the past, these employees could only respond to emails or send information when they returned to the office at the end of the day, which made

communication slow and difficult, and in some cases, hampered productivity. This view is in line with the view of Wilson (2008) who noted that technology could improve productivity through streamlining of processes and improving efficiencies.

However, despite acknowledging that technology allowed for greater connectedness, simplified processes and increased productivity by mobilising work, three respondents were of the opinion that this was not necessarily a given. Most employees are unable or struggle to use the company's systems. Some employees do not embrace and use some of the company's systems such as the CRS payroll package. In their opinion, this has hampered their ability to access critical information they may need in performing their duties, resulting in processes being more complicated than they need to be. These respondents also alluded to the fact that younger generations were more comfortable with new technologies while older generations were more reluctant to engage them. Similarly, Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj and Grover (2003) also noted that for organisations to be competitive, their IT management capability should be such that they acquire, utilise, and manage information technologies in support of their business processes and activities adequately. In today's modern world, IT resources are accessible to everyone hence the way that these resources are used will determine whether they create a competitive advantage to the organisation.

4.6.4 *Adaptable organisational design and structure*

When the respondents were asked to state what they considered to be the determinants of organisational agility in their company, none of them identified adaptable organisational design as one of the factors that affect their company's ability to adapt to change. However, the literature review found that adaptable designs allow organisations to quickly realign their businesses in response to changing internal and external circumstances or shifts in customer values and needs (Waal, 2007). Strategies alone cannot deal with the "escalating imperatives for speed and flexibility" (Liedtka, 2000, p. 8) in today's highly dynamic business environment. According to Worley and Lawler (2010), even the most cunning strategy will not reach its potential if an organisation's structures, processes, and systems do not support it.

The respondents were asked if they thought the structure of the organisation affected its ability to be agile, eight of the eleven respondents were unanimous in that the structure of

the organisation did indeed affect its ability to be agile. The other three said they do not consider the organisation's structure to be a significant enabler of organisational agility, but rather the people within the organisation that drive the change. The literature review in chapter 2 supported both these views from the respondents. Wendler and Dresden (2014) established that the structure of an organisation can allow it to flexibly adapt and change itself, as well as enable it to develop an organisational culture that fosters teamwork and breaks down departmental silos that tend to exist in traditional institutions. However, a significant amount of research is of the opinion that an agile workforce is the main determinant of whether an organisation will be agile or not (Alhadid & Abu-Rumman, 2015). Breu et al. (2001) also concluded that organisations alone cannot be agile, but their employees can be.

The respondents were then asked to describe the type of organisational structure they thought allowed an organisation to be more agile; ten of the eleven respondents said a flatter, decentralised and fluid structure with fewer management levels allowed direct access to decision makers, improved communication, and allowed the company to be more responsive and adaptive to change as decisions are made quicker. This observation agreed with the findings in the literature review that said most high performing organisations simplify and flatten their structures so as to reduce boundaries and barriers between their employees, thus getting rid of bureaucracy and organisational complexity (Waal, 2007). Agile companies tend to have flatter structures, with fewer layers, minimal hierarchy and broader spans of control (Worley & Pillans, 2015).

However, one respondent said more hierarchical organisations operate more efficiently and would be in a better position to be agile compared to organisations with flatter structures as they are better organised due to being tightly managed. This is in contradiction to our findings in the literature review that stated that the best fitting organisational structure in dynamic environments is an organic structure which is typically an adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1992). Research on organisational structure established that there are mainly two types of organisational structures: mechanistic structures (characterised by rigid organisational structures and processes that operate in predictable environments) and organic structures (less rigid organisational structures that are more readily adaptable to change within volatile environments) (Burns & Stalker, 1961).

In reference to the decision making and communication process of the company, the respondents were asked how long it took the company to make and communicate key decisions within the company. Five of the eleven respondents said the company made decisions and communicated decisions fairly quickly. The other six respondents said key decisions are not always easy and quick to make and often require a well thought out process. The company places a lot of consideration into key decisions because Bidvest is a labour oriented business. This is in contradiction to Robertson (2007)'s findings that stated that agile organisations strive to ensure that decisions are made quickly and incrementally with maximum information, and can be adjusted continuously in response to the changes in the environment.

Equally important to fast decision making is a company's ability to communicate change internally to all the stakeholders of the company, who in turn, must have the ability to pivot quickly to execute the desired strategy (PWC, 2015). Decision making, leadership function and overall effective leadership needs to be supported by good communication channels (Harraf, Wanasika, Tate, & Talbott, 2015). Seven of the eleven respondents were less than happy with the communication process of the company. One respondent who stood out during the interviews said the communication within the company was poor, only a few employees understood the new strategy of the company while most do not necessarily know where the company is going. Another respondent said communication varied from one employee to another depending on confidentiality of the information being shared. This however often results in unhappiness amongst employees. According to Waal (2007), agility requires organisations to create a highly interactive internal communication system that promotes a culture of transparency, openness and open sharing of information. This approach builds trust in teams and creates an environment where people are more comfortable and adaptive to change (Wasserman, 2016).

4.7 Conclusion to the results and discussion

The researcher set out to identify the determinants of organisational agility within a South African contract cleaning company. The responses and themes from the interviews validated and supported the findings from the literature review. The literature review identified adaptable organisation designs, agile and adaptive workforce, adoption of

technology, and fast organisational learning as key determinants of organisational agility. Most of the determinants identified in the literature review were confirmed by the research findings. The respondents also identified three of these factors identified in the literature review: agile and adaptive workforce, adoption of technology, and fast organisational learning. The respondents did not identify adaptable organisation designs as one of the factor that affect their company's ability to be agile. However, when they were asked if the structure of the organisation affected its ability to be agile, eight of the eleven respondents were unanimous that the structure of the organisation did indeed determine whether it is responsive and adaptable to change. Overall, the determinants identified in the research findings were consistent with the academic literature on organisational agility.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key conclusions derived from the research findings and provide theoretical and practical insight on how organisations can strive to achieve or enhance agility within their organisations. This chapter concludes by providing recommendations for future research on the subject of organisational agility.

5.2 Conclusions of the study

The purpose of this study was to identify the determinants of organisational agility and in turn, provide a better understanding of the concept of agility. In order to identify these determinants, past academic literature was reviewed and interviews carried out with the management of Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Services. Using an holistic single-site case study approach within the paradigm of the qualitative research method, eleven managers were interviewed and asked to identify and provide their perspective, and insights regarding the determinants of organisational agility. The data provided by the respondents in the interviews provided the basis from which the final view pertaining to the determinants of organisational agility was deduced.

In light of the fast moving unpredictable business environment characterised by increasing volatility and complexity, the ability of an organisation to adapt to unexpected changes is critical to achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage (Ganguly, Nilchiani, & Farr, 2009). The complexity, volatility and unpredictability of the business environment today has led to the failure of many organisations (Tseng & Lin, 2011). Today's organisations have the onerous task of not only responding to rapid changes in their environments but also accurately sensing change in their markets and responding quickly and appropriately to it (PWC, 2015). Consequently, agility is not just about being fast or outperforming your competition, but also entails an organisation's ability to weather and survive the economic and environmental storms (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Agile organisations are able to

embrace change by moving quickly, decisively and effectively to take advantage of the change, yet remain robust enough to absorb any setbacks (Mourougan, 2015).

This research has, therefore, identified factors that are considered to be the determinants of organisational agility within a listed South African contract cleaning company. The research findings were consistent with what is currently purported by academic literature. The main finding of this research can be summarised as follows:

1. Definition of organisational agility

When asked to define organisational agility, the respondents did not give one common definition. However, most of the definitions given covered most of the essential characteristics of agility, which include speed, flexibility of the system, the ability to respond and adapt to environmental change. The thematic analysis revealed six primary themes from respondent's responses when they were asked to define organisational agility:

Theme 1: Ability to move quickly

Theme 2: Ability to adapt to change

Theme 3: Flexibility

Theme 4: Ability to change

Theme 5: Being responsive to external environment

Theme 6: Being innovative

A significant number of respondents, (six of the eleven) said that organisational agility entails being able to move quickly with ease. They defined organisational agility as a company's ability to move quickly and efficiently in response to the market while retaining its customers and maintaining the quality of the goods and services it offers. Other respondents thought that organisational agility referred to how quickly a company reacts and adapts to change, and how quickly it is able to realign its employees, internal systems, and company strategies in response to that change. Two respondents felt that an organisation also needs to be innovative, constantly seeking to find disruptive products and better ways of doing things in order to stay ahead of the pack. These definitions are

consistent with the views of Dove (1999, 2001) who defined organisational agility as an effective integration of an organisation's response ability, and knowledge management in order to **rapidly, efficiently and accurately adapt to** any unexpected changes in the environment while taking advantage of any opportunities as they come and meeting customer needs without compromising the cost or the quality of the product/ process

2. Determinants of organisational agility

To answer the research question, the respondents were asked to identify the determinants of organisational agility in their organisation. The presentation and analysis of the research results presented in chapter 4 have succinctly conceded to the findings of the literature review in chapter 2 in identifying the determinants of organisational agility. It was clear from the data analysed that there were similarities between the views of the scholars cited in the literature review and those of Bidvest Prestige management. The literature addressed many of the issues elicited by the interviews and respondents commented on many similar themes. The following determinants of organisational agility were identified by the respondents during the interviews:

- **Agile and adaptable workforce**

Workforce agility was noted to be one of the key factors that determined whether an organisation would be agile or not. The respondents said that people are the ones that essentially drive change within an organisation. They recognised that a company as big as Bidvest has a lot of processes and technologies in place so as to create an enabling environment. However, all these tools are meaningless if the organisation does not have an agile workforce to exploit them. This is in line with the assessment of Alhadid and Abu-Rumman (2015), who said an agile workforce is the main determinant of whether an organisation will be agile or not. Breu et al. (2001) also stated that organisations alone cannot be agile, but their employees can be. Logically, this implies that organisations can only become agile if those that control them are agile (Seo & La-Paz, 2008).

- **Adoption of technologies**

Adoption of technologies often results in improvements in productivity and communications. It also allows for greater access to information from other important resources. The respondents were unanimous that use of technology in Bidvest had made work more mobile which increased the productivity of employees, improved communication and enabled better access to information, simplified processes, improved core business areas such as inventory management and enabled the company to be more responsive to change. The literature review also confirmed that technologies play an important part in the pursuit of organisational agility (Seo & La-Paz, 2008). Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj and Grover (2003) noted that IT applications, such as Internet computing, customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, and supply chain management allow companies to rapidly detect changes, flexibly alter their market strategies, and enable them to respond more quickly to customers' changing requirements thereby attaining competitive advantage.

- **Fast organisation learning**

The challenge for most businesses today is not just how to out-manoeuvre or out-muscle the competition, but rather how to out-think them by developing unique points of view about the future and getting there faster. This requires organisations and leaders to never stop learning in a world that never stops changing (Taylor, 2012). Organisations should create a learning environment by continuously investing in training, upgrading of skills, investing in management development and constantly identifying and accessing new competences (Waal, 2007). Learning organisations should continuously evaluate how they do things so as to weed out bad practices and improve the good ones. Agile organisations continuously simplify and improve their processes in order to eliminate unnecessary procedures, work and information overload (Waal, 2007).

- **Adaptable organisation design**

Although none of respondents identified adaptable organisation design as one of the determinants of organisational agility, eight of the eleven respondents agreed that the structure of the organisation did indeed affect its ability to be agile. The literature review found that adaptable designs allow organisations to quickly realign their businesses in

response to changing internal and external circumstances or shifts in customer values and needs (Waal, 2007). Strategies alone cannot deal with the “escalating imperatives for speed and flexibility” (Liedtka, 2000, p. 8) in today’s highly dynamic business environment. According to Worley and Lawler (2010), even the most cunning strategy will not reach its potential if an organisation’s structures, processes, and systems do not support it.

5.3 Recommendations

During the course of the research, the researcher came across a number of areas in which Bidvest Prestige could improve in order to ensure that the company benefits from the largest possible impact of organisational agility. The following are recommendations aimed at Bidvest Prestige Cleaning Solutions and can be applied to other organisations that are looking to enhance their ability to be responsive to changes in their environment.

5.3.1 Recommendation 1

It is recommended that Bidvest Prestige educates its management and employees on the concept of agility and the benefit of the organisation being more responsive and adaptive to change. It was established throughout the research that the management team had varying perspectives on the subject, and while they had a general understanding of the concept, there is a need for the company to debate the subject further under a common umbrella to develop a shared understanding of what it is indeed that will drive their business forward, and stay ahead of the pack.

5.3.2 Recommendation 2

It is recommended that Bidvest Prestige invests more time in improving its channels of communication. A number of respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with the current levels of communication in the company. They said as much as some things are communicated within the organisation, other things were either insufficiently explained or not communicated at all, in some cases. The company is encouraged to spend more time on managing and communicating change, as well as getting the buy-in of its employees before anything is implemented.

5.3.3 Recommendation 3

It is recommended that Bidvest Prestige invests in training its workforce on how to use their in-house systems more effectively. The respondents said the company was in possession of the latest Information technologies but these were not being fully utilised and exploited to their full potential as the system users were not adequately trained prior to using the system. The literature review confirmed that technologies play an important part in the pursuit of organisational agility; however, with technology so readily available and accessible to everyone in today's world, it is more how it is used that will determine whether it creates a competitive advantage to the organisation or not.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

There were a number of limitations that were experienced during the course of this research which led to more questions than answers for the researcher. Possible further studies could look into the following:

5.4.1 Suggestion 1

This research was conducted using qualitative research methodology and was therefore open to:

- 1) Subjectivity which is a weakness, so a more objective research method such as quantitative research method could be used.
- 2) This research was based on a single-site case study of one company and therefore no comparisons were made. Research in the future could compare what different organisations consider to be the determinants of agility in their companies so as to establish a broader perspective on the subject

5.4.2 Suggestion 2

The research was based on the perspective of management, as no lower level employees were interviewed. The research could have interviewed employees from other levels within

the organisation as their opinion and feedback is equally important, hence further research should be done on different target groups within Bidvest Prestige.

5.4.3 *Suggestion 3*

A better understanding of the concept of organisational agility, its drivers and determinants and its impact on the performance of the organisation is essential if organisations are going to successfully navigate today's dynamic business environment. The research identified that there are internal and external determinants of organisational agility, however it was confined to looking at internal determinants only. There would be value in exploring the external determinants of organisational agility in another research.

5.4.4 *Suggestion 4*

The scope of this research was to identify the determinants of agility and did not explore or evaluate their impact on the operational and financial performance of the company. Further research could be done in evaluating the impact of the identified determinants of agility on the actual performance of the company.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to Respondents

Dear Madam/Sir

I am an MBA student at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of our academic program we are required to carry out a research on one of the most topical issues facing the business environment. I am conducting a research study on organisational agility as part of my MBA thesis and would appreciate your input with regards to this subject.

I would like to schedule a 30minute interview with you to ask questions and hopefully get your perspective on the subject of organisational agility. The information you provide is strictly for academic purposes and confidentiality will be observed throughout the process.

Your assistance will be greatly appreciated,

Yours sincerely,

Charity Mguni

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Research instrument – interview guide

Demographic details

1. Name of respondent
2. Current position in company
3. Number of years employed in company
4. Number of year in the current position
5. Highest qualification

Section 1 – Definition of organisational agility

1. Explain what you understand by the term agility?
2. Explain your understanding of organisational agility?
3. Does the company have the appropriate structure, technologies, human resource practises and learning environment to encourage it to be agile?

Section 2 – Determinants of organisational agility

1. What do you think are the determinants of organisational agility in your company and why?

Workforce agility and adaptability

1. Does the company encourage employees to move between different departments and job functions?
2. Are your company's employees empowered to make decisions within the scope of their work?
3. Would you consider yourself to be multi-skilled, if so has the company made use of your other skills other than those you were employed for. How?
4. As an individual, how quickly do you adapt to change? Why do you think it is important?
5. As an organisation, how quickly do you think that your organisation adapts to changes?

Adaptable organisation design

1. In your opinion, can an organisation's structure enable it to be agile and responsive to changes in the environment? If so how?
2. What kind of organisational structure do you think best allows/ enables an organisation to be more agile and why?
3. In your opinion, do you think the organisational structure of your company can enable its ability to be agile and responsive to changes in the environment?
4. How long does it take the company to make key decisions, communicate and implement them?
5. How well does the company communicate changes within the organisation to both its internal and external stakeholders?

Organisation learning environment

1. Does the company encourage the employees to continuously find new and better ways of doing things?
2. How frequently does the company review its existing processes and procedures?
3. How frequently do you receive training to ensure that you are able to do your job more effectively?

Adoption of IT systems

1. What do you consider to be the key information technology competences of your company?
2. In your own opinion, to what extent do you think adoption of IT systems at your company has enhanced its ability to be flexible and responsive to market demands?
3. In your opinion does your company's IT systems enable you to share knowledge and develop of skills that are specifically aimed at ensuring that the company remains responsive to change and market demands?