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*“In order for companies to survive, it is important to hire lateral thinkers, people that think differently. The recruitment is no longer around specific skill and experience, it is about the attitude and parallel skills that you can get to formulate the strategy and that is becoming more and more not just what the company is.” (P5: Senior Manager - Middle Management)*

The impact of disruption was not completely projected as doom and gloom by participants. Some participants received disruption as an opportunity for positive change within the company; especially in the promotion of higher scale collaboration across company structures and levels. Participants mentioned that disruption might probably inspire management to start collaborating better and effectively from a top-down and bottom-up approach, with the hope that this will make management understand and embrace the importance of becoming more inclusive, especially when it comes to strategy formulation. Most research advocates for the opening up of strategy formulation as

organisations can benefit from broadening the strategy formulation process (Adobor, 2019; Malhotra *et al.*, 2017).

In addition, participants felt that as a result of the presence of disruption, employees across the business would have to approach business challenges in a multidimensional way to problem solving, instead of an individualised area of expertise. Participants also mentioned that disruption was changing the way in which they engaged and interacted with their customers; this was requiring them to be more customer centric by embracing more ownership of innovation within the company. There is a general consensus that with disruption, every employee is bound to get challenged, everyone is going to have to change their way of thinking or reconsider their approach to strategy and basically be the best or the better of whatever is coming.

#### **6.6.5.1      *Aligning strategy formulation to address disruption***

From participants responses (all participants), the biggest change in strategy that they had observed within the company was the increased focus on local content as a sustainable competitive advantage. The company had not only increased its investment in local content in South Africa alone, but also in Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Angola, Ghana, Mozambique and Ethiopia, by customising local content that is relevant and relatable within these specific countries.

Another notable change in strategy was the change in target market focus. The ‘ company was initially built on the foundation of serving a limited but affluent market through ‘top segment’ subscribers, however the change in the economy as well as the rise of the Black middle class across the continent made the company aware of the untapped growth opportunity presented within the mass market. Other responses to disruption have been seen in the product changes that came about in response to video streaming services, in particular Netflix.

With regard to how the formulation of strategy was aligning in the effort to address disruption, 11 participants felt that formulation of strategy within the company was changing and evolving. Participants said that they are noticing a culture of inclusivity and collaboration that was budding within the organisation. The company had implemented strategic projects and programmes which had become the foundation for strategy formulation and was thus informing the strategic direction of the company, with the aim of building a future fit organisation. This inclusivity would create a rich repository for disruptive ideas which would improve innovation management within the organisation.

In addition, executive management had become more reliant on the expertise and knowledge of employees beneath them, making sure that the executives get the holistic view of the business from the people who are more hands on, instead of basing the company's strategic objectives on a birds eye view, which is what was done in the past. Participants said that they had also noticed that the pace of decision making in the organisation had become faster, and this was driven by the accelerating pace of change within the environment that the company operated in. Participants mentioned that the change was slowing eroding the bureaucracy which could hamper progress and discourage a culture of innovation within the company. Participants believed that the company was becoming more responsive, much quicker than what they had seen in the past. The excerpts below indicate the above:

*"I think formulation it is different because they are involving more people in the formulation."*  
(P1: Senior Manager - Middle Management)

*"Let me just point to even the profile of any reporting meeting, reporting meetings now seem to have Execs from a lot more arms of the business. Just even from a casual observation, it seems that there is a greater inclusivity".* (P2: Manager - Lower Management)

*"I do recognise that the company is trying to be at all places to make sure that there is inclusivity..."* (P11: Director - Top Management)

Five participants felt that the strategy formulation process within the organisation had not changed at all. Two of these 5 participants commented that they were aware of the faster

pace of strategy formulation, however, they believed that the process was as it had always been. The excerpt below indicates this:

*“I wouldn’t say it changes, I think the pace changes but the way we formulate strategies is still in place because of those ticks and balances that needs to happen. You might miss a thing or two there. The pace is a little bit faster especially with dealing with such things, but it is also phased again.” (P16: Top Management – Executive Head)*

Two participants said they did not know whether the strategy formulation process had changed, mostly due to lack of context and limited exposure to the strategy formulation process, and therefore did not have a benchmark to compare against. This once again speaks to the inclusivity of strategy formulation as previously discussed in the literature.

Interestingly, 1 participant who is in a low management position voiced that the strategy formulation could not change and that it needed to remain exclusive in order to maintain order and eliminate confusion. These sentiments are captured below:

*“To always be inclusive may slow you down. I think for me it is like ‘as the mom I make the best decisions for my child’, we’ll work around what the impact is. Not to say that you are arrogant or dictatorial, but it just does not work...Sometimes being too democratic or inclusive may slow the way forward...Inclusivity as an example will not necessarily work. (P9: Manager - Lower Management)*

In summary, Theme 2 addressed Research Question 1, Question 2 and Question 3, by discussing the constructs of strategy formulation during disruption within ‘the case company’. In so doing Theme 2 also incorporated all four case study propositions that served as the study’s guidelines and have consequently been extensively linked to literature within this study.

## **6.7 CONTINUOUS SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AS A SHOCK ABSORBER AGAINST DISRUPTION**

Research question 3 aimed to understand what actions were taken by management when faced with disruption. As discussed in the previous section, ‘the case company’ has been implementing various strategies to counter act the impact of the changing competitive landscape. It is also evident that the company has been making efforts to strengthen their competitive advantage, particularly in the middle and mass segments, where competitors are still struggling to make inroads. The final theme addresses the importance of sustainable competitive advantage as part of strategy formulation as a protective barrier against the harsh consequences of disruption. Competitive advantage is sustainable when rival firms give up plans to imitate the resources of the competitors, or when the barriers to imitation are relatively high (Barney & Hesterly, 2018:137; Haberberg & Rieple, 2012:246). When the imitative actions have come to an end without disrupting the organisation’s competitive advantage, or when it is not easy nor cheap to imitate, an organisation’s strategy can be termed as being sustainable (Grant, 2019:146; Hill *et al.*, 2020:177).

### **6.7.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

When asked whether they have seen a change in the competitive advantage of the company, 12 of the 19 participants said that the competitive advantage of ‘the case company’ had undeniably changed. They explained that the company was no longer the sole source of video entertainment, as was the case a few years ago, as new technologies had enabled consumers to consume video entertainment content in many different ways. This feedback from participants is in line with literature of competitive advantage (Dess, 2018; Neugebauer *et al.*, 2016; Porter, 1990; Porter, 2004; Thomas & Ambrosini, 2015; Whittington *et al.*, 2016). As a result, consumer awareness has heightened, making consumers question what is available, comparing options and exercising their right to choose differently if they wish to do so. This behaviour is also in line with literature when assessing the presence of disruptors in the market (Christensen, 2006; Denning, 2016;

Downes & Nunes, 2014; Lepore, 2014; Silberzahn, 2017; Weeks, 2015). This has consequently impacted the share of wallet and the share of eyeballs for ‘the case company’, as this change in competitive advantage was gradually shifting as global competitors such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+ tried to cement their presence in the mind of the African consumer.

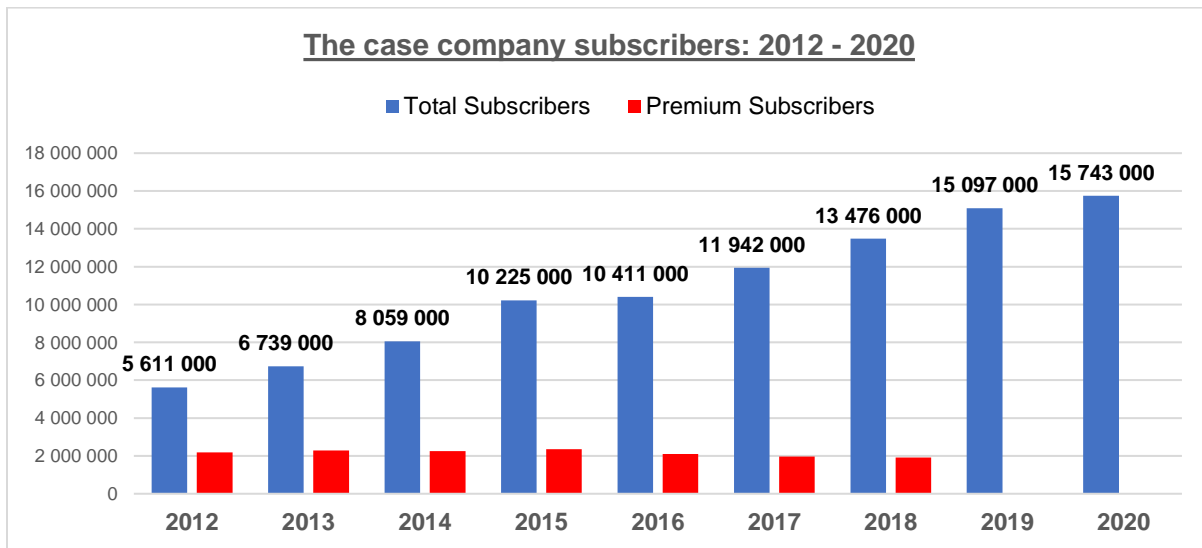
There were 7 participants who believed that the company’s competitive advantage had remained the same and even strengthened over the last few years. These participants mainly spoke to the fact that ‘the case company’ remained the largest broadcaster and pay television company in Africa; with its market dominance increasing annually. Figure 6.4 shows published South African subscriber numbers between 2012 and 2020 of ‘the case company’ and it was evident that the company had not lost market share overall and had actually continued to grow its subscriber base over the years, even in the advent of disruption. This behaviour aligns with literature which speaks to the fact that sustainable competitive advantage is the advantage that allows a business to continuously become more successful than its competitors over a long period of time (Adobor, 2019; Cândido & Santos, 2015; Malhotra *et al.*, 2017; Maniak & Midler, 2014; Porter, 1990; Porter, 2004; Samuel, Siagian & Octavia, 2017).

What Figure 6.4 is also illustrating, is that it was the more affluent and most profitable subscribers that were leaving the company’s ‘top segment product’ service in favour of Netflix, while ‘the case company’ was showing notable growth within the middle to lower income base. Some of the factors mentioned by participants that may have been compromising the company’s competitiveness may have been the ease of business that competitor services are offering. These include the ease of transacting; Netflix has simplified the joining and payment processes for consumers, pricing is also a big factor, as well as the ease of product usage and product relevance. The above speaks to the theory of disruption which relates how a disruptor (like Netflix) is able to challenge an established incumbent (like ‘the case company’) by entering a certain segment of the market and slowly gain traction in that particular market by meeting their needs at a reduced cost compared to what is offered by the incumbent (Christensen, 2017;



McDowall, 2018; Nelson-Brantley, 2020; Roy, 2018; Vecchiato, 2017). These factors could pose a risk for the company’s sustainable competitive advantage in the future; near or far. The company’s continued growth was attributable to their strength in local content and their ability to connect and resonate better with African viewers, which would take the global competitors, especially Netflix, some time to replicate or surpass.

**Figure 6.5: Digital satellite service of the case company South African subscriber numbers 2012-2020**



Source: Adapted from (Vermeulen, 2020a)

### 6.7.1.1 What is at the core of the sustainable competitive advantage

The 7 participants that said that ‘the case company’ had a sustainable advantage, believed that the sustainable competitive advantage had a lifespan of on average between 5 to 10 years. That is the period of time that they believed the company could enjoy uncontested market leadership across the continent. A few participants believed that the sustainability could even stretch to 20 years, however those were only 2 participants, both being in low management positions. The excerpt below gives an account of this:

*"It is sustainable and for 20 years. I am also linking it to the current stuff that is already cooking and taking it forward. I am not seeing anything affecting us in the next 10 years, I*

*am not. There is awesome stuff happening for the business.” (P19: Team Lead - Lower Management)*

Participants were asked to give their account and understanding as to what sat at the core of the sustainable competitive advantage that they believed ‘the case company’ possesses. The factors below give an overview of factors that were at the core of the sustainable competitive advantage as related by participants. First mover advantage as a result of many years that ‘the case company’ has invested in building its empire both in South Africa and in the rest of the continent. The time invested has resulted in an accumulation of sizeable resources, infrastructure, years of learning and building best practices, business models, brand knowledge and brand recognition, that will take competitors some time to match up. Numerous conceptual and empirical studies advance the notion that first movers achieve long term competitive advantages and these studies purport to demonstrate the presence of a systematic direct relationship between order of entry for products, brands, or businesses and market share (Das, 2019; Hirose, Lee & Matsumura, 2017; Nishida, 2017; Park, 2021).

‘The organisation’s resources also enable the company to operate better than its competitors. Resources in terms of expertise, financial, technology, people, infrastructure, learning which has made the company almost ‘untouchable’ in some ways. Before unbundling from Naspers, the company enjoyed years of Naspers affiliation as well as the financial benefits that came with that relationship. The Naspers empire extends to China where Naspers owns WeChat, which is the leading chat application in China. This international technological learning may have benefited the company. These resources are not just based in South Africa but throughout the continent, enhancing the company’s competitive advantage even further. The resource based view (RBV) theory of strategy planning in literature motivates the organisation’s position of long standing competitive advantage by explaining that competitive advantage and superior long term performance are usually as a result of resources that organisations possess, and resources that are not easily duplicable by competitors, thereby raising barriers to

competition (Barney, 2001; Campbell & Park, 2017; Hart, 1995; Hoskisson, Gambeta, Green & Li, 2018; Kraaijenbrink, Spender & Groen, 2010).

Participants also mentioned the company's leadership as another contributor to the company's sustainable competitive advantage. Leadership is an important component of effective strategy formulation as the leadership of the organisation hold the highest responsibility in fulfilling the vision and mission of the organisation. Participants heralded the leaders of the company for continuously steering the company in the right direction amidst the changing competitive landscape. They commended the leadership for decisions that have been made including the recent decision to become a content aggregator and incorporate Netflix and Amazon Prime Video services into the digital satellite service of the case company. They also acknowledged the fact that the company leaders were not entirely perfect, however they recognised that there is great responsibility that comes with running a company of this nature and this magnitude, and that it takes strong strategic leadership to be able to keep the company profitable and competitive during disruption, with minimal casualties. Participants commended the company for their handling of the Covid 19 pandemic. The swift and seamless decisions that enabled staff to work from home before hard lockdown rules were enforced. The company also made sure that there were no direct job losses or salary cuts due to the pandemic, all this while providing uninterrupted service to their customers. They were also commended for different initiatives in which they partnered with the South African government to assist the country to deal with the pandemic. Participants believed that the leaders had the best interests of the country and the continent, as well as the best interests of their employees in mind. Research continues to highlight the importance of strategic leadership capabilities specifically in enabling strategy formulation, in building sustainable competitive advantage, especially in disrupted environments (Crossan *et al.*, 2008; Ireland & Hitt, 1999; Lear, 2012; Schoemaker *et al.*, 2018; Samuel *et al.*, 2017).

Another reason for the sustainable competitive advantage that 'the case company' has as related by participants is its location. Participants mentioned that because the company is an African company and is also based in Africa, (the organisation has offices

in 52 countries in Africa), this gave the company an added advantage over the American competitors. This is not just only due to proximity, but also due to their tangible understanding of African consumers, since it is a company by Africans for Africans. Participants mentioned that the South African growth had plateaued, however there is still massive untapped growth on the rest of the continent, region to region, country to country, and the organisation's location makes them better placed than the American competitors.

The then current active subscriber base of 20 million subscribers was also listed by participants as a sustainable competitive advantage that the company had over its competitors or future competitors. Participants believed that it would take a long time, as well as countless resources, for competitors to erode this customer base and as indicated in Figure 6.4, the company continued to grow its subscriber numbers, consequently widening and strengthening its competitive advantage.

Participants also believed that the company's different established brands were entrenched in consumers' minds and the company had managed to build years of brand loyalty, brand equity and brand value over time. Therefore, the goodwill of the organisation's name and its brands put the company at a better seating than its competitors. In line with literature, this speaks to brand equity and brand value which the organisation has managed to build and acquire over the years. Brand equity is a set of assets (or liabilities) in the form of brand visibility, brand associations, and customer loyalty that add (or subtract) from value of a current or potential product or service (Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Sharp, 2019; Sierra, Iglesias, Markovic & Singh, 2017). Brand equity attests to the fact that a brand is not only a tactical aid to generate short term sales, but also serves as a strategic support to a business strategy that will add long term value and sustainable competitive advantage for the organisation (Keller & Brexendorf, 2019). Brand value is the financial worth of the brand, this would entail the market share value of the brand.

Participants spoke about how the organisation has spent years on perfecting payment systems across the continent in order to make it easy for their diverse customer base to

pay for the services offered by the company. Participants explained how challenging it is to collect money in this type of business, especially when your customer base consists of consumers from different socio-economic backgrounds, especially outside South Africa. Consequently, the company has spent many years investing in payment infrastructures that allowed the company to collect money from banked and unbanked customers across the continent.

Lastly, participants mentioned people (human capital) as another contributor to the company's sustainable competitive advantage. Participants spoke about how the company had the ability to recruit and maintain highly skilled staff that contribute towards making the company what it is today, and also gearing it up for the future. One participant who is in senior management, related how he believed that the company had the right people to protect the company from the harsh effects of disruption, as well as take the company to the next level through effective strategy formulation.

Although participants were confident about the sustainable competitive advantage that the company had managed to build, participants were also cautious about its real sustainability, bearing in mind that under the then current economic challenges, consumers' loyalty can be fickle, and the company could not afford to let its guard down in any way.

### **6.7.2 STRATEGIC AGILITY AS AN ENABLER OF SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**

To thrive in an increasingly disruptive world, organisations must become as strategically adaptable as they are operationally efficient (Hamel, 2008). As discussed in the literature in Section 3.4, disruption, as well as rapid and unexpected changes increase the volatility of the business environment, and this requires flexible and creative strategies. Managing uncertainty and reducing risk is relevant to an organisation's success and it is therefore important for organisations to attempt to reduce the impact of uncertainty by proactively anticipating change, as well as equipping themselves to manage the change within the

business environment (Arena, 2018; Chan & Muthuveloo, 2020; Kotter, 2014; Prange & Heracleous, 2018). Thus, competitive activity in disruptive environments is dependent on the organisation's ability to manage changes, as well as on its flexibility.

Literature describes the organisation's strategic agility as a way to manage changes and risks, and thus improve its competitive activity. Chan and Muthuveloo (2020); Doz (2020); Reed (2020); Shams, Vrontis, Belyaeva, Ferraris and Czinkota (2021) argue that 'many organisations fail not because they do something wrong or mediocre, but because they keep doing what used to be the right thing for too long, and fall victim to the rigidity of their business model'. Literature has used the construct of strategic agility to interpret how successful organisations respond to specific concerns such as disruptive innovation amongst others (Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Wilson & Doz, 2011).

The 19 participants were asked as to whether the company had changed its strategy over the last few years. Eighteen of the 19 participants were in agreement that the company strategy had been changing and evolving over the last few years. The one participant who did not say yes, said that she had no point of comparison as she was new in the organisation (had only been working at the company for a year). In terms of how the company had been changing its strategy, participants were cautious about not wanting to divulge confidential and sensitive company information, however they were able to talk about the publicised strategy of going 'hyper local' and reducing reliance on international content in order to protect the business from competitors like Netflix. Participants also spoke about a change in strategy in terms of resource allocation, budget allocation, capacity allocation and also how the company had been increasing its focus on improving its technologies. Participants also spoke about how historically the company depended heavily on the affluent 'top segment' subscribers to drive revenue; however the business had now shifted its focus to the massive middle to low income earners who form a large percentage of the African population. The company had also heightened its strategy on growing the business in the rest of Africa (outside South Africa), which also represented a large market size and massive revenue potential for the company. All agreeing

participants also commented that the change in strategy felt as though it was happening at a very fast pace compared to previous years, where change was more gradual or slow.

The 19 participants were also asked as to whether they had noticed changes in how the company was formulating strategy in comparison to previous years. Fifteen of the 19 participants responded that they definitely saw some changes in the strategy formulation process within the company, while 3 participants said that they did not notice any changes and the 1 new participant said that she did not know as she had not worked in the company long enough. For the 15 participants who said that they noticed changes; inclusivity was unanimously cited as a glaring difference. Participants mentioned that they are noticing that top management is starting to involve some non-executive managers in some decision making processes and that the strategy formulation process had become noticeably more consultative than before. The excerpts below provide an account of this:

*“I think formulation is different because they are involving more people in the formulation”.*  
(P1: Senior Manager - Middle Management)

*“Reporting meetings now seem to have executives from a lot more arms of the business. Just even from a casual observation, it seems that there is a greater inclusivity, to say let us get the most holistic picture of things and let us not just dictate things.”* (P2: Manager - Lower Management)

*“But it seems as if we are more consultative across the group. Whereby during strategy formulation, you have different departments working together to say ‘CII this is your input, Content this is your input, Marketing Product this is your input.’”* (P4: Senior Manager - Middle Management)

*“I do recognise that the company is trying to be at all places to make sure that there is inclusivity”.* (P11: Director - Top Management)

Another change in the way that the company formulates strategy as related by participants was the speed of strategy formulation. Speed is a critical competent within strategy agility; because in order to be an agile company, strategies need to be formulated

and implemented as fast as necessary, so as to be able to meet the requirements of the changing business environment (Arena, 2018; Reed, 2020). The excerpts below provide an account of this:

*“I am seeing that the decision making is becoming a little bit faster. I am seeing that the decision making around being responsive to disruption is a little bit quicker than my previous experience.” (P7: Senior HR Business Partner - Lower Management)*

*“The pace is a little bit faster especially with dealing with such things, but it is also phased again. The pace changes and obviously things improve”. (P19: Team Lead - Lower Management)*

Furthermore, participants were asked about how the company formulates strategy; if there were specific activities that the company was performing differently compared to historic behaviour. The 15 participants who said that the company’s strategy formulation process was different mentioned that they had noticed activities that were different in the strategy formulation process within the company, as part of the company changing its approach to strategy formulation in reaction to the competitive environment. According to participants, the company was increasingly adopting a project based approach to strategy formulation. The current projects that were mentioned were the projects called ‘Vibranium’ and ‘Wakanda’ which are strategic business optimisation projects which were geared to future proof the organisation. The excerpts below provide an account of this:

*“We have a whole programme now called Wakanda that is supposedly a strategic project and it is big and it is worth millions and millions of Rands for the next couple of years.” (P1: Senior Manager - Middle Management)*

*“There are more strategy programmes such as Vibranium and Wakanda, because in the past we would have hired a big consulting company, with endless collection of data, putting together this and that. For the fact that we are tuning inward to look at how we provide solutions for different things, for me this tells me that it is very progressive.” (P7: Senior HR Business Partner - Lower Management)*



As previously mentioned by participants, the company's growing reliance on data and insights in order to make critical decisions as part of their strategy formulation, was another observation by participants in how the strategy formulation process had been changing, as well as how the activities of the business had been done differently as part of strategy formulation.

An organisation's resilience capacity captures its ability to take situation-specific, robust and transformative actions when confronted with environmental changes that have the potential to jeopardise the organisation's long term survival. Strategic agility is a complex, varied construct that can take multiple forms, but captures an organisation's ability to develop and quickly apply flexible, quick and dynamic capabilities especially as part of strategy formulation (Doz & Kosonen, 2010).

## **6.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The data analysis process started with the coding of the 19 interview transcripts which resulted in a total of 90 codes. These codes were then merged into 40 codes, ultimately resulting in 11 subthemes. As shown in Figure 6.2 (p.149), the three main themes derived from the data analysis process were; the approach to strategy formulation during disruption, the relationship between disruption and strategy formulation, and lastly looking at continuous sustainable competitive advantage as a shock absorber against disruption.

The approach to strategy formulation within 'the case company' was explored and this unearthed the drivers of strategy formulation within the organisation. The hierarchical structure of the company as described by participants had a strong influence on the strategy formulation process being such a top-down process, where the responsibility of strategy formulation solely sat with the executive senior level. This posed some challenges which restricted strategy formulation collaboration which is much needed in the presence of disruption and fuelled the exclusive nature of strategy formulation within the company. The data indicates that there are still gaps in how the company manages

strategy formulation, particularly in the midst of the disruption that is taking place around the organisation.

In the process of understanding the strategy formulation by managers in response to disruption, it was important to explore the perceptions and awareness of disruption by the different managers within the company. There were different perceptions of the phenomenon of disruption which impacted the awareness and ultimately the actions that were administered to mitigate against disruption. The impact of disruption on strategy formulation played out on how the company has to balance reactive and proactive strategies. Participants' perceptions resonated with the practices that are documented in the literature with regard to the emergent and deliberate approach to strategy formulation in the midst of disruption.

The next chapter discusses the study's findings in relation to the research questions outlined in the first chapter. The chapter also describes the current study's contributions to both theory and practice, acknowledges its limitations and offers recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### Chapter outline:

The purpose of this chapter is to:

- reiterate the study's research questions;
- reiterate the study's case propositions;
- summarise the main findings of the study in relation to each research question;
- discuss the managerial implications of the study's findings and provide practical recommendations for strategy formulation during disruption;
- articulate the study's contribution to the existing body of knowledge;
- acknowledge the limitations of the current study; and
- offer recommendations for future research.

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 6 presented the study's findings that were derived from the analysis of the data collected. This chapter begins by reiterating the study's intended purpose, as well as revisiting the research questions that guided this enquiry postulated in Chapter 1. The case study propositions are also considered. The main contributions that this study has made are also affirmed in this chapter. The managerial implications of the study's findings for theory and its contribution to the existing body of knowledge are also discussed and practical recommendations for strategy managers are given. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the study's limitations for both researchers and managers of strategy, and recommendations for future research are presented in closing.

## 7.2 MAIN PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

In order to position the current study's findings, it is important to revisit the purpose as well as the research questions which guided this investigation. The aim of the study was to explore strategy formulation by managers in response to disruption within 'the case company' which is a leading pay television company. In order to guide the investigation, the following research questions were outlined:

- How does management prepare for and create awareness around disruption?
- How does management alter strategy formulation in response to disruption?
- What are the actions taken by management when faced with disruption?

In addition to the research questions, the case study propositions below were presented to guide the study:

- Proposition 1: Enterprises facing disruption will approach strategy formulation in a non-linear way.
- Proposition 2: Enterprises facing disruption are likely to follow a more emergent approach to strategy formulation than a deliberate approach to strategy formulation.
- Proposition 3: Enterprises facing disruption will find it challenging to grow or maintain their competitive position.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Propositions 1 and 2 align with Research Questions 1 and 2, while Proposition 3 aligns with Research Question 3.

In response to the research questions and affirmation of the study propositions, the findings confirmed the presence of disruption within the company and furthermore revealed that the company was indeed aligning its strategies in response to the disruption happening in the pay television industry. The disruption has also had an impact on the strategy formulation process of the organisation, confirming that disruption does impact how organisations will steer their strategy formulation. The following sub-sections provide a summary of the findings within the company.

## 7.2.1 HOW MANAGEMENT PREPARES FOR AND CREATES AWARENESS AROUND DISRUPTION

The strategy formulation process of 'the case company' was analysed and discussed at length throughout Chapter 6. There was varied understanding by the different managers who participated in the study of the strategy formulation process followed by the company, and it was evident that the company followed a similar theoretical strategy formulation process to that depicted in Figure 2.5 (p.35).

Participants consistently emphasised that the executives relied on data, market and business intelligence, as well as market and viewership research as a foundation for establishing strategic objectives during strategy formulation. This is in line with the theory of competitive intelligence which is the ability to gather, analyse and use information collected on competitors, customers and other market factors that contribute to a business' competitive advantage (Hill *et al.*, 2020; Hitt *et al.*, 2020; Köseoglu *et al.*, 2020; Louw & Venter, 2013:144; Rothaermel, 2020). This data and information not only form the foundation for decision making, but also gives the strategy formulators strategic insights that highlight threats, opportunities and disruptions in the market. Theory dictates that strategic intelligence allows executives to identify potential threats and opportunities, as well as to generate alternative courses of action (Krippendorff, 2007; Levina & Su, 2008; Stonehouse & Snowdon, 2007). The strategic objectives of the company were mostly driven by the need to respond to disruption, most particularly Netflix and other video streaming services that are wanting to make inroads in Africa.

As discussed in Section 6.5.4, strategy formulation within 'the case company' is exclusive to the executive management layer and there are multiple barriers that inhibit complete inclusivity of other employees. This presents a challenge to the awareness of disruption because the lower level managers (or even non-managers) may be aware of certain disruptions or new looming disruptions of which executive management may not be aware. This is likely to happen because the people lower down the management chain have closer proximity to 'real life', to customers as well as to operational matters from

which executives are so removed. The company is particularly hierarchical by nature and it means that it may not always be possible for lower management or even non-managerial staff to flag disruptions to the executives who are in control of the formulation of strategy within the company. From the interviews with participants, it is evident that intentional and consistent inclusivity and collaboration would improve the upward movement of information (including alerts of disruption), which would increase the awareness of disruption by those who formulate strategy and thus positively impact strategy formulation within the organisation. In addition, this inclusivity would create a rich repository for disruptive innovations which would improve innovation management within the organisation and ultimately make the company a disruptor in the industry.

The theory of Situational Awareness (SA) was used in section 6.6.2 to analyse the awareness of disruption within 'the case company'. SA was used to analyse the perception and recognition of disruption within the company, the comprehension of the disruption, and lastly the ability to be able to project disruption over a short period of time (Brandt & Gawlick, 2019; Fischer *et al.*, 2017; Gasaway, 2015). What was assuring in the findings was the high level of awareness and agreement amongst participants (17 participants) that the company was facing disruption, and also that there was unanimous agreement on what the biggest disruptions are for the organisation. This means that the managers are aware of their surroundings and potential threats.

When the participating managers were asked as to whose responsibility it should be to detect or look out for disruption, 17 of 19 managers said that it was the responsibility of every employee to be vigilant and aware of their business surroundings, in order to be able to foresee and identify possible disruptions. This implies that managers are not solely placing the responsibility of awareness of disruption on the executive management, but instead there is a collective agreement that every employee should be aware of their environment as well as the disruptions that can impact the company.

Awareness of disruption in the company is at safe levels, however, what needs to be resolved are the communication channels that will allow employees to communicate and

flag disruptions that they may come across, because not all employees will have access to decision makers, which will mean that some disruptions may be uncommunicated until it is too late.

## **7.2.2 HOW MANAGEMENT ALTERS STRATEGY FORMULATION IN RESPONSE TO DISRUPTION**

In today's hyper paced world, few things are more important to business success than the ability to respond quickly to sudden changes in market conditions or customer needs (Stowell & Mead, 2016). Whether the disruption comes from the introduction of a new technology, a new competitor that nobody saw coming or drastic changes, successful companies are those that respond the quickest.

Section 6.7.2 discussed the flexibility and dynamism required by the company in order to maintain its competitive advantage and market leader status. The study revealed that disruption not only requires awareness, but also needs preparedness through strategy agility which is mostly driven through strategy planning and strategy formulation (Chan & Muthueloo, 2020; Doz, 2020; Reed, 2020). The company has mostly responded fast to counter the effects of disruption by changing their strategy to meet market conditions. Section 6.6.3.1 discussed the company's attempts at mitigating the effects of disruption. When asked as to whether the company was responding mostly reactively or proactively with regard to addressing disruption, 9 of the participants believed that that the company was mostly reactive in its response to disruption; while 7 of the participants believed that the company was mostly proactive, and only 3 participants believed that there was a balanced response.

Participants raised concern that the company was not innovating at the same level and pace as disruptors, and this could compromise the company's preparedness for disruption effects. Innovation plays a critical role during disruption because it cushions the incumbent against the harsh effects of disruption, but also allows the incumbent to widen the gap between themselves and competitors. Researchers caution companies

against believing that upgrades are equal to innovation. They argue that innovation done in increments is a thing of the past, because disruptive innovation is where organisations need to look to survive, agility is key (Johnson, 2021; Strydom & Buckley, 2020; Tidd, 2020). Disruptive innovation is what allowed a giant like Amazon to follow an exponential innovative path that transitioned the company from selling books, to e-books, to e-commerce, cloud technology, entertainment content, drones logistics and home automation, just to name a few (Kuratko, Goldsby & Hornsby, 2019).

Christensen (2016b) advises that in order for companies to be disruptive, a SMART plan for innovation is required, and the CEO should be involved in the innovation process and take ownership of innovation within the organisation. The company also needs to have a first mover and not fast follower mindset and operate accordingly, and this requires taking risks and focusing on ground-breaking moves. The company should commit a budget to innovation by following the golden rule of 70% on incremental innovation and 30% on disruptive innovation.

### **7.2.3 ACTIONS TAKEN BY MANAGEMENT WHEN FACED WITH DISRUPTION**

Section 6.6.5.1 of this study extensively discussed how the company realigned its strategy formulation process to address disruption. From the participants responses, the strategy formulation process of the organisation remains relatively the same with minor changes. What has changed significantly are the strategic objectives which were also discussed throughout Chapter 6.

Some participants did comment that they have noticed a change in the pace of decision making within the organisation and this has since improved tremendously; it is now faster than it has ever been. There are also traces of improvements when it comes to inclusion in decision making; from the standpoint that the executives are leaning more and more on the expertise of their employees, albeit that strategy formulation remains a closed and exclusive process. The company has implemented strategic projects and programmes which have become the foundation for strategy formulation and thus inform strategic



direction of the company. These strategic projects allow for inclusivity and involvement by non-executive employees. What became apparent was that participants did not recognise that these programmes give input into strategy formulation.

### 7.3 CASE STUDY PROPOSITIONS

- **Proposition 1: Enterprises facing disruption will approach strategy formulation in a non-linear way.**

As discussed in Section 2.5, research identified uncertainty as a crucial constituent that influences the strategy making process, and that elements of market uncertainty play a significant role in the strategy making process (Elbanna & Child, 2007). As a result, formal and rigid strategy processes have been proven to be insufficient in shaping strategy in response to disruption (Kopmann, Kock, Killen & Gemünden, 2017c). The concept of non-linearity in strategy is not new and still remains relevant. Quinn (1980) explains that successful business strategies do not arise from the highly formalised approach to planning as per recommendations from many textbooks. His findings were that in large organisations the processes used to arrive at the total strategy are typically fragmented, revolutionary and mostly intuitive. In contrast to literature described above, the company's strategy formulation process was related as linear, methodological and systematic by participants. This strategy formulation process was out of character for a company operating under disruption.

- **Proposition 2: Enterprises facing disruption are likely to follow a more emergent approach to strategy formulation, than a deliberate approach to strategy formulation.**

Section 6.6.4 in the previous chapter discussed how 'the case company' balances between emergent and deliberate strategy, in light of the disruption which they are facing. Eight of the participants believed that the strategies were planned over a long term, and thus the company is operating mostly on deliberate strategy. Participants elaborated that the strategies that 'the case company' was currently executing were based on what the company planned approximately 5-10 years ago. This is in contrast to literature in Section

2.4.2, which says that organisations facing disruptions are most likely to follow emergent strategies, where strategic decision making needs to be an ongoing and inductive change process, which can be incremental and path-dependent as strategies become continuously modified (Papagiannakis *et al.*, 2013). Emergent strategy formation is also particularly significant in the product innovation domain because companies can respond quicker to changing customer demands or employees' ideas (Leitner, 2014).

- **Proposition 3: Enterprises facing disruption will find it challenging to grow or maintain their competitive position.**

Section 6.7 discussed the competitive advantage of the company. Although some participants expressed that the competitive advantage of the company was not as solid as it has always been, the financial reports reflect how the company has been continually growing over the last couple of years and growing in financial profits as well as in subscriber numbers. This is in contrast to the theory of disruption which states that disruption will compromise the incumbent's competitive advantage.

The study's findings have valuable implications for theory and practice. The study's managerial implications are discussed first.

## 7.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The researcher recognises that participants of this study operate in various levels of management, with varying involvement in strategy formulation, and therefore articulated strategy formulation from different levels of strategy, namely corporate, business or functional strategy. This is an important factor that played a role in participants' inconsistent interpretations of the strategy formulation process within the organisation. Executive managers in organisations should therefore strive to create awareness of the corporate strategy formulation activities to other levels of management, as well as to explain how these activities affect the business or functional strategy, which are areas managed by middle and low level managers. Doing so will enable all levels of management to have a common understanding of strategy formulation and disruption.

The main managerial implications of the study are discussed herein. Firstly, the findings indicate that strategy formulation needs to be approached differently during disruption. Managers and employees who are responsible for strategy implementation should also be involved in strategy formulation processes. Competitive moves are chosen by executives' suites, but ultimately implemented by frontline employees. Organisational success depends on all employees in all roles as is does on executives' ability to master strategy. The benefits of an integrated and inclusive approach to strategy formulation will assist in ownership of the entire strategic management process by all managers and employees (Adobor, 2019; Köseoglu *et al.*, 2020).

Articulation and translation of the corporate strategy from executive level to other levels of management and non-managerial employees is required. In the study it came to light and was apparent that some managers could not deduce that some of the formulated strategic goals of the organisation were in response to disruption or were a counteraction against disruption. This oversight also hampers the awareness and recognition of disruption by non-executive managers. Being a technology company, a formal dedicated disruption management system needs to be put in place. A disruption management system will help decision makers respond to disruptive events in real time, so that the damage effected by the disruption is reduced to a minimum and addressed timeously. Christensen and Dillon (2020); Kivimaa *et al.* (2021) exposed many organisations who ignored disruptive technologies that evolved to displace them and encouraged organisations to become disruptors amidst disruption.

An innovation management strategy is needed in the organisation as a mitigator for disruption. Innovation can be a fundamental driver of competitiveness, and innovation management is one of the most challenging aspects of modern business (Juma, 2019; Szczepańska-Woszczyzna, 2021; Tiem & Burns, 2020). The organisation needs to establish a culture of encouraging employees to come up with innovative ideas that could positively impact the business. Although there is already a platform where employees can contribute ideas, it is not well managed and not well marketed because only one

participant could recall it. A rebrand of this portal with a more lucrative reward and compensation structure will encourage wider participation within the organisation. Employees currently do not feel motivated to come up with innovative ideas, and if they do, they are unaware of the correct channels to communicate ideas so that these ideas can be considered for development.

## **7.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Despite the important findings summarised above, there are some limitations to the study that should be acknowledged.

The study specifically focused on the strategy formulation and disruption within a large pay television broadcaster in South Africa and did not include other broadcasters. In addition, this study employed a total sample size of nineteen participants from a single pay television company in South Africa. This limits the transferability of the study's findings to other organisations in other industries and regions. The normal limitations associated with qualitative research, such as tentative generalisation and small sample size, also apply to this study.

Furthermore, this research employed semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. Consequently, all limitations related to semi-structured interviews also apply to this study (see Section 5.8.1.3). Future research may employ other qualitative data collection methods such as focus groups, which may allow for larger sample size, thus including more managers of strategy in other parts across multiple industries. Future research may also employ quantitative data collection methods such as surveys, thus enabling the researcher to empirically test the generalisability of the participants' awareness and preparedness for disruption. Due to the fact that this research was only limited to a single organisation and a single industry, in future this study can be expanded to a wider sample, comprising of more broadcasters and pay television companies, and possibly even more industries.

Lastly, the research focused only on one element of the strategic management process. As discussed in literature in Chapter 2, the strategic management process consists of strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation. Recommendations for future research are to assess whether disruption will have an impact on the entire strategic management process, and if other parts of the strategic management process can be more impacted than others.

## **7.6 CONCLUSION**

The findings of the study revealed that response to disruption through strategy formulation cannot be ignored and that disruption does indeed require attention within strategy formulation in order to sustain competitive advantage. Based on literature and the findings of the study, disruption can hit fast and hard, but sometimes the effects of disruption may take a long time to reveal themselves. In that case it is important for affected organisations to use the opportunity to upskill, upgrade, hyper innovate and disrupt, so that they do not become obsolete. The study also revealed that the traditional formats of strategy formulation require reinventions in times of disruption.

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## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX A**  
**- LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH -**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

University of Pretoria  
Economic and Management Sciences Building  
Room 3-56

2018-09-18

The Manager  
MultiChoice

For attention: Ms Anabela De Rose: Senior Manager: Learning

**re. Request for permission to conduct research among staff members of MultiChoice**

Dear Ms De Rose

I am currently supervising Ms Ursula Shikhati, who is an MCom student in Business Management in the Department of Business Management at the University of Pretoria. As part of her studies, she has to conduct research on the impact of disruptive innovation on the strategic management process, specifically looking at the broadcasting sector.

She hereby request permission to conduct semi-structured interviews with 12 managers (executive and middle level) in your organisation on a date and time to be arranged with each manager. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

The study will be guided by the following principles:

- Once she has received permission from you, the study will be submitted to the University of Pretoria's Research Ethical Committee for final approval. The study already complies with all the ethical requirements of this committee.
- Participants will participate in the interviews on an anonymous and voluntary basis and will not receive any incentives to encourage their participation.
- She will schedule appointments with each of the managers at a time convenient to them.
- The name of your organisation and the names of the interviewees will not be mentioned in the research report.
- She will provide you with a copy of the final research report on request.

Please feel free to contact her, (Cell: 082 880 5095, Email: [ursula.shikhati@multichoice.co.za](mailto:ursula.shikhati@multichoice.co.za)). If you need additional information about the study. You are also welcome to contact me, (tel. 012 420-4195, e-mail: [reba.letsholo@up.ac.za](mailto:reba.letsholo@up.ac.za)), to confirm that this is a legitimate research project.

Your kind co-operation is highly appreciated.

Sincerely,  
Reba Letsholo  
Lecturer: Business Management  
University of Pretoria



**APPENDIX B**  
**- LETTER GRANTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH -**



PO Box 1502

Randburg

01 October 2019

**University of Pretoria**

To Whom It May Concern

We hereby support Ms. Ursula Shikhati's application, a Masters in Commerce coursework student from the University of Pretoria, to conduct a qualitative study in a form of interviews with 25 of our employees during the period of 2020.

Permission is granted to Ms. Ursula Shikhati subject to her obtaining ethical clearance to conduct research from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria and by abiding to its terms.

We acknowledge that Ms. Ursula Shikhati will obtain the necessary consent from the participants and the subject of the study will be based on the topic of her research for her thesis which is on **Investigating the relationship between disruption and strategy formulation in practice – a case study**

For further enquiries please contact Katlego Mogole (011) 289 4406.

Kind regards,

**Katlego Mogole**

**Senior Specialist Learning**

**Human Resources – Talent Management**

MultiChoice Africa Ltd  
is an unlisted financial services provider.  
Reg Number - 2009/0000000/07, FSP License number 11314  
Overseen FNB Limited, CP Africa, T.Africa  
Company Secretary: L.J. Diba

MultiChoice Support Services Africa Ltd  
Reg Number - 2009/01481/08P  
Director: R.M. Langa, CP Merit, T. Jacobs  
Company Secretary: L.J. Diba

201 MultiChoice Building, 2184, South Africa  
PO Box 1802, Randburg, 2125, South Africa  
T +27 11 288 4406, F +27 11 788 3942

**APPENDIX C**  
**- INFORMED CONSENT FORM -**



**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION AND INFORMED CONSENT  
FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

**Title of the study:**

Investigating the relationship between disruption and strategy formulation in practice – a case study

**Researcher:**

Ursula Shikhathi (u17257434)  
082 880 5095

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Dear Participant

You are cordially invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Ursula Shikhathi a Master's student from the Department of Business Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to investigate the relationship between disruption and strategy formulation in practice.

Please note the following:

- This study involves a semi-structured personal interview. Your name and that of your company will not appear in the final research report and the answers you provide during the interview will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to me. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without stating any reasons and without any negative consequences. You, as participant, may contact the researcher at any time in order to clarify any issues pertaining to this research.
- The study will take about 1 hour of your time.
- With your permission I would like to record this interview and well as write notes which I will use later for transcribing.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. You will be provided with a summary of our findings on request. No participants names will be used in the final publication.

---

**WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT**

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research. I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

Respondent: **NTHABISENG NGOBEZA**  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_NP Ngobeza\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: **URSULA SHIKHATI**  
Signature *UShikhati*

Date: **16 July 2020**

Contact number of the Researcher: 082 880 5095

**APPENDIX D**  
**- INTERVIEW GUIDE -**

## Interview Discussion Guide

### **Case Study: Exploring strategy formulation by managers in response to disruption within a case study**

Dear Participant,

My name is Ursula Shikhati and I am currently a Masters (MCom) Strategic Management student at the University of Pretoria. Firstly, I would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to meet with me and contribute to my study. The research I am conducting is focusing on Disruption and Strategy Formulation, specifically investigating the relationship between the two constructs. My study seeks to solicit valuable qualitative insights from managers within the company.

The results of this research will benefit management within the company by underpinning the importance of understanding and managing disruption within strategic management in 'the case company', more specifically within strategy planning and strategy formulation.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time, if you feel uncomfortable. You are also free to not participate in answering any questions that may seem inappropriate to you. The sole intended use of the data collected is for research purposes only and all your responses as the participant will be treated with utmost confidentiality. I would like our interview to be a very open and frank discussion based on the research topic, bearing in mind that my goal is to gain insights from you, therefore no answer could be regarded as right or as wrong.

With assurance of your confidentiality, I would like to ask for your permission to audio record the interview as this will assist me in analysing your responses more accurately whilst also allowing me to keep the conversation flowing. As a participant, I would also like to remind you that your participation is voluntary, and you may request to end the

interview at any time and decline answering any specific question. I request that you sign the prescribed informed consent form that will serve as protection of your confidentiality.

Kind regards,

\_\_\_\_\_

Ursula Shikhati

## **WRITTEN INFORMED CONSENT**

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I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature of this research.

I understand that I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the research. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions.

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number of the Researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_



## **Interview Questions:**

### **A. Introduction**

The initial questions are introductory questions that will help me understand your role and position within the company.

1. Can you please tell me what your job title is in the company?
2. Which department are you currently working in?
3. How long have you worked in this particular position?
4. How long have you worked in the company in total?
5. Would you say that your job is classified as top, middle or lower level management?
6. Can you briefly describe your experience in strategy in this role as well as previous strategy based experience?
7. There are key phases in strategy; in terms of your current job role and deliverables, which phase do you think you fall in? Would you say that you are more on the *formulation* (coming up with) of strategy, the *implementation* of strategy or post *evaluation* of strategy? Please kindly elaborate your answer.

### **B. Strategy Formulation**

The next couple of questions will focus on the strategic management process (*i.e. the process of how strategic decisions are formulated, implemented and evaluated*) within the company, specifically focusing on strategy formulation.

8. Can you please explain your understanding or observation of the overall strategic management process (*i.e. the process of how strategic decisions are formulated, implemented and evaluated*) followed by the company?
9. What is your understanding or observation of how the strategy management teams are setup?
10. Is there a specific way that the company formulates its strategies?
11. How often does strategy formulation take place?

12. According to your knowledge, the strategies that the company has in place, have these been planned or have they been developed on the go?
13. In terms of hierarchy of teams, when it comes to how strategy is formulated within the company, what is your understanding of how this is set up?
14. How does the formulation of strategy filter up within the company? Are those on the ground allowed or given the opportunity to get involved in the formulation of strategy?
15. In your opinion, should lower level management and/or operational staff be involved in the formulation of strategy? Why do you think this would be beneficial for the company?
16. How often does the company review or re-evaluate its strategies?
17. How does the company review or re-evaluate its strategies?

**C. Disruption** (*Awareness, Responsiveness and Actions*)

Now that we have covered strategy in previous questions, I would like us to talk about disruption which forms an important part of this research. According to the Cambridge dictionary, *a disruption can be described as an interruption in the usual way that a system, process or event works.*

18. When you hear the word disruption, what comes to mind?
19. In your opinion do you think that the company is facing disruption and why?
20. What do you think is/are the biggest disruption/s facing the company? And why?
21. According to your knowledge, are there measures that have been put in place to address the disruption/s that the company may be facing?
22. Are you aware of the current strategy/strategies of the company that are in place to deal with disruption?
23. Are you aware of any measures, tools or methods in place to detect disruption early? And if so, can you please tell me about them.
24. Do you think that the company is more reactive or more proactive with regard to addressing disruption?
25. Do you think that the company is responding adequately to the disruption/s that they are facing? And why?

26. In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to detect disruption in terms of which level of management, or across?
27. Does management identify or realise that the operational staff might detect disruption earlier than the top-level management?
28. How do you think the disruption that the company is facing will influence your job? Will there be a direct impact on how you perform certain activities? And how so?

**D. The relationship between Disruption and Strategy Formulation** (*Awareness, Responsiveness and Actions*)

29. Has the company had to change its strategy over the last few years?
- In what way have they changed the strategy and why do you think they have had to do so?
  - Do you think that this change in strategy has been more drastic in the past year compared to the last five years? (*The researcher wants to assess delayed responsiveness and whether the company is becoming more responsive now (in the last year) compared to five years ago*)
30. With regards to how the company formulates strategy, what is the company doing differently compared to previous years?
31. With regard to how the company formulates strategy, are there specific activities that the company is performing differently compared to historic behaviour?

**E. Competitive Advantage**

I am now going to ask you questions about competitive advantage. A competitive advantage is an advantage that an enterprise has over its competitors allowing it to generate greater sales or margins and/or retain more customers than its competitors.

32. Has there been any change in the company's competitive advantage over the past few years? If so, how has the competitive advantage changed?
33. Would you say that this change has been more drastic over the last year than over the last five years?

34. According to your knowledge, is the company's focus more on maintaining its competitive advantage, or more on growing its competitive advantage? Please elaborate.
35. Do you know how they are planning to go about this?
36. Do you think that the company has a sustainable competitive advantage?
- a. If so, why do you think it is sustainable?
  - b. What is the core of this sustainable competitive advantage?
  - c. If not, why not and how will they remain competitive?
37. Any closing comments that can further inform this research?

**APPENDIX E**  
**- THEMES AND SUBTHEMES EMERGING FROM THE ANALYSED**  
**DATA -**

**APPENDIX F**  
**- MERGED AND SORTED CLUSTERS OF CODES -**

<b>ANSWER</b>	<b>CODE</b>	<b>SUB-THEME</b>
Combination of formulation and evaluation of strategy	Successful strategy entails a thread between formulation, implementation and evaluation	Strategic management is top down
Combination of implementation and evaluation of strategy		Strategic management should be consultative
Combination of formulation and implementation of strategy		The strategic management process, strategy formulation needs to be proactive to survive disruption
Mostly formulation		Drivers of strategic formulation
Mostly implementation		Communication as an enabler of strategy by-in
All three phases - formulation, implementation and evaluation		Approaches to Strategy Formulation: Intuition Approach, Gap Analysis, Portfolio Approach, Key-Factors Approach and a Few Others (mostly intuition and experience) <a href="https://www.businessmanagementideas.com/strategic-management/approaches-to-strategy-formulation/19873">https://www.businessmanagementideas.com/strategic-management/approaches-to-strategy-formulation/19873</a>
Executive levels have to formulate and evaluate corporate strategy	Strategy formulation largely driven by executive management (top-down)	Adaptive and agile strategy is required in the phase of disruption
Middle Managers formulate their business unit strategy so they can implement the corporate strategy	Middle Managers formulate their business unit strategy so they can implement the corporate strategy defined by executive management	Disruption is an agent of change
Low level Managers are full time implementors of both the business unit strategy and the corporate strategy	Low level Managers' role is to implement the strategy	Innovation management
Strategy requires collaboration across different business units and different layers of management	Strategy requires collaboration across different business units and different layers of management	Sustainable competitive advantage is crucial in surviving disruption
Strategy formulation requires inclusivity in order to get buy-in from those who need to implement it successfully	Strategy formulation requires inclusivity in order to get buy-in from those who need to implement it successfully	Strategy myopia
If those who have to implement the strategy do not have proper context of the strategy, they cannot fulfil their duties optimally	Those who are responsible for formulating the strategy need to give context of the strategy to those who need to implement in order for formulation to be successful	
Strategy is very classified and very hidden ta MC, it is very-very top level management , there is little to no engagement with the rest of the organisation in terms of input	Strategy can be classified and confidential, preventing the formulation process to be inclusive	

Strategy formulation is a top-down approach at MC	Strategic management and strategy formulation are hierarchical (top-down)	
Strategy management process is consultative at MC	The consultation is not consistent around strategy formulation	
Strategy formulation is consultative in other areas but not consistently so across the business		
Interrelationship between Corporate Strategy and Business Unit - Corporate strategy informs the business unit strategy		
MC strategic process and strategic decision making is reactive	Strategy needs a balance of being reactive and proactive	
Continuous market analysis is important in order to stay on top of things	Environmental scanning and analysis are crucial pillar in strategy formulation process	
The company strategy formulation is mostly focused on being responsive and does not lean too much on being a disruptor		
Pursuing growth outside SA (which has plateaued)	MC is applying is applying all growth strategies (Ansoff model: product market)	
Complexities of strategy outside your country		
Strategy division does not really do strategy but is more project based	Strategy formulation as a designated function	
Multiple layers and levels of strategy	Strategy formulation is influenced by different layers and levers of strategy	
Strategy is secretive at MC		
Many people do not know what the Strategy division actually do		
Overlapping strategy formulation and overlapping and duplication of strategy implementation		
Internal and external market analysis is important in strategy formulation		
The sheer size of the company makes strategy challenging to be inclusive	The size of the organisation has an impact on strategy inclusivity	
Strategy formulation touches at every level but essentially it is a CEO domain.		
Different involvement levels in strategy formulation by different groups and stakeholders		
Research and data as foundation for strategy formulation		
Formulation process differs across the company - from no process to some form of process depending where you are	Different approaches to strategy formulation within MC	



execs are more aware of strategy formulation process than the other levels of management		
strategy formulation follows an entrepreneurial approach (you do what needs to be done and not following an academic framework)	<b>Strategy formulation mostly based on experience, intuition and research</b>	
strategy formulation is top down approach		
strategy formulation has a 3 and 5 year view - 'in 5 years this is where we want to go, in 3 years this is where we want to go', but the review is done on a yearly basis that add up to that number of years.	<b>Strategy formulation is executed in different phases (3-5 years)</b>	
strategy must talk to the next 3 years. It reviews the current year and then it talks to the next 3 years as well.		
strategy by nature requires a mid to long term view (because you have to wait for things to actualise - some strategies take a long time to implement)	<b>strategy by nature requires a mid to long term view (because you have to wait for things to actualise - some strategies take a long time to implement)</b>	
strategy formulation requires flexibility	<b>Strategy needs to be agile, adaptive and dynamic</b>	
strategy formulation and strategy need to be dynamic		
Strategy evolves, influencing strategy formulation		
Decision making is at Executive level and at board level (due to it being a listed company)		
<b>Strategy formulation takes a multi-functional approach</b>	<b>Strategy formulation takes a multi-functional approach</b>	
strategy formulation cannot involve everyone, but it also cannot be exclusively for a few people - there needs to be a balance		
The input and involvement in strategy formulation happens in different ways, direct and indirect. Direct for top layer and indirect for everyone else		
Different levels of influencing strategy formulation		
Size of company makes strategy inclusivity challenging		
Confidentiality and sensitive information make it difficult to open up strategy formulation to a bigger forum		
The desire for collaboration is there, but the reality in implementing and practitioner that collaboration is a different story		
Operational staff are more in touch with what is happening on the ground and can flag potential challenges	<b>Operational staff are more in touch with what is happening on the ground</b>	

People at the bottom do not get to have a full view of the strategy because they are not included in the formulation of strategy	<b>Lower management and operational staff only get the summarised version and view of the strategy</b>	
Executive level only has the summarised view of business issues and operational challenges because of their focus on the big picture	<b>executive level only has the summarised view of business issues and operational challenges because of their focus on the big picture</b>	
Formulated strategies require buy-in from the bottom in order to ensure successful implementation		
Corporate strategy needs to be reviewed quarterly and business unit strategy and short term goals need to be reviewed more frequently e.g. monthly	<b>Strategy evaluation is just as important as formulation and execution</b>	
Evaluation does not happen enough		
When it does it is through trackers or scorecards		
Disruption is unexpected drastic change	<b>Disruption is inevitable</b>	
Disruption is progressive change	<b>Disruption is a good thing for everyone (the industry + consumers)</b>	
Disruptive brands - Netflix, Uber, FNB		
Disruption is opportunity		
Disruption is positive shake		
Disruption is what happens externally that impact how we do business internally		
Disruption - market disruptions, competitive disruptions, regulatory		
Disruption is an external change that impacts how we do business		
Disruption is against the grain, against convention, lacking or the clean traditional definition		
Disruption is new product, underserved market.		
Disruption is like a new way of doing things		
Disruption is about efficiency, a better way of doing things		
Disruption is game changer - something that is surprisingly different and then changing the way people behave in a major way		
Disruption is about being agile and adaptable		
Disruption is the opposite of comfort zones		
Disruption is high risk high reward		
Disruption is about breaking the norm		

Disruption means different things to different people	Disruption means different things to different people	
MC facing disruption in terms of changing technology		
MC facing disruption in terms of changing consumer behaviour		
MC facing disruption in terms of changing the industry		
MC facing disruption in terms of changing competitive landscape		
<b>Technology is changing consumer behaviour, which is then changing the industry and the competitive landscape</b>		
Economics in general (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Because the company is now a mass market company - economics, unemployment are a big issue right now (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Evolving customer base (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Currency devaluations in Rest of Africa (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Content production and content consumption habits (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Competition from VOD companies (from a customer perspective and from a content perspective because they get content from some of them and this may be at risk in the future) (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
USP (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
Price point (what are MCs biggest disruptions)		
VOD service of the case company		
Minimal price increases		
Different measures in place to mitigate disruption		
Business model - content aggregator		
continuously evaluating the competitive market and the technological market		
MC is agile and flexible		
MC is very reactive		
Strategies to mitigate disruption - see previous question		
Research (internal and external)		
Business intelligence		
Non present because company is reactive		
Trends analysis (global, industry, technology and business)		

Consumer trackers		
Informal market sensing		
Reactive as incumbents		
Slow to respond		
Inadequately response		
Responding the best way they can due to the fast pace of change		
Market leader in most instances		
Not agile enough to respond quick		
Reacting optimally		
Although reactive, MC takes it to the next level		
Evolving from reactive to proactive		
MC is responding optimally to disruption		
MC is not complacent		
MC is a multi-layered company (product wise and staff wise)		
Not customer centric enough		
It is hard to change a business and to adapt a business to change (adapting to change)		
Old business model of decoders is still very profitable for MC		
Global changes not always viable to implement in Africa due to slow adaption rates of technology in Africa		
Need to strike a balance between old and new technology		
Africa pay-tv market is not as advance as the western/northern hemisphere		
Reacting to disruption requires careful consideration		
Detection of disruption is not the responsibility of management only		
Everyone should be empowered to detect disruption (spirit of ownership and inclusivity)		
Top executives not on the ground enough to be solely responsible for picking up disruptions		
Top executives not operational enough to detect disruption		
Everyone is responsible for disruption		
Think tank should facilitate awareness of disruption		

Perception that it is top management's responsibility to detect disruption		
Assessing the impact of disruption should be responsibility of General Management (top-mid)		
<b>Management must assess impact of disruption, everyone must detect disruption</b>		
Collaboration		
<b>Strategy formulation inclusivity can facilitate widespread detection of disruption</b>		
Collaboration		
Strategy team at the heart of detecting disruption		
<b>Management does not optimally use operational staff ability as partners in managing and dealing with disruption</b>		
Not enough realisation of how valuable employees can be in the input into strategy		
Management does not give credit to operational staff when it comes to the ability to detect disruption earlier than anybody else		
The faced paced environment does not allow management to 'star gaze' enough and to realise a lot of things about the business	<b>Top management undermine the power of lower level staff in strategy and disruption</b>	
Employee feedback on strategy is invaluable		
<b>Broadcasting is a complex business</b>		
Management not leveraging on operational staff optimally	<b>Management not leveraging on operational staff optimally</b>	
Disruption is inevitable for everybody and anybody		
<b>Real time responsiveness as a competitive advantage</b>		
Disruption will affect jobs		
Waves of perpetual disruptions	<b>Waves of perpetual disruptions</b>	
Disruption forces management to collaborate across the business		
<b>Familiarity breeds contempt</b>		
Disruption is a threat (to job security and business survival)		
Disruption is an important phenomenon		
Content is king		
<b>Strategy myopia</b>		
Accelerating rate of change in strategy and in business conditions (competition, disruption, etc.)		

<b>Adaptive and agile strategy</b>		
Response insufficient for disruption		
Change in strategy is accelerating		
Strategy formulation is different but strategy implementation is the same		
Strategy inclusivity is improving		
Strategy agility		
Data is driving strategy formulation		
Programme based strategy formulations		
Programme based strategy projects		
Strategy formulation requires collaboration		
Inclusivity may slow decision making and progress		
The pace of strategy formulation has changed		
Project based approach to strategy planning, formulation and implementation		
New skills are required during disruption		
Data driven decision making		
MC remains a monopoly in its own right		
Rate of technological changing impacting industry change		
Competitive advantage growth is pivotal for survival		
Subscribers growth numbers indicate that company is still growing		
Market expansion into other territories for growth opportunities		
It is about owning the customer		
Being reactive limits growth		
Being innovative increases growth		
MC does have a sustainable competitive advantage but it requires work, consumers are fickle		
<b>There is a business case for MC product and offering - consumer have proven this</b>		
<b>MC sustainable competitive advantage is based on first mover advantage (years and years of experience and learning), resources (technical, financial, infrastructure, established customer payment system) leadership,</b>		

MC sustainable competitive advantage is based on untapped market potential that still exists on the African continent		
Local content is also a key factor in contributing to MC's sustainable competitive advantage		
MC sustainable competitive advantage is based on strong product, strong people		
Sustainable competitive advantage requires you to reinvent yourself		
MC competitive advantage is a strong installed base - almost 20 million subscribers		
The power of the digital satellite service of the case company brand is still a competitive advantage - strong brand recognition		
Goodwill of MC name is a competitive advantage		
Not everyone thing that MC competitive advantage is sustainable		
we need to be able to move away from the brand digital satellite service of the case company and create new things that are unadulterated by this 'old brand' that people already have an aversion towards. People literally have digital satellite service of the case company grudgingly		
MC competitive advantage is sustainable for 5-10 years		
Strategy is never perfect, strategy formulation is never perfect and seamless		
Different layers of management perceive things differently - the perceive disruption different, the strategy differently, strategy formulation differently. It depends on exposure		

**APPENDIX G**  
**- INTERVIEW RECORDINGS (CD) -**



**APPENDIX H**  
**- INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS (CD) -**