

Research report title.

**The role of entrepreneurial resourcefulness in the context of sustaining business  
growth**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

## **ABSTRACT**

Entrepreneurship is related with a resource-constrained environment and a plethora of challenges. Despite these limitations, entrepreneurship is nevertheless viewed as an important component of economic growth and poverty reduction. Business expansion thus becomes a critical component of any economy. Entrepreneurial resourcefulness has been a determining factor of Small, Micro, and Medium Enterprises in a constrained environment. This study suggests that entrepreneurial resourcefulness is a learned behaviour that can be taught to entrepreneurs to sustain business growth. The study looks at the behaviours, characteristics, and orientations of resourceful entrepreneurs. The study takes a qualitative approach to assessing the experiences of entrepreneurs to find trends and patterns of resilience, adaptation, strategic decision making, and self-efficacy. Due to the narrative nature of the research, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with entrepreneurs who have been in business for more than 5 years in Gauteng, South Africa.

The findings revealed that entrepreneurs used a combination of effectuation, bricolage, and entrepreneurial orientation to overcome financial, operational, and psychological barriers. The study's main themes are adaptability, strategic thinking, and resilience. Furthermore, the findings contributed to the body of entrepreneurship literature; the findings on understanding of the behaviours and characteristics that lead to entrepreneurial resourcefulness provide rich and substantial tools for assisting business owners in overcoming the challenges posed by limited resources.

These findings resulted in the creation of a conceptual model for entrepreneurial resourcefulness that business managers, policymakers, and researchers may utilize to help SMMEs grow.

## **KEYWORDS**

Entrepreneurial resourcefulness, Entrepreneurial orientation, Constraints, Behaviours, Adaptability.

**DECLARATION**

*I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### 1.1. Chapter One: Introduction

*"It's not the lack of resources, it's your lack of resourcefulness that causes failure!" -*

Tony Robbins

Emerging as a main engine of economic development, entrepreneurship uses companies to foster creativity, employment, and social change (Brito, 2018). One of the primary factors enabling the success and sustainability of entrepreneurial operations is the capacity of entrepreneurs to employ their creative talent in the face of constraints and challenges. Entrepreneurial resourcefulness—that is, the capacity—has been found to be a fundamental quality for entrepreneurs striving to keep and expand their businesses. Considered as the ability to creatively employ limited resources to attain desired goals, (Corbett & Katz, 2013)

The objective of this study is to investigate, in the context of sustaining business growth, the function of entrepreneurial resourcefulness. The paper looks at the several aspects of entrepreneurial resourcefulness, including how well one can overcome resource limitations, use "newness" as a benefit, and build resilience against hardship. (Corporate & Katz, 2013) The research also explores the interactions among entrepreneurial resourcefulness, creativity, and innovation and their combined influence on business sustainability and development. (Nnadi, 2014.)

The paper offers a theoretical contribution by means of a conceptual framework that clarifies the function of entrepreneurial resourcefulness in the framework of business success and launching your own company. This framework considers both the resource-based view of the firm and resourceful behaviour's that entrepreneurs can learn or adopt to fully understand how resourcefulness in entrepreneurs can help businesses keep growing. It further unpacks how entrepreneurial networking can foster resourcefulness by means of knowledge sharing, accessing complementary resources, and the development of novel combinations. (Eniola, 2020, Franco et al., 2020)

In the real world, the results from the study can help business owners, policymakers, and business support groups make programs and initiatives that will make entrepreneurs more resourceful and, by extension, help businesses achieve long-term viability and sustain a competitive edge in the corporate jungle in South Africa.

The research's methodology makes a significant contribution to the body of literature. In contrast to prior research mainly focused on entrepreneurial resourcefulness being born out of a crisis, this study seeks to understand and capture the nuances of how entrepreneurs cultivate and apply resourcefulness as an ongoing process to successfully scale and sustain their enterprises.

This chapter outlines the need for the research based on the urgent need to grow the economy, with entrepreneurs being the backbone of this effort. While there is extensive academic literature on entrepreneurship, the specific role of entrepreneurial resourcefulness in fostering business sustainability has not been comprehensively explored.

## **1.2. Contextual Background to the Research**

The role of Small to medium enterprises (SME) has received a lot of attention especially from governments, researchers, and other stakeholders. SME's have demonstrated the great contribution towards the alleviating unemployment and other social, political, and economic challenges in the world (Pulka., et al, 2021). The role of entrepreneurs stretches far beyond this by providing entrepreneurial skills, reducing the reliance on government, and promoting income redistribution. At an economic level SME's play a vital role in GDP growth, utilization of local skills and resources, and in developing of new technologies and markets (Appendix 1). In South Africa about more than 80 percent of businesses are SMEs, and the rate of growth has been as low as 20 percent with an average of 50 percent of these businesses failing to grow (Mboniyane & Lanzani., 2011). Only 59 percent of SMMEs are three years and older, while 26 percent of SMME are three to five years old. Even though SME's contribute to the economic development of the country, according to OECD (2017) South Africa's market is still largely dominated by large firms and compared to other emerging economies South Africa rate of entrepreneurship is ranked low, despite this the South African market continues to demonstrate a high potential for small businesses and opportunities for self-employment.

According to Sakellarios., et al. 2022 the importance of SME's in the economy is unquestionable, but one of the challenges which they face is lack of skills and resources which can enable them to be resourceful especially during and after a crisis. Furthermore Newman et al., 2022 suggests that SME's and enterprises in times of crisis might be in an

advantaged position in comparison to large corporates to take their business model in a different trajectory. In recent years the world has experienced a myriad of crisis's which have caused destabilization in the economy with the recent global COVID-19 pandemic which had catastrophic impact to the global economy and equally imposed significant influence on small businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, and entrepreneurs in general. However the crisis did not affect all businesses and entrepreneurs the same way, with some there was reduced business activities, closure of businesses and retrenchment of most employees. on the other hand the crisis provided some businesses and entrepreneurs with unique opportunities that have the potential to change the world as we know it, like the use of zoom, a teleconferencing software, which has become revolutionary in the way we run meetings and work (Lee et al., 2023; Newman et al., 2022; Protuguez & Zermeno, 2020).

The South African government acknowledges that to achieve accelerated economic growth there needs to be low unemployment, population growth, technological processes, savings and investments that contribute to the GDP growth (Andrei et al.,2009). Furthermore, the National Policy development framework (2020) in dealing with the triple challenges of unemployment, inequality, and poverty, the South African government has policy options available help to increase employment generation and raise citizens' socioeconomic standards. The legal basis of this framework is anchored on ensuring promotion of efficient, economic and effective use of resources. Government and policy makers can accelerate the realisation of the goals of the National Policy development framework, and operational Vulindlela (Department of National Treasury, 2024).

if they focus on capacitating entrepreneurs and providing the necessary resources.

### **1.3. RESEARCH PROBLEM**

#### **1.3.1.Theoretical relevance of the research problem**

Small, micro, and medium enterprises (SMMEs) are commonly acknowledged as vital contributors and the foundation of numerous economies worldwide; consequently, governments perceive them as an answer for various economic and social issues in developing nations. Increased economic growth results in a bigger supply of goods and services, reduced unemployment, and ultimately enhanced welfare for the economy. In South Africa, where small enterprises comprise over 80 percent of the commercial sector,

the growth rate is poor, with an average of 50 percent of small businesses failing to expand. The Resource-Based View posits that the resources possessed and controlled by SMMEs play an important role in creating and sustaining competitive advantage and superior performance. Consequently, the growth rate and performance of SMMEs can be partially ascribed to the available resources, competencies, and capabilities (Ibrahim & Mas'ud, 2016; Mbonyane & Lanzani, 2011; Pulka et al., 2021; Isichei et al., 2020).

Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) are typically defined by an adaptive mindset, limited resources, informal methods, and flexible structures, resulting in a higher likelihood of failure compared to larger organizations (Ristyawan et al., 2023). According to Rafiki et al. (2023), these exogenous features exert a substantially detrimental effect on the growth of SMMEs, which is defined as the process surpassing the resource constraints which are a result of the burden of newness and smallness. Certain resources are considered essential to the greater performance of enterprises relative to their competitors, hence allowing SMMEs to tackle obstacles and sustain their bargaining power. Certain small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) possess less opportunities than larger corporations, compelling them to be innovative and resourceful (Rafiki et al., 2023).

Consequently, the way entrepreneurs see and actualize opportunities is shaped by the resources they possess and those available in their environment. Misra and Kumar (2000) assert that resourcefulness is essential for entrepreneurial success, as entrepreneurship involves the identification and fulfilment of possibilities through entrepreneurial imaginative thinking, regardless of the resources already available. Enhancing entrepreneurial activity among SMEs at the individual level creates employment, improves personal income sources, reduces the reliance on the government, promotes the acquiring of skills and knowledge required by entrepreneurs and alleviates poverty. Economically, it enhances GDP growth, employment, exports, technological adoption, the emergence of new industries, and strengthens a country's export earnings through international commerce, while also increasing industrial capacity utilization (Quagrainie et al., 2023).

### **1.3.2. Practical relevance of the research problem: entrepreneurial resourcefulness as a tool to sustained business growth**

Entrepreneurial resourcefulness is a multifaceted construct, that incorporates several factors like effectuation, bricolage and bootstrapping which contributes to the ability of entrepreneurs to efficiently identify, manage and leverage limited resources and external constraints to drive growth and sustainability of their businesses (Mai et al., 2023; Pramesti & Prihastiwi, 2020).

Resourceful entrepreneurs, according to Wang & Huang 2020, can take external resources and transform them into products, and they also can improve the efficiency of internal resources. They can take existing resources across different spheres and combine them to successfully attain their objectives even when facing resource constraints. Entrepreneurs with high resourcefulness can improvise and be flexible in their decision making, to swiftly capitalize on emerging opportunities despite having limited resources. (Yin et al., 2020) (Mai et al., 2023).

The decision-making process of highly resourceful entrepreneurs is 'what can I do with what I currently have?' rather than 'what do I need to get to achieve my goals?' (Potluri & Phani, 2020; Yin et al., 2020). According to Melovic et al., 2022, entrepreneurs should not rely on the effect of negative consequences, i.e. a financial crisis, pandemic, natural disaster, etc, but rather focus on securing a position in the market and having a competitive edge. Resourceful entrepreneurs should be able to scan the environment and anticipate changes that could disrupt their business in the future. This therefore means organisations need to continuously self-regulate and reset to reach situational harmony.

Understanding the key drivers that enable resourcefulness is important as it is reported that between 70 percent and 80 percent of small businesses fail within the first five years, furthermore only 1% of the micro enterprises that started with less than five people have grown to only employ ten or more employees, these business unfortunately do not contribute to the reduction of unemployment and do not contribute to the taxation base of the economy. It is therefore imperative that the small businesses thrive and reduce failure rate, according to Simon et al., (2013) small businesses depend on the owner for success, the business can succeed or fail based on the ability of the owner to practice resourcefulness, innovativeness and proactiveness.

#### **1.4. Motivation for the study**

The overarching problem underscoring this research can be unpacked as follows: The lifespan of a new business is often short with a significant proportion of businesses failing within the first few years of operation (Franco et al., 2020). The preservation of small businesses is paramount to addressing the issues of unemployment and promoting long term growth. The escalating rate of business failures and the high rate of unemployment is testament to the importance of policies to understand what are the factors that contribute to sustained growth and success of entrepreneurial ventures. (Pramesti & Prihastiw, 2020, Mai et al., 2023).

According to Sakellarios., et al. 2022 the importance of SMMEs in the economy is unquestionable, but one of the challenges which they face is lack of skills and resources which can enable them to be resourceful especially during and after a crisis. Furthermore Newman et al., 2022 suggests that SME's and enterprises in times of crisis might be in an advantaged position in comparison to large corporates to take their business model in a different trajectory. In recent years the world has experienced a myriad of crisis's which have caused destabilization in the economy with the recent global COVID-19 pandemic which had catastrophic impact to the global economy and equally imposed significant influence on small businesses, entrepreneurial ventures, and entrepreneurs in general. However the crisis did not affect all businesses and entrepreneurs the same way, with some there was reduced business activities, closure of businesses and retrenchment of most employees, on the other hand the crisis provided some businesses and entrepreneurs with unique opportunities that have the potential to change the world as we know it, like the use of zoom, a teleconferencing software, which has become revolutionary in the way we run meetings and work (Lee et al., 2023; Newman et al., 2022; Protuguez & Zermeno, 2020).

Entrepreneurs are characterised as innovators, they are in the business of creating fresh idea, products, tools, and organisations or improving existing ones. The entrepreneur needs specific skills including proactivity, opportunity recognition, risk management, resilience if they are to operate dynamically and be creative. These entrepreneurial qualities help one become more competitive and capable of taking calculated risks. These results together with the tools available to help entrepreneurs on how to be creative, knowing the traits of resourceful entrepreneurs and how to use resourcefulness to develop and sustain their

company highlight the business need of researching and underlining the importance of entrepreneurial resourcefulness as a mechanism to support small businesses in South Africa (Kośny & Piotrowska, 2018).

There is empirical evidence in academic literature that demonstrates the importance of “resourcefulness” for the success of entrepreneurship. The body of scholars has in the past attempted to explain how entrepreneurs or actors use resourcefulness to creatively exploit opportunities regardless of them being owners of the resources or not, and this phenomenon has been underpinned to entrepreneurial resourcefulness (Williams et al., 2021). Entrepreneurial resourcefulness has also been connected to the resilience of SMEs especially in challenging business environments such as the global COVID-19 pandemic (Zutshi et al., 2021). To date much of the body of research on entrepreneurial resourcefulness has been analysed in the context of a crisis or limited resources. There still remains a paucity of research regarding the subject of entrepreneurial resourcefulness, and this is demonstrated by the contradictions in literature that suggest that it is the environmental context that makes an entrepreneur resourceful, while there are other researches which purports that there are psychological traits that include locus of control, personality traits, power hunger, propensity to take risks that are important in developing the entrepreneurial resourcefulness behaviors. Therefore, due to the gaps in literature the research intends is to explore the drivers of entrepreneurial resourcefulness and how can it sustain business growth.

## **2. Chapter: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter is to elucidate the existing literature and arguments regarding entrepreneurial resourcefulness in the context of business growth. The literature review starts reviewing the concept of entrepreneurial resourcefulness and the developments around the concept over the years. This literature review aims to analyse the extant literature which focuses on survival of startups, and it has limited view on how resourceful entrepreneurs transition from survival to business expansion.

This chapter delineates the Effectuation theory, and Resource-based theory, as pertinent theoretical frameworks applicable to this study. The theoretical frameworks are followed by an examination of the drivers that enable Entrepreneurial resourcefulness as well factors that lead to the survival of entrepreneurs such as adaptive strategies and overcoming the barriers. Where literature for entrepreneurial resourcefulness is available for business growth and longevity, particular attention will be applied to examine what is known and what it yet to be studied.

The study further investigates the conceptual framework of entrepreneurial resilience as a factor influencing long-term success. Table 1 below provides a graphical flow of the literature review.

Table 1 : Literature review flow (Authors compilation)

<b>Conceptualizing Entrepreneurial Resourcefulness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Definition of Entrepreneurial Resourcefulness</b></li> <li>• <b>Resources and Resourcefulness how literature treats it</b></li> </ul>
<b>Theoretical Framework for Entrepreneurial resourcefulness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Effectuation theory</b></li> <li>• <b>Resource based view theory.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Characteristics and Drivers that lead to a Resourceful entrepreneur</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Entrepreneurial Competencies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Conceptual and relational competencies</b></li> <li>- <b>Business management competencies</b></li> <li>- <b>Entrepreneurial competencies</b></li> <li>- <b>Human relation competencies</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Entrepreneurial Orientation</b></li> </ul>
<b>Factors that promote survival of entrepreneurs</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Entrepreneurial Resilience: Adaptability and flexibility</b></li> </ul>
<b>Challenges to entrepreneurial resourcefulness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutional barriers, Market challenges, Personal limitations, technological constraints</b></li> </ul>
<b>Research gaps</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>

## 2.2. Conceptualizing Entrepreneurial Resourcefulness

### 2.2.1. Defining Entrepreneurial Resourcefulness:

Entrepreneurial resourcefulness (ER) is a trait frequently cited as crucial for business prosperity. In the literature on entrepreneurship for both practitioners and scholars, resourcefulness is an essential attribute for initiating, expanding, and maintaining a business enterprise. Academic experts have recognized resourcefulness as significant due to its implications for essential entrepreneurial processes (Williams et al., 2024). Misra & Kumar (2000) define ER from psychological and organizational *viewpoints* “as the ability to identify opportunities in the environment and regulate and direct behaviours to successfully cope with the task of creating and managing an organization to pursue the opportunity”. Bradley (2015) approaches ER from an organizational viewpoint and he posits as “learned behavioural, financial, and social repertoires for dealing with problems, especially those of novelty, in the pursuit of an opportunity” this definition focuses on the liability of newness, by such means it relates more to a start -up and the realization of an opportunity, but it neglects the other aspects. Akeke & Eyo (2018) puts forward that resourcefulness is the ability to take what is available and creatively improve its performance. Williams et al., (2021) tried to consolidate and provide a uniform definition of ER as a “boundary-breaking behaviour of creatively bringing resources to bear and deploying them to generate and capture new or unexpected sources of value in the process of entrepreneurship”. Williams et al., (2024) defined entrepreneurial resourcefulness encompassing both cognitive and behavioural components, as ‘a social-cognitive process of bringing resources into use for an entrepreneurial schema that challenges and extends normative boundaries. Rieple & Chang (2017) further defines resourcefulness through the lens of resource management, which includes the “acquiring, transforming, utilisation and managing of resources in order to be able to compete in a resource constrained environment towards the exploitation of an entrepreneurial opportunity”.

Despite the interest by scholars in entrepreneurial resourcefulness (ER) the understanding of the construct and its drivers and enablers remains unexplored. Researchers continue to articulate concerns regarding ER due to its highly dispersed and diversified theoretical environment. (Lange et al., 2024).

The growth of markets is heavily dependent on the inspiration and innovative qualities of entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurs who are in possession of these traits always challenge the dominant logic and bring about disruptive breakthroughs within their environment. Their disruptive ideas redefine the world as we know it today. As with the case study on the 'Uberisation' phenomenon, it clearly outlines the deliberate strategy of Uber to become a 'disruptive innovator' (Dudley et al., 2017, Zeynalova., 2024). Entrepreneurs have been universally recognized as value drivers and important contributors of economic success, not only do they create jobs but the sales which contribute to the fiscal revenue of the country. While the entrepreneur's role is paramount, this sector still faces challenges especially in South Africa, where entrepreneurs work under resource constraints, and because of the high failure rate the SME's have not been able to contribute to the expected economic growth (Botha et al., 2021).

### **2.3. Resources and Resourcefulness how literature treats it**

To understand resourcefulness, the literature explores the existential literature of what are resources, how are they attained and deployed in entrepreneurship. While there are contrasting views and definitions of resources, the RBV synthesises the definition as "those attributes of a firm's physical, human, and organizational capital that enable a firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness". The inherent quality of resources makes them valuable, and it is actors and companies that want to achieve sustainable competitive advantage who will exercise resourcefulness (William et al., 2021).

The resourcefulness of entrepreneurs has been examined from various perspectives, prompting scholars to reassess the construct. Consequently, a refined definition has emerged: "getting more for less, by identifying novel and clever ways to bring, assemble and deploy resources" (Michaelis et al., 2020). Despite many discrepancies in research about resourcefulness, three entrepreneurial behavioural ideas elucidate how entrepreneurs utilize resources: (1) Causation, (2) Effectuation, and (3) Bricolage. This study examines the perspective established by the metaphysics of ER, which adopts a dynamic approach wherein cognitive and behavioural processes converge. The process elucidates how individuals subjectively envision possibilities for future-oriented

entrepreneurial opportunities and consistently discover innovative methods to utilize potential resources for those opportunities.

## **2.4. Theoretical framework for entrepreneurial resourcefulness**

### **2.4.1. Resource based view theory**

The Resource-Based View describes a business as a heterogeneous, unique, and difficult-to-replicate aggregation of resources and competencies (Thornhill & Amit, 2003). Barney (1991) outlined four resource traits that can confer a competitive advantage to a business: value, scarcity, imperfect imitability, and lack of substitutability. The valuable resources of a firm assist in capitalizing on opportunities and mitigating environmental threats, facilitating the formulation of plans to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) asserts that enterprises capable of attaining superior performance own resources deemed distinctive and valuable. These resources are categorized as property-based and knowledge-based resources (Duong, 2022). The company's resources underscore its competencies and are crucial for establishing and managing competitive advantage, as well as for maintaining good organizational performance (Pulka et al., 2021; Zahra, 2021). Among these elements, of value and rarity are essential yet the least significant in an attempt for competitive advantage.

Conversely, evidence indicates that smaller organizations that begin with fewer resources than their competitors tend to surpass those with greater resources (Bradley, 2015).

Melović et al. (2022) contend that the environment affects the entrepreneurial decision-making process, whether it is rational or risky. Furthermore, they propose that more seasoned entrepreneurs engage in calculated risks informed by trustworthy sources, knowledge, and prior experience. Pulka et al. (2021) asserts that the resources of SMEs, encompassing both tangible assets (tools, equipment, office) and intangible assets (skills, experiences, strategies), are crucial determinants of business survival, growth, and success, especially in an external environment characterized by complexity, volatility, and adversity.

Management's impact in resourcefulness has been recognized as a competitive advantage. Thornhill and Amit (2003) assert that a business's competitive position is determined by its management and organizational processes, influenced by its asset position and the available strategic avenues. Consequently, managerial competencies that

extend beyond mere efficiency and optimization are essential. The effectuation theory complements the resource-based view (RBV) and asserts that entrepreneurs leverage available resources, engage stakeholders, and navigate constraints to create new artifacts, including products, opportunities, markets, and businesses (Nelson & Lima, 2020).

#### **2.4.2. Effectuation theory**

The origins of effectuation theory originate from the decision-making process in uncertain operational contexts. Sarasvathy (2001) sought to comprehend the motivations behind individuals establishing new enterprises despite it not being their initial objective. The entrepreneurs are willing to incur losses while maintaining the capacity to adjust to environmental changes. Effectuation logic is said to thrive in unpredictable operational settings, as the continual learning process is intrinsic to it; these changes necessitate organizational adaptation (Matalamäki, 2017).

Michaelis et al., 2020 elucidates that, in addition to acquiring resources, the capacity to allocate resources dynamically is essential for achieving optimal resource production. Research has examined how entrepreneurial individuals utilize methods such as Effectuation, which emphasizes the availability of resources or means above the ultimate objective. Sonenshein (2017) offers a pragmatic delineation of two chefs: one is presented with a desired meal and must procure the ingredients, termed causation, while the other must search the cupboards to create a meal, known as effectuation. Effectuation considers the circumstances, available resources, prospective limitations, and aspirations. This behavioural notion posits that the complex uncertainties of the future can be circumvented by generating a new future, rather than depending on prior experiences, by co-creating with many stakeholders and converting resources into actions, which effectively mitigates previous hesitations. (Michaelis et al., 2020; Grégoire & Cherchem, 2019). Thus, it is essential for the resourceful entrepreneur to creatively allocate resources.

Entrepreneurs frequently encounter challenging decisions in dynamic contexts. Experienced entrepreneurs do not endeavour to predict the future; rather, they manage uncertainty through non-predictive control. The effectuation process is a decision-making paradigm wherein the entrepreneur, using available resources, identifies the optimal

outcome for those resources. The implementation of effectuation decision-making is illustrated by Richard Branson's founding of Virgin Atlantic. These principles conform to the logic of effectuation, which is based on numerous basic principles, starting with the means, implementing affordable loss, leveraging relationships, and seizing opportunities. The principles of affordable loss highlight the magnitude of loss that can be endured. Upon establishment, the entrepreneur explores diverse strategies within limited resources and opts for solutions that present more future potential over immediate maximal gains. The effectuator establishes strategic partnerships and utilizes relationships to reduce uncertainty and remove barriers to entry. The effectuators utilize contingencies as resources and ultimately, they transform the environment to fulfil their objectives rather than simply adapting to it (Nelson & Lima, 2020; Sarasvathy, 2001).

All startup enterprises and entrepreneurs, irrespective of their field, engage in decision-making. The entrepreneur is an effectuate, an individual who capitalizes on contingent opportunities and utilizes all available resources to achieve a variety of present and future goals, many of which are influenced by economic decision-making rather than predetermined factors. The founders of Amazon, along with other e-commerce entrepreneurs, established new markets and businesses. Establishing new industries necessitates exceptional strategies. Electrifying a city through the invention of the light bulb required Edison's persuasion of governments, the public, and educators, which was dependent upon the exploitation of social and technological factors (Sarasvathy, 2001, as cited in Malsch et al., 2023). Klenner et al. (2022) employed effectuation theory in their research, examining the correlation between design thinking and effectuation theory. The effectuation theory served as a framework for entrepreneurial innovation and the establishment of new ventures. The study demonstrates that effectuation theory serves as an inducer for enhanced startup performance. Other researchers have discovered that SMMEs can apply effectual decision-making logic instead of causal decision-making logic. Subsequent studies indicated that the implementation of effectuation in innovation management enhances the creativity of employees engaged in new product development.

## **2.5. Characteristics and Drivers that lead to a Resourceful entrepreneur**

### **2.5.1. Entrepreneurial competencies**

What factors contribute to a business's success? This is a question that has been an area of focus for many researchers. Previous study has focused on questions indicating that the entrepreneur is pivotal to the success of medium-sized businesses (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). Authors such as Markam and Baron (2003) assert that "even economists suggest that firm performance and personal success are significantly influenced by human variability rather than solely by exogenous factors like differentiation, barriers to entry, or economies of scale."

Entrepreneurial skills are considered a set of qualities and experiences that facilitate success in business ventures. Entrepreneurial abilities are vital for a business, as they are associated with its establishment, sustainability, and expansion (Pulka et al., 2021). McClelland (1987) contended that many individuals presume successful entrepreneurs possess greater self-confidence, energy, creativity, and versatility than others; however, these skills are linked to success across all professions, not alone to entrepreneurship. McClelland identified three categories of competences using a technique known as Behavioural Interview. Proactivity is vital; entrepreneurs take initiative and do not permit matters to be overlooked. The second group of talents includes the ability of entrepreneurs to identify unconventional opportunities, embrace risks, prioritize optimization and quality, enforce accountability, and exhibit assertiveness. The third group pertains to dedication to others; successful entrepreneurs ensure they fulfil their promises, thereby sustaining positive relationships with their clients.

Pulka et al. (2021) regard entrepreneurial competences as essential attributes, including knowledge, motives, traits, self-image, social roles, and abilities, that contribute to the creation, survival, and growth of a startup enterprise. Thus, as articulated in the RBV, the competences and capabilities of business owners to acquire and grow resources in SMEs are crucial.

Innovation and creativity are essential for cultivating a successful business. Small and medium-sized enterprises exhibit a flexible innovation culture marked by minimal resistance to change, low risk aversion, and a tolerance for ambiguity. Entrepreneurs who can discover and capitalize on possibilities possess a tendency for success, while also being cognizant of risks and adept at managing them. Awareness of environmental and

socioeconomic factors is crucial for entrepreneurs, as they must anticipate future developments in an increasingly uncertain and dynamic business landscape. Consequently, the ability to sense these changes as a dynamic capability is essential for business growth (Teece et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been recognised as a prominent characteristic, the results of self-efficacy is entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial attitude and the desire to create business. According to Osadolor et al. (2021) posits that entrepreneurial self-efficacy implies belief in self, belief in one's ability to bring together, assemble and utilize the resources to achieve a set target, and since its self-belief is highly dependent on the knowledge of the individual it has the tendency to propel an individual to starting their own business

### **2.5.2. Conceptual and relationship competencies**

Numerous studies on entrepreneurial competences indicate that risk-taking is an intrinsic and vital component of an entrepreneur's life and success, irrespective of industry or market (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). It is recognized that risk-taking may lead to failure or setbacks. Consequently, entrepreneurs must cultivate the competences necessary to manage risks and their associated ramifications to effectively address failures and setbacks. In fig...it reflects the entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs regarding the attributes and competencies required to start a business. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) conducted a study on the entrepreneurial competences reported by female entrepreneurs dedicated to business growth. The study concentrated on female entrepreneurs and was corroborated by Kyndt & Baert's (2015) research on entrepreneurial talents, assessing their predictive value for entrepreneurship. Both the studies confirmed the categories of entrepreneurial competencies as the following: business management competencies, conceptual and relationship competencies, entrepreneurial competencies, and human relations competencies.

Conceptual and relational competences encompass the entrepreneur's capacity to influence people and establish networks and partnerships. Entrepreneurs must cultivate and sustain relevant networks to efficiently attract and keep clients. (Kyndt & Baert, 2015; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

A case study of the Maponya business indicate that the family members are burdened by the pressure of not letting their business to fail, but this is circumvented by the access to existing networks and connection, as well skills upgrading which is accessible to all family members (Ssekitoleko & Plessis, 2021)

### **2.5.3. Business management competencies**

Entrepreneurial resilience is a fundamental competency for entrepreneurs; successful entrepreneurs persevere in the face of adversity, and their resilience allows them to remain committed until the goal is achieved. Decision-making is a crucial asset for entrepreneurs; effective entrepreneurs can derive conclusions from various information sources. Successful entrepreneurs exhibit the courage to make difficult decisions. Entrepreneurs must possess the ability to strategize, which entails converting their vision into the tactical and operational measures required to attain their objectives (Kyndt & Baert, 2015; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). Strategic emphasis is directed towards explicit corporate objectives; these entrepreneurs possess the capability to recognize chances, which positions them to surpass those whose endeavours are primarily life-oriented (Bird, 2019). Sachdev, (2023) states that entrepreneurship requires a set of requirements, and includes personal characteristics, interpersonal skills, critical and creative thinking and practical or technical skills.

### **2.5.4. Human relations competencies**

One of the most significant skills that are necessary for the success of the company is the ability to interact with people. According to Williams et al. (2024), certain entrepreneurs possess an innate aptitude for acquiring resources for their ventures by gaining a knowledge of the authority that exists within the informal social framework on which they operate. In the near term, authority might be utilized to collect resources in order to maintain the existence of a newly formed organization. According to Williams et al. (2024), entrepreneurs who possess strong social abilities are able to exploit their capabilities to

secure a position in supply chains by cultivating relationships with individuals who influence the decisions of purchasers.

According to Daddi et al.'s research from 2020, it is essential for an organization to invest in employee development because it places an emphasis on action-oriented and practical approaches, promotes self-directed learning, provides opportunities for real-world experiences, and drives employees to produce tangible results. Previous study has shown that the success of a business is directly related to the owner of the organization (Simon et al., 2013). As a result, the owner's leadership abilities, capacity to manage others, and employee relations are all essential characteristics for entrepreneurs to possess.

## **2.6. Entrepreneurial orientation**

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO), as stated by Mondal & Chakrabarti (2021), is a risk-oriented strategic posture marked by a propensity for innovation, proactivity, and openness to risk, which positively impacts organizational performance. They further assert that EO encompasses “the organizational processes, methods, and styles that firms employ to act entrepreneurially.” Various research has yielded inconsistent data about the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and performance, with some suggesting a favourable link and others revealing a poor association. EO is a behaviour exhibited by an organization to foster creativity, proactivity, and performance. EO facilitates internal processes and empowers managers in small firms to attain a competitive advantage through innovation and the recognition of environmental opportunities. Entrepreneurial orientation is evaluated using the aspects of innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness (Isichei et al., 2020).

Innovation pertains to the organization's capacity to innovate across its whole business operation, demonstrating openness to new ideas and fostering innovation, creativity, idea development, and experimentation. Innovativeness facilitated the enhancement of abilities in dynamic and uncertain situations to generate new products and services, which is essential for capitalizing on possibilities, allowing the organization to leverage consumers' ever evolving preferences and needs. To ensure longevity, a firm must be innovative, as this enhances its market position and facilitates growth. Isichei et al. (2020) posits that innovativeness enables the organization to manage its capabilities to enhance the key competencies of the business.

Risk-taking is characterized in entrepreneurial resourcefulness as an organization's inclination to engage in risk despite uncertain outcomes. Risk-taking is governed by the principle of locus of control, which is intrinsic to an entrepreneur and influences the survival of the business. The entrepreneur's propensity to take risks indicates a disposition towards business risk. Additional research indicates that entrepreneurs often overlook risks seen by others and concentrate on the limitations of their business, thereby exposing the organization to increased risk (Isichei et al., 2020).

Proactiveness is the capacity of an organization to foresee and predict future products and services and to implement strategies to deliver them. Proactiveness entails delivering a solution that the consumer was previously unaware of, so allowing the business to gain a competitive advantage and fostering elevated entrepreneurial activity. When an organization can discern market expectations and respond accordingly, it displays the organization's foresight, customer-centric approach, and provides a first-mover advantage (Isichei et al., 2020).

## **2.7. Factors that promote survival of entrepreneurs**

### **2.7.1. Entrepreneurial resilience**

Resilience is a concept that is used across broad scholarly bodies, it stems from the Latin verb "resilire". Some physics scholars describe ability of the materials to resist external forces and absorb these forces without being destructed. In psychology resilience is related to the ability to cope after having trouble and be able to positively move on.

In entrepreneurship resilience it is a process of continuous reworking and alignment to the changes in the external environment. Entrepreneurial resilience is also defined as the aptitude an entrepreneur must remain motivated and future focused despite the challenges they are facing in the current environment, these entrepreneurs are open to change and are ignited by uncertainty, they face challenges with positivity (Fatoki, 2018).

Entrepreneurial resilience is characterised by three factors self-assurance, resourcefulness, and optimism. Self-assurance refers to an entrepreneur ability to control themselves, and they are self-sustaining and therefore do not wait on others for validation or support. While resourcefulness refers to the knowledge, competencies, and resources that the entrepreneurs enjoy in the face of adversity. Optimism assists entrepreneurs to

identify opportunities even from past mistakes. While all these factors are important, resourcefulness is the most important factor that determines the entrepreneur's success.

According to Fatoki, 2018, the process of resilience starts at an individual's comfort zone, when all is in alignment, which after there will be distractions. This process is regarded as an adaptation process, whereby the entrepreneur persists and is optimistic even when the conditions are tumultuous, the entrepreneurs are able to manage and hold in tandem difficult people, challenging market conditions as well as world events, while being future oriented. Entrepreneurial resilience is also linked to the Attribution theory, which is a motivational theory, which looks at how people device meaning of an event in relation to their motives to find a possible cause, as well as knowledge of their environment.

### **2.7.2. Entrepreneurial networking**

Entrepreneurial networking is a relationship shared by members of SMEs with other stakeholders, including suppliers, government, businesses, communities to access resources. Entrepreneurial networking (EN) helps in providing required resources and it also elevates the business owners to be able to identify opportunities and transform them to actions. The important role that entrepreneurial networking is provide business owners or managers with the open access to resources which exist outside of their immediate environment. These relationships with other stakeholders are resources themselves, and the EN can help SMEs on how to allocate resources, use the knowledge acquired and how to deploy technologies. This in turns gives the entrepreneur market advantage and tools on how to penetrate the market.

The SMEs are consistently facing challenges, especially with the business environment that is not static, therefore entrepreneurial networking helps SMEs in the development of strategies that will enable them to deal with obstacles that might compromise business continuity.

### **2.8. Challenges to entrepreneurial resourcefulness**

Entrepreneurs encounter various challenges, especially in dynamic business environments, necessitating strategies to overcome obstacles that could threaten business continuity. The ability to navigate these challenges is crucial for sustaining business growth and

maintaining a competitive edge. Starting a new venture is both a thrill and fear, and when starting new business entrepreneurs face numerous challenges such as uncertainty, emotional stress, lack of motivation, lack of support, availability of resources, lack of skilled labour, and order for an entrepreneur to run their business efficiently they must overcome such challenges (Fig 1) (Muneeb et al., 2022).

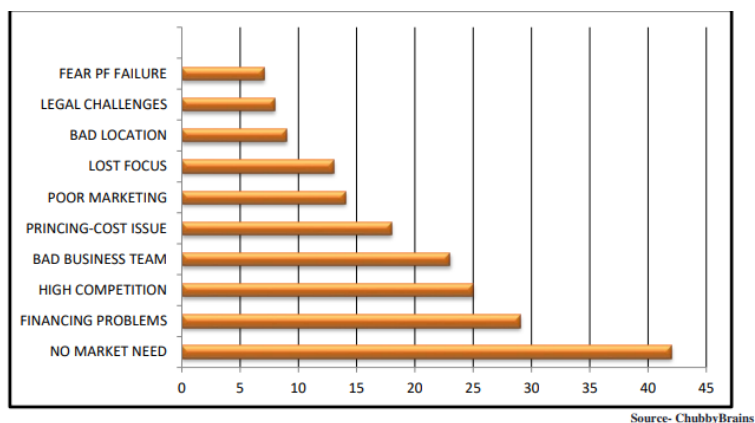


Figure 1: An analysis of the challenges faced by entrepreneurs – 2019 (Sulochana, 2021).

### Financial Challenges

As soon as an entrepreneur has developed an idea and taken the risk to open a firm, the next hurdle that they are confronted with is the challenge of raising funds. Ifeanyi (2014) and Rohan and Agarwal (2019) demonstrate that the problems that entrepreneurs face include not just the difficulty of acquiring funds but also the difficulty of persuading investors to participate in a company that does not yet exist. Investors are more likely to engage in a business that is already established, provides them with low risk, and guarantees that they will receive returns.

According to Raj (2016), the accumulation of funds is not the only issue; rather, the awareness of sources of finances, information about interest rates on loans, and the knowledge of how to borrow wisely are also some of the challenges. Further, it is mentioned that there are numerous reports of those who have gone from being poor to being wealthy, but there are less records about those who have gone from being wealthy to being poor. Furthermore, Khanin et al. (2020) postulates that the difficulties that entrepreneurs encounter are made worse by the high cost of credit, the high requirement for collateral, the high bank charges, and the strict regulations surrounding the business world.

### Governmental bureaucracy

Entrepreneurs are encouraged by a country's regulatory structure, and academics have suggested that the lack of assistance from the government is the root cause of obstacles that prevent people from starting their own businesses. (Khanin et al., 2020) asserts that excessive regulations pose a considerable barrier to entrepreneurial endeavours. In addition to having a negative impact on entrepreneurs, social institutional issues such as poor policies also serve to increase the obstacles that stand in the way of entrepreneurial endeavours.

### Dealing with competition

Every entrepreneur is confronted with the difficulty of contending with competition. Although this is a legitimate task, most entrepreneurs are not able to keep up with the changes that occur in the market, and they do not keep up with the trends. In contrast to season entrepreneurs, who have acquired agility and are able to use trends to their advantage by finding opportunities, inexperienced entrepreneurs are unable to foresee or recognize trends. Season entrepreneurs can learn how to discover opportunities is a challenge that all entrepreneurs face, while this is a valid challenge, most entrepreneurs are no able to keep up with changes in the market, they do not keep up with the trends. For inexperienced entrepreneurs they are not able to anticipate or identify the trends, unlike season entrepreneurs who have learnt agility and use the trends to their advantage by identifying opportunities. Competition is also seen as a good challenge, it stimulates the entrepreneurs to be innovative, creative and proactive.

Personal Limitations When an entrepreneur recognizes an opportunity but chooses not to pursue it due to a lack of entrepreneurial characteristics and abilities such as resilience, creativity, and problem solving, this refers to a situation known as personal limitations, which can be classified as psychological obstacles (Ucbasaran et al., 2003). There is a connection between these obstacles and a lack of self-esteem and confidence, as well as drive and ambition. To overcome this challenge, inexperienced entrepreneurs should collaborate with more experienced entrepreneurs to improve their cognitive abilities. Additionally, research recommends that entrepreneurs seek assistance from outside sources because it is beneficial to the entrepreneur.

### Lack of skill development

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs), in contrast to giant corporations, are more adaptable, devoid of bureaucracy, and nimble. They possess the capacity to take risks, but they do not do so because they lack resources, namely financial and human resources. The ability to achieve competitiveness can be achieved by businesses that have a skilled workforce by utilizing the skills and knowledge of their human resource force. However, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) do not have the resources to provide these trainings, even though investment in skills development is essential for the growth of a business (Demirkan et al., 2021).

## **2.9. Conclusion**

Entrepreneurial resourcefulness is a complex concept that significantly influences the success and sustainability of businesses, especially in environments with limited resources (Williams et al., 2024). Access to resources is insufficient; it is essential to creatively identify, mobilize, and utilize these resources to address challenges and attain business objectives (Lange et al., 2024). The current literature presents multiple viewpoints on entrepreneurial resourcefulness, emphasizing its significance for both new ventures and established enterprises (Lange et al., 2024). Entrepreneurs must manage resources efficiently to initiate and grow their ventures, particularly in the context of resource constraints (Lange et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial resourcefulness encompasses behaviours including bricolage, bootstrapping, co-opting resources, causation, and effectuation, highlighting the capacity to accomplish greater outcomes with limited resources (Lange et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial resourcefulness represents a tailored reaction to contextual limitations, wherein entrepreneurs discern opportunities and adjust their actions to effectively manage tasks (Lange et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial passion, the need for achievement, and self-efficacy are essential characteristics that empower entrepreneurs to capitalize on profitable opportunities (Mohammed, 2020). These characteristics enable individuals to surmount obstacles and manage resource constraints. Integrating entrepreneurial education into curricula is essential for fostering entrepreneurial intentions and skills (Lange et al., 2024). Entrepreneurial resourcefulness necessitates a strategic framework for mobilizing resources in environments characterized by scarcity (Lange et al., 2024).

## **2.10. Research Gaps**

The literature review identified multiple research gaps, notably the scarcity of studies examining the specific strategies employed by entrepreneurs to mobilize resources in environments characterized by resource limitations. Additional research is required to elucidate the effects of entrepreneurial networking on business performance and capabilities. The significance of human relations competencies in facilitating business success warrants additional investigation. Furthermore, there is an absence of comprehensive frameworks that incorporate entrepreneurial resourcefulness, networking, and human relations competencies to elucidate business growth.

### **3. Chapter 3 Research Questions**

#### **3.1. Research purpose**

In spite of the contribution that SMMEs make to the economy they still continue fail due to lack of resources, therefore the research proposes to explore the role of resourcefulness in entrepreneurs in the context of business growth, it explore the entrepreneurial competencies, entrepreneurial orientation, and entrepreneurial resilience, in the effort to extract the drivers which can lead to the development of entrepreneurial resourcefulness as well tools to help entrepreneurs to become resourceful and sustain business growth. This study also further examines how the entrepreneurial networking can further enhance the entrepreneurial resourcefulness and how these cognitive enablers can be helping to sustain the business growth. This study aims to contribute to the entrepreneurship literature by providing a comprehensive understanding of the concept of entrepreneurial resourcefulness and its impact on business sustainability

#### **3.2. Research question**

The existential literature explored in chapter two has prompted further study to understand the role of resourcefulness in entrepreneurial business growth, by answering four specific research questions.

The research questions formulation was inspired by the literature review.

#### **Research Question one: What are the inherent characteristics that lead to the emergence of an entrepreneur?**

According to Quagraine et al., (2023) entrepreneurial resourcefulness is a multidimensional concept embedded in a network of individual competencies and social resources; research question one aims to identify traits, behavioural dimensions and competencies that define a resourceful entrepreneur. Knowing this will help one to have more profound understanding of the elements affecting entrepreneurial resourcefulness.

#### **. Research question two: What are the drivers that enable resourcefulness**

The second research topic is to identify the behavioural elements and drivers decision-making, attributes, capacities that enable entrepreneurs to be resourceful to attain business

expansion. Mitchell et al. 2002. When end goals are unknown, creative behaviour such as effectuation a resource use logic emphasizing starting with the means rather than the end goal has been found to be successful way to create value (Michaelis et al., 2020).

**Research question three: What are the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs?**

The aim of research question three is to identify the situational factors that drive business sustainability (Isichei et al., 2020).

**Research question four: How does your experience as an entrepreneurs inform the proclivity to being resourceful?**

Research question four aims to identify the how the experience of an entrepreneurs leads to an inclination of being resourceful (Isichei et al., 2020).

## **4. Chapter 4**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter explores the research methods employed in this study. The study employed a qualitative, exploratory research design, utilizing a mono-method qualitative approach to examine the role of entrepreneurial resourcefulness in the context of sustained business growth. The exploratory research afforded the researcher insight into poorly understood material, while the application of qualitative research enhanced the trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability of the findings. Data was gathered via in-person or online interviews, the businesses chosen for the study had the following attributes, the businesses are medium sized businesses, have been in operation for more than five years, the key decision maker is the respondent, and they are based in Gauteng, South Africa. This study employed qualitative research to get insight and comprehension of real-world situations (Mago & Olajuyin, 2022). The quality controls and limitations of the study are explained at the conclusion of this chapter.

### **4.2. Research methodology and design**

The interpretive process, which has a belief that social interaction gives birth to reality, therefore the collection of the empirical data generates an interaction between the researcher and the respondents. The interpretivism philosophy used precise qualitative method and it was suited for this study because it provided a deep understanding, paying attention to details and seeking to understand the reality lived through experiential learning (Irshaidat, 2022). The purpose of this research was to understand the why and how experiences are that humans value, therefore the uses the inductive approach emphasizes this and it enacts a deeper understanding of the research context (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

The inductive nature approach was the most suitable method of research when little is known regarding the study explored. Due to the time constraints of this research, it was conducted using cross sectional research, this allows collection of data at a point in time, also known as a snapshot. This research was not restrictive it allowed for collection of data from multiple sources; therefore, the respondents were from different ethnic groups, male

or female, and the respondents were entrepreneurs who operate their business from varied locations (Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

A semi structured, virtual meeting, in depth interview strategy was used to collect data, as it allowed interaction with the respondents (Irshaidat, 2022). The data was collected over a three-week period in 2024. The semi structured, in depth interviews provided a unique depth of understanding of the research problem as well as adjustments to the questions based on the information uncovered (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), and additional business data available online was used as a form of triangulation (Chege & Otieno, 2020).

Entrepreneurial resourcefulness is a study that needed to be explored as it under theorised, especially in the context of sustaining business growth. To gain knowledge and understanding of the research question the researcher collected secondary data through a desktop literature review, this literature review search was used to enrich the study with reputable, up to date academic journals, reports, and publications using a search engine with academic database.

### **4.3. Population**

The primary data of this study was be collected in Johannesburg, Gauteng. The population comprised of medium sized independent entrepreneurs, distributed across different industrial sectors. The suitability of the participants was established in interview question one which prompted to provide answer to 'where did the journey start' and the interviewer prompted further to ask how long the business was running.

### **4.4. Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis for this study was entrepreneurs, which comprised of individuals or group of entrepreneurs operating their enterprise or business for more than 5 years.

### **4.5. Sampling method and size**

The sample selected from a population in the study is referred to as a sampling method, and when a full list of all the members is available this will formulate a sampling frame (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). SMEs in South Africa contribute 98.5% of the number of

enterprises or organisations in the economy (The big voice of small business, 2019), therefore for this reason a complete list of all the members did not exist and if it did exist the cross-sectional time horizon of this study and limited resources was a constraint in conducting this study. In appreciation of this, the researcher used their networks and relationships to gain access to the entrepreneurs that will be sampled.

Although the population was of entrepreneurs with defined characteristics i.e.: they have been in operation for more than 5 years, the respondent is a key decision maker in the business, and the entrepreneur has business operations in Gauteng. These entrepreneurs were heterogeneous in nature as they differed in some aspects e.g.: the type of business they run, the location of the business, the revenue they generate, etc. The purposive sampling method was utilized for this study which was also referred to as the judgement sampling. Purposive sampling used in this study particularly allowed for selection of a small sample (Mago & Olajuyin, 2022), in regard to the research, 12 participants were interviewed in the first stage of the analysis, but this was not limited as the aim of the research is not the number of participants that are interviewed but the depth of the data collected (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013). Furthermore, unlike other sampling methods, the purposive sampling chooses participants based on a criterion that bears features of the study. Data was collected until there were no new trends or patterns that were developing, and this was guided by the saturation theory (Mago & Olajuyin, 2022). The notion of saturation is described by Rahimi & Khatooni (2024) as a criterion in qualitative research to stop the gathering of data, based on no new information being deduced. Reaching saturation point was a critical element of this research since it demonstrates research rigor, it also expresses the range, intensity, and degrees of the studied subject.

#### **4.6. Measurement Instrument:**

The instrument of measurement used regarding the qualitative research of this study was a semi-structured interview, and an interview guide was a vehicle used to extract the data. According to Mashuri et al. (2022) the research scholars regard qualitative interviews as a conversation between the interviewer and interviewee, the researcher guides the conversation, other scholars likened the interview as a miner searching for buried metal, the data is regarded as the buried metal while the interviewer is the miner, the process therefore emphasised on participant because they possess a wealth of knowledge.

The semi-structured interview explored the themes which had main questions, as and the interviewer was able to formulate follow up questions based on the response of the participant, and this interview guide allowed interviewer to probe further to solicit better understanding of the responses. A semi structure interview was appropriate for this study, unlike the structured interview, which is formalized with questions that are restricted, the semi-structured interview was flexible and informal in style ensuring that the researcher gains better understanding of the respondent's world.

The development of the interview guide was based on the premise that the knowledge is situated, and the interview was a social meeting. To be able to conjure up contextual and interactional experiences the interviewer provided the interviewee with an environment that makes the extraction and building of data possible, at the same time ensuring that the participants experience is focused on (Mashuri et al., 2022).

Creswell (2017) suggested the use of an interview protocol to ask questions and records response, and it included: the topic being researched, the date, location, the name of the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher establish rapport with the participants, by providing them with instructions and the objective of the study being conducted, that no answer is right or wrong, also by indicating which language will be used for the interview and if a different language was required the researcher provide translation of the questions, the participant's confidentiality was ensured during the interview.

The guided interview was be conducted as a virtual meeting, and it commenced with five direct questions i.e.: What motivated you to become an entrepreneur? where did the journey start? if you had a book what would you call it? what problem is your business trying to address? Follow up probing questions were asked to allow the participant to elaborate further and provide more details.

#### **4.7. Data gathering process.**

The researcher collected primary and secondary data, to gain better understanding of the research question, information was collected using text material which included reputable journal articles, reports, magazine articles, new reports, non-text material. The advantage

of using secondary data was the availability of the material and it reduced the constraint of negotiating for data (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Creswell (2017) postulates that the use of secondary data for this study will be based on the relevance, the reasons why the data was collected, the methodology, and the questions used.

Since this was a qualitative interpretivist research, the researcher made an interpretation of what was observed (see, hear, and understand) (Creswell, 2017), this was done using a semi structured interview as a tool, the interview according to Mashuri et al., (2022) seeks to understand the world through the lens of the research subjects. The interaction during the interview unearthed the meaning of their experiences and unfolded their lived world. An interview guide was prepared according to (Saunders & Lewis, 2018) a process of how to prepare for semi-structured interview.

Firstly, a consent form was developed, which was shared with the respondent prior to the interview, and a signed consent form in Appendix D was provided prior to the interview to allow for the interview to continue. The interview was audio recorded once permission was sought from the interviewee, this was followed up by open ended questions. To verify the interviewees interpretation of the responses, the interviewer sought clarification where responses were unclear (Roulston, 2010).

#### **4.8. Analysis approach**

The data analysis is a sense making process, the researchers synthesised the information into themes or perspectives. The audio recording derived from the interviews was stored electronically with backups to ensure the data was not lost. The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed by the interviewer. The researcher worked through raw data, typing the notes and comments from the field and arranging the data. The researcher went through the data to ascertain the general view of the participants, a thematic content analysis was used which allowed for theme to emerge from the participants unique experience (Vaismoradi, 2013). According to Saunders & Lewis (2018) the use of data analysis software, computer aided data analysis software Atlas.ti is recommended therefore Atlas.ti, a software tool that provides automated analysis of the data was used, this process validated the themes developed and provided credibility of the analysis. Using a thematic analysis strategy, the main themes of the study were ranked according to the number of quotations from the semi structured interview, thereafter the main themes

were evaluated (Creswell, 2017). The final step involved the interpretation of the data, the flexibility of a semi-structured interview was appreciated compared to other forms of data collection.

Mashuri et al. (2022) reiterates that data analysis is about uncovering information, it involves, defining the scope and models, categorizing the data into common descriptors, theorizing, explaining the relationship or contradiction between experiences and attitudes, exploring and mapping.

#### **4.9. Quality controls**

Many scholars advised researchers to provide the steps they followed to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. In this study, the researcher delved deeper into qualitative reliability, validity, and generalizability. The researcher demonstrated consistency across the case study, which indicated qualitative reliability (Mashuri et al., 2022). Creswell (2017) suggested that the development of a case study protocol by checking transcripts to rule out any mistakes made during transcribing, ensuring that the coding/themes were consistent, and that there were no changes in meaning.

The research incorporated validity strategies to ensure quality control of the data, including:

**Triangulation:** Several data analysing sources were evaluated and using evidence to justify themes. In this research, secondary data points, semi-structured interviews, and online business data were triangulated. Using multiple sources of data or participant viewpoints to establish themes enhanced the study's validity.

**Rich, thick descriptions:** These descriptions were utilised specifically to present the reader with a genuine sense of the lived experience.

**Reliability:** The researcher assured reliability by continue to interview until saturation point was reached and no new information as extracted. Finally, to authenticate the data, the researcher provided discrepancies; no material was suppressed.

**Qualitative generalization:** Levitt (2021) inferred that scholar of research had recognised that qualitative research was based on using information from evidence to identify patterns of stability and variation in data. Qualitative researchers constructed a map of variation in their data that represented the practice and experience of the phenomena under investigation rather than using probability sampling to capture variability in a population.

Therefore, this technique allowed for the generalisation of the phenomenon rather than the

population. The researcher in this study used forms of variation for generalisation by identifying patterns of variation. According to other researchers, qualitative research accommodated generalisation if there was consistency in the themes and patterns. However, this held true even if there were variations, even though they were not universally applicable.

#### **4.10. Limitations:**

This study focused on entrepreneurs who have been in business for more than 5 years, but it did not consider emerging entrepreneurs, how technological advancements and globalisation have boosted or hindered their resourcefulness.

The study incorporated elements of subjectivity due to its qualitative and interpretivist nature. The qualitative controls outlined in section 4.9 were utilized. The exploratory nature of the research produced numerous topics, some of which were outliers and not extensively addressed in this study. The study was executed as an individual effort, despite Cresswell et al. (2007) advising that a research team should undertake such a case study technique to mitigate bias.

Scholars offer varying definitions of entrepreneurial resourcefulness, thus, participants may not have comprehended the concept and depended on the interviewer for clarification. The suggested study evaluated entrepreneurs based on their lived experiences; one participant did not consider themselves an entrepreneur even though they operate a business for more than five years, therefore the data collected on this interview was limited. This was counteracted by asking the participant to provide specific examples and clarity was sought where the response was ambiguous

The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

## 5. Chapter 5

This chapter explicates the results/ findings derived from the research questions presented in Chapter Three. The results are presented based on the inductive approach of qualitative analysis, which entails the identification of patterns within the data, the formulation of codes that characterize the collected data, and the execution of thematic analysis, which organizes the codes into relevant and similar categories. A semi-structured interview was employed, with the research questions generated from the literature review in Chapter Two. The principal themes extracted from the research have been use to analyse the findings in this chapter.

The inductive character of the analysis produced 141 independent codes throughout the 12 Interviews (Appendix A), facilitating the documentation of emergent themes, including those unrelated to the research topic. This facilitated an in-depth examination of the research subject. Moreover, the research reveals emergent themes that were not identified during the literature review; these themes represent the multifaceted nature of entrepreneurial resourcefulness. Figure 2 illustrates the depiction of the emergent themes, while the next sections of this chapter analyse and integrate the findings to the study questions.

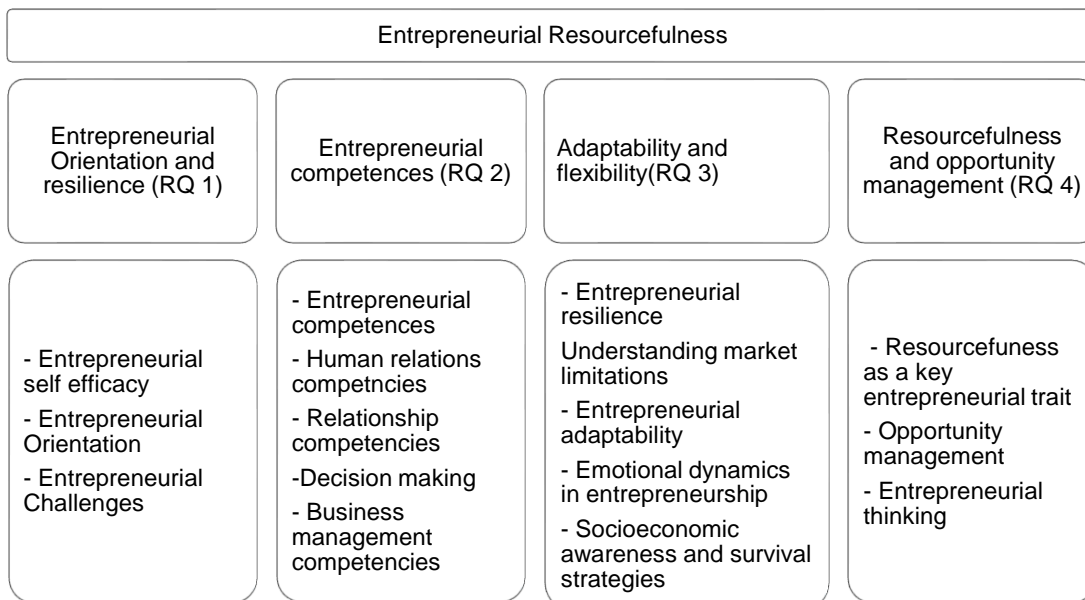


Figure 2 :Overarching themes derived from categories of codes (Authors own complication).

## 5.1. Sample Description

Table 2 displays the data obtained from the thirteen interviews performed with participants. The identities of the participants have been protected by assigning unique participation codes. Pseudonyms have been employed in lieu of individuals or business names as referenced by participants during the interview. The participants were chosen based on their years of operation and are classified as small to medium-sized enterprises. The participants' businesses have operated for over five years and employ between ten and fifty individuals, as defined by the National Small Business (NBS) Act of South Africa (Bvuma & Marnewick, 2020). All interviewed individuals were in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The researcher made extensive efforts to obtain heterogeneity in the samples to obtain diversity of characteristics and maximum variation. This deliberate endeavour aimed to guarantee relevance, positioning the interviewees to offer pertinent insights regarding the research topic, as posited by Horsburg (2003), who asserts that this approach is most suitable for qualitative research.

Table 2: Participants description (Authors own compilation)

Participants ID	Gender	Years of experience	Industry
E1	Male	10	Property Management
E2	Female	11	Film Catering
E3	Male	10	Raw Material supplier
E4	Female	12	Hygiene and Cleaning
E5	Male	7	Construction
E6	Male	12	Civil Engineering
E7	Female	8	Manufacturer
E8	Female	8	Bakery & Farming
E9	Male	6	Security, Farming & Aviation
E10	Female	7	Service Station
E11	Female	8	Bakery
E12	Male	9	ITC
E13	Male	12	Multimedia

## 5.2. Results for Research question One

### What are the inherent characteristics that lead to the emergence of an entrepreneur?

The primary objective of research question one is to identify the characteristics, abilities, and behaviours that business owners possess or acquire to demonstrate resourcefulness. The participants were asked questions about their background, this allowed them to narrate their own stories about themselves as well as their experiences of running a business and how they have practiced resourcefulness, whether intentional or inadvertent. Question one and the probing questions were intended to elucidate the factors that shaped the entrepreneurial journey. Question two and three expounds the entrepreneurs experience and challenges faced. The research approach is a narrative inquiry that aims to document the experiences of participants, explaining the lived experience or specific experience of everyone (Francis, 2018). The participants were urged to answer questions candidly, yielding profound insights into their opinions and what they deemed pertinent to the questions posed.

The responses to the question provided rich insights that contextualises the role of resourcefulness in the journey of an entrepreneur. To exhaustively answer the research question, there a various factor that were taken into consideration: the age of the business, the challenges the entrepreneur faced, how the company has managed to survive even after challenges. The below diagram (Fig 3) was constructed to demonstrate how the emerging themes related to the research question one.

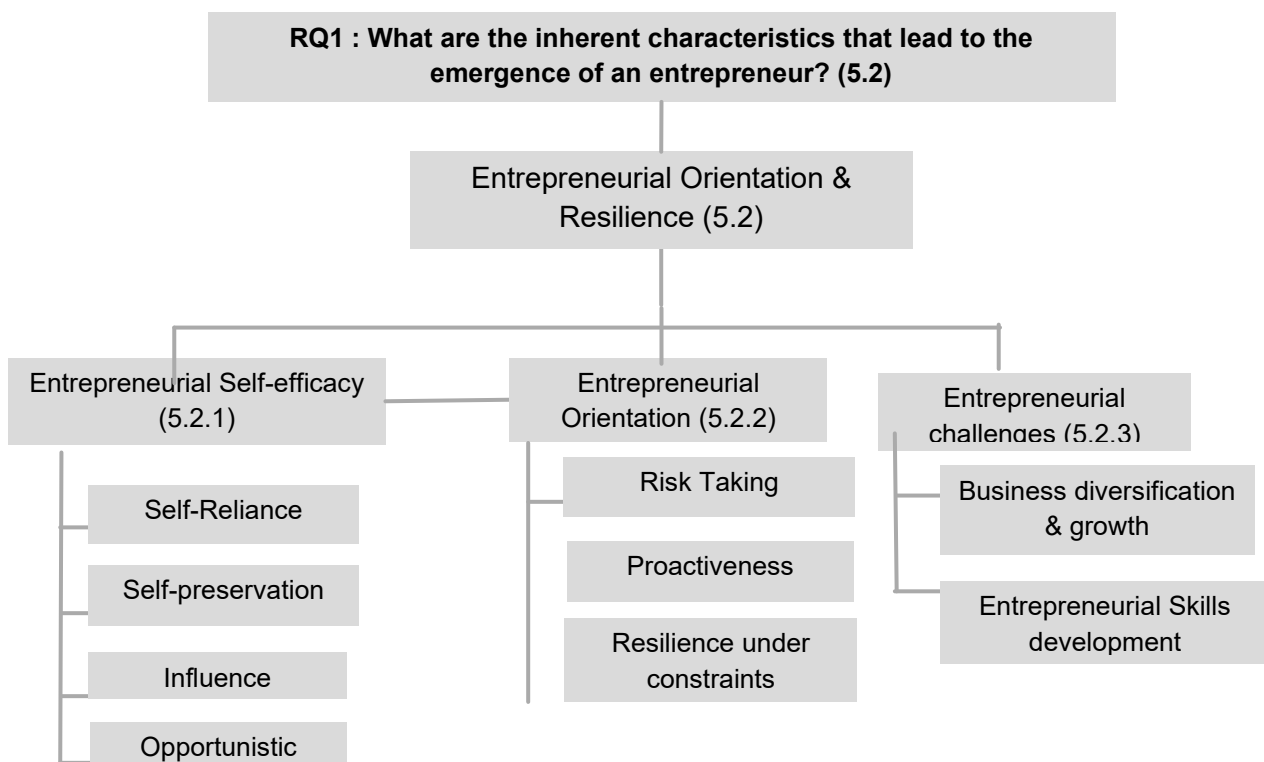


Figure 3: Research question one Theme mapping (Authors own compilation)

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### 5.2.1. Entrepreneurial self-efficacy

To understand the mindset of an entrepreneur and the characteristics that lead to being resourceful and resilient; to gather rich, diverse and relevant insights it is important to comprehend the participants background, what motivated and influenced them.

#### 5.2.1.1. Participants Background, Motivation and influence

In the explorative nature of the research, uncovering information that is not well understood is crucial and adds to the body of literature by providing solutions to real life challenges. Therefore, the background of the participants and their influences provided valuable insight into various aspects of the research.

The participants were willing to give insights into the background, motivation, and influences, some spoke extensively on how their upbringing influences the entrepreneurs that they are. Only two participants mentioned education and the role it, while others by inference, highlighted its importance.

Most participants that were interviewed provided an elaborate background of their journey, with a significant number of participants connecting their entrepreneurial journey to the influence of their parents, grandparents, and other influential members of the family. Participants whose businesses were successful had the influence and support of their family. Although the influence of family was apparent, one business owner said *'I've always told people that I was pushed into this. It's not something that I had really had passion for entrepreneurship'*.

Another participant further corroborated their experience,

*E12: 'I think, to tell you the truth, for me, I never dreamt of being an entrepreneur. I saw myself as a lady with high heels being a CEO and running*

*a company, those big corporates being a marketing director at Tiger brands because I studied marketing, and that's where my passion was.'*

Although only a few participants openly mentioned that they never wanted to be entrepreneurs, but their family influence manifested itself into a desire for independence. Three participants mentioned how entrepreneurship was not part of their plans, but rather to work in corporate. The idea of creating your own income, freedom to manage your time, and ability to contribute to changing the economic outlook of others, resonated with them and hence they ended up choosing the entrepreneur path.

With eleven of the thirteen participants reverberated the impact of the influence of their families, they acknowledged the role it played and how it built a character of resilience and the desire to be self-sufficient.

*E3: 'And I always say I was raised by a family of matriarchs, really, because my grandmothers were very strong. My grandmothers were present, very strong, even personality. So, one of my grandmothers, my paternal grandmother, ran as Spaza shop. So, the way that that I started doing my stock was how she did it.'*

*E10: 'how I've been raised, I was not raised as a seven to five person. I was raised as a target person, meaning, in a day, if I say I need to paint 20 square meters, I'll finish 20 square meters before I leave the site.'*

*E10: I was by my grandparents, of which my grandfather was self-employed. It was built that. So, we used to do a lot of used to build a lot of houses.*

*E4: I personally, I come from humble beginning, you know, I'm a village girl, is probably the only thing that I know, especially since for the longest time, my mom, she was a single mom, and she could not afford to take us to school. So, at some point, I realized that hard work was the only weapon that I had, until such time that I can be able to, you know, to actually take myself to school. So, the strong personality, the hard working, the consistency that I learned, I think it's something that I've learned at a young age*

*E13: Also, because my own father had been a security guard. So, my father had been a security guard, so it was quite logical. They tell you what they do,*

*subconsciously, they plant a seed for you, yeah. And you think, oh, okay, you wanted to be a security officer. What if I want to be something more complex than upgrading too big, but be realistic, not too big.*

#### **5.2.1.2. Self-reliance**

With 3 of the 13 participants agreed, that the desire to be self-reliant, have control and be able to get things for themselves was the driving characteristic that led them to become entrepreneurs. According to the responses from the participant self-reliance, meant being able to fund their own needs, without having to ask anyone.

*E1: I grew up in a family where, we didn't have everything right, primarily because my parents were taking care of extended family members. So, in a situation where income was then supposed to be for you, it wasn't so because they were like four or five other people that were sharing those resources.*

*E3: my parents we strict, so I wanted to start getting my own things, and they were not going to buy me all these things that I wanted. Can I please have a phone? Can I please have this? And, I hate asking, so let's find a way of creating or meeting at work. So I decided to take my 20 rands that I got my pocket money for the week. I went and I bought a packet of snapper's chips.*

*E8: Can you start off by doing it on the side? I mean, I started doing it when I was, I used to work on weekends after hours, and I started making more money than three times, six times more than what work was giving me.*

*The participants who didn't explicitly indicate self-reliance as an entrepreneurial characteristic, they indicated that entrepreneurship affords them the opportunity to make independent decision's, they feel empowered to pivot new strategies and have also learnt to manage and control capital, human resource and they can scale their business in alignment with their vision.*

*E13: I think the fundamental entrepreneur is your ability to scale. You may be an entrepreneur, but you may not be a good businessperson, or maybe entrepreneur that you understand opportunity, identification and pursuing that*

*opportunity, but then you don't have the ability to scale. This is the limitation of entrepreneurship, and I think it's your ability to scale that distinguishes successful and unsuccessful entrepreneurs.*

*E8: And then, then it was about taking the decision get to grow the business, because now I'm doing a whole lot of things all at once. Now you must make a decision. Now you need to choose, are you staying in corporate or are you choosing your business?*

#### **5.2.1.3. Self-Preservation**

The act of protecting oneself from harm, according to Sook and Sook (2020) it is self-preservation. The higher the self-preservation, the higher the self-efficacy and willingness to start a business. The participants demonstrated a high level of enacting the survival instincts which has been instrumental in ensuring that the entrepreneur is successful and adapts easily to different environments. In the various challenges each of the participants have experienced they learnt a survival mechanism or built a personality trait linked to preservation.

*E1: I think I saw the need in my sort of personal environment, trying to fulfil those gaps that were present at that time.*

*E3: I embraced setbacks as learning opportunities and adjusted my business model accordingly.*

*E2: Whenever crisis lands, you need to really kind of like, how can I solve the situation, and how can I be able to help you know a specific target group?*

The participants responded that encountering challenging circumstances compelled them to survival mode and prompting them to find strategies and resourceful tactics to preserve what they have built, defend themselves and their families.

#### **5.2.1.4. Influence**

The participants demonstrated in their response signs of being influenced and wanting to influence others. Participant E13 spoke about the endeavours he pursued during his childhood, motivated by the desire to influence others, mobilize individuals, and leave a

lasting impression. Through influence the participants were able to secure opportunities, build relationships and networks, and drive business growth.

*E13: Because if I look at it from that selling cigarette, yes, you Influence. You get acknowledgement from peers. You're doing something dangerous, alcohol. You're sneaking in alcohol with the cleaners. You pay the cleaners from the money you get from the cigarettes and pay the cleaners a little extra. They bring in the alcohol for you on Friday and so on. And they can open the gate for you to go to sneak out and so on. It became like a job but all of that was an influence.*

*E13: And I kind of forgot about it because I kept wanting to increase my influence. I think for me, it's always been about influence. I could say what compelled me to be an entrepreneur was to want to have influence over my environment. Because every time all this that I was doing was to get relevance. I mean, if you're a child, you're growing up amongst many siblings, you want to be relevant. You want attention. If I had to think of it in hindsight now, I could say the journey started with my siblings because I'm not the only child. I'm number five, so I'll probably have suffered some middle child syndrome at the time.*

Further on participants were impacted by what they observed, the better life they could have inspired them into continually trying for better, and even when faced with problems they remembered the better life they had promised themselves

*E8: I wanted to see the world because I went to China. And then I was when China and being in an environment where there only an entrepreneur, technological advancement in China, I went to Hong Kong, Guangzhou, I was left inspired.*

*E12: My aunt was working as a domestic worker. You know, when you move from rural areas to urban areas, you see these big houses. Everything is big, yeah. So, I think for me, seeing those lights and those big houses influenced me.*

#### **5.2.1.5. Opportunistic**

Periods of social and economic instability create opportunities; as noted by Knight (2013), crises generate dynamic areas for opportunity and diversity, as social demands persist

even in uncertain times. The thirteen participants concurred that the identification of opportunities was essential for their business success. Participant E13 said *'most of the time people see the opportunities. It's just that they don't know how to go on about it to extract certain information from their potential customers as to how best they can deliver the solution.'*

*E 3: "I started selling snacks at school, and when I realized I was making a profit, I reinvested it in sweets to avoid giving change."*

*E 6: Just something small, very small and had this recipe that we would occasionally just bake. And, you know, people would always be, can I have? Can I have? And, yeah, so how this one started. My mom was like, at work, and she said, You know, I took the scones to work, and everybody likes them. I think, it would be a good*

*E 9: So in my case, as I was looking at different industries, I come from a rural area where, at the time there was a lack of like bread? Yeah, it was very far, I've already done a quite a lot of research when it comes to making bread.*

### **5.2.2. Entrepreneurial Orientation:**

The experience of an entrepreneur has been seen to differentiate those who make it and those who don't. During the study there were several themes that emerged in relation to the experience and the sustainability of business growth, with one of them being the entrepreneurial Orientation, that which motivates and enables an entrepreneur to turn obstacles into opportunities. The motivation and drive that pushes the entrepreneurs to consistently, even through adversity, overcome challenges and innovate is synonymous with entrepreneurial orientation.

During the interviews, respondents said that although drive is essential, there are concerns about the increasing demands placed on entrepreneurs and the adverse effect this has on their motivation. Additional themes that emerged include an entrepreneurial mindset and motivation, as well as the influence of entrepreneurial drive on company diversification and growth. The next section will concentrate on the predominant topics, notwithstanding the emergence of other subjects.

Table 3: Outlines the main emergent themes of entrepreneurial drive.

<b>Entrepreneurial Orientation</b>	
<b>Themes</b>	<b>Frequency of mention in the theme</b>
Resilience under constraints	19
Risk taking & Proactiveness	18
Business diversification & growth	4
Entrepreneurial Skills development	3
Entrepreneurial hardships/ challenges	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>56</b>

Many participants alluded to the fact that entrepreneurship is not easy journey and can be lonely at time's but there is a greater drive or motivation that makes them still choose entrepreneurship, some said that they had to travel this journey alone respondent E5 expressed this as,

*'I had to travel the journey business wise alone, of course, without anyone holding my hand.'*

While the challenges of entrepreneurship are visible many of the respondents said that becoming an entrepreneurship has given them a newfound appreciation.

*E2: 'That is why I would still pursue a business or become an entrepreneur, because the lives that we're able to change. I mean, we've got a wellness initiative were all of our employees get breakfast and lunch every single day. They've got transport subsidy. They've got medical care, meaning that if ever they feel unwell, they've got access to a nurse the company access to a library.'*

The word 'it is worth it' and 'I would do it again' coming up often during the interviews, this demonstrating the drive and motivation that these entrepreneurs have to fulfil a purpose higher than them. The one responded said,

*'The intention of us doing our business was not for us to become millionaires or make money. It was really a passion of ours that we had in terms of creativity and sharing creativity with the people.'*

### **5.2.2.1. Risk Taking and Proactiveness**

There are intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive people to become and remain entrepreneurs. These include being resilient, motivated and having the right mindset. Under the overarching theme of risk taking, the respondents showed high level motivation, willing to risk it all and entrepreneurial thinking. With some of the participants tracing back their dream to be entrepreneurs as far as young as in high school.

The level of motivation to take risk can be seen from the collated findings in table 2, the participants attributed their propensity to take risk to passion, influence and the drive to find creative solutions to everyday problems. Participant E2 said

*'The passion and the intention behind the business is the reason why we do what we do. Yes, it is hard, but we are able to walk in that hard journey because money was never really part of it and to be recognized by yourself, you just you are calling it and saying I want to hear about your story that is incredible for us. One other person knows about us, that is what fulfils us and being able to be acknowledged by your Oprah Winfrey,*

*E8: I took calculated risks in expanding my business rather than growing too quickly.*

While the respondents showed signs of high motivation and the correct mindset, there are some who have pointed out that there are challenges that have not been dealt with, which make it seem like entrepreneurs are always motivated and never face challenges.

*E7: I mean, I think the top one running out of money, which is something that is a I think that we have not created a space for entrepreneurs to be able to speak about that openly and be able to be transparent even with their team members.*

### **5.2.2.2. Resilience under constraints**

As stated in chapter two, entrepreneurial resilience it is a process of continuous reworking and alignment to the changes in the external environment. The participants described areas in their entrepreneurial life when they faced 'economic hardship' and another said, 'I

*will never make the same mistake again'. Another responded said 'we were thrown out of two apartments back-to-back, when we came back and was it 6 months shy of COVID, we didn't have money'. The continued financial instability and inconsistencies with money in entrepreneurship is the biggest deterrent for most people according to the participants. In their response the participants highlight how they had to make ends meet for their business to survive.*

*E6: 'This means I didn't have enough the money to cover all these things. So I had to rely on the small contracts to pay my bills, I pay labour, which was not enough, so I had to go out and make sure I find small jobs that will take us through. I won't go back to that similar mistake without having something at hand. I had to retrench some off the guys'*

*E2: 'But I had to be resourceful. I mean, I've been a nanny. I've been a babysitter. When I moved to France, I was a cleaner. I came back to South Africa when my mom got cancer, and I applied for a job as a personal assistant.'*

*E4: 'But then there was a time when business started becoming slow and then I got frustrated, because now I don't understand what's happening. So how does one survive when business is slow?'*

### **5.2.2.3. Entrepreneurial challenges.**

The participants commonly face limited resource availability, with most responses indicating that a lack of funding and restricted market access were the primary challenges hindering efficient business operations. Lack of financial resources was highly ranked amongst the participants, in many instances the participants expressed the increasing difficulty in sustaining their business due to lack of funds, or where funds have been made available by the governmental agencies, there is lack of urgency and therefore the business owners lose the contract due to the delays. Other related concepts that emerged is the lack of skills among the labourers, and this is predominantly young people, who are unemployed, and therefore due to lack of basic skills become unemployable.

#### 5.2.2.4. Business diversification & growth

The ability of an entrepreneur to grow and diversify their business not only guarantees sustainability but it also promises longevity. The respondents indicated that the era of COVID 19 has led to many businesses not focusing on one business opportunity but rather explore multiple business opportunities. Most of the businesses that were interviewed were involved in more than one venture. Responded E4 indicated that.

*'I run the cleaning company, my husband is running IT company, and construction on the side'*

*E13: 'The first one is the first core business that we're actually running is private security. From private security, we then realized that most of our cost is actually in the supply of equipment. And from the supply of equipment, we realize supply work uniform'.*

*E7: Bakery in studio as a specialist bakery, manufacturer of baking premixes. And then we also have a cooking studio where we teach kids and adults alike on how to cook, but it's just an extension of even the services that we offer, because it makes sense for us to have a cooking studio, to be able to teach people on how to cook and stuff like that.*

The respondent's frustration and struggles were due having to use their own funds to expand their business. One responded said

*And it's not an easy thing, because we are at a phase of scaling up, and it's the toughest thing where you would want to because costs are escalating, like nobody's business, and asking how are you telling us about all these things that are challenging you, but you are scaling up? And, you know, like people look at you, and then they say, you have money.*

But there was other one responded who invested their own funds not due to lack of availability, but due to lack of knowledge on how to effectively utilize credit. One responded said *'Use other people's money to grow your business'*

*E3: Investing in the academy was a big investment I had saved. And I've been the biggest mistake that I made, which also could still work to my favor, but was investing, using my own capital and not using credit effectively when I had lots of credits that I could get.*

*E9: So that is one lesson that I would advise. During that period when you are growing, that's the time to improve even better your business, because you've got good cash flow. Balance Sheet is looking good, and then the bank is going to give you the funding.*

#### **5.2.2.5. Entrepreneurial Skills development**

Entrepreneurial skills enable individuals to establish a business and facilitate social development. To enhance competitiveness and engage in risk-taking, entrepreneurs must possess key entrepreneurial skills. These skills encompass creativity, proactivity, self-efficacy, networking, opportunity identification, among others (Portuguez & Gomez, 2020). Most of the interviewed entrepreneurs possessed higher education, with some holding master's degrees and others engaged in ongoing self-development. But the most participants said while they are qualified, they have encountered significant challenges of employers who have insufficient basic skills. One participant said *'being in cleaning is one of the most difficult fields for one to work in, particularly because cleaners, they're not professionals.*

Participants pointed out the lack of professionalism and accountability, indicating that employees exhibit no sense of ownership regarding their work; they are merely present to receive a salary, contributing minimal effort to accomplish their duties precisely or exceed expectations. Participant E2 described this as,

*'They undermine the type of work that is being offered to them. For instance, here we're more skilled based, we need people that are going to make a product, and I think that people see themselves above that, of course, which is all good and well, but we've got artisans here that are making more than even graduates you wouldn't believe the kind of salaries that they earn because of the kind of work that they do, and they are really well incentivized that South Africans don't see it and appreciate it'*

*E4: 'And I find myself having to train the cleaners on how to be professional, how to do that job, because they get so comfortable, you know, they will tell the clients about their sick kids, their birthdays, their fighting, their spouses, and things like that.'*

The participants acknowledged a lack of skills amongst their employees, particularly the youth, and mentioned their displeasure with their educational system and the lack of knowledge about entrepreneurship. Research indicates that individuals' entrepreneurial abilities and education significantly influence their professional advancement and contribute to the development of employable skills (Mittal & Raghuvaram, 2021). Participant E4 further elaborated,

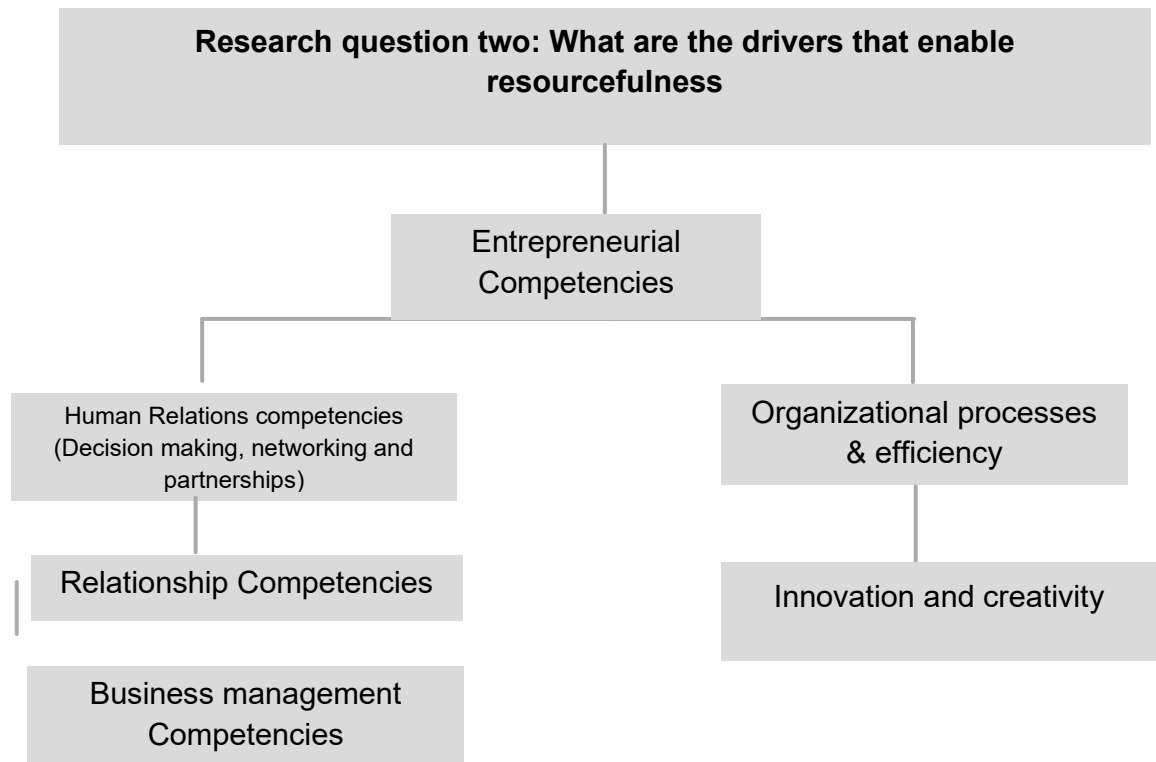
*'Give information, teach people, educate people. To be honest with you. I think for me personally, I would say that from the high school, the only things that I knew is be a nurse, to be a teacher or to be a police. No one was saying you can actually open your own business, because it wasn't even part of the curriculum. So at early stage education they need to incorporate entrepreneurship, I think that would help people'.*

*'I personally feel this, my personal view, that the environment is not conducive, and especially for rural entrepreneurs the information is not easily accessible'*

### **5.3. Results of research question two**

#### **Research question two: What are the drivers that enable resourcefulness:**

The aim of this research question was to establish the different types of drivers that enable resourcefulness in entrepreneurs. Questions five and six seek to answer this question, for which it was important to establish the creative and out of the box ideas that the entrepreneurs have come up with to solve some of their problems, the question further seeks to understand if there are any proactive solutions that were used in the process. The research question was also interested in understanding the methods or processes involved in running the business efficiently, as well as the people that assisted in achieving the goal. The themes that have emerged are represented in Fig 4.



#### **5.3.1.1. Entrepreneurial Competencies**

Entrepreneurial competencies are the skills that an entrepreneur should have to run a successful enterprise. Leadership is one of the prominent skills in any organisation, including in SMMEs. The leaders have influence, because with influence there is no leadership, and a leader has a goal or a destination which he directs his followers to. Therefore, as expected the business to survive and reach a set goal there needs to be leadership.

#### **5.3.1.2. Human Relations Competencies**

The interviews generated holistic and rich insights into various functions played by the owner within a business. Decision making, networking and partnerships are the most prominent types of entrepreneurial competencies that the entrepreneurs employ in their business, the findings also gave insight into interesting emergent sub themes within human relations category which are explored in depth in the following sections:

Table 4: Outlines the main emergent themes of Entrepreneurial competencies.

Overarching Theme	Themes	Frequency Themes
Entrepreneurial Competencies	Decision making	9
	• Profit Driven decision making	1
	Business management competencies	9
	Relationship Competencies	9
	Long term strategic thinking	5
	Innovative problem solving	4
<b>Entrepreneurial Competencies Total</b>		<b>37</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>37</b>

### 5.3.1.3. Decision making

Many business owners were required to make consistent decisions in their businesses, responded E1 who runs a property management business is constantly faced with making insurmountable decisions that could change the trajectory of his business, and he says,

*And what I also found is, sometimes we make decisions on situations and sometimes you don't. You don't have to do that, because when you take time to think through, you are able to find alternatives*

A significant number of respondents also said that their decision making process has changed over the years of running the business, responded E12 said that in her service station she used to give her employees verbal warnings and this was not acknowledge and the same type of behaviour recurred, she therefore made a decision that going forward she will give a written verbal warning to ensure that there is accountability from both parties. She indicated that she had to change the way she runs her business and put in more formal and strict processes. While some of the entrepreneurs took the decision to put strict processes, some of the entrepreneurs empowered their employees to take decisions especially of those that are within their level, responded E6 said,

*'In my construction business, you will find from the group, someone will just emerge automatically to be a supervisor. And if it happens like that, it means there is less headache for me, I don't have a headache in terms of listen to it. So because it's them who generated the process, then it becomes easier for them to work with the person'*

#### **5.3.1.4. Relationship Competencies**

When entrepreneurs were asked about the people or organisations that assisted them into ensuring that their businesses were running efficiently, they all referred to the relationships, networks and partnerships. Some of them indicated that they have seen great benefits to the relationships that they have with the government, although they have been labelled 'tenderpreneurs'.

*But like I said, there's also heavily leaning into what our government provide, and that can be in terms of resources, sometimes inputs and things like that. I absolutely love our government*

One respondent also indicated that managing relationship can also be a costly exercise, as there is an expectation to be available when required, he said,

*E13: You need to be resourceful in that you need to manage relationships. Managing relations. Sometimes will cost money. Sometimes, going on that golf day is important as you attending your wife's, attending your partners or your business partners, child's birthday or baby shower, that's an important distribution of resources.*

*E3: 'People are not constantly going to call you. Then I had to start looking for business. I had to, I had to build relationships. So that has been the way that I've been running my business must be to build a good, solid relationship with the with your client'*

Other respondents also indicated that they had to lean on the family members or friends for assistance with money, or to be able to make ends meet. One responded said that when his business was starting up there were times where they used the wife's salary to pay salaries of their workers. Respondent E2 further corroborated and said,

*'So, we have to be very resourceful, asking family and friends for money, asking our network of people for money. I mean, we are still doing that, even now, when we find ourselves without cash flow and we need, like, a 10k or to buy things or pay salaries. And you know, these are very hard topics to discuss, especially when we like to talk about the success stories, and we really shy away from being vulnerable topics and telling the truth of the business that it really is not an easy walk the road to walk.'*

Another respondent said that relationship building and networking is paramount in entrepreneurship. He further said it is not just about opportunity identification, but it is about the social skills and social ability to extract more information from the potential customer and present a solution that they want.

While the relationships, networks and partnership enable the entrepreneur to efficiently run their business, other respondents said they help others even when it is not reciprocated.

*E6: 'Whether you help me or not, I will help you because where I come from, there are people who helped me to get to where It has inspired me'*

#### **5.3.1.5. Business Management Competencies**

Throughout the entrepreneurial resourcefulness literature, innovation and problem solving are the most dealt with subjects. The ability for an entrepreneur to be competitive in the market they must be innovative, and they also need to be able to solve other people's problems. The range of participants gave a diverse but highly rich content to address the subject of innovative problem solving.

One of the respondents who started her business in high school, narrates how she had the desire to be able to buy herself things, but due to the limited resources she became innovative, she attended a multiracial school while her sister attended school in the township has introduced her to some snacks, and immediately she saw a business opportunity, as these snacks were not sold at her school. She also understood her target which were kids which were kids at multiracial school, therefore she priced the product at double the price that it was sold in the township. She therefore not only did she solve a problem, but she had an innovative pricing strategy.

Most of the respondents showed how their problem-solving ability and innovativeness set them apart from others,

*E2: We have found that, even though we were not able to raise capital, or, have funds in the beginning, but we were able to be resourceful by entering*

*this competition that really gave us a network, because we now, knew CFOs, we knew the radio station, and we were given a banker that was able to help us on how to get finance, and then we were able to get a car. And so even though the journey has been hard, I think that there's smart ways to be able to climb up the ladder, which is something that we hadn't done in our previous businesses, and putting ourselves falling short of success because we didn't really have that opportunity that we found ourselves having.'*

Another respondent said that their service station has captured the taxi guys market in their area, they created a relationship of trust with them. Whereby the taxi drivers are allowed to fill up a full tank of petrol in the morning and come back during the day when they have made enough money to pay for it. She also mentioned that they started promotions at the service station whereby anyone who fill up for more than six hundred and fifty rand stands a chance to win a sheep or an air fryer, these types of innovative ideas attract customers.

#### **5.3.1.6. Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability**

An emergent theme that came out of research question two, is how employee wellness and job satisfaction contributed the entrepreneur's ability to drive resourcefulness. The greatest number of respondents said that when employees are secured in their jobs they are willing to go an extra mile. This has been seen as a extrinsic factor that the entrepreneurs benefit from. Most of the respondents said words like 'keep you employees happy, and you will see the fruits. Another entrepreneur said

*E2: I care a lot more about the people than I do about the profit. I am more a people's driven person, yeah, so that's what I would call myself. I care that the next person is comfortable, that I care about how my employees came to work*

*E3: So, for me, my core business is my people, the staff members, have allowed me to live the quality of life that I live.*

*E1: And so, we are still in a very big case study, we are still that business that's trying to prove that you can be profitable even by looking after people. And it's still a journey. So, we're still in there, we're still doing our research.*

#### **5.3.1.7. Organisational processes and efficiency**

The ability to iterate a process to improve it gives the entrepreneurs a competitive advantage, enabling them to adjust swiftly to market fluctuations. The continuous process

of aligning resources and capabilities to gain market advantage and respond to market dynamics is a factor of entrepreneurial resourcefulness.

The interview continued to highlight the need for entrepreneurs get access to information so they can be able to exercise continuous improvement in their business which gives entrepreneurs the ability to allocate resources efficiently, adapt to market changes and manage risks. The owner of a film catering business responded E3 said that she had the privilege of being given an opportunity to take part in an Enterprise development program, EDP program where she learnt about food safety, personal protective equipment (PPE), food costing. She was reminded that in her business before she joins the EDP program she had been using her grandmothers costing model, which had a lot of limitations.

Other entrepreneurs performed continuous improvement by training their employees, respondent E4 said

*'I must continuously remind them guys, remember, this is a professional workplace, guys remember, this is how we treat ourselves. Guys, remember, this is not our home. Remember, our clients are not our friends'*

While a continuous improvement process might seem to only focus on improving what is available, one responded said that she adjusted her hiring strategies, and she fired a lot of her employees to reduce theft and improve employee reliability.

### **5.3.2. Innovation and creativity**

Entrepreneurs' ability to use limited resources creatively to differentiate themselves in the market, and the ability to turn what is considered useless, useful. Most of the entrepreneurs have shown signs of being creative with what they had and using it to their own advantage and to make a living. Respondent E9 said that when his business was confronted by the pandemic COVID 19, he had to find creative ways to maximize on what he had, He said that after COVID 19 pandemic when lock downs were uplifted, he had to go back to his business and analyse how could he practice the art of frugality, conserving the resources that he had. One of the things that came up is that all the customers deliveries were not charged regardless of the size of the order. He therefore amended his delivery terms, implementing that deliveries will only be made within three days this allows them to group deliveries based on the area, and only customers who order above a certain size will get their deliveries for free.

Another entrepreneur also in response to the pandemic, she started supplying masks to corporates, and she said she used her last one thousand rand that was in her account, and through this she landed two contract for big corporates, and to be able to fulfil the order she reached out and outsourced the mask making, she further said *'we saw that we could adapt to the situation and be resourceful. And, we had to be agile, like change quickly.'*

Another entrepreneur said that while she was in high school and running her snacks business, she was selling the chips for eight cents, and most of the kids would pay using one rand, and she didn't want the twenty cents to go back to them, she then decided to buy a packet of sweets, so whenever someone buys her chips instead of giving them twenty cents change she would give them a sweet instead.

During the interview one of the entrepreneurs also pivoted their business to provide alternative solutions and changed their business model, E13 said

*'Then we said, let's move to the supply of uniform. And that's how we started textiles, and we started producing security uniforms for ourselves. We're cutting costs, but now we can even supply for the others, and we can create facilities, because we're buying bulk. And the interesting part is that most people in the in the security industry, they wear trousers or skirts that even children in high school wear, so that broadens our target market.'*

#### **5.4. Results of research question three**

##### **Research question three: What are the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs?**

The aim of the research question was to understand the driving factors that are involved to ensure survival of the entrepreneur as well as their businesses. It is imperative to understand what and how business can survive since It is still reported that between 70% and 80% of small businesses fail within the first five years, furthermore only 1% of the micro enterprises that started with less than 5 people have grown to only employ 10 or more employees.

The research question probed the participants to provide insight of the setbacks that they had as businesses and how they have managed to survive these setbacks. The questions further explore the support system that exist for the entrepreneurs, as some of the participants indicated that entrepreneurship can be a lonely journey. The often-overlooked skills set that is required by entrepreneurs, is also investigated in this research question. Deep and rich insights were uncovered when the participants were asked about their awareness of the environment of business they participate in, how the setbacks contributed to this awareness, and lastly the participants were asked to share what are the ‘don’t do lessons’, were some of the entrepreneurs said each person’s journey is different and the only way to learn is go through it. The emergent themes are represented diagrammatical in Fig 5

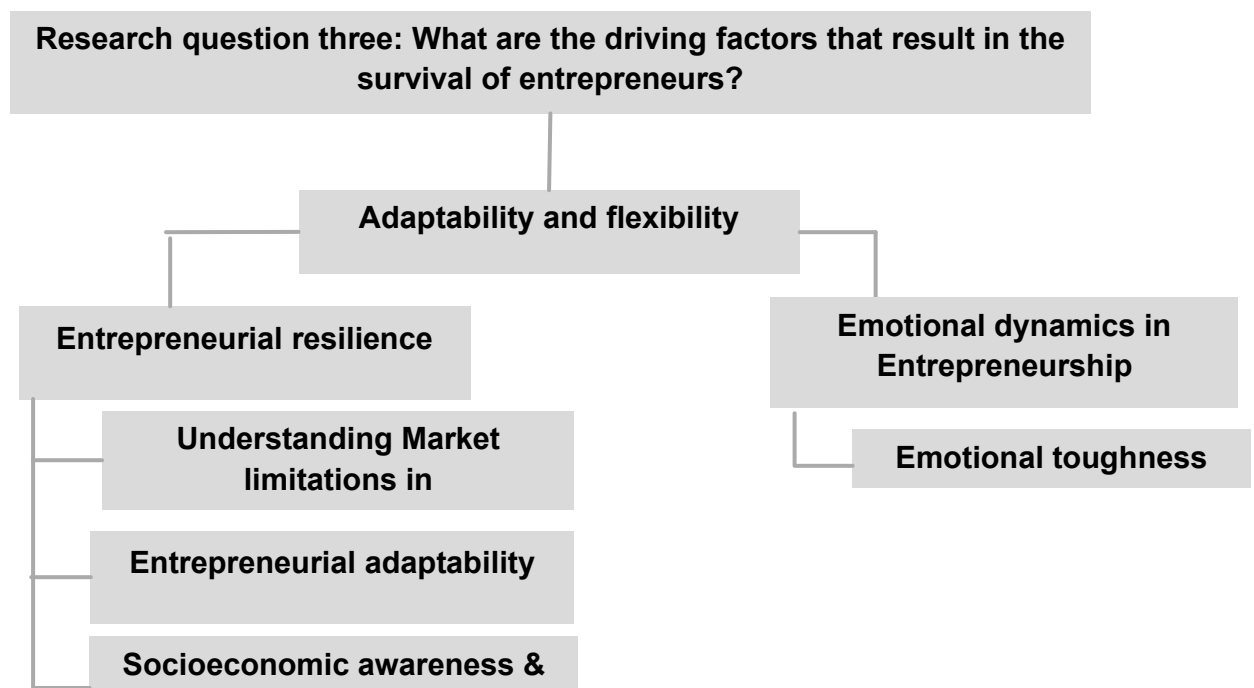


Figure 5: *Research question three Theme mapping (Authors own compilation)*

### 5.4.1. Adaptability and flexibility

It is a well-known saying that it is the survival of the strongest, but in entrepreneurship it is not enough to be strong, the survival of businesses is determined by those who are able to scan the environment, interpret the patterns in the environment and adapt accordingly over time. Therefore, adaptability is key to the success of any business, considering that businesses operate in uncertain environments and the outcomes are unpredictable.

Problem solving is also a tool that enables entrepreneurs' survival, an entrepreneur who has identified a challenge and systematically analyses the cause and deploys innovative solutions to the problem, practices problem solving. The participants who were able to do this, showed optimized business processes and competitive advantage

Table 5: Outlines the main emergent themes of Strategic positioning

Overarching Theme	Themes	Count of Code
Adaptation & flexibility	Understanding Market limitations in entrepreneurship	4
	Survival Business Strategies	1
	Socioeconomic awareness	1
	Entrepreneurial adaptability	2
Adaptation & flexibility Total		8
Grand Total		8

#### 5.4.1.1. Understanding market limitations in entrepreneurship

The understanding of the environment of business that the entrepreneur operates on is of vital importance, without this understanding the entrepreneur is not able to identify market opportunities, create innovative products and market them. The participants provided compelling insight on how understanding the market and its limitations has enabled them to device strategic decision to grow their businesses

The participants talked about how it is important that when crisis hit is to be able to say 'how can I solve it' and 'how can I reach the specific target market'. Another responded quoted Winston Churchill 'never waste a good crises' and she further elaborated that when written in Chinese it is crisis equals danger and opportunity.

The entrepreneur was able to read the market, and even in constrained environment some of the participants we able to make money, responded E2 said,

*'In 2021 myself and my sister had so much stock in the warehouse. It was December period. It was a lockdown, hard lockdown. I remember at the time, they had even banned South Africa from traveling to the US and all sorts of things, and we had so much stock in the warehouse and no money in the bank. And so, we sat down. I remember that December we had nothing in the bank, and we had just asked for a loan, and they declined the finance request.*

*And we said maybe we need to open up the warehouse to the public or community in Pretoria. Maybe we go door to door and knock and talk about us. So we put a couple of adverts together, we put ourselves on social media, and we invited the community to come. And you know what we thought was going to be quite small. I mean, it was small at the time. 200 people supported us, 200 people came through to the warehouse, and we made over 250,000 rands in space of three days,'*

But not all entrepreneurs were able to read the environment, one of the entrepreneurs interviewed had been supplying the beer and laundry detergent market. During COVID 19 when the hard restrictions were imposed, he did not pivot quickly enough to alternative markets, and only when the harsh lockdown were imposed, he started sourcing for sanitizers, and masks to sell. But his efforts were delayed, as he made a loss from these transactions and it put his business in a financial strain, He further said once he had found himself in that situation he had to accept and device a plan,

*This is what I'm facing. Once you've got a plan, even if it's not the plan that you would like, but you come with a realistic plan, then at least if you are able to execute that plan, it gives you at least some sleep. You can get some sleep if you have decided this is my situation, and this is how I'm going to live now based upon this situation, when you're still thinking about, if you're not coming into decision, it frustrates you.*

#### 5.4.1.2. Entrepreneurial adaptability

Resilience is described as the capacity to recover from adversity and to progress positively thereafter. Resilience and adaptability are essential strategies employed by entrepreneurs to address challenges and maintain sustained drive in the face of adversities. The interviews illustrated the participants' resilience in overcoming the challenges they encountered.

One participant, who operates a woven basket business, recounted her journey into entrepreneurship through the creation of origami sculptures, which she learned from a roommate. What began as a hobby became beloved by her consumers; she showcased her product at a market and sold out. She recognized that her clients appreciated the product's sustainability feature, despite her prior inexperience about sustainability. At the subsequent market, a new product was introduced: woven baskets constructed from PVC pipes discarded at waste disposal sites. Her capacity to adapt to market changes and comprehend the market has positioned her business on a growth trajectory.

Entrepreneurial resilience enables the mind to perceive setbacks not as ends but rather as opportunities to be discovered. One speaker discussed the necessity of adapting to prevailing market conditions and the importance of resilience for fostering innovation and market expansion. He stated,

*You don't set market conditions. You are not in that position, when you have monopoly, you can then set market conditions and say, going forward, this is how things are going to be participated. And for now, when in Rome you do as the Romans do.*

*Once you realize that the option is not the same as it is for others. You just must proceed, but quitting is the easier part, that's the easy way out. But how long do you do that for? You just have to say, okay, it's not efficient or it is not working. Let me continue with what I have. The good part is that you always stick to what you know is your core function.*

### 5.4.1.3. Socioeconomic awareness & Survival business strategies

The success of an entrepreneur is a dynamic process it does not occur in isolation, but rather it is a dynamic process that is influenced by the social environment as well as the economic conditions. Consequently, socioeconomic awareness is intrinsically linked to the survival of a business. The awareness of the socioeconomic environment enables the entrepreneur to navigate challenges, be innovative and prepare for future growth of the business. There were no significant insights that were drawn from this theme, but rather what stood out is the relevance of socioeconomic awareness with the theme understanding market limitations in entrepreneurship, therefore respondents exhaustively spoke on this theme also covered the socioeconomic awareness.

About survival business strategies, the respondent talked about the implementation of cost management strategies to reduced overhead cost. The respondent talked about creating operational flexibility, which enables agility within the business. Another respondent said that at her service station the employees are all-rounders:

*E:12 'Everybody at my service station is an all-rounder, but like my cashiers, they can hook the pipe and can also be petrol attendants. Same thing with my supervisors, also myself. When I'm at the service station, I become a cashier. The cashier goes outside and becomes a petrol attendant, or I can be a petrol attendant.'*

Survival strategies also mean austerity measures, cost efficiency was highlighted by the participants, one entrepreneur said that they had to sell off company card because the business was not making money and no new business was coming through. Another respondent said 'if you are scared of a debit order bouncing, then entrepreneurship is not for you'. This was further corroborated by respondent E6 who said that she had to move money from one account to another to avoid debit orders so she can be able to pay salaries.

### 5.4.2. Emotional dynamics in Entrepreneurship

Emotions refer to a range of psychological responses or feelings that the entrepreneur have experienced in their journey. These responses have a role to play on how the entrepreneur responds to their employees, the decision that they make and their leadership style.

### 5.4.3. Emotional toughness

The capability of entrepreneurs to navigate the uncharted territories of the business landscape, comprising of setbacks, emotional fluctuations, and high-pressure environments. Consequently, entrepreneurs' resilience and ability to recover from significant setbacks might have detrimental effects, as they often hide their emotions and receive minimal or no help during their journey. Emotional resilience also pertains to self-regulation, when an entrepreneur has acquired the ability to manage their emotions and utilize them to facilitate better decision-making.

The participants spoke about the roller coaster of emotions that they must undergo, and at most times they go through it alone. One responded who runs her own bakery said,

*'Entrepreneurship, it's facing two types of emotions on a daily basis. You switch from negative to positive. That's how hectic it is, euphoria and something literally, that shifts, you know, between, between the two.'*

Another responded mentioned that he became desensitised to rejection, there was a emotional detachment in making business decisions.

*'I became desensitized, rejected, Once you become desensitized to rejection, one will reject me, but I I'm also a person someone must deserve me out there somewhere. And that gave me resilience, even in business, because business is, asking out, of course, that way, yeah, and that you, you this person will come from a different world than you are coming from.'*

Few participants when asked about becoming an entrepreneur and whether they would chose it again, so spoke about the challenges that come with entrepreneurship and they

are inflexible and not adaptable they would not be able to undergo this journey, one respondent said,

*'When it comes to opportunities and inconsistency, I would say no to entrepreneurship, because business is so inconsistent, sometimes you have a good month or good days, and sometimes you can go try for another six months and there is nothing.'*

### **5.5. Results of research question four**

#### **Research question four: How does your experience as an entrepreneurs inform the proclivity to being resourceful?**

The aim of the research question is to establish how the experience, prior experience as well as current experience influence the entrepreneur's resourceful capacity. Many participants indicated that their journey has been characterised by challenges, uncertainty, high pressure, restricted resources and failed ventures. All these experiences according to the findings have fostered a profound proclivity for resourcefulness.

The questions asked on the research question attempted to understand how the entrepreneurs can make means or do little with less. The participants were asked about the time when they had no resources but there was continuity in the business, what are some of the behaviours they displayed and there were rich insights about whether resourcefulness is an inherent skill or learnt skill. Fig. 6, illustrates the emerging themes from the analysis.

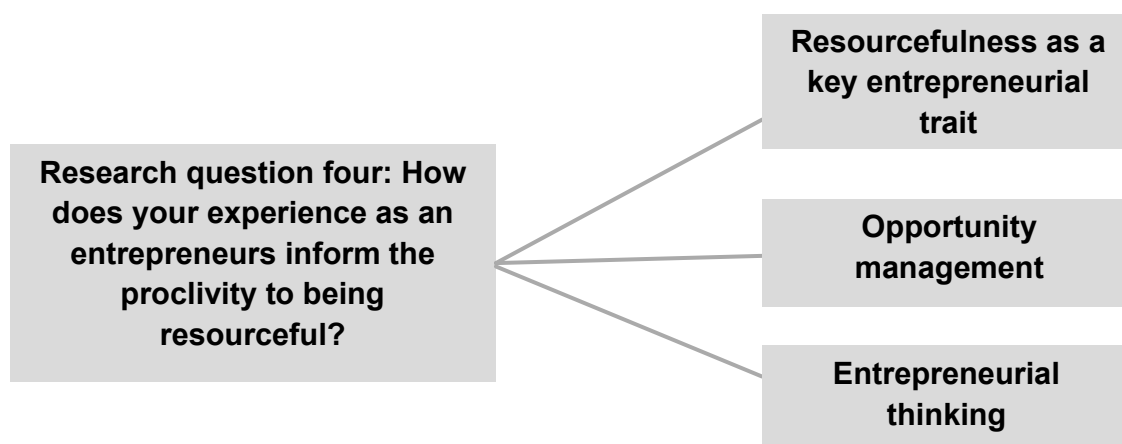


Figure 6: *Research question four Theme mapping (Authors own compilation)*

### **5.5.1.Resourcefulness as a key entrepreneurial trait**

Resourcefulness has been revered as one of the integral traits for entrepreneurs. Resourceful entrepreneurs can create something from nothing, sometimes being resourceful can mean the entrepreneurs have to deviate from established norms or be unconventional to be resourceful. Resourcefulness encompasses adaptability, agility, leveraging networks and collaborations, strategic resource allocation, opportunity recognition, drive for growth. It is not just a skill but rather a mindset.

There is a coherence among other themes that have been discussed in the previous questions, the adaptability and problem-solving theme in research question three displayed the skills that the participants enacted when they were faced with adversity. When respondent E1 was faced with the challenge as a teenager of having to share resources with other family member, he decided to pivot, and after recognizing the need in his school where some of the students were not doing their homework, he offered to do it for them at a fee, and when he grew up he became a DJ on weekends, but due to his study commitments he got his cousin to do it for him, and he would drop him off at the venue and pick him up.

The speed of responding to market changes is also an inherent resourcefulness trait, most respondents talked about the sense of urgency being paramount in an entrepreneur's life. One respondent said during the COVID 19 pandemic, their business was selling non-essential items, and therefore during the pandemic they could not continue, but because they are entrepreneurs and resourceful at heart, they decided to start selling PPE, which at the time the president had not announced masks as a mandatory. And because they were already dealing with large customers like the retailers, they targeted them as their customers for masks, and this exercise of agility and resourcefulness made them five hundred thousand in less than three weeks.

The entrepreneurs also mentioned how leveraging networks and partnerships has driven their business growth. Research question one, which talks about the inherent characteristics of an entrepreneur and research question two which deals with the drivers that enable resourcefulness, have also addressed the power of leveraging networks,

partnerships and collaborations. One of the respondents said that they are a good network, and the diverse nature of his networks has determined his net worth.

### **5.5.2. Opportunity management**

The interviews provided rich insight into opportunity management and how it informs the proclivity to resourcefulness. Opportunity management involves the identification of the opportunity, and this process is usually a proactive approach that entrepreneurs have honed the skill to be able to look at a situation and ask the question 'how can I make this better'. Once the opportunity is identified, the entrepreneur evaluates its feasibility and the rate of return (ROI), some entrepreneurs don't evaluate the risk beforehand, they evaluate the result. The woven basket business, which has grown in the past five years and now they sell their products to markets outside of South Africa, the owner indicated that the accidental identification of the opportunity to sell to direct market, which was different to their initial business model which their distribution channel was to wholesalers, has positively increased their revenue, she said

*'Because we were resourceful, because we saw an opportunity, and we kind of were creative with it, and now it's expanded and creating such a big, outcome for us and then, we've tripled our revenue just in one year, because of this model. And we're preparing for the factory scale of the last in December now. And we know for sure, guaranteed that 4 million or more will be maintained. And it started from just a crisis.'*

While for another entrepreneur loadshedding sparked an opportunity, she runs a bakery, and the effects of loadshedding are detrimental to this type of business. In the quest for business continuity, she decided to find another place where she can bake, but she ensured that they loadshedding schedules of her two places were complementing each other, when one area is being load-sheded the other has electricity. And this is how she has managed to sustain her business even during adversity.

### **5.5.3. Entrepreneurial thinking**

The very nature of entrepreneurs is synonymous with creativity, problem solving, risk taking, breaking boundaries. Therefore, throughout this research the fundamental trait that entrepreneurs have is the out of the box thinking, curiosity, and bravery. They do not only think creatively to turn ideas into products, but they also are able to create something from nothing. Build up adaptive strategies and they are continuously iterating and pivoting based on the feedback and changing environment.

Most of the entrepreneurs that were interviewed spoke about the restrained financial resources, and lack of information. Even though they mentioned these challenges, through their resourcefulness they had managed learn from the failures, and one participant said, it is important to take advantage of the available credit facility, but also to use it correctly. He further went on to say 'use other people's money to grow your business'. Another participant echoed these sentiments and said, 'borrow when you balance book is positive'. These are all classified as entrepreneurial thinking, they breakaway from the traditional way of thinking and encourage exploring new approaches.

## **5.6. Summary of Findings**

### **5.6.1. Summary of finding for Research question one**

The findings from study question one provides deep understanding into the intrinsic traits that contribute to the emergence of an entrepreneur, with the predominant theme being an entrepreneurial mindset and resilience. The foundational traits that precede this mindset are the entrepreneur's past and present influences, which, according to the studies, emerge from self-reliance, self-preservation, and similar factors.

Additional notable findings relate to entrepreneurial motivation, particularly the ability of entrepreneurs to remain driven during periods of uncertainty. The findings provided valuable insights into the innovative and unconventional tactics employed by entrepreneurs to leverage available resources.

Resilience emerged as a significant trait in the research, enabling individuals to adapt, innovate, and optimize their limited resources. The trait of resilience among entrepreneurs,

as indicated by the research, has enabled them to overcome difficulties with outcomes that are often unforeseen. One of the main challenges that entrepreneurs encountered was access to funds and knowledge, as well as a lack in manual skills among their staff. Despite the rising unemployment rate in South Africa, the findings illuminate the lack of appreciation and accountability among those who are granted opportunities. The results indicate the traits that entrepreneurs have developed to foster innovation and expand their enterprises, which can be seen as a manifestation of resourcefulness.

### **5.6.2. Summary of finding for Research question two**

All things considered; the second research question revealed insightful information on the factors allowing entrepreneurs to be resourceful. The key conclusions from the research were the participants engaged in different drivers that shaped them into business owners and entrepreneurs. These elements are classified as strategic position, leadership, and delegation. Three key functions under leadership and delegation have arisen: innovative problem-solving, networking and collaboration, and strategic decision-making. While on the strategic positioning, organizational processes and efficiency, innovation and creativity were the main elements that surfaced.

Under leadership and delegation, the participants acknowledged that the ability to network and collaborate with others has been a main driver in the company coupled with innovative problem solving, this skill has enabled them to find resourceful ways to remain competitive even with limited resources. Regarding the most essential skills used, several of the participants said that innovation and creativity was valuable; others said that networks and teamwork were so. Together, these factors help the entrepreneur to turn into a very resourceful and competitive individual.

### **5.6.3. Summary of finding for Research question three**

In summary research question three generated rich insights into the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs, by reoccurrence of some themes it confirmed their relevance. In general adaptability was considered the most significant driver to survival of a entrepreneur, since many of the entrepreneurs narrated stories of how being adaptable and agile has enabled them to pivot in their businesses. The entrepreneurs indicated that the

understanding of the market limitations play a big role in ensuring adaptability since most of them participated in uncertain environments.

The emotional dynamics within entrepreneurship has also been downplayed in entrepreneurship research conducted. In most cases the respondents spoke of the emotional roller coaster that entrepreneurship, even though they cite the freedom and flexibility that entrepreneurship provides, some said if they knew the inconsistencies, and the unpredictability of entrepreneurship, they would have not chosen path.

And some other findings in relation to emotional dynamics, is some individuals became desensitised, they detached their emotions from business. To a certain extent have lost the sense of humanness, because they indicate that business has no emotions. Overall, the ability to be adaptable and emotionally tough in business has led to some of the businesses survival.

#### **5.6.4. Summary of findings for research question four**

The main findings that emerged from this question is the participants developed resourceful traits. The resourcefulness traits were inclusive of an entrepreneur being able to identify opportunities, find creative and innovative ways to solve everyday problems, have the entrepreneurial thinking mindset. The aim of research question four was to how the entrepreneurs experience assists in being resourceful, the question also drew from the previous questions themes and reiterated them on how the entrepreneurs managed to do more with less.

#### **5.7. Conclusion**

The results from the twelve interviews conducted are presented in this chapter, the overarching themes were illustrated diagrammatically on Fig1. The frequency of the mentions throughout the interviews were collated and categorised as themes. The findings in this chapter generated rich insights into understanding the phenomena of entrepreneurial resourcefulness in South Africa. The unlimited variation purposive sampling allowed for a broad range of view and experiences.

The findings of ER also revealed the tendency of some entrepreneurs to resourcefulness than others. This chapter also highlighted that six of the entrepreneurs were able to grow because of ER, while the other were able to survive.

The next chapter will discuss the implications of the findings in connection to prior relevant literature.

## **6. Chapter six: Discussion of Results**

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the research findings about entrepreneurial resourcefulness among business owners in South Africa. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with business owners, employing an entirely inductive research approach. Consequently, the research questions presented in Chapter Three served as a framework to structure the discussion in this chapter. The themes and codes from Chapter Five will be examined in detail concerning the research questions. The results will be analysed in conjunction with the literature review presented in Chapter Two. The study's findings enrich the existing research and elucidate how entrepreneurs in South Africa might leverage resources to expand and sustain their businesses.

### **6.1. Discussion for Research Question one: What are the inherent characteristics that lead to the emergence of an entrepreneur?**

The primary objective of research question one is to identify what characteristics, traits and behaviors required or develop to be resourceful. To answer question one an understanding of the participants background and influence was established. Then the question wanted to further understand the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs and what behavioral characteristics and skills they used to handle these challenges. This approach enabled for the enactment of these characteristics and behaviors.

#### **6.1.1. Participants background, motivation and influence**

While most participants were established business owners who have been operation for more than five years, when asked about their influence and motivation, most of the participants pointed back to how they were brought up, the influence of family and parents has played a big role into them becoming entrepreneurs. The participants indicated characteristics of their parents or family members that they adopted or learnt and have played a pivotal role in their entrepreneurship life.

The research identified the role and influence background plays in creating a resourceful entrepreneur, the results revealed that those entrepreneurs who had role models and influencers in their life growing up, they were afforded the opportunity to learn while they

were still young. These entrepreneurs showed high levels of self-reliance, influence, opportunism. The research also identified a characteristic of self-preservation while this characteristic can manifest itself as a survival skills, some entrepreneurs showed signs of being authoritarian in their leadership approach because they are trying to self-preserve.

Two participants that were interviewed did not mention the influence of family members, they did not mention the significance influence from their family members but mentioned people outside their family circle who influenced them. The findings of the participants background and influence is inconclusive since the participants were not probed on the question of the role that background and influence played in their entrepreneurial journey.

It is axiomatic in literature on entrepreneurial resourcefulness (ER) that it has mainly focused on the resource constraints and how the entrepreneur perceives the potential value of opportunities and productivity of these resources (Malsch et al., 2023). The literature does not recognise the influences and background that entrepreneurs have or had to be able to operate in a resource constrained environment. Williams et al. (2021) suggest that future research should investigate resourcefulness, namely the application of political ability and influence to shape shared meaning with others in pursuit of specific objectives. Research indicates that businesses with political connections to military officials were more effectively positioned to secure funding for their activities. Williams et al. (2021) advocate for additional research on how entrepreneurs utilize the acumen to determine the appropriate persuasion methods for specific situations.

Literature acknowledges that entrepreneurial role models is a phenomenon in existence for a long time, their influence and characteristics is limited in academics. Research states that individuals' decisions to engage in specific behaviours are typically impacted by the behaviours and opinions of others (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). When an individual aligns themselves with a great role model, they are motivated to emulate that person; numerous entrepreneurs assert that their company ventures were shaped by others. Parental role models significantly influence children's propensity to become entrepreneurs (Akerlof & Kranton, 2000). The research findings from the evaluated literature illustrated the impact of entrepreneurs' backgrounds on their decision to pursue entrepreneurship and fostering of resourcefulness characteristics.

### **6.1.2. Entrepreneurial independence, self-efficacy**

Several respondents indicated that they established businesses to attain independence. The study revealed that certain individuals' entrepreneurial journeys arose from a desire for more, a desire for influence, and the identification of opportunities. Most participants who aspired towards independence functioned as a precursor to opportunity identification. In other instances, the participants' aspiration for influence not only facilitated the identification of opportunities but also enabled them to attract a following of clients, suppliers, and supporters.

The studied literature on resourcefulness characterizes entrepreneurship as 'the pursuit of opportunities outside controlled resources' (Malsch et al., 2023). Osadolor et al. (2021) acknowledge that self-efficacy is a significant psychological trait influencing intention and is a crucial component of entrepreneurship. This component acknowledges that the aspiration for independence serves as a motivating force for individuals to pursue entrepreneurship. The studied literature acknowledges that independence entails the capacity to make autonomous decisions and operate a business without external influence (Shava & Chinyamurindi, 2019, as cited in Osadolor et al., 2021). In commercial environments such as Nigeria, help is offered to young adults to initiate their own enterprises, hence fostering self-confidence in entrepreneurial endeavours (Ifeanyi, 2014).

The research findings in the study corroborated certain conclusions in the entrepreneurial self-efficacy literature, indicating that persons with elevated entrepreneurial self-efficacy are inclined to nurture their desire to exercise control, influence, attain goals, and identify ways of achieving them. The research findings elaborated on the existing literature, indicating that entrepreneurs with a drive for independence and influence were better positioned to discover opportunities, leverage relationships, and ultimately build their enterprises.

### **6.1.3. Entrepreneurial Orientation**

The research findings in Table 2 illustrate the characteristics of proactiveness, risk-taking, and resilience. The research findings indicate that business owners addressed limits and obstacles by demonstrating resilience, undertaking risks (predominantly calculated), and

adopting a proactive approach. They observed instances when they had to navigate the business journey alone, devoid of help. Additionally, certain participants exhibited self-motivation to confront problems and ambiguity within their surroundings.

Several business owners indicated that in the absence of accessible funding, they opted to take risks or proactively utilized their personal investments to realize their aspirations.

Others indicated that the absence of financial resources did not dissuade them from pursuing their ventures; rather, they sought funding from family and friends to realize their aspirations.

Literature on entrepreneurial orientation (EO) acknowledges a direct association between EO and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI). For any entrepreneur to initiate a business, intention is essential, and entrepreneurial resilience is a crucial factor for entrepreneurial orientation. The examined literature indicates that entrepreneurial orientation (EO) can be attained through environmental scanning for possibilities, and when organizations embrace the associated risks, they enhance their competitiveness (Isichei et al., 2020). Moreover, literature underscores the significance of innovativeness, particularly the capacity to innovate across the company value chain. Kocak et al. (2017) conducted a study in Turkey that evaluated small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) and determined that innovation significantly impacts their performance. Additionally, White and Vila (2017) examined the entrepreneurial orientation (EO) of marketing strategies employed by U.S. firms entering Cuba, measuring this through new product development, and found a significant relationship. An organization capable of innovating in dynamic and uncertain situations can create a new market that provides novel products and services. The examined literature indicates that risk-taking in most organizations poses a challenge due to inadequate skills and resources necessary for effective decision-making. Certain academics have shown that risk-taking does not significantly affect an entrepreneur's success, whilst others have demonstrated that risk-taking influences risk-taking (Isichei et al., 2020).

The research findings indicated a substantial necessity for entrepreneurs to exhibit resilience, as they encounter multifaceted problems. Entrepreneurs affirmed the importance of maintaining motivation and a future-oriented perspective, particularly in times of adversity. The literature on entrepreneurial resilience corroborates research findings indicating that entrepreneurship entails elevated stress levels and uncertainty, resulting in a significant incidence of errors and misjudgements in decision-making; consequently,

entrepreneurs must perpetually adapt their strategies in response to market fluctuations. Fatoki (2018) asserts that resilience may be a catalyst for entrepreneurial success. This literature addresses the traits necessary for entrepreneurs to attain business growth; however, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the impact of entrepreneurial resilience on the success of SMMEs in South Africa, particularly given the high failure rate and poor performance of these enterprises in the region.

#### **6.1.4. Entrepreneurial challenges**

The research findings in Chapter 5 demonstrate the challenges that entrepreneurs face in the enterprises. The participants described access to funding, information on funding and access to markets as the major challenges they face. The financial resource constraints hinder the business ability to run their operations efficient and scale up. The Participants also referred to government's grants being a challenge, although some of reported good relations with the government.

Many participants reported scaling up as a challenge to business growth, there was a unanimous agreement amongst all entrepreneurs regarding the relationship between having access to financial resources and the ability to scale which reinforced what Clough et al (2019) studies showed. Post Covid-19 crises entrepreneurs diversified their businesses to be able to respond to changing needs of the environment and their consumers.

Invest of one's fund was an alternative that most businesses pursued, due to the frustration of bureaucracy and lack of urgency from the government agencies. While some respondents advised on learnt valuable financial lessons of borrowing when the balance book is positive. While scaling up is a challenge for most entrepreneurs, others stated lack of skilled labour even greater challenge. Lack of skilled labour regressed the entrepreneurs' efforts to growing the business. Some of the employees demonstrated no signs of proactiveness and willingness to learn.

The literature reinforced the challenges that entrepreneurs face, indicating that the deficiency in business knowledge and networks, inadequate support, insufficient training and education, and limited assistance characterises a business during periods of uncertainty (Kah et al., 2022).

In summary, the thematic analysis revealed two overarching characteristics that an entrepreneur should possess to manage uncertainty, be innovative, be resourceful and promote business growth.

## **6.2. Discussion for Research question two: What are the drivers that enable resourcefulness:**

Research question two sought to understand the drivers and behaviours that an entrepreneur needs to exhibit to be resourceful. Question six in the interview guide asked the respondents to provide creative and innovative ideas that they have come up with. The respondents were asked further question on what proactive solutions they came up and what were the outcomes of this behaviour, the skills that they learnt and whether these skills brought about awareness.

### **6.2.1. Entrepreneurial Competencies**

The need for entrepreneurial competencies emerged strongly in the twelve interviews. The entrepreneurs in possession of the required entrepreneurial skills reported experiencing growth in their business. The study demonstrated that strong leadership, decision making, human relations, business management competencies laid a strong foundation for business growth, which supports the studies that assertions that the performance of a business is highly influenced by the leader rather than the exogenous factors (Markam and Baron, 2003).

The entrepreneurial competencies in this study were categorised into human relations, relationship and business management competencies. The competencies in this study varied based on the type of business each entrepreneur was running. The finding in this study showed that even though the entrepreneurs were running different business there was commonality in the way they dealt with requirement of the basic competencies required to run a successful business. Business manager needed to implement strict and structured policies to be able to manage their employees, and their requirement style changed to attract skilled employees. Pulka et al (2021) elaborated that the skills and

competencies which include knowledge, capabilities are vital in the establishment, growth and sustainability of a business.

Furthermore, the other significant theme that emerged was that the entrepreneurs needed to form strategic relationship and partnership to attract investment and clientele. Some business owners the relationship they forged positioned them in a position of advantage and increasing their competitiveness. This further confirms the study which says entrepreneurs need strong relationships and partnerships that will attract and sustain clients (Kyndt & Baert, 2015; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

The research findings also confirm that innovation and creativity are an important factor for successful businesses, as well as the ability to anticipate opportunities in a complex business system is essential for business growth (Teece et al.,2016). The findings show the business owners demonstrating innovativeness ways to capture a market and maintain process efficiencies. This supports the notion that entrepreneurs who can identify and exploit opportunity have a propensity to be successful.

In summary, the main findings that emerged from research question two were that business owners of any size or industry employ entrepreneurial competencies to accelerate business growth and ensure efficiency in their business. The role of human relations competencies is important, given that the business or enterprise relies on the competency of the business for success. The research revealed that while the business owner is at the focal point, there is a greater requirement for the business owner to have a skilled workforce. For the business to be innovate it needs a skilled workforce, and this in turn create a competitive advantage for the business which it can capitalise on for profitability and growth.

### **6.3. Discussion for Research question three: What are the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs?**

Research questions three's aim was to understand what factors or elements that the lead to survival of the entrepreneur's business. Question eight on the interview guide asked the participants about the concept of making means will little, getting more out of little. It further probed what was the trigger for such behaviour.

### **6.3.1. Adaptability and flexibility**

In Chapter 5, it is mentioned that the survival of the is dependent on the ability to scan the environment, decode the patterns and adapt to the ever-changing markets. Adaptability in its very nature is a tool to resourcefulness. The research findings demonstrate that business owners have not learnt the skill to adapt, most of the business owners showed the lack of environmental scanning, this is evident among them for an example the crisis of Covid 19 on business owner E9 who failed to pivot or diversify his business during the pandemic. While some business owners through resourcefulness were able to pivot into alternative markets/ industries during Covid 19.

The literature on resourcefulness encompasses the concept of resilience and adaptation, for resourceful actors, and the research findings shows a several business owners who even when the entrepreneurial journey gets tough, they still opt for entrepreneurship over a corporate job. In support of Williams et al (2021) concept on resourcefulness, the business owners demonstrated resilience and the need to adapt and be innovative in prevailing market conditions and acknowledging that they don't set market conditions.

While literature lacks cohesion about adaptability and resilience, a key finding from the literature in the case of entrepreneurs who lacked the ability to be adaptive in times of crises, they ensured that they are intentionally diverse their businesses in order to be able to be prepared for any market changes.

The study found that when the business owners who understand the market limitations and are aware of the socioeconomic environment they operate in, they can anticipate opportunities better and exploit the relationships and partnerships that they have. The literature says markets are heavily reliant on the innovative qualities of the entrepreneurs (Rafiki et al., 2023), and the findings confirmed that when entrepreneurs are constrained, they enact innovativeness, and they practice the art of frugality to ensure that the resources are conserved and can be transformed into something more valuable. When entrepreneurs

apply effectual decision-making logic the performance of their business is elevated (Klenner et al., 2022).

Building on from research question two, on entrepreneurial competences, the research findings in research question three have demonstrated the entrepreneur's ability to be resourceful by perceiving the setbacks at play, not as an end but rather as an opportunity. Post Covid the entrepreneurs had no access to markets but through relationship and partnerships the entrepreneurs unlocked another level of innovation. Literature characterises entrepreneurs as innovators and magicians at times, the ability to create fresh new ideas or improving existing ones is synonymous with the with the findings of this research (Sachdev, 2023). Literature further states that such characteristics of resilience and adaptability result in a competitive edge and ability to take calculated risks.

In the summary the theme that emerged from research question three was the business owner practice of adaptability, flexibility and resilience to survive. Business owners are consistently faced with uncertainty, where they are required to make decision on outcomes that are unknown or that they cannot predict due to lack of skills and competencies. Therefore, the research findings for research question three, confirms that even in the absence of skills and knowledge entrepreneurs make do with the resources at hand and build characteristics of resilience and adaptability.

#### **6.4. Discussion for Research question four: How does your experience as an entrepreneurs inform the proclivity to being resourceful?**

Research question four aims to understand how the experience of an entrepreneur brings about resourceful, are nascent entrepreneurs more resourceful than the experienced entrepreneurs. It further seeks to understand if resourcefulness can be learnt or is it an inherent behaviour.

In Chapter five the outcomes of the research showed across the different research questions a strong link amongst the different theme, which culminate to give a resourceful entrepreneur. The results of research question four uncovered that resourcefulness is a vital trait that all entrepreneurs should have. The entrepreneurs in this study when faced

with challenges in their environment they practiced agility by transforming their business to be aligned with the market changes, other entrepreneurs have engaged in promoting sustainable products to contributing to the sustainability goals of South Africa.

#### **6.4.1.Resourcefulness as a key entrepreneurial trait**

The research findings demonstrated that the entrepreneurs were able to overcome their challenges by being resourceful, through making means with the resources they have on hand, inclusive of the relationships, financial resources, human resources, experiences and most entrepreneurs took advantage of the influence that they have. Fisher et al. (2021) further elaborates that the experience of the entrepreneur attracts investors, as quoted by a Wall Street venture capitalist (VC) said 'Every VC dream of alleviating risk, and one way of doing it is to back guys who have done it before'. The words 'work with what you have' and 'resourceful' were cited most frequently in the study, the most common outcome of resourcefulness was entrepreneurs being innovative and creative with the resources that they have. Other outcomes that the respondent identified from the study were: entrepreneurship gives flexibility, the quality of life has improved, and diversifying to new and parallel markets. Regarding resourcefulness outcomes participants identified: agility, competitive advantage, decision making logic, resilience, adaptability, self-belief, boldness, tenacity, and confidence.

The literature on resourcefulness is clearly indicates that resourcefulness is a function of creativity, Willian et al., (2021) infers that competition can be defeated by 'thinking about the battle differently'. Contrary to the findings some literature says fewer knowledge resource can bring about an advantage, whereby the entrepreneur views the problem not from an expert level but rather from a level of an amateur. Research further confirms the findings indicating that resourcefulness is a mindset that is required when in pursuit of challenging goals.

The literature of resourcefulness in the context of SMMEs points out that entrepreneurs can have the resources but still fail to operate and grow the business due to lack of resourcefulness (Akeke & Eyo, 2018). Literature further reveals that there are multiple benefits that entrepreneurs can derive from being resourceful, it brings about self-reliance

and self-efficacy, get more for less, ability to creatively identify, assemble and utilize resources. On the contrary Williams et al., (2021) brings to bear the disadvantages or negative consequences of resourcefulness. He states that working under constraint environments with lack of resources could lead to burnout and the resultant effect is inefficiency, exhaustion and scepticism.

The research findings further demonstrate that the entrepreneurs had self-belief and were not intimidated by their peers or those with more knowledge, these findings expanded on the literature of self-efficacy by providing insights into the benefits of self-efficacy that was outlined in literature. These extended to hiring people with better qualifications, entrepreneurial spirit, entrepreneurial drive, resilience.

The need for independence has also emerged as an important trait for entrepreneurs, other participants mentioned that having control and not reporting to anyone is a valuable part of entrepreneurship, while the findings support the independence and the responsibility that independence comes with, it is solely dependent on one's decision. Some literature refers to joint resourcefulness behaviours, these behaviours include the means of bringing the resources, assembling and utilizing resources that are owned by actors, and not one business owner or entrepreneur (Michaelis et al.,2022; Osadolor et al., 2021). Some researchers corroborate the findings in this report which promote the self-reliant resourcefulness (Michaelis et al., 2022). This type of behaviour sees entrepreneurs relying on their own resources, the findings in the study confirms this behaviour were some of the entrepreneurs used their own investments to fund the businesses, in line with research this behaviour reduces the dependence on outside actors and provides the entrepreneur with full access and control to their resources.

#### **6.4.2.Opportunity Identification**

The research findings demonstrated that opportunity identification and ability to act on the opportunity is important as an entrepreneur. The findings in the research demonstrated the actions that entrepreneurs took. The opportunity identification played a role in most of the entrepreneurs, by opening them up to other opportunities or connecting them to other stakeholders which uncovered new possibilities. Other entrepreneurs' awareness of the

socioeconomic challenges like loadshedding enacted behaviours of looking within for solutions rather than being dependent.

The respondents spoke on how finding a niche and exploiting the opportunity opened markets outside of South Africa. The ability to identify these opportunities was due to knowledge accumulation and background research done by most entrepreneurs, and according to literature opportunities emerge from a process of acquiring knowledge and information. Research further indicates that the level of experience that the entrepreneurs have influences the extent the entrepreneur can identify opportunities (Ucbasaran et al., 2003).

Research has identified that the social networks and partnership of entrepreneurs influences the opportunity identification (Ssekitolesko & Plessis, 2021). These resources are leveraged and exploited by the entrepreneur in response to a need. The findings confirm the literature, most of the respondent's strategy to opportunity identification involved the use their networks to diversify and gain market competitiveness. On the contrary Ducker (1985, as cited in Akerlof & Kranton, 2000) opines that Australian school, entrepreneurs do not cause change but rather they exploit the opportunities that create change. Literature further states that entrepreneurs are not focused on the problem but have an eye for potential that creates change.

#### **6.4.3. Entrepreneurial Mindset**

The findings in this study suggest that entrepreneurship is a critical component of the economy of South Africa. All the respondents had more than 5 employees and make the contribution to lowering unemployment. While it is evident in the study that these entrepreneurs are critical all respondents faced challenges of lack of skills from their employees. Hence the need the need for support and training on entrepreneurial thinking, and resourcefulness is required.

Furthermore, other significant theme that emerged needed support and resources to contend with the uncertainty and unpredictability of the markets. While they grapple with lack of skills in their work force, they also need to make means to be innovative, curious, take risk and problem solve. Most of the challenges faced by entrepreneurs were found to

be related to the lack of knowledge, skills and lack of access to information. This also confirms the research findings that one of the challenges that entrepreneurs find the most challenging after financial resources, is the lack of entrepreneurial skills of their employees.

Literature states that entrepreneurs foster the entrepreneurial behaviours, they are creative and innovative, have inventive intent, they embody the entrepreneurial spirit.

Entrepreneurial thinking also involves having high confidence levels, appetite to take risk, leadership, originality and are future oriented (Ucbasaran et al.,2003). The literature review further states that entrepreneurs need to exhibit the entrepreneurial capabilities which include the risk management capabilities, networking, and development. According to the findings most of the entrepreneurs exhibited the capabilities highlighted in the research, The findings confirm that entrepreneurs of SMMEs are concerned with management of their business, scouting for new opportunities and improving on the processes, but are limited due to the lack of skills of their employees and the availability of resources.

In summary the findings of research question four provided a different perspective to the entrepreneurial resourcefulness in the context of business growth. The main findings indicate that resourcefulness was mainly an outcome of the entrepreneur's current market environment, the availability of resources (financial, human, technical). As such it was a challenge to correlate resourcefulness functions to the outcomes for all the entrepreneurs as many of the outcomes reported in this study were a product of many variables.

Additionally, the research provides rich outcomes, and since the research was self-reported, the outcomes are useful, but they are not complete. While the research question was concerned with finding out about the growth of the business, the financial outcome of the business was not investigated, hence they are not reported by the entrepreneurs, and the outcomes of the report were based on the individual entrepreneur's perspective of resourceful and growth.

The research provided crucial perspectives of the traits, behaviours and competencies for entrepreneurs who are concerned with the growth of their businesses.

## **6.5. Conclusion of discussion**

This chapter has discussed the findings that have emerged based in the literature reviewed in Chapter two, the literature that has been extracted and reviewed on concept of entrepreneurial resourcefulness has been applicable to SMMEs who intend to grow and sustain their businesses. The findings from the research in some way differ with the research, since the literature focuses more on start-up entrepreneurs as opposed to established and experience entrepreneurs. Based on the research findings as entrepreneurs who have been running businesses for more than five years have different resource requirements. The findings of the research contribute to the rich repository of data that provides deeper insight into the different aspects of entrepreneurial resourcefulness. The insights derived from this research, contribute deeply to the extant literature on entrepreneurial resourcefulness.

Experienced entrepreneurs (who have been in operation for more than five years), extract different methods of dealing and overcoming resource constraints. The findings confirm that the most cited practice was to be resourceful, meaning to find creative ways of extending the resources at hand. In cases where entrepreneurs are current resources are limited, they turn to family and friends for assistance, they use the relationships and partnership to acquire resources required.

The influence of family, background and other role models were also seen to play a significant role in building the resourceful characteristics of the entrepreneur. These entrepreneurs value and recognise the role that the role models play. The most valuable characteristics were found to be entrepreneurial independence, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial orientation. These characteristics enabled entrepreneurs to be decisive, resourceful, proactive, innovative and adaptable.

Literature has not interrogated the value of background on being resourceful, nor has it explored the characteristics and competencies required to grow and sustain business for experienced entrepreneurs. These constructs have been explored in this research and contribute to the field of entrepreneurship and resourcefulness.

The study provided insight on the challenges entrepreneurs face while being resourceful. The participants mostly highlighted lack of financial resources and lack of entrepreneurial

skills as the major challenges. The business owners relied on a variety of methods to overcome the challenges, the study found the most cited way to deal with challenges was to be resilient and make ends meet, where there was lack of skills from employees, entrepreneurs stepped in to do it themselves, where there was lack of financial resources, the participants turned to family and friends, and when the funds were not available, they used what they had to make ends meet and achieve their goal. Literature confirms this behaviour of resilience in resourcefulness but also cautions the potential negative consequences that comes with resourcefulness.

Insights from entrepreneurial competencies further highlighted a strong relationship between resourcefulness and relationships and partnerships especially for SMMEs. The value of relationships, networks and partnership was found create access to resources and markets. These relationships provided a platform for entrepreneurs to be competitive. Innovativeness and creativity within the enterprise was also seen to open new markets and provide competitive advantage to these businesses.

Adaptability and flexibility among entrepreneurs were seen as a tool for resourcefulness, with those entrepreneurs who were not adaptable and flexible not being able to exploit available resources. The survival of entrepreneurs was seen to be dependent on agility to adapt and change at the same rate or faster rate than the changes in the markets. The entrepreneurs who were aware of the environment of business they operate in were able to anticipate the opportunities and were better positioned to introduce innovative products in the market.

The most valuable characteristic that leads to business growth is the entrepreneur's ability to be resourceful, this characteristic was seen to provide entrepreneurs with width of competencies and traits to be resourceful.

## 7. Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship globally has been recognised as an agent for economic development, in emerging economies like South Africa SMMEs were first recognised by the government in 1996, as a panacea of economic growth. According to (Bruwer & Smith, 2018) South African businesses have the responsibility to create jobs and reduce unemployment, eradicate poverty, and add value to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The GDP contribution of SMMEs in South Africa is approximately between 51 and 57 percent and the employment contribution are around 60 percent (Fatoki, 2018). Despite the notable contributions the unemployment rate has shown to have grown to 27.2% and job losses being more than 250 000 (Assessment of South Africa's Small Medium Enterprise Landscape. 2018), and entrepreneurs continue to fail at high rates. The failure rate of SMMEs can be attributed to both external and internal factors. The lack of entrepreneurial skills and mindset, lack of innovation and creativity, lack of business planning are regarded as the internal factors. While the external factors include barriers to market entry, lack of financial resources and support, highly competitive environment. Sekellarios et al. (2022) recognises the critical role that SMMEs play in the South African economy and contribution to social growth, as well the challenges they face which include lack skills and resources.

Therefore, the study contends that the simple application of RBV in a dynamic environment is insufficient to predict success and sustainability of a business (Wu. 2007) To advance literature this study proposes assessing the Resourcefulness and introduce a construct of entrepreneurial behaviours and competencies. The creativeness and innovativeness of SMMEs responding to resource constraints birthed this exploratory study, which has allowed for the researcher to use a sample of 12 entrepreneurs, using a cross-sectional time horizon, to investigate the entrepreneurs character and competencies to engage in resourceful behaviours. Following an inductive research approach, the primary research questions the study needs to answer is,

*“How do entrepreneurs use resourcefulness in the context of growing and sustaining the business”*. The aim of the study is to understand the view of resourcefulness in the context of business growth, according to the entrepreneur's experience.

Chapter seven details the conclusion of the main findings derived from each research questions and integrates the extant literature with the findings to formulate a coherent set of conclusions that addresses the research question. Based on the findings this study makes recommendations to different stakeholders. The chapter concludes with the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

## **7.2. Research findings**

The research findings are presented according to four research questions, which aim to understand how entrepreneurs become resourceful, what behaviours and character traits they exhibited, which factors influenced their business survival, and how their experiences informed being resourceful.

### **7.2.1. Research Question one: What are the inherent characteristics that lead to the emergence of an entrepreneur?**

Research question one's primary objective was to establish the characteristics, traits and behaviours that are required to be resourceful. To fully address the research, question an understanding of the participants background, motivation and influences was established. The research question further explored the challenges that the research participants faced and what skills and behavioural characteristics they used to handle these challenges.

It is evident in the existing literature of entrepreneurial resourcefulness that it focuses on the resource constraints, and how entrepreneurs extract the value out of the resources and the productivity thereof (Malsch et al.,2023), however these extant theoretical perspectives do not account for the influence of individuals background and family as a factor which builds the resourceful behaviours. This study found that factors such parental and family influence, the background of the entrepreneur and motivation by role models play a role in establishing resourceful behaviours in the entrepreneurs. The findings further established that emergence of entrepreneurial resourcefulness is driven by a combination of factors, the desire for independence or self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, early exposure to business, proactiveness, risk taking and resilience.

Michaelis et al. (2020) elucidates that resourcefulness is getting more for less, through the identification of new and fresh ideas, and finding innovative way to put them together, and it is underpinned by three entrepreneurial behaviours including causation, effectuation and Bricolage. The entrepreneurs in this study demonstrated traits aligned with the effectuation theory which considers the environment, available resources, the possible limitations and aspirations.

Although literature confirms the challenges that entrepreneurs face including competition, compliance, accessing finance, attracting and retaining staff (Botha et al.,2021), it does not delve deeper into the challenges that entrepreneurs are exposed to while being constrained. This study uncovered main themes in relation to challenges that entrepreneurs face under resource constrained environments. The themes that emerged is lack of access to finance and markets and lack of skilled labourers.

In accord to Barraket at el. (2019) study that postulates the paradox that resourcefulness helps organisations to be innovative and sustain business growth, and it can also constrain it when it is labelled with a specific resourcefulness behaviour. The study showed that the SMMEs response to constrained environment was not uniform, and it changed based on the challenge faced by the SMMEs, which is in support to Fisher et al. (2021) study. Therefore, the entrepreneurial characteristics and behaviours are reflected in the proposed Entrepreneurial resourcefulness framework for SMMEs business growth (Fig 7)

### **7.2.2. Research question two: What are the drivers that enable resourcefulness**

Research question primary objective was to establish what are the drivers and factors that enable a resourceful behaviour. To extract deep and rich data the research question sought to the problem the business is solving for, the organisational processes involved, and the creative and innovative ideas utilised.

Literature reveals that entrepreneurial competencies are dynamic combination knowledge skills and attitudes. These competencies can be changed based on requirement, are learnable and attainable through training and experience. While other researchers identify specific behaviours that entrepreneurs need to possess to be successful but do not account for risk that comes with being resourceful (Kyndt & Baert, 2015). This study unveiled that the key drivers to resourcefulness include networking and partnership,

Innovation and creativity, decision making, organisational processes and efficiencies. These findings were in alignment with the Entrepreneurial orientation theory, which involves innovativeness, risk-taking and proactiveness (Bouhaleb & Tapinos, 2023; Simpson & Sariol, 2022). The entrepreneurs demonstrated. The findings illustrate how SMMEs that deploy entrepreneurial competencies have a competitive advantage and were able to scale their business.

Therefore, this study demonstrates that entrepreneurs who employed decision making, innovation, risk taking, networking and relationships, and continuous improvement in their businesses experienced growth, even when under constrained environments (lack of financial resources, competitive pressure, lack of skilled staff). Moreover, the use of entrepreneurial competencies in their businesses contributed to the creation of key and strategic relationship and access to markets.

The entrepreneurial competencies are reflected in the proposed Entrepreneurial resourcefulness framework for SMMEs business growth (Fig 7.)

### **7.2.3. Research question three: What are the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs?**

The aim of research question three was to understand the elements that lead to survival of a business, especially considering the rate of business failures in South Africa. The questions were asked to understand the challenges and setbacks that the business experienced as well as the steps took to survive. The question was important to answering the research question as it assessed the survival strategies used by business owners.

Literature on entrepreneurial resourcefulness discusses resilience as a catalyst for business growth (Fatoki, 2018), In consonance with this Conduah & Essiaw, (2022) discussed the advantages of entrepreneurial resilience to overcoming making the same mistake. Resilience is a well-documented phenomenon in psychology, but it undertheorized in the field of entrepreneurship. Considering this paucity of literature this paper has made strides to enrich the body of research and have generated factors that lead to the survival of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it has incorporated the emotional dynamics in entrepreneurial resourcefulness, which confirmed the notion studied by Hung and Pearce (Fisher et al., 2021), about the emotion-based pathways. Considering that

entrepreneurship has been a concern for scholars and policy makers alike, due to its critical role in economic and social growth, this research confirmed that it is important to understand the emotions within entrepreneurship.

Regarding the use of entrepreneurial resourcefulness for survival of businesses, this study was consistent with most extant literature, and it added more depth to the study with new insights on emotional dynamics in entrepreneurship. The main theme that emerged from this study is the interrelationship between entrepreneurial competencies and the survival skills of the entrepreneur. The link between the competencies of the entrepreneur and survival mechanism is shown on diagram Fig 7.

#### **7.2.4. Research question four: How does your experience as an entrepreneurs inform the proclivity to being resourceful?**

This research question investigates the experiences of entrepreneurs and their relationship with resourcefulness, and whether resourcefulness can be learnt or an inherent characteristic. Since uncertainty is an axiom view of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurs in the research study confirmed the literature that the context of uncertainty varies depending on the entrepreneur's environment (Fisher et al., 2021).

The extant literature about entrepreneurial experience, indicate that sources of resource investment, especially finance investors, are prone to invest if there is evidence of entrepreneurial experience. This experience of entrepreneurs as demonstrated by the participants is an indicator of competencies that have been developed over time. Although according to some research there is a general expectation for experienced entrepreneurs to be resourceful, and their past achievements are admired more than their ability to overcome challenges and be resourceful (Fisher et al., 2021).

Existing research explores the process of decision making by opportunity identification, evaluation and exploitation (Hanifzadeh, 2022)., which is coherent with process of decision-making process highlighted by the participants as an entrepreneurial competence of resourceful entrepreneurs. The research confirms the findings of the study that opportunity identification is associated with the entrepreneurs individual and environmental variables.

The study uncovered that there is a link between entrepreneurial characteristics and the opportunity identification. This is coherent with literature that confirms that opportunity identification and exploitation include the entrepreneur’s ability to be alert to opportunities, their access to information and knowledge, their networks and relationships and their self-efficacy (Hanifzadeh, 2022).

The overarching theme uncovered from this research question is that the amalgamation of entrepreneurial competencies, behaviours, characteristics provides an outcome of a resourceful entrepreneur has a direct relationship with business growth.

### 7.3. Conclusions and Framework

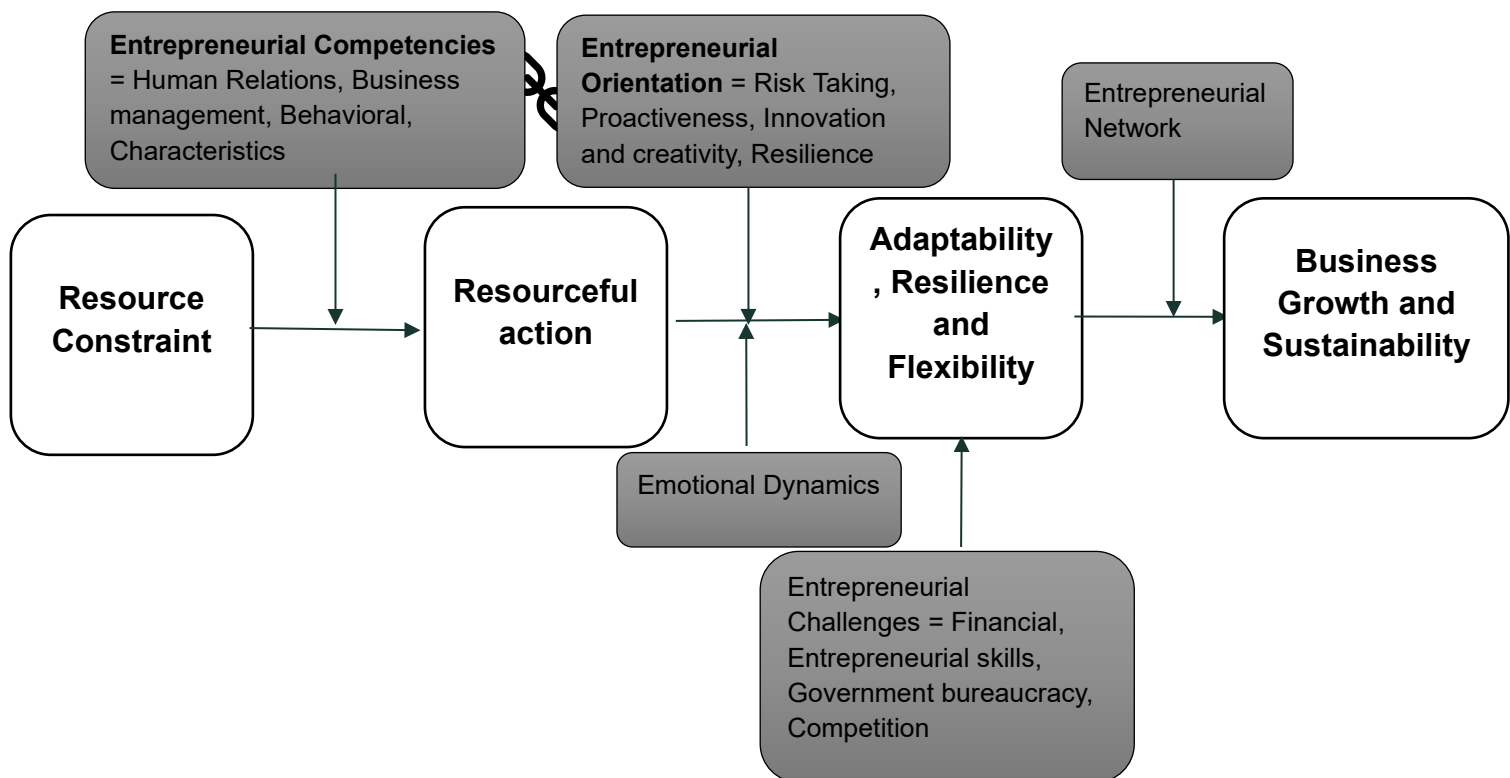


Figure 7: Conceptual Model for Entrepreneurial resourcefulness framework for SMMEs business growth (Authors own compilation)

The objective of the study is to understand the execution of entrepreneurial resourcefulness, define the requisite behaviours and characteristics for resourcefulness, and analyse how the interaction of these aspects contributes to business growth. We create a descriptive conceptual model in Fig. 7 for predicting our theorizing. This model is initiated by a constraint imposed on the entrepreneur, prompting an action from the entrepreneur. The interconnected actions are influenced by the entrepreneur's competencies, behaviours, and characteristics (Williams et al., 2019) as they seek to navigate the challenge or constraint. To overcome the constraint, an entrepreneur must employ creative and innovative methods, thereby intentionally or subconsciously cultivating entrepreneurial orientation, which encompasses the entrepreneur's tendency to embrace strategies involving innovation, proactivity, and risk-taking (Bouhaleb & Tapinos, 2023), there is a link between entrepreneurial competencies and entrepreneurial orientation. The entrepreneur, engaged in a resource-intensive endeavour, must navigate several emotional dynamics (Fisher et al., 2021). The perceived resourcefulness of the entrepreneur's efforts evokes emotional and cognitive responses. Since the entrepreneur engages in resourceful activities, they encounter problems, since it is widely acknowledged that deficiencies in business expertise and networks, poor support, insufficient training and education, and restricted assistance are prevalent during constraints. The entrepreneur's sequence of actions and difficulties fosters adaptability, resilience, and flexibility (Williams et al., 2021). The entrepreneur leverages their network and relationships to uncover opportunities, as well as to expand and diversify their firm (Ssekitoleko & Plessis, 2021). The conceptual model illustrates that the aggregation of all actions results in corporate growth.

## **7.4. Practical Implications and contributions**

### **7.4.1. Theoretical contributions**

This study enhances the existing literature on entrepreneurial resourcefulness, which remains poorly theorized. Most of the reviewed literature aligns with the study on resourcefulness and the growth of SMMEs. The study highlighted specific elements of entrepreneurial resourcefulness concerning SMMEs in South Africa, which are presently underdeveloped in the existing literature. Most of the research on entrepreneurial

resourcefulness is said to lack cohesiveness, with the notion of resourcefulness varying across numerous sources (Williams et al., 2021). Michaelis et al. (2020) argue that the research on entrepreneurial resourcefulness predominantly examines it from a resource constraints viewpoint, neglecting resourceful behaviours in contexts of resource slack or surplus.

The constructivist ontological perspective posits that entrepreneurship is acquired through a process of failures, experiences, and social interactions. This study clarifies that there are underlying features and factors that contribute to a resourceful entrepreneur. It further elucidates the research by revealing the correlation between behaviours, qualities, abilities, and experiences that foster entrepreneurial resourcefulness, ultimately resulting in business growth.

The existing literature on breaking boundaries to generate value to creatively generate value creatively has underscored the adverse effects of resourcefulness, indicating that an excessive focus on resourcefulness may hinder a business from pursuing external resources or capabilities it lacks. This study effectively elucidates the negative influence of resourcefulness on entrepreneurs, particularly in the context of financial constraints.

Resourcefulness has been examined from cognitive and behavioural viewpoints, revealing that entrepreneurial behaviours may be acquired, as further detailed in this study (Botha et al., 2021).

#### **7.4.2. Research implications**

The theoretical contributions of this study, the proposed entrepreneurial resourcefulness for business growth framework presents the characteristics, behaviours, and the competencies that SMMEs used to spur sustainability and business growth. The findings contribute to the ER literature and SMMEs growth and success. The empirical findings of the study can help entrepreneurship researchers to understand how entrepreneurial resourcefulness impacts growth and sustainability.

#### **7.4.3. Managerial implications**

The research findings aid business managers in comprehending how to utilize ER to stimulate growth inside their businesses. Comprehending the correlation between ER and

business expansion can significantly diminish the failure rate of small enterprises. These findings can assist SMME the owners facing skilled labour shortages in formulating strategies to enhance employee retention through training and seminars focused on entrepreneurship, particularly in the domains of innovation and creativity, continuous improvement, self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, entrepreneurial mindset, resilience, and coping strategies. The study will further aid entrepreneurs in cultivating a resourceful mindset that promotes effectuation-based thinking, enabling them to make strategic decisions based on available resources rather than awaiting optimal conditions. It will also assist entrepreneurs in recognizing that an abundance of resources does not guarantee success.

#### **7.4.4. Government and Institutions implications**

The results of this study can aid governmental organizations that promote entrepreneurship in South Africa, such as the Small Business Development Agency (SEDA) and the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), in comprehending the impact of entrepreneurial resilience (ER) on the success of business owners and their enterprises. This will facilitate the construction of training programs specifically tailored to address ER and its efficient utilization by business owners. The study will enhance the support necessary for SMMEs and assist governments in offering accessible finance mechanisms and mentorship specifically designed for SMMEs. Business incubators can be optimized and organized to provide support to entrepreneurs. The report would encourage the government to formulate policies aimed at educating businesses with technology and financial management skills to enhance sustainability in the era of technological developments.

#### **7.5. Limitations of the research**

The main limitation of the study lies in its interpretivist methodology, which precludes statistical generalization. The study additionally recognizes selection criterion bias, as the interviewed entrepreneurs had either achieved success or persisted in their entrepreneurial endeavours, and they were five years and older. The study's sample size and geographic coverage concentrated on SMMEs, hence constraining generalizability. The results were self-reported and therefore susceptible to bias. The study was cross-sectional and merely provided a temporal snapshot; a longitudinal investigation might enhance the rigor of the

findings about the progression of ER. Scholars provide diverse definitions of entrepreneurial resourcefulness (ER); hence, participants may not have fully understood the idea and relied on the interviewer for elucidation.

### **7.6. Recommendations for future research**

ER current literature has predominantly focused on start-up businesses with little of no focus on established businesses, and some literature has explored how entrepreneurs allocate resource to overcome challenges caused by newness and smallness of new ventures (Michaelis et al.,2020). A compelling future study might involve an analysis of sector-specific resourcefulness methods to evaluate issues and solutions across various sectors. The study did not establish a correlation between experimental behaviour as expected; so, further research is advised to conduct experiments to ascertain whether the environmental context influences the resourceful behaviours of entrepreneurs.

Resourcefulness offers novel frameworks to evaluate recent theoretical advancements regarding its implications, particularly the influence of triggers such as poverty, wealth loss, and transformative experiences like death on entrepreneurial entry (Williams et al., 2021). This presents a compelling area for exploration. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to examine the function of collective resourcefulness in promoting social resilience in entrepreneurship. Additionally, more research would involve entrepreneurs who terminated their businesses under comparable circumstances, aiming to comprehend the reasons for their inability to survive. A longitudinal study of the same entrepreneurs is necessary to assess whether the challenges have evolved over time.

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## 9. APPENDIX A: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

### Research Question one: What are the inherent characteristics that lead to the emergence of an entrepreneur?

Before the interview commences, the interviewer will ask about the entrepreneur's background and their business:

1. Firstly, I would like you to give me a background about your business.
  - a. (Probe) What motivated or influenced you to become an entrepreneur?
  - b. (Probe) Where did the journey start?
  - c. (Probe) If you had to write a book about your journey, what would be the name of the book?
2. Tell me more about your experience as an entrepreneur?
  - a. (Probe) How would you rate your experience of entrepreneurship throughout the years (positive, negative, neither) and why?
  - b. If you knew what you know about entrepreneurship today, would you have still started?
    - i. (Probe) If so, why?
3. What are challenges that your business has faced?
  - a. (Probe) What are some of these challenges that you have faced?
  - b. (Probe) What are some the challenges that you deal with today?
  - c. (Probe) Explain to me what challenges you faced when scaling up your business?
  - d. (Probe) Elaborate on how you handle challenges in your business?
  - e. (Probe) Are there any skills or characteristics you needed to learn or develop to help you handle these challenges?

### Research question two: What are the drivers that enable resourcefulness:

4. Tell me more about the problem you are trying to solve with you business?
  - a. (Probe) What is the end goal, the end in mind? Further elaborate what your business is solving for.
  - b. (Probe) Did you borrow any lessons from past cases that you used to close the gap with your business?
5. Tell me more about the organizational process?
  - a. (Probe) What method or processes did you use to ensure your business was running efficiently?
  - b. (Probe) Were there people or organisations that assisted you to achieve this?
6. Elaborate to me about some of the creative and out of the box ideas you have come up with?
  - a. (Probe) What innovative/ creative ideas you have come up with and what sparked these ideas?

- b. (Probe) What type of proactive solutions did you come up with, and what has this type of behavior (proactiveness) yielded positive or negative results (elaborate further)

**Research question three: What are the driving factors that result in the survival of entrepreneurs?**

- 7. Have you or your business experiences any setbacks?
  - a. (Probe) Tell me more about the setbacks you experienced?
  - b. (Probe) What was your first reaction and mentally how you deal with it?
  - c. (Probe) Tell me more about the steps you took trying to survive?
  - d. (Probe) During this time who was assisting you? Are those people still supporting you?
  - e. (Probe) Which skills did you develop during these setbacks?
  - f. (Probe) Did this situation help you to be aware of the environment of business you are operating in, and did this help you to prepare better for the future?
  - g. (Probe) What 'do not do' lessons did you learn in the process?

**Research question four: How does your experience as an entrepreneurs inform the proclivity to being resourceful?**

- 8. What is your opinion regarding making means/ do with little in business?
  - a. Tell me more about situations where you had no resources, but still managed to make means with little?
    - i. (Probe) What triggered this behavior?
  - b. Have you demonstrated this type of behavior outside your business?
    - i. (Probe) If so, how does this play itself out?
  - c. Is this behavior learnt or it is inherent?
    - i. If it is learnt, how did you learn it?
- 9. Have you reflected on yourself as an entrepreneur, and what type of entrepreneur do you think you are?
  - a. (Probe) Which type of behaviors are synonymous with you?
  - b. Is your character influenced by others?
    - i. (Probe) If so, who has the biggest influence on you, and why?
  - c. Are the any individuals (entrepreneur or not) that you look up to as role models?
    - i. (Probe) If so, tell me more about them?
  - d. What are some of the things you would change for future entrepreneurs?

## 10. APPENDIX C ETHICAL CLEARANCE

**Gordon Institute  
of Business Science**  
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance  
Approved**

Dear Thabile Mosadi,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.  
You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.  
We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

## 11. APPENDIX D: LETTER OF CONSENT TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear Participant,

I am conducting research with entrepreneurs on the role that entrepreneurial resourcefulness play in helping entrepreneurs to sustain business growth. I am trying to find out what are the drivers that lead to entrepreneurial resourcefulness and what are the predecessors of resourcefulness, does it assist in sustaining business growth.

The interview will take approximately ninety minutes, and it will be conducted in person or online, this will enable us to further understand how entrepreneurs can use resourcefulness to sustain their business growth.

Taking part in this research is voluntary and you are allowed to withdraw at any time without penalty. All data will be reported without identifiers, this is to ensure your confidentiality is maintained. If you have any concerns, please contact my supervisor or myself. Our details are provided below. Please consent to the interview if you wish to participate by signing below.

Researchers Name	Thabile Mosadi	Supervisors Name	Prof Kerrin Myres
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Email:	<a href="mailto:23989981@mygibs.co.za">23989981@mygibs.co.za</a>	Email:	<a href="mailto:myresk@mygibs.co.za">myresk@mygibs.co.za</a>
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Phone No.	0659893264	Phone:	083 263 4175
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**Participants Signature:**

**Date:**

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**Researchers Signature:**

**Date:**

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## 12. APPENDIX E: STUDENT SUPERVISOR MoU

### THE STUDENT AND THE SUPERVISOR:

Confirm that we have read and understood this Memorandum of Agreement and agree to accept its content for the duration of the period of study in respect of the degree as specified below.

Name of student: Thabile Mosadi

.....  
Student number: 23989981

.....  
Signed at ...Johannesburg on...03.03.2025 (date)

Student's signature *Mosadi*

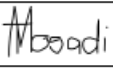
.....  
Name of supervisor: Prof. Kerrin Myres

.....  
Supervisor's signature: *Kerrin Myres*

.....  
Signed at Johannesburg on  
.....03.03.2024..... (date)

### 13. APPENDIX F: COPYRIGHT DECLARATION FORM

#### 22.1 COPYRIGHT DECLARATION FORM

Student details			
Surname:	Mosadi	Initials:	T
Student number:	23989981		
Email:	23989981@mygibs.co.za		
Phone:			
Qualification details			
Degree:	MBA	Year completed:	2025
Title of research:	GIBS		
Supervisor:	Prof Kerrin Myres		
Supervisor email:	myresk@gibs.co.za		
Access			
A. My research is not confidential and may be made available in the GIBS Information Centre and on UPspace.			
I give permission to display my email address on the UPspace website			
Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. My research is confidential and may NOT be made available in the GIBS Information Centre nor on UPspace.			
Please indicate embargo period requested			
Two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Please attach a letter of motivation to substantiate your request. Without a letter embargo will not be granted.	
Permanent	<input type="checkbox"/>	Permission from the Vice-Principal: Research and Postgraduate Studies at UP is required for permanent embargo. Please attach a copy permission letter. Without a letter permanent embargo will not be granted.	
Copyright declaration			
I hereby declare that I have not used unethical research practices nor gained material dishonesty in this electronic version of my research submitted. Where appropriate, written permission statement(s) were obtained from the owner(s) of third-party copyrighted matter included in my research, allowing distribution as specified below.			
I hereby assign, transfer and make over to the University of Pretoria my rights of copyright in the submitted work to the extent that it has not already been affected in terms of the contract I entered into at registration. I understand that all rights with regard to the intellectual property of my research, vest in the University who has the right to reproduce, distribute and/or publish the work in any manner it may deem fit.			
Signature:		Date:	03.03.2025
Supervisor signature:		Date:	

## 14. APPENDIX G: LIST OF CODES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

	No.	Code	Categories	Overarching Theme
RESEARCH QUESTION 1	1	RQ 1: Meet my needs	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
	2	RQ 1: Identifying Market Gaps & Business Opportunities	Self-preservation	Entrepreneurial mindset development
	3	RQ 1: Worth it	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	4	RQ 1: Self-Sufficiency	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	5	RQ 1: Detail Oriented	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	6	RQ 1: Growth Mindset	Adaptable, & Innovative entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial Independence
	7	RQ 1: Entrepreneurial independence	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	8	RQ 1: Lack of Financial Resources	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial Mindset development
	9	RQ 1: Lack of Skills (financial, operational)	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial Mindset development
	10	RQ 1: Undermine the skills required	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial Mindset development
	11	RQ 1: Personality Trait	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
	12	RQ 1: Desire for influence & independence	Financial Challenges	Entrepreneurial challenges
	13	RQ 1: Business expansion	Entrepreneurial skills development	Entrepreneurial challenges
	14	RQ 1: Building capacity	Entrepreneurial skills development	Entrepreneurial challenges
	15	RQ 1: Delegation of tasks	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	16	RQ 1: Entrepreneurial Influence	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	17	RQ 1: Following your passion	Entrepreneurial skills development	Entrepreneurial challenges
	18	RQ 1: I never wanted (never knew) to be an entrepreneur	Self-preservation	Entrepreneurial Independence
	19	RQ 1: Entrepreneurship can be a lonely journey	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence

20	RQ 1: Access to funding & markets	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
21	RQ 1: Self-funding	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
22	RQ 1: Background has shaped me	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
23	RQ 1: Hard working and consistent	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
24	RQ 1: Profit Driven Entrepreneurship	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
25	RQ 1: Corporate hostility	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
26	RQ 1: Crisis impact on the business	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Leadership and strategic decision making
27	RQ 1: Provision for legal/ labour disputes	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
28	RQ 1: Balancing authority with empathy	Entrepreneurial development	Entrepreneurial drive
29	RQ 1: Monetise on opportunities/ Market gaps	Entrepreneurial development	Entrepreneurial drive
30	RQ 1: Resourcefulness is a strategic choice	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
31	RQ 1: Personal investment in entrepreneurship	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
32	RQ 1: Corporate competitive pressure	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
33	RQ 1: Entrepreneurial attrition due to challenges	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
34	RQ 1: Authoritarian leadership style	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
35	RQ 1: Psychological safety in business	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
36	RQ 1: Strategic Positioning	Entrepreneurial hardships/ challenges	Entrepreneurial drive
37	RQ 1: Entrepreneurship is a lifestyle choice	Entrepreneurial hardships/ challenges	Entrepreneurial resilience

RESEARCH QUESTION 2	38	RQ 2: Building Relationships & active networking	Networking and Partnerships	Leadership and Delegation
	39	RQ 2: Employee Satisfaction	Networking and Partnerships	Leadership and Delegation
	40	RQ 2: Job Satisfaction	Networking and Partnerships	Leadership and Delegation
	41	RQ 2: Continuous Improvement/ Learning	Networking and Partnerships	Leadership and Delegation
	42	RQ 2: Creatively exploit opportunities	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
	43	RQ 2: Competitive (cost)advantage	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
	44	RQ 2: Meet needs of others	Mentorship as an entrepreneurial resource The role of mentorship in business success	
	45	RQ 2: Promoting independence & Autonomy	Resource Management / allocation	Resourcefulness and opportunity management
	46	RQ 2: Pricing strategy	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
	47	RQ 2: Peer to peer marketing	Innovative problem solving	Leadership and Delegation
	48	RQ 2: Innovative & Independent problem solving	Innovative problem solving	Leadership and Delegation
	49	RQ 2: Saving with a purpose	Entrepreneurial skills development	Entrepreneurial challenges
	50	RQ 2: Confidence in your abilities (Not intimidated)	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	51	RQ 2: Always deliver quality & keep your promise	Self preservation	Entrepreneurial Independence
	52	RQ 2: Simplified business & decision making in Entrepreneurship	Organisational processes and efficiency	Strategic positioning
	53	RQ 2: Business diversification	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
	54	RQ 2: Always remember your why	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial mindset
	55	RQ 2: Never sell yourself short	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial resilience
	56	RQ 2: Entrepreneurial Creativity	Critical thinking	
	57	RQ 2: Adaptive business models in crisis	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
58	RQ 2: Decentralization as risk mitigation	Entrepreneurial development	Entrepreneurial drive	
59	RQ 2: Cost analysis	Entrepreneurial motivation	Entrepreneurial drive	
60	RQ 2: Scaling through diversification	Emotional dynamics in entrepreneurship	Emotional dynamics in Entrepreneurship	

No.	Code	Categories	Overarching Theme
61	RQ 3: Side hustle to reduce the entrepreneurial risk	Entrepreneurial Behaviour	Emotional dynamics in Entrepreneurship
62	RQ 3: Financial Instability & Business struggles	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
63	RQ 3: Self-Reflection	Entrepreneurial mindset development	Entrepreneurial drive
64	RQ 3: Roller coaster of emotions	Emotional toughness	Emotional dynamics in Entrepreneurship
65	RQ 3: Investment for a long time before you see the rewards	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
66	RQ 3: Resilience	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
67	RQ 3: Adaptive problem solving	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
68	RQ 3: Leverage convenience for business growth	Purpose driven entrepreneurship	Leadership and Delegation
69	RQ 3: Finding creative Solutions to everyday problems	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
70	RQ 3: Risk taking & opportunity in business	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
71	RQ 3: Strategic partnerships/ relationships	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
72	RQ 3: Getting more for less	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
73	RQ 3: Target Audience Marketing		
74	RQ 3: Purpose driven entrepreneurship	Networking and Partnerships	Leadership and Delegation
75	RQ 3: Passion driven entrepreneurship	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
76	RQ 3: Agility in responding to market changes	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
77	RQ 3: Community Involvement	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
78	RQ 3: Collaborative management	Mentorship as an entrepreneurial resource The role of mentorship in business success	Leadership and Delegation
79	RQ 3: Challenging the dominant logic	Resource Management / allocation	Resourcefulness and opportunity management
80	RQ 3: Learning from failed ventures/ mistakes	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
81	RQ 3: Learning from others	Innovative problem solving	Leadership and Delegation
82	RQ 3: Creative Resource utilization	Innovative problem solving	Leadership and Delegation
83	RQ 3: Emotional high and lows	Financial Challenges	Entrepreneurial challenges

84	RQ 3: Faith/ Acceptance as a coping mechanism	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
85	RQ 3: Withdrawing from the deposits you have made	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
86	RQ 3: Acknowledging your mistakes	Entrepreneurial skills development	Entrepreneurial challenges
87	RQ 3: Assets reallocation for financial relief	Vision-Driven Entrepreneurial Resilience	Resourcefulness & opportunity management
88	RQ 3: Risk of losing an opportunity	Entrepreneurial adaptability & decision making	Adaptability & problem solving
89	RQ 3: Entrepreneurial autonomy and independence	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
90	RQ 3: Emotional toughness in business	Self-reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
91	RQ 3: Emotional detachment in business decisions	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
92	RQ 3: Acceptance of conflict in business	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
93	RQ 3: Open & consistent communication (even during conflict)	Resourcefulness as a key entrepreneurial trait	
94	RQ 3: Awareness of the environment of business	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
95	RQ 3: Customer/ Peer driven crisis support	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
96	RQ 3: Desperation driven entrepreneurship	Reward and Motivation (Learning to Manage Uncertain Business Cycles)	
97	RQ 3: Scaling up challenges - scaling as a key success factor	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial resilience
98	RQ 3: Operational inefficiencies	Self-Reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
99	RQ 3: Missed business expansion opportunities	Self-Reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
100	RQ 3: Limited Market Diversification	Self Reliance	Entrepreneurial Independence
101	RQ 3: Accepting what is beyond your control	Critical thinking	
102	RQ 3: Borrow when your balance sheet is looking good	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
103	RQ 3: Giving up is not an option	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive

RESEARCH QUESTION 4	104	RQ 4: Building a legacy	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	105	RQ 4: Lose now & win later	Purpose driven entrepreneurship	Leadership and Delegation
	106	RQ 4: Be inquisitive	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	107	RQ 4: Pivoting to alternative Solutions/ business models	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	108	RQ 4: Prudent and informed Decision Making	Understanding Market limitations in entrepreneurship	Adaptation & resilience
	109	RQ 4: Mentorship in business & Skills transfer	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial drive
	110	RQ 4: Make do with resources on hand	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial drive
	111	RQ 4: Gain corporate/work experience first	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
	112	RQ 4: Transforming resources/ crisis into actions	Innovation and creativity	Strategic positioning
	113	RQ 4: Commitment despite Challenges		
	114	RQ 4: Utilizing limited resources	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
	115	RQ 4: Learning through socialization	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
	116	RQ 4: Unprepared for challenges	Employee Well-Being and Business Sustainability	Leadership and Delegation
	117	RQ 4: Commitment despite difficulties	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial Mindset development
	118	RQ 4: Commitment to consistency	Entrepreneurial Mindset & Motivation	Entrepreneurial Mindset development
	119	RQ 4: Hanging by the thread- Survival Mode	Innovative problem solving	Leadership and Delegation
	120	RQ 4: Go back to basics		
	121	RQ 4: Make information accessible	Monetising passion for long term viability	
	122	RQ 4: Be willing to start small	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Entrepreneurial resilience
	123	RQ 4: Resourcefulness is a learned behaviour	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
	124	RQ 4: Serial entrepreneur	Long term strategic thinking and resilience	Leadership and strategic decision making
	125	RQ 4: Unrealistic entrepreneurial expectations	Entrepreneurial Resilience under constraints	Leadership and strategic decision making
	126	RQ 4: Transformational leader	Entrepreneurial development	Entrepreneurial thinking

	127	RQ 4: Analytical entrepreneur	Resourcefulness as a key entrepreneurial trait	Resourcefulness as a key entrepreneurial trait
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