

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

**AN ASSESSMENT OF GENERIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE
COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN**

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**AN ASSESSMENT OF GENERIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE
COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN**

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ABSTRACT

The liberalisation of international trade has disrupted the South African textile industry, by undermining the viability of locally manufactured garments with the influx of cheap Chinese imports. The heightened competition has led to the closure of numerous domestic factories, triggering a structural shift within the sector. In response, many displaced workers and entrepreneurs have turned to micro-textile enterprises as a survival strategy, resulting in a proliferation of highly competitive micro-enterprises that operate informally to eradicate poverty and unemployment. The growth of this informal business activity has reshaped the industry's landscape. This study investigates whether micro-businesses' competitive strategies align with Porter's generic strategies in enabling them to gain a competitive edge. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data for comprehensive analysis. Quantitative data were gathered from 384 respondents using stratified random sampling and analysed with SPSS version 26, employing Likert-scale and closed-ended questions. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews and open-ended surveys with 50 respondents and analysed using NVivo software. A sequential triangulation design prioritised qualitative data, while quantitative findings offered supplementary indigenous strategies that enable a deeper understanding of industry experiences and micro-enterprise growth strategies. The study revealed that competitive strategies within micro-textile enterprises are primarily driven by cost minimisation or differentiation rooted in the unique skills of the owner-manager, who serves as both entrepreneur and fashion designer. Ubuntu principles are embedded within the pricing strategies adopted by these businesses, with a strong emphasis on value-based pricing. This approach prioritises a supportive, collaborative environment that enhances customer well-being and social justice, advocating that prices should reflect the intrinsic value of the product rather than purely market-driven considerations. In doing so, micro-entrepreneurs seek to balance commercial viability with ethical responsibility, fostering inclusivity and community-oriented business practices. Additionally, the findings revealed how technology adoption and personality traits drive organisational sustainability and competitiveness, emphasising their importance in enabling organisations to adapt and thrive in a dynamic and ever-evolving environment. The study demonstrates that the Ubuntu management philosophy can function as a

strategic framework for enhancing competitiveness among micro-entrepreneurs operating in the informal sector. It provides a synthesis of Ubuntu principles within organisational strategy, contributing to both theoretical development and practical application. This framework enables the pursuit of competitive advantage through ethical, collective, and inclusive leadership, rather than relying solely on market positioning.

DECLARATION: I, TSEPO MACHELA, hereby solemnly declare that this dissertation/thesis has never been submitted for a degree to any other university, and its prior publication might be in the form of conference papers journal articles that I might undertake in future. Where other sources/authors have been cited, this has been acknowledged in the text and referenced at the end of this work.

Signature:

Date: 26 MARCH 2026.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

4IR:	Fourth Industrial Revolution
ADBG:	African Development Bank Group
AESCON:	Asia-Europe Sustainable Connectivity Scientific Conference
AGOA:	African Growth Opportunity Act
AMOS:	Analysis of movement structures
ANOVA:	Analysis of variance
AVE:	Average variance extracted
CBD:	Central business district
CIPC:	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
CFA:	Confirmatory factor analysis
CMT:	Cut, Make and Trim
COVID-19:	Coronavirus disease
CR:	Composite reliability
CTFL:	Clothing, textiles, footwear and leather
DPME:	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DSBD:	Department of Small Business Development
DTIC:	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
EFA:	Exploratory factor analysis
EPP:	Employment Promotion Programme
FET:	Further Education Training Institute.
FP&M:	Fibre processing & manufacturing
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GEM:	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
ICT:	Information and communication technology
ILO:	International Labour Organisation
IS/MES:	Informal Sector Micro Enterprises
KMO:	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
KZNCTC:	KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and Textile Cluster
MSE:	Micro and small enterprise

NVIVO: Qualitative Data Analysis Computer Software Package

OCEAN: Openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism

OLS: Ordinary least squares

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development,

PLS-SEM: Partial least squares - Structural equation model

PPE: Personal protection equipment

R&D: Research and development

RBV: Resource-based view

SAQA: South African Qualifications Authority

SARS: South African Revenue Service

SBE: Small business enterprise

SCP: Structure-conduct-performance

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SEM: Structural equation modelling

SETA: Sector Education and Training Authority

SME: Small and medium-sized enterprises

SMME: Small, medium and micro enterprises

SPSS: Statistical Package for Social Science

SSA: Sub-Saharan African

Stats SA: Statistics South Africa

TCLF: Textile, clothing, leather and footwear

TIPS: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies

UNCTAD: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDESA: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNESCO: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VIF: Valence inflation factor

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The micro-textile industry plays a crucial role in economic development by mobilising small-scale capital, fostering entrepreneurship, and creating job opportunities, in developing regions (Parthiban et al., 2024:03; National Archives, 2022:05). As an integral part of the informal sector, it contributes significantly to reducing regional imbalances by enabling localized production and encouraging innovation in textile manufacturing (Buquet, 2024:02). This industry serves as a bridge between informal textile production and formal modern technological advancements, providing an accessible entry point for entrepreneurs with limited resources but a strong vision for market-driven innovation (Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators, 2021; Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:19).

Micro-textile manufacturing is a highly competitive sector that thrives on differentiation, efficiency, and creativity (Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:1-2). Owing to its informal nature, businesses within this industry operate with flexible structures, allowing for rapid adaptation to market trends and consumer demands (Garrido-Moreno, Martín-Rojas, and García-Morales, 2024:12-13). Entrepreneurs in this sector continuously innovate, whether through unique designs, sustainable production methods, or technological enhancements, to establish a strong presence in the marketplace (Oluwadamilare, Kess-Momoh, Ibeh, Elufioye, Ilojiana, and Oyeyemi, 2024:555). The accessibility of micro-textile manufacturing enables small-scale enterprises to flourish, providing employment and economic stability to local communities while also contributing to the broader national economy (Goswami, 2025:06).

Formal and informal micro-businesses were recently conveyed by scholars such as Ayeni, (2025:02); Kunene (2018:12); and Mulibana and Rena, (2021:427) as adequately researched disciplines. Most of the research conducted revealed that formal and informal micro-businesses mobilise a significant portion of economic development in developed countries where the level of education is high, the inflation rate is low, and financial intermediaries play an evident role (Musa et al., 2021:100; Musa and Babatunde, 2025:2-3). Informal businesses in developed economies are

characterised primarily by motivated people creating employment with low levels of skilled personnel, accessibly organised markets and technology, making use of low and unstable incomes in adequate and noble working conditions (International Labour Office, 2020:09). On the other hand, formal sector enterprises in these developed economies are primarily organised and structured, concerned with profit maximisation (Abdallah, 2018:125-126).

The picture painted by Abdallah (2018:125-126) and Parthiban et al., (2024) of developing countries differs from that of developed economies in addressing formal and informal micro-businesses. Informal enterprises from several parts of sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries receive little benefit from their governments' support, thereby denying them a key developmental role to play in economic growth (Daramola and Etim, 2020:07). Anthony, (2024:07-09) found systematic financial exclusion in South Africa by further examining micro-enterprises. Among other issues highlighted is the ease with which financial institutions grant personal loans as opposed to business loans. Yogo, Kangoye, and Brixiová (2020:180) argue how business loans in developing countries are strategically critical for the manufacturing sectors to grow and develop industries.

This chapter covers a summary of the entire thesis, where the context and scope of the research are predominant. Chapter 2 covers the theoretical literature on how micro-textiles are managed in the industry. Chapter 3 comprises the applicability of Porter's generic strategy. Chapter 4 discusses the research methodology of the study. Chapter 5 covers the findings, analyses, and interpretation of the study, while Chapter 6 deals with the discussion and conclusion of the study. The background of the study is discussed in the next section.

1.2 THE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The global textile industry, valued at about \$1.6 trillion, remains a key driver of economic activity worldwide, fuelled by urbanisation, rising incomes, and fast fashion trends. Technological innovations and sustainability initiatives are reshaping production, while challenges such as cost competition and environmental regulations persist. China and India dominate manufacturing, whereas Europe and the U.S. lead in high-end and technical textiles.

In Africa, the textile sector is growing steadily, supported by trade agreements like African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), foreign investment, and sustainability programmes such as Cotton Made in Africa. However, the industry faces structural issues, including reliance on imports, infrastructure gaps, and competition from low-cost Asian products. Opportunities lie in ethical fashion, e-commerce, and regional trade integration.

South Africa's clothing and textile industry contributes about 1.7% to Gross domestic product (GDP) and provides significant employment. Despite government support through initiatives like the Retail-Clothing, Textile, Footwear, and Leather (R-CTFL) Master Plan, the sector struggles with cheap imports, high energy costs, and limited access to finance (Jenvey, 2020; Sydney, Kirkpatrick and Lee, 2020). Yet, local fashion demand, export potential, and digital platforms present growth opportunities.

Micro-textile and clothing industries are among the fastest-growing industries in the world's industrialisation landscape. While they face challenges in capital, technology, and market access, innovation, sustainability, and digitalisation offer pathways for growth and competitiveness. The ease with which new entrepreneurs can enter the market exacerbates competition (Khajuria and Singh 2018:202).

Since the textile (also known as fabric) and clothing (also known as garment) sectors may be treated as one sector, in principle they are two differing sectors (Costa, Azoia, Silva and Marques, 2020:87). The clothing industry mostly provides foundational expertise practised in developing countries, where labour is unskilled, with low entry-level requirements, and the costs of technological investment requirements are low (Ribeiro, 2024:37). On the other hand, textile production uses capital-intensive investments to process raw materials such as cotton, wool and silk to manufacture fabric (Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies, 2024:08). Skillset requirements in textile production entail spinning, weaving, knitting and finishing (Olowookere, 2025:131-132). However, for this study, textiles and clothing should be treated as closely related. At times, the terms are used interchangeably as both are similar socio-economically and in terms of trade policy.

The small-scale traditional textile production workflow involves intensive manual labour from creating designs to sewing the final garment (Chen, 2018:08). This small-

scale manufacturing textile sector has kept evolving. Technological advancements have led to the industry's development, offering multiple efficient technologies for manufacturers with an efficient and sustainable turnaround time (McKeegan, 2018). Small-scale micro clothing enterprises are typically labour-intensive, providing one to five jobs per enterprise at low salaries (Maliwichi et al., 2021:840-841). These small-scale micro clothing enterprises do not produce sufficient profit; they find meaning and purpose in sharing job security and kindness with others, as a core aspect of their business philosophy is intertwined with Ubuntu (Mohale, 2020). However, due to the continuous nature of the work, the organisation employs a limited number of skilled workers, who can be readily replaced. Measuring employment in the micro clothing sectors is difficult because of the large number of small enterprises and numerous homeworkers.

The sector provides small-scale employment opportunities by utilising local resources and reducing regional imbalances in the country by providing innovative opportunities (Goswami, 2025). Push-and-pull strategies in the supply chain are effective value chain approaches that contribute significantly to the economic development of the micro-textile sector (Milewski, 2025:01-02). They make a positive contribution to innovation by facilitating swift change in the economy (Choe and Ji, 2019:15). Ziane et al., (2025:220-221) asserts that innovative entrepreneurship is one of the key success factors for the growth of small enterprises.

A variety of typologies describe how organisations compete in the industries in which they operate to gain a competitive advantage. According to Porter (1998), a company can employ three main generic strategies: cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy. Setiawan and Farida (2022:3) contend that small and micro firms mostly choose between two strategies, namely cost leadership or differentiation strategies. Traditional textile and clothing businesses are designed for a cost leadership strategy. This requires firms to develop an optimal efficient scale of operation vigorously and maintain tight control of the firm's activity costs (Lauday, 2019:1). An alternative strategy is the differentiation strategy, which relates to a resource-based perspective. It posits that output from heterogeneous resources is difficult to imitate, making it distinguishable in the market and more attractive than competitors (Mind Tools, 2020; Robert, Lasch, Block, and Xi, 2021:799). Firms seek

to exploit firm-specific assets by producing products that are unique compared to those of rivals (Lokare, 2019). The differentiation strategy is not limited to the physical nature of the product but also includes distribution channels, marketing efforts, and after-sales service (Lumen, 2019). Ideally, firms seek to establish uniqueness within the industry. Once effective differentiation has been achieved, resistance to the forces of competition is attained (Latkovikj, Mustafa, and Islami, 2020:2).

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The third strategy is the focus strategy, which involves offering niche customers a specialised product or service that is customised to meet their tastes and preferences (Durie, 2017:67). The specificity requirements allow a firm to differentiate itself from competitors by servicing a particular market sector. The focus is to drive profitability and improve customer loyalty by taking into consideration factors such as buyer intimacy, specialised product or service, and specific customer market rather than the overall market (Latkovikj et al., 2020:3). It is thus directed towards serving the needs of a limited customer group (Camilleri, 2017:48). The strategy is based on the understanding that all organisational resources and efforts are directed towards engaging the niche market to achieve a competitive advantage over rivals who compete broadly across the market (Setiawan and Farida, 2022:2).

Since various companies opt for different generic strategies when competing, most formal organisations in the textile industry make use of a cost leadership strategy and differentiation strategies to attract customers (Suprihono et al., 2022:2-3). Organisations that are unable to direct resources to focus on strategic decisions are in danger of being stuck in the middle (Latkovikj et al., 2020:2). The danger of an organisation being stuck in the middle is that it fails to decide. It uses resources trying to be a cost leader or differentiator and even tries to use a focus strategy and,

ultimately, achieves neither, in the process confusing consumers (Kennedy, Jamison, Simpson, Kumar, Kemp, Awate and Manning, 2020:123).

1.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

The informal sector in South Africa is relatively small by international standards (Rogan, 2018). It provides livelihoods, employment and income for about 2.5 million workers and business owners (Fourie, 2019:730). One in every six South Africans works in the informal sector (Fourie, 2019:730). Small and micro-businesses are found in both the formal and informal sectors. For this study, the definition of an informal micro-enterprise is defined as a private enterprise employing under 10 employees. These organisations are not registered with the tax authorities for tax purposes, are without formal account-keeping exercises that enable financial separation of the enterprise from other activities of its owner/s (de Wet, 2019; Williams, Smith, Aaron, Manley and McDowell, 2019). According to the South African Companies Act (Act 71 of 2008), formal organisations are to be constituted as separate legal entities independent of owners.

Micro-textile and clothing enterprises in South Africa have implemented various initiatives to attract customers, meet shareholders' expectations, and withstand competition (Fourie, 2019:731). New entrants into this sector focus on survival, while established players strengthen their competitive advantage. According to Arianty and Julita (2019:177) competitive advantage is defined as a position that companies achieve through the creation of excellence by employing one of the three generic strategies. Notably, the textile industry in South Africa has few barriers to entry, with new firms easily entering the market. Additionally, the industry is characterised by a limited number of exporters of finished materials, primarily composed of micro-enterprises (Mokhethi, 2019:6).

Under the South African National Small Business Amendment Act of 2004, micro-enterprises are found in different sectors, varying from the manufacturing to the retail sectors. The intention of the South African National Small Business Amendment Act of 2004 is to increase the contribution of small enterprises to the South African economy and promote economic growth, job creation, and equity (Department of Small Business Development, 2019). The 2004 Act defines micro-enterprises as an

entity employing ten or fewer employees. Small businesses have between 10 and 50 employees, and medium-sized enterprises can have up to 250 employees.

The study therefore defines small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) according to size, turnover, activity, ownership and legal status, employing fewer than 250 employees and with a turnover of less than ZAR220 million. Entities with ten or fewer employees and a turnover of less than ZAR200 000 are categorised as micro-enterprises (MEs) (SARS, 2020). As illustrated in Table 1.0 below, South African organisations are classified into distinct categories, providing a detailed breakdown of different type of enterprises. Basson and Omoruyi (2025:02) notes that the SMME sector is largely unremunerated, with estimates indicating that it comprises approximately 60% of the workforce and contributes around 25% of industrial output in value terms across Africa (Basson and Omoruyi, 2025:02-03). For this study, a micro-textile enterprise is defined in accordance with the Department of Small Business Development (2019) as a legally registered single-owner managed business. Conversely, an informal micro-textile enterprise refers to a similarly structured single-owner operation that operates without formal legal registration. Throughout the study, both terms will be used interchangeably to reflect the shared structural characteristics of these enterprises.

Table 1.0 South African organisational classification

Sector or sub-sector within the Standard Industrial Classification	Size	Total full-time equivalent of paid employees	Total turnover	Total gross asset value (fixed property excluded)
Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises	Medium	51 – 250	R5m – R64m	R5m – R23m
Small Enterprises	Small	11 – 50	R3m – R4.9 m	R1m – R6m
Micro-Enterprises	Micro	Up to 10	Up to R0.2m	R0.10m

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2017)

The KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and Textile Cluster (KZNCTC) is a non-profit public-private sector partnership enterprise designed to enhance the competitiveness of the local apparel, textile, and footwear industry to ensure that it can compete in the global market (KZNCTC, 2017). The organisation is engaged in strategic partnerships with entities such as The Foschini Group Textile Cluster and the eThekweni Furniture

Cluster to discuss best-practice cost optimisation strategies that assist the KZNCTC members in growing (KZNCTC, 2020). The cluster has firm-level members, ranging from machine suppliers to design houses, Cut, Make and Trim (CMT) operations, clothing manufacturers, textile mills, and retailers (Matsoma, 2018:120-122).

It is estimated that SMMEs contribute to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the South African economy in significant proportions (Makanda and Ngalawa, 2025: 02-03). It is believed that the textiles industry contributes between 14-20% to the GDP, providing significant employment opportunities for an estimated 35% of African, Coloured and Indian women (Whitfield & Mkhabela, 2023:14). SMMEs are job creators, and innovators and contribute significantly to economic growth within low-income earners (Durie, 2017:97; Mungai and Ogot, 2017:154). Workers from these sectors cannot easily find alternative employment owing to limited skill diversification and the low rate of job creation within the sector (Wolcott, 2021:161-162).

In terms of garment production and employment, this industry is one of the largest industries in the province (KZNCTC, 2017). The textile industry, however, appears to be fragmented, with reduced export incentives, global price pressures and competition, cotton price volatility, logistics shortfall, and delays in infrastructure projects at different stages of the production process and different aggregate demand levels (Stewart, 2020; Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023).

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM, QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The core research problem focuses on addressing a notable knowledge gap in the existing literature concerning the conceptualisation and implementations of operational strategies of informal and micro textile businesses. This sector has become increasingly competitive, prompting the need to explore strategic approaches. Guided by Porter's typology of competitive strategies, the study aims to assess whether the strategies adopted by informal and micro textile businesses, typically single-owner enterprises align with this framework, and whether these strategies contribute positively to business performance. A critical concern is that many entrepreneurs in this sector enter the market primarily due to unemployment Bushe (2019:03); Mungai and Ogot (2017:149), without formal training or strategic expertise to effectively position their brands. Furthermore, Moore (2025:15) highlights that such

businesses, established under challenging circumstances, tend to struggle with sustainability, beyond the crucial first five years.

1.4.1 Research problem

This study seeks to address the existing knowledge gap identified by Wood and Bischoff (2019:34-35); Musaraa and Nieuwenhuizen (2019:195-196) regarding how informal and micro textile enterprises conceptualise and implement management strategies (Nkwana and Roberson, 2025:2). It investigates the challenges these entrepreneurs in Durban encounter in formulating and executing effective managerial approaches. Furthermore, the research explores the extent to which these enterprises can design customised strategies rooted in indigenous and normative concepts that align with their complex internal and external environments, as well as the mechanisms they employ to ensure successful implementation (Chrisman, 2019:66; Williams, 2017:87).

Standard practice is that Porter's generic strategies of cost leadership, differentiation, and focus provide an understanding of competitive approaches that businesses can adopt concerning their market positioning and competitive scope. However, according to Williams (2017:88), for micro-enterprises to use these generic strategies, they must possess the right combination of entrepreneurial competencies, an entrepreneurial mindset, characteristics, and business practices to compete effectively (Somers, 2019).

Thus, the study aims to explore specifically the behaviour of micro-textile entrepreneurs in developing their own generic strategies suitable for micro and informal enterprises when entering the textile garment production sector in the Durban area to gain a competitive advantage (Maireva and Magomana, 2021:180). Given the cultural diversity in Durban, the study focuses specifically on central Durban, with the expectation that its findings will provide an understanding of how productivity, logistics, and distribution can be optimised to withstand market competition.

1.4.2 Objectives of the study

The primary objective of the study is to assess how micro-entrepreneurs in micro-textiles sector access and use resources to conceptualise, plan and implement generic management strategies aimed at achieving competitiveness.

1. To assess whether micro-textile enterprises make use of generic strategies to survive the first crucial five-year phase.
2. To assess whether managerial strategies are designed according to the resource capability of the enterprise or according to the preference and personality traits of the micro-textile entrepreneur.
3. To assess whether micro-entrepreneurs deliberately conceive, plan and implement a management strategy to use or whether they default into one unintentionally.
4. To assess whether the use of technology assists micro-textile enterprises in the industry to achieve a competitive advantage; and
5. To assess whether the personality trait of the entrepreneur is organisationally aligned to or influenced by the African Ubuntu philosophy.

1.4.3 Research question of the study:

The research questions guiding this study are designed to explore and illuminate the researcher's key areas of inquiry, to make a distinctive contribution to an under-investigated area. By examining the following five questions, the researcher seeks to advance knowledge on existing literature gaps and provide understanding that contributes to the field:

1. Do micro-textile enterprises make use of generic strategies to survive the first crucial five-year phase?
2. Are managerial strategies designed according to the resource capability of the enterprise or according to preference and personality traits of the micro-textile entrepreneur?
3. Do micro-entrepreneurs deliberately conceive, plan and implement a management strategy to use or do they default into one undeliberate?
4. Can the use of technology assist micro-textile enterprises in the industry to achieve a competitive advantage?
5. Is the personality trait of the entrepreneur organisationally aligned to or influenced by the African Ubuntu philosophy?

It should be noted that micro-textile manufacturers in production and distribution in eThekweni face numerous challenges, including inadequate marketing strategies and a lack of technological advancement. These obstacles hinder their growth, competitiveness, and ultimately their ability to access markets, achieve liquidity, and maintain profitability, which can lead to business closure (Bushe, 2019:06). Various scholars such as Ansong (2021:800) and (Sharabati, et al., 2024) caution that marketing should not be perceived as an expense, but rather as a vital tool for the development and growth of micro-enterprises. According to Rahman (2017:239), marketing should be deemed a crucial factor in determining the growth potential of small-scale, rural-based income-generating operations. The road to selling for these entities is not easy, but the pride people feel when they trade what was made by all their hard work makes it worthwhile (Fuller, 2020; Sello, 2018; Vessella, 2024).

Providing micro-entrepreneurs with training and support on optimal pricing and price-setting strategies is crucial for their success. The marketing mix framework, which comprises the 4 Ps (product, price, place, and promotion), stresses the significance of price as a strategic lever that facilitates the exchange process by creating a conducive environment that influences customers' willingness to pay (Thabit and Raewf, 2018:100). Price affords potential customers the will or affordability to buy displayed goods. The difficulty for micro-enterprises to set prices and attend to other variables such as incurred costs, competitors' prices, demand, political factors, and environmental factors involved in fixing prices for goods and services, poses a sense of concern to SMEs in the eThekweni municipality (Ndwandwe and Khoza, 2026:01-02).

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research sought to offer practical solutions that support the growth and sustainability of the micro textile sector by enhancing the understanding of effective managerial strategies to navigate competitive challenges. The findings were expected to help extend the business life cycle, for enterprises that struggle to survive beyond their initial years of operation.

The study aimed to empower micro textile businesses in South Africa by equipping them with tools to better withstand market competition, providing them with knowledge

of strategic marketing and entrepreneurial skills that are crucial for entering the market with low barriers and intense competition.

The micro textile sector largely operates without regulation or oversight, presenting significant challenges in areas such as branding, financing, and the adoption of technology. Limited budgets, lack of financial documentation, and restricted access to modern tools further hinder growth. The study emphasised the importance of developing tailored marketing strategies and managerial approaches that are specifically suited to the unique conditions of this sector.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the systematic and structured methodology employed to gather information for the research study. Research methodology serves as a framework for determining the outcomes of a specific issue or research problem (Swarooprani, 2022:537). Within this framework, various philosophical approaches were applied to investigate and address the research problem. The research philosophy refers to a set of beliefs and assumptions regarding how data related to a phenomenon should be collected, analysed, and interpreted. It encompasses a systematic set of perspectives that guide the development of knowledge, providing a foundation for the research process (Bianchi, 2021:33). While this concept may seem abstract, it fundamentally underpins the research process, as it involves the systematic pursuit of knowledge within a field (Saunders et al., 2019: 236).

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is defined by Islam (2020) as a process of cleaning, transforming, and modelling data to discover useful information for business decision-making. In this study, an analysis of both qualitative data and quantitative data was carried out sequentially, with more emphasis placed on qualitative data, whilst quantitative data played a cross-verification role for the same information to strengthen validity in the research study.

1.7.1 Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis, content analysis, and discourse analysis. Themes or patterns were used to represent ideas, incidents, concepts, interactions, behaviours, phrases, and terminology. The use of the Nvivo software package enabled the categorisation of information into themes and sub-themes. Recurring themes were then applied in the text to extract themes that apply to the data. This was applicable owing to the thorough reading of the transcripts and field notes that make up the data. Content refers to sub-themes or specific issues explaining the major themes. Discourse focuses on the conversational aspect between the researcher and respondent, exploring how respondents articulate their ideas and experiences. Specifically, it examines how respondents identify with and express their emotions towards the businesses they operate, ranging from passion and enthusiasm to discouragement and emotional connection.

The qualitative data were systematically categorised to identify recurring patterns that highlighted meaningful connections and relationships. To illustrate the prevalence of these emerging themes, the findings were presented using frequency counts and bar charts. Subsequent analysis of these themes provided deeper insights into underlying trends and significant relational dynamics within the dataset. The qualitative analysis was used to complement and enhance the quantitative findings, providing a richer understanding of the data. The qualitative results were presented in thematic categories, content analysis, and discussion, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of textile micro-entrepreneurs in conceptualising, planning, and implementing strategies.

1.7.2 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data analysis involves calculating the frequencies of variables and identifying differences between variables. Correlations were also calculated to assess how variables influenced each other on average. A quantitative approach is usually associated with finding evidence to either support or reject hypotheses formulated at the earlier stages of the research process. The study employed analysis of variance, Pearson correlation techniques, and structural equation modelling.

The results complement the qualitative data, indicating that experiences and personality traits, as well as contextual factors, have a significant impact on micro-enterprise entrepreneurs, positively influencing their strategy, and guiding businesses to achieve a competitive edge. Consistent with experience, increased demand for products can lead to business growth, potentially prompting expansions to larger facilities, such as manufacturing plants, which can reduce costs and boost sales. However, global competitiveness in terms of quality, price, and supply chain management poses a threat to the industry's viability. This study was conducted with a 95% confidence level, which was determined based on the expected prevalence or variance of the main outcome variable and the required margin of accuracy or error. The confidence level ensures that the results revealed by the survey findings are accurate and reliable.

Sample sizes are more manageable for statistical analysis than working on the entire population. Using an unbiased sampled representation that is easily observed and measured gives one adequate information about the entire population (Peters, 2017). Selecting a representative sample in quantitative research is important as it enables one to generalise the results to the target population (Omair, 2014). Quantitative research collects numerical data that is statistically quantified to measure attitudes, behaviour, and performance. This numerical data provides results in percentages that are easier to interpret. Utilising a series of tests and techniques, quantitative research will yield data that is projectable to a larger population.

1.8 THESIS STRUCTURE

The structure of this thesis was arranged according to the standards of academic guidelines. The first chapter, which introduces the study, was followed by two literature review chapters, the methodology chapter, the presentation and discussion of results, and the conclusion and recommendation summarising the entire study. A succinct explanation of the chapter was covered in the next sub-sections.

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Micro-textile entrepreneurs: Individuals who own or operate small-scale businesses in the textile industry, producing garments, accessories, or fabric-based products with limited resources and workforce.

Ubuntu: A Southern African philosophy emphasising communal values, compassion, and mutual respect. It is summarised as "I am because we are," highlighting interconnectedness and collective humanity.

Entrepreneurial personality: A set of traits commonly associated with successful entrepreneurs, such as risk-taking, innovation, resilience, proactiveness, and a strong internal drive to achieve goals.

Entrepreneur: A person who identifies a business opportunity, takes the initiative to organise resources, and assumes the risk to start and manage a business venture.

Micro-entrepreneurs: Entrepreneurs who run very small businesses, typically with fewer than five employees and limited capital investment, operating in informal or local markets.

Micro-textile firms: Small-scale textile businesses that produce or sell fabric-related products, characterised by low production volumes, limited market reach, and informal operations.

Voluntarist theory: A theory in entrepreneurship that emphasises individual agency, suggesting that success is primarily driven by personal choices, traits, and actions rather than external factors.

Continuous development of knowledge: The ongoing process of acquiring, updating, and refining skills and information to remain relevant and competitive in a changing environment.

Skill: The ability to perform tasks or activities effectively, acquired through training, experience, or education.

Seamsters/Seamstresses: Skilled individuals who sew garments or fabric items, either by hand or using machines. Seamster is a gender-neutral term, while seamstress traditionally refers to a female.

Dressmakers: Professionals who design, cut, and sew custom clothing, especially dresses, working directly with clients to create tailored garments.

Segmentation: A marketing strategy that involves dividing a broad target market into smaller, more defined groups based on shared characteristics such as demographics, behaviour, or needs.

Structuralist theory: A theory that attributes entrepreneurial outcomes to structural factors such as economic conditions, institutional frameworks, and social systems, rather than individual traits.

Marketing strategies: Plans and actions designed to promote and sell products or services, including pricing, promotion, distribution, and product positioning to reach target customers effectively.

Micro-enterprises: Very small businesses, typically with fewer than 10 employees and minimal capital investment, operating in informal sectors or local markets.

Generic strategies: Broad strategic approaches used by businesses to gain competitive advantage, commonly categorised as cost leadership, differentiation, and focus (according to Michael Porter's framework).

1.10 CONCLUSION

Considering the challenges facing the South African economy, including high unemployment rates, rising inflation, and limited entrepreneurship initiatives, it becomes prudent to evaluate the competitiveness of micro-entrepreneurs, in the textile industry. The industry is characterised by low entry costs and investment costs, indicating a high potential for eradicating unemployment among the poor. In West and Central Africa, the tailoring retail trade employs 1.2 million people, representing 29% of the workforce, comparable to textile mill products in six European Economic Community countries: Switzerland, Denmark, Austria, the United Kingdom, Ireland, and Turkey.

The research study was conducted in Durban, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa. The study aimed to assess the competitiveness of generic management strategies among micro-textile entrepreneurs. A mixed methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods. This approach allowed the researcher to gather rich and diverse data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon. The data was analysed using SPSS and NVivo software packages to facilitate an in-depth understanding and interpretation of the findings, revealing meaningful insights and patterns. The next chapter will discuss the theoretical literature covering the theoretical framework, South African management strategies, micro textile use of generic strategies, and micro-entrepreneurs' deliberation of management strategies and use of technology.

Chapter 1. Introduction

This chapter contains the background, rationale, aim, and objectives, conceptual framework, and theoretical frameworks of the study, as well as the chapter's summary. This chapter also serves as an introduction to the study as a whole and the context of the study.

Chapter 2. Theoretical Literature

The chapter discussed different management strategies, including typologies of micro-entrepreneurs operating in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). The study introduces Ubuntu's philosophy as a management strategy and explains how micro-textiles use generic strategies. The chapter further discussed micro-entrepreneurs' deliberation of management strategies and concludes with the use of technology in the micro-textile industry.

Chapter 3. Applicability of Porter Generic Strategies

This chapter discussed the applicability of Porter's generic strategies in micro-businesses. These typologies are extensively discussed in their multidimensional and unidimensional classifications. Various geographical locations within the African continent are discussed, considering the applicability of the strategies in micro-businesses. The study explored the geographical nuances of the African continent, examining the applicability of competitive strategies in micro-businesses across various regions. Specifically, the research focuses on the western, eastern, and

southern parts of the continent, investigating the suitability and effectiveness of these strategies in different cultural, economic, and environmental contexts.

Chapter 4. Research Design and Methodology

This chapter focuses on selecting a suitable research methodology for this study. A detailed plan of the empirical study, including techniques, methods of data collection, and analysis, is explained in this chapter. A relevant research design is discussed, starting with the logic of inquiry and followed by the research paradigm. The mixed methods approach of the current study is subsequently elaborated on in terms of typology, shortcomings, and rationale.

Chapter 5. Presentation of Results and Discussion of Data Findings

This chapter presented the study's findings, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative results were introduced first, followed by the qualitative findings, to systematically address the research questions. The chapter included descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, with an emphasis on structural equation modelling, to uncover relationships and validate theoretical constructs. Qualitative data from interviews enriched the analysis by revealing nuanced perspectives from micro-textile entrepreneurs. Recommendations were presented to guide strategic planning and policy development within the sector. Ultimately, a synthesis was developed by combining conclusions and findings through both theoretical and empirical analyses.

Chapter 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presented a discussion of the results in relation to the study's aim and objectives, highlighting their implications. The chapter commenced with an introduction that outlined the purpose and scope. A summary of the theoretical framework was then presented, highlighting the key concepts and frameworks that informed the research. This was followed by a summary of the empirical findings, which were discussed in relation to the research objectives. The implications of the findings for micro-textile enterprises were then examined, with recommendations provided for the use of strategic competitive strategies to enhance their competitiveness and sustainability in a rapidly changing environment. This chapter concluded by drawing together the theoretical and empirical threads of the study, highlighting their contributions to the field and avenues for future research.

CHAPTER 2 - THEORETICAL LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter provided an overview of the research methodology employed in this study. This chapter shifts focus to a review of generic management strategies implemented by micro-textile enterprises. To contextualise this discussion, the chapter begins by examining management strategies from a South African perspective, followed by an exploration of how micro-textile enterprises implement generic management strategies in their operations. To provide a clearer understanding of the industry, the chapter presents a typology of micro-textile enterprises within the national context. This typology serves as a foundation for the subsequent discussion on generic management strategies, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the industry's characteristics and challenges.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is the foundational structure that upholds or supports a theory of the research (Kivunja, 2018:46; University of Southern California, 2023). In this research study, the theoretical framework introduces strategies used by the MEs entering the informal market in pursuit of competitive advantage. A theory by Porter (1985:38) posits that companies advance different strategies depending on their strengths, resources and skill sets. The theory bases its hypothesis on Porter's theory which postulates that businesses can achieve and sustain success by adopting either a cost leadership strategy or a differentiation strategy without necessarily applying an empathetic or sympathetic ingredient (Ghobadi, 2023; Ketchen and Short, 2012:179). In addition to the two commonly used strategies (cost leadership and differentiation) is focus strategy - mostly used to target the niche market. Porter's theoretical framework is briefly sketched in Figure 1.1 below, illustrating the use of generic strategies by formal enterprises to survive competition.

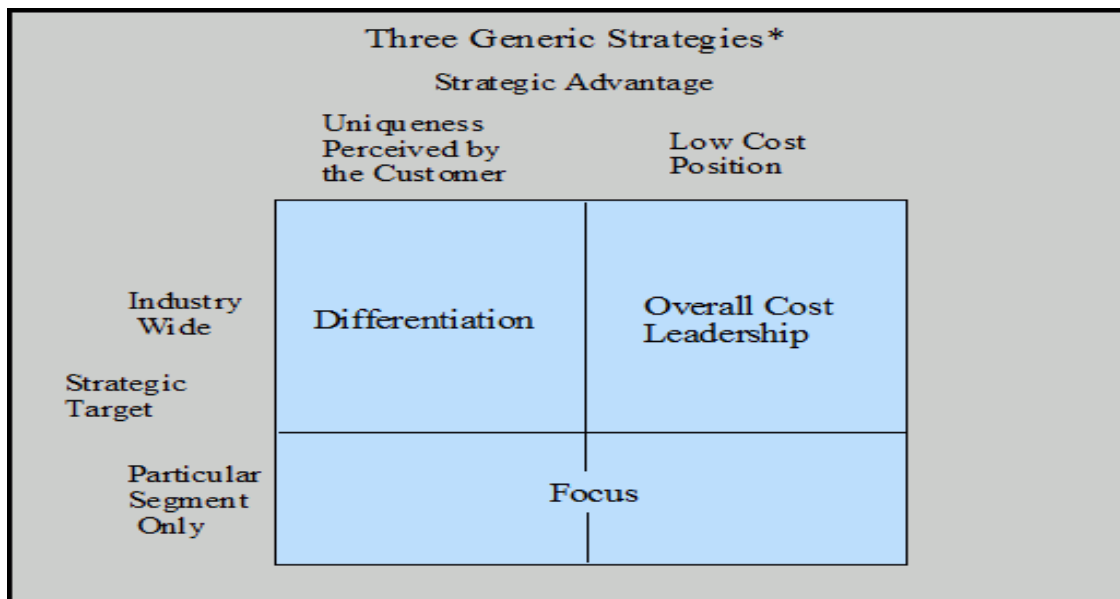


Figure 2.1 Porter's competitive strategies

Source: Porter (1980, p. 39)

Porter (1980:39) proposes that firms pursue any of the three recommended generic competitive strategies in accordance with their resource capabilities. The recommended strategies are cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy. An organisation can opt for the best befitting strategy to survive competition, be more profitable, and increase the market share. To understand how this works, the study investigates the owner-manager generic strategy by creating an appropriate strategy befitting resource capabilities to enable adaptable environmental challenges. In most cases a strategy is concerned with several activities, one way being how micro-businesses differentiate themselves from the competition (Williams Jr. et al., 2019:2379) The theoretical framework is set to assist in assessing whether the personality traits of micro-enterprise leaders striving to lead their firms to sustainability and success are associated with the generic strategy (Kivunja, 2018:52).

2.2.1 Micro-enterprises and generic strategies

The two most widely practised strategies by micro-enterprises are cost leadership and differentiation strategies (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:1-2). Cost leadership strategy asserts that price sensitivity is achieved by having minimal costs with a strong value proposition (Leonard, 2025). Micro-enterprises in the textile industry that adopt a cost leadership strategy prioritise cost minimisation by limiting expenditures on advertising and other promotional activities, thereby maintaining a competitive edge

through low prices (Suprihonoa, et al., 2022). Generic business-level strategies are a general way of positioning a firm within an industry (Kennedy et al., 2020:130). Secondly, the differentiation strategy pursues a certain distinctiveness in goods and services concerning competitors (Kivunja, 2018:52). Successful use of a differentiation strategy depends on not only offering unique features but also communicating the value of these features to potential customers (Kennedy et al., 2020).

The study specifically seeks to demonstrate how MEs can implement cost leadership differentiation strategies to become competitive and challenge existing markets under development hurdles and lack of competitiveness (Kenosi, 2020:59). Kleinsorge, Boulding, Schmitt and Pen (2016) argue that some of the challenges such as distribution costs are shared within the industry by all players in publicising their marketing initiatives to become competitive internationally.

2.2.1.1 Corporate strategy

Formal enterprises devise policies and procedures that guide management with decisions and internal actions required for the enterprise to be relevant and competitive (Pasteur and Henderson, 2018:15). Such actions include strategies, tactics and regulation compliance for the entity to be recognised as a legal entity. Corporate strategies are initialised at the highest level of strategic decision-making level of the firm. These functions require strategy formulation whereby resources are convened to form a vision, mission, acquisition and allocations to achieve long-term objectives (Magang and Magang, 2018:68; Musa and Babatunde, 2025). This sharing and applying of resources require participation from all stakeholders. The exercise is inclusive of employees, management and communities within which a company is situated for there to be a successful accomplishment of goals and objectives (Musa, et al., 2021). Big corporates follow an elaborate system of strategy formulation, implementation and control at different levels in the company to survive and grow (Pasteur and Henderson, 2018:15).

Informal sector managers adopt an entrepreneurial survivalist *modus operandi*. The business operates with a highly personalised preference, prejudice, and attitude of the owner-manager. This brings to the fore challenges regarding the strategies adopted (Gbadamosi, 2020:02). The manager does not initiate their own way of doing business; instead, the market dictates at what price to sell, suppliers dictate discounts

and competitive rivals dictate profits. Management is mostly carried by market current, becoming a product necessity pusher and ending up stiffening competition (Ledingoane and Viljoen, 2020:01).

2.2.1.2 Business-level strategy

In defining a business-level strategy, Emeritus (2022) refers to it as the entire strategic planning and implementation of decisions and activities undertaken by a business to steering the vision and mission. Levels of business strategy depend on the goal that every part of an organisation wants to achieve. These levels are formulated for each product division, known as the strategic business unit (Pasteur and Henderson, 2018:16). Business level strategies carried out in each business unit of the organisation deploy resources where every unit is expected to achieve higher efficacy.

A different perspective is observed in the informal and micro-business settings. Business-owner behaviour and entrepreneurial acumen is positively associated with high-growth probability for firms (Blackburn, Hart and Wainwright, 2013:11). Performance becomes linked to growth aspirations and the motivations of owner-managers (Blackburn et al., 2013:11). This, however, becomes applicable if planning and strategy development are actively engaged. Business-level strategy in micro-businesses and informal traders is inevitably intertwined with business owners themselves and business organisations (Durie, 2017:57). The boundaries in running this type of business make lines of demarcation blur for business owners as they perform any function and do everything in the business (Plancover, 2022).

Successful small businesses positively correlate with the entrepreneur's level of entrepreneurial acumen (Ligthelm, 2014:11432). In broad terms, entrepreneurship literature divides entrepreneurs into two main categories: necessity-driven entrepreneurs and opportunity-driven entrepreneurs (Ligthelm, 2014:11418). Necessity-driven entrepreneurs are those who are forced by circumstance into setting up a business because that is the only way they can earn a living. Their enterprises are of a survivalist nature (Ligthelm, 2014:11424).

Businesses follow different strategies to survive and grow within a competitive environment. MEs and informal businesses specifically follow a competitive strategy launched on a small scale to penetrate the market and aim to achieve break even.

2.2.1.3 Functional strategy

Functional-level strategy is characterised by a strong emphasis on achieving corporate and business unit objectives and strategies by maximising resource productivity (Vasu, 2018:07). It is a strategy designed to create and achieve competitive advantage. Gordon (2023) is of the view that functional strategy generally requires a unit and employees to develop specific competencies that are required to provide the business unit with a competitive advantage in resource capabilities.

The painted narrative poses a challenge for MEs and informal enterprises as they are generally owner-managed or single-employee operated. The separation of the three levels of operational strategies within these entities are stifled from growing by three factors, namely internal, external and a combination of both. Internal factors refer to the managerial ability to make the right decision, the capability to manage scarcity and the ability to know resource capability (Plancover, 2022). The second factor is external factor defined as management of external resources to increase the amount of sales and output. This further suggests that the quality of output of the processes is to be judged on the amount of growth factors such as profit, market share and assets (Plancover, 2022).

In developing countries such as South Africa, challenges negatively affect profitability and growth of businesses owing to unconducive business environments, such as the unavailability of electricity, poor road infrastructure, and e-commerce challenges, thus threatening the long-term survival of micro-enterprises (Letuka and Lebambo, 2023:1829). Debilitating growth among MEs and affirm Ekberg and Hedell's (2013:103) views that most startups begin small and die small.

The ability to make own business decisions is regarded as positive for the entrepreneur in this aspect. As a business owner, one seeks to make decisions, either negative or positive, in respect to the organisation. It is from this aspect that entrepreneurs' functional strategy incentivises managers to work harder for success.

2.2.2 Conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is an analytical tool that is used to gain a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon (Creately, 2021). It is the logical conceptualisation of an entire research project. This implies that it is a metacognitive, reflective and

operational element of the entire research process (Ariel and Dunlosky, 2011:104; Kivunja, 2018:47). It is composed of high-order consideration of the questions issues about the research. It is used in different fields of research, the most common being to explain the relationships between key concepts or variables and the need to study them (Swaen, 2020).

MEs are initially involved in small production and distribution operations within a certain radius owing to financial and manufacturing lead-time capability. Micro-entrepreneurs launch businesses for survival and employment (Robert et al., 2021:798). Production, distribution and labour costs are usually a high-end stage of production. This puts the micro-textile sector in Durban under high pressure as consumers in Durban are price sensitive. This makes these micro-manufacturers cautious in their attempt to avert overpricing, as most of their textile customers are in the surrounding areas. However, for manufacturers with a wider distributional network, their pricing model allows them to price higher in compensating for an increased operational cost.

In their lack of financial resources, micro-businesses do not have leeway to use management strategies that are wasteful or easily duplicated. They are expected to use well-developed innovative strategies to take advantage of ever-changing conditions (Shlensky, 2015). This is in alignment with the theory of the resource-based view (RBV) which states that organisational resources which are valued, rare and difficult to duplicate or substitute are a significant contributor to competitive advantage (Holdford, 2018:01; Edwards, 2012). Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that supply chain disruptions can have a disproportionately severe financial impact on SMMEs compared to large corporations. This highlights the significance of exploring the resilience and adaptability of SMMEs in the face of supply chain challenges. Furthermore, this discussion touches on the longstanding debate regarding whether entrepreneurship is an innate trait or a skill that can be developed (Dawson Consulting, 2019).

Samusodza (2018) laments the high failure rate of micro-business in South Africa, because 70% do not reach their fifth anniversary (Bushe, 2019:09). Many of the failures are a result of entrepreneurs' inability to take advantage of economic markets, lack of developmental support and misunderstanding of marketing demands (Leboea,

2017:17). This makes the government's establishment of an incubator business development services crucial. Many entrepreneurs lack basic marketing skills, financial human resources and strategic management skills owing to low levels of education and South Africa's historical economic background (Leboea, 2017:119). The development of incubator business support programmes can prevent entrepreneur failures if handholding support by institutions offering specialised incubation programmes is structured accordingly for each region (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2022).

An incubator's main goal is to produce successful MSEs with an array of targeted resources and services (Department of Trade Industry and Competition, 2021). Without information and knowledge on budgets to match large corporations, it is a significant challenge to achieve the levels of visibility required for an organisational supply chain to be competitive (Dawson Consulting, 2019). The objective of incubators in South Africa is to support the development of SMEs through the early stages. The support comes with a combination of several services such as business development services, funding and access to the physical space necessary to conduct a business (Department of Trade Industry and Competition, 2021).

According to Bhorat, Asmal, Lilenstein and Van Der Zee (2018:47) SMMEs in South Africa face significant challenges, including financial exclusion and limited access to credit. The sector is characterised by limited access to information technology and inadequate market infrastructure and insufficient marketing and logistical support (Qureshi, 2020). Moreover, the micro sector is plagued by inadequate credit flow and limited exposure to best management practices, hindering the development of effective manufacturing, marketing, distribution and brand initiatives (Leboea, 2017:120). Additionally, the micro-enterprise sector experiences severely restricted credit flow and limited exposure to best practices in management, manufacturing, marketing, distribution, and branding initiatives (Ecosystem Development for Small Enterprise, 2020). The non-availability of raw materials or an increase in the price of raw materials without a corresponding increase in the sales price of the products makes it difficult to compete (Yadav and Vikas Tripathi, 2018:51). Entry of many poor-quality manufacturers leads to cut-throat competition. Moreover, a lack of sales

promotion with poor or non-existent delivery schedules results in inefficient distribution arrangements.

The proposed conceptual framework developed for this study adopts Porter's generic strategies in conceptualising business strategy in SMMEs. The research study uses an exploratory research design to study variables used by micro-entrepreneurs to enter into the market within the informal and micro-textile industry space. The variables in question entails the dependent and independent variables used to deliver goods to customers the micro-textiles entrepreneurs and prospective clients or customers (Figure 2.2).

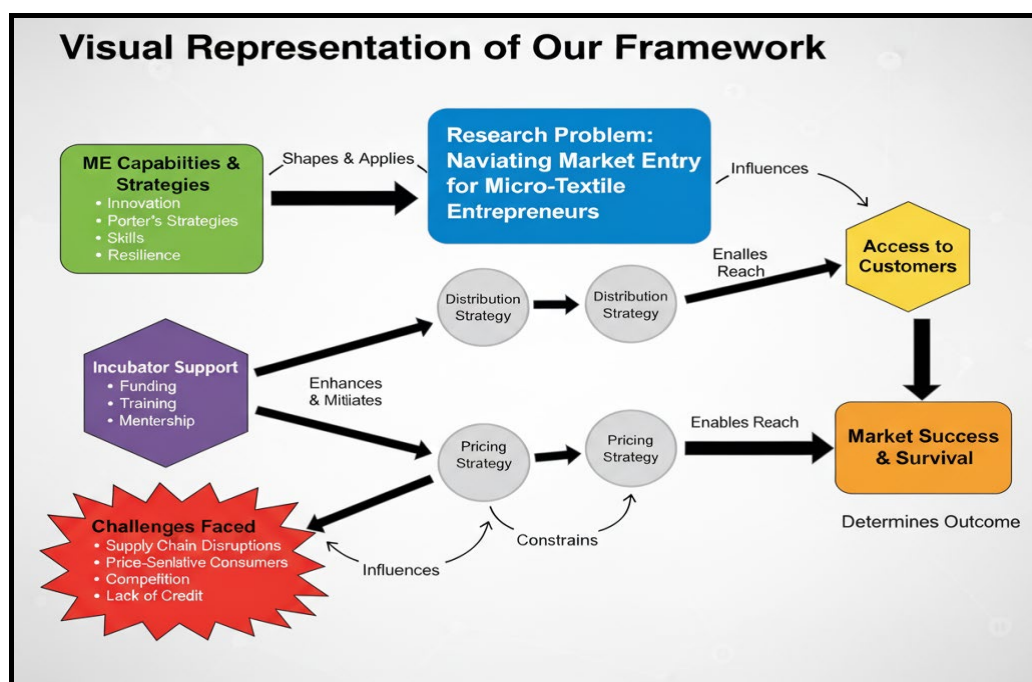


Figure 2.2: Conceptual model

Source: constructed Model

Figure 2.2 gives an exploratory narrative, allowing investigation on dependent variables interaction to explain the success or failure rates of micro-enterprises, specifically in the informal and micro textiles industry. The Framework hypothesises that micro enterprises capabilities and strengths directly shape distribution channels and pricing strategy. Their market and supply chain environment significantly constrains the strategies and presents challenges for micro enterprises. Lack of effective distribution channels and appropriate branding strategies which are dependent variables are crucial for growth hamper access to prospective customers. Ultimately, the success of micro enterprises relies on the entrepreneur's integration and

navigation of the environmental factors determining the organisations market success and survival. It is from this model that the South African context emanates.

2.3 SOUTH AFRICAN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND PERSONALITY

TRAITS

South Africa, an upper-middle-income country, boasts a population of approximately 63.6 million people and is widely regarded as the most developed nation on the African continent (Davids and Jardine, 2020:1432). Historically, its economy was the largest on the continent until 2014, when Nigeria surpassed it (Akinso, 2018:20; Ogunlesi, 2016). Notably, South Africa's economy is characterised as a two-tiered system, marked by a stark divide between a well-developed, minority-benefiting sector and a less skilled, economically marginalised majority, largely relegated to informal, unskilled and precarious work arrangements (Ogunlesi, 2016; Kristiansen and Booyens, 2011:05). A study by Nzewi and Masuku (2021:60) asserts that the South African informal sector constitutes just over 2.5 million people. This makes 20% of the total employment of the country with a contribution of just over 5% of the GDP (Nzewi and Masuku, 2021:60). Informal micro-enterprises do not comply with basic registration requirements, causing challenges for government authorities to account for unknown quantities. For compliance, enterprises are to be registered with one of the government departments such as the South African Revenue Service (SARS) or the Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO) (Frosch, 2019:66; Nzewi and Masuku, 2021:59).

Studies by Nzewi and Masuku (2021:66) and Oelz (2017) suggest constraints faced by the informal business sector comprise low education levels; lack of managerial, marketing and production skills; a low-skilled work base; and the low purchasing power of their consumers (Mungai and Ogot, 2017:148). The South African formal economy is exclusionary and biased against the black majority who face challenges of capital resources necessary for establishing a business enterprise.

Although financial resources are the most highlighted form of capital, some scholars and practitioners emphasise psychological resources are as important as finances (Baluku et al., 2016:15; Witt, Schroeter and Merz, 2010:291-292). There are other forms of capital, including human capital and social capital, which may be equally important for entrepreneurial start-ups. The entrepreneur's ability to use start-up

capital appropriately is observably affected by the individual's character (Baluku et al., 2016:14). The resources used by micro-entrepreneurs vary in nature and include money, personal property, business knowledge and skills as well as experience (Baluku et al., 2016:14). This study develops on the ethos of Kovaleva and De Vries (2016:84) by advancing on the personality traits of micro-entrepreneurs impacting the performance of the enterprise. The theory is further advanced by Okyere (2017:160) on how leadership, especially in micro-enterprises, is an important management function in pursuing the collective Ubuntu operational goals of a firm to success.

In South Africa, personality traits have shaped the ideas and goals of entrepreneurs (Machi and Kunene, 2018:235). They form characteristics, system of values and aspirations, and resemblance between the entrepreneur's strategies and objectives that companies are planning to achieve (Lobontiu, 2002). Entrepreneurial personality traits such as self-efficacy, passion, vision and tenacity influence an individual's ability to perform entrepreneurial activities, thus influencing business strategy formulation (Mamabolo, Kerrin and Kele, 2017:02). The lack of these strategic resources by micro-enterprises has deprived many organisations of a conventional management strategy. At times, for micro-entrepreneurs in developing markets the most important aspect is to lead businesses to survive critical periods and growth (Mamabolo et al., 2017:02; Solesvik, 2012:11).

By following the personality trait preference of entrepreneurs, it has at times been observed that resource capability becomes critical for setting up business modes and tones (O'Reilly, 2021:223). An equally important aspect of this resource is conventional strategic management, an ingredient set to assist achieve competitive advantage. Nkate (2019) highlights the significance of integration and integrated thinking in the workplace as a crucial component of successful strategy implementation. Furthermore, embracing the concept that "everybody matters" based on the Ubuntu concept constitutes a crucial element of managerial strategy (Machi and Kunene, 2018:233). Fostering an environment where individuals can authentically be themselves, organisations can leverage the unique strength and perspectives of their workforce to drive strategic success (Nkate, 2019).

An intellectual analysis by scholars Amar (2015:344), Bezuidenhout (2018:23), Bressler (2015:01) and Nkulu (2012:08) found that informal enterprises, micro-

enterprises and small businesses do not use managerial generic strategies to achieve competitive advantage. They are of the view that these types of organisations are not equipped to respond to competition in a conventional manner such as corporates (Amar, 2015:344; Bressler, 2015:08). Bardak and Rosso (2019) contend that informal enterprises, micro-enterprises and small businesses rely more on an entrepreneur's personality for success. Farrington (2018:383) adds that the personality trait of a business leader influences the strategic decision processes and strategic actions of a firm, ultimately having implications for the firm's success. One of the significant traits is empathy towards fellow citizenry with owner-managed enterprises inundated by customer concession requests in the micro-sectors.

2.3.1 Ubuntu philosophy as management strategy

In Africa, an ancient philosophy in metaphysical beliefs, axiological values, and epistemological base is reported to have existed within Africa's earliest societies (Shishigu and Ali, 2020:04). It is founded in indigenous education entrenched in an old African concept called Ubuntu that existed long before the days of colonisation (Msila, 2015:45). Ubuntu is a way of life that was similar to a religion in African societies. Ubuntu means to sacrifice for others selflessly, caring and protecting your fellow human beings. It is this way of life that has shaped African physiology and philosophy. The solidarity spirit of Ubuntu simultaneously supports cooperation and competitiveness by allowing individuals to contribute their best efforts for the betterment of their groupings through the formation of synergistic relationships.

In a study by Louw and Eaton (2010:211) African informal micro-enterprises are characterised by a collective orientation, with an emphasis on shared responsibility rather than individualism. Entrepreneurs within this sector prioritise community needs over personal gain, with empathy deeply ingrained in their entrepreneurial profiles. This communal ethos may explain the extended business infancy, spanning 12 to 15 years. A notable example of this collective approach is the sharing of procurement and supplier sources with competitors. For instance, a textile entrepreneur seeking specific materials may readily inquire about a competitor's supplier, and the competitor is willing to disclose this information. This behaviour emphasises that the strategic focus of these businesses is not on achieving success at the expense of competitors, but

rather on ensuring long-term survival and sustainability within the industry (Khadem, Alzubi and Ramadan, 2024:02)

The Western educational philosophy has depreciated the African ubuntu philosophy to be superstition and misapplication in understanding. Indigenous African philosophy is rooted in the philosophy of ubuntu, which furthers dependability, teamwork, interconnectedness, and caring being led by a collective vision, performance, loyalty, openness, honesty and transformational leadership. Leaders and managers can use the wisdom of this ancient African philosophy to create more humane and productive workplaces (Msila, 2015:10). According to Mgeni (2015:4), there is a direct relationship between the business performance of the organisation and the sustainable growth of the organisation. This theory reveals how the relationship between the leadership styles of micro-business owners/managers and organisational performance in the African context has a causal effect (Adamu, 2023:03).

Generic strategy typology is a component of social and human capital theory, which informs Western entrepreneurship (Setiawan and Farida, 2022:1-2). This theoretical framework is relevant to the application of social and human capital in medium and large organisations (Mungai and Ogot, 2017:149). In the three main generic strategies, namely cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy and focus strategy, Porter advances that pure strategies are better than hybrid ones (Hansen, Nybakk and Panwar, 2015:55). It is only after the pronounced success of this finding (Porter) that intensive reviews by many scholars revealed differing views (Alharb et al., 2022:1-3; Alnoor, Khaw, Chew, Abbas and Khattak, 2023:179-180; Hansen et al., 2015:51; Miller, 1992; Snow and Miles, 1978:546).

Acquaah (2013:108) and Porter (1998) are of the view that value is created from the repeated formal and informal interpersonal relationships created between business and community cultural, traditional and religious leadership. The creation of competitive advantage is desired by Western management philosophy as it is the epitome of value creation (Ogorean, 2016:90). This paradigm is opposed by indigenous African knowledge that thrives in communal collective ubuntu togetherness as a business strategy. This African ubuntu-style consensus decision-making usually makes the implementation stage more successful (Damane and Mangaliso, 2001:24).

2.3.2 Ubuntu as a differentiation strategy

A differentiation strategy is based on persuading customers that a product is superior in some way to competitors' offerings. In differentiation strategies, the emphasis is on creating value through uniqueness, rather than the lowest cost (Acquaah, 2013:106; Bordean, Catalina and Răzvan, 2010:174; Porter, 1998:79). A differentiation strategy focuses on developing a product or service that is unique or perceived to be unique in the minds of customers to create a competitive advantage.

Man, Kumar, Kumar and Mann (2009:05) view the objective of a business strategy as being able to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage over rival firms. A positional advantage is normally gained by positioning the firm as a cost leader or a product (differentiation) leader in the industry. The uniqueness of products or services enables firms to appeal to a diverse range of customers to a variety of customers and satisfy the desire of niche markets. By pursuing uniqueness, firms can maintain a sustainable competitive advantage, thereby creating above-average value for their customers and above-average profits for themselves. Resources dictate strategy for both informal and formal micro-organisations. The informal sector, also referred to as the informal economy, operates in an unregulated economy, unorganised sectors, or unobserved employment. MEs in the informal sector are mostly conceptualised and managed without business plans or business strategies (Bushe, 2019:10; Nasrullah, 2012:72; Nkulu, 2012:09 and Vrchota and Švárová, 2013:2860).

Informal MEs do not have a business strategy or a strategic plan, and if they have one, they misapply it (Amar, 2015:344; Bezuidenhout, 2018:73). Formal micro-firms are not always equipped to respond in the same manner to competition as large companies as a result of their level of financial capability, access to markets and human capital (Bogenhold, Bonnet, Dejardin and De Lema, 2016:16). They do, however, use the skills and knowledge of managers. For their success, they depend on the personality traits of the entrepreneur or manager. MSEs are noted for sizeable proportions of urban employment and are also considered vital components of South Africa's urban economies (Debela, 2014:05). Hence, marketing strategy forms part of the broader corporate strategy and involves the crucial decisions of the top-level management.

2.4 MICRO-TEXTILES MAKING USE OF GENERIC STRATEGIES TO SURVIVE

Africa is a diverse and vast geographical location comprising abundant resources even though it is characterised by poor emerging markets. The continent faces challenges of infrastructure connectivity with minimal regional integration, making stimulation of economic trade a challenge (Deloitte Report, 2017:23 and Muteshi and Kariuki, 2020:140). However, MEs from this challenged market environment are expected to compete and implement business theories developed from western epistemologies, where no African or Pan African ideology permeates (Sisulu, 2022). Expecting an African philosophical ME to conceptualise, plan and implement Eurocentric corporate strategies should be considered inappropriate (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018:147). Indigenous African knowledge is a strategy that is incorporated into business operational processes (Machi and Kunene, 2018:233). The thesis advances that small and micro-businesses vary widely in size and capacity for growth. A well-conceived corporate strategy should allow a company to determine how its (internal) dynamic capabilities are developed for a competitive (external) business environment to reward its heritage by confronting forces that exist in the environment (Teece, 2014:10).

A competitive corporate strategy becomes a long-term framework, designed and used by organisations to achieve competitive advantage. Sitnikov (2013:14) professes a corporate strategy to be a pattern of decisions in a company that determines and reveals objectives to produce principal plans and policies. By design, corporate strategies are delineated to have a separation between corporate strategy and business strategy. This separation is invisible, especially for MEs in developing countries owing to a lack of resources, skills and knowledge. Lewis and Churchill (1983:90), Tapera (2014) and Woodward (1976) contend that micro-businesses are characterised by independence of action, differing organisational structures, and varied management styles. During the startup phase, managerial owners of micro-businesses face significant challenges. As businesses grow and evolve, they must adapt to changing circumstances, relinquishing some control and adjust their managerial roles to ensure continued success.

According to Durie (2017:58), not all strategies lead micro-organisations to accomplish objectives; the existence of strategies does not guarantee success. According to scholars such as Lumen Boundless Marketing (2020), and Uncles and Bock (2000),

markets are heterogeneous, and no segmented strategy is predictably suboptimal. Specific knowledge about the market provides micro-entrepreneurs with a basis to formulate a special promotion associated with a strategy they can use to target the needs of the market, thus the capitalisation of the product's unique attributes (Amar, 2015:345). At times, this falls outside of Porter's generic management strategies. Entrepreneurs in developing markets find themselves involved in almsgiving, being sympathetic, caring, sensitive to the needs of others, being respectful, considerate, patient and kind (Magang and Magang, 2018:68). Entrepreneurs, those from African cultural backgrounds, find themselves navigating a complex interplay of values. Rather than prioritising individualism, they may be more inclined towards Afrocentric collectivism and communalism, emphasising the importance of community, interdependence and shared success (Louw and Eaton, 2010:11). This approach shapes their business practices. Thus, applying a Eurocentric strategy such as Porter's generic management strategies advances a colonial way of life to be poorly governed and underdeveloped by African ideology.

Eurocentric theories are based on European experiences and are more easily applicable to well-established organisations with resources politically referred to as “white monopoly capital” within the South African context. This study requires a theoretical framework based on African interests and one seeking African strategies. Researched African scholars Gobagoba and Littrell (2003:132), Khomba (2011), Machi and Kunene (2018:233) and Shishigu and Ali (2020:08) have cautioned against unilaterally applying business models or business strategies across cultures. Furthermore, business start-ups and growth are synergistic products of specific cultural environments; therefore, business models within African communities should follow Afrocentric epistemology for success (Gobagoba and Littrell, 2003:132).

2.4.1 Micro-textile entrepreneurs in developed countries

The textile industry is one of the world's biggest industrial sectors (Kovač, Semolič and Završnik, 2009:11). Functions performed in this sector are primarily concentrated in designing, producing, and distributing yarn, cloth, and clothing (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). The sector mainly uses raw and natural materials or synthetic products from the chemical industry. The market is mainly dominated by textile exports from China, the European Union (EU) and India, accounting for 66% of total global exports (Mordor

Intelligence, 2022). This industry has made a substantial contribution to the European economy, creating jobs and wealth (European Union, 2022). It employs 1.3 million workers with a turnover of €167 billion and over €67 billion of exports (Lu, 2020). It is a major contributor to the economy, employing nearly 6% of the working class in total manufacturing in Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and United Kingdom region (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). Warfield, Traore, and Kim (2006) contend that the industry serves as a gateway to industrialisation, used mostly by developing countries. It makes use of highly technological equipment to keep up with the technological trends that major players and competitors use.

The use of highly automated technological equipment enables manufacturers to produce high-quality textile products, thus giving European manufacturers a competitive edge (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). A barrier to economic growth in developed countries such as Germany, Iceland, Japan and New Zealand, is not so much a scarcity of capital, labour or land but dynamic entrepreneurs that can bring sophisticated mechanisms into the markets that can facilitate economic growth (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 1997). Automation has come at a great cost for employment opportunities, especially in the labour-intensive manufacturing industries, such as textile and garment, footwear and electronics (Lan, 2022:04).

The advent of technology has brought various technological combinations in the textile and clothing sectors that are subjected to radical changes. The developed countries such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark and the United States have advanced and mastered the concept, pursuing it in the growth of various production costs and edging international competition (Kovač et al., 2009:12).

The textile industry in developed countries has become more specialised in products with special applications and those intended for niche markets (Tobler-Rohr, 2011:388). It is more capital-intensive than the clothing industry; it consists of spinning, weaving and finishing, and the three functions are undertaken in integrated plants. The sector has become heavily reliant on textile fabric imports from Asian countries (Bekker, 2018:03). This makes the industry less flexible in adjusting to consumer tastes during a season than the clothing and retail sectors (Bekker, 2018:03). The sector is characterised by long lead time while the capital intensity of the industry results in relatively large minimum orders. The textile sector is thus in many ways the

bottleneck in the supply chain. The largest contributors in terms of clothing industry employment are western European countries such as Romania, Italy, Poland, Bulgaria, and Portugal (Skills 4 Smart TCLF 2030, 2018).

In these countries, globalisation has exacerbated competition in manufacturing. It impacts negatively on exports and foreign investments, thus leading to the deterioration of wages (Dejardin, 2018:01). Most of the labour-intensive export industries are dominated by women; The culling of vulnerable jobs takes place at the lower segments where women are concentrated (Dejardin, 2018:02). Micro-entrepreneurs in low-income regions perform work in very different conditions than opportunity-driven entrepreneurs in wealthier economies. MEs in low-income regions are more likely than those in higher-income regions to be part of the “informal” economy, meaning typically unregistered or unlicensed, requiring lower-skilled people (Hui, Toyama, Pal, and Dillahun, 2018:02).

According to Durie (2017:78), Porter’s strategies deserve attention in as much as they lack clarity on how competitive advantage is achieved. The textile industry in developing countries is believed to be more capital- and skill-intensive than clothes manufacturing and therefore tends to be less mobile, needing longer lead times to establish itself (infoDev, 2008; Warfield et al., 2006).

2.4.2 Micro-textile entrepreneurs in developing countries

Interestingly, the least-developed countries rarely export textiles; instead, they export clothing whilst retaining textiles for domestic use (Oelz, 2017). In West Africa and many of the Southern African countries, for example, finished textile products in high demand are predominantly used in the design and production of traditional apparel such as the Kaba and other exquisite garments (Bruce-Amartey, Amissah and Safo-Ankama, 2014:37). Textile importers have literally thousands of options to which to ship their commodities (Russell, 2022). However, this flexibility only works in one direction; according to a survey by the ILO (Russell, 2022).

The clothing sector is more downstream and closer to consumers, making the designing, branding and marketing functions more crucial (Yamagata et al., 2013:20). Firms in developed countries undertake these functions and fetch a substantial proportion of the total value-added in the chain. Developing countries participate in

these value chains by catering for the labour-intensive assembly functions that employ large numbers of mostly low-skilled workers (Yamagata et al., 2013:21). The textile industry in developing countries is generally fragmented, consisting of five distinct sectors: raw materials, textile production, and clothing (Cut, Make and Trim) trading agencies that import and export finished textiles and retailing (Thauer, 2014:12). The only countries listed among lower-income countries are China, India, Turkey and Pakistan which achieved textile exports of above \$5bn in 2004 (Yaozhong, 2017:33). An argument can indeed be raised about whether China, India, and Turkey are classified as developing or developed.

The South African market is varied with rich raw materials for producing textiles (wool, mohair, leather, vegetable fibres, and manufactured fibres) and embroidered clothing to satisfy home demand inputs for clothing, textiles, and leather production (Mbatha, 2021:123; South African Embassy in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2021). The sector is well developed and sophisticated, not only in the traditional activities of clothing, and home textiles but also in the modern sub-sector of technical textiles (South African Embassy in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, 2021).

The industry is characterised by the high number of MSEs operating formal and informal operations which are heavily reliant on imported fabric textiles from China (Bekker, 2018:03; Research and Markets, 2018). Micro-textile businesses manufacture and distribute goods to customers at a costly exercise. Their small-scaled supply chain requires innovative managerial skills to survive severe competition. This unprecedented scenario presents both exciting opportunities and challenging obstacles for researchers (Wagner, 2019).

This industry is made of family-run enterprises, capacitated with low-skill levels and characterised by low barriers to entry and little interaction with state authorities (Arnold, 2019). The industry is dominated by informal micro-textile enterprises that operate small, systematically organised tasks using specialised sewing machines developed for individual tasks (Anwar, 2019).

The model of managing businesses is centred around the personality traits or personal interests, or circumstances and past experience of the entrepreneur. Kerr et al. (2017:14) are of the opinion that studies conducted in developed countries (United

States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, France, Italy and other European economies) guide conclusions on how or why most entrepreneurs, commonly self-employed individuals or business owner-managers, succeed or fail. Literature from Fairlie and Fossen (2018:21) advances a view that businesses can succeed or fail owing to motivation. This motivation is guided by the distinction between those who start a business owing to the availability of an opportunity versus those who start businesses motivated by unemployment.

However, in the third world or developing countries necessity versus opportunity-driven entrepreneurs bring different personality traits. Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs in New York City might be different from those in Silicon Valley (Coyle Jr. and Habiby, 2010). Opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are more willing to take risks than necessity entrepreneurs. They are motivated by creativity and are more risk tolerant than other entrepreneurs. Using data from the GEM, Lusardi and Ardagna (2010) contend that the average necessity-driven entrepreneurship rate is higher in low- and middle-low-income countries (14%) than in high-income countries (6.7%). At the same time, two-thirds of entrepreneurs in developing countries are necessity-driven entrepreneurs, as compared to 22% in high-income countries. Notably, opportunity-driven entrepreneurs provide greater economic growth (Lusardi and Ardagna, 2010). Globally, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)-based measurements find opportunity-driven entrepreneurs are slightly younger, male, more educated, more confident in their skills and abilities, and less afraid of failure (Kerr et al., 2017:24). The studies, however, disregard the African ubuntu philosophy, a concept which Ogude (2019) explains as a sense of self shaped by your relationships with other people. Ubuntu shapes how prospective entrepreneurs conceptualise their sense of self, centring its core value on relationships. This implies ubuntu affects personality traits on how entrepreneurs relate to create value with the market.

Leaders of sharing economy companies have gone as far as publicising their platforms as training wheels for being an entrepreneur and as entrepreneurial support tools (Curtis and Lehner, 2019:03-04). For example, Uber Technologies, whose mission is to reimagine the way the world moves, is considered entrepreneurial because drivers who sign up on this platform use their own assets as a means of production (Hui et al., 2018:02). In maximising productivity, entrepreneurs on these sharing economy

platforms are there for personal gain and personal connections for personal future ventures (Henama and Sifolo, 2019:03). Contrariwise, management scholars differentiate sharing economy and other alternative work arrangements separately from entrepreneurship (Curtis and Lehner, 2019:03-04). They argue that the sharing economy and alternative work arrangements focus on resource utilisation and flexibility whilst entrepreneurship centres on innovation, risk-taking, and business creation.

South Africa is recorded as a country with an alarmingly high number of single-person households. This is attributed to high numbers of deaths, increased divorce rates and increased work opportunities for women within the corporate sector, all leading to the breaking down of the traditional family unit (Goldberg, 2021:292). These individuals have higher disposable income at their disposal, making them an attractive target market for sharing economy companies (Chen, Hung-Tai, Chen and Chou, 2019:12). This growing demographic shares fewer financial obligations and expenses than traditional families, enabling them to allocate a portion of their resources to services and experiences offered by the sharing economy (Curtis and Lehner, 2019:03-04).

This considerable growth of single-person households with disposable income at their disposal makes them a lucrative target market for sharing economy companies (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2015). Goldberg (2021:292) defines this new market segment as singletons as they are not married and are living alone or are in a long-term relationship. Their experiences on the services received affect perceptions, values and behaviours on social and environmental decisions about whether to continue offering services, recommend them or discontinue using them. This market in South Africa is powerful and influential as it is known to be the middle-class (Burger et al., 2015).

An explanation of the middle class by Burger et al. (2015:11) in the South African context means having access to the financial market through work. The biggest beneficiaries of this services are the middle class with disposable income. The sharing economy has offered them the ability to be mobile. Service providers have managed to use consumers' needs to reduce poverty in a resource-constrained economy. Micro-entrepreneurs as service providers to corporate companies have managed to shape how to use social technologies such as sharing economy tools and social media

platforms to respond to unexpected life disruptions (Burger, Steenekamp, Zoch and Van Der Berg, 2015:12-13).

2.4.3 Micro-entrepreneurs in South Africa

The clothing industry in South Africa is mainly concentrated in three provinces: the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng (Nattrass and Seekings, 2013). The industry was dominantly based in Johannesburg before the 1950s, with a small handful of firms in the Cape (Morris et al., 2004:11). With the apartheid government imposing restrictive laws in the late 1950s prohibiting African labour movement in the urban areas, the Transvaal economy suffered contraction (Kelly, 1989:58). The contraction induced expansion in Durban and Cape Town where there was access to Indian and Coloured labour, respectively (Strauss, 2019:136). Cape Town took the lead position as a regional centre of economic activity focused on expanding its position as a home for retail chains (Morris and Reed, 2018:23). Leading retail chains invested in the industry, making it the main employer of semi-skilled and unskilled employees.

The Durban industry, in as much as it has developed, offered lower segments than that of Cape Town. The Kwazulu-Natal precinct experienced the brunt of pay differentials between African natives and Coloured and Indian workers in the Cape (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2008). The colonial architects had long banished the indigenous black working class who were not eligible for a comfortable livelihood (Gibbon, 2003:1809; Hinds, 1985:05; Morris et al., 2004:12). The reorganisation of the political structure of the Cut, Make and Trim (CMT) operations in Durban and Cape Town began emerging in the 1960s and 1970s when large retailers sourced directly from manufacturers, with some encouraging or helping to set up CMT operations (Chetty, 2008:109). Later in the 1970s, large manufacturers themselves started to use CMTs to cope with production peaks more problematic styles and shorter production runs.

In parallel, informal CMTs emerged because of the closure of textile factories, with former employees re-employing themselves in MSEs. Rahman (2017:240) defines MEs as entrepreneurs employing a few people to perform manual operations with conventional tools while relying on the entrepreneur's native skills. Their operations cater for local communities through the necessities they provide. In less developed

countries micro-enterprises are considered vital contributors to job creation, offering sustainable opportunities for income generation for those seeking to sustain their lives (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 2017:07). That is why policy formulation around ME projects are aimed at improving the status of the poor through income-generating activities and social development activities.

In South Africa the Clothing, Textiles, Footwear and Leather (CTFL) industry offers more products that are diverse. It consists of many product lines, driven by seasonality and trends (Economic Development & Growth in EThekweni, 2014:19). The industry is characterised by a relatively high number of MEs as well as informal traders operating as clothing and garment manufacturers. Over the years there has been a decline in the number of clothing firms in the cosmopolitan province of KwaZulu-Natal, in the period 1995 to 2001. The result is a 13.6% decline caused by foreign competition of imports from Asia (Economic Development & Growth in EThekweni, 2014:6).

Through its Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), the Employment Promotion Programme (EPP) contracted Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS) to assist in developing measures to reduce the regulatory burden on small business (TIPS, 2017). TIPS recommended reduction and simplification of regulatory burden costs associated with registration and permit requirements.

The South African Government intends to foster economic participation by deliberately enhancing micro-entrepreneurship, accelerating the growth of both woman and youth-owned and managed enterprises capable of contributing to the GDP growth rate (Department of Small Business Development, 2019). The government anticipates using this sector to empower low-income earners in terms of trade, employment and skills and value-adding activities such as contributing significantly to designing and marketing (Rahman, 2017:238).

According to Vlok (2014:230), macro-organisations in South Africa have been predominantly located in provinces such as the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, the Free State, and Gauteng. These organisations are concentrated in major urban centres, such as Cape Town, Durban, and Johannesburg, as well as in select rural areas, including industrial towns in the former homelands (KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and

Textile Cluster, 2017). These regions served as key manufacturing hubs, for the production of textiles and clothing, employing women as seamstresses and garment workers. Though Black women moved into the public space, they were still limited in their ability to enhance their economic status (Demartini, 2019:1-2). The South African Government, through the efforts of the Department of Small Business, has developed a comprehensive SMME Support Plan. The plan deals with how government entities will contribute to the Medium-Term Strategic Framework and the National Development Plan 2030 objectives (Department of Small Business Development, 2019). It designed a 'SheTradesZA' platform specifically to serve as a unique opportunity for women entrepreneurs in the SMME sector to participate in the global value chains and markets (Department of Small Business Development, 2019).

Women as micro-entrepreneurs are inter-connected to extra-local networks, thus are connected serendipitously. Micro-entrepreneurs tend not to see themselves as businesswomen. They see themselves primarily as mothers, wives, and daughters, not as businesswomen. They consider running a small business as something they have to do to provide food for their family. Micro-entrepreneurs' multi-task as finance managers, human resource managers, marketing managers, and communication managers, amongst others so that their selling price can compete with competitors. In addition, micro-enterprises should also be able to determine an efficient selling price.

2.4.4 Micro-textile entrepreneurs on devising a management strategy

The word "entrepreneur" is derived from the French verb *entreprendre* (Boutillier and Uzunidis, 2013:580-582). It means "to undertake" (Muhammad and Khoza, 2015:49). Entrepreneurs undertake to take risks by investing time and resources into new projects or new ideas for capital gain (Kuppers, 2019). In a study by Mhlongo and Daya (2023:02), SMM entrepreneurs give many people hope with their ideas by creating employment, generating wealth and shaping careers of thousands that depend on them for survival.

Entrepreneurs contribute to the social and economic growth within economies, regardless of the development state of the country. They operate formally as required by regulation to register their enterprise with the appropriate regulatory office, or they operate informally without registering. This study focuses on informal enterprises, specifically in the textile industry. Informal enterprises are non-compliant or partially

compliant with state regulatory documentation. The term “enterprise” is to be understood in a broad sense as referring to any unit engaged in the production of goods or services for sale or barter (International Labour Organisation, 2004). On the other hand, formal enterprises are distinguished from informal enterprises in that they are registered with government regulators and are able to gain access to finance, further accessing business development services and technologies and reducing their exposure to exclusion (International Labour Organization, 2017).

The significance of the study relied on micro-textile management’s ability to formulate a strategy. Durie (2017:103) is of the view that a business strategy should be regarded as a rational decision-making process by which an organisation matches resources with opportunities. Therefore, it is paramount that every organisation, regardless of formality, has an operational strategy. In this context, strategies enable organisations to perform uniquely. Managers should be innovative and implement new strategies appropriate for their resources and relevant to their customers. Their strategy should consider the underlying market environment and consumer sophistication for market relevance (Durie, 2017:197).

That is why basic education and continued investment in on-the-job training for developing entrepreneurial skills are important. Bosire and Nzaramba (2013:13) define entrepreneurial development as a programme of activities that enhances knowledge, skill, behaviour and attitudes of an individual group of people to assume the role of entrepreneurship. This continued repetitive exercise plays a pivotal in skilling entrepreneurs to excel and become competitive. Most textile start-ups in South Africa arise owing to retrenchments, job loss and factory closure, leading to be necessity-driven entrepreneurship (Mbatha, 2021:125). That is why micro-textile entrepreneurs are predominantly found in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg (DTIC, 2022).

The onus is therefore on the entrepreneur to start their enterprise, thereby improving their family's lives, providing for their children and further contributing to the local economy and individual wellbeing (Muhammad and Khoza, 2015:47). Therefore, understanding start-up processes, for women’s retailing businesses, is critical for the longevity and continuance of a business, because many flounder or abandon their ideas during the start-up phase (Demartini, 2019:1-2). It is well established that the

level of entrepreneurial start-ups in women contributes to the level of economic growth of a region (Bosire and Nzaramba, 2013:12-13). Entrepreneurial skills are perfected through combining competent components such as training and education. Entrepreneurs demonstrate knowledge and skills through innovation, adaptability, resilience and networking to perform tasks at home and in the corporate.

Recent research and emerging knowledge increasingly portray women in developing countries as necessity-driven entrepreneurs who demonstrate exceptional resilience and adaptability despite operating under constrained conditions (Department of Small business development, 2019). According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa (2022), these women face limited access to resources and infrastructure, and they navigate unorganised and volatile market environments. Nevertheless, many manage to establish and grow businesses in the absence of expert guidance or formal support mechanisms. As Bessant and Tidd (2023:3-4) note, their entrepreneurial success unfolds in the face of systemic barriers, highlighting their ability to overcome adversity and create value without the competitive advantages typically afforded to formal enterprises. According to Bosire and Nzaramba (2013:12-13), competitive advantage is not the only external factor that precipitates the flourishing of organisational entrepreneurial capabilities (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:2). There are intangible internal factors such as managerial abilities, technical know-how and the external business environment. Micro-entrepreneurs in developing economies performed work in very different conditions than opportunity-driven entrepreneurs in wealthier economies. These differences shape women's entrepreneurship traits and their use of the skills to become experts in managing scarce resources (Hui et al., 2018:03).

2.4.4.1 Tier I micro-textiles

Before the advent of democracy, informal and small-scale textile enterprises in South Africa were dominated by the production of mainly pinafore attire. In South Africa, as in many African countries, women play a critical entrepreneurship role of job creation by providing ultra-cheap essentials, such as the pinafore production. It is a versatile garment admired for its timeless appeal (Manning, 1993:82). With low barriers to entry, the garment industry also offers easy access to retrenched factory workers. Their swift transition into micro-textile entrepreneurship makes their eagerness to engage in

garment-making admirable (Manning, 1993:79-80). A requirement is minimal space either back-rooms, garages or in an office, with a domestic hand-driven or electric sewing machine (Bennett, 2020:12; Manning, 1993:79-80).

With time, a vast majority of these textile entrepreneurs have graduated from being home-based operations to being experts who have emerged after the advent of democracy with businesses located in an industrial complex (Nieuwenhuizen and Musara, 2020:160). These Tier I micro-textiles have emerged as industry leaders driving innovation, quality, and competitiveness by creating brands that resonate with African customers. The demand for designer garments and special-occasion wear amongst the African middle-class has created a niche market for these Tier I micro-textiles, enabling them to upscale and expand their businesses, a testament to the potential and resilience of African textile entrepreneurship (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023).

These informal and small-scale textile enterprises are not competing directly with large-scale manufacturers of mass-produced garments. Instead, they have carved their own niche market, focusing on unique, high-quality personalised garments (Oxenham, Cassill and Parrish, 2006:425). They have recognised that competing on price alone is not sustainable; instead, they have focused on differentiating themselves through quality, design and service (Bhandari, Garza-Reyes, Rocha-Lona, Kumar, Naz and Joshi, 2022:225). By doing so, they have created a distinct market segment that is completely new. The market is sizable, as evidenced by the many enterprises that are catering for this demand. The market is driven by desire for exclusivity, quality and cultural identity and the micro-textiles entrepreneurs have been well-positioned to meet the demand (Bordone, 2024:5-6).

2.4.4.2 Tier II micro-textiles

Unlike many start-up organisations, a sewing business usually requires a great deal of groundwork and equipment to start. Most start-up (Tier III micro-textile) seamstresses, seamsters and tailors work from home or in small, rented rooms, sewing dresses and garments for special occasions for women and children (Frick, 2002). Uddin (2019) has established that the Tier II micro-textile industry is comprised of businesswomen who specialise in pinafores or loose cotton dresses. They focus on producing high-quality made-to-order cotton dresses, with intricate designs and

embroidery. These second-tier micro-textiles play a crucial role in the industry as they offer specialised services and products, providing employment opportunities for skilled workers. They contribute to the growth and diversification of the textile industry, helping build a strong and resilient supply chain. By focusing on its area of expertise, this sector has built a strong reputation establishing itself as a reliable partner in the manufacturing and retailer space.

2.4.4.3 Tier III micro-textiles

To avoid ambiguity in clarifications, micro-textiles are divided into three sections. Each section is assessed according to the number of jobs and skills per unit of capital invested, the scale of operations involved and the level of technology and machinery used. The Micro-textile industry was noticed by scholars like Damewood (2022) and Manning (1993:79-80) as a significant contributor to economic development in both developed and less developed countries. Governments and development organisations have recognised and supported the industry as it can help unlock economic growth and development. Renowned scholars such as Franco (2017:841), Bruce-Amartey Jnr et al. (2014:36), and Vlok (2014:227) view Tier III micro-textiles as contributing significantly in less developed countries in advancing employment opportunities as the Tier III consists of mainly semi-skilled working as seamstresses, seamsters and tailors, who find employment in the textile sector. The United Nations Secretariat (2007) observed varying functions from mending or altering clothes, maintaining and manufacturing (fashion design), classifying this sector as Tier III micro-textiles.

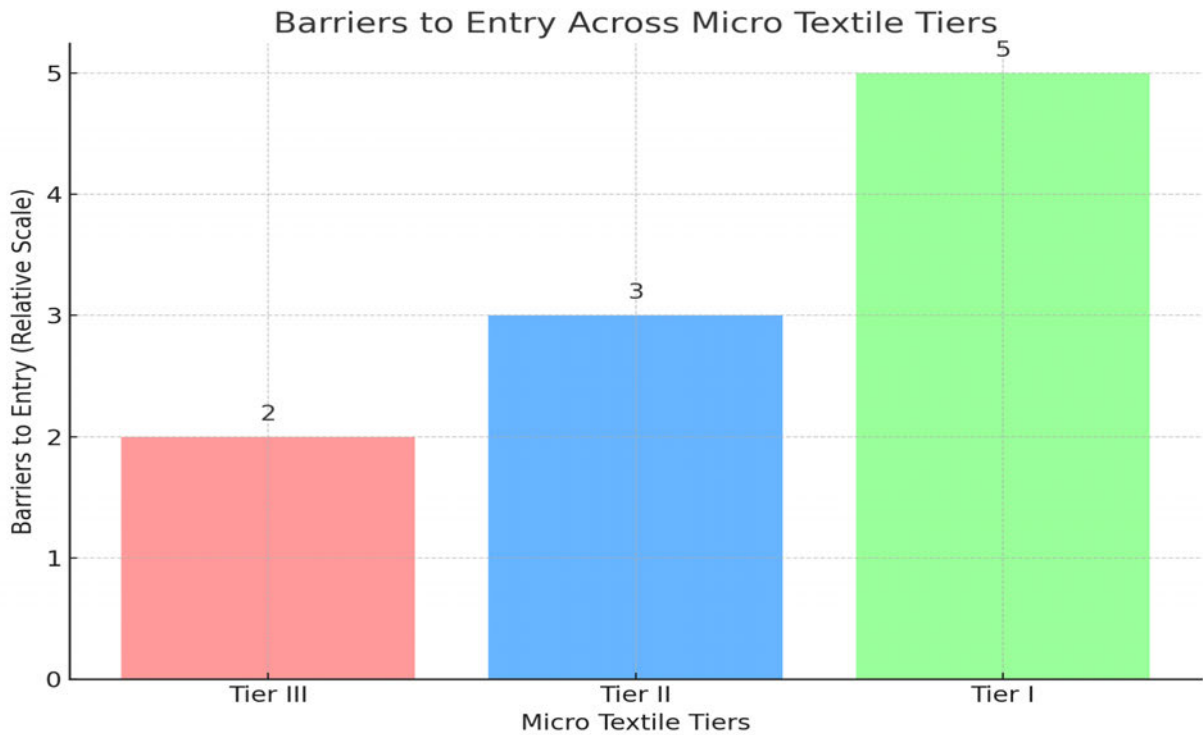


Figure 2.3 Barriers to Entry across Micro-Textiles Tiers

Source: Own Construct

- **Tier III** has the lowest barriers to entry, as businesses typically require minimal capital and rely on basic equipment like sewing machines (Short, 2018).
- **Tier II** sees slightly higher barriers owing to the need for more specialised skills and the inability to scale production efficiently (Swiss South African Cooperation Initiative , 2024).
- **Tier I** has the highest barriers, as businesses are more established, requiring significant capital, advanced technology, and a solid market presence to compete on a national or international level (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:03).

2.5 MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS' DELIBERATION OF MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The primary obstacle facing micro-enterprises when entering the market is sustaining competition (Daya and Mhlongo, 2023:2). A significant portion (60% to 80%) of micro-enterprises fail to survive beyond the first two years of operation and a substantial proportion do not reach the seventh year (Leboea, 2017:119). Literature reveals that the first challenge micro-enterprises face upon entering the market is the survival of competition in the market. According to Figure 2.1 and studies cited by Leboea (2017:119), a significant portion of new enterprises face challenges that impact sustainability, making it crucial for businesses, especially informal organisations, to develop management strategies that promote long-term survival. To achieve this, enterprises must focus on creating a unique value proposition that differentiates them from competitors while implementing a competitive pricing and cost management strategy to ensure profitability and increase market share (Taghizadeh-Hesary and Yoshino, 2016:08-10). By adopting these strategies, organisations can navigate the challenges of the market and achieve sustainability.

The failure of micro-enterprise entrepreneurs to develop and execute effective organisational strategies can significantly impair an organisation's ability to survive (Acar and Göç, 2011:841; Duong, 2010:11-13 and Jacobs, 2022:57). A key contributor to this is the inability to identify and manage risks, which leads to substantial losses if not mitigated (Duong, 2010:14). Effective risk management involves identifying potential threats assessing their impact and implementing strategies to minimise potential losses (International Institute for Management Development, 2024). By adopting a proactive approach to risk management, entrepreneurs can reduce the likelihood of financial loss, reputational damage and challenges concerned with safety and health issues that are gender-based, that ultimately impact negatively affecting chances of organisational success and long-term sustainability (Kanjere and Legodi, 2016:57).

To thrive in a competitive environment, micro-enterprise entrepreneurs must develop effective management strategies that integrate with their risk mitigation plans. This enables organisations to achieve long-term sustainability (Islami et al., 2020:02). The survival of micro-enterprises and small businesses depends on entrepreneurs

generating profits through the effective use of limited resources. Therefore, entrepreneurs must invest in organisational strategies that can operate within a narrow range of resources. Owing to these resource constraints, entrepreneurs must adopt specialised strategies that optimise resource utilisation, relying on core competencies to ensure survival and growth (Islami et al., 2020:03).

2.5.1 Strategic plans by micro-enterprises on resource utilisation

Empirical researchers have identified two types of organisations: specialist strategy organisations and generalist strategy organisations (Mindruta, 2023). Specialist strategy organisations are typically small or micro-organisations that face resource constraints and adopt a focused market entry strategy by default (Carroll, 1984:126; Mindruta, 2023). In contrast, generalist strategy organisations can operate in a wide range of market conditions, leveraging their resources to adapt and thrive (Carroll, 1984:126; Mindruta, 2023). Generalists tend to have a longer lifespan compared to specialised ones (Mindruta, 2023). Studies have shown that throughout their life cycle firms face intense competition, leading to failure (Latkovikj et al., 2020:2). This prompted an investigation into the role of diversification as a strategy for micro-enterprises to mitigate this risk (Vogl, 2018:16). The findings suggest that management diversification offers opportunities for business growth, increased profitability and market share expansion, ultimately leading to improved survival rates (Islami et al., 2020:01). Diversification is defined as a multifaceted growth approach whereby new markets are acquired to avoid dependence on a single revenue source and increase the overall potential (Rogan, 2018; Vogl, 2018:12).

Although diversification is essential for growth, many micro-enterprises fail to implement this strategy owing to a lack of knowledge on how to scan their environment, identify threats and opportunities and assess their internal strengths and weaknesses (Nouteya-Jackson, 2022:89). This knowledge gap hinders entrepreneurs from making informed decisions, limiting their ability to diversify and grow their businesses effectively (Aldehayyat and Anchor, 2016:646). Many micro-enterprise entrepreneurs face challenges in successfully implementing product diversification which is crucial for growth and stability (Lumen, 2019). Understanding the complex decision-making process and effectively implementing diversification strategies poses a significant challenge for businesses (Thomas, 2020). This is due to a lack of strategic

knowledge, long-term vision and competitiveness goals, which can put the viability of the business at risk. Some business leaders even lack the knowledge to develop and implement a competitive strategy, hindering their ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic market (Nouteya-Jackson, 2022:14).

2.5.2 Emerging markets managing risk

Managing risk in emerging markets is crucial, but requires significant budget and human resources, which are limited for small enterprises (International Institute for Management Development, 2024). Strategic decision-making in these markets involves careful consideration of resource allocation and financial status (Duong, 2010:21). While there are studies on strategic decision-making in emerging markets, there is a need to explore how these markets differ and how they impact the implementation (Thomas, 2020). Specifically, research has focused on partial aspects of strategic decision implementation; however, there is a gap in understanding how emerging markets uniquely influence decision-making processes (Aldehayyat and Anchor, 2016:645). Research has identified a distinguishing factor between SMEs in terms of their strategic performance (Cote, 2020). While most studies have focused on large enterprises, some research has explored the applicability of strategic groups and generic strategies in SMEs, in developed countries (Bartolome, 2023; Sandada, Pooe and Dhurup, 2014:663). However, these concepts may not be directly related and transferable to SMEs in developing countries, as the strategic context can vary significantly across countries (African Development Bank Group, June 2019; Nkulu, 2012:08).

A notable distinction exists between large and small-sized enterprises, as well-documented in the literature. Most strategic management research has focused on large enterprises, with early studies on strategic groups conducted primarily in developed countries (Aldehayyat and Anchor, 2016:649). These studies explored the application of strategic groups and generic strategies in industries, with the understanding that strategic concepts can vary across nations (Yao, 2009). Interestingly, the concept of strategy has its roots in ancient China, where it was primarily associated with tactics for achieving victory in battles. This is exemplified in the timeless classic “The Art of War” by Sun Tzu, which remains a seminal work on strategic thinking to this day. Over time, these concepts evolved and were adopted by

Western business strategies (Möller, Stachon, Azkan, Schoormann, and Otto, 2021:703). Today, state-owned enterprises successfully apply these principles; however, SMSs struggle to survive owing to limited resources and capabilities (Acquaah, 2013:105). In Africa, a phenomenon known as co-opetition has emerged, where rival organisations strategically combine cooperation and competition to achieve long-term strategy (Beech, 2023). This approach is prevalent among owner-managed enterprises, which are family-owned businesses striving to provide for their loved ones (Mamabolo et al., 2017). By sharing sensitive information, such as supplier secrets, these businesses can collectively enhance their competitiveness, improve their market position, and increase their resilience (Yang, Liu, Nazief, and Kholaf, 2022:02). This collaboration mindset is a testament to the resourcefulness and adaptability of African entrepreneurs, who can navigate challenging environments and foster a sense of community and cooperation (Kilonzo and Iwara, 2023:202).

2.5.3 The default to informal practices in the absence of strategy

A well-defined strategy is essential for SMEs, informal traders, and entrepreneurs to succeed. A strategy creates a supportive environment, providing a clear framework that guides organisational principles to sustainable growth and development (Laljani, 2015:3-4). It enables effective implementation of initiatives, to allow for an organisation to thrive and reach its full potential. The use of strategic management by small and micro-businesses in Africa is not always formalised, but information sharing can still ease rival competition (Gopaul and Rampersad, 2020:_1-2). This is a firm-level concept related to strategic management and decision-making processes. With globalisation and global competition, firms focus on performance, profitability and adaptability to changing markets, leading to an increased emphasis on corporate entrepreneurship (Gandhi, Sapkota, Chavda, Mathur and Ahmad, 2024:12627). The role of the entrepreneur is to drive innovation, reform or revolutionise the production process, creating new products, services or markets (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:03). In African markets this can involve opening up new supply sources, alternative products or reorganising existing ones (Adejumo-Ayibiowu, 2018:90). Information sharing and collaboration can facilitate this process, even in the absence of formal strategic management strategies.

Historically, management development has been seen as the purview of large enterprises with micro-enterprise developmental needs being addressed through ministerial educational initiatives (Durie, 2017:210). However, the growth challenges faced by micro-enterprises are distinct from those of larger organisations, requiring tailored support and management development strategies that cater to their unique needs (Wildschut and Garrod, 2021). In Africa, small and micro-business landscape strategies are imitating rival competition and driving innovation through growth. Collaboration and information exchange creates new markets, products and opportunities (Castañer and Oliveira, 2020:966-967; O'Dwyer and Ryan, 2000:346). Micro-enterprises and startups struggle in transitioning from traditional informal businesses to more established organisations. This hindrance impedes their progress, making it challenging for them to advance beyond the initial stages of growth and development. To overcome this, it is essential to establish a robust business model, which requires a clear vision, effective leadership and a well-defined strategy (Chen et al., 2019:02). Moreover, separating personal and business interests, activities and finances is crucial for sustainable growth. Developing individual skills and abilities is also vital for long-term success (Behling and Lenzi, 2019:257).

When informal businesses enter the market, they do so without a clear strategy owing to a lack of education and training (Mokwena, 2023). This demise leads necessity-driven entrepreneurs to follow existing business models, defaulting to ethnicity-driven approaches (Meyer, Meyer and Molefe, 2016:123), while opportunity-driven entrepreneurs enter the market with a well-defined strategy (Fairlie and Fossen, 2018:21). Lack of education and training may lead entrepreneurs to default to an existing business model. However, management strategies for necessity-driven entrepreneurs are defaulted into without a planned approach; their plans are mostly devised by the market (Fairlie and Fossen, 2018:23). They experience powerful suppliers and buyers and are swayed by rivalry. They are pressured to follow the competition as they are mostly too unstable to lead the market (Alharb et al., 2022:10).

2.6 MICRO-TEXTILE ENTERPRISES AND THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The importation of textile fabrics into South Africa has significantly impacted the country's textile and apparel industry (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2022). Despite its potential for competitiveness, the industry has struggled to compete nationally and internationally. The influx of cheaper clothing and fabrics from Asia, especially low-cost Chinese imports, has significantly undermined South African retailers by exerting downward pressure on prices, eroding market share, and intensifying competition alongside the growing presence of international clothing brands in the domestic market. (Durie, 2017:156).

While some textile production processes are automated, such as spinning, weaving and cutting, the industry remains reliant on labour-intensive techniques, having failed to adopt micro-electronic assembly technologies fully since the 1980s (Mordor Intelligence, 2022). Automation was adopted in some areas of micro-textile manufacturing, limiting the introduction of micro-electronics technology (Skills 4 Smart TCLF 2030, 2018; Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:18). This means the industry remains heavily reliant on labour-intensive techniques (Franco, 2017:836).

According to Altenburg, Chen, Lütkenhorst, Staritz and Whitfield (2020:112), the textile industry's automation timeline within African countries is estimated at 15 to 20 years, making the near-term robot replacement of human workers unlikely. Robotics adoption requires a suite of capabilities, posing challenges for developing countries (Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:01). Currently, smart factory and supply chain technologies are prioritised to enhance efficiency, quality and stability over automation (Russell, 2022). The future of manufacturing is not necessarily threatened by automation scenarios, but rather it is primarily focused on domestic development and growth (Parschaub and Hauge, 2020:121). However, there is also a potential downside as investment in productivity and robots could lead to job displacement and exacerbate income inequality (Nasrullah, 2012:98). On the other hand, investments in technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence could also bring about significant productivity gains and economic growth (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:1).

The timing for technological adoption becomes crucial for micro-textiles' future, which is unlikely to be disrupted by automation scenarios, given the continent's nascent manufacturing capabilities and focus on domestic markets (Farida and Setiawan,

2022:1). However, there is a potential risk of missing out on future outsourcing investments as companies weigh up the commercial viability of leveraging high-productivity robots (Moses, 2023:123). In essence, Africa's manufacturing sector is still in its early stages and primarily focused on domestic markets, making automation less of a concern for now (Sambhav Foundation, 2022). However, the continent risks missing out on future investment opportunities if it does not adopt technologies like robots to enhance quality.

African challenges are not void of South Africa's textile dilemma of being coerced to embrace automation to enhance quality, risk job loss, or maintain the status quo and miss out on potential future investment opportunities. This conundrum is pressing for labour-intensive industries such as the textile industry in developing countries such as South Africa, where manufacturing plays a crucial role in economic development.

2.6.1 Leveraging technology to enhance efficiency and competitiveness in micro-textile

The future of south Africa's micro-textile industry is at a critical juncture. Despite its current limitations and focus on domestic markets, the sector's growth prospects are not necessarily hindered by internal constraints. However, the increasing use of high-productivity robots in developing economies poses a significant threat, as it may lead to a decrease in outsourcing opportunities, as developed economies opt for automation. South Africa's micro-textile industry must embrace innovation and adapt to changing market dynamics to remain competitive and avoid a decline (Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:34). Instead of confronting the challenges of an evolving global economy and enhancing its manufacturing capabilities, the South African micro-textile industry is primarily focused on domestic markets. This has led to internal threats from textile firms such as trade unions, which have responded to the industry's lack of competitiveness by advocating for protectionist policies reminiscent of the previous import substitution era. Rather than improving operational performance to meet competitive threats, these organisations are seeking to revive protectionism from profits, tariffs and import controls which may ultimately hinder the industry's growth and competitiveness. China's e-business success relies on its comprehensive industrial value chains and infrastructure, whereas African countries need to develop these basics to participate in e-business.

The Dalang Sweater Cluster, a leading Chinese manufacturer, exemplifies this, having leveraged China's advanced infrastructure to thrive in export-oriented manufacturing (Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023:14). A successful implementation of e-business models in China is contingent upon the presence of comprehensive industrial value chains and a well-developed digital and logistical infrastructure. In contrast, African countries still need to establish these foundational elements before they can fully participate in e-business. The successful adoption of new e-business models in China depends on the existence of complete industrial value chains and a well-developed digital and logistics infrastructure. African countries still have a long way to go to establish these foundations before they become part of the booming e-business. The Dalang Sweater Cluster is one of the largest export-oriented sweater clusters in China (Shandong Jerry Textile Technology, 2023). Located in Dongguan City in Guangdong Province, the cluster is part of one of the earliest regions in mainland China to develop a garment industry (Shandong Jerry Textile Technology, 2023). After more than four decades, Dalang's sweater industry has evolved into a comprehensive industrial cluster, including R&D, manufacturing, material and accessory supply, washing and printing, logistics, trade and retail of woollen sweaters (ARC Group, 2022). More than 90 % of the cluster's firms are SMEs, closely cooperating in exchanging information, sharing orders, relying on a joint labour pool and fostering specialisation (ARC Group, 2022).

In smart factories, digitalisation is used to monitor machines and collect data that is used for real-time assessments of productivity and problem-shooting (Grznár et al., 2021:27). The latest versions of electronic textile machines come with machine learning and the ability to suggest optimal settings without being explicitly programmed (Whitfield and Mkhabela, 2023). Electronic sewing machines remember settings and then sew automatically, with workers moving the fabric. Retailers are increasingly focusing on e-commerce and using it to customise products (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), 2023). Online sales produce big data that is analysed to forecast fashion trends better and reduce inventory and unsold stock. Digitalisation can also be used to make the production process more consumer-centric or consumer-driven, shortening the time from creation to purchase and increasing customisation (Reinartz et al., 2019).

2.7 THE TEXTILE, LEATHER AND CLOTHING INDUSTRY

The textile, clothing, leather and footwear (TCLF) industry is an important economic sector in South Africa. It provides employment opportunities to millions of workers nationally, especially women (International Labour Office, 2019:01). The industry accounts for 14% of the country's manufacturing and employs a significant portion of the workforce. A large portion of the workforce are engaged in various activities like manufacturing, retail and design. It contributes 9% to the country's GDP, making it the second biggest source of tax revenue in South Africa (Textile Infomedia, 2022). The industry is highly diverse and mature, contributing various inputs: wool, leather, footwear and clothing, accounting for roughly R55 billion of the country's production (Manuel, 2020). The South African TCLF industry is concentrated in the Western Cape with 35%, followed by KwaZulu-Natal with 34% then Gauteng with 14% (CCTC, 2022). The industry was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the entire value chain in South Africa. The demand for retail goods was significantly constrained with efforts put in place to revive the industry through the localisation of personal protection equipment (PPE) production (Smith, 2021).

The performance of this manufacturing sector interlinks two important sectors – textiles and clothing (Dos Santos, 2020:65). The two are interlinked through supply chain and vertical integration, making a critical value chain in the trading for textiles and clothing. However, the textiles sector is significantly mechanised, using far more capital-intensive types of equipment to advance the production process. The industry's incorporation of automated technologies and robotic sewing systems is driven by the revolution of recycled materials and artificially engineered nanomaterials (International Labour Organisation, 2019:02). The functions carried out in this capital-intensive sector include spinning frames, weaving knitting and finishing, which are roles requiring significant energy inputs (Lan, 2022).

In contrast, the clothing industry offers entry-level jobs for unskilled to semi-skilled labour and relatively modern technology is adopted at comparatively low investment costs (Morris et al., 2004:15). The textile industry makes a major contribution to the clothing industry, creating a vertical relationship (Dos Santos, 2020:57). The sector is characterised by long lead times. Because of the capital-intensive nature, the results in quantities produced are large and have less room for error and flexibility (Nordås,

2004:6). According to the World Trading Organisation (2008), since the beginning of January 2005, almost four decades of restrictions on trade formally came to an end with the demise of the Multi-Fibre Arrangement (MFA) quota system, causing many developing countries to face increasing competition and downward pressure on prices (DTIC, 2015; infoDev, 2008).

The textile industry has become a potential economic growth boost for developing countries such as Bangladesh, Indonesia, Lesotho, Madagascar and Pakistan (Sakamoto, Ahmed, Begum and Huq, 2019:02). Preferential trade agreements such as the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) have allowed development in countries, such as South Africa, Lesotho and Madagascar owing to duty-free access (Morris et al., 2004:10). By providing some export protection, they availed of competitive ability in high tariff line items (United States Trade Representative, 2021). The textile and clothing industry has provided manufacturers with an opportunity to improve their competitive advantage. This has improved localisation by developing manufacturing input for firms in South Africa (Mbatha, 2021:122). The localisation of the manufacturing input sector has resulted in the reindustrialisation of the textiles and clothing industry (Mbatha, 2021:123). The DTIC (2021) defines localisation as a strategy of building capacity for local industrial for the domestic market and for export markets. This strategy is said to change the terms of the engagement from not only concentrating engagements in global markets as exporters of raw materials but also changing terms of engagement in the industrialisation of raw materials for domestic use (DTIC, 2021).

2.7.1 The personality trait of entrepreneurs in textile, leather and clothing

There is an ongoing debate amongst researchers, academics and scholars about the oversimplification of entrepreneurship as solely necessity-driven in developing countries and opportunity-driven in developed countries (Hui et al., 2018:02). This dichotomy suggests that entrepreneurs in developing countries are primarily motivated by necessity e.g. poverty and lack of employment rather than opportunity innovation market demand. This perspective overlooks the diversity and complexity of entrepreneurial motivations and contexts in both developing and developed countries. Lekhanya and Mason (2013:40) suggest personality traits and characteristics of

entrepreneurs play a significant role in shaping entrepreneurs'/managers' views of market strategies and business performance.

According to Mhlanga (2019:02), an individual's personality traits influence their decision-making and ultimately the entrepreneur's prowess, which affects business performance. Personality traits are complex, genetically co-determined psycho-physiological characteristics of an individual manifested in a consistent way of behaving in a wide variety of situations (Mhlanga, 2019:03). The use of innovative managerial skills and adaptation on the closure of clothing and textile factories has enabled the production of a new sector for micro-textile necessity-driven entrepreneurs to function after retrenchment (Dilanchiev, 2014:05). Baluku et al. (2016:14) view an entrepreneurial personality as being measured using traits such as locus of control, goal orientation, creativity, risk-taking propensity, achievement orientation, marketing ability and competitive aggressiveness. These traits help an individual identify their higher potential to become an astute entrepreneur, regardless of background or country of origin. The perspective emphasises that entrepreneurial potential is not solely determined by external factors such as poverty or developmental status, but by internal factors such as personality traits and individual characteristics.

By focusing on these traits, scholars aim to move beyond stereotypes and assumptions that entrepreneurs from developing countries are only necessity or poverty driven. Instead, they recognise that entrepreneurs from all backgrounds can possess the necessary personality traits to succeed in business. This approach further highlights the importance of entrepreneurial education and training programmes that focus on developing these personality traits, rather than only providing basic business skills. By fostering a proper understanding of financial management and product and market development strategies, some of the basic requirements needed by micro-textile entrepreneurs are developed and entrepreneurial success is achieved (Smith and Myres, 2020:09).

Overall, the literature paints a picture that there is a relatively clear distinction between the entrepreneurial personalities of those who are entrepreneurial and those who are non-entrepreneurial (Kritikos, 2022:02). Personality traits play a crucial influence in occupational choice and are valid predictors of managerial success (Farrington, 2012:382). Personality exhibits a consistent behaviour pattern and intra-personal

processes that originate from within an individual further give a person their individuality (Farrington, 2012:384-385).

2.7.1.1 *Theory of personalities*

Baluku et al. (2016:14) and Mumme (1997:01) reviewed Holland's theory (1995) of vocational personalities and work environments. The theories under review were Krumboltz's theory of social learning and career decision-making, and Super's life-span, life-space theory. These theories help explain how individuals make decisions, choose occupations and navigate career paths (Nauta, 2010:11). These vocational personalities and work environments theories are relevant to the study of entrepreneurial personality (Baluku et al., 2016:14). They also highlight the importance of considering person-occupational environment fit (Baluku et al., 2016:15).

By understanding these theories, the study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors influencing career development and decision-making. The novelty and thrill tendencies are found in entrepreneur solution creation (Kerr et al., 2017:05). These tendencies are more important than financial rewards as entrepreneurs are motivated by the desire to create something new, constantly finding more new and unexplored opportunities than any managers. Baluk et al. (2016:14) and Kerr et al. (2017:11) hypothesise that an entrepreneur is dynamic and requires creative and innovative decision-making. Micro-textile individuals thrive on challenges and novel environments presenting creative solutions, business models, and products.

2.7.1.2 *Conventional economic models*

Conventional economic models suggest that the structural characteristics of the textile industry (competitive environment) determine the market conduct (competitive strategy) performance of firms within the industry (Kovaleva and De Vries, 2016:01). This means the industry structure influences the behaviour and decision-making of firms. This conventional economic model such as the structure conduct performance (SCP) framework, states that market structure determines firm conduct, which in turn determines performance (Tan, 2016:46). This market structure is analysed using several factors such as the number of competitors, concentration ratio, the heterogeneity of product and the cost of entry and exit.

The micro-textile sector is highly competitive and encounters critical challenges in growing businesses. Kovaleva and De Vries (2016:78) affirm the two growth stages

anticipated by future entrepreneurs referenced in a life cycle model. Stage one: *Formation* and Stage two: *Early growth*. At the formation stage, organisations focus on developing production capacity, identifying a target market, and providing segment-specific products (Gobagoba and Littrell, 2003, p. 133). At the foundation stage, organisations develop their production capacity, identify a target market, and refine their market segment with tailored products. As the business progresses to the early growth stage, it establishes itself commercially, characterised by increasing sales, stabilising and maintaining cash flow. Distribution channels for products are also established during this phase.

However, micro-enterprises face unique challenges, primarily related to financial backing and cash flow management, during the initial phases of business growth. Various personality attributes are associated with entrepreneurial success and small-business ownership. The ability to manage resources efficiently by employing correct generic strategies assists entrepreneurs in achieving competitiveness. The complex socio-political environment post-independence has raised a new opportunity with a cosmopolitan generation seeking economic freedom. Lawson (2019) defines economic freedom as the ability of individuals and businesses to make economic choices to trade with any person they choose. There are indices which are used as units of measure to quantify the level of economic engagement. An encouragement is for governments to formulate economic policies that advance international trade, contributing to economic development. This is because post-apartheid Durban citizenry have previously raised concerns over the changing racial complexion of the inner city and the way the inner city is acting as an economic hatchery (Hutton, 2004:91).

In Durban's inner city, Black entrepreneurs actively contribute to a dynamic and diverse informal economy. Their businesses span a broad array of activities, including the production of traditional African clothing, custom-made dresses, shirts, trousers, and school uniforms, as well as curtains, duvets, and wedding attire. Many also specialise in crafting garments for women's associations and various other community-based groupings, reflecting both cultural heritage and responsiveness to local market demands (Lasarow, 2017).

This active involvement has seen entrepreneurship, and small businesses are essential for economic growth and development. Among the black South Africans operating in the city are a significant number of foreigner-born individuals from various African countries, including Zambia, Nigeria, Ghana, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Nobanda, 1998:02-03). These foreigners work alongside South African entrepreneurs, in the same buildings and markets, contributing to the city's economic activity. This kind of collaboration can help break cultural and economic barriers.

In a report by the GEM, Herrington and Kew (2017:54) articulate the importance of engaging the population in early-stage entrepreneurship activity. The Kauffman Indicators of Entrepreneurship (2020) define the Early-Stage Entrepreneurship series as a set of measures that represent new business creation in the United States, integrating several high-quality, timely sources of information on early-stage entrepreneurship. The report is used to articulate government policy to nurture prospective entrepreneurs in taking the first step into business (Herrington and Kew, 2017:67).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The study highlights the significance of integrating entrepreneurial personality traits with the Ubuntu philosophy in managing micro-textile enterprises. Ubuntu, rooted in African spirituality and communal values, is overlooked in mainstream entrepreneurship literature but plays a vital role in shaping selfless, cooperative, and competitive business behaviour. The research emphasises that leadership in micro-enterprises should reflect Ubuntu values to foster sustainable growth. It also categorises the South African textile industry into three tiers, ranging from informal home-based operations to more structured micro-factories. The study critiques the applicability of Porter's generic strategies to micro-enterprises, arguing that such models are ill-suited for resource-constrained, informal businesses in developing contexts. Rather than relying on generic models, the study advocates for strategic frameworks that are tailored to the local context and aligned with indigenous values and entrepreneurial realities. Having established an enabling environment for micro-textile enterprises, the next chapter explores the relevance and application of indigenous strategies within these business settings.

CHAPTER 3 APPLICABILITY OF PORTER'S GENERIC STRATEGIES IN MICRO-BUSINESSES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapter, theoretical literature was presented regarding the South African management strategies, dwelling on the micro-textile use of indigenous management strategies, whether they default into or intentionally follow a documented statute. This chapter delves into the applicability of Porter's generic strategies as a business tool by micro-businesses. The discussion deliberates on strategic plans by micro-entrepreneurs, the leveraging of technology and how personality traits contribute to business leadership.

3.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Generic business strategies are arranged broadly into two groups, namely typologies and taxonomies. Both are used to categorise and classify concepts in as much as they differ in their approach. Typologies are usually used in qualitative and quantitative research (Verduijn, Dey, and Fletcher, 2023). They are well-established analytic tools in the social sciences making crucial contributions in ways of describing groups or characterisation displayed by different clusters of strategic behaviour in business organisation (Collier, Laporte, Seawright, 2012:217; (The Association for Qualitative Research, 2013). They focus on identifying and describing different categories with an emphasis on unique characteristics and features (Letuka and Lebambo, 2023). On the other hand, taxonomies focus on creating a hierarchical classification system, grouping items or concepts into categories and subcategories (Awati, 2023). They are used in biology, library sciences and information architecture (Möller et al., 2021:702).

Older, well-known typologies include parsimonious framework descriptions for a complex organisational dimension or conceptual criteria on organisational strategic effectiveness or groupthink (Doty and Glick, 1994:245; Venkatraman, 1989). Literature by Abell (1980), Miles (1982), Miles and Snow (1978) and Porter (1980) outlines a founding typology on strategic management. In the same breath taxonomies are a practice and science classified as skeletons of knowledge, providing a sturdy framework for understanding the world (Awati, 2023). In micro-businesses, this knowledge plays a pivotal role in the economic growth and poverty alleviation of developing countries, yet there is a dearth of research that examines the operational

performance and competitive strategies of these micro-enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa (Sum, Kow and Chen, 2004:322).

Commentaries by Collier et al. (2012:219) point out key distinctions to be followed and adhered to regarding the formation of a concept by mapping out dimensions, which correspond to the rows and columns which are classified as explanatory variables. Research by Collier et al. (2008:152-153) and Collier et al. (2012:217) articulates various roles played by typologies in concept formulation and measurement. The key distinction of typologies to be understood entails the following:

- a) **Conceptual typologies:** Conceptual typologies typically serve as independent variables in explaining various phenomena or outcomes (Collier et al., 2012:217). They help define the meaning of a concept by mapping out its dimensions, which correspond to the rows. In other words, they predict the behaviour, characteristics or outcomes of individuals, organisations or systems. Conceptual typologies make a fundamental contribution to concept formation in both qualitative and quantitative research (Collier et al., 2012:218-219).
- b) **Explanatory typologies:** Explanatory typologies are concerned with the causal relationship between concepts (Doty and Glick, 1994:235). They are a powerful tool in the qualitative framework. They offer a framework for analysing and understanding complex cultural dynamics that shape our world (Stephenson, 2023). They study relationships and patterns between concepts, ideas and cultural phenomena. In examining a complex cultural relationship between nationalism and modernity, different combinations of these two concepts can lead to different outcomes; therefore, explanatory typologies do a better job of helping understand such intertwined relationships (Collier et al., 2012:219).
- c) **Classificatory typologies:** They place names of cases in the corresponding cells, for example, countries, wars, or elections (Collier et al., 2008:152). Classificatory typologies contain numerical counts sorting cells by cases and occur either as percentages with a conceptual or explanatory typology (Collier et al., 2012:218).
- d) **Descriptive versus explanatory typologies:** Conceptual typologies may also be termed descriptive typologies rather than mapping out variations in the

outcomes (van der Waldt, 2024:39). The typologies focus on describing and categorising concepts, ideas and phenomena, aiming to provide a detailed accurate picture of what exists (Taherdoost, 2022:53). They are in contrast to an explanatory typology, which focuses on explaining and interpreting the relationships between concepts, ideas and phenomena (Doty and Glick, 1994:231). The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of why things happen the way they do. Emphasis analysis, theory development and interpretation are used to predict outcomes and are not placed in the matrix and columns (Goldsmith, 2021:2062). While descriptive typology provides a snapshot of what exists, it establishes a property space catering for relationships that identify with overarching rows and columns as variables provided to define attributes (Collier et al., 2012:217-218).

3.3 MULTIDIMENSIONAL VERSUS UNIDIMENSIONAL TYPOLOGIES.

Taxonomies are empirically based classifications of business-level strategies based on the measurement of organisations' indicators of strategic behaviour and representing the existence of internal consistent configurations (Morrison and Roth, 1992:400). Moreover, according to Diambeidou et al. (2008) and Rich (1992) a taxonomy is more than a simple classification of items into separate groups. It is a specific categorisation of elements having resemblance in an ordered pattern.

Prominent scholars such as Galbraith and Schendel (1983), Miller and Friesen (1978) and Porter (1980) have authored prominent taxonomies that are essential for business model approaches (Möller et al., 2021:701).

- a) Schendel and Hofer's (1979) model suggested an identifiable limited number of strategies with different competitive strategies and investment strategies. The model is ideally constructed around the compatibility of the product and target market, leveraging resources and capabilities (Goldsmith, 2021:2061). In summary, the strategy seeks to identify the position and strategy gaps and subsequently bridge the gaps to achieve a competitive advantage.
- b) Porter (1980) introduces the concept of competitive strategy as a proactive or defensive business-level typology that can be operationalised. According to Porter (1980) firms can pursue one of three generic strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, or focus strategies. The three generic strategies, as proposed,

aim to defend an organisation to target three distinct perspectives (Institute for Manufacturing, 2016). Firstly, the cost leadership strategy focuses on producing goods and services at a lower cost for the producer while maintaining an acceptable cost for the consumer. In the context of company rivalry, the emphasis is on achieving low-cost positioning to ensure profitability. Consequently, supply chains are pushed to optimise efficiency, driving cost-cutting measures to maximise returns (Dawson Consulting, 2019).

- c) On a related theme, Miller and Friesen (1978, 1980) have empirically examined archetypes of organisational transition and strategy formulation. In small firms, success, organisational transitions and strategy formulation are relatively significant. They conclude that there are ten basic types of strategy making (1978) and nine archetypes of organisational transition (1980).

Although the Miller and Friesen (1978, 1980) studies are only tangentially related to the typologies of business level strategies, two key points implied by the authors are relevant. First, methodologies employed to develop and test archetypes, whether strategic or organisational in nature, must be capable of capturing the complex of interrelated linkages that constitutes real strategies and organisations, respectively; and second, the dynamics of any system over time should be taken into account when developing meaningful typologies (Schendel and Galbraith, 1983). Schendel and Galbraith (1983) have proposed a composite definition of strategy built around four components: (a) scope, which they define in terms of product/market matches and geographic territories (b) resource deployments and distinctive competences (c) competitive advantages, and (d) synergy. At the secondary or business level, this translates into the question, “How should a business position itself among its rivals in order to achieve its goals?”

The study aims to strengthen its case on strategy conceptualisation and organisational performance by drawing on two key taxonomies in the literature. The first is the Industrial Organisation (I/O) perspective, as discussed by (Bordean et al., 2010; Chen and Walters, 2020:58). The second is the Resource-Based View (RBV), as explored by (Veetil, 2008:289; Yang and Morgan, 2011:33). By integrating these frameworks,

this study aims to provide a foundation for understanding strategic conceptualisation and its impact on organisational performance.

I/O is viewed as a field of economics that deals with the strategic behaviour of firms, regulatory policy, anti-trust policy and market competition (Chen and Walters, 2020:57). Literature portrays it as neither taking a pro- or anti-capitalistic assumption; instead, as seeking to define ownership of the media by analysing the industrial structure (Gomery, 2015:702). This economic structure details how the industry performs and possible policy recommendation requirements to make the system efficient. It facilitates industrial organisation economists in having control over competitors, giving them an advantage to maintain considerable economic power and keep out unwanted competition, a fundamental personality trait micro-business has yet to learn (Gomery, 2015:701).

A view by Veettil (2008:74) observes these typologies as theoretically derived and relying on measuring key traits and assessing differences and similarities across profiles that consist of characteristics that explain a detailed strategic plan (Veettil, 2008:298). In defining I/O, Chen and Walters (2020:57) view it as an analysis of various factors, operating and contributing to a firm's overall strategy. I/O addresses issues arising from the behaviour of firms operating under different market conditions and the effect this has on their economic performance in trying to achieve competitive advantage (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 1993).

Yang and Morgan (2011:25) define the Resource-Based View (RBV) as a concept of "strategic fit," emphasising the alignment between a firm's internal resources and capabilities with its external environment. This perspective focuses on leveraging internal strengths to enhance competitive advantage (Farida and Setiawan, 2022:03). RBV encompasses various aspects of the market environment, including market power, product differentiation, and industrial policy, all of which influence a firm's operations (Holdford, 2018:02).

According to the RBV, Edwards (2014) posits that an organisation with strategic resources has an important competitive advantage over competitors without resources. This is owing to resources such as cash and equipment not being considered strategic resources because competition can easily and readily replicate

them (Adamu, 2023:1-2). However, a resource is considered strategic according to the extent of its value, rareness, difficulty to replicate and substitutability (Hui et al., 2018:04).

Resources and capabilities are to be considered as basic unit block businesses use to create strategies. Micro-business is to introspect its tangible resources and its intangible resources, which are difficult to imitate, the knowledge and skill of employees, and organisational culture (Hui et al., 2018:03). Lastly, the dynamic capability of an organisation refers to its ability to adapt and evolve over-time, primarily through experience (Auster et al., 2016:65). This trait is developed through continuous skill enhancement and the strategic combination of changes, enabling the organisation to improve existing capabilities or develop new ones, in response to shifts in the external environment (Kilonzo and Iwara, 2023:203).

3.4 PORTER'S GENERIC STRATEGIES IN MICRO-BUSINESSES

Porter's generic strategies (low-cost strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy) remain one of the most widely accepted typologies for strategic options for corporates and medium-sized businesses (Mungai and Ogot, 2017:149). It is from this premise that the study seeks to assess the effective competitiveness of Porters generics management strategies in micro-businesses. Oliveira et al. (2015:02) posit that micro-business owners are involved on a daily basis on the business monitoring aspect; a crucial aspect of their effective daily operations of process monitoring, performance monitoring and progress tracking. The function of developing and managing staff, processing of information, and seeking new business opportunities instigates the exclusion of research and development initiatives required for strategic planning, thus contradicting position taken by corporate business.

Islami et al. (2020:02) submit that the most important aspect of strategic planning is to align shareholders and employees with organisational goals, and ensure those goals are backed by resources (Cote, 2020). It therefore becomes crucial for top management of organisations with large amounts of resources to implement and plan correctly. Renowned scholars Okurut et al. (2016:301) and Oliveira et al. (2015:1280) submit that operations in small businesses differ from those of large businesses. They have their own specific characteristics regarding management. Islami et al. (2022)

suggest that micro-businesses are multifunctional or multidivisional, requiring consideration of both the internal and external factors, which poses a challenge.

Edwards (2014:57) and Lim and Kim (1988:806) raise a critical question regarding whether small businesses can employ the same strategic approaches as large enterprises. Various perspectives highlight the significant influence of the economic environment on business survival and competitiveness. One key consideration is the disparity in managerial expertise between micro-businesses in developed and developing economies (Rogan, 2018). Another important aspect concerns the applicability of management theories formulated in developed economies to businesses in developing nations. Studies by Kiggundu, Jorgensen, and Hafsi (1983), as well as Lim and Kim (1988:810), suggest that while data from industrialised nations is valuable for understanding organisational challenges in developed countries, it may be less effective in addressing the complexities of micro-organisations in developing economies.

3.5 AFRICAN STRATEGIES FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIES

Trade is not a new concept in Africa. Its historical engagement in global trade is a testament to the world of its integration into international economic networks (Tralac, 2025). Dating back to antiquity, around 3000BC, Ancient Egypt emerged as a pivotal economic hub, facilitating the exchange of coveted resources such as gold, ebony, grain and ivory with various regions of the world (Klemm and Klemm, 2023). The subsequent flourishing of the Trans-Saharan trade, which gained prominence approximately in the 8th century AD, draws attention to the significance of commercial interactions between West and North Africa and external partners in Europe and the Middle East (Klemm and Klemm, 2023). This extensive trade points out the continent's enduring role in shaping global interchange, culture economic and societal developments across the continent and beyond.

The continent has for centuries engaged in economic markets and long-distance trade, making influential decisions in central marketplaces (Hayakawa, 2024:33). African trade precedes Egyptian Pharaohs and the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba who were recorded in the Bible (1 Kings 10) as King Solomon's business counterparts (Mokhtar, 2000; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2023:628). In affirming these sentiments Newton and Wesley (2022) assert that the Kush kingdom

was closely affiliated with early Egyptians, playing a significant role in economically connecting Egypt to much of Africa. Because of the multilateral trade agreements between Egyptians, Kush, and the Nubians, their ties extended further into religion, beliefs, and cultures (Newton and Wesley, 2022). This practice supports the belief that entrepreneurship is a cure for Africa's unemployment problems. A view also held by Endris and Kassegn (2022:2-3) that investments into African entrepreneurship philosophy can contribute immensely to economic growth and job creation, reducing inequality, low productivity and disconnect from global value chains.

African scholars Abdullahi et al. (2021:33) and Lawal and Osifo (2018) involved in business and political development assert that the primary strategies confronting poverty alleviation should be aimed at entrepreneurship within the MSEs space. Endris and Kassegn (2022:2-3) asserts that this tradition was enacted in developed countries in pursuing entrepreneurial ventures to curb unemployment and grow economies.

3.6 ETHIOPIAN BUSINESS STRATEGIES

Ethiopia is Africa's oldest independent country and the second-largest populous in the continent (Endris and Kassegn, 2022: 2-3). It is a landlocked country on the Horn of Africa (McKenna, 2009; Mehretu et al., 2022). It is one of the poorest countries of the world with half the population living under a dollar a day (Mehretu et al., 2022). The economic environment forced the economic ecosystem to adopt pro-poor strategic projects to alleviate poverty and create employment (Alemu et al., 2000:36-39). The Ethiopian government developed a policy supporting SMEs. The Government implemented several rural programmes targeting women and youth (Alemu et al., 2000:36-39). The dominant Ethiopian livelihood is centred around crop-livestock production, followed by cereal crop production. Ethiopian farmers and businesses are focused on a diverse range of activities to ensure food security, income generation and sustainable livelihoods. These diverse business strategies include raising ruminant livestock (mainly sheep and goats), growing annual crops such as pulses and oilseeds, off-farm activities such as trading activities, salary employment, or handicrafts, producing perishable annuals (mainly vegetables), and cultivating perennial crops such as coffee, *khat*, and fruit trees (Alemu et al., 2000:36-39). The business environment in which these commercial activities are carried out is predominantly where only 16% of SMMEs have access to electricity from the national

grid while 28% of SMMEs have access to water municipal sources (Endris and Kassegn, 2022:02).

A pro-poor strategic policy generates a more self-employed workforce as compared to large companies from other countries. Ethiopian business strategies make a crucial contribution to job creation and income-generating MSEs as means of creating employment to millions of youths and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In September 2015, a total of 193 world leaders reached a consensus on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the primary objective being "To end poverty" (Abdullahi et al., 2021:34-35). The issue of poverty is a pressing global concern in low- and middle-income countries. A significant proportion of sub-Saharan African nations are disproportionately affected by this problem. As a global issue, poverty requires collective action and cooperation from both developing and developed countries to address its root causes and find sustainable solutions (Fourie, 2018:30). Ethiopian Airlines is a ray of light for leadership within African conglomerates (Endris and Kassegn, 2022:1-2). During the hard pressed COVID-19 pandemic, the airline effectively steered its organisational strategy into becoming a world-class African airline by specifically improving its route network in poverty-stricken developing countries to meet customer needs, contrary to its competitors in developed countries who encountered global annual losses of close to \$84.3bn (Redactive Media Group, 2023). Industry leaders such as American Airlines and Emirates resorted to seeking government support (StudyCorgi, 2022). Ethiopian Airlines dealt with the crisis without reducing salaries or asking the government for a bailout (Collins, 2020).

Collins (2020) and Singh (2022) attribute Ethiopian Airlines' resilience during the pandemic to nothing short of a miracle, attributing it more to strategic leadership at the management level. The decision to redeploy aircraft during peak COVID months to meet urgent cargo demand is an adaptation decision that management had to come up with to save the airline (Redactive Media Group, 2023). The flexibility of Ethiopian Airlines management was critical in devising creative strategies to survive through the COVID-19 crisis, including redeployment of staff to least areas least affected by pandemic business units while applying cost leadership strategies (Collins, 2020; Redactive Media Group, 2023).

Vidović, et al. (2006) characterised a low-cost business model as serving secondary airports and focusing on short haul routes. In developed countries where resources and infrastructure are in abundance, it becomes fair to conceptualise and implement low-cost model as a practical business strategy as it is widely used by Ethiopian Airline counterparts in Europe and the United States (Redactive Media Group, 2023). However, the low-cost business model does not become a strategic fit for Ethiopian Airlines (Islami et al., 2020:05). The lack of resources and infrastructure prevents the Ethiopian Airlines business strategy from being a truly low-cost model in the high-cost African context. In developed countries, air carriers such as Ryanair or Southwest reduce costs by making use of secondary airports (Vidović et al., 2006). However, in developing countries such as Africa, many cities do not have secondary airports. The discrepancy further confirms the researcher's objective to question the effectiveness of generic management strategies, specifically in an African context.

3.7 NIGERIAN BUSINESS STRATEGIES

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country located in the west of the continent, has an estimated population of 213.4 million, who ascribe to doing business in a different manner (The World Bank, 2023). Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse federal state. It is inhabited by over 250 tribes speaking over 500 distinct languages (BBC, 2023; The World Bank, 2023). A positive impact of this populous statistic is that of cheap labour. Nigeria is fast developing and there is a vast need for innovative products. An enormous influx of entrepreneurship opportunities and investors in Nigeria mostly trade in Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt (Alade, 2010). The influx revealed how micro and small businesses require innovation to remain competitive, as they must always introduce novel products, services, or processes that did not previously exist, thereby creating differentiation within the market (Musa et al., 2021:101).

Small business enterprises (SBEs) in Nigeria are confronted and influenced by many threats and opportunities emanating from various variables (Osuagwu, 2003:04). Inadequate financial means, limited supply of qualified staff and competition are daily challenges experienced differently in African countries (Musa et al., 2021:100). The SBEs in Nigeria are structurally informal and differentiated in terms of financing, planning, control, training and information systems to those of the developed worlds (Sikiru, 2014:181). In Japan, for example, development policies and institutional set-

ups are conceptualised and implemented basing the objective of a non-discriminatory criterion that seeks to support SMEs' efforts (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 1997).

The majority of micro-organisations in developing countries lack resources that exhibit the uniqueness of companies operating under perfect competition (Abdullahi et al., 2021:35; Sikiru, 2014:179-180). The survival of those in Nigeria is not dependent on access to financial resources. The secret behind their success is “self-reliant strategy”, a people’s attitude towards small enterprises (Ayanda and Laraba, 2011:201). SBEs in developing countries need to be treated differently from large-scale companies (Abdullahi et al., 2021:34). Specifically, SBEs in Africa have different problems which demand different managerial approaches from those of large-scale organisations. Innovation Management, Entrepreneurship and Sustainability (2017) is of the view that SBEs are organic in nature; that is why they are extension of the entrepreneur’s psychology. To be successful, an entrepreneur has to come up with a successful business strategy (Acar and Göç, 2011; Lim and Kim, 1988:817). It was determined that success depends on an appropriate relationship between variables within managerial control, such as marketing, production, and investment decisions, and variables that are generally beyond the direct control of management (Abdullahi et al., 2021:33-34; African Development Bank Group, June 2019). Business performance is, for instance, a function of controllable or strategic variables and noncontrollable or environmental variables.

3.7.1 Small business enterprises using technology in Nigeria

Most small business owners have taken advantage of digital marketing and are advertising using social media platforms for their businesses to flourish (Alade, 2010). Nigerian micro-businesses have recognised the potential of social media as a strategy to boost their business revenue growth (Akinso, 2018:22). This shift to digital marketing and social media advertising has opened new opportunities for SBEs in Nigeria. To maximise their online presence and reach a wider audience, small businesses in Nigeria make use of more than one social media platform and other digital channels to advertise their goods and services (Abubakre et al., 2021:839).

A typical example of such business platforms are email marketing strategies, cell phone marketing, business websites, social media handles X (formerly known as

Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook (Alile, 2021). By combining these platforms, businesses diversify their online presence, catering for different customer audience preferences and maximising digital marketing efforts. By leveraging on digital and social media platforms, SMEs in Nigeria increase their market reach to a larger customer base and drive website traffic and sales. By embracing digital transformation new opportunities emerge with job creation contributing to economic growth.

Ogbe (2023) posits that lack of training and investment are some of the challenges facing Nigerian micro-businesses. Their inability to attain a competitive advantage is attributed largely to the lack of technology in today's global market (Nwosu, 2017:219). The need for funding deprives entrepreneurs of the most basic aspect which is innovation. Making investments into one business through information and communication technology (ICT) assists in collecting, storing, and analysing data more efficiently, which in turn helps them be innovative and make informed decisions (StudySmarter, 2022). According to Nwosu (2017:230) innovation can be defined as the process by which an entrepreneur transforms knowledge into specific skills, leveraging SME competencies and assets acquired through formal and informal (action-based) learning channels.

Technology can affect market price by altering output and market share (Qureshi, 2020). A widely known view by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2013) holds that access to computers and the Internet breaks down barriers to accessing the retail space. Several Nigerian online firms have broken barriers, finding themselves in this technological frontier and reaping major productivity gains. The likes of Jumia.com and Konga.com, are some of the leading Nigerian online giants dominating the online space (Enang, 2023). The advantage of access to a functioning technological platform has the potential to assist micro-businesses break down entry barriers in industries (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013).

Small businesses mainly suffer huge economic damage due to unforeseen circumstances that lead to changes in price (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 1997; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2022). Price takers are incapacitated from efficiently managing price fluctuations, making them substantially dependent on bigger players with larger market shares in a community of stakeholders (Organisation for economic co-operation and

development, 2022). For small businesses maintaining profitability, market share and reinvestment in the business is crucial for sustainability and livelihood. However, for big businesses, these economic concerns may go in the opposite direction (University of Kansas, 2022).

Therefore, by prioritising innovations and investment, small businesses ensure their long-term viability and success which is critical for their livelihood (Endris and Kassegn, 2022:2-3). This engagement allows them to establish a strong brand reputation and expand their knowledge and value proposition through new product and services. In contrast, to large organisations where growth is extensively explored and documented strategies for growth and profitability are in place, making these organisations well-established within their business landscape (Mamabolo et al., 2017). Managers in such situations formalise organisational innovative strategic management practices to survive the turbulence and dynamic environments (Acquaah, 2013:103).

However, similar studies for SBEs are less common, as in these environments managers of SBEs in more turbulent and dynamic environments (such as finance) where adaptability and innovation are crucial for survival and success tend to assume greater business risks, be more open to experimentation and embrace change and uncertainty (Oliveira et al., 2015:01). Turbulent environments require businesses to be agile and adaptable to survive, and innovation is seen as the driver. In assuming greater business risks and investing in innovation, managers in turbulent environments can identify opportunities and revenue stream ahead of the competition (Courie, 2021; Osuagwu, 2003:02). They can further build resilience against market fluctuations by finding new ways to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. It is, however, important to note that assuming greater business risks also increases the likelihood of failure, therefore care is to be balanced with risk reward (Leitner and Guldenberg, 2009:170).

3.8 KENYAN STRATEGIES

Kenya is East Africa's largest and most important business, financial, and transportation hub. It is strategically located as a gateway to East and Central Africa, leading it to be the most diversified economy and the second-largest population in East Africa (The United States Agency for International Development, 2021). The country has a young well-educated workforce that contributes to the development of the country (Leonardo and Casanovas, 2019). Kenya's government does not rely solely on any socio-political or socio-economic philosophies but prioritises sectors such as agriculture, SMMs, housing, manufacturing, and the digital superhighway, offering lucrative investment opportunities into major industrial activities, such as agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, manufacturing, energy, tourism, and financial services (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020).

Mombasa is Kenya's second-largest city and East Africa's largest port (European Union, 2022). It is East Africa's busiest trade and transport route. It is a corridor leading to neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi (Okafor, 2023). It is an economic hub that mainly thrives through small business enterprises in the region. A total of 80% of the employment in Kenya's middle class is stimulated by SMEs' growth and innovation in demand for new goods and services (Kasi Insight, 2021). The majority of Kenyan SMEs are in the informal sector, popularly known as *Jua kali*. A definition coined by the International Labour Organisation (2022) describes Jua Kali as a collection of traders and artisans operating within a wide range of skills, ranging from carpentry, metal work and welding, shoe repair, tailoring, and automobile repair to plumbing, just to mention a few.

Artisans are small business traders in an informal sector operating in the street or in open market spaces, just like in any other African country (Bilal, 2022). The sector employs 83% of the working population of Kenya (International Labour Organization, 2022). Many Jua Kali workers are from poor backgrounds and cannot afford formal education or training (Bilal, 2022). They were thus forced into informal forms of training and employment to be able to feed their families and survive (International Labour Organisation, 2022). Owing to the informal nature of the Jua kali sector, information about SMEs operating under this sector is based on estimates (International Labour Organization, 2022; Bilal, 2022; Radier, 2016:267). Proceedings from the sector are difficult to track because of the traditional banking systems used.

3.8.1 Operations within the Jua Kali sector

The transfer of knowledge in the Jua Kali sector follows an informal approach. Traders and artisans learn on the job from their local master crafts-persons (Lillo, 2020; K'Aol and Nelson, 1997:74). Learners are, however, not attested with an official document that validates the skills they have developed (Lillo, 2020). This in turn deprives them from obtaining formal employment and stable income opportunities, despite their significant capabilities and competencies (Bilal, 2022).

Kenya's Jua Kali offers a uniquely historical and exceptionally well-informed perspective on the best understood informal sector in Africa and perhaps world-wide (King, 1996:1-2; Radier, 2016:259). It is believed no other country can match Kenya's efforts to understand the informal sector, accept it as a viable component of an emerging economy, and incorporate informal sector planning into national policies and plans (King, 1996:1-4). The western community views Lillo (2020) Jua Kali informal markets as stereotypically chaotic and lackadaisical. Many developed nations do not understand Africa's innovative strategy, which is characterised by recycling innovation. A working strategy for developing countries with limited resources is that existing solutions are reworked and adapted to better meet local needs (Lillo, 2020).

3.9 SOUTH AFRICAN STRATEGIES

South Africa is the southernmost country on the continent of Africa (Lowe et al., 2023). The country is renowned for its varied topography. It is one of the few countries in the world, if not the only one, that has three cities that serve as capitals: Pretoria (executive), Cape Town (legislative), and Bloemfontein (judicial) (Smith, 2020). Johannesburg, lying at the heart of the populous Gauteng province, is South Africa's largest urban city, contributing 16% of the country's GDP (City of Johannesburg, 2018). Durban is a city developed around the port of Natal on the Indian Ocean. It is a major industrial centre and the third biggest city in the country after Cape Town which is on the southern tip of the country (Lowe et al., 2023).

The South African economy is considered one of the most advanced, diverse and productive in Africa (International Trade Administration, 2023). It is a highly competitive economic environment, making it one of the toughest regions in the world to be an entrepreneur (Bizcommunity.com, 2022; The World Bank, 2021). The country has experienced a positive inclination towards entrepreneurship since 2003

(Lekhanya, 2016:180). A positive outcome from current research by Bogenhold et al. (2016:15) and Burger et al. (2014:11-12) reads that more than 80% of youth doing Grade 12 learnerships view entrepreneurship as a good career choice. In another study by global entrepreneurship monitor South Africa (2022) key fundamental priorities were identified that require implementation to strengthen the country's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The report reveals that South Africa's supportive environment for entrepreneurship is rated lower than global averages (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa, 2022). Self-employment or entrepreneurship in South Africa represents only 10% of all jobs as compared to 30% in most upper-middle-income countries such as Turkey, Mexico and Brazil (The World Bank, 2021).

For a country to improve entrepreneurial ratings, its policies should be pro-business startup, growth and sustainability (Karani and Mshenga, 2021:224). Pro-poor entrepreneurship strategies need to be set up to help support entrepreneurs to move from startup to success (Stowers, 2023). There are, however, encouraging signs of an increasing entrepreneurial activity for small businesses to make it beyond the startup stage. An entrepreneurial ecosystem approach to the right path is proving to show an effective response (Mason and Brown, 2014:1-2).

3.10 AFRICAN INDIGENOUS STRATEGIES

The South African government has designed an extensive micro-enterprise framework offering diverse and vibrant infrastructure for setting up sustainable business growth for various industries. The DTIC through its financial assistance programme has close to 25 incentive programmes for SMEs (Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, 2022). Business strategies required to grow one's business are largely dependent on the human factor, especially entrepreneurial endowment and small business management skills (Ligthelm, 2014). Regardless of urban or rural settlements, engaged in trading, manufacturing or services; or run by men or women, small businesses are a representation of the country's entrepreneurial spirit (Department of Trade and Industry, 2015).

A South African SMME perspective requires an enterprise to stay competitive in order to avoid failure (Bushe, 2019:10). An SMME needs skilled leadership with the ability

to navigate and survive a volatile, uncertain and unpredictable business environment (Daya and Mhlongo, 2023:1-2). Indigenous African entrepreneurs were trading in African markets for years using African indigenous strategies (Blankson et al., 2019:628). One of the most striking features of sub-Saharan African culture is that of collectivism (Machi and Kunene, 2018:210; Makgalanchech, 2006). African cultures have a remarkable display of unity in diversity, an expression of harmony and unity between dissimilar individuals or groups (Lalonde, 2014:170; Lutz, 2014:320). In as much as they are communal which is the cornerstone in African thought and life, they are also expected to build long-term business relationship with stakeholders on collaboration and fairness. Certain indigenous trends of thought, cultural influences, and value orientations are shared by most people in sub-Saharan Africa. In Hofstede's (1991) taxonomy, an extensive literature framework explains cultural differences (individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity-femininity).

A framework used to understand Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory discusses the differences in cultures across countries and discerns the ways businesses is done across different cultures (CFI Education, 2020). According to Hofstede's research, people in individualistic societies such as those in North America and Europe emphasise personal independence and autonomy (Weinschenka et al., 2022:03). They are expected to care for themselves and their immediate families only but may not feel as responsible for extended family members or the community at large. On the other hand, collectivistic cultures such as many in Asian, African and Latin American countries, emphasise interdependence and group harmony (Fatehi et al., 2020:08). People in these cultures view themselves as members of larger groups, including extended family members, and feel a strong sense of responsibility in caring for each other (Lusardi and Ardagna, 2010). Collective cultures care for each other not as moral obligation, but as a social norm. This can include financial support, emotional support and practical help (Lusardi and Ardagna, 2010).

In summary, individualism and collectivism are two fundamental cultural orientations that shape our beliefs, values and behaviours. Individualism describes the importance of individuals and their virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, while collectivism emphasises the interrelationships of persons and the importance of human connections (Fatehi et al., 2020:08). A Southern African way of expressing a

way of living that is universal believes in collectivism. This African oriental contradicts the Western oriental of an individualistic view. It is from African collectivism that the term “*botho*” is coined, from the Sesotho-speaking community. “*Motho ke motho ka batho*”, a direct translation being “You are a human because I am also a human”. Botho is from the Sesotho languages - Sepedi, Setswana and (Southern) Sesotho. A similar concept from the Nguni languages being isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and isiSwati, exists. Nguni languages use the term “ubuntu” in referring to this same concept.

3.10.1 Theoretical comparison of African micro-enterprise strategies

Informal entrepreneurship has a long history in Africa, predating colonial times, with robust trade networks such as the Kush and Nubian markets (Jallow, 2023). Trade was a big part of people's life in building enterprise agents. The western African part of the continent with its mighty kingdoms and monarchs are known to have traded crops and mineral resources (Umejese and Cheteni, 2024). The pre-colonial entrepreneurship in Africa reveals ubuntu, a paradigm where profit and community development were intensely intertwined, confirming African entrepreneurial endeavours to transcend profit maximisation, prioritising a positive social impact (Blankson et al., 2019:630).

With the advent of time MSEs have evolved into critical tools for poverty alleviation, creating jobs and sustaining development. Their representative significance has been highlighted in Table 3.1 where Kenya's Jua Kali sector and in Nigerian digital transformation, in informal financial systems supporting small Businesses. Recognising the integral significance and the community dependence on rural development, Ethiopian policymakers have initiated pro-poor policies and strategies targeting employment through rural programmes. Furthermore, South Africa's SMME framework integrates an entrepreneurial ecosystem, uniquely blending indigenous collectivist approaches, such as *stokvels*, to foster inclusive economic growth.

Table 3.1: Comparative analysis: Theories on micro-enterprise strategies

Theory	Key Features	Region	Advancements
Pro-Poor Strategies	Focus on MSEs to alleviate poverty, create employment, and achieve SDGs.	Ethiopia	Multi-faceted business strategies (crop-livestock production, rural SME policies).
Self-Reliant Strategies	Emphasis on internal resourcefulness and independence.	Nigeria	Digital marketing and ICT adoption are transforming traditional enterprise approaches.
Jua Kali Informal Model	Informal on-the-job training with artisanal innovation.	Kenya	Embraces recycling innovation to adapt existing solutions to local needs.
Indigenous Collectivism	Collaboration, group harmony, and long-term stakeholder relationships.	South Africa	Frameworks like ubuntu and botho emphasise community-driven entrepreneurship (stokvels).
Low-Cost Adaptation	Adaptation of Western models (low-cost carriers), tailored to Africa's infrastructural gaps.	Ethiopia (Airlines)	Ethiopian Airlines' strategic redeployment of resources during crises demonstrates resilience.
Technology-Driven Growth	Using ICT and social media for market expansion and efficiency.	Nigeria and Kenya	SMEs increasingly leveraging platforms like Jumia and digital advertising for growth.

Source: Own Construct

3.10.2 In business for survival not mega profits

All business theories that maintain that the purpose of business management is the maximisation of profit must be rejected because some profit-maximising actions are unethical (Lutz, 2014:315). This rejection of business ethics theories and corporate governance practices is rooted in individualistic philosophical systems which contradicts *botho or ubuntu* as an African philosophical root of collectivism. The *botho or ubuntu* principles are a humanitarian approach of managing socio-economic factors. Players operating in this African set-up are assumed to uphold the following

principles, namely trust, respect, responsibility, fairness, compassion and good citizenship (Machi and Kunene, 2018:200).

Enshrined in the South African Constitution section 27(3) is the right to life, closely linked to Sustainable Developmental Goal number 3 – Ensuring healthy lives and promotion of well-being for all (United Nations, 2022; Kramer, 2008:53). The South African Constitution categorically outlines this right in outlining that “*No one may be refused emergency medical treatment*” regardless of payment. In an opinion shared by Kramer (2008:53-54), a medical practitioner redirecting and transferring financially disadvantaged emergency medical patients from private health care simply because they cannot afford presents an ethical concern. Therefore the *botho or ubuntu* principle enshrined within the Constitution mandates that it is incumbent upon all healthcare providers to render basic medical treatment without fear, favour or undue financial demand (Kramer, 2008:53). It therefore becomes illegal for a healthcare institution to refuse an appropriate level of care at an emergency situation owing to services being unaffordable for patient.

In as much as the scenario upholds only in emergencies, it somehow contradicts the principles of profit-maximisation followed largely by corporates in pursuit of profits. Machi and Kunene (2018:190) posit that profitability and financial stability in corporations depends on revenue being collected on all products or services being sold. However, the South African context requires the principles of *botho or ubuntu* not only permeate in SMEs but permeation through big business as enshrined in the Constitution.

In an argument by Conti (2021), an assertion is made that for every single act taken, there is an effect on something or someone, affirming Newton's third law of motion that for every action there is a reaction. Entrepreneurs venture into businesses for various reasons, one being to sustain livelihood or profit. Research has, however, established that economic principles upheld in developed countries vary greatly with those of developing countries. Inasmuch as competitive advantage is prevalent for the survival of businesses, it is, however anti-communal, as its existence follows one's gain to be others' loss (Conti, 2021). It should, however, be emphasised that *botho or ubuntu* do not mean people should disregard themselves, but they should benefit in a way that enables the community to improve (Msengana, 2006:209).

Afro-centric perspective of business entrepreneurship cannot be fully understood without understanding the African concept of reincarnation (Msengana, 2006:213). In defining Afrocentrism, the Oxford Dictionary came up with a definition citing that it is a focus or influence of African cultures or Afrocentric ideas, attitudes, or emphasis (Magang and Magang, 2018). The ethos that guides micro-business entrepreneurs emanates from the communities and neighbourhoods in and around which managers as persons were influenced, reproducing botho or ubuntu management principles as a personality trait inculcated during upbringing (Lutz, 2014:317). The practice allows micro-entrepreneurs to use their Afro-centric views when seeking approaches and ways to guide businesses to survival. The African nurture infused during one's upbringing automatically aligns with botho or ubuntu principles that are meant to serve many purposes in the social and economic realms of communities (Nkate, 2019). Afro-centric business principles therefore rest on the principle that all human beings are interconnected and interdependent.

One of the key principles of botho or ubuntu is interdependence, a communal offering set up (Sarraf and Berman, 2017:456). Correctly implemented, It can offer an alternative to western-style financing models. In Southern Africa, MSEs use social capital built on communal projects that benefit the community in the long run. Ubuntu-inspired businesses recognise the value of interconnectedness, prioritising collective success and well-being. It encourages a hybrid model that is economically sustainable and socially focused (Sarraf and Berman, 2017:455). The arts can play a vital role in realising the potential of ubuntu in the business context, in MSEs. By integrating the arts into a business strategy, entrepreneurs can harness creative problem-solving and foster innovative thinking. Embracement of productive and efficient sustainable development practices improves brand reputation and increases customer satisfaction. These initiatives help humanise the business, emphasising the importance of relationships, empathy and social responsibility (Sarraf and Berman, 2017:456). Communal fundraising is an activity proposed by local and international lending organisations to seek to import for shareholder primacy, short-term profit and privatisation of public goods (Sarraf and Berman, 2017:455).

3.10.3 Being in business is not always about competition

African strategies of doing business entail assisting or making sure customers' needs and wants are met. *Botho* or *ubuntu* at times require the seller to redirect the buyer to an alternative station or competitor where help will be found. When the buyer has insufficient funds, the seller may release goods “out of the goodness of their heart” for the buyer to achieve their objective. In African communities, community members have funded children to go to universities or proceed to a venture that will assist the community in the future. An example by Letseka (2013) elaborates on a Letsema-cooperative community farming among the Basotho and Batswana communities. This is where families come together and agree on a duty roster that would allow them to cultivate each other's fields on agreed days to make them ready for the planting season (Letseka, 2013).

The Southern African part of the continent is strongly committed to worship. Both *botho* or *ubuntu* spirituality are dialogical partners having the ability to bring together social cohesion to a chaotic world full of inequalities, prejudices, marginalisations and all sorts of inhumane treatment of other people (Resane, 2022:03). Social cohesion binds communities together, forging a common sense of identity and sense of belonging. Social cohesion speaks to a willingness to extend trust to outsiders, to respect fellow citizens and uphold their dignity, and to be moved to action in the face of persistent inequality on behalf of those who are marginalised (Resane, 2022:02). *Botho or ubuntu* speaks to communities, offering extended help where none has been offered. Help is offered not with an expectation of receiving a favour in return; however, to extending assistance to those in need, even if redirection is towards competition (Letseka, 2013). This is done because in African cultures, human life is deeply valued and revered, with strong spiritual and religious undertones (Blankson et al., 2019:628). Religion infiltrates every dimension of people's lives and experiences to the extent that separation between the sacred and the secular, the visible and the invisible, or the spiritual from the material, is impossible (Magang and Magang, 2017). These traits build and nourish entrepreneurs in decision making in business. Hence, it should not be surprising when decisions differ from Porter's generic strategies.

This Afrocentric philosophical social cohesion refutes and resists Western culture's exaltation of individualism and adoration of wealth as solutions to human problems

(Morris et al., 2004:12). Instead, it affirms African cultural philosophy by advocating and perpetuating values of communality and reciprocity (Letseka and Letseka, 2021). For this reason, ubuntu is described as offering a workable model for restoring social and economic justice encouraging hybrid models that are socially focused and economically sustainable (Arthur et al., 2015:63-64).

According to an article by Toolis (2021:05), SMEs are sometimes seen as epitomising individualistic values, prioritising extreme profits and hyper-profitability over relationships. This approach is linked to privatisation, a process in the era of neoliberalism that espouses the notion of achieving profits to meet expenses faced is one of the factors that allow a company to produce goods or services better or more cheaply than its rivals (Mfete, 2020:249). Indigenous approaches used by African businesses and societies state that hyper profits should not inhibit access to resources that are used to promote relationship-building (Toolis, 2021:04). More than anything, exclusionary models of community development that impoverish everyday people, including social contracts and stakeholder theories, must be prohibited because they attempt to correct errors without addressing the problem which is individualism (Ishola, 2022:74; Toolis, 2021:03).

3.11 MICRO-ENTERPRISE IN THE ARTIFICIAL ERA

The artificial era has come with many changes that integrate the micro to the macro-management and structural difference between corporate and micro-businesses. Corporations in Africa must believe that to be successful, they must be able to apply ubuntu management principles professionally to achieve business success (Bhadu, 2023). In an African setting, heads of families have an obligation to families in distress to assist with relief, support and other obligations (Ishola, 2022:75). This practice has compelled corporates to offer employees “compassionate leave” to ease with distress an employee is going through. However, for entrepreneurs in the SME sector, a sense of self-awareness, that is evoked by environment and upbringing directs entrepreneurs to be able to own up to their strengths and weaknesses that are related to family matters (Ishola, 2022:75; Rushwaya, 2018:139).

3.12 MANAGEMENT AND STRUCTURAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CORPORATE AND MICRO-BUSINESS

Corporations in Africa should recognise the importance of professionally implementing ubuntu management principles as a means to achieve business success (Bhadu, 2023). In an African setting, heads of families have an obligation to families in distress to assist with relief, support and other obligations (Ishola, 2022:76). This practice has compelled corporates to offer employees “companionate leave” to ease the distress an employee is experiencing. However, for entrepreneurs in the SME sector, a sense of self-awareness that is evoked by environment and upbringing directs entrepreneurs to be able to own up to their strengths and weaknesses that are related to family matters (Ishola, 2022:74; Rushwaya, 2018:140).

3.12.1 Technology a need for the future

Lutz (2014:319) outlines a futuristic approach that embraces technological advancement in relation to morals and values dependent on human factors to thrive. The plan requires that every enterprise be afforded an equal opportunity to access technology and the Internet for all humans to be fully prosperous. Rushwaya (2018:134) contends technology and the Internet are catalysts by which bright, skillful and ambitious entrepreneurs will always emerge highly successful. However, it was noticed that at times when at the highest level of productivity, these sovereign individuals become extremely wealthy and losing touch with the masses (Rushwaya, 2018:135). However, current research has not presented a corrective measure to bring wealthy sovereign individuals to their senses except by means of a loss of wealth.

A corrective means is also measured by how many times a fallen micro-enterprise rises back into entrepreneurial activity (Akoh, 2020:397). This fall and rise in entrepreneurial activity constitute tangible evidence in support of the need for strategies that can grow micro-entrepreneurship (Akoh, 2020:398). SMMEs have to learn some lessons from large firms in formulating business strategies around key variables from their business environment.

3.12.2 Globalisation the cause of unemployment

Democratisation in South Africa brought with it globalisation and integration into the world trading network. The rise in competition from the rest of the world resulted in the inability to create sufficient jobs, thus the establishment of large numbers of small

(informal) businesses as people resorted to self-sustainability. One of South Africa's main reasons for unemployment is the disproportional dependence of labour markets. The formal clothing and textiles industry (like many others) was focused on manufacturing before importation as substitute.

Big business demoralised South African's attitude towards entrepreneurship in many regards. Firstly, employment in a large corporation is regarded as prestige. Secondly, small and micro-businesses, either formal or informal, have to compete with businesses, making the playing field uneven. Despite the challenges encountered, self-employment has exhibited a consistent upward trajectory since 2003. Notably, over 80% of South Africans now perceive entrepreneurship as a favourable career choice, an increase from 69.4% in 2017. Additionally, the view of entrepreneurship as a profession with high status has risen from 74.9% to over 80% in the same period.

Micro-entrepreneurship is at the bottom of the pyramid in South Africa due to the socio-cultural business setup in managing and running a company. Micro-businesses are influenced by the socio-culture seclusion, which requires that women be at home caring for families and protecting their reputation to be good family up-keepers as opposed to their male counterparts. Most businesses are male-dominated, and although current social and economic transformations are impacting on the practice, there is a wave of change in South Africa, evidenced by female entrepreneurship that is increasing in developing economies as conditions improve (Field et al., 2015; Ghani et al., 2014).

Several years after South African independence in 1994, the economic growth agenda was set to be a priority by the government seeking to absorb the unemployed into the market to materialise micro-business sustainability (Henama and Sifolo, 2019:02; The World Bank, 2021; UKEssays, 2018). It is always important to have citizens who have an alternative view of employment. The perspective of being an entrepreneur reduces the uncertainty of job hunting. Entrepreneurs seek opportunities and convert resources into assets, while also considering the impact on society and the threats posed by uncertain and ambiguous economic situations (Gill, 2017).

3.12.3 Entrepreneurship or self-employment

The two words, “entrepreneurship” and “self-employment”, cannot be used interchangeably. In as much as they both involve working for oneself, they have key differences. In self-employment one is involved in functions or services that already exist, replicating traditional employment roles. Self-employment does not involve innovative or creative functions, whilst entrepreneurship involves creating new ideas, and products that require innovative and risk-taking initiatives. Entrepreneurship requires one to be a critical thinker, with the ability to identify market needs and developing solutions for the market. This requires developing a unique value proposition to achieve a competitive advantage. It is the entrepreneur's critical thinking skills that identify opportunities, develop and launch new products and use these markets and sales strategies to reach customers (Jones, 2022).

Whilst self-employment is about working for oneself, entrepreneurship is about creating something new and innovative which is more challenging and riskier but potentially rewarding (The World Bank, 2021). That is why many South African citizens rely on micro-businesses and entrepreneurship as a means of survival, in the absence of formal job opportunities (Smith and Myres, 2020:07). The two businesses' operations represent an erratic, transitory means of survival among the poorest citizens, yet some entrepreneurs may actively pursue viable business opportunities to generate a sustainable livelihood (García-Cueto et al., 2021:362). The necessity-driven business operation is mostly informal, with limited access to resources focusing on basic survival needs (Weinschenka et al., 2022:04). On the other hand, opportunity-driven business operation focuses on market gaps and opportunities, being innovative enough to create a new market.

Whether opportunity- or necessity-driven, hundreds of thousands of South Africans generate a primary income through micro-businesses which plays a vital role in the economy, providing a lifeline for many individuals and households (Faustino, 2023). It is through their contribution to the GDP of the country that poverty and inequality are reduced. Despite the importance of micro-businesses in South Africa, the owners face enormous challenges such as systematic barriers such as limited funding and access to resources (Ramsuraj, 2023:2150). However, with all these challenges, the

government has introduced various initiatives and programmes to support and empower micro-businesses in South Africa (Gordon, 2023).

3.13 STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SMALL AND MICRO-BUSINESSES.

Some of the strongest self-employed analysts run their businesses at will, pricing for price-sensitive and image-sensitive customers (Chan, 2017). The pricing strategies used are the same as those in a highly competitive market with many competing offerings (Islami et al., 2019:122).

In various markets, consumers are willing to pay different prices. In niche markets, customers seek the highest value offering, regardless of price (Gary et al., 1999:3-4). For price-sensitive customers, a cost leadership strategy is effective (Leonard, 2019). However, business managers may face challenges from buyers who exert pressure, sometimes referred to as the masculinity factor, which can impact pricing strategies and negotiations (Stewart and Roth, 2007).

In a neoliberal African state, people's sovereignty has been substituted by self-employment in the informal sector owned and managed by women in the majority (Fourie, 2018:23). In connection to this, are the few that make market regulations prescribing to most commercial prescriptions in the form of economic markets and politics and law (The World Bank, 2021). This prescribed market regulation determines the dominant values of a culture and where these values land on a spectrum in which "masculine" is associated with assertiveness (Gill, 2017).

Various studies have shown that the acquisition of wealth and material possessions can have a significant impact on individuals and societies. In Egypt, Kenya, South Africa and Nigerian's SMEs reveal that inadequate government assistance and poor infrastructural facilities have indirectly led to a small economic market and SMMEs' lacking motivation for innovation (African Development Bank Group, June 2019). Structural barriers within the market prevent opportunities for cooperation with other firms and research. The market dynamics and consumer demand dictate the strategies for trading and selling products. Such that small business owners, have to adapt to the market conditions and follow the trends to remain competitive (Elsner et al., 2015).

3.14 CONCLUSION

In many African communities, values of collectivism, generosity, and shared faith foster a culture where communal support outweighs financial gain. This Afrocentric worldview emphasises group well-being over individualism but has been increasingly challenged by neoliberal ideologies that promote wealth accumulation and privatisation, marginalising indigenous practices.

The African kinship system, rooted in communal belonging, shapes identity and social responsibility. Literature has argued that personality traits significantly influence entrepreneurial choices and managerial performance. However, research on how these traits affect SMME outcomes in African contexts remains limited, with most studies focusing on policy failures rather than individual characteristics.

Cultural expectations, such as fulfilling social obligations, also impact business sustainability. For example, Eskom adopted Ubuntu-based leadership by prioritising people over profits during economic hardship. Similarly, street vendors embody Ubuntu through fairness, respect, and relationship-building in their business practices. This humanitarian approach, known as Botho or Ubuntu, balances profit-making with social cohesion, offering a culturally grounded model for managing Afrocentric enterprises. Building on this foundation, the next chapter will outline the research methodology aimed at expanding knowledge in this area.

CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter examined the application of Porter's generic strategies as a business tool for micro-businesses, focusing on strategic planning by micro-entrepreneurs, the integration of technology, and the influence of personality traits on business leadership. Building on this foundation, the chapter discusses the research philosophy and research approach, providing a rationale for selecting the most appropriate strategy to investigate effectively the research problem. The chapter begins by presenting the research problem guided by the research onion framework as proposed by Saunders et al. (2019:29). The research questions and objectives inform the chosen philosophical perspectives and methodological approaches. It proceeds to detail the methodological choices and elaborates on the application of the grounded research strategy. A detailed framework for data collection and analysis is presented, ensuring production of relevant findings. The primary objective of this chapter is to investigate whether competitive strategies adopted by micro-businesses align with Porter's generic strategies in achieving a competitive edge. To address the objective, specific research questions and corresponding objectives were developed, formulating a philosophical foundation that guides the research.

4.1.1 Research problem and questions

In conceptualising a research problem, the researcher identifies a specific area of inquiry that requires an in-depth understanding. This process establishes a solid foundation for analysis by articulating research objectives, questions and a conceptual framework that guides the study (Sandmo, 2019:3-4). It is the most important aspect of the research, as it adds to the current body of knowledge (QuestionPro, 2022). Research objectives are concise and explicit statements that delineate the specific goals and outcomes that the study seeks to accomplish through the investigation (Sreekumar, 2023). These objectives provide a clear direction for the study, outlining what the research is expected to attain or discover.

4.1.1.1 Research question I: Do micro-textile enterprises make use of generic strategies to survive the first crucial five-year phase?

Empirical research by Dladla (2019:75) and Okurut et al. (2019:292) suggests that emerging firms, within the initial three to five years of operation, are disproportionately susceptible to failure. Literature by Ziane et al., (2025) and Wood and Bischoff (2019) indicates that the precarious nature of this critical developmental phase for micro-enterprises is attributed to the myriad challenges that emanate from various obstacles. Key among these challenges are difficulties in accessing finance, limited managerial experience, and restricted access to international markets, which collectively exacerbate the vulnerability of these nascent firms (Letuka and Lebambo, 2023). The operational strategies employed by micro-enterprises differ significantly from those utilised by conglomerates and medium-sized organisations (Mulibana and Rena, 2021). The latter typically adopt clearly defined generic strategies, which enable them to secure above-average returns. In contrast, micro-enterprises employ distinct strategies owing to their unique operational designs and constraints (Parthiban et al., 2024).

The research aims to provide an in-depth examination of whether micro-enterprises align with Porter's generic strategies, or they develop their own, which are uniquely indigenous to their strengths. According to Mungai and Ogot (2017:150), these strategies are effectively employed to leverage a firm's strengths and counter market competition. While conglomerates and medium-sized organisations employ generic strategies to avoid being "stuck in the middle", micro-enterprises and informal businesses face a distinct challenge. Unlike their larger and formal counterparts, they rely heavily on the entrepreneurs' personality, who influences their approach to strategy implementation (Kilonzo and Iwara, 2023).

4.1.1.2 Research question II: Are managerial strategies designed according to the resource capability of the enterprise or according to the preference and personality traits of the micro-textile entrepreneur?

According to International Institute for Management Development (2024) and Awwad and Al-Aseer (2021), some of the risks associated with small enterprises are not only inexperience and a lack of access to finance, but also reliance on the dominant

personality traits of owners, who are decision-makers. It is not easy for micro-enterprises to separate management decisions from the owner's personality traits when utilising organisational resources. This is why the study seeks to understand whether owners' personalities and preferences could be considered a hindrance, affecting micro-enterprises' ability to follow formulated strategies.

4.1.1.3 Research question III: Do micro-entrepreneurs consciously conceptualise, plan and implement a management strategy to use or do they default to one unconsciously?

Micro-enterprises are single-owner, self-managed enterprises, putting business owners in a conflict-of-interest situation. Awwad and Al-Aseer (2021) argues that the lack of strategic direction among these entrepreneurs is due to resource constraints. These limitations hinder their ability to conceptualise strategy, develop plans, resulting in premature business closure. Therefore, performing an honest and unbiased market analysis of micro-enterprises' strengths and weaknesses across financial, operational, and staffing aspects is essential for informed decision-making.

Young Entrepreneur Council (2022) contend that the personality traits of small business owners play a crucial role in performance when goals are set. Small business managers who are also owners operate in unstructured, changing conditions that require them to function in multiple roles. It is widely accepted that the personality of a business leader influences the strategic decision-making processes and strategic actions of a firm, ultimately having implications for the firm's performance (Cao et al., 2022). Their personality traits influence their occupational choices, making them predictors of managerial success.

4.1.1.4 Research question IV: Can the use of technology assist micro-textile enterprises in the industry to achieve competitive advantage?

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has become an instrumental tool for both conglomerates and micro-businesses alike. The advent of the 4IR enables micro-textile enterprises to compete effectively, supporting reach beyond their regular customer base. The use of social media assists micro-textiles in advertising their merchandise to a broader customer base far beyond regular jurisdictions. The advent

of payment technology such as Easypay, electronic funds transfer (EFT), and mobile banking assists micro-textiles in receiving funds and paying debts easily and without much trouble.

4.1.1.5 Research question V: Is the personality trait of the entrepreneur organisational aligned or influenced by African ubuntu philosophy?

Entrepreneurs make an enormous contribution to a country's economic growth. Therefore, an economic policy must nurture MSEs to facilitate a heightened emancipation of poverty alleviation and economic growth, which communities can experience. Vodă and Nelu (2019) stipulate that the prevalence of traits for entrepreneurs, or the "traits that make entrepreneurs successful," are entrenched at every level of study. A cognitive approach that consolidates entrepreneurial skills and informs the youth that entrepreneurship, as a career option, is to be envisioned and understood (Vodă and Nelu, 2019).

A Eurocentric entrepreneurial pedagogy fails to accommodate Afrocentric philosophies, leaving the needs and perspectives of a vast population excluded from benefiting from developmental initiatives. This exclusion exacerbates inequality and promotes poverty. A general belief, as expressed by Conti (2021), suggests that the implementation of Afro-centric ubuntu philosophies has the potential to address poverty and promote more inclusive and equitable economic development. Ubuntu is a weapon that is also used by schools or society to challenge inequality and injustices (Magang and Magang, 2018). Ubuntu offers a unique approach to entrepreneurship and financing that prioritises social impact alongside financial sustainability (Nkate, 2019). Ubuntu-inspired approaches can offer a refreshing alternative to traditional Western financing styles that prioritise shareholder profits and the privatisation of public assets. This is a crucial step towards creating a more just and equitable economic landscape that benefits all (Sarraf and Berman, 2017:456).

4.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The term "research philosophy" refers to a system of beliefs and assumptions that guide the research process and the development of knowledge (Bianchi, 2021:34; Okesina, 2020:57-58). Although this sounds rather profound, it is precisely what one embarks on when pursuing research: developing knowledge in a particular field

(Saunders et al., 2019:29). The research philosophy serves as a foundational element shaping the research approach, methodological choice, research strategy and data analysis (Bianchi, 2021:33). It is influenced by many factors such as time, philosophical way of thinking (paradigm), worldviews, and the researcher's philosophical viewpoint (Business Research Methodology, 2018). Central to this philosophical framework are key classifications or types of paradigms, such as ontology, which addresses the nature of reality; epistemology, which concerns the nature and acquisition of knowledge. The classification of paradigms is divided into three; positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, each offering distinct perspectives on how knowledge is understood and investigated (Bianchi, 2021:33; Okesina, 2020:59-60; Ugwu et al., 2021).

A comprehensive research framework provides a systematic structure that guides the researcher through each stage of the study, from conceptualisation to the interpretation of findings. The research onion model is frequently employed as a guiding blueprint by researchers providing a structured, layered approach to methodological decision-making (Babbie, 2020:89; Creswell, 2019:146).

The goal of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how different approaches have conceptualised and applied different layers of research philosophy, approach and strategy. Saunders et al. (2019:179) demonstrate in Figure 4.1 how the research onion is a useful framework for understanding the sequential and interconnected elements of research design. The pictorially illustrates how various research aspects at different layers emanating from the philosophy and research approach, progressively inform methodological choices, research strategy, time horizons and finally, the techniques for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2019:133).

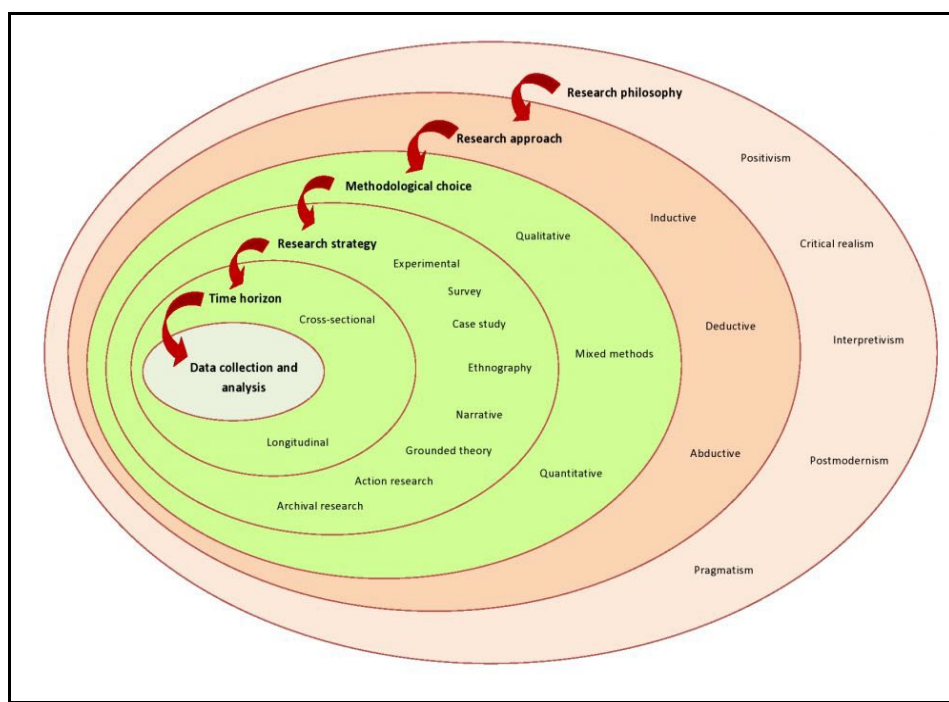


Figure 4.1: The research onion

Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019)

4.2.1 Epistemology

This refers to the branch of philosophy that examines the nature, sources, and limits of knowledge (Bianchi, 2021:32-33). It encompasses the processes of acquiring understanding and validating knowledge, as well as evaluating its reliability, scope, and limitations (Ugwu et al., 2021). Meem (2020) explains this theory of knowledge by questioning what is known, what constitutes truth, and how belief, evidence, and reliability are defined. This notion is further reinforced by Okesina (2020:59), who acknowledge that as individuals mature, their epistemological development regarding the nature of knowledge evolves. Within epistemology, there are several approaches to reality, including positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism. Positivists argue that reality is measurable and observable, lending credibility to research findings (Makombe, 2019:3369). Interpretivism argues that truth depends on subjective interpretations, and pragmatism, which posits that both subjective interpretation and objective phenomena can provide knowledge (Okesina, 2020:60). Considering how data was collected and the nature of interaction between the researcher and the researched (respondents) in the knowledge-sharing process, and the way reality was influenced by the nature of the study, the researcher finds it appropriate to position the

study within the interpretivism paradigm, in agreement with Okesina (2020:60), who asserts that within the interpretivist paradigm, understanding is constructed through the meanings individuals assign to their experiences, as micro-textile entrepreneurs conceptualise their own management strategies in line with their experiences and personality traits. Akoh (2020:398) contributes to the philosophical understanding of micro-enterprises by examining how micro-textile entrepreneurs apply generic management strategies, aligning with the interpretivist paradigm, which emphasises the subjective nature of knowledge and the contextual interpretation of reality. This suggests that the strategies employed by these entrepreneurs are not merely technical or procedural but are shaped by their lived experiences, socio-economic environments, and individual interpretations of business success, reinforcing the idea that knowledge in the micro-enterprise sector, within informal or resource-constrained settings, is constructed through practice and perception rather than universal principles.

4.2.2 Ontological philosophy

This research paradigm addresses the natural occurrences related to all that is real (Machela, 2018). Ontology pertains to the nature of knowledge and the perception of reality (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019:10). It is further described as a belief system that shapes an individual's interpretation of what constitutes a fact (Business Research Methodology, 2018). In the context of micro-textile entrepreneurship, the perception of reality suggests that while there are numerous self-employment opportunities available, for women, young individuals, Africans, and those with lower levels of education, the overall labour market presents fewer opportunities, suggesting there are multiple ways of advancing opportunities (Bhorat et al., 2018:47-48). Several academic scholars conducted extensive research on the survival of micro-enterprises in South Africa (Bartolome, 2023; Mulibana and Rena, 2021; Nkwana and Roberson, 2025; Parthiban, et al., 2024).

According to Okesina (2020:58), ontology of a research paradigm is the worldview of what the world is thought to be or what is reality of the social phenomena. According to Okesina (2020:59) ontology comprises of two aspects: objectivism and subjectivism. Trivedi (2021) and Saunders et al. (2019:30) distinguish objectivism as knowledge that embraces realism, incorporating the existence of social entities that are independent

of social actors. On the other hand, subjectivism is concerned with understanding the meanings individuals attach to social phenomena. Kaushik and Walsh (2019) and Saunders et al. (2019:130) distinguish subjectivism as being associated with the term “constructionism,” which suggests that reality is socially constructed. It is from this premise that the researcher places the study on critical theory, which suggests that there is no single reality or truth, but believes that there are multiple realities. This being same on the notion that generic strategies cannot only be those from Porter. Focusing on unequal resource dynamics of the financially marginalised brings nuanced generic strategies suitable for micro textiles operations, personality and experience. Paradigms are conceptual and practical tools used to solve specific problems with having a different perspective on epistemology, ontology and axiology, Kaushik and Walsh (2019:1), based on the scope and cross-sectional nature of the study, the researcher will be discussed the following classifications: positivism, interpretivism and pragmatism.

4.2.3 Positivism

According to Ugwu et al., (2021:120), research situated within the positivist paradigm assumes that context is not critical, as truth or knowledge is assumed to exist independently and can be discovered by the researcher. Positivism views cause and effect as separable and advocates for a scientific approach to inquiry (Yingxin and Junjie, 2022). It emphasises observation and measurement, asserting that the results of research can be quantified. This paradigm employs empirical and analytical methods, operating on the belief that theory precedes research and that knowledge is best obtained through systematic observation and reasoning (Saunders et al., 2019:134).

Ontologically, positivism assumes ‘realism’, a single, objective reality that is quantifiable and measurable through processes independent of the researcher. Epistemologically, it positions the researcher and participants as separate entities, ensuring that observations remain unbiased (Yingxin and Junjie, 2022). Positivism seeks to establish objective truths through empirical evidence, prioritising quantitative methods and statistical analysis to uncover patterns and predict outcomes (Saunders et al., 2019; Okesina, 2020). Within this framework, human beings are reduced to

variables that can be studied scientifically, with the researcher maintaining a detached and impartial role (Sreekumar, 2023).

However, this study does not align fully with positivism, as the experiences, personality traits, and backgrounds of micro-textile entrepreneurs significantly influence their strategies. These subjective elements introduce complexity that cannot be captured solely through quantitative measures, making a purely positivist approach unsuitable for this research.

4.2.4 Interpretivism

According to Ugwu et al. (2021:120), research situated within the interpretivist paradigm acknowledges that the social world cannot be fully understood from an individual standpoint; rather, it is shaped by multiple socially constructed realities (Yingxin and Junjie, 2022:12). It is a subjectivist ontology that is value-bound (Meem, 2020; Saunders et al., 2019:134). This philosophy emphasises the importance of context in generating knowledge, focusing on understanding individuals and their experiences rather than applying universal laws (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019:1-2). Unlike positivism, which views cause and effect as separate, interpretivism considers them interdependent and influenced by contextual factors. It values participants' perspectives, recognising that their words and actions provide evidence of these realities. Consequently, interpretivism advocates for a qualitative research approach, enabling rich, in-depth insights into complex social phenomena. It is from this premise that Interpretivism is concerned with conducting research among people and establishing individuals' roles as social actors as a critical understanding of social meanings and experiences. This approach is essential in the social sciences, as it enables researchers to gain a deeper understanding of human behaviour, social structures, and cultural practices (Fatehi et al., 2020:7). This philosophy aligns well with the study, as research was conducted among people to examine the roles they play in various settings.

However, this study does not align fully with interpretivism, as the experiences, personality traits, and backgrounds of micro-textile entrepreneurs significantly influence their strategies. These subjective elements introduce complexity that cannot be captured solely through qualitative measures, making a purely interpretivism approach unsuitable for this research.

4.2.5 Pragmatist

The pragmatic paradigm challenges the notion that a single philosophical orientation, such as positivism or interpretivism, can fully address complex research problems. Instead, it advocates for a flexible worldview that integrates multiple perspectives to generate practical and meaningful knowledge (Ugwu et al., 2021:120). Pragmatism assumes a non-singular reality at the ontological level and adopts a relational epistemology, emphasising that both objective and subjective factors shape knowledge (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019:2-3). This approach supports the use of mixed methods, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques to provide comprehensive answers to research questions. By balancing subjectivity and objectivity, pragmatism enables researchers to draw on diverse data sources and methodologies, ensuring that findings are both contextually relevant and empirically robust (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). This approach emphasises problem-solving by focusing on practical outcomes of ideas and actions. It is based on the principle that people's actions are intrinsically linked to their intentions and that they anticipate future scenarios based on the expected consequences of those actions (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019:1-2). The approach is ideal for the current study as it fits the narrative that micro textile entrepreneurs seek to align their resources to solve strategy problems that will enable their micro textile businesses to thrive in competitive environments.

This philosophical assumption suggests that knowledge and reality are shaped through interaction with the environment, as individual beliefs and habits influence them. According to Kaushik and Walsh (2019:2-3), there are several ideas of pragmatism focusing on the nature of experience, unlike philosophies that emphasise the nature of reality (Creswell, 2019:134; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019:3-4). The first being actions cannot be separated from the situations and contexts in which they occur, the second being actions are linked to consequences in ways that are open to change, and lastly, actions depend on paradigms that are socially shared sets of beliefs. It is from these presentations that pragmatism is seen as the most suitable approach for this study.

4.2.6 The research philosophy adopted

After careful analysis of the philosophies and the classification articulated by scholars Ugwu et al., (2021:117); Makombe, (2019:3367); Okesina (2020:58-59) research was positioned within a pragmatic approach, for its priority to solve real-world problems of micro textile entrepreneurs, conceptualise and implement a management strategy. The choice of pragmatism was primarily informed by recommendations and sentiments that knowledge is practical and based on solving real-world problems (Chikwendu, 2019:130; Saunders et al., 2019:117). This research paradigm is both socially objective and subjective; therefore, incorporating phenomenology into a sense of how individuals use experience and personality traits to make sense of environmental concepts (Hammond, 2021:03). The pragmatism paradigm values a subjective understanding of meaning and social phenomena, thereby supporting the ethos of the current study in assessing generic management strategies for micro-textile businesses.

4.3 RESEARCH APPROACH TO THEORY DEVELOPMENT

In the field of social science, various researchers assign different meanings to the term “research approach” (Taherdoost, 2022:53). The extent to which a research study focuses on theory testing or theory building raises an essential question regarding the design of the research project (Saunders et al., 2019:117). This process becomes important in providing a framework for analysis in developing a good theory. To establish a good theory, one needs to formulate a research question and underpin the choice of research methods to be explored (Melnikovas, 2018:30).

Scholars such as Taherdoost (2022) and Creswell (2019:120) contribute to the understanding of research approaches, which are plans and procedures consisting of broad assumptions detailing data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. However, a different view from Business Research Methodology (2018) and Datt and Chetty (2016:135) is that the research approach is a general plan and procedure to conduct a research study. Research Methodology (2018) refers to three categories of research approaches: deductive, inductive, and abductive approaches. The approaches are explained as follows:

4.3.1 Deductive approach

Chikwendu (2019:134) and Saunders et al. (2019:118) believe that the origin of the deductive approach is associated with positivism, which is typically linked to scientific methods and the natural sciences. It is with this premise that Pedraza (2017:02) posits that the deductive approach begins with a general hypothesis that provides arguments to test for a specific outcome based on observation or experience. The deductive research approach works from hypothesis to factualism (Pedraza, 2017:03). Data is collected to test and assess the hypothesis and attempt to explain the causal relationship that may exist between concepts and variables.

4.3.2 Inductive approach

In a study conducted by Chikwendu (2019:130), the inductive research approach is associated with qualitative studies or the interpretivist paradigm. The process involves searching through observation and collecting data to develop an explanation or theory for patterns observed through a series of hypotheses, ultimately forming a theory (Business Research Methodology, 2018; Pedraza, 2017). The original positivists emphasised the importance of inductive research owing to the significance of its empirical data. One of the reasons why the inductive approach is recommended by Chikwendu (2019:134) and Saunders et al. (2019:118) is that researchers seeking an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon must adopt a logical inductive approach, rather than merely describing it.

4.3.3 Abductive approach

Instead of moving from theory to data (as in deduction) or data to theory (as in induction), the abductive approach combines both deductive and inductive approaches (Pedraza, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019:237). This process is devoted to planning incomplete observations, surprising facts as articulated by Business Research Methodology (2018). This was further demonstrated by its ability to transition from empirical to theoretical dimensions of analysis (Alrajeh et al., 2022). Saunders et al. (2019:230) contend that abduction begins with observing the periphery, gradually developing a plausible theory of how things came to be in their current state, making the abductive approach suitable for the current study. Since the study combines abductive and inductive methods with micro-textile entrepreneurs who use experiences to find their paths, which are uniquely suited to their resource-strained enterprises, it is also well-suited for mixed-methods analysis.

4.4 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE

The selection of an appropriate methodological approach is a critical component of any research study, as the researcher's philosophical assumptions shape it. These assumptions, namely ontology, epistemology, and axiology, inform the researcher's worldview and influence the choice of methodology, research design, and data collection methods (Ugwu et al., 2021:2-3). Ontological beliefs about the nature of reality guide epistemological positions on how knowledge is acquired, which in turn determine the methodological framework adopted (Saunders et al., 2019:102-103).

Methodological choices encompass the strategies and techniques used to collect and analyse data. These choices are typically classified into three broad categories: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2019). Qualitative approaches focus on exploring phenomena in depth, using interviews, observations, and thematic analysis. On the other hand, quantitative approaches emphasise measurement and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and examine relationships between variables. The mixed methods approach integrates both qualitative and quantitative techniques within a single study, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of complex research problems.

The nature of the research problem largely influences the decision to adopt a methodological approach, the research questions posed, and the overall research design (Hasa, 2017). Each approach carries distinct characteristics in terms of its design and methods. While the research design outlines the overall strategy for addressing the research problem and achieving the study's objectives (Melnikovas, 2018), research methods refer to the specific procedures used to collect, analyse, and interpret data (Makombe, 2017:3375-3376).

Ultimately, the methodological choice must align with the researcher's philosophical stance and the practical demands of the research inquiry, ensuring coherence and rigour throughout the study. It is from this premise that the research adopted a mixed-methods approach, as it aligns with the pragmatist abductive approach. Furthermore, the pragmatist philosophy has been used by scholars (Makanyeza, 2014:148-150) (Serubugo, 2024:155-157) who hold that entrepreneurs' past experiences and personality traits cannot be separated from their beliefs, they are used to answer the research questions. This study investigates whether micro textiles' competitive

strategies align with Porter's generic strategies to attain a competitive advantage. The answer seeks the views and experiences of micro textile entrepreneurs, who are sole managers and sole owners of these micro enterprises.

This study employed an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, which integrates qualitative and quantitative techniques to enrich the depth and breadth of the research findings. The rationale for adopting this approach lies in its ability to combine the strengths of both methods, thereby enhancing the validity and comprehensiveness of the study (Creswell, 2019:233).

The research design unfolded in two distinct phases. The initial phase involved collecting and analysing qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with 50 micro-textile enterprises. The qualitative phase aimed to explore and quantify participants' experiences, perceptions, attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and other defined variables to generalise results from a larger sample population relevant to the research problem (University of Illinois, 2024). The qualitative data were analysed thematically using NVivo software, which facilitated the identification of key themes and patterns. Insights derived from the qualitative phase informed the development of the subsequent quantitative phase. In this phase, a structured survey was administered to 384 participants to test and generalise the findings. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, generating descriptive statistics that complemented and extended the qualitative insights. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the mixed methods approach enabled a more nuanced understanding of the research problem. It also allowed for methodological triangulation, which strengthened the credibility and reliability of the findings.

4.4.1 Qualitative method

A qualitative method offers several options for gathering data using various tools. This involves questioning the methodology and procedures, as well as the data collection methodology. Thematic data analysis is an approach that seeks to bring interpretation and understanding about the experiences, thoughts and behaviours from across the data set (Kiger and Varpio, 2020:850). The approach explores the inductive style of examining issues and understanding the perspectives of individuals or groups related to a social or human problem. It does so by analysing data, building general themes, and making interpretations. This data is designed to complement and enrich the

quantitative data, providing a more detailed and contextualised understanding of the research phenomenon.

4.4.2 Quantitative method

The current study employed quantitative data to be cross-verified against qualitative data to affirm the information in strengthening the validity of the research study (Machela, 2018). It is further alluded by Machela (2018) that cross-verifying the same information strengthens the validity of the research study.

4.4.3 Mixed methods research

By using a mixed methods approach, the study combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2019:109). A mixed-methods design offers multiple methods of validating findings and increasing accuracy. It offers one the opportunity to obtain a complete understanding of the research issue by exploring both quantitative and qualitative aspects (Taherdoost, 2022). In doing so, it offers an in-depth understanding and broad generalisation (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2019:107). The central premise of these designs is in the combined use of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a better understanding of research issues than either approach alone (Creswell and Plano, 2018:145; Taherdoost, 2022).

According to Creswell and Clark (2018:56), once a mixed methods approach is selected, the next step is to determine a research design that effectively addresses the research problem. In this study, an exploratory sequential mixed methods design was adopted to leverage the complementary strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches while minimising their individual limitations (Creswell & Clark, 2018:109). The mixed-methods approach provides an in-depth understanding of the data from the analysis (Creswell, 2019:243).

This design was chosen to investigate the emergent and unarticulated strategies employed by micro-textile enterprises in their pursuit of competitiveness. The research began with a qualitative phase, where data were collected through interviews to explore how key experiences and personality traits influence strategic formulation. These qualitative insights provided a foundational understanding of the contextual

dynamics at play. Following this, a quantitative phase was conducted to test and generalise the findings across a broader population. This sequential structure allowed the researcher to develop a robust measurement tool informed by the qualitative results, thereby enhancing the reliability and applicability of the quantitative analysis.

Edmonds and Kennedy (2019:154) emphasise that a comprehensive understanding of complex micro textile business issues requires both qualitative exploration and quantitative validation. Similarly, Shiyanbola et al. (2021) affirm that the strength of this approach lies in its ability to identify critical variables in micro textile entrepreneurs that are crucial for conceptualising and planning, while providing deep contextual insight into how entrepreneurs apply these strategies to achieve a competitive advantage. The integration of both phases thus enabled a richer and more nuanced understanding of entrepreneurial strategy alignment, supporting the development of generalizable conclusions.

4.4.4 Triangulation

This technique was developed by Campbell and Fiskel (1959). Their work was later developed by Web (1966) and further elaborated on by Denzin (1970) and repeatedly used by numerous scholars such as Drisko (2017) and Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012). Research is an organised and systematic approach to developing and testing theories, which is applied to various fields, including natural sciences and social sciences (Verduijn et al., 2023). It operates in a realm of ideas, theories and models to facilitate the validation of data from different sources (Shiyanbola et al., 2021).

The study sequentially collected the two types of data from one population. It sampled within the Durban vicinity. The study first collected qualitative data from the fifty participants until saturation point. This point was articulated as the point in time when information from collected data no longer began to change or brought about few changes, if any at all (Schwab, 2021). The study then followed with quantitative data collection from a sample size of three hundred and eighty-four participants. This was an exploratory research study that was expected to produce a 95% confidence level with a five-error margin.

4.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design refers to the plan that guides the researcher to integrate different components of the study coherently and logically to ensure that the research questions are effectively addressed. Scholars refer to research design as a blueprint, guiding the researcher to address the research problems (Bouchrika, 2022; Okesina, 2020:67; Saunders et al., 2019:06). It gives an account on how research method is chosen and how data collection is carried out, data measurement, and its analysis thereof leading to credible results (Morrison, 2022:217; Sekaran and Bougie, 2019).

The function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence gathered addresses the research problem with clarity and precision (Yin, 2014:33). It creates a framework in which the study is conducted, guiding the process of answering research questions formulated to achieve the study's objectives (Makanyeza, 2014). It is different from research method; while the research design outlines the overall structure of the study, research methods refers to specific procedures used to collect data, such as experiments, surveys or tests (Goundar, 2019:13). Research design differs from research methods; while the design outlines the overall structure and strategy of the study, research methods refer to the specific techniques developed for data collection, such as experiments, surveys, interviews, or tests (Okesina, 2020:63).

The study adopted a cross-sectional design due to nature of the study, which required researcher to engage with micro textile entrepreneurs within their actual work environment, where strategic decision-making processes were actively implemented. Secondly, constraints imposed by the university for students undertaking research study allows for maximum four years. The research design enabled the first phase of qualitative data collection using semi-structured interviews as outlined in section 4.4.1 giving researcher rich contextual findings. Given the abductive approach used in sections 4.3.3, the researcher follows an exploratory sequential mixed methods as explained in section 4.4.3 following the research paradigm which informs theory development.

The second phase of data collection was conducted following the analysis of qualitative data, during which quantitative data served as a supplementary source of validation and reinforcement. This sequential mixed-methods approach enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of indigenous business strategies and the

ways in which micro-textile entrepreneurs conceptualise, plan, and implement growth initiatives within their operational growth strategies. The data collection process is detailed in Section 4.4, while the structured questionnaires employed in this phase are outlined in Section 4.12.

Sections 4.7 and 4.9 provide a detailed account of the study's location and sample size respectively, including the rationale for selecting the research site and the scientific basis for determining sample sizes. These sections articulate the methodological considerations that guided the selection process to ensure representativeness and validity.

4.6 TIME HORIZON

In research time horizon refers to the temporal scope within which data are collected and analysed (Blagoev et al., 2024:2162-2162). It is typically classified into two categories: cross-sectional and longitudinal. According to Bouchrika (2022), cross-sectional studies are often preferred when time and financial resources are limited, as they allow for efficient data collection without the need for extended observation periods. In contrast, longitudinal studies involve repeated observations of the same subjects over an extended period, allowing researchers to track changes and patterns over time. While longitudinal designs offer more profound insights into developmental processes, they were not feasible for this study due to financial and time constraints.

The choice between these two approaches is primarily influenced by the research objectives outlined in section 1.4.2. Therefore, the cross-sectional approach was selected to ensure timely and resource-efficient data collection, while still effectively addressing the core research questions. A cross-sectional time horizon involves collecting data at a single point in time. This approach aimed to examine entrepreneurs' alignment with Porter's strategic framework within a specific timeframe. The cross-sectional design enabled the researcher to capture diverse variables across different entrepreneurial contexts simultaneously. This was valuable in understanding how entrepreneurs conceptualise, plan, and implement strategies in varied settings, and how these contextual factors influence their decision-making processes.

4.7 STUDY SITE

The study site is a physical, social, and cultural area of interest where the research study is conducted (Creswell, 2019:213). This study site is located in the central business district (CBD) of Durban, a cosmopolitan, vibrant, and dynamic economic hub of economic activity. It provided access to a diverse range of micro-textile enterprises, which were central to the research objectives, characterised by a high concentration of micro-businesses that compete in a crowded and competitive market.

The choice of location was informed by an active entrepreneurial landscape in the textile sector, and its alignment with the study's focus on strategic planning and implementation among small business owners. Many participants leverage their skills, which were underutilised due to restrictive apartheid laws, to establish thriving businesses in the area. Conducting research in this setting allowed for the collection of rich, context-specific data, reflecting the lived experiences and strategic behaviours of entrepreneurs operating in varied environments. The site also offered logistical feasibility, considering time and resource constraints, while still enabling the researcher to engage with a representative sample of participants. The study site thus played a critical role in shaping the scope and depth of the research, ensuring that the data collected were both meaningful and grounded in real-world practice.

4.8 TARGET POPULATION

In defining a target population, Chikwendu (2019:245) and Millsap (2021) describe it as an entire set of units or individuals for which the survey data are to be used to make inferences. A definition of population, according to Sekaran and Bougie (2019), is an entire group of units, elements, or people. Makanyeza (2014:149) emphasises the importance of giving a definite meaning to '*population*', as it ensures that sources from where data are harvested are identified. To advance the study, a registered population of micro textile entrepreneurs in Durban registered with the National Bargaining Council for the Clothing Manufacturing Industry was identified to be approximately 100,000 (KwaZulu-Natal Clothing and Textile Cluster, 2017).

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

To address the ethical considerations aspect of this dissertation effectively, researcher was issued with full approval ethical clearance certificate reference IREC 158/22. This gave researcher permission to approach participants and acknowledge respondents'

voluntary participation in the research as a crucial aspect, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wished. Respondents' participation was based on informed consent. This involved the researcher providing sufficient information and assurances about their participation and allowing respondents time to understand the implications of participation without any pressure or coercion. The researcher avoided the use of offensive, discriminatory, or other unacceptable language. The researcher conformed to the institution's privacy and anonymity clause, ensuring that the respondents' protection was of paramount importance.

4.10 SAMPLE SIZE AND DATA COLLECTION METHODS

In marketing research, the term "*sample size*" refers to the number of participants or observations in a study (Andrade, 2020:102). To ensure an accurate representation of the population, a suitable sampling technique is implemented. Various factors are considered when determining the required sample size, as a small sample size may not yield valid or representative results (Kibuacha, 2021). Conversely, a larger sample size reduces the margin of error but increases costs and time (Makanyeza, 2014:148).

Sampling is the process of surveying or interviewing. It involves collecting data from representative respondents through various methods, such as surveys, interviews, observations or experiments for the entire population of interest to make inferences (McCombes, 2019). It involves using part or a portion of the population to make inferences about the entire population (Chikwendu, 2019:200). According to Chikwendu (2019:231) and Nikolopoulou (2022) research sampling is categorised into probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is a technique involving random selection of units or elements from a population, with each unit having an equal chance for selection (McCombes, 2019). With non-probability sampling, units or elements are selected with an unequal chance of selection (Nikolopoulou, 2022). For this study, a stratified random sampling approach was employed to gather data from micro-enterprises in the textile sector, with justification for this choice provided in sections 4.9.1 and 4.9.2.

4.10.1 Sampling during the qualitative phase of the study

In qualitative research, smaller sample sizes are employed to facilitate rich, in-depth discussions and nuanced conclusions. To achieve this objective, a stratified

purposeful sample of micro-textile organisations was stratified into the following different strata variables: registered enterprises, deregistered enterprises (due to compliance issues), and unregistered micro-textile enterprises. The sampling approach was informed by the work of Bukhari (2021:1-2) and the foundational guidelines by Morgan and Krejcie (1970) on determining sample size using the Krejcie and Morgan Table. As noted by Serubugo (2024), it is common practice to engage between 30 and 50 interview participants, depending on the point of data saturation (Palinkas, Horwitz, Green, Wisdom, Duan and Hoagwood, 2015:45). Unlike quantitative research, qualitative inquiry prioritises depth over breadth, aiming for a comprehensive understanding rather than statistical generalisation.

Accordingly, this study adopted a purposive sampling strategy, shared from the University of Illinois (2024), which emphasised knowledge and active participation in the industry as a key criterion for determining sample adequacy. Despite variations in research contexts and saturation assessment methods, Hennink and Kaiser (2022) observe a general convergence around consistent sample sizes for achieving saturation. In this study, saturation was reached with a sample of 50 participants. This aligns with Edmonds and Kennedy (2019:156), who recommend determining sample size based on the principle of theoretical saturation. Data were collected from micro textile stakeholders aged eighteen (18) years and above within the Durban CBD to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the sector. This approach, as affirmed by George (2021), enabled for exploration of emerging patterns and unexpected trends within the study context.

4.10.2 Sampling during the quantitative phase of the study

In quantitative research, larger sample sizes are employed to enhance the reliability and precision of predictions whilst addressing objective challenges. This approach allows for broader population coverage, generalisation and scientific sampling design to ensure participants are representative of the population (Hajimia, 2014:03). The study employed a structured questionnaire to harvest quantitative data using a stratified random sampling method. To achieve this objective, the sample size was categorised into the following different strata variables: registered enterprises, deregistered enterprises (due to compliance issues), and unregistered micro-textile

enterprises. This stratification helped minimise variability within each group, thereby enhancing the accuracy of the results.

In addition, the choice of stratified random sampling was also guided by several international studies focused on micro businesses. For instance, Makanyeza (2014:150) conducted a study in Harare, Zimbabwe, examining consumer awareness and ethnocentrism in relation to attitudes and purchasing behaviour towards imported poultry products, where a sample of 400 respondents was used for quantitative data. Similarly, Maduku (2015) investigated the determinants of mobile marketing adoption among small enterprises in South Africa, using a sample of 448 SME decision-makers to assess their perceptions of marketing benefits. Morrison (2022:215), in a study on customer attitudes towards retail engagement and loyalty programmes in Cape Town, utilised a sample of 272 convenience-selected online retail customers.

Sample size determination was guided by the principles outlined by Creswell (2019:234), Sekaran and Bougie (2019:133), and Saunders et al. (2019:235), a total sample of 384 respondents was selected. This sample was proportionally allocated across three distinct categories: 128 respondents from registered micro textile enterprises, 128 from deregistered micro textiles (primarily due to non-compliance issues), and 128 from unregistered micro textile businesses operating within the Durban precinct. Once these strata were established, participants were then randomly selected, ensuring that every individual had an equal chance of being included in the study. This approach enhanced the precision of the findings by reducing variability within each subgroup and improving the overall representativeness of the sample.

Despite the lack of a comprehensive census or official records, the official population of micro-textile operators in Durban is not formally documented or recorded; estimates suggest it exceeds 100,000. The researcher used an in-house and in-office recruitment method because of a huge contingency of participants are working and some are housed within the Durban CBD. The location of micro-textiles operating within Durban's central business district is approximately 25km square area, stretching from Doctor Yusuf Dadoo Street, formerly Broad Street, to Sylvester Ntuli Road, formerly Point Street, and from K. E Masinga Road, formerly Old Fort Street, to Margaret Mncade Avenue, formerly Victoria Embankment

The study targets three hundred and eighty-four (384) participants using a stratified random sample technique for quantitative data. In seeking high precision and accuracy in data collection and analysis, Sekaran's (2019) sampling table was used, which provided an expected error margin of $\pm 5\%$ with a 95% confidence level from the results (Creswell, 2019:123). By accepting a relatively small error margin of $\pm 5\%$ to meet reliability and validity requirements, the findings were generalisable to the larger population (Maslakçı and Sürücü, 2020). The study employed a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation across key variables. The sample was divided into distinct strata based on ownership type specifically, single-owner managed entities that were either formally registered businesses or informal, unregistered operations. Additional stratification was conducted based on product type: apparel, home textiles, industrial fabrics, educational background, and nationality (South African citizens and foreign nationals), all of whom reside in or conduct business within the Durban area.

4.11 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

Data collection is a process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic and established manner from all relevant sources, enabling researchers to find answers to their research problems, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Dudovskiy, 2021:239). Data collection methods are classified into two main approaches: qualitative and quantitative. The research employs a mixed-methods data collection approach. An implication of this is that both quantitative and qualitative data are harvested for analysis. The researcher used the in-house and in-office intercept method because of a huge contingency of participants as explained in sections 4.9.1 and 4.9.2.

A structured questionnaire under quantitative data was identified as the most suitable data collection instrument, given its widespread adoption in similar studies (Makanyeza, 2014:169). This structured questionnaire was designed and administered to collect data from 384 respondents. Initially, face-to-face interviews were considered, as they offer the advantage of establishing rapport with participants and gaining their cooperation. However, due to relaxed COVID-19 quarantine restrictions and time constraints, self-administered pencil and paper questionnaires were deemed a more practical and time-effective approach. Anonymity was ensured

to encourage truthful responses, as research has shown that respondents are more likely to provide candid answers when their identities are not disclosed. The questionnaire consisted of closed-ended questions employing a five-point Likert scale. This technique enabled participants to respond to scaled questions and statements. The instruments yielded results that were easily summarised.

4.11.1 Questionnaire design

Questionnaires can be designed to collect both qualitative or quantitative data. For this study, questionnaires designed for qualitative interviews, as defined by Aransiola (2023), were structured to begin with broad, open-ended questions and then gradually narrow to more specific, focused questions. Whilst those designed for quantitative surveys, as defined by Creswell (2019:145) were designed for structured closed-ended questions with predefined answers, making use of the Likert scale and “yes or no” answers for clarity and ease in responding.

Shiyanbola et al., (2021) outlines essential steps to be followed in designing a questionnaire which include planning what to measure and research questions to answer, while identifying the scope and population of interest. Secondly, questions need to be formulated in a clear, concise and relevant order, ensuring no bias, to avoid inaccuracy (Joseph and Patel, 2016:02). Thirdly, the order and wording of questions are carefully considered to ensure logic, flow and progression. Avoiding leading questions and ensuring a neutral stance is necessary. Lastly, an appealing and easy-to-follow layout, clearly spaced and formatted, should be followed. It should be noted that not all researchers follow these steps; however, this does not negate their applicability in research design.

4.11.2 Pilot testing

Teresi et al., (2023) define a pilot test as a preliminary test designed to help determine whether the research methodology is reliable. The pilot testing was conducted to verify whether respondents could clearly understand the questionnaire without confusion. The intention was to see whether the targeted population can respond to the questionnaire (following instructions) without difficulty or confusion (Maduku, 2015). The research pilot tests that data collection instruments, sample recruitment strategies, and other research techniques portray information that they were intended to prepare for from a larger study (Teresi, et al., 2023).

The research was a mixed-methods study. Therefore, two pilot studies were conducted, one for quantitative data collection and the other for qualitative data collection. The experiences and suggestions of respondents needed to be taken into consideration to improve the data collection process (McCombes, 2019). During the pilot study, a stratified random sampling technique was employed to select ten (10) participants as part of the quantitative data harvesting. Similar studies conducted by Lezar (2021) and Makanyeza (2014:166) recommend using between 5 and 40 participants for a quantitative data pilot study. The primary purpose of a pilot study is to assess factors such as the time required to complete the questionnaire, the clarity or potential ambiguity of the questions, and the respondents' ability to understand and respond to them effectively. This sample accounted for 2.6% of respondents from qualitative sampling. The researcher was of the view that the feedback from the sampled participants was clear, and respondents understood the questionnaire without confusion or difficulty.

Sekaran and Bougie (2019) argue that pilot studies involving qualitative data should remain relatively small, as their primary purpose is to identify potential complications that may arise during the main study. Suknunan (2024) supports this statement as they posit for the use of data saturation as a guiding principle for determining the adequacy of qualitative data collection. This view is further reinforced by Francis et al. (2019:1229), who recommend basing the pilot sample size on the point of data saturation in qualitative studies. Based on this rationale, the current study employed a stratified purposive sampling technique involving five (5) participants for the qualitative pilot phase. The main study targeted a sample of 50 participants, with the pilot study accounting for 10% of the overall sample, thereby contributing to a preliminary reflection of the broader findings. To prevent duplication and potential bias, the researcher carefully demarcated the residential areas of participants involved in the pre-testing phase, ensuring they were excluded from the main study sample.

For a quality and clarity check, both the questionnaires and surveys were issued to participants to solicit their feedback on the suitability of the questions. The questions were designed to be easily understandable for respondents without a technical background in management. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-eight questions, for which respondents ticked the appropriate answers. They also comprised twenty-

eight questions with open-ended questions, to allow respondents to provide more detailed and qualitative responses. By following this process, a robust and user-friendly tool for data collection from respondents was attained increasing the reliability and validity of findings.

Figure 4.1 presents the reliability results from the pre-test. The findings indicate that all questions were understood by the respondents and that they were able to complete the questions within the allocated time. These results affirm the reliability of data collection instruments as presented Figure 4.1. The administration of the questionnaire was covered in the following section:

Table 4.1: Reliability of the data collection instrument

Construct Cronbach's alpha	Construct Cronbach's alpha
1 TextileQualification	0.622
2 SurviveWithoutManager	0.884
3 AbletoretainCustomers	0.854
4 AnyPrescribedPolicies	0.881
5 AnyPlansActions	0.868
6 PlansDocuOrIntuitive	0.878
8 DevStr_1	0.880
9 STRAT_1	0.827
10 CUSTAR_1	0.856
11 RESSTRA_1	0.984
12 RETCUS_1	0.855
13 POACTN_1	0.879
14 STRGYIMP_1	0.896
15 PLANRVW_1	0.758
16 INDCOMP_1	0.863

Construct Cronbach's alpha	Construct Cronbach's alpha
17 IMPRCOMP_1	0.823
18 EDGECOMP_1	0.871

Source: Own construct

4.12 DATA QUALITY CONTROL

Data quality control is the process of ensuring the accuracy and integrity of data used in the research process. It measures how well-suited data set is for a set-specific purpose (Heavy.AI, 2019). It should however, be noted that there are numerous criteria and frameworks which can be used to assess the integrity, quality, and reliability of the data at every stage of the research in both quantitative and Qualitative data quality research which the study did not follow.

This research study adopted data quality dimensions from Jaya et al. (2017) on validity, reliability and trustworthiness of data. This included the establishment of safekeeping of data collection instruments as a precautionary measure before data collection began. Secondly, data capture training for the research assistants on data validation, verification, cleaning, and documentation filing was also included to prevent errors.

4.12.1 Reliability of quantitative data

In quantitative research, reliability and validity are essential concepts to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. Validity refers to the accuracy of the measurement, whether the research instrument measures what it claims to measure (Maslakçı and Sürücü, 2020), whilst reliability refers to the consistency of the measurement, whether the research instrument produces consistent results when repeated (Middleton, 2019).

To enhance reliability in quantitative research, researchers can use various methods such as recording devices, digital file descriptions and filed notes (DeVault, 2019; Middleton, 2019). To ensure reliability and validity, researchers can increase confidence in their findings, making them more trustworthy and generalisable to other contexts (Carroll, 2022). If the results consistently produce the same answers, this indicates reliability in measurement. Reliability denotes precision and consistency of

measure. The information enables the drawing of conclusions and generalisations from harvested data (Questionmark, 2022; Maslakçı and Sürücü, 2020). To ensure reliability, a test-retest was conducted to evaluate the robustness of the questionnaire. This was to verify the consistency of the findings at different times and conditions.

4.12.2 Validity of quantitative data

A definition by Patino and Ferreira (2018:84) advances validity in research as a method that accurately displays the true findings that research intends to measure. Middleton (2019) adds that the concept of accurate measuring in a study is defined as validity. It demonstrates what exists or is a valid measure of what is supposed to be measured in quantitative data. To assess validity, a series of questions were administered, with responses rated using a Likert scale in the order they were presented (Carroll, 2022). Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of a research study (Sago, 2023). It displays consistency in measurement each time it is used under the same conditions with the same respondents (Middleton, 2019). The concept of validity instils confidence in researchers when collecting and analysing quantitative data, ensuring that the results accurately reflect the phenomenon being studied. To ensure validity for this study, the questionnaire was designed with a clear and attractive format, including font size. Additionally, the instrument was reviewed by subject matter experts, whose feedback was incorporated into the final version.

4.13 QUALITATIVE DATA QUALITY

Qualitative researchers establish trustworthiness in their research using dependability, credibility, transferability and confirmability to achieve trustworthiness (Noble and Smith, 2015:35). By establishing trustworthiness, researchers enhance the validity and reliability of their qualitative findings, to ensure the rigour of qualitative findings (Carroll, 2022; Middleton, 2019). Trustworthiness from qualitative data harvested aims to support the argument that the inquiry's findings are "worth paying attention to" (DeVault, 2019; Cloutier and Ravasi, 2020). For trustworthiness, the research was set to conduct data analysis using thematic analysis to notice that findings as worthy of attention (Cloutier and Ravasi, 2020). Thematic data allows researchers to analyse data using NVIVO by coding it into themes.

4.13.1 Trustworthiness

The researcher followed Suknunan, (2024) by reassuring participants of their confidentiality and anonymity, which helped them feel comfortable, fostering openness and willingness to share information. Avoiding requests for personal identifiers improved reliability, reducing interviewee bias, and built trust in the process. Trustworthiness is established through credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. Instead of applying traditional quantitative measures, qualitative studies emphasise trustworthiness, which reflects the overall quality and confidence in the data and findings (University of Pretoria, 2022). In other words, while validity and reliability may not directly translate to qualitative research, trustworthiness embodies the principles of rigour and integrity in qualitative inquiry (Cloutier & Ravasi, 2020). By focusing on this criteria, researchers can demonstrate confidence and credibility in their work, ensuring meaningful contributions to the field (Elo et al., 2014:1–2).

4.13.2 Credibility

From the perspective of establishing credibility, researcher ensured that those participating in the research were identified and described accurately (Twycross and Heale, 2015:67). This entailed that the participants' characteristics, demographics and experiences were accurately represented to ensure findings are relevant and applicable to the intended population (Maslakçı and Sürücü, 2020:2650). Credibility further ensures that the data collected aligns with research questions and objectives, ensuring that the findings provide answers to the proposed research questions (Twycross and Heale, 2015:67). By ensuring these aspects, researchers established credibility and confidence in their findings, demonstrating that their research is trustworthy, reliable and relevant to the field (Polit and Beck, 2017).

Self-awareness and careful evaluation are essential to ensure credibility. Researchers must recognise their biases, assumptions, and perspectives to avoid influencing data collection and analysis (Islam, 2020). To improve this narrative, pre-interviews were conducted to help test and refine interview questions, to ensure an effective gathering of rich data that addresses the research questions. An examination of interview tapes and texts was carried out to assess quality and relevance. Finally, an evaluation of the study from its inception to conclusion was performed to guarantee the trustworthiness of content analysis (Naeem, Ozuem, Howell, and Ranfagni, 2023:2).

4.13.3 Transferability

Transferability is an essential component of trustworthiness in qualitative research, referring to the extent to which findings can be applied to other settings, populations or contexts (Mohajan, 2017:02). In qualitative research, the comparable measure of data quality relates to the accuracy of the instrument, which is analogous to generalisability or external validity in quantitative research (Consultores, 2020). Trochim (2022) defines transferability as the extent to which a research instrument consistently produces the same results if it is used in the same situation on repeated occasions.

Consistency and reliability of data collection instruments are critical for ensuring transferability, as they enable findings to be generalised beyond the specific study context. Selecting an appropriate data collection method further strengthens credibility and transferability (Cuncic, 2022). For example, results from micro-textile studies in Durban provided a rich contextual analysis, supporting the applicability of findings to other sectors and regions.

4.14 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the most crucial part of any research. It involves the cleaning and organising of data for analysis, checking for data accuracy, and developing a database structure (University of Pretoria, 2022). This involves entering data into the computer to transform the data and integrate into various measures (Machela, 2018). This process assists in summarising collected data, as it involves the interpretation and analytical and logical use of reasoning to determine patterns, relationships or trends (University of Pretoria, 2022).

The research began with qualitative data analysis using Nvivo as the main instrument for analysis. Analysis was from data collected using open-ended questions collected from micro textile entrepreneurs' strategy conceptualisation, planning and implementation. The study followed an exploratory nature of doing business as the researcher was on an exploratory seeking to answer questions and meet research objectives in trying to undertake an in-depth study on how micro textile conceptualise business strategies. The strategy adopted is recommended by (Saunders et al., 2019:226-227).

5.2.1 Qualitative analysis

Step 1 The researcher started by reviewing qualitative data, listening to audio recordings and reading transcripts until they were confident in the data's quality and completeness.

Step 2: After familiarisation, the researcher identified meaningful segments relevant to the research question. These segments were coded according to questions, creating labels that capture key ideas and patterns. The codes serve as a foundation for theme development.

Step 3: The codes formed were then organised into broader categories that summarise and add meaning to the context. These categories were then refined into themes that represent significant patterns in the data. Nvivo was used to assist naming themes and organizing coded items under them.

Step 4: The themes were accurately named and connections between categories yielding similar patterns were explored. Nvivo analytical tools helped identify important themes and sub-themes with frequency counts providing insight into their significance

Step 5: Finally, findings are reported and visualised using Nvivo outputs to support themes with the evidence from the data. The themes are used to explain the findings, attaching meaning and significance to the analysis. Qualitative factors on the use of management strategies by micro textile entrepreneurs were presented based on these themes, content and discourse analysis.

5.2.2 Quantitative analysis

The study presents quantitative data analysed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques that presented relationships between patterns and dataset. The data used descriptive methods, such as frequency distributions and cross-tabulations, to explore relationships between variables. Inferential analyses, independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA analyses were used to assess differences across groups, while structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to examine complex interrelationships among constructs and validate the theoretical framework.

Descriptive statistical techniques were employed to summarise the sociodemographic characteristics of the micro textile sample. The data were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24, which facilitated the creation of a structured data file for analysis. Key descriptive measures, including averages, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis, were calculated to identify basic patterns within the dataset. To enhance interpretation, the results were complemented with graphical representations that visually illustrated the distribution and trends of the variables.

To address research objectives two and three, factor analysis was employed to identify the strategies utilised by micro textile enterprises, as summarised in Chapter 6. Specifically, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the underlying relationships (correlation) among items measuring strategy formulation, strategy implementation, retention strategies, and customer retention variables. This approach enabled the grouping of related items into coherent factors, thereby simplifying the data structure and revealing latent constructs. The findings also served to verify the construct validity of the independent variables, ensuring that the measures accurately represented the intended theoretical concepts.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to assess the impact of hypothesised relationships among the study variables and to validate the proposed conceptual framework in Figure 5.39. The theory used management strategies on the benefits derived by micro textile entrepreneurs, particularly in relation to competitive strategies, as outlined in research objectives 2 and 3 as reported in chapter 6. The analysis tested the relationship between constructs identified through factor analysis using (1) strategy development, customer retention, competitive strategy, and organisational strategy, and (2) effectiveness of competitiveness. The model demonstrated an acceptable level of fit, confirming the robustness of the proposed structural relationship.

In a study conducted by Maduku (2015:197) it was alluded that the internal consistency approach was the best fit for measuring reliability. In assessing reliability and comparing it with variance or covariance, Cronbach's alpha was itemised as one of the best instruments suitable for assessing reliability (Sago, 2023). The statistical package SPSS was best suited for computing Cronbach's alpha and assessing

internal consistency. The same data was further used to measure kurtosis and skewness in graphs and diagrams presented. The study further employed the EFA to determine variables that were highly correlated.

The same data was used to test a conceptual model for the study. A SEM is used to test relationships hypothetically between latent constructs in the structural model (Hair, et al., 2021). From the test, a model is framed with standardised structural regression where hypothesised determinants, supported or not, are presented as part of the final model (Maduku, 2015:213).

4.15 DUE DILIGENCE

The objective of the study is to assess the implementation of generic management strategies on the competitiveness of micro-textile enterprises. The initiative brings into question entrepreneur results and information on people's social lives and businesses involved taking into consideration ethical issues. Makanyeza (2014:174-175) is of the view that ethical issues are to be taken into consideration in any research impacting on people's responses and professions. In the collection, processing and storage of data, analysis of data and the writing up of the research findings, the researcher will act morally and responsibly by keeping data confidential in a safe under locked key for five years, accessible only to the researcher, supervisor and Head of Department under management sciences at Durban University of Technology.

A full ethical clearance letter reference IREC158/22 was obtained from the Durban University of Technology, allowing the researcher to introduce himself to the participants for purpose of data collection for the research. As part of the research process, everyone who participated was informed in either English or Zulu about the nature of the research and gave their consent to participate in the study. Participants were asked for permission to record and transcribe the interviews verbatim. When recording was necessary, permission was sought in advance, along with an explanation that the information would only be used as part of the study's analysis. Recording and capturing was done for everyone without mentioning their specific identifiers.

The data collection instruments survey, questionnaire and recording equipment were designed in a way that they ensured the personal information of participants was not

included. During the data collection phase, the two trained research assistants (enumerators) were used to ensure protection, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants.

4.16 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a mixed-methods approach, displaying how a vigorous research process was conducted and managed by an astute researcher experienced in handling research projects. This chapter discussed the theoretical framework relevant to the topic of assessment of generic management strategies. It presented the research philosophy and design, which are uniquely appropriate for the study as presented. Two sampling techniques with appropriate sampling sizes were identified and discussed in detail. An identification of the sampling sizes used were determined and discussed in consideration of their advantages and disadvantages. Methods of data collection to be used were also established within the chapter, while the research instruments to collect data were discussed. The chapter further discussed quantitative data quality by elaborating on the research reliability and validity as well as trustworthiness, credibility, and transferability. Lastly, the chapter further examined data analysis procedures specifically suited for the study. Due diligence and ethical clearance were discussed to fit in with the university's ethical clearance requirements. The next chapter focuses on the research findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5 PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the research problem and described the methodology, including the research design, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques employed. Building on the findings obtained, this chapter presents the results and provides a comprehensive discussion of their implications. The chapter begins with the qualitative analysis, presenting results derived from the qualitative data. Both content analysis and thematic analysis were employed to examine the data, to assess whether micro-textile enterprises adopt generic strategies to remain competitive. The study followed a sequential mixed-methods research design, beginning with the qualitative data collection phase, followed by the quantitative phase. The quantitative results are presented thereafter, starting with descriptive statistics and followed by inferential analysis.

The results of the qualitative phase assume primacy, generating a foundational understanding of the research phenomenon, which then directs and informs the subsequent quantitative phase. This phase was elaborated upon and contextualised through the qualitative phase, such as the development of a survey. The methodological weighting orientation assigns an arrow (→) to refer to sequential implementation, giving greater emphasis on a dominant status for the quantitative data collection (qual →QUAN) (George, 2021). Research findings achieved through this administration exercise of the interview guide and the questionnaire are analysed separately (Schoonenboom and Johnson, 2017:110).

5.2 PRESENTATION OF QUALITATIVE DATA

This section presents qualitative data collected through a semi-structured, open-ended interview guide. The in-depth data collection approach aimed to achieve the study's objectives was used, specifically to understand how generic management strategies are conceptualised and implemented in micro-enterprises. This approach allowed for a flexible and exploratory discussion, enabling the study to issue a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences, perspectives and strategies

(Makanyeza, 2014:134; Yin, 2014:177). For presentation, the study has adopted the following process (Boswell and Cannon 2014: 39):

In coding the qualitative data, the researcher began by familiarising themselves with the collected material, as recommended by Ahmed et al. (2025:03) and McLeod (2024), who emphasise the importance of engaging with transcripts, field notes, and other qualitative data sources through repeated readings. This immersion allowed the researcher to identify initial patterns, ideas, and potential themes (Ahmed et al., 2025:1-2). In carrying out this process, the researcher followed the six-step thematic analysis process advanced by Braun and Clarke (2006:79) in section 4.13.1.

The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006:80) process of systematically organising and identifying meaningful features in data referred to as coding. The process enhances the transformation of raw data into meaningful and cohesive categories according to micro textile entrepreneurs' responses and experiences. The researcher made use of NVivo software to code this data into meaningful themes. Ahmed et al. (2025:03) and colleagues are of the view that adherence to Braun and Clarke (2006:78) six-step process enhances rigour and reliability to the study.

Through this process, patterns and themes were identified and subsequently reviewed to uncover relationships within the data. These themes, which originated from interviews with micro-textile traders operating in the Durban textile industry, were then defined and labelled using descriptive coding techniques to enhance clarity, providing a valuable sense for conceptualising and planning competitive strategies.

5.2.1 Themes

In answering the objectives of the study, themes that dominate responses from the data were identified. The section outlined key themes using a combination of visual aids, such as figures, tables, and charts, supplemented by narrative paragraphs based on qualitative data analysis (Cloutier and Ravasi, 2020:1-2). The discussion offers an understanding of business strategy planning, strategic thinking, market dynamics challenges, and personality traits linked to the Ubuntu management philosophy, as well as the human resource challenges faced by the micro-textile industry in Durban. The narratives enrich the qualitative data, offering a comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of micro-textile entrepreneurs and prevailing industry trends.

The qualitative data was analysed using NVivo software, which facilitated the development of Table 5.0 by organising dominant responses into coherent thematic categories. As outlined by Kiger and Varpio (2020:847), NVivo's keyword analysis enabled the grouping of similar responses and the development of overarching themes. This analytical process led to the identification of key patterns across participant narratives. The following section presents the seven principal themes that emerged from this analysis, each reflecting critical dimensions of the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Table 5.0 Identified Themes from Data

Dominant theme	Subtheme	Description
Entrepreneurial Innovation and Technology Integration	• Use of banking tools to track growth • Use of technology by young entrepreneurs • Ability to price quickly	Focuses on how micro textile entrepreneurs with basic technology enhance operations, competition, and customer engagement.
Strategic Growth and Business Planning in Micro-Enterprises	• Market collaborative expansion efforts • setting long-term organisational goals	Explores how micro textile entrepreneurs plan for survival and growth, without strategic partnerships and market positioning.
Navigating External and Environmental Pressures	• Business affiliations • Business training	Examines external factors affecting business sustainability and how micro textile entrepreneurs adapt to shifting conditions.
Informal Business Knowledge and Entrepreneurial Learning	• Collaborative sharing of organisational resources • Collective strategy formulation	Highlights how micro-entrepreneurs conceptualise micro textile strategies and apply business knowledge outside formal education systems.
Capacity Building and Personal Development	• Skill development • Information seeking knowledge through experience and mentorship	Focuses on how entrepreneurs and their teams develop personally and professionally within resource-constrained environments.
Gendered Entrepreneurship and Leadership Identity	• Personality traits influencing business culture • Reputation and African countries' expatriates • male-designed garments. • Female leadership styles	Investigates how the gender personality shapes leadership, decision-making, and relational dynamics in micro-businesses.
Entrepreneurial Resilience and Problem-Solving Strategies	• Coping with business setbacks • Adaptive responses to crises • Community support and resourcefulness	Explores how entrepreneurs overcome challenges through collaborative creativity, communal support, infused in empathy, and shared humanity.

Source: Own construct

The study examines the business strategies employed by micro-textile enterprises, aligning them with dominant words identified in the word cloud. Several key themes are embedded in Table 5.0, which are covered in the full-scale study. This includes the ability to navigate external and environmental pressures, the capacity building and personal development, as well as micro-textiles' strategic growth and business planning, which are the core of the study. Pricing well and the production of quality garments are explained based on the interviews with entrepreneurs.

5.2.2 Synthesis Summary of Qualitative Findings

This section presents a synthesis of the qualitative data collected through interviews with micro-textile entrepreneurs in Durban, South Africa. The analysis reveals a dynamic interplay between entrepreneurial behaviour, cultural values, and strategic decision-making in the informal textile sector. A central finding is the prevalence of collaborative business practices, in pricing, knowledge sharing, and supplier network behaviours deeply rooted in the philosophy of Ubuntu, which emphasises community, empathy, and mutual support.

Seven overarching themes emerged from the data, each reflecting a critical dimension of micro-enterprise development in this context. These include: (1) Entrepreneurial Innovation and Technology Integration, (2) Strategic Growth and Business Planning, (3) Navigating External and Environmental Pressures, (4) Informal Business Knowledge and Entrepreneurial Learning, (5) Capacity Building and Personal Development, (6) Gendered Entrepreneurship and Leadership Identity, and (7) Entrepreneurial Resilience and Problem-Solving Strategies. Each theme is supported by subthemes that capture nuanced patterns in participant experiences and perspectives.

The themes are not organised by functional business categories (HR or technology) but rather aligned with the core focus of the study, understanding how micro-entrepreneurs navigate competitive environments while upholding communal values. To ensure coherence and analytical depth, the remainder of this chapter is structured around the study's research objectives. Each objective is explored through the lens of the relevant themes and subthemes, supported by illustrative quotes and tables that highlight key patterns in the data.

Figure 5.1 summarises the overall dominance of these responses. Prominent themes are highlighted and displayed in Table 5.1, with 15 out of 50 participants indicating that their pricing strategy was suitable for their customers, a finding linked to effective customer retention. This aligns with another key theme, where 15 out of 50 participants identified pricing strategy and product quality as vital factors in attracting and retaining customers. Table 5.1 presents selected subthemes and respondent quotes, showing that, due to the informal nature and limited technological knowledge within the industry, many participants rely on their bank balance as a key performance indicator to assess their business success. Technology adoption for growth and competitiveness remains limited within the industry. Only 12 out of 50 respondents, who are aged 40 and below holding tertiary qualifications, have reported using technology and social media in their operations, with an even smaller proportion 3 out of 50 utilising advanced equipment to speed up production, mainly due to the costs involved in acquiring such equipment. Regarding answers to the research question on organisational performance monitoring, respondents shared.

“The happiness of my customers positively influences the performance of my organisation, thus affecting my bank balance”.

Furthermore, the same participants highlighted a correlation between customer retention and the strength of their bank balance, identifying trust as a key contributing factor.

... “The greater the increase in customer trust and the wider the spread in word-of-mouth, the better performance one sees in the bank balance growth”. P13, P.15, P.27 and P29

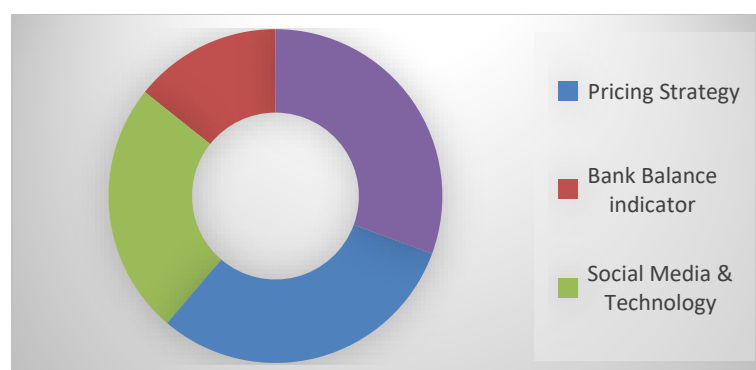


Figure 5.1 Strategic use of technology to advance customer relations

An analysis of data revealed that younger respondents who are aged 40 and below, holding a diploma, degree, or postgraduate qualification, are the primary users of technology aimed at gaining a competitive edge in the market.

A quote from participants P.29 and P.19... *“I use social media technology to advertise my garments to customers”*.

A quote from participants P.16 and P.26 highlighted that ...*“Delays in deliveries from suppliers affect the final price of products, and also delays in arrival of orders affects my pricing strategy”*.

Table 5.1 Themes on Technology Adoption

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Using technology and being innovative.	Strategic Use of Banking.	Bank balance analysis, no automation.	<i>...the better-looking the bank balance, the better is the performance of the organisation. P15.</i>
	reliance on Word of mouth.	Trust from customers.	<i>...I do not use technology much as the more I gain customers' trust due to the quality of my work the more word-of-mouth spreads. P27.</i>
	The young being techno savvy.	The aged 40 and younger.	<i>...my educational qualifications assist me to be appreciate the use of technology. P19, 29.</i>
	Speedy delivery on price.	Delivery Tracking equipment from suppliers.	<i>...suppliers' deliveries affect the final price of products. P16.</i>
	Speedy delivery on price.	Use garment technology for speedy productions.	<i>...I need tracking equipment that can be used to track ordered textiles from suppliers as their late arrival affects price. P26.</i>

Source: Author

The data analysis highlights key themes in the business practices of respondents, notably the absence of formal mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance. Instead, many entrepreneurs rely on manual approaches, with personal bank balances serving as primary indicators of business success. There is also a tendency to prioritise word-of-mouth over technology, highlighting a generational

division, as the younger entrepreneurs are more technologically inclined. Additionally, delays from customers or suppliers impact pricing. These findings shed light on the industry's challenges, informing the developmental strategies used by micro textiles to address key issues and improve overall business management practices.

5.2.1.1 Management strategies

The limited resources of micro textile enterprises necessitate effective management strategies from entrepreneurs, who play a pivotal role in driving competitiveness and enabling their organisations to carve out a distinctive position within the industry. (Mashingaidze et al., 2021). Figure 5.2 presents the dominant themes aligned with the effect of micro-textiles' competitive managerial strategies within the industry.

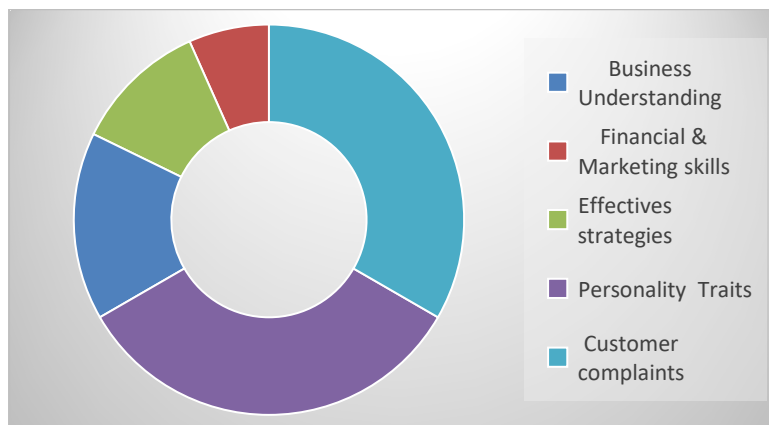


Figure 5.2: Management Strategies

Respondents were asked about the customer retention management strategies they use to remain competitive in the industry. The findings revealed that 16 out of 50 participants emphasised the importance of promptly addressing customer queries, a strategy they believe helps maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty. Another 16 out of 50 participants attributed their success to personality traits such as effective communication, people skills and the ability to influence, which they use to attract and retain customers while enhancing service delivery. Among participants under the age of 40 holding tertiary qualifications, only 5 out of 50 reported employing structured management approaches such as customer relationship strategies and formal planning techniques to achieve business objectives and enhance customer relationship management. Furthermore, 3 out of 50 respondents with tertiary education attributed their effective financial and marketing expertise in managing and growing their businesses to tertiary education. The remaining 8 out of 50 participants

consisted of seasoned professionals with over 20 years of industry experience, who have retained customers through practical knowledge and long-standing familiarity with the trade.

In answering the research question on adoption of strategic management growth of micro-enterprises to be competitive, respondents had the following to say:

A quote from participants P22 and P33 ...*“I think that possessing a good personality trait gives one an advantage on customer relationship management...additionally, I have noticed that organisational resources are essential for one to produce high quality products, which results in high profitability”*.

The data revealed that the production of high-quality products among entrepreneurs is significantly influenced by personality traits, their ability to cultivate strong relationships with customers. This relational approach is a commonly employed strategy across the industry. This is why the use of personality traits to pursue customer relationships is seen as a strategic management speciality for most micro textile entrepreneurs to strengthen their competitiveness. The study confirms Albérico and Casaca (2024) view that commitment involves a personal and emotional bond between customers and brands. It shows how entrepreneurs with positive personality traits are effective in managing relationships, which greatly aids in customer retention and business expansion.

The study addresses the research question by examining the role of correct pricing as a crucial element for customer retention strategy in maintaining competitiveness in dynamic markets. Table 5.2 presents the responses of participants, highlighting their individual perspectives and contributions to the study's findings: a quote from participants P.45 and P.17 had the following to say: ...*“I find correct pricing to be the major contributor to organisational growth, and it further assisted me with my strategic planning and customer retention strategies”*.

In answering the research question on managerial acumen of personality traits of entrepreneurs, respondents P.12, P.19 and P.27 had the following to say: ...*“I use my influential personality to sway customers to buy my quality garments”*. The study reveals that personality plays a prominent role within the industry, as entrepreneurs

engage in prolonged interactions with customers throughout the production process. Additionally, participants improve their skills through various platforms such as taking part in fashion shows organised by the Durban municipality, using fashion catwalks, reading fashion-related books and magazines, and actively participating as both attendees and presenters.

P.50 had the following to say on managerial strategies being used to effect dominance within the industry: *“For a micro textile enterprise owned or managed by one owner, it is not easy to separate the organisation from the entrepreneur...thereby making brand differentiation a difficult task for micro-entrepreneurs in the textile industry.*

Table 5.2: Themes on Strategic Market Expansion

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Indigenous Collaborative Management Strategies	Use a managerial strategy.	Skills in financial performance with organisational strategies.	<i>...I need training on linking my financial performance with organisational strategies... I would like my organisation to achieve something great in the industry. P12.</i>
	Financial and marketing expertise.	Strategic planning and effective use of strategies.	<i>...I find this to be the major contributor to organisational growth, and it further assists me with strategic planning and implementation strategies to use. P17.</i>
	Producing quality products.	Training skills needed for quality production.	<i>...I need skills training on linking financial performance with the organisational strategies ... I would like to achieve something great in the industry. P19.</i>
	Personality traits.	Personality that allows organisations to produce high-quality products.	<i>...I am of the view that possessing good personality traits followed by organisational abilities is essential for producing high-quality products. P22, P33.</i>
	Organisational strategies	Thinking ability that links financial performance with organisational strategies.	<i>...I need skills training on linking financial performance with the organisational strategies ... I would like to achieve something great in the industry. P27.</i>

Source: Own construct

This distinctive edge is largely influenced by the entrepreneurs' view of managing their businesses, including a unique combination of entrepreneurs' personalities, educational backgrounds, and cognitive abilities. The interplay between these factors contributes to the development of a tailored management approach, which in turn drives business success.

5.2.1.2 Technology use

The advent of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) has ushered in widespread adoption of technology, transforming various aspects of life, including entertainment, manufacturing, health and economic activities. In this digital era, businesses must leverage technology to reduce costs, boost productivity, and remain competitive (Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators, 2021). However, not all business entities have embraced technology, highlighting a pressing need for increased awareness and adoption of digital solutions to drive growth and sustainability (Qureshi et al., 2008:02). Data revealed in Figure 5.3 displays a notable absence of technology adoption in the micro textile industry. Respondents prioritise other constructs such as managerial knowledge and understanding of the business environment, a manager with a good personality trait and the ability to attract customers, for organisations to produce quality products and pricing correctly over technology. In answering the research question on the use of technology to assist micro-enterprises to be competitive, respondents had the following to say:

P2 had the following to say on the use of technology in enhancing product quality: *...“After the production of quality products, pricing correctly becomes the next preferred step, as production technology is not seen to immediately add value into the industry due to procurement costs”.*

P5 and P7 had the following to say on the personality trait of the manager to attract customers as one of the important attributes a manager must possess. *...“A manager’s personality can either create business for an organisation or repel customers, ...In cases where managers use technology, it is easy to produce quality products, thus easy to increase sales and retain customers”.*

The same participants further added that ...*“younger entrepreneurs with educational qualifications are the drivers of technological advancements in the industry, teaching some of us to understand the tech-business environment better”*.

Respondents such as P32 and P41 had the following to say ...*“I specifically use technology for social media to publicise my organisations, as it helps me to sell to customers that are far and wide. I however, do not use advanced technological machines to speed production as they are costly to procure”*.

This perspective is the least favoured among elderly participants, suggesting that most do not view technology as essential to the industry due to procurement costs. Instead, they rely on their extensive experience, having spent many years in the business. Their accumulated expertise, complemented by positive personality traits, enables them to retain customers and maintain high standards of product quality.

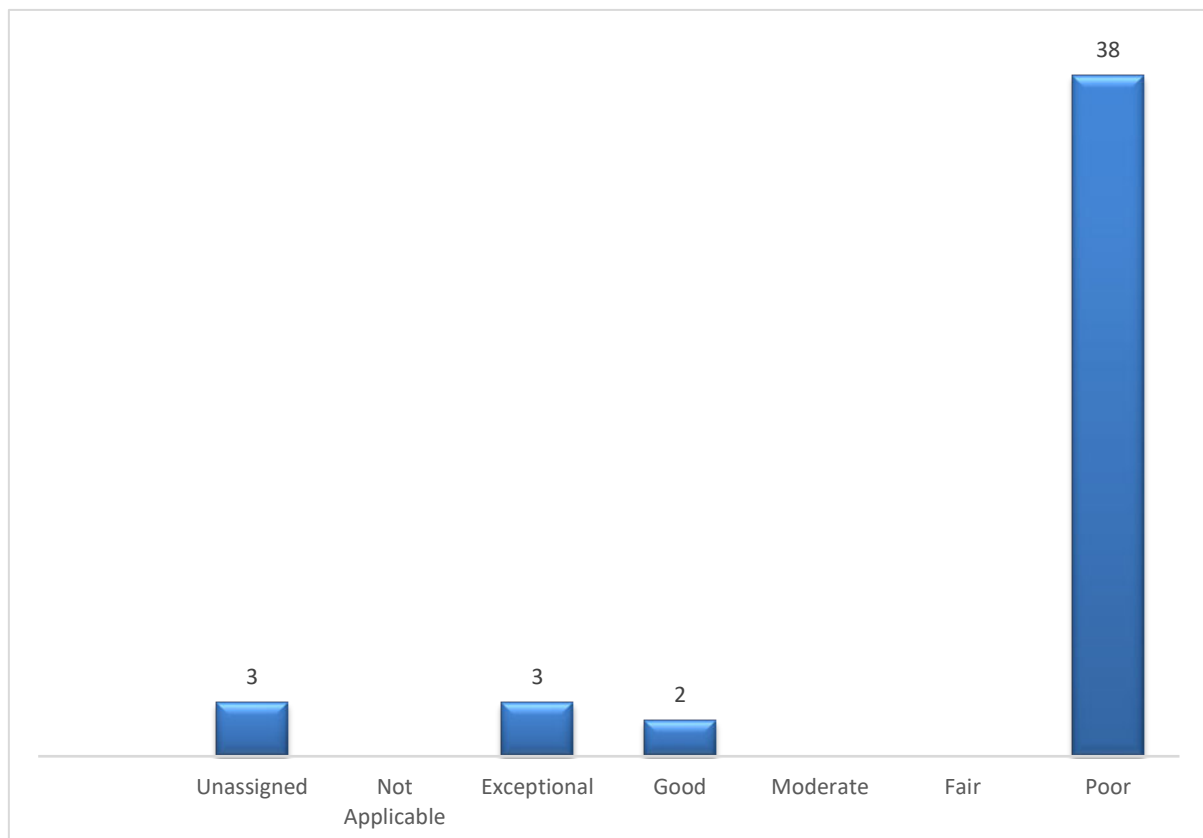


Figure 5.3 : Use of Technology:
Source: Own construct

5.2.1.3 Product quality

The impact of technology is ubiquitous, and its influence can be overwhelming for micro-organisations with limited resources (Terzimehić et al., 2021:2). This is evident in how it has become an integral part of people's daily lives, through communication, education, entertainment, and social spaces. In some cases, it has become a disruptive force, leaving social downsides such as social isolation, anxiety, and burnout (Terzimehić et al., 2021:04). The conundrum, however, is that organisations must align themselves with technological advancements or risk becoming obsolete (Qureshi, 2020). As depicted in Figure 5.4, respondents provided valuable insight into the relationship between product quality and organisational strategy, with an emphasis on technology adoption, revealing that product quality can be optimised without the use of technology when skill is enhanced. Many respondents affirm this narrative due to their bank balances and the fewer customer complaints received.

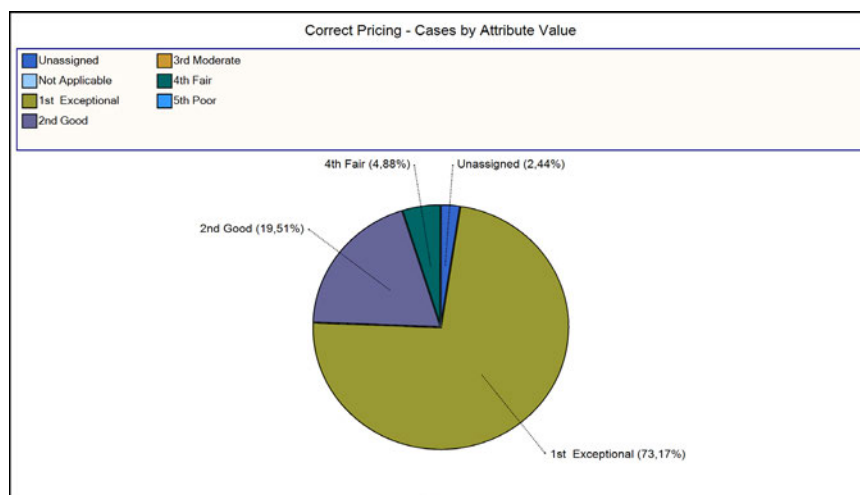


Figure 5.4 : Product Quality
Source: Own construct

Table 5.3 affirms this narrative as its subthemes reveal many participants who are of the view that monitoring growth by use of a bank balance is an exceptional means of growth monitoring tool, as all payments received regarding payments are transmitted via the business bank account. The second leading subtheme regarding the tracking of customer complaints revealed that fewer complaints and an increase in repeat buys mean that the entity is doing well. Boadi et al. (2017) are of the view that dissatisfied customers discuss their complaints and switch companies, spreading negative word of mouth. The third most prominent subtheme identified was customer referrals driven by word-of-mouth, attributed to the high product quality and excellent service provided

by the organisations. According to respondents, product quality emerged as the strongest factor influencing customer loyalty and continued engagement with the entrepreneur.

The final subtheme highlights the role of technology in accelerating the movement of textile stock used for garment production. Data indicates that when stock turnover occurs within a maximum of 30 days, it reflects a high level of entrepreneurial activity, with the entrepreneur actively engaged in cutting and designing garments to meet customer demand. This data contrasts with the retail industry, where production and turnaround times are typically shorter and more efficient compared to those of micro-entrepreneurs. While some industry participants view technology as non-essential and believe they can operate without it, scholars such as Bekker (2018:03) argue that this mindset contributes to the industry's underdevelopment. The inability to embrace technological advancements is seen as a key factor keeping the sector in its infancy.

Respondents P16 and P43 had the following to say ...*“technology is my empowerment tool that I use to advance the quality of my production... I further use it to increase my sales”*. The same participants further added, ...*“I attend fashion shows hosted by the eThekweni municipality to boost my industry knowledge”*.

Data reveal that participation in events such as the Durban Fashion Week, organised by the Durban municipality and competition on the catwalks, equips micro-enterprises with the production capabilities essential to establish them as leaders within the industry. In addition, entrepreneurs enhance their creative capacity by engaging with fashion-related media, including television, Fashion TV, books, and magazines. Their commitment to innovation is reflected in their willingness to experiment with new ideas, which they showcase at prominent fashion events like the Durban July, ultimately contributing to the improvement of product and garment quality.

In response to the question on the use of technology to advance the quality of work and increase production speed, respondents had the following subthemes emerge, as highlighted in Table 5.3:

Table 5.3: Themes on external and environmental business challenges

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
External and Environmental Business Challenges	Business knowledge	business knowledge and the understanding of use of organisational strategies.	<i>...I believe that knowledge of business empowers me in monitoring the bank balance as when it grows it means the I am doing well. P1</i>
	Business affiliation	tracking of customer complaints revealed that the fewer complaints and repeat.	<i>...I monitor customer complaints as that tells me that the fewer complaints and more repeat buys it means my business is doing well. P8.</i>
	Without formal education knowledge through others.	Making use of literature, experts and fashion shows.	<i>...for me customer referrals from other organisations are due to word-of-mouth referrals... as my work is outstanding and the product is quality. P15.</i>
	Use of technological means to be competitive	Debate on Making use of technology to produce quality and speedy.	<i>...I do not use of technology to speed production of textile...my manual stock pile sowing machine is being used to produce garments. P16</i>
	Entrepreneur empowerment	Attending training and workshops.	<i>... attending the Durban Fashion Week hosted by the Durban municipality. P25</i>
	Engage is business planning	Work with colleagues and experts to get help.	<i>I use product quality that can be optimised without the use of technology.... late supply affects my customer delivery, and if prices from suppliers increase, it has a ripple effect on my customers, affecting product quality. P43</i>

Source: Own construct

According to respondents, data reveals that product quality can be optimised without the use of technology. According to them, external business challenges are affected by factors such as late supply affecting customer delivery, and if prices from suppliers increase, it has a ripple effect on the customers, affecting product quality. Subthemes that emerge include technological use to speed production, business affiliation, engagement, and entrepreneur empowerment.

5.2.1.4 Pricing

Studies by Nelufule (2021:02) and Pascucci et al. (2023:32) have revealed that the alignment of pricing with organisational strategy has impacts on technological pricing strategies. As depicted in Figure 5.5, the findings reveal that the effect of the use of technology can lead to lower prices, ultimately influencing the dynamics of the industry. By leveraging technology, organisations can reduce costs, enhance efficiency and subsequently offer more competitive pricing, which can have a significant impact on the industry's overall pricing structure (Pilton, 2022). To indicate how price aligns to the organisational strategy used, participants offered the following:

P49 advances the following: ...*"I know technology has effects on pricing strategies, as it has improved my work since I started using it...I do not use advanced technology due to procurement costs associated with it"*.

P24 *"However, if one adopts technology, it will not have an immediate effect on production and procuring as small business we do not have any set of procurement procedures. Delay in delivery from suppliers affects prices, and at times, loss of customers is experienced. ...The quality of textiles delivered influences the price and the quality of garments the entrepreneurs produce"*.

P6 advances that: *"Pricing correctly is one of the most important attributes for textile enterprises, affecting revenue and brand loyalty. It is attributed an exceptional status on the priority scale"*.

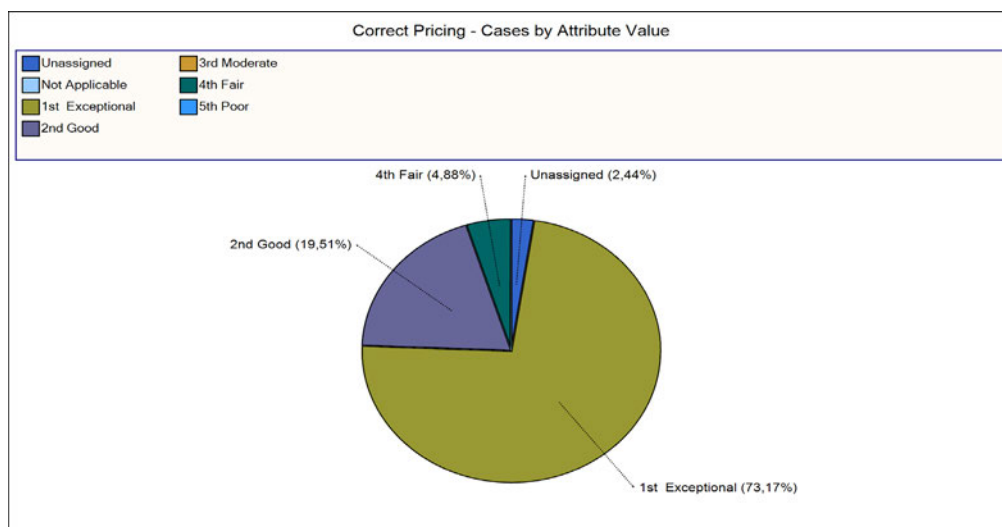


Figure 5.5: Correct pricing

Source: Own construct

Given these challenges, the study emphasises that pricing is a critical factor for micro-enterprises, as it serves as their primary channel for generating revenue and sustaining operations.

5.2.1.5 Business knowledge and understanding

The study examines the alignment of business knowledge and the understanding of organisational strategies to achieve competitive advantage, as identified by Wood and Bischoff (2019) as a crucial element in improving strategic decision-making and resource allocation. The data reveal that entrepreneurial and organisational strategies are formulated and implemented to achieve a competitive edge.

Organisations must plan, set effective goals and implement them to be able to gain a competitive edge. To assess how business knowledge and understanding are aligned, Niguse et al. (2025) suggest that the efficient utilisation of human resources and capital constitutes an organisational strategy. The study revealed how micro textiles used their business knowledge and understanding to compete and survive competition with the following remarks from participants P.10 advancing that:

...“As an entrepreneur, I use my people skills, together with my educational background and work experience, to advance my knowledge of the industry. This combination enables me to make sales easily. I find that my different working experiences, age and educational background contribute significantly to my entrepreneurship skills”.

These varying experiences are seen as positive, and they should be linked with the strategic plan and the age of the entrepreneurs.

P.05 advances that:*“as an entrepreneur with diverse micro-enterprises experiences and strategies, I have increased knowledge that assists me in developing plans of varying lengths”.*

The respondents' views appear to be strongly influenced by their level of education and experience within the industry. Table 5.6 highlights the critical need for micro-textile businesses to understand their operating environment. Given their constrained resources, these enterprises must adopt highly effective and targeted strategies to

remain competitive. A comprehensive and integrated understanding of the business landscape is essential, as even minor missteps can result in disproportionately severe consequences, potentially jeopardising the survival of the business.

Table 5.4: Themes on Business knowledge and understanding

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Business knowledge and understanding	Collective understanding of using limited organisational resources.	A collective understanding of organisational operations, goals, and its environment, which includes customers, competitors, and internal factors.	<i>...as an entrepreneur with diverse micro-enterprises experiences and strategies, I develop plans of varying lengths. P05</i>
	Collective understanding of strategy formulation.	crucial effective decision-making, value creation, and skills that drive organisations to success.	<i>...my entrepreneurial knowledge of the industry is broad, shaped by my vast experiences, age and educational background. P10</i>

Source: Own construct

Figure 5.6 displays how knowledge and understanding of the business are considered important factors when conducting a textile business. This was outlined as one of the dominant themes that emanate from responses to this question. Displayed results in Figure 5.6 from data reveal that a manager who knows and understands the textile industry is an asset to the entity, positively affecting its revenue and brand loyalty, further attributing an exceptional status on the priority scale.

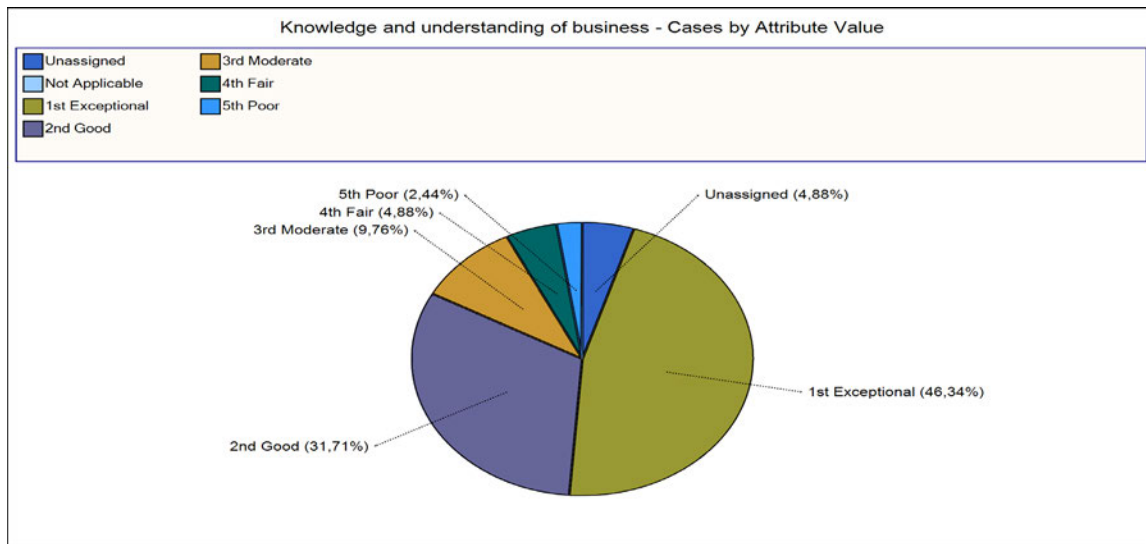


Figure 5.6 : Knowledge and understanding of business

Source Own construct

5.2.2 Market dynamics and demographics

The section explores pivotal roles played by demographic factors in decision-making by management in the textile business. The findings derived from participants' responses illuminate the importance of industry experience, pricing, goal setting, organisational performance, and business knowledge as critical themes, with business knowledge and organisational performance emerging as prominent concerns. The results agree with Aguilera et al. (2023:1-2) observation in that organisational performance depends on relationships between management and goals that are set.

However, the decision-making processes of entrepreneurs are found to be influenced by sociodemographic factors including community, background, age, education and gender. A notable highlight brought by Xanthopoulou et al. (2024) indicates that younger participants tend to prioritise business knowledge and strategic planning, whereas older respondents emphasise industry experience more. Furthermore, the study reveals that female entrepreneurs exhibit a more compassionate approach in negotiations, highlighting the impact of gender on organisational strategic approaches within the textile industry. Section 5.2.1 presents the predominant themes identified by participants during the interview process, offering firsthand perceptions into how socioeconomic characteristics influence organisational strategic approaches.

5.2.2.1 Key socio-demographic factors

In assessing the influence of demographic factors on strategy formulation, responses from participants within the textile industry revealed important discoveries into how age, education, gender, and experience shape decision-making, resource allocation, and long-term business sustainability. In a study conducted by Mashingaidze et al. (2021), thematic analysis revealed that sociodemographic-informed strategy formulation is a crucial management tool for micro-enterprises operating in volatile business environments. The findings in Figure 5.7 emphasise the importance of a differentiated approach to strategic prioritisation, as demographic variables such as age, gender, and location exert nuanced influences on strategic decision-making.

This perspective aligns with the views of Jerab and Mabrouk (2023:02), who argue that organisations must adopt flexible and varied strategies rather than rely on a one-size-fits-all model. Demographic factors offer distinctive pathways for organisations seeking to stand out from competitors and establish market leadership.

Notably, the study observed that older respondents demonstrated a stronger reliance on educational qualifications, which significantly shaped their business acumen, strategic planning abilities, and personal characteristics. In contrast, technological proficiency was deemed relatively less critical among this group, suggesting that strategic preferences may shift depending on age-related competencies and experiences.

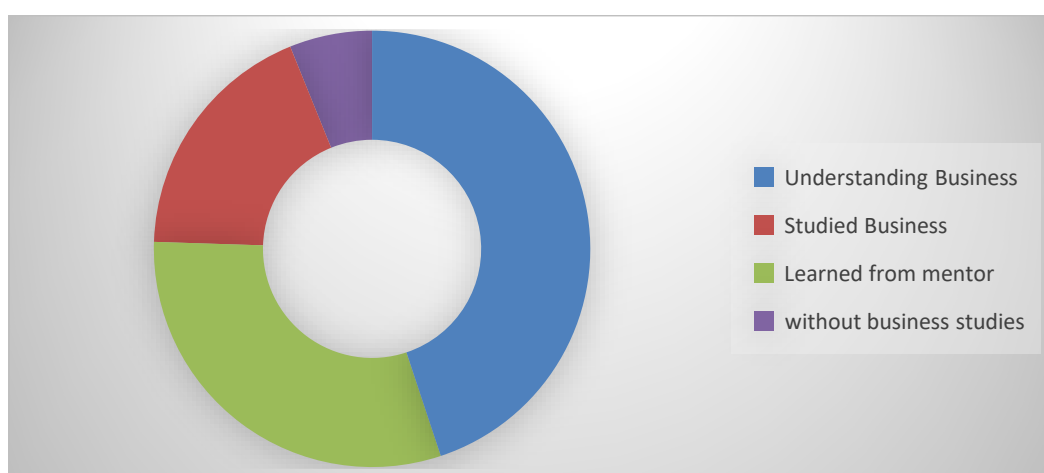


Figure 5.7: Socio Dynamic factors

A total of 9 out of 50 respondents affirm strong reliance on educational qualifications, as they highlighted the importance of studying business studies in some way or another in their lifetime. They would have either gone to university or college to further their high school qualifications. 22 out of 50 of the participants indicate that they have a good understanding of the product and can produce quality garments demanded by their customers. This finding suggests a potential intergenerational disparity in values and priorities among entrepreneurs.

For example, P.22 highlighted that *“One must have a good knowledge and understanding of this business to achieve their goals... I, however, have a challenge with branding the organisations so that my customers can separate it from me”*.

Furthermore, P.48 highlighted that: *...“it is important for one to have studied as this assists me with planning, branding, strategy formulation and confidence”*.

A key theme that emerged from the study is the competitive disadvantage faced by micro textile enterprises in garment production. These businesses incur higher procurement costs associated with procuring high-tech production equipment that assist micro textiles lowers productions costs. Making it difficult for them to compete with retailers who import inexpensive garments from Asia. Given South Africa's high unemployment rate, many consumers are unable to afford locally produced textiles, which points out the importance of business acumen among micro textile entrepreneurs. Notably, 15 out of 50 respondents acknowledged that although their product quality is comparable to that of larger retailers, their strategic capabilities are limited, shaped by informal mentorship rather than formal education. This lack of structured business knowledge appears to hinder their ability to formulate effective competitive strategies. Furthermore, 3 out of 50 participants reported significant financial strain, attributing their struggles to the absence of business education and poor financial standing.

A further notable finding concerns the 22 out of 50 micro textile entrepreneurs who demonstrate business acumen and strategically utilise pricing mechanisms as a central driver for growth and success. This approach appears to be more prevalent and effective among younger entrepreneurs, those below the age of 40, who consistently demonstrate higher levels of business performance compared to their

older counterparts. This observation aligns with the work of Prasanna and Priyanka (2024:02), who argue that younger professionals are more attuned to dynamic environments and workplace mobility, which promote innovation and adaptability. Conversely, older and more experienced individuals tend to prioritise stability and long-term security, which may limit their responsiveness to rapidly changing market conditions. This educational disparity can be largely attributed to the younger cohort's emphasis on education, which has equipped them with critical skills in brand management and industry navigation. Their academic background not only enhances strategic thinking but also enables them to adapt more readily to evolving market demands.

Furthermore, the younger generation is prone to adopting new strategies that equip them with the ability to navigate strategy formulation and brand identity. It is believed by Berkat et al. (2025:2-3) that formal education provides a solid foundation for this willingness to adopt new strategies, which is essential for planning during the acquisition of industry-specific skills. In making business decisions, these younger entrepreneurs rely on various information sources, including magazines, fashion shows, and business literature. In contrast, the older generation tends to rely more heavily on experience, word of mouth, and customer feedback to inform their business decisions.

5.2.2.2 Skill enhancement

The study illustrates the influence of partnerships on strategy formulation, revealing that expatriate entrepreneurs demonstrate a distinct set of characteristics that reflect a strong willingness to collaborate. This openness to partnership significantly shapes their strategic decision-making processes. Mathe and Maharaj (2025:01-02) support this observation, noting that expatriate entrepreneurs show a readiness to learn and speak local languages, which facilitates business partnerships. Having made substantial investments in their ventures, as shown in Figure 5.8, these entrepreneurs

tend to engage in collaborative efforts more effectively, viewing partnership as a strategic approach to mitigate the risk of business failure.

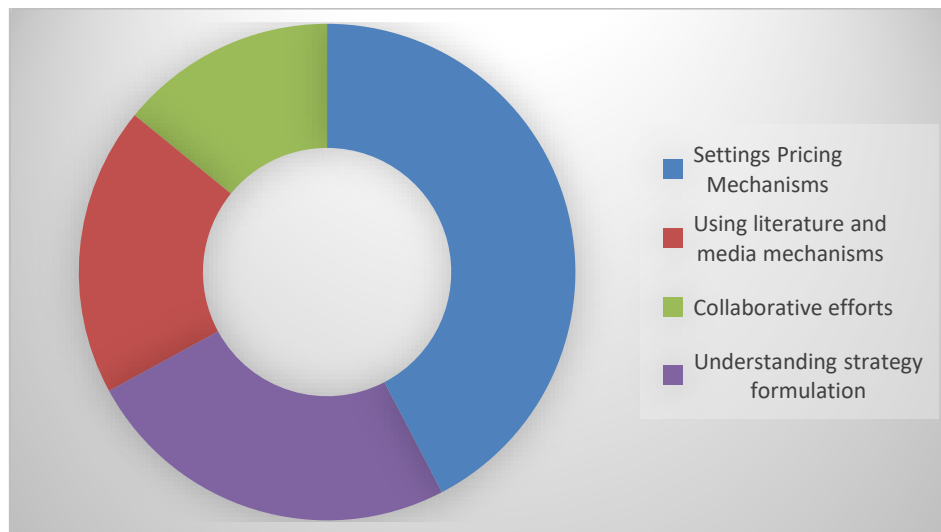


Figure 5.8: Skill enhancement

The results in Figure 5.8 revealed that 7 out of 50 of the participants exhibit a marked propensity for collaboration, a characteristic predominantly observed among expatriate entrepreneurs. This collaborative disposition appears to facilitate their ability to navigate complex challenges and enhance their prospects for success within the industries. 21 out of 50 of the participants have astute abilities in setting competitive pricing skills. This observation aligns with Table 5.5, which affirms the following responses highlighted by P28 portraying what happens when it comes to pricing resilience and competition: *“As an organisation, I find I must negotiate for prices as my customers complain a lot due to high prices. My reputation gets tarnished if I do not listen to my customers, I therefore share with some of my male counterparts from Ghana to assist with embroidery and designing of trousers as I am not an expert”*. P.28.

The following observed data is aligned with 9 out of 50 of respondents who alluded that *“In conceiving plans for enhancement, I attend fashion shows and look at my counterparts from Nigeria what they do and replicate”*. P.36.

“I came to South Africa from Nigeria, and I started this business with all my savings, if my business fails, I have nothing and nobody to help me start or support me, therefore

I must make it by whatever it takes. I must read books, watch television and attend fashion shows to equip my skills” P.48.

Table 5.5: Themes on Human resources and personal development.

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Use of Ubuntu as a relationship-building strategy.	Skill enhancement	Balancing negotiation with customers on Price.	<i>... to negotiate prices as my customers complain a lot due to high prices. P28</i>
	participants exhibit a marked propensity for collaboration.	Collaboration with expatriates in learning to make their products.	<i>.. attend fashion shows and look at my counterparts from Nigeria what they do and replicate them. P36</i>
	Collaboration influencing quality of products.	Collaboration has influenced low production costs.	<i>...many customers use Imported garments as they cannot afford to buy from us local micro textile entrepreneurs as we are somewhat more expensive. P40</i>
	No turning back, no distractions, ROI is the sole direction.	Fully invested into the make it succeed.	<i>...I started this business with all my savings, if my business fails, I have nothing and nobody to help me start or support me, therefore I have to make it by whatever it takes. P48</i>

Source: Own construct

Figure 5.8 presents that thirteen out of 50 of the respondents indicate that collaboration between entrepreneurial drive and technical expertise empowers them to excel at the organisational level. Interestingly, experts who possess this combination of skills are perceived as highly accommodating, sometimes going to great lengths to meet customer demands, which others may view as excessive. However, this adaptability contrasts with the perspective of Morales (2022), who argues that expatriates must first decode and understand their host country's culture before making significant investments. According to this view, expatriates are compelled to succeed independently before forming partnerships with local stakeholders. Their resilience and tenacity can be traced back to their upbringing and nationality, which shape their personality and enhance their professional capabilities. This unique blend of skills, personal background, and cultural adaptability enables experts to navigate challenges and achieve success in ways that may not be accessible to others.

5.2.2.3 Gender in entrepreneurship

Data findings indicate that the gender composition of the micro-textile industry is predominantly female, with women 24 out of 50 comprising most respondents. This demographic trend in Figure 5.9 reflects the historical roots of the sector, which has long been shaped by female-driven entrepreneurship. As Maphalala (2017) affirms, women have played a central role in the industry since the pre-independence era.

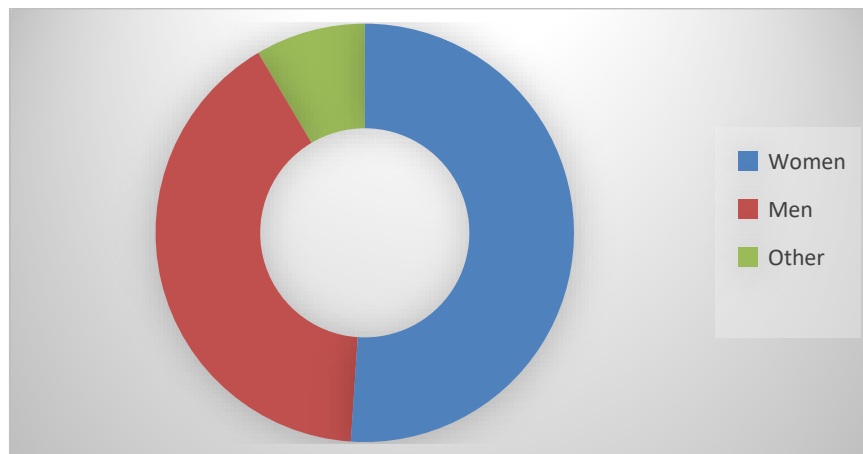


Figure 5.9: Gender in entrepreneurship

Following the closure of formal textile firms before independence, many women responded by establishing makeshift home-based factories. This shift transformed the industry from an opportunity-driven market venture into a necessity-driven livelihood strategy. Consequently, strategic approaches within the sector have been reactive, shaped more by survival than by deliberate planning. As a result, many enterprises lack the strategic depth required to build competitiveness or achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

Although men are perceived as more skilled, it is women who tend to remain longer in the industry and ultimately dominate it. This is largely due to social factors; women are typically the ones who stay behind to maintain households and provide stability, while men leave in search of better opportunities. The legacy of apartheid, portrayed in Table 5.6, reveals responses of displaced labour and fractured communities, and continues to affect these dynamics today, with many still experiencing its long-term repercussions.

“As a small organisation women managed, I am viewed differently, especially when designing male garments. In as much as I may be as skilled as them, however level of trust from customers differs”. P.38.

“I find myself having to negotiate prices with my customers because they complain a lot due to high prices. My reputation gets affected if I do not listen to my customers, I, therefore, share with some of my male counterparts from African Countries to assist with embroidery to lower the price and designing of trousers as I am not an expert”. P.12.

P7 revealed that *“men are good designers and produce high-quality garments”*.

Table 5.6: Themes on gender in entrepreneurship

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Gender in entrepreneurship - Personality traits and leadership.	Reputation and African countries expatriates.	reputation affected by customers complaints from my male counterparts from African Countries.	<i>I find myself having to negotiate prices with my customers because they complain a lot due to high prices. My reputation gets affected if I do not listen to my customers, I, therefore, share with some of my male counterparts from African Countries to assist with embroidery to lower the price and designing of trousers as I am not an expert. P12</i>
	Customer segmentations.	customer demands differentiated by quality not quantity.	<i>...I produce based on quality not quantity...differentiated by customer demands in which imported are sold due to affordability. P16</i>
	Packaging is not branded.	Branding a costly factor.	<i>Packaging is not branded because branding is costly and unaffordable. P20</i>
	Customer care	Customer demand for quality.	<i>Product quality in relation to customer demand is critical. P35</i>
	male designed garments.	Males are viewed to be more skilled.	<i>As a small organisation women managed, I am viewed differently, especially when designing male garments. In as much as I may be as skilled as them, however level of trust from customers differs. P38</i>

Source: Own construct

Figure 5.10 reveals that women have had to overcome various challenges to excel in customer retention strategies, demonstrating superior performance compared to their

male counterparts in both customer engagement and management skills. While men who constitute 20 out of 50 of the responses dominate in producing high-quality garments. Women demonstrate exceptional prowess in negotiating prices, offering affordable options that enable them to sustain their businesses over time. This unique ability to balance quality and affordability has enabled women to thrive and dominate in the textile industry. The data further revealed that 4 out of 50 of participants do not conform to traditional gender norms yet exhibit exceptional proficiency in garment production.

5.2.2.4 Technological stagnation

A critical analysis of entrepreneurial success factors in Figure 5.10 reveals that micro-entrepreneurs' experiential knowledge, business acumen, and strategic proficiency are crucial determinants of business performance and sustainability. Conversely, a lack of technological savvy is found to hinder growth, suggesting that entrepreneurs' inability to leverage technology can impede their ability to scale and remain competitive (Centre for Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators, 2021). To determine how micro entrepreneurial skills are used to tackle competition, Table 5.7 presents the responses of participants, highlighting their individual perspectives and contributions to the study's findings:

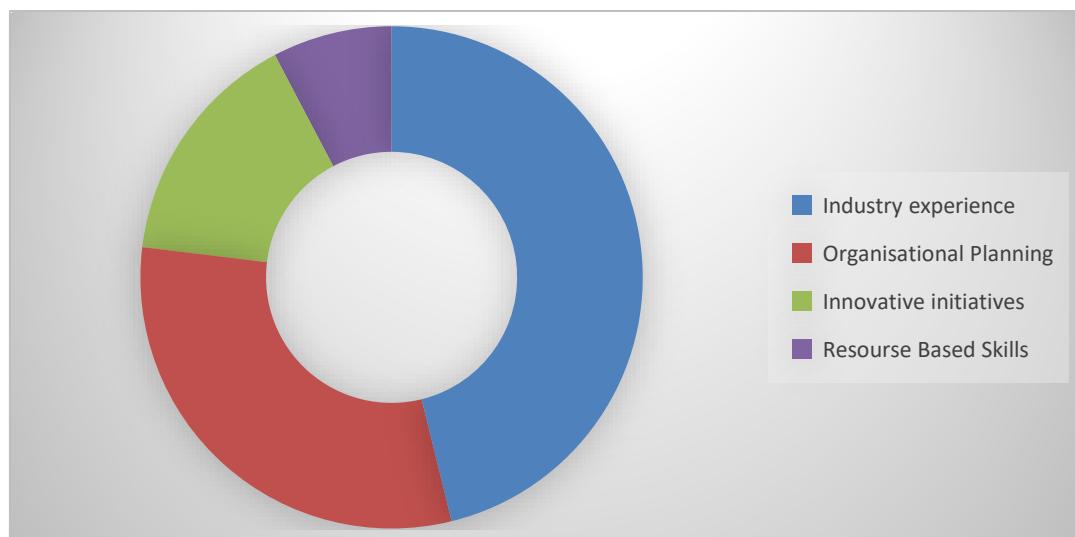


Figure 5.10: Technology adoption

"I used my experience in the industry to navigate customer demands and find suppliers meeting my customer needs". P.49

“Being innovative has been one of the foundational skills assisting me to be different from competitors... majority of my skills are self-taught”. P.40

“I devise 3-to-6-year plans... this assist, improve my organisational skills by putting plans in place of where I want my organisation to be for the future. Some of my colleagues use product quality as a performance gauge, and I have found strategic planning as a good tool”. P.18 and P.3

Table 5.7: Themes on problem solving

Theme	Sub-themes	Codes	Quotes
Problem-solving and Resilience	<i>devise skills by putting plans in place</i>	<i>micro entrepreneurial skills are used to tackle competition.</i>	<i>...I devise skills by putting plans in place of where I want my organisation to be in 3 to 6 years from now. P3, P40</i>
	<i>Organisational planning</i>	<i>the importance of short- to medium-term organisational planning.</i>	<i>...my colleagues use product quality, and I have found strategic planning a good tool. P18</i>
	<i>Foundations for differentiation</i>	<i>Using foundational skills to differentiate.</i>	<i>...I found that being innovative has been one of the foundational skills assisting me to be different from competitors. P40</i>
	<i>Using technological efficiency</i>	<i>using performance metrics, technological integration, operational efficiency, and strategic execution.</i>	<i>...customers good appearance is prioritised but competitive pricing. P20, P49</i>
	<i>used my experience in the industry</i>	<i>Navigating the textile industry to achieve competitive advantage.</i>	<i>...my experience in the industry to navigate customer demands and find suppliers meeting my customer needs. P49</i>

Source: Own construct

According to Adamu (2023:02) 4 out of 50 respondents believe that entrepreneurs are responsible for utilising resource-based competencies and strategic planning to steer their organisations toward sustainable development and enduring success. Baah and Rambe (2024:2-3) emphasise the importance of a firm’s ability to effectively deploy experience and expertise, noting that this can enhance the quality of products and services and help maintain market share. Table 5.7 reveals that nearly half of the respondents, 24 out of 50, believe that entrepreneurs should prioritise industry

experience using performance metrics, technological integration, operational efficiency, and strategic execution, which are key elements deemed vital for fostering business growth. By prioritising these elements, micro textile entrepreneurs are found to be better equipped to navigate the complexities of the business environment and achieve organisational resilience and longevity. A total of 16 out of 50 respondents emphasised the importance of short- to medium-term organisational planning, noting that it plays a crucial role in guiding efforts toward achieving overall objectives.

5.2.3 Interactive dominant themes

Dominant themes are illustrated through images that emphasise the importance of interactivity among them as key business drivers, including their strategic influence to achieve success. In a study by Ahmed et al. (2025:02) dominant themes, though important, can however, pose challenges of balancing flexibility with methodological rigour as their rich data can obscure other patterns. This interplay is characterised by dynamic engagements and reciprocal relationships. Whilst qualitative data analysis affords researchers many techniques to analyse data, in this case, a comparative analysis on a case-by-case basis via figurative visuals was carried out from Figure 5.13 to Figure 5.20. In answering the research question on whether managerial strategies are designed according to resource capabilities or the preference and personality of the entrepreneur, data reveal the following from sections 5.2.4.1 to 5.2.4.5

5.2.3.1 *Personality traits influencing industry experience*

Organisations and individuals share a commonality in that they both possess unique personality profiles, comprised of inherent characteristics, values, strengths, and weaknesses (Awwad and Al-Aseer, 2021:89). According Weinschenka et al. (2022:02) these personality profiles serve as a defining attribute, distinguishing one entity from another. In the context of small businesses, the entrepreneur's personality profile, as outlined in Figure 5.11, is deeply intertwined with that of the organisation, exerting a profound influence on the personality, direction and ultimately competitive strategies of the industry. The entrepreneurs' ability to shape and implement competitive strategies is critical in response to new technologies, innovations, and shifting market dynamics. Through their leadership and vision, entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in

navigating their organisations through complex and ever-evolving business landscapes.

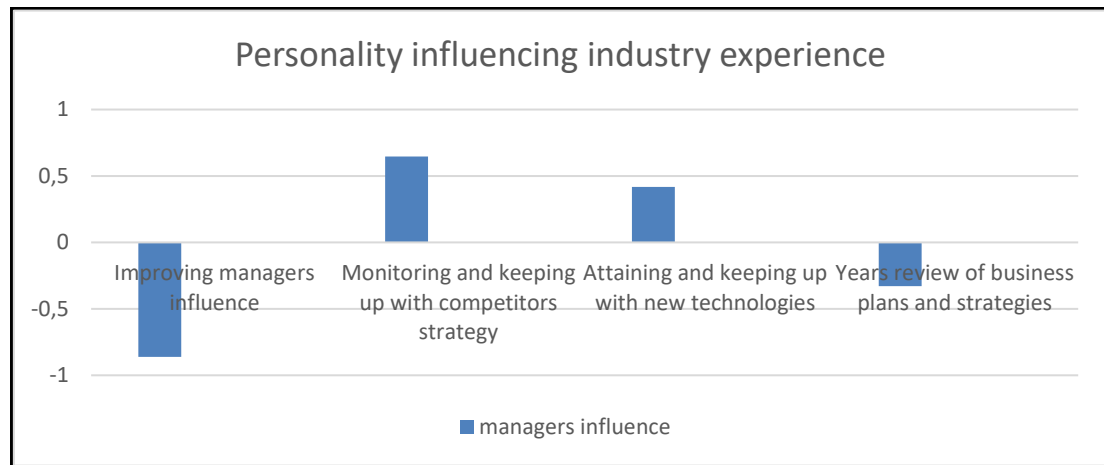


Figure 5.11: Personality influencing industry experience

Source: Own construct

A significant observation in this industry is that it is primarily led by African women entrepreneurs. The industry's characteristic profile suggests that substantial growth in micro-businesses typically occurs after approximately 15 years, as shown in Figure 5.12. This trend may be attributed to the unique traits of these entrepreneurs, which enable them to integrate effectively into the industry's culture and practices, thereby shaping business operations and fostering professional relationships.

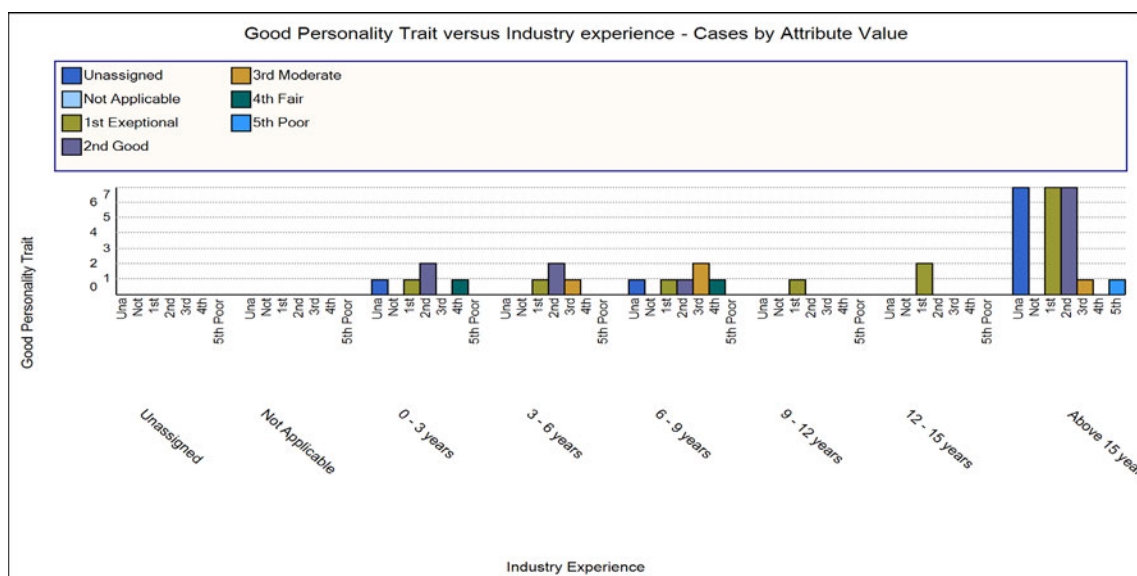


Figure 5.12: Good personality traits versus industry Source: Own construct

5.2.3.2 Business knowledge and understanding to influence use of technology

Research reveals that technology should be the predominant business driver for small and micro-businesses as they operate daily (Brookins, 2019).

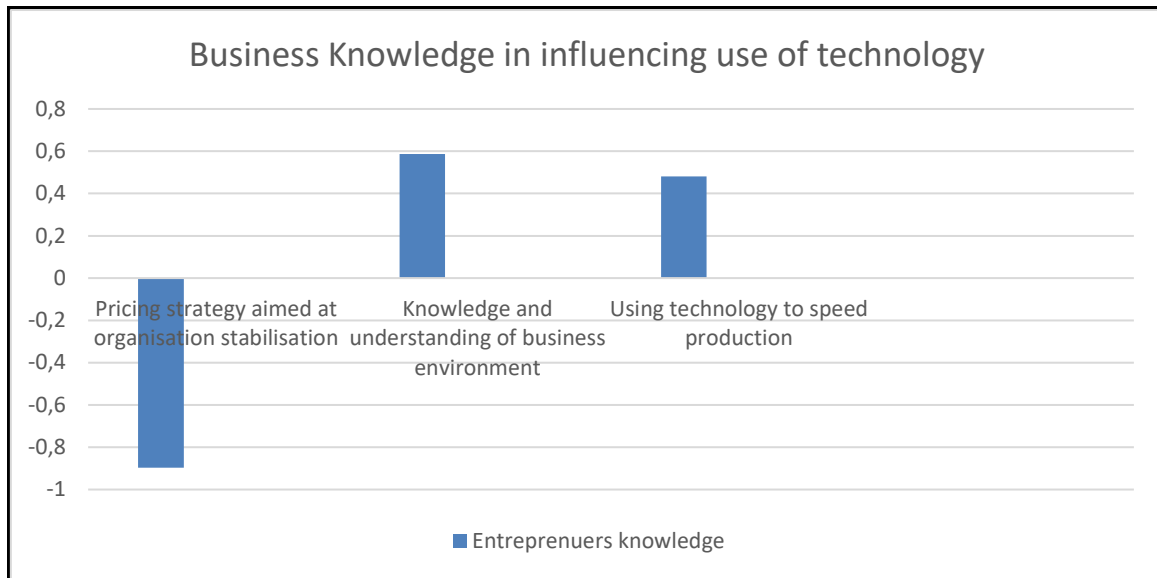


Figure 5.13: Business Knowledge in Influencing the Use of Technology

Source: Own construct

An alternative perspective emerges from the micro-textile industry in Durban, as illustrated in Figure 5.13. This sector is reportedly lacking awareness of the benefits of technology. According to Fuchs (2023), such technological illiteracy significantly hinders individuals' ability to participate in the economy or secure sustainable livelihoods. Data presented on a 1 to 5 Likert scale, with 1 being "Exceptional" and 5 being "Poor," reveal that technology was rated a 5 – a poor rating. Inasmuch as their rating indicates "Poor," there is a difference in technological skills.

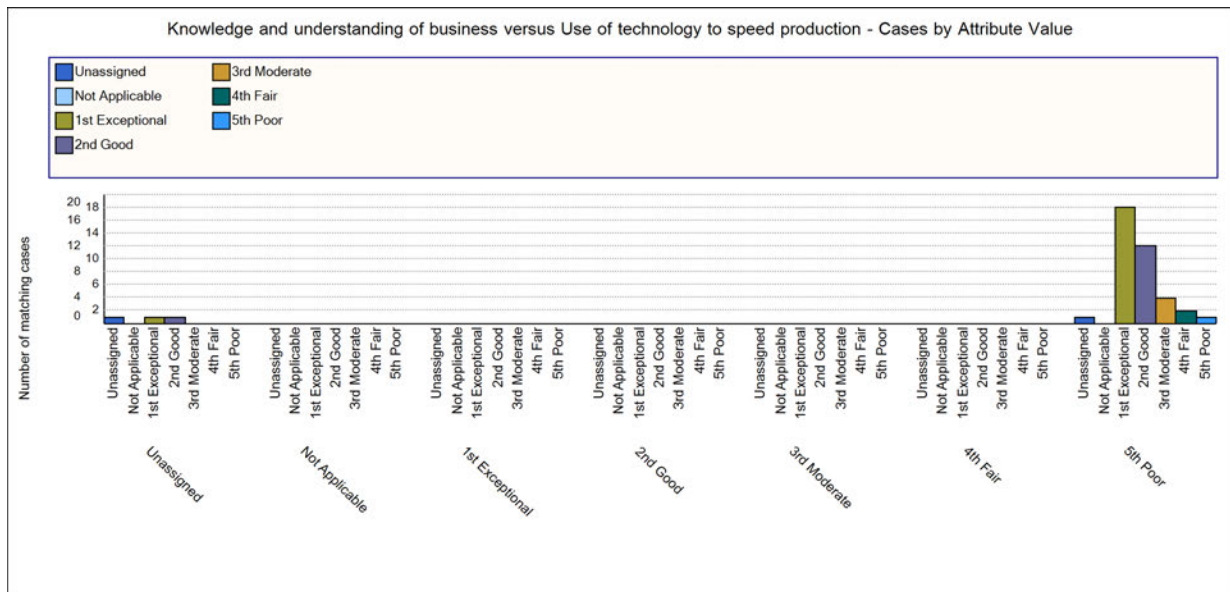


Figure 5.14: Knowledge and understanding of business

Source: Own construct

5.2.3.3 Impact of Organisational Plans on Industry Evolution

Organisational plans are key components for every entity, regardless of whether it is a corporate business, government agency or non-profit organisation (Ingram, 2019).

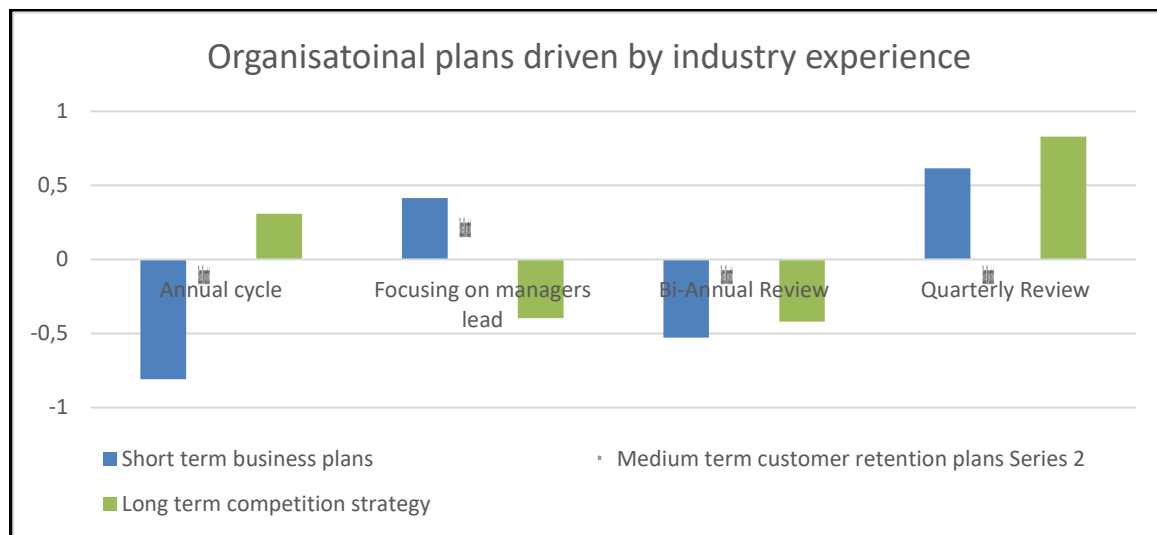


Figure 5.15: Organisational plans driven by industry experience

Source: Own construct

The data analysis of Figure 5.15 reveals that the effective implementation of organisational plans is crucial for achieving strategic objectives and driving success. The data from Figure 5.16 indicate that respondents with long-term industry experience are more likely to have organisational plans in place. Notably, only a quarter of these experienced respondents consider leveraging technology to accelerate production a critical strategy for meeting customer demands. This strategy revolves around innovation and leveraging new technologies. As illustrated in the graph, the usage of technology increases significantly after 15 years of experience.

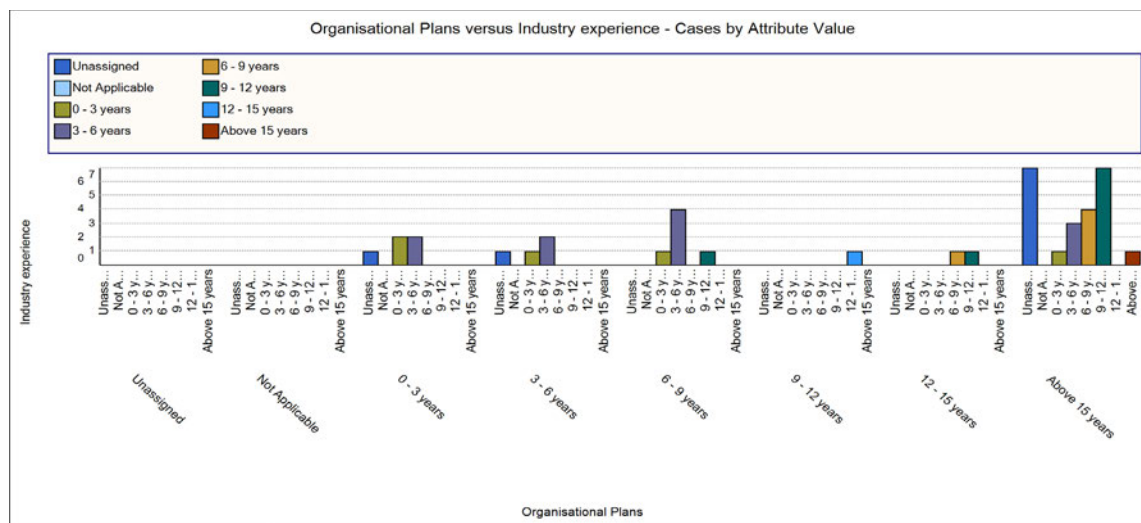


Figure 5.16: Organisational plans versus industry experience

Source: Own construct

5.2.3.4 Setting organisational plans

Figure 5.18 below displays entrepreneurs industry experience with organisations' plan of action, *which* uses a pivotal tool to overcome competition. The negative coefficients indicate a significant inverse relationship the Plan of Action has with education, with a positive coefficient signifying the opposite. The full details are discussed in section 5.4 on the quantitative data socio-demographic presentation.

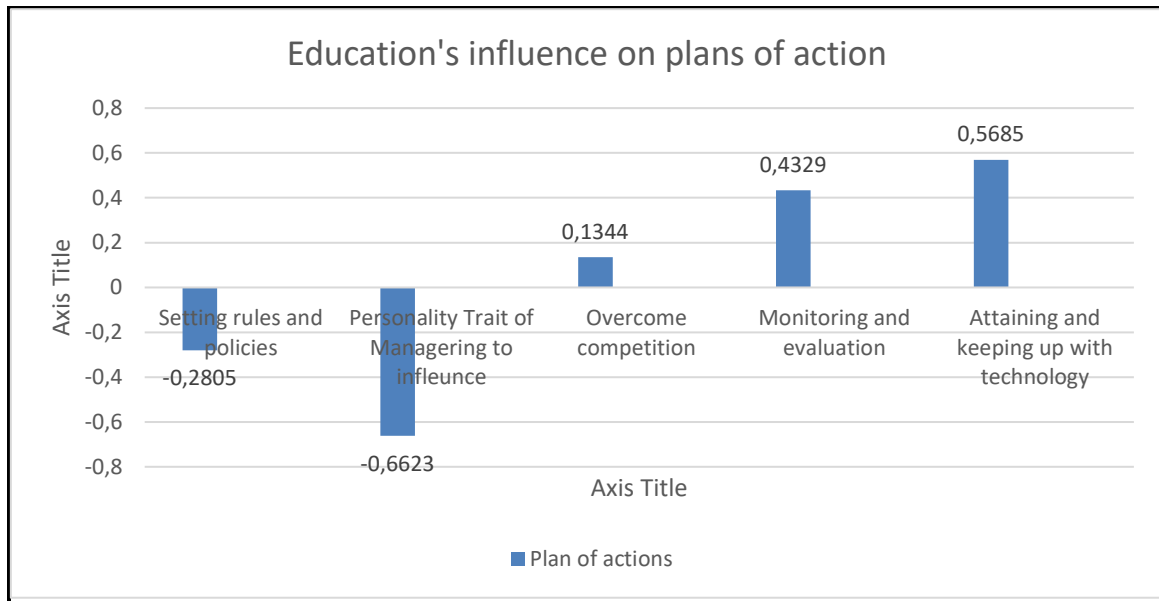


Figure 5.17: Education's influence on plans of action

Source: Own construct

Entrepreneurs with advanced educational qualifications such as those outlined in Figure 5.19 (diplomas or higher certifications) and six to twelve years of industry experience adopt strategic approaches centred on technological advancement, monitoring, and evaluation to drive business growth. Both education and experience play a pivotal role in shaping the direction of business strategy. This is supported by Berkat et al. (2025:1-2), who examined the impact of educational management on developing students' problem-solving competencies for global competitiveness. Their findings suggest that educational management fosters a holistic and sustainable mindset, enabling individuals to engage effectively with and advance technological infrastructure in support of strategic goals.

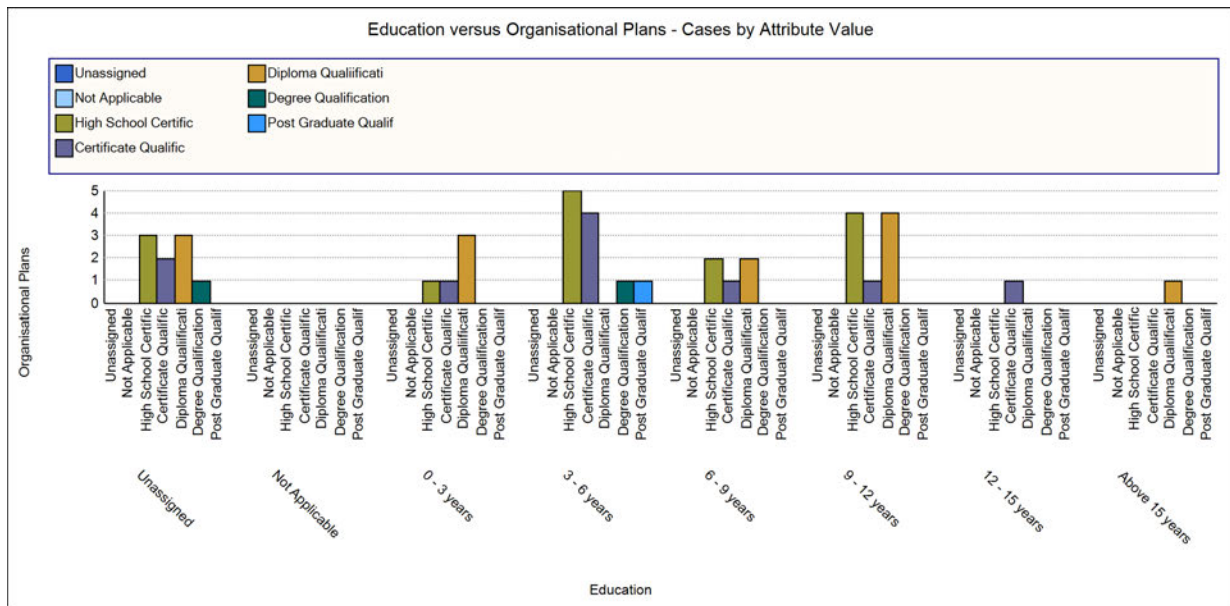


Figure 5.18: Education versus organisational plans

Source: Own construct

5.2.3.5 Educational qualification versus industry experience

According to Doughton (2018), industry experience is a crucial factor in an employee's progress and development. This component demonstrates that an individual has applied their skills and knowledge in a practical setting, thereby validating their expertise and proficiency in their field. Inasmuch as educational qualifications may take one up the ranks faster, it is industry experience that takes one further (Tijana, 2021). The data visualisation illustrates the relationships between industry experience and age, revealing that younger individuals typically have up to six years of experience, while older groups (51 and above) exhibit over 12 years of experience.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights the dominance of degree and postgraduate qualifications among younger individuals, while high school graduates, certificate holders, and diploma holders are more prevalent among older groups. The technology adoption patterns also demonstrate that younger groups utilise advanced technology heavily, whereas older groups rely on limited technology. Figure 5.20 presents a detailed analysis of the interplay between education, experience, and technology usage, organised and layered by age groups. This matrix offers a well-rounded comparison of these variables, illustrating their collective influence on organisational development.

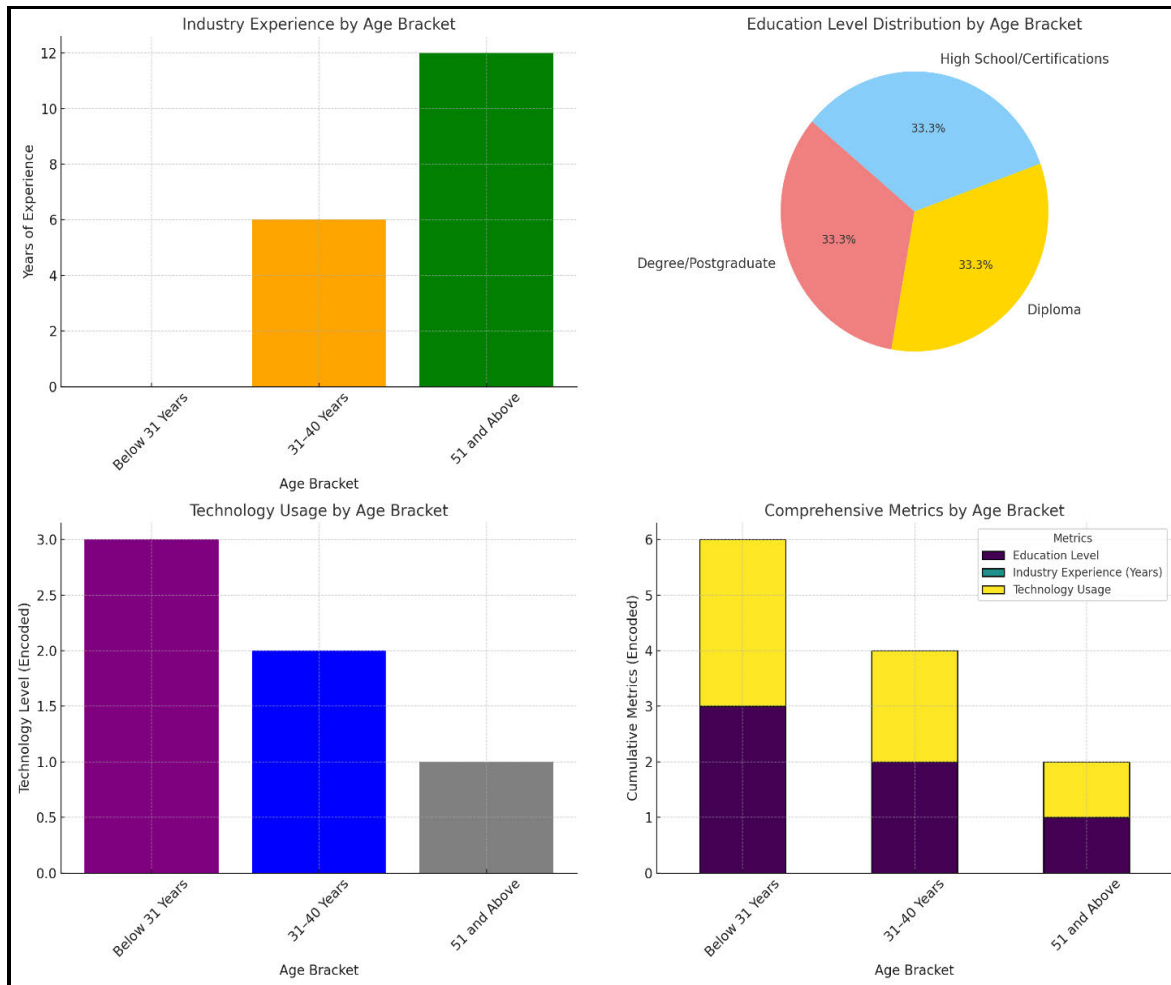


Figure 5.1: Educational qualification versus experience

Source: Own construct

5.3 PRESENTATION OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

The quantitative data analysis consisted of two interconnected stages. Phase one involved an empirical descriptive analysis, where constructs and variables were developed, and their distribution across micro-textile characteristics was examined. Phase two employed inferential statistics that explored relationships between competitive strategies and their organisational spread within the industry (Sago, 2023). The study employed factor analysis, a statistical method used to describe variability among observed or correlated variables in terms of potentially lowering the number of unobserved factors (Carroll, 2022). The model assisted in investigating the variability in organisational strategies and examining the contributory role of individual indicators in explaining the observed differences (Adamu, 2023:1-2). Focusing on the three core constructs of the Porter strategy, the cost leadership strategy, differentiation strategy, and focus strategy, the primary constructs were grouped based on the alignment of

their measurements of manifest variables with the way these strategies were conceptualised, thus operationalising Porter's generic strategies in micro-businesses (Serubugo, 2024). Using dimension reduction statistical techniques such as factor analysis, endogenous construct variables were created with the index variables generated. The index variables were used as empirical constructs traced over business characteristics to discuss what characteristics predisposed firms to certain generic strategies (Ahmad, 2021).

5.4 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section presents a descriptive statistical analysis, providing an overview of the key items used to operationalise the constructs outlined in the conceptual model (Jacobs, 2022:124). This facilitates an examination of underlying factors and offers a clear understanding of the target population. To achieve this, a demographic analysis of the sample was conducted, focusing on educational background, ethnic and gender composition, and income categories (Bukhari, 2021:1-2). This enabled an understanding of the participants' level of decision-making and provided valuable understanding of the statistical structures and constructs presented in the conceptual mode (Collier et al., 2012:217).

The descriptive statistics results were succinctly summarised and presented, thereby enhancing data visibility and understanding. This clear presentation empowers users to grasp key features and make informed decisions. Moreover, the results justify the use of partial least squares - structural equation model (PLS-SEM) to test the conceptual model, as the normality test did not hold for all items.

5.5 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIVE DATA

The socio-demographic data presents the descriptive statistics section, providing an in-depth analysis of the questionnaire items (Cai and Zhu, 2015:1-2). This section offered a detailed breakdown of frequencies, calculations displaying that 49% of the participants possess a vocational or occupational textile or clothing qualification while 51% do not. A textile qualification is a vocational and occupational qualification offered by a further education training institute. The low barriers to entry for the industry make it accessible to everyone seeking self-employment opportunities, affirming Fairlie and Fossen's (2018:24) assessment on micro-entrepreneurship being counter-cyclical. An interesting narrative is that the industry indicates learning as a base. SAQA (2001)

is of the view that South Africa has a plethora of micro-business training programmes even though an appreciative related improvement in economic competitiveness has not been witnessed. Nevertheless, the absence of entrepreneurial skills is attributed to the shortage of training programmes in the marketplace. According to Chimucheka (2014:403-404), entrepreneurship is a skill that is developed and stimulated. More than 50% of self-employed traders in the micro-textiles sector have developed increased confidence and a mindset averse to risk-taking. As per Table 5.1 below postulating the educational qualifications of the respondents, a total of 378 responses were deemed valid for use in the analysis. A total of six responses either not received or were incorrectly captured by participants – hence they are deemed missing. Table 5.1 below displays a 98% response rate.

Table 5.8: Textile or Clothing Qualification

Textile or Clothing Qualification			
	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	184	47.9	48.7
	194	50.5	51.3
	378	98.4	100.0
Missing	6	1.6	
Totals	384	100	

Source: Own construct

The qualification of descriptive results displayed in Table 5.8 shows the mean of clothing qualifications within the industry to be at 1.51 and the mode at 2, which is evidence that the sample data is not normally distributed. The observed negative kurtosis suggests that the sample distribution is flatter and has lighter tails compared to a normal distribution (Lezar, 2021). The skewness towards the left of the distribution is attributed to the negative value of -1.908 assigned. It displays the degree to which data values are concentrated around the mean (Gawali, 2024).

Table 5.09: Descriptive Qualification

TEXTILE OR CLOTHING QUALIFICATIONS		
N	VALID	378
	MISSING	6
Mean		1.51
Median		2.00
Mode		2
Std. Deviation		0.500
Skewness		-0.053
Std. Error of Skewness		0.125
Kurtosis		-1.908
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.250
Minimum		1
Maximum		2
Percentage	25	1.00
	50	2.00
	75	2.00

Source: Own construct

The frequency distribution of the micro textile dataset, as illustrated in Table 5.9 above, offers a statistical analysis of the data collected in Durban. The presentation took the form of frequency tables, kurtosis, skewness, mean values, and standard deviation, which were calculated using SPSS.

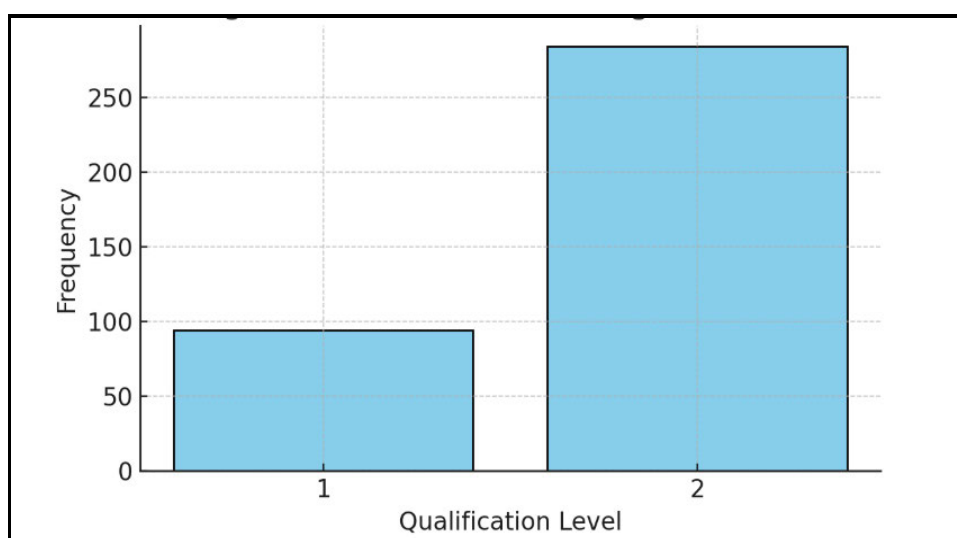


Figure 5.20: Frequency table on textile and clothing qualifications.

Source: Own construct

Figure 5.20 reveals a notable correlation between respondents' educational qualifications in textile or clothing and their involvement in the industry. The data shows that 51% of respondents do not possess a tertiary qualification. Conversely, further qualitative analysis revealed that respondents' passion for their work was a significant motivator. Moreover, the data indicates that 49% of respondents hold qualifications related to managing businesses, fashion, or textiles. This suggests that nearly half of the respondents have some formal education or trading relevant to their field, which contributes to their success and expertise in the industry.

5.6 MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The data analysis reveals that micro-textile entrepreneurs manage through a combination of entrepreneurial skills and personality traits. This will be affirmed by findings from the cost leadership index in Section 5.8, specifically Table 5.30, where measurements of micro-textile managerial practices are characterised by distinct autonomous variables that operate independently, indicating that a well-structured Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) informs effective entrepreneurial strategies (STRAT). Prioritisation of Strategic Planning emerges as a critical factor, as presented by Table 5.10, where business expansion strategy prioritises the importance of adopting flexible and adaptive approaches to strategic planning (STRIMP), allowing them to navigate the complexities of their business environment and make informed decisions that drive growth and sustainability (Alnoor et al., 2023:179-180).

The questionnaires were designed to identify independent constructs that influence how micro-textiles entrepreneurs conceptualise and develop strategies, which ultimately become pillars guiding micro or informal organisations. The results are shown in Table 5.10 below calculated under the management strategy construct, with the test for data normality achieved through kurtosis and skewness tests.

Table 5.10: General management constructs

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
DEVSTR	Do you have a textile or clothing qualification?	3.002	1.246	-0.14366	0.05
RESSTRA	Is your organisation able to survive without your presence as the business owner	2.990	1.326	0.1424	0.05
IMPRCOMP	Is the organisation able to retain and attract new customers without intervention of the business owner	2.994	1.314	0.1360	0.05
STRAT	Does the organisation follow any prescribed organisational policies or laws?	2.995	1.270	-0.1436	0.05
CUSTAR	Does the organisation have a clear set of plans, actions and goals outlined on how it will compete in a particular market?	3.002	1.346	-0.1323	0.05
POACTN	Is your plan of action documented or intuitive?	3.006	1.240	0.7538	0.05
STRIMP	Is the organisations able to pursue strategies without entrepreneurial leadership?	3.0	1.332	-0.5958	0.05
PLANRVW	Are plans reviewed quarterly or annually?	3.014	1.145	0.13954	0.05

Source: Own construct

Table 5.10 illustrates a negative skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the left side of the spectrum. Specifically, the constructs of Developmental Strategy (DevStr), Effective Strategy (STRAT), Customer Targeting Strategy (CUSTAR) and Strategic Planning (STRIMP) exhibit means values of 3.002, 2.995, 3.002 and 3.0, respectively. Notably, these mean values are clustered around the neutral point, indicating a lack of strong positive or negative tendencies among respondents.

The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically Developmental Strategies (DevStr), Competitive Strategies (STRAT), Customer Targeting Strategy (CUSTAR) and Strategic Planning (STRIMP). The results revealed negative values, suggesting that respondents generally disagreed with the statement. This implies that micro-textile entrepreneurs may lack well-defined plans, actions, and goals, supporting the idea that their strategies are intuitive and driven by entrepreneurial instinct.

Furthermore, the results yielded a kurtosis value less than one, agreeing with Machi and Kunene (2018:129) and that plans of action are intuitive as the entrepreneur is the business guide, indicating a platykurtic distribution. This implies that customers responded negatively to the statement organisation, namely “Not following any prescribed policies”. This agrees with the contention of Churchill and Lewis (1983:90) that any prescribed policies are from the entrepreneurs' decision-making as there is little or no supervision at this stage of the fifteen-year infancy stages.

5.6.1 Development of Strategies

Table 5.11 illustrates positive skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the right side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically, *Developmental Strategies* (DevStr), which summated the average of Descriptors (DevStr_3, DevStr_4) in the construct. The results showed positive values, indicating that the sample responded positively to the statement. This suggests that micro-textile entrepreneurs have good personality traits and the ability to attract customers (0.9346) and have a good knowledge and understanding of the business (0.0454).

On the other hand, the mean values of individual descriptors DevStr_1, DevStr_2, and DevStr_5 show negative values, indicating that the micro-textile entrepreneurs

responded negatively to the statements. This suggests that respondents were unable “to price correctly” (-0.0990 DevStr_1), which aligns with the inability to produce quality products (-0.3267 DevStr_2). Lastly, DevStr_5 exhibits negative descriptors of inability to “use the latest technology that speeds up production by management” (-0.3360). The average mean for all developmental strategies (DevStr_1 to DevStr_5) was 3.002, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

This informs micro-entrepreneurs’ inability to price correctly in developmental strategy_1 (DevStr_1), their inability to produce quality products in developmental strategy_2 (DevStr_2), and not using technological equipment that can speed production, affirming Twin’s (2022) views on why micro-textiles are excluded by conglomerates and are unable to grow from their infancy.

Table 5.11: Development of strategies for the business

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
DevStr_1	For the organisation to price correctly	1.99	1.36	-0.0990	0.01
DevStr_2	For the organisation to produce quality products	2.69	1.20	-0.3267	0.01
DevStr_3	For the manager to have good personality traits and the ability to attract customers	2.99	0.990	0.9346	0.01
DevStr_4	For the manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment	3.40	1.21	0.0454	0.01
DevStr_5	For the manager to use the latest technology that speeds up production	3.94	1.47	-0.3360	0.01

Source: Own construct

5.6.2 Assessing organisational strategies with available resources

The organisation's strategic priorities were evaluated in relation to its available resources, revealing how effectively resources are allocated to support key areas of strategy development. A resource audit provides invaluable enlightenment into the organisation's resource allocation and enables entrepreneurs to prioritise and make informed decisions about resource distribution (Young Entrepreneur Council, 2022). By aligning resources with strategic objectives, entrepreneurs can ensure that critical projects receive adequate support while remaining attuned to the dynamic business environment (Mabrouk and Jerab, 2023:02). This embracing of innovation, which harnesses technology, drives both personal and professional growth. The following framework illustrates how organisational strategies outlined in Table 5.12 align with resource capabilities and critical descriptors that drive organisational growth.

Table 5.12: Organisation's strategies according to business's resource capabilities

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
RESSTRA_1	Setting prices of produced textiles	2.43	1.67	-0.1106	0.01
RESSTRA_2	The quality of clothing the organisation produces	2.65	1.35	-0.0396	0.01
RESSTRA_3	Manager's personality and ability to attract customers	2.99	1.06	0.8441	0.01
RESSTRA_4	Knowledge and understanding of the business environment	3.18	1.09	0.0289	0.01
RESSTRA_5	Use of technology to speed up production	3.70	1.46	-0.5294	0.01

Source: Own construct

Table 5.12 illustrates negative skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the left side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors; specifically, Resource Based Strategy summated the average descriptors (RESSTRA_1, RESSTRA_2, and RESSTRA_5) in the construct. The data distribution for these descriptors is skewed to the left, exhibiting negative descriptors. This informs micro-entrepreneurs' inability to price

correctly RESSTRA_1, their inability to produce quality products RESSTRA_2, and RESSTRA_5's inability to use technology to speed up production, affirming Twin's (2022) views on why micro-textiles are excluded by conglomerates and are unable to grow from their infancy.

On the other hand, the mean values of individual Resource Based Strategy descriptors RESSTRA_3 and RESSTRA_4 are skewed to the right, exhibiting positive values, indicating that micro-textile entrepreneurs responded positively to the statements “manager has a good personality trait and the ability to attract customers” (0.8441) and “manager has good knowledge and understanding of the business” (0.0289). The average mean for all Resource-Based Strategy descriptors, RESSTRA_1 to RESSTRA_5, was 2.99, indicating a positive attitude toward the development of strategies.

5.6.3 Competitive strategy

In evaluating competitive strategy, three aspects from the participants' perspectives were observed from the data analysis. These included organisational competitive strategy, contingencies for adapting to market pressures, and the effectiveness of the organisation's strategies against competition. The structure for competitiveness in the organisation is summarised in Table 5.13 below, where it is shown that these structures contribute to two dominant strategies, namely market share maintenance or retention, and price competitiveness. This is affirmed by a study by Subrahmanyam et al. (2022:364), which emphasises that the structure of competitiveness focuses on maintaining long-term relationships between businesses and customers, with a targeted focus on pricing strategy. The study further suggests that pricing strategies should be competitive and accurate, as they play a crucial role in enhancing business performance by improving customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention (Subrahmanyam et al., 2022:365). Although Trebicka et al. (2023:07) examined the relationship between pricing strategy and customer retention in Albania, they did not explore how market share retention and price competitiveness can be sustained. Furthermore, competitive strategies tend to vary across organisations, influenced by the vision and decisions of entrepreneurs or business managers (Makanyeza, 2014:176). Table 5.13 reveals distinctive findings influenced by the competitiveness of the industry and the personality traits of the entrepreneurs involved.

Table 5.13: Structures assisting organisations' competitiveness

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
IMPRCOMP_1	To obtain external financial investment	2.71	1.64	-0.4769	0.01
IMPRCOMP_2	To extend infrastructure to compete	2.56	1.18	0.0665	0.01
IMPRCOMP_3	To be price or cost-competitive	2.83	1.08	0.8921	0.01
IMPRCOMP_4	To be able to gain and retain customers for successful growth	2.97	1.18	-0.2341	0.01
IMPRCOMP_5	To sell clothing to meet customer's demands and requirements (price, quality, and quantity)	3.90	1.49	-0.0499	0.01

Source: Own construct

Table 5.13 displays a negative skewness, with distribution values concentrated on the left side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors; specifically, organisational strategies summated the average of competitive strategies descriptors (IMPRCOMP_1 to IMPRCOMP_5) used in the construct. The data distribution of these competitive strategies descriptors, IMPRCOMP_1, IMPRCOMP_4, and IMPRCOMP_5, is skewed toward the left, exhibiting negative descriptors. This informs micro-entrepreneurs' inability to attain external financial investment (IMPRCOMP_1: -0.4769), inability to gain and retain customers successfully (IMPRCOMP_4: -0.2341), and inability to sell clothing to meet customers' demands and requirements (IMPRCOMP_5: -0.0499), affirming Twin's (2022) views on why micro-textiles' longevity is unable to grow from their infancy.

In assessing the Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) construct, it has two items that have a positive data distribution skewness: IMPRCOMP_2 and IMPRCOMP_3, indicating that the sample is positively responding to the respective statements "ability to extend infrastructure 0.0665 and manager to be price or cost competitive 0.8921." The average mean for all Importance of Competition descriptors IMPRCOMP_1 to

IMPRCOMP_5 was 2.994, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

5.6.4 Nature of competitive strategy

In evaluating the established competitive advantage strategies namely cost leadership, differentiation, and focus as defined by Porter (1980), this study finds that micro-textile enterprises tend to adapt their strategic approaches by prioritising specific planning indicators tailored to address unique competitive pressures. Yuleva-Chuchulayna (2019) further emphasises that contemporary environmental conditions place micro-businesses in vulnerable positions, making it impractical for them to adhere rigidly to traditional business models. Instead, these enterprises are compelled to develop modern, context-specific strategic plans, which are summarised in the study below. These are summarised in Table 5.14 below:

Table 5.14: Organisation's competitive strategy

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
EDGECOMP_1	We produce low-priced quality garments.	3.51	1.60	-0.4548	0.05
EDGECOMP_2	We produce middle priced affordable garments	1.90	0.904	-0.0478	0.05
EDGECOMP_3	We produce high-priced quality clothing	2.46	1.17	-0.3069	0.05
EDGECOMP_4	We have deep financial resources allowing us access to highly technological equipment	3.61	1.18	-0.0379	0.05
EDGECOMP_5	We advocate brand loyalty to retain and attract customers	3.49	1.25	0.9283	0.05

Source: Own construct

Table 5.14 shows negative skewness with the distribution of values concentrated on the left side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically summing the average of competitive edge strategies descriptors (EDGECOMP_1 to EDGECOMP_5) used in the construct. The data distribution for competitive edge strategies EDGECOMP_1,

EDGECOMP_2, EDGECOMP_3, and EDGECOMP_4 are skewed to the left toward exhibiting negative descriptors. This informs micro-entrepreneurs inability to produce low-priced quality garments EDGECOMP_1 (-0.4548), inability to produce middle-priced quality affordable garments EDGECOMP_2 (-0.0478), inability to produce high-priced quality clothing to meet customers' demands and requirements EDGECOMP_3 (-0.3069), and inability to access financial resources that will allow access to high technological equipment EDGECOMP_4 (-0.0379), thereby affirming Twin's (2022) views on why micro-textiles inability to access finances incapacitates them to invest in the their development.

The nature of competitive edge strategies (EDGECOMP) construct has one coefficient with a positive data distribution skewness EDGECOMP_5, indicating that the sample is positively responding to respective statements “ability to advocate for brand loyalty by retaining and attracting customers” 0.9283. The average mean for all competitive edge strategies descriptors (EDGECOMP_1 to EDGECOMP_5) was 2.994, indicating a positive attitude development of strategies. The above is affirmed by Machi and Kunene (2018:213) that micro businesses devise their own competitive strategies that are uniquely indigenous to the entrepreneurs, as they are influenced by the entrepreneurs’ personality

5.6.5 Effectiveness of competitiveness strategy

The data analysis exploring participants’ views on the effectiveness of the proposed competitive strategies focused on three core dimensions, identified through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA): business development, business improvement, and logistics costs. These latent variables serve as key indicators for evaluating strategic effectiveness. The specific variables linked to each factor, which further demonstrate their relevance to competitive strategy, are presented in Table 5.15. These findings align with the work of Dresch et al. (2018:2-3) and Nwosu (2017:138), whose study in Nigeria highlights the role of business development in collaboration with private cluster initiatives to accelerate performance. Dresch et al. (2018:2-3) further argue that, for micro-businesses to formulate effective strategies, they must possess a clear understanding of their operating environment, actively build their reputation, and remain receptive to external environmental influences.

Table 5.15: Effectiveness of the organisation's set of competitive strategies

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
STRAT_1	Strategies (plans, actions and goals) are not a priority	3.18	1.69	-0.3019	0.01
STRAT_2	The most important strategy is to lower shipping and storage costs	2.07	1.14	0.8998	0.01
STRAT_3	The most important strategy is to get more opportunities within the textile industry	2.65	1.06	0.0225	0.01
STRAT_4	The most important strategy is to work on improving e-business and e-marketing	3.47	1.03	-0.0091	0.01
STRAT_5	The most important strategy is to grow the business	3.62	1.43	-0.4377	0.01

Source: Own construct

Table 5.15 illustrates negative skewness with the distribution of values concentrated on the left side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically assessing organisational competitiveness, which summated the average of competitive strategies descriptors STRAT_1, STRAT_4, and STRAT_5 in the construct that are skewed toward the left, exhibiting negative descriptors. This informs micro-entrepreneurs' inability to prioritise strategies to attain plans, actions and goals STRAT_1 (-0.3019), inability to improve e-business and e-marketing successfully STRAT_4 (-0.0091), and inability to grow the organisation due to inability to prioritise important strategies STRAT_5 (-4377). This disproves Thomas's (2020) assertions that small businesses pursuing niche market strategies ignored by conglomerates is a crucial business model. Data reveals that micro-businesses do not pay detailed attention to strategies in analysing their operational strategies. Construct STRAT_1's negative descriptors -0.3019 indicate that micro-textiles do not prioritise strategies.

On the other hand, mean values of competitive strategies STRAT_2 and STRAT_3 are skewed to the right, exhibiting positive values, indicating that micro-textile entrepreneurs positively responded to respective statements "lowering shipping costs and storage costs" (0.8998) and "get more opportunities within the textile industry"

(0.0225). The average mean for all STRAT_1 to STRAT_5 was 2.995, indicating a positive attitude development of strategies.

5.6.6 Organisation's strategies

In analysing data on organisational characteristics linked to competitive or generic strategies, emphasis was placed on customer retention approaches, strategic planning frameworks, and perspectives on planning and strategic review. The analysis of the customer retention construct identified three latent factor variables: delineation of competitive goals, market strategy, and customer retention itself. This finding is supported by Powers (2024), who argues that the competitive landscape plays a significant role in shaping customer retention dynamics. Similarly, Subrahmanyam et al. (2022:366) suggest that customers are likely to switch to competitors offering superior value or enhanced customer experiences. These discoveries reinforce the study's narrative that the latent factors reflect the capacity of micro-enterprises to respond to competitive pressures based on their available resources and strategic opportunities. The results are summarised in Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16: Retaining and influencing of customers in this industry

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
CUSTAR_1	Ability to grow the business revenue	3.57	1.49	0.0766	0.05
CUSTAR_2	Ability to attain a pricing strategy that will stabilise the organisation	2.51	1.31	-0.8403	0.05
CUSTAR_3	Ability to outgrow competition	3.04	1.08	0.1016	0.05
CUSTAR_4	Ability to retain customer loyalty and satisfaction	3.13	1.14	0.5873	0.05
CUSTAR_5	Ability to retain and adopt marketing concept	2.76	1.71	0.1153	0.05

Source: Own construct

Table 5.16 displays a positive skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the right side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically micro-textile entrepreneurs'

perceptions towards organisations to retain and influence Customer Targeting (CUSTAR). Specifically, the average of Customer Targeting descriptors (CUSTAR_1, CUSTAR_3, CUSTAR_4, and CUSTAR_5) was summated in the construct. The results showed positive values, indicating that the micro-textile entrepreneurs responded positively to the statement. CUSTAR_1 indicated that the sample positively responds to the respective statement “Ability to grow the business revenue” (0.0766). CUSTAR_3 indicates that the sample positively responds to the respective statement “Ability to outgrow competition” (0.1016). CUSTAR_4 also indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “Ability to retain customer loyalty and satisfaction” (0.5873), and lastly, CUSTAR_5 also indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “Ability to retain and adopt marketing concepts” (0.1153). The average mean for all competitive edge strategy descriptors (CUSTAR_1 to CUSTAR_5) was 3.002, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

On the other hand, the mean value of the individual descriptor CUSTAR_2 showed a negative value, indicating that micro-textile entrepreneurs responded negatively to the statement. This informs of micro-entrepreneurs’ inability to attain a pricing strategy that will stabilise the organisation (-0.8403), disproving Thomas’s (2020) assertions that small businesses pursuing niche market strategies ignored by conglomerates is a crucial business model. Data reveal that micro-businesses do not pay detailed attention to strategies in analysing their operational strategies. Construct CUSTAR_2’s negative descriptor (-0.8403) indicates that micro-textiles do not prioritise strategies. In assessing the nature of Customer Targeting (CUSTAR), the average mean for all Customer Targeting (CUSTAR_1 to CUSTAR_5) was 3.002, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

5.6.7 Organisation’s strategic plan

Strategic actions at the organisational level were evaluated using five key indicators: the establishment of laws and regulations, the personality traits of directors or managers, competitive positioning against rivals, monitoring of external competitors, and technology upgrading. Crimmins (2025) emphasises that these elements are essential for effective strategy formulation in micro-businesses, as they enable organisations to identify and capitalise on their unique strengths, thereby achieving market differentiation. The study employed descriptive analysis, correlating these five

indicators with a single underlying factor. The results revealed notable contributions from technology adoption (0.5685), external market monitoring (0.4329), and managerial influence (-0.6623). These findings, presented in Table 5.17, align with Cote's (2020) assertion that personality traits can either empower or hinder entrepreneurs in pursuing an organisational strategic plan.

Table 5.17: Organisational Plan of Action

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
POACTN_1	Setting laws and regulations	3.07	1.65	-0.2805	0.01
POACTN_2	Personality trait of managing director to influence customer	2.23	1.18	-0.6623	0.01
POACTN_3	Overcoming competition from other businesses	2.37	1.03	0.1344	0.01
POACTN_4	Monitoring and keeping up with changes in how competitors' function	3.38	1.09	0.4329	0.01
POACTN_5	Obtaining and keeping up with new technological equipment	3.98	1.25	0.5685	0.01

Source: Own construct

Table 5.17 displays positive skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the right side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically the plan of actions (POACTN), which summated the average of three descriptors (POACTN_3, POACTN_4, and POACTN_5) having a positive data distribution skewness used in the construct. The results showed positive values, indicating that the sample responded positively to the statement overcoming competition from other businesses (POACTN_3: 0.1344), monitoring and keeping up with changes in how competitors (POACTN_4: 0.4329), and attaining and keeping up with new technology (POACTN_5: 0.5685). The average mean for all POACTN_1 to POACTN_5 was 3.006, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

On the other hand, the mean values of individual descriptors POACTN_1 and POACTN_2 show negative values, indicating that the micro-textile entrepreneurs responded negatively to these statements. The data distribution for these descriptors is skewed toward the left, exhibiting negative results. This informs us of micro-entrepreneurs' inability to "set laws and regulations" (POACTN_1: -0.2805) and "managing directors' inability to use personality traits to influence customers" (POACTN_2: -0.6623), affirming Twin's (2022) views on why micro-textiles pursue their own path to grow from their infancy.

5.6.8 Strategic planning at the organisational level

The analysis also concentrated on strategic planning at the micro-organisational level to explore the development of strategic plans. It revealed that the factors grouped into two latent categories, with the highest priority (the factor with the largest eigenvalue) assigned to consulted plans and the practices of market leaders.

Table 5.18: Strategic Planning at Organisational Level

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
STRIMP_1	I am so busy that I do not have time to plan, I work on intuition	2.39	1.55	0.1384	0.05
STRIMP_2	I simply copy what competitors are doing	3.22	1.20	0.4370	0.05
STRIMP_3	I work on my own following my own style of work	2.70	1.25	-0.8684	0.05
STRIMP_4	I regularly brainstorm with colleagues on ways and where to improve	2.95	1.22	0.4234	0.05
STRIMP_5	I specifically look at what market leaders are doing and follow their practices	3.74	1.44	-0.1281	0.05

Source: Own construct

Table 5.18 illustrates positive skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the right side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors. Specifically, strategic planning (STRIMP) summated the average of three descriptors. STRIMP_1 to STRIMP_2 and STRIMP_4 have a positive data distribution skewness used in the construct. In assessing the nature of strategic planning at the organisational level (STRIMP), the construct has

three items with a positive data distribution skewness: STRIMP_1, indicating that the sample is positively responding to the statement “following intuition with no time to plan” (0.1341). STRIMP_2 indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “simply copying what competitors do” (0.4370). STRIMP_4 also indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “regularly brainstorming with colleagues on ways and where to improve” (0.4234). The average mean for all (STRIMP_1 to STRIMP_5) was 3.000, indicating a positive attitude towards the development of strategies.

On the other hand, the data distribution for strategic planning STRIMP_3 and STRIMP_5 is skewed toward the left, exhibiting negative descriptors. Namely, the descriptor “This informs micro-entrepreneurs following their own style of work” has a skew of (-0.8684) for STRIMP_3, and the descriptor “looking at what market leaders are doing and following in their footsteps” has a skew of (-0.1281) for STRIMP_5. This data agrees with Thomas’s (2020) assertions that micro-business entrepreneurs follow their own self-devised business model. Data reveal that micro-businesses do not pay detailed attention to strategies in analysing their operational strategies.

5.6.9 Organisation’s strategic plan review timeline

The analysis included an assessment of the timeline for reviewing organisational action plans to gain an understanding of participants’ views on strategic plan reviews. Results showed a clear division between those who preferred shorter review periods and those who favoured longer, annual reviews. These perspectives were grouped into two latent factors: “short review period” and “annual review period.” Taylor (2022), in a study on strategic management, outlines how strategic review planning acts as a lifeline for organisations, as resource allocation is closely aligned along timelines. For micro-businesses, although the entrepreneur sets review timelines, they are essential in guiding the business through critical early years. Without a structured timeline, these enterprises struggle to survive the critical initial stages of development.

Table 5.19: Strategic Plan Review Timeline

	Descriptors	Means	Standard Deviation	Skewness	P Value
PLANRVW_1	It should be done once a year	2.04	1.25	0.6074	0.01
PLANRVW_2	It should be done once in three months	3.40	1.18	0.1994	0.01
PLANRVW_3	It should be done once in four months	3.01	0.964	-0.0665	0.01
PLANRVW_4	It should be done once in six months	2.36	1.21	0.1221	0.01
PLANRVW_5	It is never done	4.26	1.27	-0.8461	0.01

Source: Own construct

Table 5.19 shows positive skewness, with the distribution of values concentrated on the right side of the spectrum. The mean values of the constructs were evaluated using ANOVA across individual descriptors, specifically Review of Plans for organisational strategy (PLANRVW), which summated the average of three descriptors: PLANRVW_1, PLANRVW_2, and PLANRVW_4, having a positive data distribution skewness used in the construct. The results showed positive values, indicating that the sample responded positively to the statement. PLANRVW_1 indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “It should be done once a year” (0.6074). PLANRVW_2 indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “It should be done once in three months” (0.1994). PLANRVW_4 also indicates that the sample positively responds to the statement “It should be done once in six months” (0.1221). The average mean for all (STRIMP_1 to STRIMP_5) was 3.014, indicating a positive attitude towards strategic planning.

In contrast, the main values of individual descriptors in PLANRVW_3 and PLANRVW_5 exhibit negative values, skewed towards the left, indicating that micro-textile entrepreneurs responded negatively to the statements. Specifically, the descriptors reveal that certain activities, such as strategic planning, are rarely or never undertaken. The skewness values for PLANRVW_3 (-0.0665) and PLANRVW_5 (-0.8461) support this interpretation. This finding is consistent with Thomas’s (2020) assertion that micro-business entrepreneurs rely on self-devised strategic planning

approaches. The data suggest that micro-textile businesses tend to neglect detailed strategic analysis, instead focusing on intuitive and experiential decision-making processes.

5.6.10 Managerial influence on business

Managerial adaptability and marketing perceptions influence entrepreneurs' price settings, ability to attract customers, knowledge and understanding of business, and use of technology. Figure 5.21 displays the variation between variables influencing manager strategy.

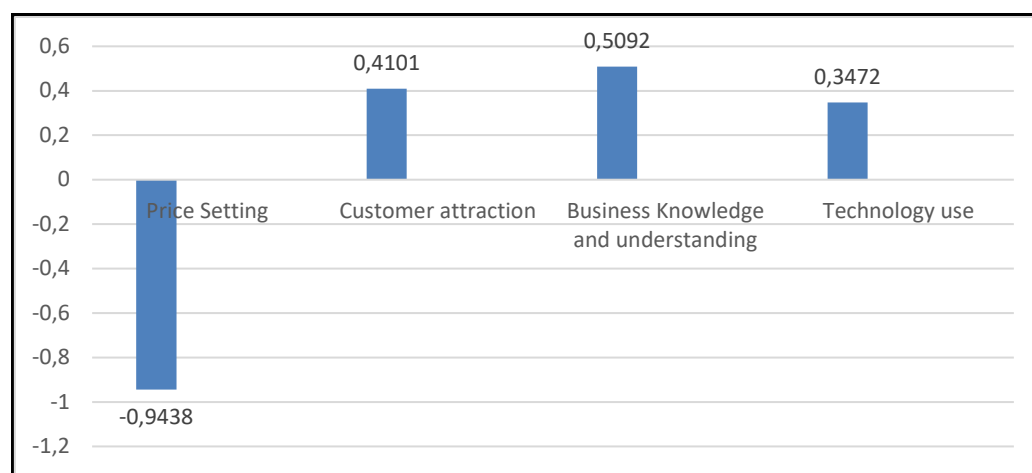


Figure 5.21: Managerial influence on Market insight

Source: Own Construct

The negative price-setting loading coefficient of (-0.9438) suggests that pricing flexibility may be limited in the business environment. In contrast, the customer attraction coefficient of (0.4101), as shown in Figure 5.21, indicates a moderate ability to attract and retain customers. This finding is supported in Table 5.28, section 5.6.15.2, which reveals that 32% of managers can attract and retain customers. Furthermore, Figure 5.21 also indicates that 34.7% of respondents utilise technology to accelerate business processes. This table asserts Trebicka et al. (2023;09) assertions that a wrong pricing strategy destabilises micro enterprises' ability to attract and retain customers, as this is a price-sensitive market.

5.6.10.1 Owner management presence

In light of the preceding discussion, a critical examination of the subsequent statistical description is warranted to discern whether the entrepreneurial activities under review are driven by opportunity-seeking entrepreneurship or necessity-driven entrepreneurship. Statistics in Table 5.20 give an indication that only 32% of businesses can survive without owners' direct day-to-day involvement. An alternative way of looking at this is that 68% of businesses cannot survive without owners' direct day-to-day involvement. These percentages display how integral owner management presence is for the effective day-to-day running of a micro-business.

Table 5.20: Frequency table on survival without owners' presence

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage
Valid	122	31.8	32
	259	67.4	68
	381	99.2	100
Totals	384	100	

Source: Own construct

According to a proposed business growth model, Table 5.20 shows that 68%, or 259 micro-textile businesses, can survive without the owner's presence, while 32%, or 122 micro-textile businesses, require the owner's presence for survival.

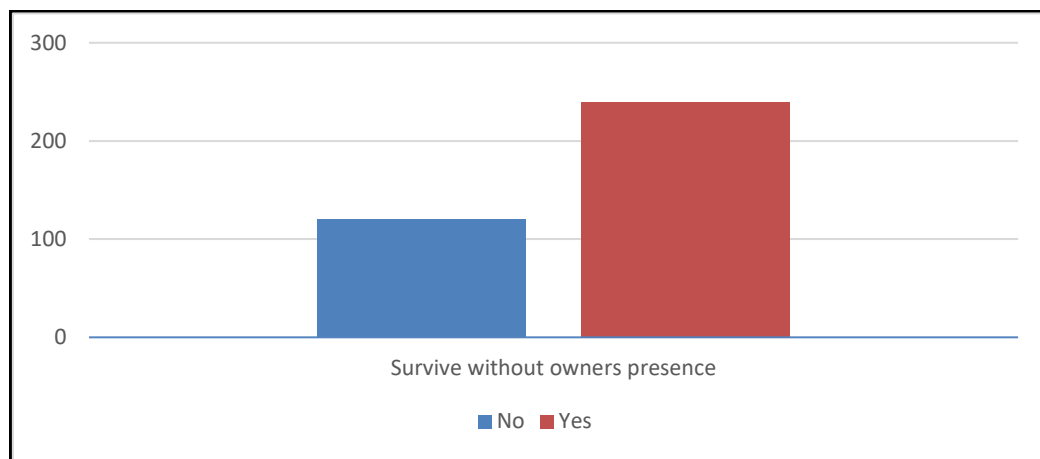


Figure 5.22 : Survival without owners' presence

Source: Own construct

A comparison is illustrated in Figure 5.22 where two variables were presented to the 384 respondents. The results display similar illustrations for both questions in Appendix A. Question 1.2 asks whether an “organisation (employees operating without a business owner) can survive without your presence as the business owner” and Question 1.3 asks whether an “organisation (employees operating without a business owner) can retain and attract new customers without the intervention of the business owner”.

Results presented in Table 5.21 below show an average of 1.6798 organisations not being able to survive without the owner's presence and a similar average of businesses not being able to retain and attract new customers without the intervention of the owner. This is 68% of businesses that cannot survive or retain and attract customers without the presence of the owner. The standard deviation (SD) is 0.46717 due to fairly uniform responses. The negative skewness for the items shows that the mode and the median are higher than the mean. The disparity between the mode and the mean is an indication that the sampled data for each item are not normally distributed.

The kurtosis statistic is (negative) -1.409 for both items, displaying a platykurtic distribution. A negative kurtosis indicates the distribution has a flattened peak. This signifies evidence of sample data not being normally distributed. Akinso (2018:78) and Ranyane (2015) suggest that survivalist entrepreneurs require considerable time before their businesses can operate independently of their direct influence. This delay is attributed to the entrepreneurs' leadership qualities, a lack of capacity or initiative to train employees in executing the strategic plan effectively. As a result, the business remains heavily reliant on the entrepreneur, hindering its ability to develop autonomous operational strength.

Table 5.21: Descriptive table on survival without owners' presence

Statistics			
		Survive without owners' presence	Retain and attract new customers without intervention of owner
Valid		381	381
Missing		3	3
Mean		1.6798	1.6798
Median		2.0000	2.0000
Mode		2.00	2.00
Std. Deviation		0.46717	0.46717
Skewness		-0.774	-0.774
Std. Error of Skewness		0.125	0.125
Kurtosis		-1.409	-1.409
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.249	.249
Minimum		1.00	1.00
Maximum		2.00	2.00
Percentiles	25	1.0000	1.0000
	50	2.0000	2.0000
	75	2.0000	2.0000
	100	2.0000	2.0000

Source: Own construct

Figure 5.23 below provides a clear illustration of the complexities presented in Table 5.21 by delineating the various stages of business growth based on the unique combination of size, diversity, and complexity. This framework is characterised by a set of key multifaceted management factors: firstly, management style, which accounts for the leadership approach and decision-making dynamics; secondly, the organisational culture, which is the shared values, beliefs, and norms that shape the company's behaviour; thirdly, the extent of formal systems, which entails the level of structure, processes, and protocols in place; fourthly, major strategic goals, which entail the company's primary objectives and priorities; and lastly, the owners' involvement, relating to the level of engagement and influence the owner has on the business. These factors provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the evolution of small businesses as they progress through different stages of growth. It is characterised by an index of size, diversity, and complexity and is described by five management factors: managerial style, organisational structure, extent of formal systems, major strategic goals, and the owners' involvement in the business.

Table 5.21 displays a negative skew distribution of -0.774, indicating that the majority of the data points are clustered on the right side of the graph, while the left tail is longer. This means that the values are concentrated on the right side of the distribution, with a fewer number of extreme values on the left side. A negative skew, also known as a left-skewed distribution, indicates the mean is shifted to the left of the median, meaning that the average value is lower than the middle value. This is consistent with actual results, which verify the theory: mean 1.6798 < median 2.0000 < mode 2.00 (Tyagi, 2018). This draws attention to the need for clearly defined strategic goals that will guide the organisation toward developing resource-based capabilities, enabling it to operate independently and sustain long-term growth.

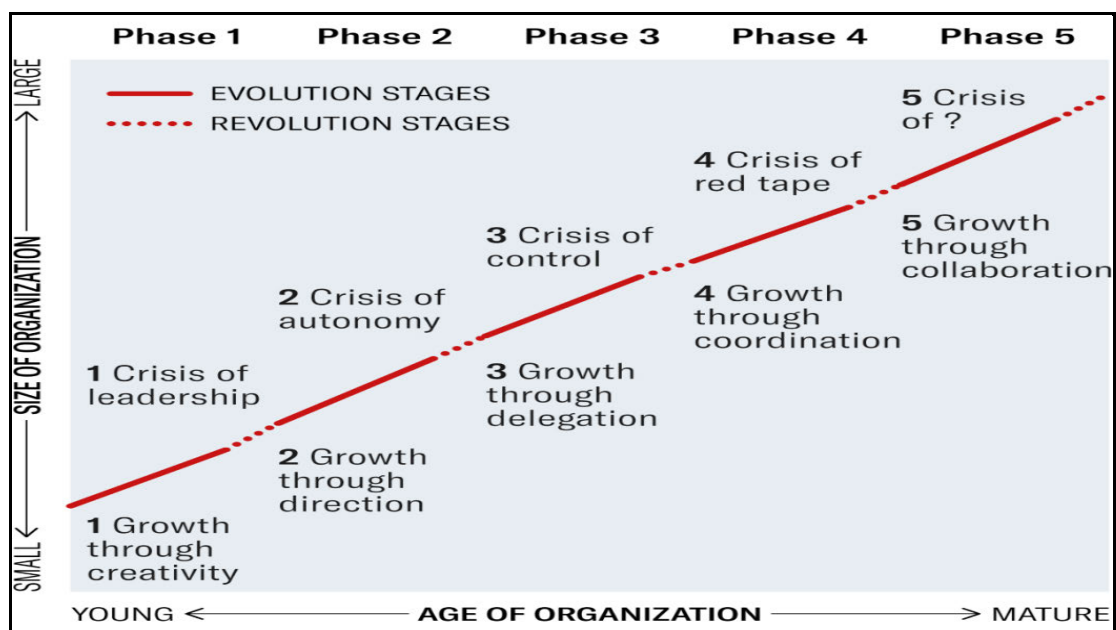


Figure 5.23: Growth Phases

Source: Churchill Lewis (1983)

Figure 5.23 states that micro-textiles operating in the “small-sized organisations and young-aged businesses” category fall under the crisis leadership category, where growth requires creativity. As indicated in Figure 5.24 section 5.6.11, stage 1 is portrayed as the existence stage. The preferred or prescribed management style required at this stage is direct supervision. As the study shows, the existence of formal systems is none or close to non-existent. The major form of strategy enforced is “strive for survival or existence”. The research affirms Figure 5.24’s idiosyncratic view, revealing that in micro-businesses, the owner is the centre of attraction (Dawson and Henley, 2012:699).

5.6.10.2 Ability To Attract and Retain Customers

Figure 5.23 confirms Dawson and Henley’s (2012:697) argument that 68% of micro-textiles cannot survive without the presence of business owners. It is from this idiosyncratic view that a statistical frequency table 5.22 projects 68% of micro-textiles are unable to retain or attract customers without the presence of the business owner. Buthelezi (2023) assertions are verified by Ithala Bank after noticing an increased failure to survive beyond the initial critical five-year probation of micro-businesses in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The affirmation of a need for owner management

presence, as indicated in Figure 5.24 above, displays how vital this component is for survival.

Only 122 respondents (n=122), or a total of 32%, confirmed the ability to attract or retain customers. On the contrary, (n=259), 68% have conceded failure to attract or retain customers. This shows the importance of management in micro-business survival.

Table 5.22: Frequency table on retaining and attracting new customers

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	
Valid	122	31.8	32	
	259	67.4	68	
	381	99.2	100	
Totals	384	100		

Source: Own construct

5.6.11 Establishing managerial strategy for micro-business

Despite the growing popularity of textiles, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding the implementation challenges faced by micro-textile firms, incubated firms across various industrial sectors. Figure 5.24 below illustrates the general management functions and their intended execution, highlighting the supervisory and entrepreneurial characteristics of small and developing organisations. The diagram demonstrates how the size of an institution influences the level of managerial involvement in overseeing daily operations, ensuring that organisational objectives are met through routine objectives. Furthermore, it depicts how organisational growth progresses from mere existence and survival to stability and expansion.

The study primarily focuses on so-called “existence” businesses, which rely heavily on direct supervision by the owner to function effectively. Figure 5.24 aptly illustrates the operational realities faced by micro-textile enterprises. According to the data, one of the most significant challenges these businesses encounter is the prolonged transition from Stage 1 (Existence) to Stage 2 (Survival). This delay is largely attributed to

limitations in leadership and resource capacity, which are further compounded by social factors such as educational background, personality traits, and deficiencies in business management skills.

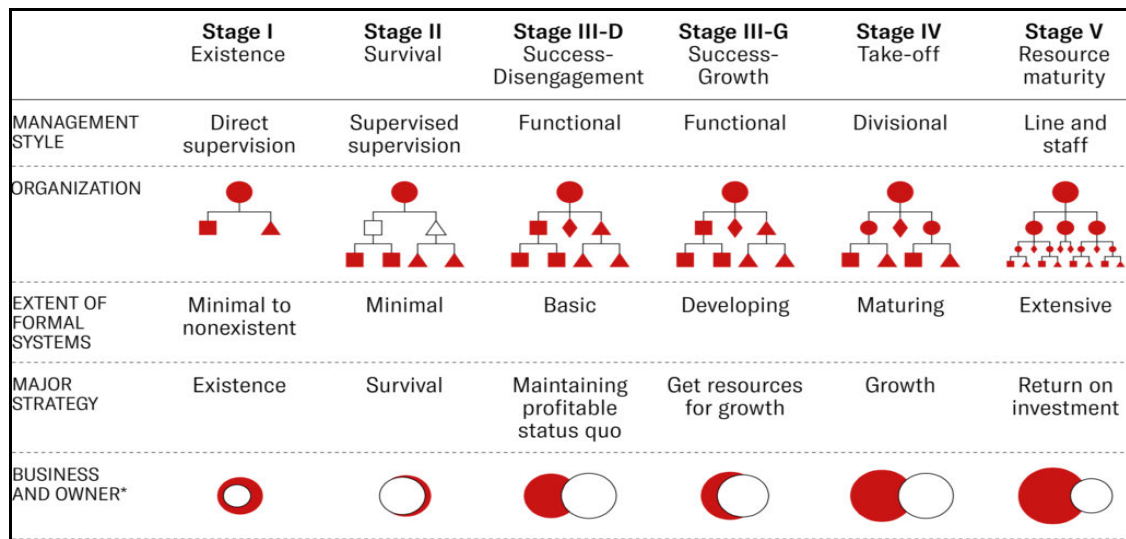


Figure 5.24: Small business at each stage of development

Source: Churchill and Lewis (1983)

Figure 5.25 displays the response to the question on “*organisation following any prescribed policies or laws*” A considerable 75% of micro-textiles within in the Durban precinct have procedures and policies in place. It should be mentioned that in as much as the clarity or wellness of definition in mission and distinction was not dealt with, a bare minimum of existence of policies was established (Organisation for economic co-operation and development, 2014). The research avoided a histogram opting instead for a bar chart for easy interpretation and analysis. A histogram defined by Zikmund and Babin (2016:320) is a graphical way of showing the frequency distribution in which the height of a bar corresponds to the frequency of a category.

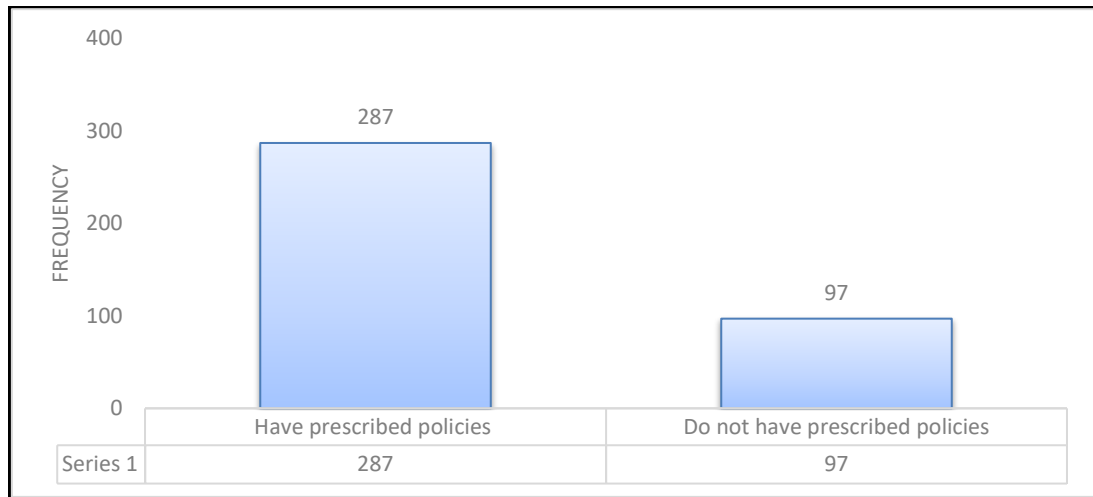


Figure 5.25: Prescribed policies

Source: Own construct

5.6.12 Organisational plan of action in being competitive in the market

An administrator's function is to plan, organise, lead, and control resources within the organisation (Boma-Siaminabo, 2022). In Table 5.23, a priority of importance was outlined in reviewing the plan of action for the organisation to function effectively. To describe the priority of importance by managerial styles of small business managers, the following responses were presented: (n=108; 28%) of respondents found it necessary that their business plan of action should be reviewed once a year. There was a slight 1% difference between those who are of the view that reviews should be done once every three months (n=48; 13%) and those who advocated for once every four months (n=51; 14%). An interesting observation is that there is almost equality between those advocating for once every six months and those advocating for once a year, both at (n=111; 29%). The last priority segment with interesting results of (n=54; 14%) was those of the view that the organisation never does reviews. In summary, the five groups in Table 5.23 are divided into three, namely those who review plans once a year or once every six months; those who are of the view it should be every three or four months; and lastly, those who are not in favour of reviews at all.

According to Kabeyi (2019), strategic management is inherently resource-intensive, demanding substantial investment in market research, planning, and operational infrastructure; yet it does not always guarantee success. For micro-businesses, these requirements exceed their financial and operational capacity. As a result, they find themselves caught in a whirlwind of challenges, lacking the means for adequate

budgeting, recruitment, training, and motivation of qualified personnel. This limitation further hinders their ability to adopt a holistic approach to strategy formulation and implementation, which ideally involves inclusive participation from all members of the organisation.

Table 5.23: Frequency table: Reviewing plan of action for organisation

	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent
It should be done once a year	108	28.1	29.0
It should be done once in three months	48	12.5	12.9
It should be done once in four months	51	13.3	13.7
It should be done once in six months	111	28.9	29.8
It is never done	54	14.1	14.5
Missing	12	3.1	
Total	372	96.9	100.0

Source: Own construct

5.6.13 Use of generic strategies by micro-textiles enterprises for survival

In response to the question, the *'order of importance in allocating competition time and frequency of management'* Table 5.24 displays the following results. Micro-textiles firms perceive small businesses as their biggest competitors at (n=155; 42%), likely due to targeting the same customer base. Informal organisations are the second-largest competitors at (n=118; 32%), with a slight distinction between small businesses and informal businesses being their registration with organisations such as the Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) or the South African Revenue Service (SARS). An interesting observation is the significant drop in order of importance in medium and large organisations to (n=45; 12%) and (n=36; 10%), respectively. A further observation is the lack of a specific generic strategy used by micro-textiles. Churchill and Lewis (1983:83) and Oliveira et al. (2015:02) articulate micro-business stages as a survival mode.

Table 5.24: Frequency table: Order of importance in competition

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Large organisations	36	9.4	9.7
Medium organisations	45	11.7	12.1
Small organisations	155	40.4	41.7
Informal organisations	118	30.7	31.7
No competition	18	4.7	4.8
Missing	12	3.1	
Total	372	96.9	100.0

Source: Own construct

5.6.14 Conceptualising, planning and implementing of a managerial strategy

It is important for micro-businesses to be constantly looking for opportunities that will assist them gain a competitive edge and remain relevant in the long term. The implementation of correct competitive strategic behaviour can assist procurement from suppliers, assisting cutting costs and providing services at an acceptable rate for short-term objective (Indeed Editorial Team, 2023). This highlights the importance of understanding a company's strengths and resources to develop a competitive strategy, either by defending its position or building a strong market presence to outmanoeuvre competitors.

5.6.14.1 Strategy formulation to downstream or upstream

As part of business strategy formulation, resource capability plays a pivotal role in shaping strategic conceptualisation for micro-businesses (Heubel, 2022). To achieve a sustainable competitive edge, these enterprises must engage in deliberate strategic activities aligned with their goals. Developing a competitive advantage is especially critical for micro businesses and informal business, where strategic direction from the entrepreneur can determine survival and growth. Notably, one key factor that micro-businesses underestimate is pricing despite its significant influence on market positioning and long-term viability.

In contrast to the production concept, which emphasises producing large volumes of affordable products, a viable market entry strategy for micro-businesses is to position themselves at the high end of the market through premium pricing. This approach is popular amongst micro textile entrepreneurs, as articulated by Akoh (2020:397-398) in proving effectiveness when customers perceive the product or service as offering superior value. The product concept prioritises quality, performance, and innovative features, focusing on creating novel, improved, or enhanced products that surpass existing ones. By concentrating on delivering the best possible quality products, businesses can differentiate themselves and establish a competitive edge (Chan, 2017).

This approach emphasises innovation, creativity, and excellence, aiming to develop products that stand out in the market, offering unique benefits and meeting evolving customer needs. By embracing the product concept, businesses can differentiate themselves, drive growth, and establish a reputation for innovation and quality (Chan, 2017). The cost of shelf space for a manufacturer is determined by the retailer's opportunity cost, which is the profit they could earn from selling a different product in the same space. This means that manufacturers can strategically influence the costs of their rivals by offering higher upfront payments to secure shelf space, effectively raising their competitors' costs and gaining a competitive advantage.

Table 5.25 below displays respondents' responses and views on organisations' strategies they view to be similar, hence competing against. Almost (n=72; 19%) are of the view that the cost leadership strategy operated by the likes of PEP is the biggest competitor threat for their business. The niche market is viewed by (n=97; 26%) respondents to be a competitor, as it has a similar organisational strategy to theirs.

Table 5.25: Frequency table: Organisational strategy similarity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
I do not know (Blank)	18	4.7	4.8
PEP Low cost	72	19.4	19
Woolworths – working towards being different.	88	22.9	23.3
Niche market selling only at high prices	97	25.3	25.7
We have our own pricing strategy (setting prices depends on the time spend producing and quality)	103	26.8	27.2
Missing	6	1.6	
Total	372	96.9	100.0

Source: Own construct

5.6.14.2 Strategy Implementation

According to Table 5.25 and Figure 5.26 (n=103; 27%), of micro-textiles respondents formulated their own operational pricing strategy and implemented it according to quality and time spent on the product. The strategy is based on price and time spent (duration) on the garment or the quality of the garment produced.

In response to *"organisations' strategy viewed to be similar - hence competing against"*, the revelation shows a significant one-third of managers in the sampled population coming up with plans to be different and make organisational goals a reality. Figure 5.26 displays a left-skewed (negatively skewed) distribution. This shows a high proportion of respondents reported employing a niche market strategy and differentiation strategy as their own approach, compared to other strategic typologies.



Figure 5.26: Strategy similarity

Source: Own construct

5.6.14.3 The effectiveness of managerial strategies set

According to Tan (2015) and Tan (2016), organisational performance is determined by a firm's conduct through the structural conduct performance paradigm. Tan (2016) argues that factors such as the number of competitors in an industry, the heterogeneity of products, and the cost of entry and exit are critical units of analysis for measuring the effectiveness of firm performance.

According to responses on “*the effectiveness of strategies against competition*,” Table 5.26 displays that close to 35% of the sampled population considers lowering shipping, transportation, and storage costs, indicating this to be the most important strategy to beat the competition. The least regarded strategy by sampled respondents is working on e-business and e-marketing, sitting at (n=18; 4.8%) in this industry.

Table 5.26: Frequency table: Order of effectiveness of set strategies

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strategic plan, actions, and goals are not priority	52	13.5	13.8	13.8
The most important strategy is to lower shipping costs and storage costs	134	34.9	35.4	49.2
The most important strategy is to get opportunities within the textile industry	113	29.4	29.9	79.1
The most important strategy is to work on e-business and the e-marketing (online presence)	18	4.7	4.8	83.9
The most important strategy is to grow the business	61	15.9	16.1	100
Total	378	98.4	100,0	
Missing System	6	1.6		
Total	384	100,0		

Source: Own construct

It also indicates that n=52 respondents (13.8%) do not consider strategic plans, actions, and goals to be a priority. This group would consider prioritising other phenomena, like the strategy to grow the business, which displayed a (n=61; 16.1%) response. An interesting category is the (n=113; 29.9%) respondents required work on getting more opportunities within the textiles industry. Competitive advantage is an important issue that deserves special attention. This range of options and constraints displayed in this industry is defined by the attributes that confine this industry.

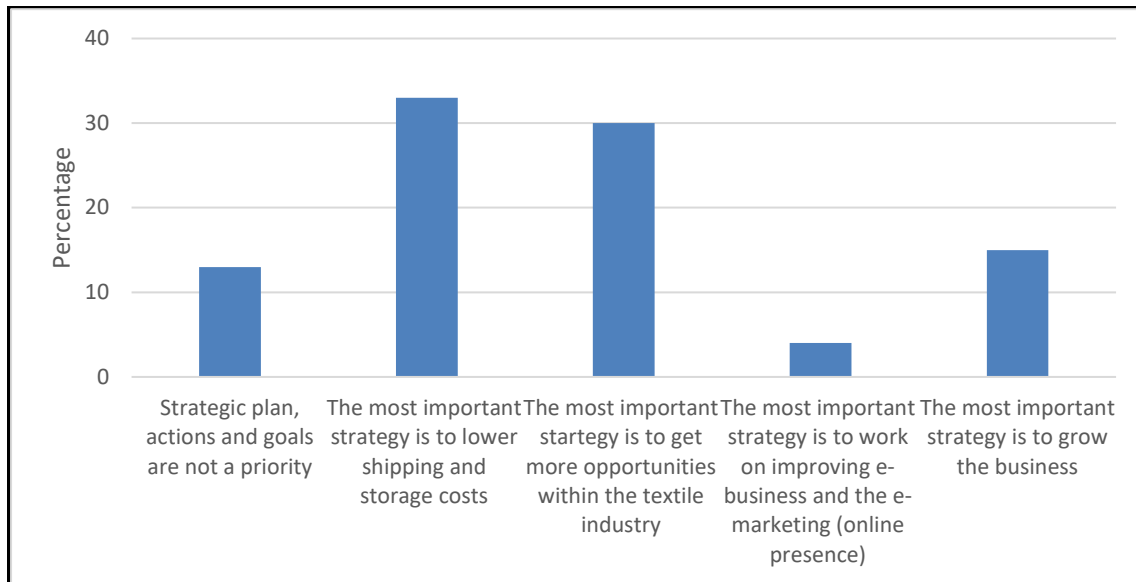


Figure 5.27: Effectiveness of organisations in setting strategies

Source: Own construct

5.6.15 Technology as a tool used by micro-businesses

An observed scenario from the study alludes to those micro-businesses in the Durban precinct in a less developed country that has not enjoyed heavy investment in research and development. They display a minimal training in engineering and research and development. Their technological matters reveal that the micro-textile sector has a weakness that impedes it from competing with rival retail corporates and internationalise. In general, because of this fragmentation in the Durban precinct, the textile production chain has found itself to be operating in a low competitive environment. They seek lower costs by importing finished textile materials, machinery, and equipment, notably from Asian countries.

The presented observation indicates that micro-textiles are highly disadvantaged in relation to products manufactured by foreign retail competitors, from Asia – China, Indonesia Vietnam and AESCON countries (Yaozhong, 2017:168).

The unsophisticated and slow-paced changes in technology are part of the regressive innovative development capabilities that do not allow micro-textiles to internationalise successfully. In a requisition *“for micro-textiles entrepreneurs to prioritise catalysts strategy development in order of importance”*, a display of results in Table 5.27 prioritised strategies according to order of importance. Managers’ regard of

importance in latest use of technology to speed up production is recorded at (n=29; 7.7%). This figure is a few notches higher than the (n=28; 7.4%) regard for managers to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment. The highest allocation is the (n=157; 41.8%) regard by respondents for the organisation to produce quality products. An argument raised by Vlok (2014) is on the lack of investment in skills development thus affecting garment quality.

The study identified that the technological weakness featured in the patterns of competition made it feasible to produce less even though more was generated with a high degree of personalisation in the digital textile revolution for multinationals.

Table 5.27: Developmental strategies

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
For the organisation to price correctly	45	11,7	12,0	12,0
For the organisation to produce quality products	157	40,9	41,8	53,7
For the manager to have good personality trait and ability to attract customers	117	30,5	31,1	84,8
For the manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment	28	7,3	7,4	92,3
For manager to use latest technology that speeds up production	29	7,6	7,7	100,0
Total	376	97,9	100,0	
Missing	System	8		
Total	384	100,0		

Source: Own construct

5.6.15.1 Technological Inefficiencies

An argument by Zhong et al. (2022:4) asserts that technologies play a critical role in the development and implementation of organisational strategy. Businesses that provide superior service through technologically skilled employees gain competitive advantage. However, weak technological advancement due to lack of facilities results in weak competitiveness (Zhong et al., 2022:4).

5.6.15.2 Strategy Development

In a statement addressing “*organisational development of strategies for businesses*” responses tabled in Figure 5.29 – “Development strategies” indicates that (n=45; 12%) of participants prefer for the organisation to price correctly. An investigation by Curran et al. (1997) revealed how micro-entrepreneurs' technological incapability mostly employs a narrow-outdated profit maximisation notion of 'rationality'. This revealed how micro-textiles prioritised short-term financial gains over long-term sustainable investments such as employee development and failing to adapt tools to changing market conditions. This was observed and discussed in section 5.6.9 when dealing with the question on “*organisational priorities on plans of action for their organisation*”. Priority on investment into new technology to speed production and lower cost was seen to be at least 7.6%. From the priorities, Figure 5.29 presents these two important items “*For the manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment*” and “*For a manager to use the latest technology that speeds up production*” contributing the least on order of importance to micro-textile businesses. A (n=28; 7.4%) and (n=29; 7.7%) respective responses prioritised the two constructs as important for their business.

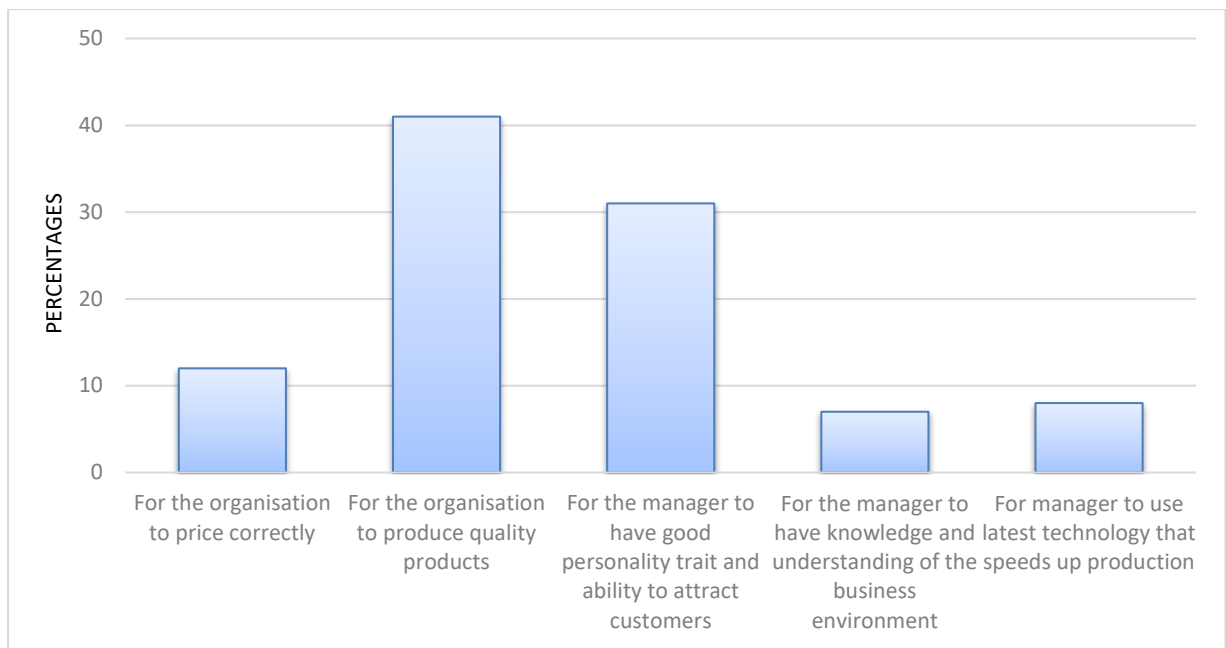


Figure 5.28: Development strategies

Source: Own construct

On frequency Table 5.28, the following priorities were articulated by respondents in setting development strategies for their micro-textile businesses in the Durban precinct. Interestingly, $n=45$, or 12% of respondents, identified correct pricing of goods sold by the organisation as a priority. This highlights the significance of pricing strategy as a key ingredient for this sector's transition to profitability and competitive advantage. The production of quality products was prioritised by $n=157$, namely 41.8% of respondents. The micro-textile industry regards a strong, credible reputation as a unique competitor differentiator that is highly sought after. The ability of a manager to have good personality traits and attract customers is a highly regarded value, with $n=117$, or 31.1% of respondents prioritising it for competitive advantage in their businesses. For the manager to have a good knowledge and understanding of the business environment, $n=28$, or 7.4% of the respondents, believed this to be a priority required for their businesses to achieve market leadership in the industry. Lastly, the use of the latest technology to speed up production was prioritised by $n=29$, or 7.7% of the industry. Technology has huge potential to speed production and enable entrepreneurs to design spectacular clothing at affordable prices. It is attitude and education on technological manufacturing in the 4IR that the industry needs to learn for a change to be affected.

The study identified that the technological weakness featured in the patterns of competition made it feasible to produce less, even though more was generated with a high degree of personalisation in the digital textile revolution for multinationals.

Table 5.28: Frequency table: Development strategies

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
For the organisation to price correctly	45	11,7	12,0	12,0
For the organisation to produce quality products	157	40,9	41,8	53,7
For the manager to have good personality trait and ability to attract customers	117	30,5	31,1	84,8
For the manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment	28	7,3	7,4	92,3
For manager to use latest technology that speeds up production	29	7,6	7,7	100,0
Total	376	97,9	100,0	
Missing	System	8		
Total	384	100,0		

Source: Own construct

5.6.15.3 The effectiveness of the set strategy

A variety of typologies describe how firms compete in specific businesses or industries to achieve competitive advantage. Techniques that produce the best results in attaining competitive advantage for small businesses require an effective use of people and technology. Batista et al. (2016:225) and Bressler (2015:1-2) are of the view that forging strategic partnerships and developing working paradigms between personnel and technology are proven initiatives that bring success for small business ventures in strategic decision-making. According to Lipovich (2020), a sustainable competitive advantage is achieved when a specific business provides a long-lasting, distinctive edge that is difficult for competitors to replicate. An effective technological innovation forms a sustainable competitive advantage that helps cement industry leadership (Kennedy, 2021:230). In its form, effective technological innovation aims at reducing costs and increasing efficiency (Chen and Hsiang, 2007:576).

According to Figure 5.29, improving e-business and e-marketing specifically (online presence) is the least prioritised strategy, with less than 5% of respondents considering it most important. This low prioritisation can be attributed to respondents' limited technological inclination or skills, as well as a general lack of awareness regarding the benefits of e-business and e-marketing. The respondents who viewed that *“strategic plans, actions and goals are not a priority”* and *“The most important strategy is to grow the business”* are almost equivalent at 14% and 16% respectively. To a large degree, these responses are a result of a lack of business education by micro-business entrepreneurs. The respective responses of 14% and 16% affirm that the challenges of inexperience in the field of business, lack of technical knowledge, poor managerial skills and lack of planning skills are the result of growth and closure within the first five years of operation of businesses.

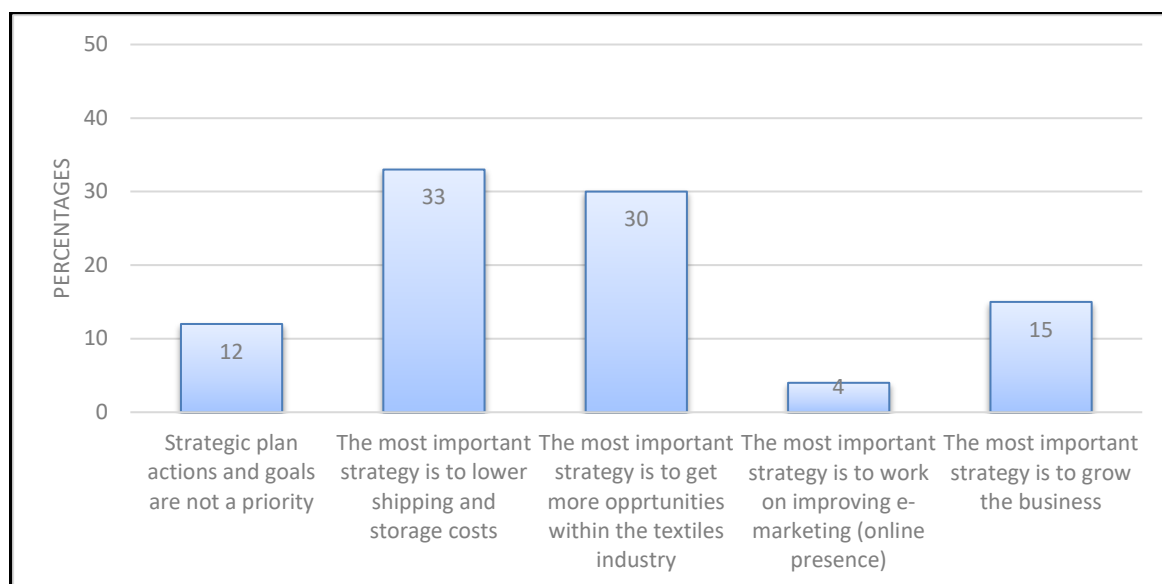


Figure 5.29: Effectiveness of organisation's set of strategies

Source: Own construct

5.6.15.4 Personality trait strategy influence in micro-businesses

The data presented reveal the mean for Development strategies at 2.57, while the mean for Effectiveness of strategies stands at 2.7407. This was achieved using frequency tables and figures presented in Table 5.29. Measures of central tendency and dispersion provide a concise summary of the frequency distribution of data, offering understanding into the central location and spread of the data. These measures comprise two primary categories: Measures of central tendency, which include mean, median and mode, represent the average value of the data, providing a single value that typifies the entire dataset. The measure of dispersion, which includes range, variance and standard deviation, quantifies the spread or variability of data, providing a sense of how the individual data points deviate from the central tendency (Zikmund and Babin, 2016:239). Measures of dispersion comprise range, variance and standard deviation, which describe how data is spread out around the centre value (Zikmund and Babin, 2016:240). These statistics are essential in research to analyse variables, understand data variability and make informed decisions. They help in calculating measures so that researchers can summarise large data sets, identify patterns and trends, evaluate data consistency, make comparisons across different groups and inform decision-making processes.

Table 5.29: Frequency table: Effectiveness of organisations' set of strategies

Statistics			
		Development strategies	Effectiveness of organisations' set of strategies (plans, actions and goals)
N	Valid	376	378
	Missing	8	6
Mean		2.57	2.7407
Std. Error of Mean		0.054	0.06372
Median		2.00	3.0000
Std. Deviation		1.048	1.23884
Skewness		0.703	0.579
Std. Error of Skewness		0.126	0.125
Kurtosis		0.163	-0.561
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0.251	0.250
Minimum		1	1.00
Maximum		5	5.00
Percentiles	25	2.00	2.0000
	50	2.00	3.0000
	75	3.00	3.0000

Source: Own construct

5.7 DATA VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Data validity refers to the extent to which the data accurately measures the intended construct or concept (Collingridge, 2017). Ensuring that data content adequately reflects the construct being measured is essential for establishing the reliability and validity of measurement. As explained by Middleton (2019) high content validity indicates that the measurement accurately captures the construct under study, providing confidence in the results. In other words, validity ensures that the data

measures what it is supposed to measure, making it a crucial aspect of research methodology.

Furthermore, data harvested must be tested for reliability. A consistency measure is used to produce similar results under the same condition (Frost, 2017). Cronbach's alpha is purported to be an excellent statistical tool that is used to benchmark at an acceptable 0.7 minimal measurement. This is an acceptable measurement used between variables to make sure that they are producing the same or similar outcomes each time (Questionmark, 2022). It should be noted that Cronbach's alpha is a measure of reliability but not validity. It indicates consistency (reliability) between constructs (Frost, 2017). but it cannot determine whether the items measure the correct concept (validity).

5.8 COST LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

The research study is aimed at understanding the competitive strategies pursued by micro-textiles based on Porter's generic competitive strategies of cost leadership, differentiation and focus strategy. As discussed earlier and affirmed by Gray (2019) cost leadership is concerned with achieving the lowest production and operational costs in the industry. In this study, these variables were measured using constructs measuring *Competitive Edge Strategy* (EDGECOMP), *Importance of Competition* (IMPRCOMP) and strategies for *Customer Retention* (RETCUS). Firms focus on strategies that enable cost cutting or cost efficiency, either at production or cost recuperation at the market level (for example, compensating for high costs say in producing high-quality products which are compensated by high market value for products). Thomas (2022) is of the view that optimising energy usage, and embracing digital transformation are some of the efficient production and cost-saving innovations or offering products that can use to lower prices than the competition (Thomas, 2022). Table 5.30 presents a summary of the cost leadership and textile pricing strategies. This section presents the various cost leadership strategies employed by firms, structured according to their defining characteristics and the strength of their contribution to explaining underlying variations. The strategies are analysed based on key attributes, highlighting their focus areas and effectiveness.

Table 5.30: Measuring cost leadership

Indicator	Gain or customer retention strategy	Resources for technology differentiation	High-priced textile strategy	Pricing stabilisation strategy	Outgrowing competition strategy	Customer loyalty strategy	Medium-priced textile strategy	Cost competitiveness
Produce-priced cheap textiles			-0.9045			0.768		
Produce medium-priced affordable textiles		0.3421					0.9370	
Produce expensive high-priced textiles			0.7389			0.3770		
Resources enable technological differentiation		-0.7521					-0.3209	
Focus on brand loyalty to retain and attract customers	0.3030	0.4478	0.3149	-0.3676		-0.3326		
No competition	-0.7006							-0.4834
Attracting external financial investment	-0.6285					0.8661		
Price or cost competitiveness			0.7244					0.9673
Ability to gain and retain customers	0.7989				0.4566			
Ability to meet customer demands and requirements	0.6530						-0.3493	
Growing business revenue		-0.4253		-0.4399	-0.7157			
Pricing strategy aimed at organisational stabilization				0.9323				
Outgrow the competition					0.8642			
Retain customer loyalty and satisfaction						0.8999		
Retain and adopt marketing concept		0.7070				-0.3433		

Source: Own construct

The data analysis reveals distinct relationships between textile pricing categories and their corresponding strategies. In the case of low-cost textiles, the strong negative loading of (-0.9045) reflects a significant inverse relationship with cost leadership, indicating that this strategy is closely associated with cost-efficient practices. The first strategy *customer retention* and expansion centres on fostering brand loyalty, attracting and retaining customers, and understanding interfirm competition. A notable negative loading (-0.7006) on competition awareness suggests that while firms acknowledge the presence of market competition, they may face challenges in navigating it effectively. This strategy is further defined by the need for financial investment and the capability to acquire and maintain a customer base, as evidenced by a strong positive loading (0.7989). This implies that firms adopting this approach prioritise customer growth through financial commitment and strategic market positioning. These findings align with Islami et al., (2019:121-122) views that companies need to adopt rigorous knowledge and understanding of customer needs, expectations and demands to retain loyalty and drive growth.

Leonard (2025) argues that implementing a cost leadership strategy is challenging due to the financial leverage required to compete efficiently. It demands the delivery of high-quality products at minimal cost, which is reflected in the positive coefficient (0.7389) associated with producing expensive, high-priced textiles at low cost. Consequently, the inverse relationship (-0.9045) between high-priced strategy and the production of low-cost textiles highlights the strategic tension micro-businesses face when attempting to reconcile premium product positioning with cost efficiency.

A prominent strategic approach to resources for technology differentiation focuses on reducing operational costs through targeted technological investments. This strategy encompasses elements such as technological differentiation (-0.7521), brand loyalty, customer acquisition, revenue growth (-0.4425), and marketing adoption (0.7070). The negative loading for technological differentiation suggests that many firms lack sufficient technological infrastructure and are not actively leveraging technology to drive revenue growth. This challenge is further exacerbated by limited marketing expertise, as entrepreneurs view technological adoption and training as financially burdensome (Indeed, 2021). Ironically, as Kanike (2023) points out, investing in

technology enhances organisational technical capabilities, enabling increased production efficiency and reduced manufacturing costs.

Conversely, the high-priced textile strategy represents a business model aimed at mitigating competitive pressures by focusing on the production of premium textiles rather than low-cost alternatives. The pronounced negative loading for low-priced textiles (-0.9045) indicates that these firms deliberately avoid cost-cutting production strategies. Instead, they seek to maintain market competitiveness through innovation and operational efficiency, thereby sustaining premium pricing structures. The price stabilisation strategy is characterised by brand loyalty (-0.3676), revenue growth (-0.4399), and a pricing strategy focused on organisational stability (0.9323). The firms following this approach aim to regulate product pricing to maintain business operations. However, the negative loadings indicate that revenue growth and brand loyalty are not central to this strategy, thus exacerbating growth longevity during the early stages of development.

Another distinct approach is the outgrowing competition strategy, which is defined by business revenue growth (-0.7157) and efforts to outperform competitors (0.8642). The strong negative loading on revenue growth indicates that firms prioritising competitive advancement may not emphasise immediate revenue expansion. The customer loyalty strategy focuses on producing high-priced textiles, fostering brand loyalty, and ensuring customer satisfaction (0.8999). Retaining customer loyalty is the dominant feature, with less emphasis on premium pricing and brand recognition. This suggests a strategy driven by customer relationships rather than pricing strategies. The medium-priced textile strategy is built around producing moderately priced textiles, investing in technology, and meeting customer demands. Firms adopting this strategy prioritise affordability while ensuring product availability, though they place less emphasis on technological differentiation.

The cost competitiveness strategy is characterised by efforts to minimise overall expenses through enhanced efficiencies in production, supply chain management, and operational processes. This enables firms to offer lower prices than their competitors, thereby attracting price-sensitive customers while sustaining profitability. Although some businesses seek to improve cost efficiency through external financial support, the negative loading (-0.6285) on financial investment indicates that such

funding is not a decisive factor in driving the strategy. Rather, the focus remains on internal cost control and pricing strategies as the primary levers for revenue generation.

The analysis further on Table 5.30 reveals the dynamics of pricing strategies. Medium-priced textiles show strong positive associations (0.9370) with affordability-focused strategies, while high-priced textiles exhibit moderate positive loadings (0.7389 and 0.3770), suggesting a tendency towards premium pricing, albeit with a weaker emphasis. The findings also highlight a strong negative loading (-0.7521) for technological differentiation, indicating that cost-leadership strategies may conflict with differentiation approaches that rely on advanced technologies.

Customer retention and loyalty emerge as significant priorities, with a high loading (0.8999) reflecting the strong emphasis on maintaining and attracting customers. The ability to gain and retain customers is also a priority (0.7989), reinforcing the customer-centric nature of micro-textile firms. However, a lack of focus on branding results in only moderate associations between brand loyalty and cost leadership (0.3030 to 0.4478), indicating partial overlap.

Competitive pricing is a key factor in organisational stability, with a high loading (0.7989). Additionally, the study highlights barriers to growth, as seen in the negative loadings (-0.4253 to -0.7157) associated with growth and revenue strategies. These findings suggest that micro-textile firms struggle to align cost-leadership strategies with sustainable growth. However, their ability to retain customers remains a strong feature (0.7989), influenced by communal business practices and principles such as ubuntu.

Price stabilisation strategies show strong relevance (0.9323), reinforcing their importance in maintaining business stability. Since factor analysis involves aggregating indicators weighted by their respective loadings, composite index values were calculated. The distribution of these values is visually represented in Figure 5.31, illustrating the strategic variations among firms and their adoption of cost leadership approaches.

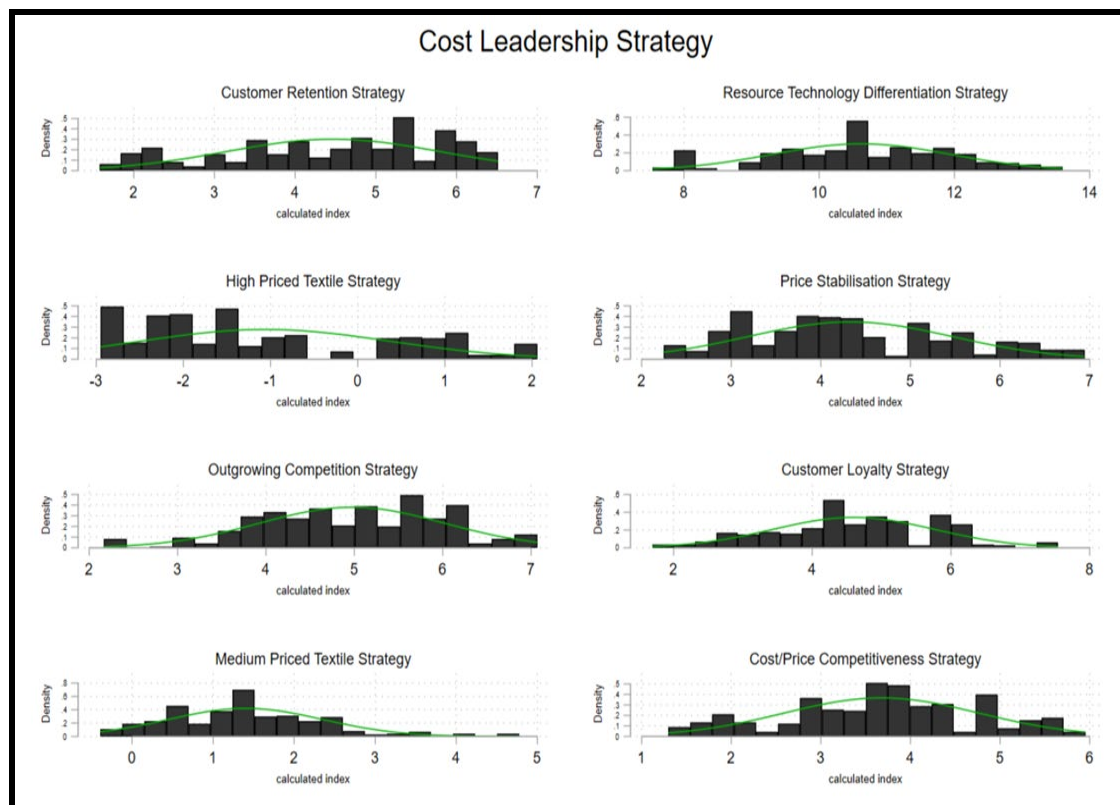


Figure 5.30: Distribution of index values of cost leadership strategies

Source: Own construct

Most of the values as shown in the Figure 5.30 above show that the index values are most likely positive, and the value distributions are skewed both negatively and positively. This indicates that firms were more likely to score low or score quite high on the index scales. The negatively skewed distribution of the values of *Customer Retention Strategy* shows that most firms scored higher on this strategy, indicating popularity of the strategy among micro-textiles. The positively skewed distribution of the value of the distribution of *High-Priced Textile Strategy* showed that most firms in the sample did not pursue this strategy shown by concentration of the firms on the negative end of the index. While the distribution is negatively skewed, the strategy of *Medium-Priced Textiles Strategy* shows values concentrated at the lower end of the scale, with firms scoring low values on the index.

5.2.3 Analysis of variance: Cost leadership strategies.

The analysis presented in Table 5.30 below evaluates whether the mean differences in the composite indices, calculated for the various cost leadership strategies, are influenced by specific characteristics. A comprehensive assessment of the results

indicates that the presence or absence of active policies among SMES does not appear to be a significant differentiator in the selection of cost leadership strategies. This is evidenced by the substantial p-values, which indicate that the differences in the calculated means are not statistically significant. Policies do not seem to influence whether SMEs adopt one strategy over another. Nevertheless, there is a slight indication of a relationship regarding the Customer Loyalty Strategy ($p = 0.0591$). In a similar vein, whether plans are documented or intuitive does not appear to be a significant determinant of the cost leadership strategies employed by the firms. The Customer Loyalty Strategy ($p = 0.0541$) demonstrates a near-significant difference, implying that the status of planning may exert some influence on this strategy. Other strategies reveal no significant differences ($p > 0.05$). Conversely, registration status and business revenue represent strong determinants of strategic choices. With respect to business registration status, it can be discerned that the selection of strategies such as "resource technology differentiation strategy," "high priced textile strategy," "price stabilisation strategy," "customer loyalty strategy," "medium priced textile strategy," and "cost competitiveness strategy" is considerably influenced by business registration status. The differences in the calculated average values for the subgroups of registration status are statistically significant, suggesting that registration status affects the adoption of these strategies. Regarding business revenue, the subgroups exhibit highly significant differences across all strategies ($p < 0.05$ for all). This suggests that revenue levels influence strategic decisions, for the High-Priced Textiles Strategy ($p = 0.0001$) and the Cost/Price Competitiveness Strategy ($p = 0.0000$). Therefore, the revenue and registration characteristics of firms are strong predictors of strategic choices. In contrast, policies and plan status demonstrate limited influence, with only marginal significance for a few strategies. Strategies such as Cost/Price Competitiveness and high-priced textiles are sensitive to variations in firm characteristics.

Table 5.31: Analysis of variance and cost leadership strategies

Firm Level Characteristic	Levels	Customer retention strategy	Resource technology differentiation strategy	High-priced textiles strategy	Price stabilisation strategy	Outgrowing competition strategy	Customer Loyalty Strategy	Medium Priced Textile Strategy	Cost/Price Competitiveness Strategy
Policies	Yes/No	4.472	10.621	-1.061	4.327	4.974	4.599	1.400	3.677
		0.04	0.77	3.08	0.27	0.00	3.59	0.00	0.27
		(0.8396)	(0.3807)	(0.0800)	(0.6042)	(0.9713)	(0.0591)	(0.9598)	(0.6005)
PlanStatus	Document ed/ Intuitive	4.472	10.621	-1.061	4.327	4.974	4.599	1.400	3.677
		0.31	1.37	0.78	0.00	3.46	3.73	2.01	0.01
		(0.5756)	(0.2424)	(0.3780)	(0.9606)	(0.0638)	(0.0541)	(0.1571)	(0.9137)
Registration	Registered / Registered with assistance/ Registered with no assistance	4.562	10.612	-1.078	4.261	4.936	4.586	1.379	3.634
		2.30	9.72	7.22	5.43	1.87	4.62	9.19	15.15
		(0.1023)	(0.0001)	(0.0009)	(0.0048)	(0.1559)	(0.0105)	(0.0001)	(0.0000)

Table 5.31: Analysis of variance and cost leadership strategies

Business Revenue	< R100k PA								
	<R150k PA	4.472	10.621	-1.061	4.327	4.974	4.599	1.400	3.677
	<R200k PA	3.95	4.42	6.22	2.99	4.62	3.13	3.84	9.24
	<R250k PA	(0.0038)	(0.0017)	(0.0001)	(0.0189)	(0.0012)	(0.0149)	(0.0045)	(0.0000)
	>R250k PA								

5.9 FOCUS STRATEGY

Porter's conceptualisation of generic competitive strategies posits that the focus strategy entails a deliberate concentration on a distinct, narrow market segment, intending to satisfy its unique needs more effectively than competitors who pursue a broader market scope. The key aspects of the focus strategy are niche targeting, differentiation or cost leadership directed toward cost focus and differentiation focus. A focus strategy is based on a business's internal capabilities to create a unique aspect of the market that may have advantages specific to the business context. In measuring the focus strategy, key variables at the firm level included the firm's Developmental Strategies (DevStar), the Firm's Strategies (STRAT), Plan of Actions (POACTN), Periodic Review of Plans (PLNRVW), and Importance of Strategic Planning (STRGYIMP). An analysis of the indicators composing these latent variables revealed 12 unique sets of focus strategies, which are summarised in Table 5.32 below.

Table 5.32: Focus strategies

Strategy	Indicators	Loadings
Beating competition	Pricing correctly	0.3472
	Setting laws and regulations	-0.8961
	Overcoming industry-level competition	0.7312
	Attaining and keeping up with new technologies	0.4848
	Quarter business plan reviews	-0.3712
	Bi-annual business plan review	0.3414
Short term business plan cycles	Producing quality products	-0.8082
	Focusing on manager's role in customer retention	0.4152
	Quarterly business plan review	0.6152
	Bi-annual business plan review	-0.5277
Business Expansion strategy	Prioritising business strategies	-0.8912
	Growing or expanding the business	0.7555
	Monitoring and keeping up with competitor's strategies	0.3373

Market Follower Strategy	Strategy focused on lower shipping and storage costs	0.3704
	Yearly business planning cycles and review	-0.5942
	Strategic planning contingent on the manager's intuition	-0.5039
	Patterning strategy based on competitor's strategies (copying)	-0.3512
	Following strategic direction set by market leaders – no loading?	0.8233
Focus on business environment trends	Pricing correctly	-0.7944
	Manager's understanding of business environment	0.7719
	Strategy focused on lower shipping and storage costs	-0.4237
Strategic planning and design	Attaining and keeping up with new technologies	-0.3345
	Strategy contingent on manager's intuition	-0.4491
	Patterning plans after competitor's strategies	-0.3762
	Following strategic direction set by market leaders	0.9178
Improving manager's influence	Improving manager's influence	-0.8626
	Monitoring and keeping up with competitor's strategies	0.6468
	Attaining and keeping up with new technologies	0.4181
	Year's review of business plans and strategies No loading?	-0.3298
Latest production technologies	Focusing on the manager's role in customer retention	0.6236
	Manager to employ the latest technology in production	-0.8712
	Focusing strategy on lower shipping and storage costs No loading?	-0.3800
Strategic brainstorming with colleagues	Based on the manager's intuition	-0.4737
	Regular brainstorming with colleagues on strategies	0.9008
Medium term customer retention plans	Focusing on manager's role in customer retention	0.3243
	Annual cycle review of business plans	-0.3076

	Quarterly business plan review	-0.3104
	Bi-annual review of business plans	-0.3109
	Long-term planning with infrequent review	0.9455
eBusiness strategy	Increased opportunities within the textile industry	-0.7591
	Working on improving the e-business strategy	0.8206
Long term competition strategy	Overcome industry level competition	0.3049
	Business review once in four months	0.8292
	Bi-annual business plan and strategy review	-0.4199
	Patterning after competitor strategies or plans	-0.3956

Source: Own construct

The *Beating Competition Strategy* is mostly driven by the indicator “overcoming industry level competition”. However, the micro-textiles pursuing this strategy do not focus on pursuing to attain market/industry level dominance owing to firm size. Their strategy is horizontal competition achieved through technological strategies. Efficient planning is shown by the moderate effective size of the factor loading on short-term review of business plans (*Bi-annual Business Plan Review*—0.3414). This further becomes indicative of high levels of competition among the micro-textiles with their constant need of strategies planning and technological innovation. Their strategy emphasises competitive positioning, especially by overcoming industry challenges and leveraging technology, but de-emphasises regulatory involvement, evidently owing to business capacity and size.

Short-term Business Plan Cycle strategy is defined by a focus on manager’s role in Customer Retention and *Short-term Business Planning Cycles*. The large negative loading on *Producing Quality Products* (-0.8082) is indicative of products that are not *High-Quality Textiles* but probably *Low-Level Quality Textiles*, which could be common, hence the need for manager’s efficiency and role in *Customer Retention*. This strategy is more operational and reactive, focusing on frequent reviews and immediate customer retention, less so on product quality.

The *Business Expansion Strategy* is premised on the long-term growth of the business while keeping up and monitoring competitor’s strategies. The negative loading of *Prioritisation of Business Strategies* (-0.8912) suggests that this focus strategy is not about prioritisation but *Action Oriented*

Growth. This strategy indicates focus on scaling the business and staying competitive with a less hierarchical approach to strategy prioritisation.

Market Follower Strategy follows the dominant premise of *Competitive Strategies* such as the Stackelberg, in which smaller Tier III micro-textiles plan and develop their strategies based on the strategic actions of the industry-dominant Tier I micro-textiles (Conitzer, 2016). The large loading on “*follow strategic direction set by market leaders*” (0.8233) strongly demonstrates the Stackelberg model. The negative loading on “*yearly business planning cycles*” of -0.5942, suggests that this strategy does not seem to emphasise long-term structured reviews. This is a reactive approach where businesses adapt to trends and mimic market leaders.

Focus on *Business Environmental Trends* is a competitive focus strategy that relies on a manager’s personality trait and ability to scan the macro environment. The large loading on “*manager’s understanding of business environment*” (0.7719) shows the centrality of the manager’s skills in this strategy. The negative loading on *Pricing Correctly* (-0.7944) indicates that pricing might be less flexible when focusing on environmental trends. Success in this strategy depends on the manager’s personality traits and external awareness, even if pricing strategies are constrained.

Strategic Planning and Design is a strategy used by micro-textiles to follow a strategic direction set by the market leaders as indicated by the effect of large-size loadings associated with this strategy (0.9178). The negative moderate effect sizes on the other indicators “*attaining and keeping up with new technologies*”, “*strategy contingent on manager’s intuition*” and “*patterning plans after competitor’s strategies*”, show that the firms pursuing these strategies have limited agency in a somewhat strongly dominated industry. The strategy heavily leans on *emulation and adaptive planning* based on market dynamics. Improving the manager’s influence is central, though negatively loaded. This suggests this strategy may have complex managerial dynamics, focused on enhancing manager’s leadership and technological influence.

Latest production technologies depend on the manager to *Employ the Latest Technology in Production*” (-0.8712) and is a highly important characteristic. The negative loading suggests that technology was exogenously determined by managers deciding whether to pursue technologies based on firm-level resource capabilities. This strategy centres around innovation and leveraging new technologies for efficiency.

5.9.1 Focus strategies and firm-level characteristics

The description in section 5.8 shows that strategies vary between proactive, such as business expansion strategies, and reactive, such as market follower strategies. Technology and managerial influence appear pivotal in many of these strategies. In Figure 5.32 below, the predicted values of the endogenous competitive strategies are presented and discussed in Table 5.32 above. These univariate distributions are designed to show the relative scoring for each given participant and the potential scores expected to indicate the performance of the firms on each index summarising competitive strategy.

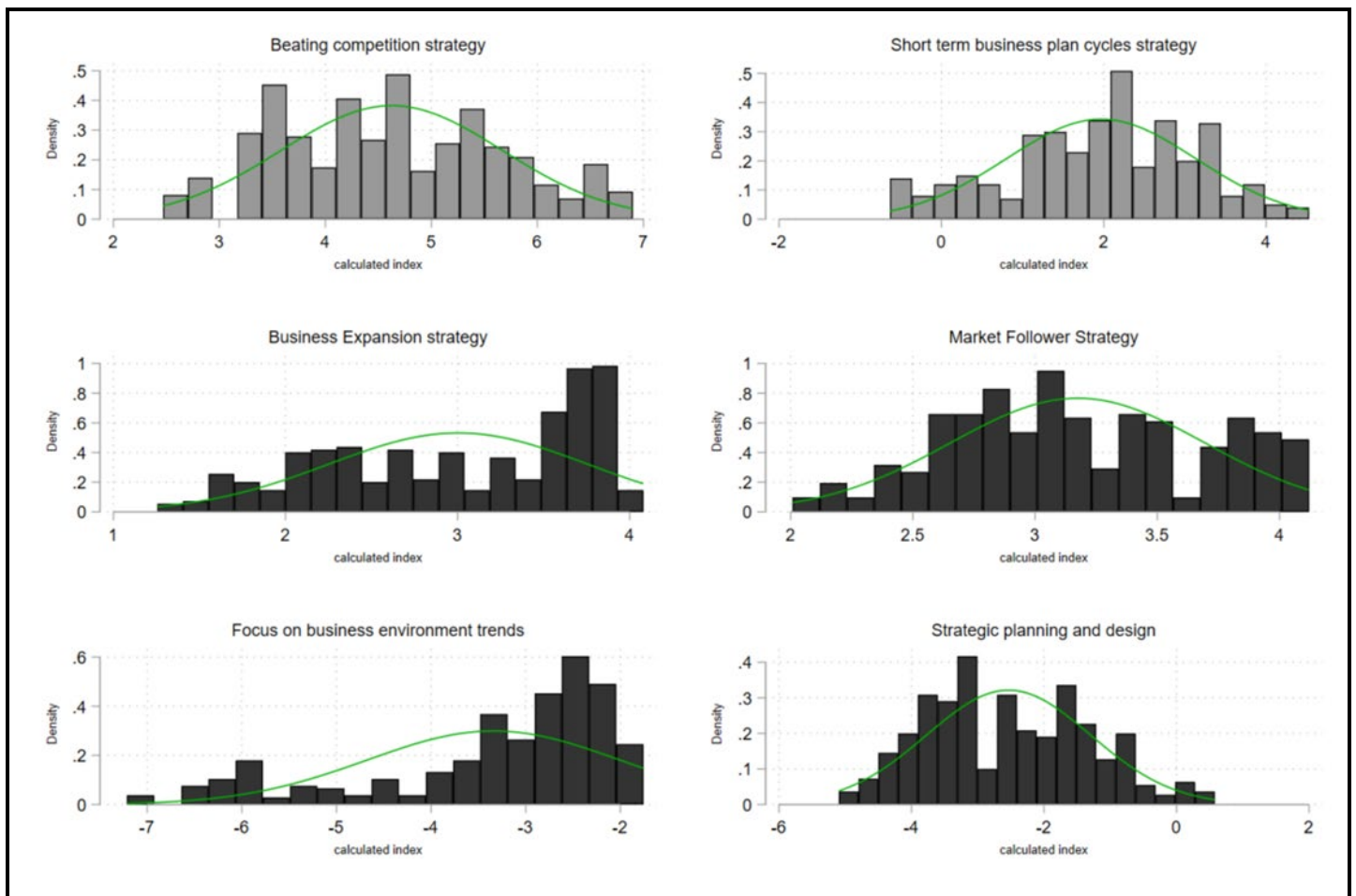


Figure 5.31: Graphic summaries of focus strategies

Source: Own construct

The “beating competition strategy” histogram (top left) in Figure 5.31 shows that the scores are normally distributed, with participants most likely scoring around the average values of the composite index. A similar trend can also be observed for scores on the “short-term business cycles strategy,” which has values coalescing around the average values. The business expansion and focus on business environment strategies both show polarisation, with the distribution of the scores being

negatively skewed. Most participants have very low scores, while a few firms do seem to have larger scores on these strategic directions. The differences in these scores are expected to be explained by firm-level characteristics such as resources, skills, and the like, which determine the range of business strategies possible for the businesses.

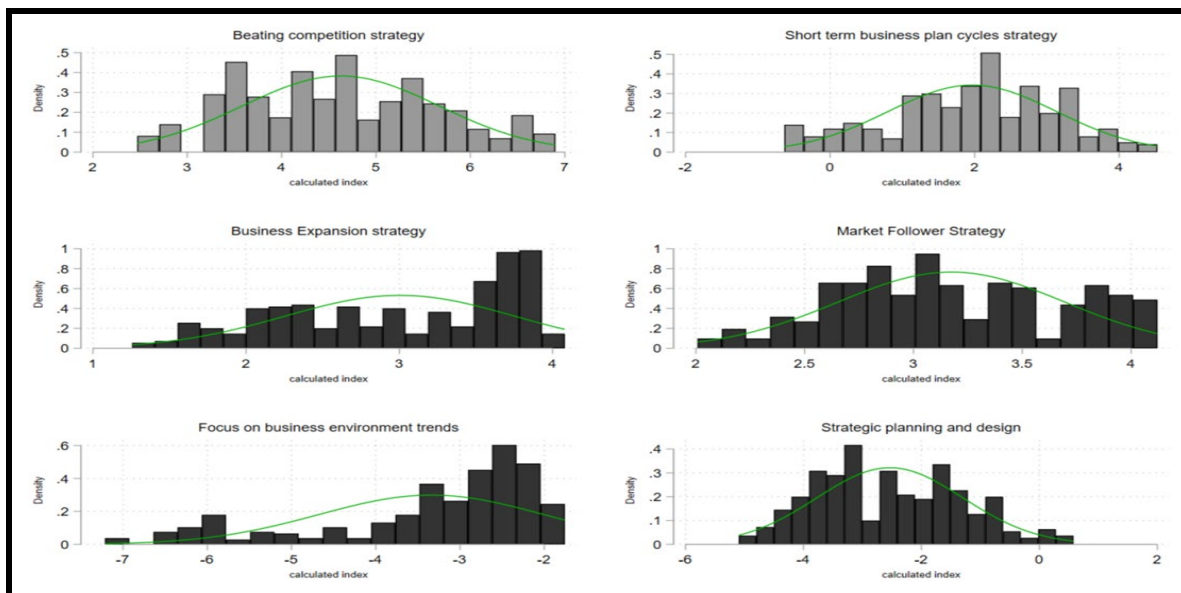


Figure 5.32: Graphic summaries of focus strategies

Source: Own construct

These graphs, presented in Figure 5.33 below, the same as the graphs in Figure 5.32 above, are a univariate summary of the distribution of scores of the participants on the endogenous computations representing various business strategies. It was observed that strategies that are less resource-intensive have normally distributed scores, implying homogeneous responses across micro-businesses. Where resources such as financial resources are required, the differences begin to appear; for instance, concerning eBusiness strategy, where the majority of the firms have scores close to zero, while a few firms have slightly larger index scores.

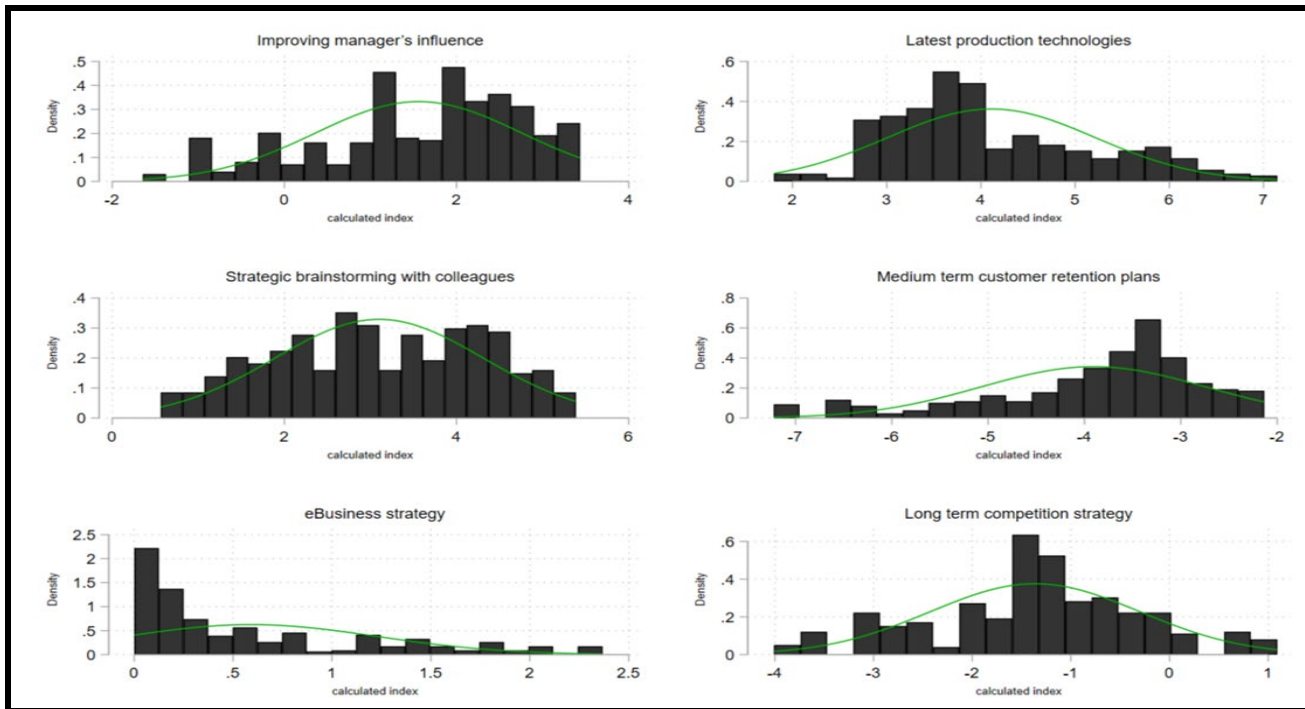


Figure 5.33: Graphic summaries of various strategies Source: Own construct

These scores calculated for each firm on each of the indices were compared based on subgroups of firm-level characteristics, such as whether the firm had policies (yes/no), whether the business plans were documented or intuitive, the nature of the business registration, and the business's annual self-reported revenue category.

Using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the mean average difference in the mean scores for each subgroup was calculated (the mean for the grouping variables, taking the average of the subgroups), along with the ANOVA F statistic and the associated p-value in parentheses. The implementation of ANOVA was based on the objective of empirically tracing whether the differences in the scores were influenced by business-level characteristics. In this case, four grouping characteristics were considered, with the results being presented in Table 5.33 below.

Table 5.33: Focus strategies over firm-level characteristics

Firm Level Characteristic	Levels	Beat Competition	Short-term business plan cycles	Business expansion strategy	Market Follower Strategy	Focus on business environment trends	Strategic planning and design
Policies	Yes/No	4.626	1.967	-4.673	-4.951	-3.340	-2.535
		0.07	0.14	0.14	5.45	0.77	1.59
		(0.7970)	(0.7117)	(0.7107)	(0.0201)	(0.3800)	(0.2087)
PlanStatus	Documents/Intuitive	4.626	1.967	-4.672	-4.951	-3.340	-2.535
		1.09	3.72	1.96	1.93	3.24	0.62
		(0.2979)	(0.0545)	(0.1621)	(0.1661)	(0.0727)	(0.4309)
Registration	Registered/Registered with assistance/ Registered with no assistance	4.651	1.948	-4.734	-4.912	-3.353	-2.512
		2.20	16.65	12.02	0.98	8.15	1.92
		(0.1122)	(0.0000)	(0.0000)	(0.3775)	(0.0003)	(0.1489)
Business Revenue	< R100k PA	4.626	1.967	-4.672	-4.951	-3.340	-2.534
	<R150k PA	1.44	2.81	4.52	1.64	2.12	0.94
	<R200k PA	(0.2217)	(0.0254)	(0.0014)	(0.1643)	(0.0779)	(0.4395)
	<R250k PA						
	>R250k PA						

Source: Own construct

The analysis of policies shows mixed results across the businesses. There are statistically significant differences in the performance of firms on the strategies “Beat competition”, “short-term business cycles”, “business expansion strategies”, “focus on the business environment”, “strategic planning and design”, “improving managers’ influence”, “latest production technologies”, “medium-term customer retention strategies”, “e-Business strategy” and “long-term competition strategy”. The presence of large p-values in the association analysis unequivocally stresses the notion that strategic options available to firms are shaped by the dynamic nature of the industry. This empirical evidence necessitates a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of strategy formulation wherein firms are compelled to adopt a responsive and adaptive approach to navigate the complexities of the industry landscape. Policies, however, shape firm behaviour in the use of the market follower strategy (with p-value 0.0201) and strategic brainstorming with colleagues (p-value 0.0147). An analysis of the changes in scores revealed that for every one-unit change in the "Market Follower Strategy" index, firms without business policies were likely to experience a 38% decline in performance compared to the subgroup with business policies. In a similar subgroup analysis of changes in firm-level performance on the “brainstorming with colleagues strategy”, the index falls by 35.6% to a point for firms without business policies. The results of this marginal analysis are shown in Table 5.34 below.

Table 5.34: Marginal analysis							
Firm Level Characteristic	Levels	Improving manager's influence	Latest production technologies	Strategic brainstorming with colleagues	Medium-term customer retention plans	eBusiness strategy	Long-term competition strategy
Policies	Yes/No	1.560	4.111	3.101	-3.907	-0.420	-1.363
		(1.199)	(1.101)	(1.213)	(1.164)	(1.069)	(1.062)
		0.06	0.15	6.01	1.60	0.83	0.78
		(0.8118)	(0.7000)	(0.0147)	(0.2066)	(0.3622)	(0.3773)
PlanStatus	Documented/Intuitive	1.560	4.111	3.101	-3.907	-0.420	-1.363
		1.56	0.22	0.47	0.31	0.00	0.28
		(0.2120)	(0.6387)	(0.4939)	(0.5800)	(0.9576)	(0.5975)
Registration	Registered/	1.562	4.086	3.135	-3.788	-0.452	-1.379
	Registered with assistance/	2.43	1.43	1.59	0.42	5.19	6.62
	Registered with no assistance	(0.0897)	(0.2396)	(0.2059)	(0.6591)	(0.006	(0.0015)
Business Revenue	< R100k PA	1.560	4.111	3.101	-3.907	-0.420	-1.363
	<R150k PA						
	<R200k PA	2.44	3.08	13.00	3.46	11.52	1.97
	<R250k PA >R250k PA	(0.0466)	(0.0163)	(0.0000)	(0.0085)	(0.0000)	(0.0983)
Source: Own construct							

A rigorous comparative analysis of the strategic differences between firms with documented versus intuitive plans yields an unequivocal finding: there are no statistically significant disparities between the two groups. This empirical evidence unequivocally challenges the conventional wisdom that formalised planning approaches are critical determinants of strategic variation among businesses. Instead, the study suggests that the informal and non-structured nature of management practices in these firms is the dominant factor, rendering the documentation of plans inconsequential. Managers in this context rely heavily on their intuition and experiences to guide decision-making, regardless of whether plans are formally articulated or not. This finding has profound implications for our understanding of strategic planning in informal and non-structured business environments and points out the need for further research to elucidate the complex interplay between formal and informal planning approaches.

Registration status is an important predictor of business strategy, with a review of the p-values associated with various strategies over the registration status of the business demonstrating statistically significant differences in the average scores. Registration status had three categories: businesses that were registered, registered with external assistance in business management, and registered with no external business assistance. There were statistically significant differences in the use of the strategies, “short-term business plan cycles”, “business expansion strategy”, “focus on the business environment”, “e-Business strategy”, and “long-term competition strategy”. A unit change in the given scores for a business on the “short-term business plan cycles” is associated with a 27% increase in the index for firms registered with assistance when compared to firms without assistance. Focusing on just registered firms versus firms registered with no assistance, each unit change of the index results in a 30% increase in index scores for firms registered with no assistance. This indicates that firms registered with assistance were likely to utilise short business cycle strategies when compared to firms registered with no assistance.

Concerning the “Business expansion strategy”, each unit increase in the index is associated with a 93% decline in average index scores for firms registered with assistance, implying firms registered with assistance were less likely to pursue a strategy based on business expansion. Regarding the “focus on business environmental trends” as a business-level strategy, firms registered with assistance see a 17% decline in the firm scores on this index. This may imply that firms registered with assistance were likely to be under contractual agreements with fewer requirements for business expansion or environmental scanning. The analysis showed that registration status had some influence on certain strategic directions, with registration with external assistance limiting the utilisation of some strategies such as expansion or competitive focus, which may imply firms operating under contractual arrangements.

Finally, focusing on the influence of business revenue on the choice of business strategy, “short-term business cycles”, “business expansion strategy”, “latest production strategy”, and “eBusiness strategy” among others are shaped by the availability of business revenue. Focusing on revenue and business expansion strategy, an analysis of marginal changes in index of business expansion strategy showed that businesses in the revenue category between R200,000 and R250,000 per annum were 10% more likely to pursue a business expansion strategy when compared to firm below this revenue bracket. Firms with annual revenue categories above R250,000 were expected to have higher index scores by 6.5% when compared to firms with revenue brackets below R250,000. This implies that business revenue category influences or shapes adoption of specific business-level strategies.

5.10 DIFFERENTIATION STRATEGY

Differentiation strategies were measured in the data using three indicators measuring actions directed at Customer Targeting (CUSTAR), Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP), and Resource Based Strategy (RESSTRA). The combination of these indicators was utilised to define specific strategies through the application of correlational analysis, as presented in Table 5.34. The scores are calculated as linear combinations of the indicators, with each indicator weighted by its corresponding factor loading. This approach enables the derivation of a composite score that captures the underlying patterns and relationships among the indicators, thereby facilitating the identification of distinct strategies. The factor loadings serve as a means of quantifying the relative importance of each indicator in contributing to the overall score, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the strategic constructs being measured. The composition of the strategies is discussed in Table 5.35 below.

Table 5.35: Emerging differential strategies

Strategy	Indicators	Loadings
Small enterprise focus with mixed strategies	No customer strategies	0.5671
	Differentiation through product quality	0.6649
	Differentiation through own pricing strategy	-0.8686
	Small enterprises or organisations	0.3325
Managerial adaptability and market insight	Setting prices of textiles	-0.9438
	Manager’s role in attracting customers	0.4101
	Knowledge and understanding of business environment	0.5092
	Using technology to speed up production	0.3472

Competitive pressure handling	Competition from large organisations	0.8985
	Ability to meet customer demands and requirements	-0.7242
Cost leadership in small enterprises	Differentiation through cost leadership	0.8812
	Small enterprises or organisations	0.3013
	Manager's role in attracting customers	0.3402
	Using technology to speed up production	-0.4880
Quality differentiation in informal sectors	Differentiation through quality	0.3080
	Small enterprises or organisations	-0.4973
	Informal organisations or micro-enterprises	0.8695
	No competition	-0.3006
	Manager's role in attracting customers	0.4017
Stabilisation through knowledge and technology	Pricing strategy aimed at organisation stabilisation	-0.8968
	Knowledge and understanding of business environment	0.5868
	Using technology to speed up production	0.4810
Niche market excellence	No competition	-0.5509
	Niche markets high-price, high quality	0.8649
	Small enterprises or organisations	0.5229
Medium-scale competition dynamics	Competition from medium-sized organisations	0.9242
	No competition	-0.3194
	Using technology to speed up production	0.3060

Source: Own construct

Table 5.35 presents various strategic approaches adopted by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), highlighting how they navigate competitive environments, differentiate their offerings, and manage market challenges. One such strategy is a small enterprise focus with mixed strategies, characterised by a lack of customer strategies, differentiation through product quality, differentiation through pricing strategy, and a focus on small enterprises or organisations. The negative loading on the pricing differentiation factor suggests that SMEs in this sector lack the ability to set prices independently. Instead, these enterprises primarily focus on product quality and pricing differentiation, despite not having formalised customer retention strategies. The negative pricing indicator further implies challenges in maintaining consistent pricing strategies.

Another prominent approach is managerial adaptability and market insight differentiation, which involves setting textile prices, the manager's role in attracting customers, knowledge of the business

environment, and the use of technology to enhance production efficiency. The negative loading on the price-setting indicator confirms that SMEs lack pricing control in the market. However, this strategy highlights the significance of managerial competencies in understanding the business landscape, attracting customers, and leveraging technology for operational efficiency.

Competitive pressures also influence strategic decisions, leading to the adoption of a competitive pressure-handling strategy. This approach is defined by competition from large organisations and the ability to meet customer demands. The strong loading on competition suggests that SMEs primarily target residual markets where large enterprises have limited influence. The negative loading on customer demand fulfilment may indicate capacity constraints, making it difficult for SMEs to meet market requirements effectively. This strategy emphasises how SMEs attempt to navigate competition, struggling to balance customer expectations and resource limitations.

Another key approach is cost leadership in small enterprises, which encompasses cost leadership differentiation, a focus on small enterprises, the manager's role in customer attraction, and the use of technology to improve production efficiency. The dominant indicator in this strategy is cost leadership, suggesting that some SMEs attempt to minimise costs as a competitive advantage. However, findings indicate that SMEs may not prioritise cost leadership extensively, possibly due to market constraints or limited pricing power.

In contrast, some SMEs adopt quality differentiation in informal sectors, which is measured by differentiation through quality, a focus on small enterprises, informal organisations or micro-enterprises, limited competition, and the manager's role in attracting customers. This strategy emphasises quality as the primary differentiating factor in informal markets. Given the relatively low competition in these sectors, SMEs focus on improving product quality rather than competing on price.

Another approach, stabilisation through knowledge and technology, is based on pricing strategy for organisational stabilisation, knowledge of the business environment, and the use of technology to enhance production. While pricing strategies can support business stabilisation, the strong negative loading suggests that most SMEs do not rely on this approach. According to economic theory, this may stem from a lack of market power. Instead, the strategy highlights the importance of knowledge and technology in stabilising business operations.

In addition, some SMEs follow a niche market excellence strategy, which revolves around the absence of competition, targeting niche markets with high-quality and high-priced products, and focusing on small enterprises or organisations. This approach allows SMEs to concentrate on

specialised markets where premium offerings can thrive in less competitive environments. However, the findings suggest that while some SMEs succeed in niche markets, this strategy is not widely adopted across the sector.

The distribution of values for the computed strategy index scores presented by Figure 5.35 provides further understanding into the extent to which SMEs adopt these strategies. The small enterprise focus with mixed strategies appears slightly right-skewed, with a peak around 7, indicating that many SMEs adopt a combination of strategies, focusing on differentiation and product quality. Similarly, the managerial adaptability and market insight differentiation strategy exhibits a symmetrical distribution peaking at 7, suggesting that SMEs generally possess a moderate level of adaptability and market awareness. Meanwhile, the competitive pressure-handling strategy has a right-skewed distribution with a peak at 6, reflecting moderate levels of competitive pressure faced by SMEs.

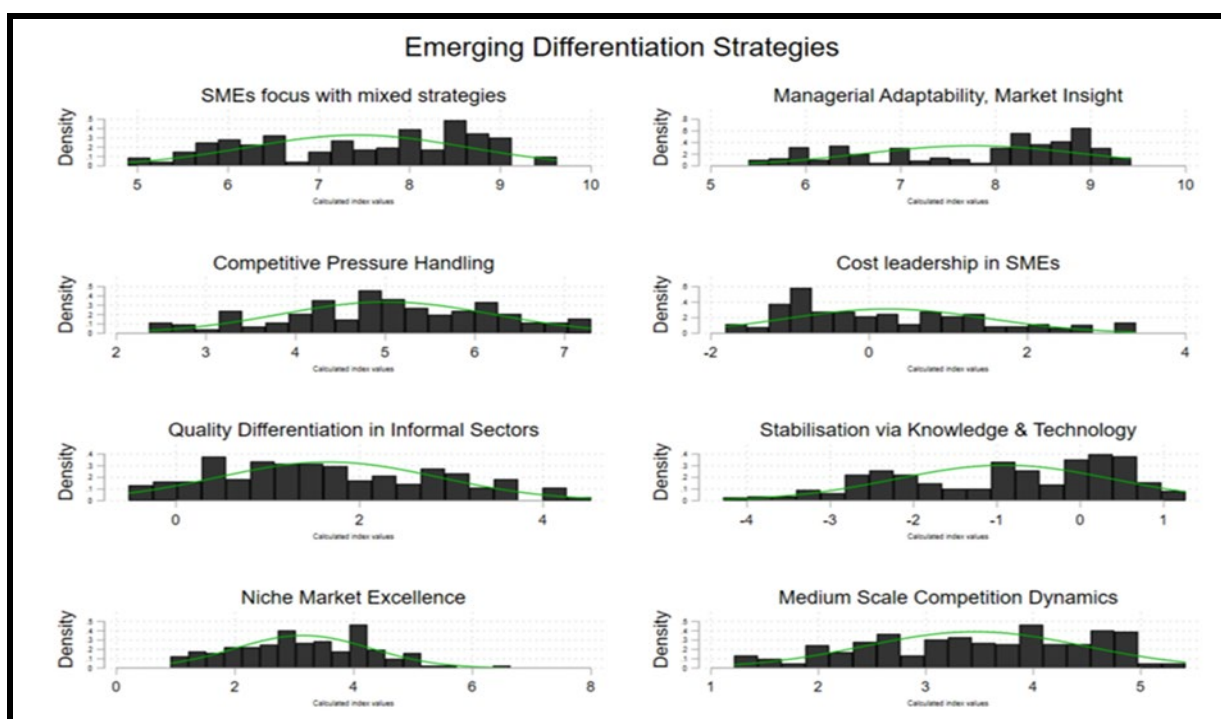


Figure 5.34: Distribution of scores of differentiation strategies

Source: Own construct

The cost leadership strategy in SMEs, however, is right-skewed with a peak around 0, implying that cost leadership is not a widely prioritised strategy. This could be due to limited market power and capacity constraints. The quality differentiation strategy in informal sectors shows a slightly right-skewed distribution with a peak at 2, suggesting that SMEs in informal sectors focus on quality differentiation to a moderate extent. Conversely, stabilisation via knowledge and technology exhibits a left-skewed distribution with a peak at -1, indicating that most SMEs do not prioritise this approach,

likely due to limited technological capabilities. The niche market excellence strategy is slightly right-skewed with a peak at 4, showing that while some SMEs focus on niche markets, this is not a dominant strategy. The medium-scale competition dynamics strategy has a slightly right-skewed distribution with a peak at 3, suggesting that SMEs face moderate competition from medium-sized businesses.

Overall, the distribution patterns suggest that SMEs predominantly adopt differentiation strategies, focusing on product quality rather than cost leadership. They experience moderate competitive pressure but do not extensively utilise stabilisation through knowledge and technology. While some SMEs succeed in niche markets, this remains a less common approach. These findings highlight the diverse strategic responses SMEs employ in navigating competitive business environments.

5.10.1 Analysis of Differentiation Strategies Across Business-Level Characteristics

To examine the impact of business-level characteristics on differentiation strategies, an ANOVA analysis was conducted. The differentiation strategies were assessed against various firm-level attributes, including managerial adaptability, competitive pressure handling, cost leadership, quality differentiation, stabilisation through knowledge and technology, niche market strategies, and medium-scale competition dynamics. Key business-level characteristics such as policy adoption, planning status, firm registration, and business revenue levels were analysed to determine their statistical significance in shaping differentiation strategies. Table 5.36 below presents the results, with statistical significance indicated in parentheses.

Table 5.36: ANOVA differentiation strategies over business level characteristics

Differentiation strategies over business level characteristics Firm Level Characteristic	Levels	SMEs focus with mixed strategies	Managerial adaptability, market insight	Competitive pressure handling	Cost leadership in SMEs	Quality differentiation in informal sectors	Stabilisation via knowledge and technology	Niche market excellence	Medium scale competition dynamics
Policies	Yes/No	7.424	7.763	5.012	0.229	1.658	-0.915	3.144	3.456
		0.79	1.82	1.31	1.60	0.12	1.00	0.27	0.22
		(0.3757)	(0.1786)	(0.2534)	(0.2065)	(0.7253)	(0.3189)	(0.6061)	(0.6407)
PlanStatus	Documents/ Intuitive	7.424	7.763	5.012	0.229	1.658	-0.915	3.144	3.456
		1.03	0.01	1.06	0.02	0.47	0.80	0.57	0.09
		(0.3097)	(0.9389)	(0.3045)	(0.8846)	(0.4917)	(0.3728)	(0.4512)	(0.7680)
Registration	Registered/ Registered with assistance/ Registered with no assistance	7.428	7.730	5.049	0.230	1.647	-0.938	3.139	3.467
		7.77	4.31	4.56	4.25	2.63	10.37	0.84	3.69
		(0.0005)	(0.0141)	(0.0111)	(0.0150)	(0.0734)	(0.0000)	(0.4325)	(0.0261)
Business Revenue	< R100k PA								
	<R150k PA	7.424	7.763	5.012	0.229	1.658	-0.915	3.144	3.456
	<R200k PA	3.94	8.26	4.68	7.59	1.93	2.22	1.39	2.88
	<R250k PA	(0.0038)	(0.0000)	(0.0011)	(0.0000)	(0.1047)	(0.0662)	(0.2357)	(0.0225)
	>R250k PA								

Policies: There are no statistically significant differences in strategy scores between firms with and without formal policies. There are no statistically significant differences in any differentiation strategy (all p-values > 0.05). This suggests that policies (Yes/No) do not substantially influence differentiation strategies.

Business plan status: Similarly, there are no significant differences in strategy scores between firms with documented plans and those with intuitive plans. There are no statistically significant differences in any differentiation strategy (all p-values > 0.05). The planning approach (formal documents vs. intuitive methods) does not significantly impact the strategies.

Business registration: Statistically significant differences are observed in several strategies. Firms registered with or without assistance differ significantly in terms of "SMEs focus with mixed strategies," "Managerial adaptability, market insight," "Competitive pressure handling," "Cost leadership in SMEs," "Quality differentiation in informal sectors," and "Stabilisation via knowledge and technology." This suggests that the level of formal registration influences the adoption of these strategies, or that registration type strongly affects the adoption of these strategies.

Business revenue status: Significant differences are observed in Table 5.36, where several strategies across different revenue levels are compared. Table 5.36 illustrates the varying levels of indicators among strategies, as detailed. Notably, the graph suggests a correlation between business revenue and differences in strategic adoption, implying that the implementation of distinct strategies may influence revenue outcomes. This suggests that business revenue is associated with differences in strategy adoption. Firms' revenue levels significantly affect how they pursue differentiation strategies. Figure 5.35 presents a summary of emerging differential strategies regression coefficients of influence.

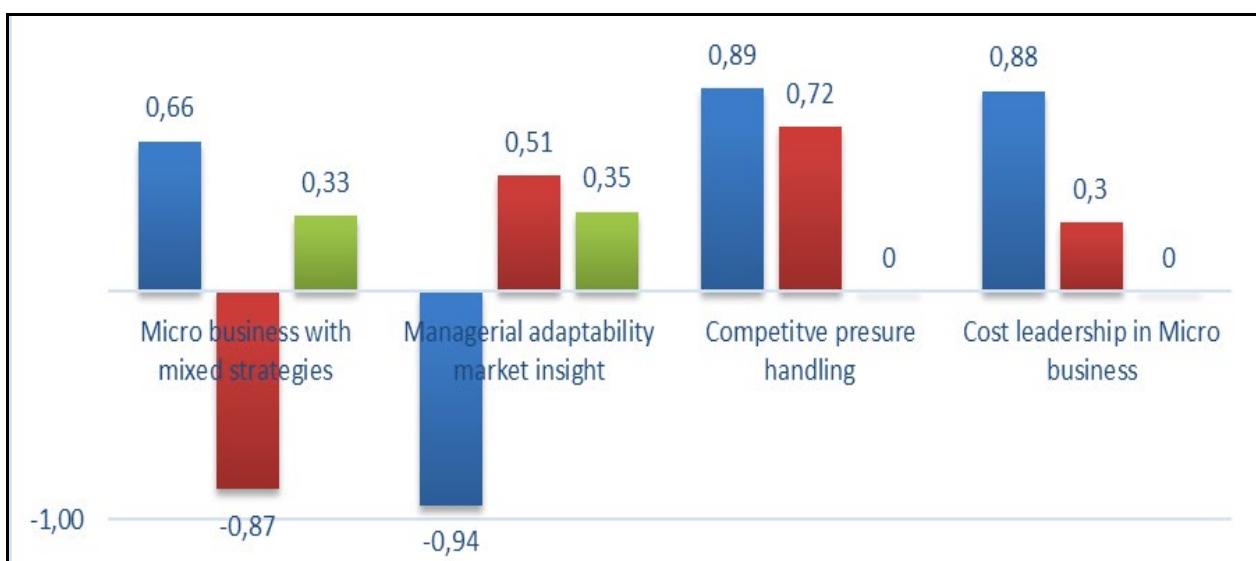


Figure 5.35: Emerging Differential Strategies

Source: Own construct

Registration status and business revenue are the most impactful characteristics affecting differentiation strategies. Policies and plan status do not significantly impact differentiation strategies. Efforts to enhance differentiation strategies should prioritise addressing variations by firm registration type and revenue levels. The results indicate that firm-level characteristics, such as registration status and business revenue, can significantly influence the adoption of different differentiation strategies. This suggests that policymakers and practitioners should consider these factors when designing interventions or support programmes to promote specific strategies.

5.11 CRONBACH'S ALPHA

The research process is a scientific procedure that requires analysed data to produce consistent (reliable) and valid results. Data analysis is an important part of research requiring accurately analysed data to produce accurate reporting for correct decision-making (Eteng, 2022). Before the advent of research instruments such as SPSS, NVIVO, ANOVA, STRATA and others, researchers' analysis was cumbersome and laborious, making work for researchers and statisticians slow as they had to calculate huge amounts of data. However, technology has simplified calculations and analysis, making research work interesting and easier.

It is prudent that researched data is valid and reliable. This is done by considering the reliability and validity of data collection instruments using the available disposable categories. Cronbach's alpha is a reliable way to measure internal consistency. The reliability proof is Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient that ranges between 0 and 1, with a 0.7 scale being acceptable.

Reliability and validity of measurements

The ability to reproduce the same previous results in consistently in research is regarded as an important reliable attribute for a reputable researcher. This attribute is considered the trustworthiness of the research design. The research design affirms the validity of studies in measuring the instruments used to measure the behaviour and quality that the study intended to measure and indicating how well the instruments performed their function (Moses, 2023:121). There are numerous approaches for determining reliability based on internal consistency; nevertheless, of the known methods, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is the most preferred and extensively utilised (Sürücü and Maslakçı, 2020:2650). Because of what the research questions sought to achieve for this study, Cronbach Alpha is considered the most appropriate tool for assessing the data collection tool employed internal consistency in this case (English and Keeley, 2015; Maslakçı and Sürücü,

2020:2649). The general threshold acceptable for ensuring reliability is displayed in Table 5.36 below.

Table 5.37: Classification of Cronbach's alpha coefficient

Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Interpretation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient
0.9 or higher	The scale has a high level of reliability.
Between 0.7 and 0.9	The scale is internally consistent and reliable.
Between 0.6 and 0.7	The reliability of the scale is acceptable.
Between 0.5 and 0.6	The scale's reliability is poor.
Lower than 0.5	The scale has no internal consistency and is regarded as unreliable.

Source : Maslakçı and Sürücü (2020)

5.11.1 Cronbach's alpha reliability

From the data results in Table 5.38, Development strategies have an excellent Cronbach Alpha of 0.873, indicating good internal consistency between constructs. When studying the data, the reliability test on all constructs shows excellent reliability, with values ranging from 0.734 to 0.873. Development strategies 0.873, Competitive strategies 0.827, Customer Targeting 0.851, Strategy Importance 0.857, and Review of Plans 0.834 are in an ideal reliability range and consistent with each other. For items where the Cronbach's alpha has been lower than 0.7, the loading was removed.

Table 5.38: Results of the preliminary test for reliability and validity

First Order Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Development Strategies	DevStr_1 (replace with actual names)	0.832	0.873	0.639
	DevStr_2	0.830		
	DevStr_3	0.737		
	DevStr_4	0.794		
	DevStr_5	0.646		
Competitive Strategies	STRAT_1	0.561	0.827	0.536
	STRAT_2	0.661		
	STRAT_3	0.783		
	STRAT_4	0.850		
	STRAT_5	0.675		
Customer Targeting	CUSTAR_1	0.833	0.851	0.548
	CUSTAR_2	0.769		
	CUSTAR_3	0.685		
	CUSTAR_4	0.658		
	CUSTAR_5	0.744		
Resource Based Strategy	RESSTRA_1	0.767	0.734	0.565
	RESSTRA_2	0.596		
	RESSTRA_3	0.638		
	RESSTRA_4	0.754		
	RESSTRA_5	0.760		
Plan of Actions	POACTN_1	0.770	0.781	0.518
	POACTN_2	0.752		
	POACTN_3	0.762		
	POACTN_4	0.830		
	POACTN_5	0.831		
	STRGYIMP_1	0.784	0.857	0.628

First Order Constructs	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Importance of Strategic Planning	STRGYIMP_2	0.760	0.834	0.646
	STRGYIMP_3	0.725		
	STRGYIMP_4	0.832		
	STRGYIMP_5	0.828		
Review of Plans	PLANRVW_1	0.678	0.834	0.646
	PLANRVW_2	0.836		
	PLANRVW_3	0.758		
	PLANRVW_4	0.673		
	PLANRVW_5	0.864		
Industry competitiveness	INDCOMP_1	0.619	0.742	0.592
	INDCOMP_2	0.910		
	INDCOMP_3	0.776		
	INDCOMP_4	0.692		
	INDCOMP_5	0.910		
Importance of competition	IMPRCOMP_1	0.823	0.794	0.647
	IMPRCOMP_2	0.683		
	IMPRCOMP_3	0.719		
	IMPRCOMP_4	0.836		
	IMPRCOMP_5	0.890		
Competitive edge	EDGECOMP_1	0.637	0.742	0.517
	EDGECOMP_2	0.882		
	EDGECOMP_3	0.677		
	EDGECOMP_4	0.769		
	EDGECOMP_5	0.743		

Source: Own construct

5.11.2 Factor Loadings

Table 5.38 above shows the relationship strength of factor loadings. The strength of the relationship between corresponding constructs should be above 0.7 to be considered a strong relationship, between 0.5 and 0.7 the relationship is moderate, and for those with a loading of 0.5, the relationship is weak. Factor loadings are relative to sample size; the larger the sample size, the lower the

acceptable factor loading (Hair et al., 2009:26). The acceptable factor loading of 0.7 sufficiently captures the variance for the recommended sample size of 120 units. According to the presented Table 5.39 below an acceptable loading factor reading is 0.35. However, it should be noted that loadings with magnitudes of 0.32 or less are not acceptable as they do not meet the minimum level of practical significance. Factor Loadings range from -1 to 1, with loadings closer -1 or 1 signifying a higher association between the observed variable and the factor, whereas loadings closer to 0 signify poor association (Hair et al., 2009:24).

For construct *development of strategies*, the loading ranges from moderate 0.646 to strong 0.832. Indicating that the relationship between some indicators differs, some strong (DevStr_2) 0.832 and others moderate DevStr_5 (0.646). For the second construct, *Competitive strategies*, the factor loading relationship has only two-factor loadings that have a strong relationship, namely (STRAT_3) 0.783 and (STRAT_4) 0.850. The rest are moderate (STRAT_1) 0.561, (STRAT_2) 0.661 and (STRAT_5) 0.675. For the third construct *Customer targeting*, the factor loading relationship has only three-factor loadings that have a strong relationship (CUSTAR_1) 0.833, (CUSTAR_2) 0.769 and (CUSTAR_5) 0.744. The rest are moderate (CUSTAR_3) 0.685 and (CUSTAR_4) 0.658. The research sampled for the study was 384, needing a factor loading of 0.30 for significance. Table 5.39 below is a guidance identifier for sample size required for factor loadings.

Table 5.39: Guidelines for identifying significant factor loadings based on sample size

Factor Loading	Sample Size needed for significance
0.30	350
0.35	250
0.40	200
0.45	150
0.50	120
0.55	100
0.60	85
0.65	70
0.70	60
0.75	50

Source: Own construct

5.11.3 The reliability and convergent validity of constructs

Reliability is used by researchers to assess the goodness of fit to measure consistent or stable results (Maduku, 2015). Tools commonly used to assess internal consistency are Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Table 5.40 displays Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (RhoC) constructs having above-recommended thresholds of 0.7, even though at times 0.6 is considered to be acceptable (Issock, 2016:120; Moses, 2023:124). The model presented further examined convergent validity as it was used to assess the ability of the structural model to correlate with constructs modelled by indicators. The model was assessed using standardised factor loadings, CR and average variance extracted (AVE). The reliability and convergent validity of the study are discussed below, and the discriminant validity is presented in Table 5.40 as satisfactory.

Internal consistency measures the degree to which the indicators (manifest variables) measuring a given construct are related to each other. In factor analysis, this is measured by the Cronbach alpha, which reports inter-item covariances or correlations among manifest variables. The composite reliability (RhoC) is a significant measure of inter-item correlation among manifest variables in PLS-SEM. Generally, recommended values are higher than 0.7 and demonstrate satisfactory composite reliability (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Nicholas and Ray, 2021). The values for RhoC in Table 5.40 are lower than 0.7, which indicates a lack of composite reliability among the constructs. The Cronbach alphas demonstrate some problems with the data that is being used in the SEM, as the expected values of Cronbach alphas range between 0 and 1.

Table 5.40: Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	RhoC/ composite reliability	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
RESSTRA	0.734	0.871	0.565
POACTN	0.781	0.869	0.518
PLANRVW	0.834	0.857	0.646
STRIMP	0.857	0.700	0.628
RETCUS	0.436	0.314	0.392
IMPRCOMP	0.794	0.721	0.647
EDGECOMP	0.742	0.799	0.517
DEVSTR	0.873	0.801	0.639

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	RhoC/ composite reliability	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
CUSTAR	0.851	0.820	0.548
INDCOMP	0.742	0.927	0.592
STRAT	0.827	0.870	0.536

Source: Own Construct

5.11.4 Average variance extracted (AVE) (convergent validity)

Convergent validity assesses the ability of the structural model explaining a construct to be modelled by the indicators. To this end, the researcher considers the average of the independent contributions of the indicators in explaining variation in the target construct. The average variance extracted (AVE) thus computed provides evidence of convergent validity. It measures the amount of variance captured by items of the construct relative to the variance due to measurement error. It should be greater than or equal to 0.50 for the items to be valid and for convergent validity to be established. The value for RETCUS shown in Table 5.40 for the AVE is lower than 0.50, showing that convergent validity was not achieved in the constructs used in the hypothesised model.

An example referred to in Table 5.40: For *Development Strategies*, the AVE is 0.639, Strategy Importance 0.628, Review of Plans 0.646, and Importance of Competition at 0.647 all have above the threshold of 0.5, indicating good convergent validity.

Conclusion: Most constructs have acceptable AVE values (ranging from 0.517 to 0.646), though *Plan of Actions* (0.518) and *Competitive Edge* (0.517) are at the lower end, which may require attention

Table 5.41: Collinearity statistics (Variance inflation factor—VIF)

Manifest Variable	VIF
DevStr_1	1.004
DevStr_2	
DevStr_3	
DevStr_4	
DevStr_5	
STRAT_1	1.017
STRAT_2	
STRAT_3	
STRAT_4	
STRAT_5	
CUSTAR_1	1.014
CUSTAR_2	
CUSTAR_3	
CUSTAR_4	
CUSTAR_5	
RESSTRA_1	1.005
RESSTRA_2	
RESSTRA_3	
RESSTRA_4	
RESSTRA_5	
RETCUS_1	1.001
RETCUS_2	
RETCUS_3	
RETCUS_4	

Manifest Variable	VIF
RETCUS_5	
POACTN_1	1.006
POACTN_2	
POACTN_3	
POACTN_4	
POACTN_5	
STRGYIMP_1	1.000
STRGYIMP_2	
STRGYIMP_3	
STRGYIMP_4	
STRGYIMP_5	
PLANRVW_1	1.001
PLANRVW_2	
PLANRVW_3	
PLANRVW_4	
PLANRVW_5	
INDCOMP_1	1.011
INDCOMP_2	
INDCOMP_3	
INDCOMP_4	
INDCOMP_5	
IMPRCOMP_1	1.017
IMPRCOMP_2	
IMPRCOMP_3	

Manifest Variable	VIF
IMPRCOMP_4	
IMPRCOMP_5	
EDGECOMP_1	1.016
EDGECOMP_2	
EDGECOMP_3	
EDGECOMP_4	
EDGECOMP_5	

Collinearity Statistics		
Sig	Tolerance	VIF
.000	,996	1,004
.000	,983	1,017
.000	,986	1,014

The data reveal that VIF ranges from 1.000 to 1.017, indicating very low multicollinearity among the variables. The valence inflation factor (VIF) statistics (tolerance ranges between 0.983 and 0.996, VIF ranges between 1.004 and 1.017) shown in Table 5.41 demonstrate that the model is free from collinearity problems. This follows the recommendations of Saunders et al. (2009:463) that a very small tolerance value (0.10 or below) or a large VIF value (10 or above) indicates high collinearity.

The foregoing analysis shows problems with the underlying hypothesised measurement model. The CFA fails reliability tests, while the very high VIF values in Table 5.41 indicate the presence of collinearity among the manifest variables associated with the constructs. The low factor loadings also show that most of the manifest variables are weakly associated with the constructs they are predicting using multiple regression.

5.12 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

This is a multivariate technique used mostly in scientific investigations to best test and evaluate multivariate causal relationships (Fan et al., 2016:2). The technique is a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis (Murti, 2016). It analyses the structural relationship between measured variables and latent constructs (Korstanje, 2021). Unlike SEM, PA is statistical, basing its technique on a linear equation system to assess several different variables to test direct

and indirect effects on pre-assumed causal relationships (Sturgis, 2016). The framework uses observed variables, hence excluding latent variables (Fan et al., 2016:1-2). Owing to its multifaceted constructs, it assumes measured elements are error-free. The framework draws from several disciplines, measurement theory, path analysis, correlation regression, simultaneous equation and factor analysis (Sturgis, 2016).

SEM makes it possible to have different outcomes or dependent variables each affecting other dependent variables in a complex manner. It can either be through causal modelling, path analysis and latent variable. SEM are analysed using various software packages available. This includes the likes of Mplus, EQS, AMOS, R package and STATA. The packages are available for access each with its advantages and disadvantages. One challenge facing SEM is its being multifaceted; it carries with it an element of error. In assessing SEM, Sturgis (2016) views path analysis using latent variables.

5.12.1 Path analysis

This is a linear SEM without latent variables using relationship constructs to serve as predictors (The Analysis Factor, 2016). Columbia University (2017) argues that path analysis is a predecessor to and subset of SEM. The University of South Florida (2016) further argues that the method is used to discern and assess the effects of variables acting on a specified outcome via multiple causal pathways. These variables may either be endogenous or exogenous; in addition, exogenous variables may or may not be correlated with other exogenous variables (Columbia University, 2017).

Figure 5.36 shows symbols used in the relationship of constructs via path diagrams. Straight arrowed lines are used to indicate the direction of relationships. These lines cannot point in opposite directions, as they assume a variable that cannot be both a causal and an effect (Murti, 2016). However, if variables are correlated one to another, but largely independent of other sets, they are combined into factors (Crossman, 2019). Factors are made up of two or more indicators, usually characterised by circles or ovals (Crossman, 2019). However, there are curved double-headed arrows indicating a correlation between exogenous variables. Circles represent latent variables, squares represent observed indicators, triangles represent intercepts or means, one-way arrows represent paths and two-way arrows represent either variances or covariances (Lin, 2017).

Variables that are not directly observed, such as personality traits and entrepreneurial training and skills, are variables the study infers to as latent variables as they are not directly observed or measured. However, they are believed to exert an influence on other measurable variables,

including competitive strategy, organisational competitiveness, industry competitiveness and resource-based strategy (Millsap, 2021).

With the advent of technology, one can conduct path analysis using statistical programmes such as SPSS and STATA, among others (Crossman, 2019).

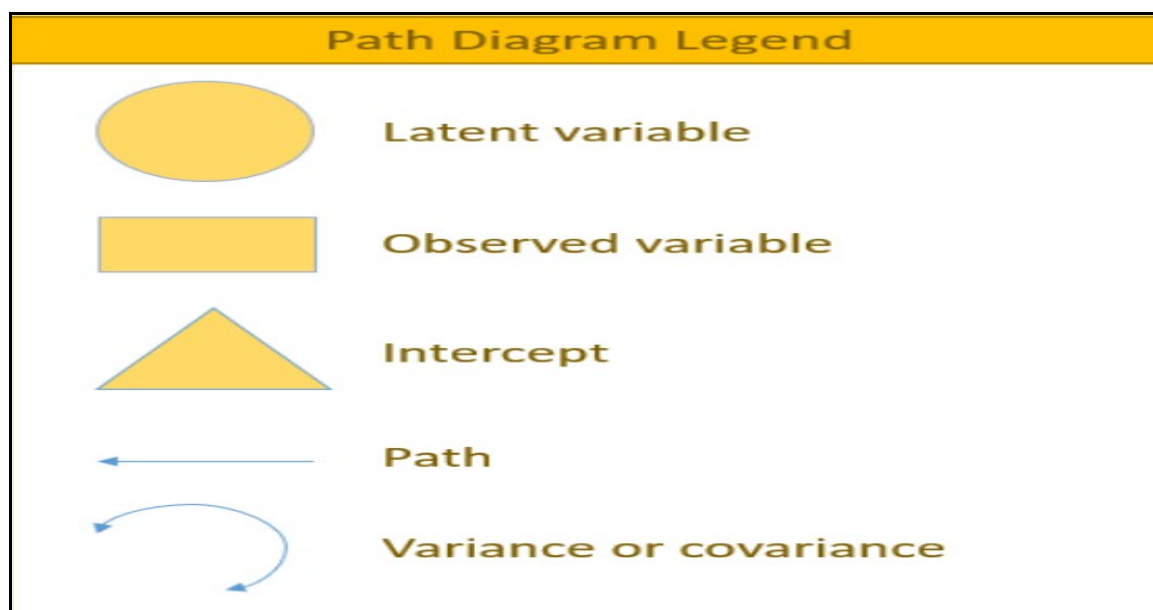


Figure 5.36: Path diagram legend

Source: Lin (2017)

5.12.2 Linear structural relation (LISREL)

The term “LISREL” is an acronym for linear structural relationships. It is a computer software package used to perform SEM, developed in the early 1970s by Karl Joreskog for covariance structure analysis (Bynner and Romney, 1985:43; Hair et al., 2021). LISREL is capable of testing relationships among latent variables as well as relationships among latent variables and their indicators (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000:87).

The model has attained a commanding position in covariance structure analysis undertakings. It has become a preferred software when dealing with covariance structure analysis. In explaining covariance structure analysis, Hayakawa (2024:31) and Kelloway (1998) theorise it as a confirmatory tool used to confirm relationships between latent variables and among variables. It further manifests whether indicators are consistent with empirical data (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000:89). The relationship between latent constructs is modelled using SEM, a confirmatory technique that examines the linear relationship between variables within a theoretical framework (Pawłowska and Potembska, 2011:01).

In the SEM framework, the relationship between constructs is represented in pathways, which are estimated using data (Hair et al., 2021:23). This approach enables researchers to test theoretical models and explore the relationships between latent constructs, such as attitudes, beliefs and behaviours (Hoyle, 2023:23). In the LISREL model, the linear structural relationship and the factor structure are combined into one comprehensive model applicable to observational studies. LISREL is becoming increasingly popular in various fields as a comprehensive method for testing theories and measuring constructs within a structured framework (Lin, 2017; Pawłowska and Potembska, 2011:02). This simultaneous estimation of the structural model and measurement model is known as covariance structure analysis, which is a multivariate statistical technique which combines (confirmatory) factor analysis and SEM (Korstanje, 2021). This approach examines the relationships between observed and theoretical variables, typically involving two or more variables. Covariance structure analysis enables researchers to examine relationships between latent constructs and observed constructs. The variance further enables researchers to test theoretical models and hypotheses (Hair et al., 2021:26). SEM enables the estimation of relationships between variables while accounting for measurement errors. Furthermore, it facilitates the examination of complex relationships between variables, providing a comprehensive understanding of the underlying structural dynamics.

The measurement model specifies how each latent variable is operationalised or measured through corresponding manifest indicators (Lin, 2017). For instance, previous suggestions that personality traits and entrepreneurial personality could be manifest indicators of the latent variable “resource-based strategy”. In this context, the structural model assumes that variables are measured without errors and the measurement model accounts for the relationship between the latent variables and their corresponding manifest indicators (Malhotra et al., 2014). The structural model assumes variables are measured without error while factor analysis is the technique that deals with the measurement model (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2000:97). According to Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2000:98), factor analysis is composed of two types: one is EFA and CFA.

5.12.3 Factor analysis

Factor analysis, as defined by Crossman (2019) and the University of California, Los Angeles (2011) is a statistical tool used to describe observed variability and correlation structure among variables with latent variables called factors. This method condenses numerous variables into a handful of factors, retaining most of the data information (Qualtrics, 2017). By identifying patterns among large sets of related variables, factor analysis explains how these variables relate to underlying constructs (Fisher, 2019). In this study, factor analysis was employed to examine the dimensions of interrelationships among response items. Although the initial sample of 384 cases was insufficient,

a subset of 64 interrelated cases was identified. The study factored in 11 items, yielding a ratio of 1:34, which supported the adequacy of the observed indicators. The variables analysed were organisational competitiveness, industry competitiveness, and resource-based strategy, which are described as being affected by constructs closely related to latent variables (Frost, 2022).

To evaluate the samples' adequacy for factor analysis, analysis of movement structures (AMOS) version 26, a module of SPSS, was used. The Bartlett test for sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure were employed to assess sampling adequacy. The KMO statistic ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 indicating absolute inadequacy and 1 denoting absolute adequacy. A KMO value of 0.5 is recommended as the minimum threshold for sample adequacy. Bartlett's test for sphericity is considered significant if the $p < 0.05$, indicating that factor analysis is appropriate. Table 5.35 in section 5.10.1 illustrates how factor analysis treats indicators as linear combinations of factors, assessing the variance explained by each factor (Watkins, 2018).

Factor analysis aims to identify latent variables that create commonalities among observed variables (Frost, 2022). This study employed factor analysis to achieve two primary goals: investigating known constructs within the dataset and confirming the viability of measurement instruments. According to Frost (2022) and Qualtrics (2017), factor analysis encompasses two approaches: CFA and EFA. Both techniques are used to evaluate the reliability of measurements (Newsom SEM Winter, 2005). However, both are not used at the same time, as they measure validity differently (Serubugo, 2024).

5.12.4 Exploratory factor analysis

EFA is a statistical tool used by researchers when there is inadequate information concerning the structure of the measure and explain the correlations between variables (Arteaga, 2023). EFA is recommended when there is little information about the nature of the underlying factor structure of the measure. EFA has three basic decision points: (1) deciding the number of factors, (2) choosing an extraction method, and (3) choosing a rotation method (Arteaga, 2023; Newsom SEM Winter, 2005). Heale and Twycross (2015:66) and Maduku (2015) believe that for a good factor analysis to take place, a minimum of 300 cases are to be obtained. For this study, a total of 384 cases were sampled, confirming a good sample size for factor analysis (Watkins, 2018).

This factor analysis was conducted using SPSS. A measurement of independent variables was initiated and followed by dependent variables, a consistent approach with that of Watkins's (2018) study. A principal axis factoring was applied to extract the maximum variance in the indicators, whilst verimax rotation was allied to explore the dataset. Lastly, maximum interaction for convergence was used to determine the number of times SPSS searched for optimal solutions.

The initial data factorability was measured using Bartlett's assessment of sphericity and the KMO to determine the structure of data. For validity, it is recommended that a KMO value of 0.6 and Bartlett sphericity ($p < 0.01$) be attained for the study to proceed (Maduku, 2015).

Table 5.42: KMO and Bartlett's test

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.880
Bartlett test of sphericity	Approx Chi-Square	28941.128
	df	861
	significance	0.000

Source: Own construct

Table 5.42 presents the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the application of generic strategies. The returned value of 0.880 indicates a high level of adequacy. Additionally, Bartlett's test for sphericity was statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis. The results concur with Nelmapius's (2016) suggestion that the appropriateness of the factor analysis be assessed by using the KMO MSA and Bartlett's test for sphericity. The KMO – MSA for each variable in the model assessing micro-textiles use of generic strategies was determined at the value of 0.880, and Bartlett's test for sphericity was significant with $p < 0.01$, which indicated that the data were factor-analysable.

Table 5.43: Exploratory factor analysis conducted on indicators

Indicators	11	22	3	44	55	6	7	8	9	100	111
	RESSTR A	POACT N	PLANRV W	STRIMP	RETCU S	IMPRCOM P	EDGECO MP	DevStr	CUSTAR	INDCO MP	STRAT
DevStr_1								0.820			
DevStr_2								0.862			
DevStr_3								0.781			
DevStr_4								0.743			
DevStr_5								0.882			
STRAT_1											0.783
STRAT_2											0.771
STRAT_3											0.786
STRAT_4											0.848
STRAT_5											0.877
CUSTAR_1									0.897		
CUSTAR_2									0.750		
CUSTAR_3									0.883		
CUSTAR_4									0.848		
CUSTAR_5									0.986		
RESSTRA_1	0.841										
RESSTRA_2	0.829										
RESSTRA_3	0.835										
RESSTRA_4	0.770										
RESSTRA_5	0.714										
RETCUS_1					0.748						
RETCUS_2					0.879						
RETCUS_3					0.873						
RETCUS_4					0.783						
RETCUS_5					0.713						
POACTN_1		0.915									
POACTN_2		0.739									
POACTN_3		0.812									
POACTN_4		0.720									
POACTN_5		0.894									
STRGYIMP_1				0.895							
STRGYIMP_2				0.799							
STRGYIMP_3				0.870							
STRGYIMP_4				0.820							
STRGYIMP_5				0.792							
PLANRVW_1			0.767								
PLANRVW_2			0.740								
PLANRVW_3			0.711								
PLANRVW_4			0.758								
PLANRVW_5			0.891								
INDCOMP_1										0.842	
INDCOMP_2										0.851	

Table 5.43: Exploratory factor analysis conducted on indicators											
INDCOMP_3										0.836	
INDCOMP_4										0.825	
INDCOMP_5										0.899	
IMPRCOMP_1						0.777					
IMPRCOMP_2						0.749					
IMPRCOMP_3						0.877					
IMPRCOMP_4						0.751					
IMPRCOMP_5						0.793					
EDGECOMP_1							0.829				
EDGECOMP_2							0.748				
EDGECOMP_3							0.762				
EDGECOMP_4							0.876				
EDGECOMP_5							0.830				

Source: Own construct

5.12.5 Confirmatory factor analysis

On the other hand, CFA is a type of SEM making use of statistical techniques, specifically measurement variables (Hoyle, 2000:466). The measurement variable in this case are the relationships between indicators and factors. The goal of latent variable measurement or factor analysis is to establish the number and nature of factors that account to the variation and covariation among observed measures (indicators) (Hoyle, 2023:24). CFA has a multivariate statistical technique, using measured variables to represent the number of constructs to verify the factor structure of the observed variable (Statistics Solutions, 2020; Suhr, 2010). This type of SEM specifically deals with the relationship between indicators (observed measures) and factors (latent variables) (Hoyle, 2023:23).

The study carries out CFA with the aim of determining two main measurement models, the first being that the goodness-of-fit is acceptable and valid, and the second being to determine reliability and validity. There are various methods advocated by Moses (2023:174) to determine goodness-of-fit; however, the research study will be confined to EFA.

The use of multiple indices provides sufficient evidence for model fit. Moses (2023:136) and Mullen et al. (2008) recommend chi-square as part of an inclusion degree of freedom (χ^2/df). Thus, a report by Morrison (2022:214) on the χ^2/df , the CFI or the TLI, and the RMSEA is deemed to provide enough information to evaluate model fit (Hair et al., 2014:234). To measure the goodness-of-fit of the measurement model, a structural model is proposed for this study; the χ^2/df , the RMSEA, the CFI, the TLI, and the GFI were used, under the recommended cut-off values for goodness-of-fit indices.

Table 5.44: Fit indices used, and recommended cut-off values for goodness-of-fit

Fit index	Recommended cut-off value for goodness-of-fit		
CMIN/DF (chi-square/degrees of freedom)	Below 3	Good	$X^2/df \leq 3$
	Between 3 and 5	Acceptable	$3 \leq X^2/df \leq 5$
	More than 5	Bad	$X^2/df > 5$
RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)	Below 0.05	Good	
	Between 0.06 and 0.1	Acceptable	
	More than 0.1	Bad	
CFI (comparative fit index)	Below 0.90	Bad	
	Above 0.90	Good	
TLI (Tucker–Lewis index)	Below 0.80	Good	
	Between 0.80 and 0.90	Acceptable	
	More than 0.90	Bad	
GFI (goodness-of-fit index)	Below 0.80	Good	
	Between 0.80 and 0.90	Acceptable	
	More than 0.90	Bad	

Adapted from (Hair et al., 2014; Moses, 2023)

5.13 PARTIAL LEAST SQUARES (PLS) STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL RESULTS

The dataset utilised in constructing the PLS-SEM was derived from the harvested data set comprising 384 clothing and textile micro SMEs in KwaZulu-Natal. Variables of the business characteristics studied varied from registration status, whether the business's plans were documented or intuitive, whether the owners had textile qualifications, whether the business would survive without the owner, the business's revenue profile and whether the business owner(s) follow prescribed organisational policies or laws. Furthermore, the data contained 11 constructs measuring aspects of the clothing and textile SMEs' competitive strategies. The hypothesised relationships are described using the chart in Figure 5.37 below.

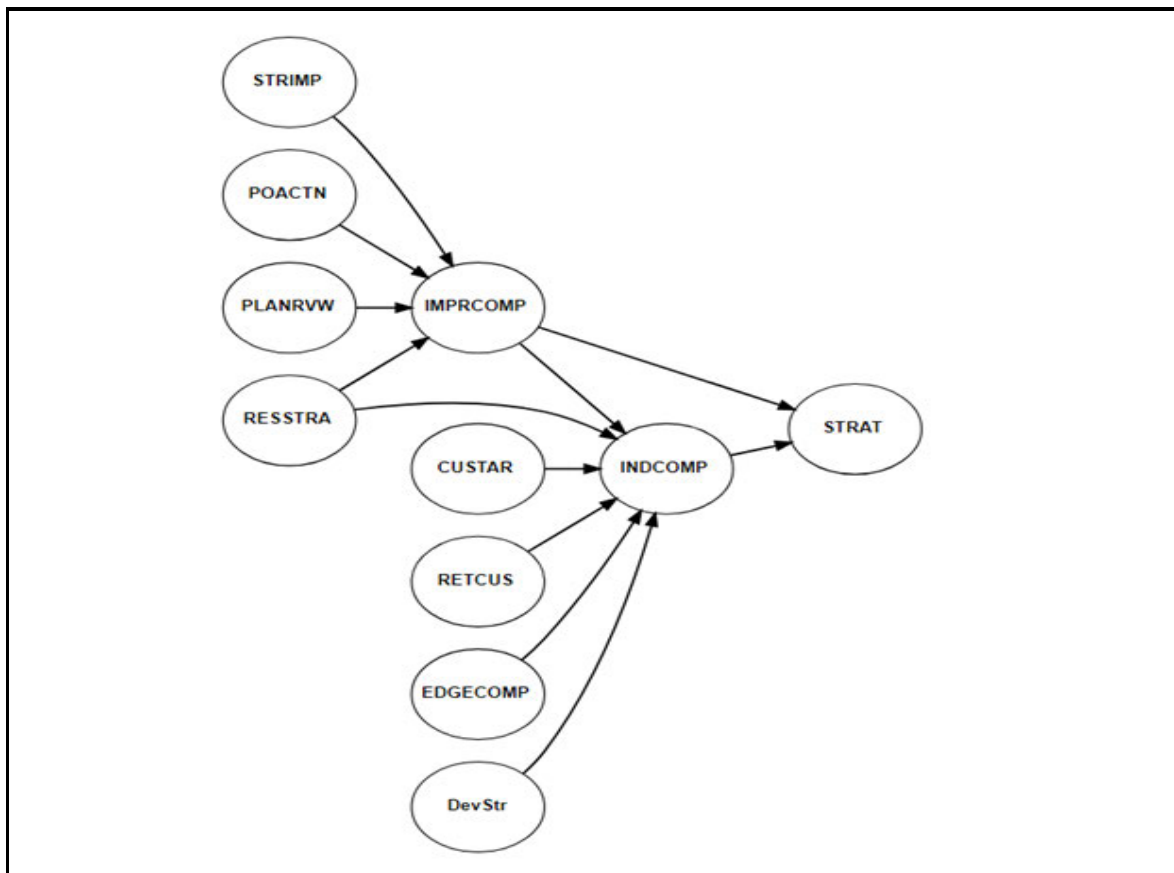


Figure 5.37: Hypothesised relationships

Source: Own construct

In the design of the model, formative constructs were assumed, where the arrows point to the construct and linear regression relationships (principal factor analysis factoring) are assumed. Thus, the relationship connecting the manifest variables to the constructs are estimated through MLR and OLS regression which are utilised in explaining the relationships among the constructs and the manifest variables.

The following explanation seeks to account for the hypothesised relationships of constructs believed to be influencing micro-textiles strategies. Firstly, generic management strategies are critical for creating a competitive organisation, that is efficiency and effectiveness in making strategies that prioritise a clear competitive strategy for business implementation. A conceptual model proposed in Figure 5.39, was designed to test structural relationships among observed and unobserved variables. The designed conceptual model was created based on a theory of micro-textiles' use of generic strategy to ensure **organisational competitiveness** impacts the efficiency of the sector. The profitability of the micro-textile industry depends on the sustainability and basic suitability of the types of competitive advantage strategies that organisations pursue (Porter, 1980:145). It is determined by Dresch et al. (2018:2-3) that a firm's relative position within its industry is determined by the firm's profitability, whether it is above or below the industry average. The fundamental basis of above-average profitability in the long run is sustainable competitive advantage (Setiawan and Farida, 2022:02).

The use of correct strategy is a fundamental element for increasing the competitiveness of the companies themselves (Dresch et al., 2018:1-2). Competitiveness is influenced by a number of constructs, these being strategic planning, resource-based strategy, importance of reviewing plans and having a planned action. This leads to **industrial competitiveness** as a result of developmental strategy, customer targeting strategy, customer retention strategy and strategic competitiveness. Lastly, is the **effectiveness of the strategy** which is deemed to be influenced by Industry competitiveness and organisational competitiveness.

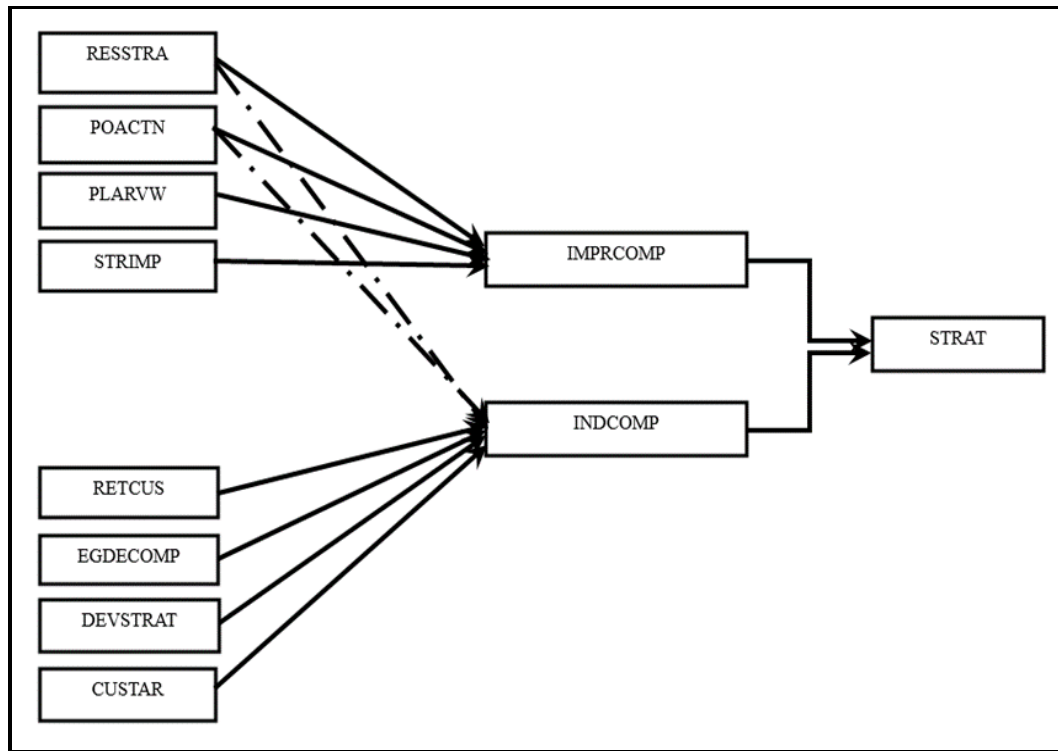


Figure 5.38: Linked relationships among constructs

Source: Own construct

As discussed in Section 5.12.3, an empirical representation of the structure was hypothetically constructed through factor analysis, establishing how well the observed indicators serve as measurement indicators for latent variables. The software used is Analysis of Movement Structures (AMOS) version 26, a module of SPSS. The software enabled the study to determine how well construct validity performed for the measurement model. To ascertain the robustness of the validity, eleven major fit indices were used to devise the model fit. Model fit indices were outlined in Section 5.12.4, whilst Table 5.43 outlines how each latent variable is accounted for in the measurement model. The absolute fit indices indicated a good fit, whereas the incremental fit indices showed a better fit compared to the null model, suggesting that the proposed model was a good representation of the data (Issock, 2016:201). To evaluate the measurement model's fit, five model fit indices are utilised. A threshold of whether indices are acceptable or rejected was applied, as specified in Table 5.43.

The study used 64 indicators and 11 latent constructs in constituting the graphic model in Figure 5.38. The initial result measurement model of observed variables and their indicators displayed some unsatisfactory fit indices and raised several validity concerns. The model produced a chi-square (χ^2/df) of 5.572, the CFI was 0.870, the TLI was 0.856, the GFI was 0, and the RMSEA was 0.95, as presented in Table 5.44. The results obtained from the (χ^2/df)

and RMSEA indices were not within thresholds of acceptable fit, while TLI and CFI were below the acceptable goodness-of-fit threshold.

In improving the measurement model, an analysis of modification indices suggested a correlation of error variance among some of the observed variables. A suggested modification on CUSTAR (customer targeting) and RETCUS (customer retention strategies) should be correlated. The reasoning for the modification suggested that CUSTAR and RETCUS overlap (“customer targeting” may be conceptually parallel to “customer retention”). The error observed among the variables was used to measure respective constructs; a correlated error variance was observed, and AMOS was used to re-run modified tests.

An improved goodness-of-fit indices model meeting necessary thresholds is presented in Table 5.45 below:

Table 5.45: Model fit indices of measurement model

Model fit index	Threshold adapted from Hair et al. (2014)	Initial measurement model	Final measurement model
Chi-square (χ^2/df)	$\chi^2/\text{df} \leq 3$ $3 \leq \chi^2/\text{df} \leq 5$ $\chi^2/\text{df} > 5$	5.572	2.486
CFI	Less than 0.90 (bad) Above 0.90 (good)	0.870	0.954
TLI	Less than 0.80 (bad) Between 0.80 and 0.90 (acceptable)	0.856	0.938
RMSEA	Less than 0.05 (good) Between 0.06 and 0.1 (acceptable) Above 0.1 (bad)	0.952	0.074

Source: Own construct

The measurement model or CFA is shown in Table 5.46 with ten latent variables, namely Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA), Plan of Actions (POACTN), Review of Plans (PLANRVW), Strategic Planning (STRIMP), Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP), Competitive Edge (EDGECOMP), Development Strategies (DevStr), Customer Targeting Strategies (CUSTAR), Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP), and Competitive Strategies (STRAT). The variable RETCUS was removed from the model owing to the reliability and validity concerns posed to the model. Each of the factor loadings has a contribution towards

its construct. Loadings range from -1 to 1, with loadings closer -1 or 1 signifying a higher association between the observed variable and the factor, whereas loadings closer to 0 signify poor association (Hair et al., 2009:24).

Table 5.46: Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Cronbach Alpha	RhoC/ composite reliability	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)
RESSTRA	0.873	0.871	0.639
POACTN	0.878	0.869	0.524
PLANRVW	0.857	0.857	0.549
STRIMP	0.703	0.700	0.550
RETCUS	0.436	0.314	0.392
IMPRCOMP	0.724	0.721	0.501
EDGECOMP	0.805	0.799	0.558
DEVSTR	0.800	0.801	0.522
CUSTAR	0.822	0.820	0.587
INDCOMP	0.930	0.927	0.575
STRAT	0.873	0.870	0.587

Source: Own construct

The variable (RETCUS) customer retention strategy was removed from the model due to its unacceptable measurement model fit (0.314). In contrast, the measurement model presented in Table 5.46 demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity for all items. A factor loading of 0.857 for the construct PLANRVW “review their plan of action” periodically indicates that approximately 86% (0.857) of the variance in measuring this construct is explained by the underlying factor. Furthermore, the correlation coefficient between the competitiveness of an organisation and its organisational strategy is 0.376. This implies that when the effectiveness of an organisational strategy increases by one standard deviation, the competitiveness of an organisation increases by 37.6% of its standard deviation. The measurement model is presented in Table 5.45, producing a chi-square (X^2/df) of 2.486, a CFI of 0.954, a TLI of 0.938, and an RMSEA of 0.074.

Based on the presentation in Figure 5.38, a conclusion is drawn that the measurement model fits the data adequately, implying that the measurement tools used in the final measurement model were trustworthy. The presented results support both the convergent validity and

discriminant validity, inspiring confidence in the structural model because of the satisfactory results of the CFA.

Table 5.47: Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity Measurement Model					
Number of rows		369			
Number of columns		65			
Column type frequency:					
Numeric		65			
Group variables		None			
Variable type: numeric					
skim_variable	n_missing	complete_rate	mean	Std Deviation	p0
TextileQualification	0	1	1.51	0.501	0
SurviveWithoutManager	0	1	1.68	0.467	0
AbletoretainCustomers	0	1	1.67	0.469	0
AnyPrescribedPolicies	0	1	1.25	0.432	0
AnyPlansActions	0	1	1.26	0.439	0
PlansDocuOrIntuitive	0	1	1.49	0.501	0
DevStr_1	0	1	1.99	1.36	0
DevStr_2	0	1	2.69	1.20	0
DevStr_3	0	1	2.99	0.990	0
DevStr_4	0	1	3.40	1.21	0
DevStr_5	0	1	3.94	1.47	0
STRAT_1	0	1	3.18	1.69	0
STRAT_2	0	1	2.07	1.14	0
STRAT_3	0	1	2.65	1.06	0
STRAT_4	0	1	3.47	1.03	0
STRAT_5	0	1	3.62	1.43	0
CUSTAR_1	0	1	3.57	1.49	0
CUSTAR_2	0	1	2.51	1.31	0
CUSTAR_3	0	1	3.04	1.08	0
CUSTAR_4	0	1	3.13	1.14	0
CUSTAR_5	0	1	2.76	1.71	0
RESSTRA_1	0	1	2.43	1.67	0
RESSTRA_2	0	1	2.65	1.35	0
RESSTRA_3	0	1	2.99	1.06	0
RESSTRA_4	0	1	3.18	1.09	0
RESSTRA_5	0	1	3.70	1.46	0
RETCUS_1	0	1	1.96	1.48	0
RETCUS_2	0	1	2.51	1.15	0
RETCUS_3	0	1	2.99	0.971	0
RETCUS_4	0	1	3.44	1.09	0
RETCUS_5	0	1	4.11	1.29	0
POACTN_1	0	1	3.07	1.65	0
POACTN_2	0	1	2.23	1.18	0
POACTN_3	0	1	2.37	1.03	0

Table 5.47: Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity Measurement Model					
POACTN_4	0	1	3.38	1.09	0
POACTN_5	0	1	3.98	1.25	0
STRGYIMP_1	0	1	2.39	1.55	0
STRGYIMP_2	0	1	3.22	1.20	0
STRGYIMP_3	0	1	2.70	1.25	0
STRGYIMP_4	0	1	2.95	1.22	0
STRGYIMP_5	0	1	3.74	1.44	0
PLANRVW_1	0	1	2.04	1.25	0
PLANRVW_2	0	1	3.40	1.18	0
PLANRVW_3	0	1	3.01	0.964	0
PLANRVW_4	0	1	2.36	1.21	0
PLANRVW_5	0	1	4.26	1.27	0
INDCOMP_1	0	1	3.69	1.20	0
INDCOMP_2	0	1	3.07	0.991	0
INDCOMP_3	0	1	1.92	0.860	0
INDCOMP_4	0	1	2.32	1.32	0
INDCOMP_5	0	1	4.04	1.36	0
IMPRCOMP_1	0	1	2.71	1.64	0
IMPRCOMP_2	0	1	2.56	1.18	0
IMPRCOMP_3	0	1	2.83	1.08	0
IMPRCOMP_4	0	1	2.97	1.18	0
IMPRCOMP_5	0	1	3.90	1.49	0
EDGECOMP_1	0	1	3.51	1.60	0
EDGECOMP_2	0	1	1.90	0.904	0
EDGECOMP_3	0	1	2.46	1.17	0
EDGECOMP_4	0	1	3.61	1.18	0
EDGECOMP_5	0	1	3.49	1.25	0

Source: Own Construct

5.13.1 Descriptive Statistics of the formative model (formative model results)

The skewness shows the distribution of values of the manifest variable. Values below zero indicate negatively skewed distributions (negative values for skewness), which means data is clustered along higher values of the variables. Values above zero and positive values indicate a positive skew; that is, values for the manifest variable are concentrated on the lower end of the scale, towards zero or the minimum value. The descriptive statistics show that most of the values of the manifest variables have negatively skewed distributions.

5.13.2 Summary of the model

The initial model had the following relationships: The construct of Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) was predicted by four constructs: Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA), Plan of Actions (POACTN), Review of Plans (PLANRVW), and perceptions of Strategic Planning (STRIMP). The Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP) construct was hypothesised to be predicted by the six constructs measuring Customer Retention (RETCUS), Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA), Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP), Relative Competitive Edge (EDGECOMP), Development Strategies (DevStr), and Customer Targeting Strategies (CUSTAR). Finally, Strategic Effectiveness (STRAT) was hypothesised to be predicted by the Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) and Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP) constructs. The computed relationships and the explained variation, as explained by the reported R-squared values, are presented in Table 5.47 below.

Table 5.48: Summary of paths of hypothesised model

Variable/Metric	IMPRCOMP	INDCOMP	STRAT
R-Squared (R^2)	0.335	0.302	0.142
Adjusted R^2	0.328	0.290	0.137
RESSTRA	0.185	0.157	.
POACTN	0.305	.	.
PLANRVW	0.228	.	.
STRIMP	0.273	.	.
RETCUS	.	0.314	.
IMPRCOMP	.	0.127	0.376
EDGECOMP	.	0.154	.
DEVSTR	.	0.102	.
CUSTAR	.	0.271	.
INDCOMP	.	.	0.074

Source: Own construct

The latent construct for the Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) has an R-squared value of 0.335, showing that the manifest variables predicting this construct account for 33.5% of the overall variation. The manifest variables predicting Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP) account for 30.2% of the variation in the construct. The two constructs for competitiveness and relative competitiveness account for only 14.2% of the overall variation in the target construct measuring strategy effectiveness. Thus, the hypothesised model's paths outline the factors predicting competitive strategy, which account for only 14.2% of the overall variation in the construct.

5.13.2.1 *The formative structural equation model*

The illustrated formative structural model is shown in Figure 5.40 below, with the different arrow forms showing the relationships between the manifest variables and the primary constructs, and the relationships among the constructs. The solid lines show direct relationships, while the dashed lines show indirect relationships. The existence of such indirect relationships may indicate that the relationships modelled were not theoretically consistent, or that the theoretical model requires significant transformation.

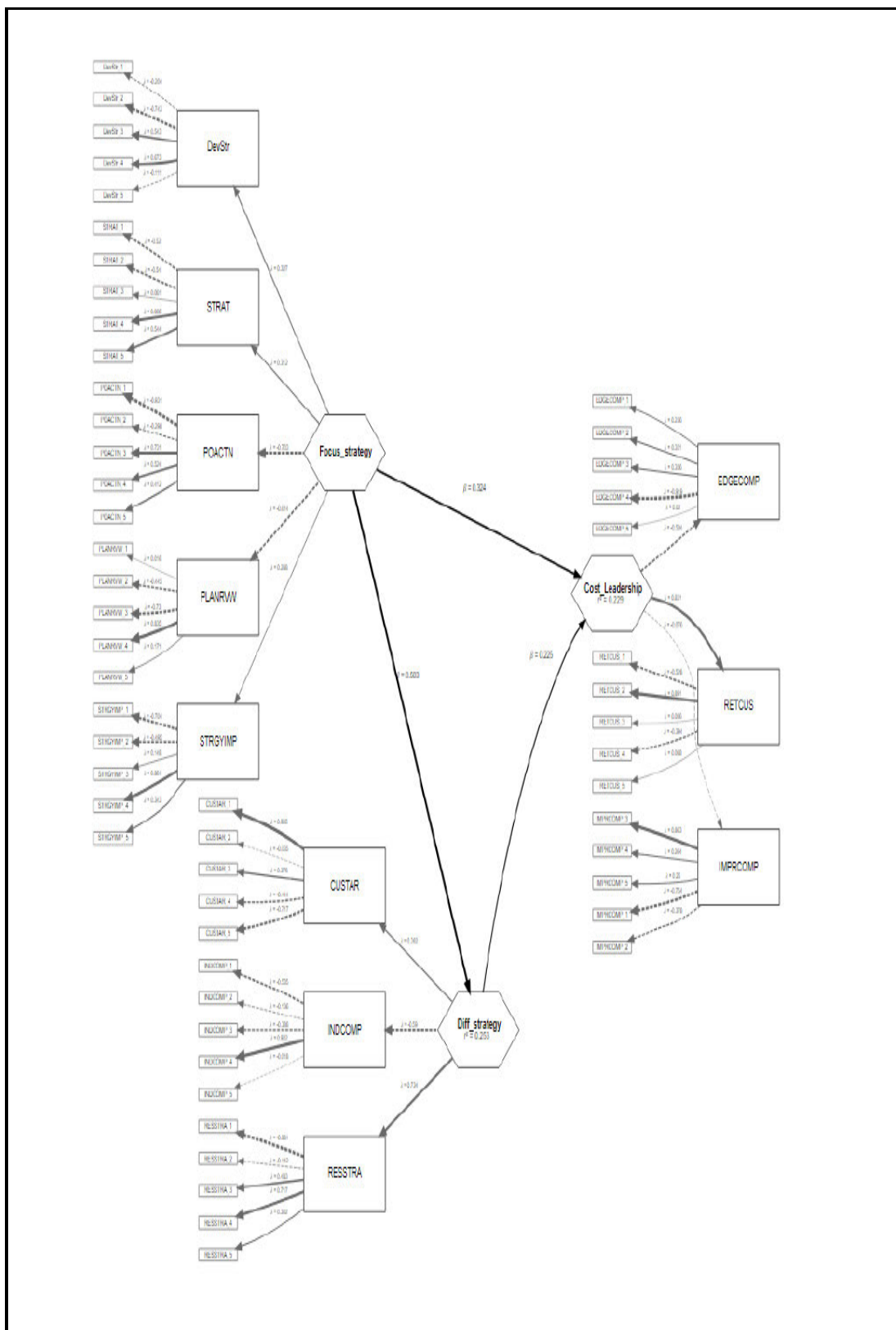


Figure 5.39: Partial least squares – Structural equation model (PLS-SEM):

Source: Own construct

Section 5.11.5 presents the discussion on CFA addressing generic management, which is categorised into 11 constructs measuring aspects of the clothing and textile SMEs' competitive strategy. The diagram presents how constructs relate to the strategies: focus strategy, differentiation strategy, and cost leadership strategy, as presented in Figure 5.39.

In a designed model, formative constructs were formulated where the arrows point to the construct and linear regression relationships (principal factor analysis factoring) are assumed. The connecting manifested variables indicate relationships of constructs estimated through multiple linear regression.

In the pursuit of model fitness, the following steps were carried out:

Step 1: Creation of a path direction from RESSTRA 1, RESSTRA 2, RESSTRA 3, RESSTRA 4, RESSTRA 5 to RESSTRA.

Step 2: Creation of a path direction from POACTIN 1, POACTIN 2, POACTIN 3, POACTIN 4, POACTIN 5 to POACTIN.

Step 3: Creation of a path direction from STRCYIMP 1, STRCYIMP 2, STRCYIMP 3, STRCYIMP 4, STRCYIMP 5 to STRIMP

Step 4: Creation of a path direction from PLANRVW 1, PLANRVW 2, PLANRVW 3, PLANRVW 4, PLANRVW 5 to PLANRVW

Step 5: Creation of a path direction from IMPRCOMP 1, IMPRCOMP 2, IMPRCOMP 3, IMPRCOMP 4, IMPRCOMP 5 to IMPRCOMP

Step 6: Creation of a path direction from RETCUS 1, RETCUS 2, RETCUS 3, RETCUS 4, RETCUS 5 to RETCUS

Step 7: Creation of a path direction from EDGECOMP 1, EDGECOMP 2, EDGECOMP 3, EDGECOMP 4, EDGECOMP 5 to EDGECOMP

Step 8: Creation of a path direction from DevStr 1, DevStr 2, DevStr 3, DevStr 4, DevStr 5 to DevStr

Step 9: Creation of a path direction from STRCYIMP 1, STRCYIMP 2, STRCYIMP 3, STRCYIMP 4, STRCYIMP 5 to STRCYIMP

Step 10: Creation of a path direction from CUSTAR 1, CUSTAR 2, CUSTAR 3, CUSTAR 4, CUSTAR 5 to CUSTAR

Step 11: Creation of a path direction from INDCOMP 1, INDCOMP 2, INDCOMP 3, INDCOMP 4, INDCOMP 5 to INDCOMP

?? which are Development Strategies (DevStr), Effectiveness of Strategies (STRAT), Customer Targeting Strategies (CUSTAR), Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA), Customer Retention Strategies (RETCUS), Plan of Actions (POACTN), strategic Planning (STRIMP), Review of Plans (PLANRVW), Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP), Importance of Competition (IMPRCOMP) and Competitive Edge Strategy (EDGECOMP).

The culmination of this process resulted in a structural model, illustrated in Figure 5.39, which serves as a foundation for micro-textile firms in developing strategic approaches based on cost

leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies. The model demonstrated strong predictive validity, as evidenced by key goodness-of-fit indices (PCMNI/DF = 2.486, CFI = 0.945, TLI = 0.938, RMSEA = 0.074), affirming its effectiveness in guiding strategic planning within the industry.

5.13.3 SEM findings interpretation and discussion

The findings in section 5.8, Table 5.30 reveal a complex relationship between cost leadership and constructs. The results reveal that cost leadership is significantly related to *Competitive Edge Strategy* (EDGECOMP), with a factor loading of 22.9%. This suggests that cost leadership plays a crucial role in achieving a competitive edge. Moreover, the most influential construct is the *Importance of Competition Strategy* (IMPRCOMP), with a factor loading of 54%. This indicates that a well-planned competition strategy is the most critical factor in achieving cost leadership.

This is affirmed by low applications of the cost leadership strategy, as entrepreneurs' lack of planning is seen to be high in the constructs Plans of Action (40%) and Review of Plans (42.5%). In contrast, the strategy for customer retention has a negligible impact, with a factor loading of only 2.5%. This suggests that customer retention strategies have a limited impact on cost leadership within the micro-textile industry. However, the overall findings highlight the importance of developing a strong competitive strategy to achieve cost leadership while also considering retention strategies within the appropriate context. Furthermore, the study emphasises that the primary factor linking firms to the cost leadership strategy is price stability, highlighting its central role in competitive positioning (Gray, 2019).

The findings in Section 5.9, Table 5.31 reveal a complex relationship between focus strategy and constructs. The results reveal that the focus strategy is moderately related to the key Developmental Strategies (DevStar) construct (30.7%), the Firm's Strategies (STRAT) construct, the Plan of Actions (POACTN) construct (40%), the Periodic Review of Plans (PLNRVW) construct (42.5%), and the Importance of Strategic Planning (STRGYIMP) construct (30%).

The results reveal that focus strategy has a moderate relation to key Developmental Strategies (DevStar), with a factor loading of 30.7%. This suggests that focus strategy plays a crucial role in developing strategies. Moreover, the most influential constructs are the Plan of Actions (POACTN) construct and the Periodic Review of Plans (PLNRVW) construct, with factor loadings of 40% and 42.5%, respectively. This indicates that a well-planned competition

strategy is the most critical factor in achieving focus strategy. These findings point out the critical role of structured planning and continuous review processes in the effective execution of focus strategies, among Tier III micro-textile firms. Overall, the study highlights the predominant influence of competitive strategy constructs in shaping strategic decision-making, reinforcing the necessity of rigorous planning, strategic evaluation, and price stability as key enablers of sustainable competitive advantage (Leonard, 2019).

The findings in Section 5.10 Table 5.34 reveal a complex relationship between Differentiation strategies and constructs. The results reveal that Differentiation strategies were measured in the data using three indicators measuring actions directed at the Customer Targeting (CUSTAR) construct 38%, Industry Competitiveness (INDCOMP) construct 58% and the Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA) construct 75%.

The results reveal that the Differentiation strategy is significantly related to the Resource-Based Strategy (RESSTRA) with a factor loading of 75%. This suggests that the Differentiation strategy plays a crucial role in aligning resource-based strategies, which affirms that organisational resources are valued, rare, and difficult to duplicate and substitute, contributing to competitive advantage. Moreover, the industry competitiveness, with a factor loading of 58% (INDCOMP), indicates that a conducive industry competitive strategy is one of the critical factors in achieving a differentiation strategy. The results further reveal that differentiation is significantly related to Customer Targeting, with a factor loading of 38%, suggesting that differentiation plays a crucial role in the targeting of customers. This suggests that the differentiation strategy plays a crucial role in the efficient management of organisational resources and the effective targeting of the right customers within a competitive industry.

The quality of differentiation is measured by garment quality and managers' ability to target the right customers. This is affirmed by Shlensky (2015), who cites that micro-businesses do not have leeway to use management strategies that are wasteful or easily duplicated. They are expected to use well-developed innovative strategies to take advantage of ever-changing conditions (Shlensky, 2015).

5.14 INTEGRATION OF QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section provides a cohesive analysis, combining the qualitative results from section 5.2 with the quantitative results presented across sections 5.3 to 5.6. The analysis combines discoveries from both descriptive and thematic findings, providing a more nuanced and multifaceted understanding of the research phenomena and delivering a richer interpretation of the results. The discussion in section 5.8 reveals that environmental factors such as high prices, product quality and digital transformation significantly influence strategy conceptualisation and are linked to entrepreneurial traits. Table 5.30 emphasises the key role of these indicators in capturing firm characteristics, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of their underlying concepts. Specifically, the cost leadership construct appears to permeate the primary characteristics of micro-firms, with the alignment of measurements supporting the successful completion of the universe and normality tests.

Furthermore, Table 5.30 highlights a strong relationship (0.7389) between the production of high-priced garments and customer retention strategies among micro-entrepreneurs. This suggests that creating premium-quality clothing plays a key role in attracting and retaining customers. Supporting this, qualitative data reveals that male participants are entrusted with producing high-end garments, despite the textile sector being largely dominated by female entrepreneurs. Interestingly, women in the industry emerge as pioneers of cost leadership strategies and key advocates of the Ubuntu philosophy, attributed to their nurturing characteristics. This new knowledge plays a crucial role in shaping the approach to cost leadership. It highlights the importance of considering gender dynamics in entrepreneurial decision-making.

The discussion on competitive strategies employed by micro-entrepreneurs in the textiles industry focuses on overcoming competitive pressures within the industry level, as shown in section 5.6.15.3. Notably, the findings suggest that micro-entrepreneurs can achieve competitive advantages without investing substantial resources, instead opting for a focus strategy that enables them to allocate resources efficiently. The quantitative analysis reveals that efficient planning is a key factor in achieving competitive success, with a significant factor loading on short-term reviews of business plans by means of annual business plan reviews. This is relevant in the highly competitive micro-textile industry, where micro-entrepreneurs are continually engaging in strategic planning and adapting to technological innovation. The industry reveals the importance of efficient planning and resource allocations in achieving competitive success.

The qualitative analysis provides empirical support for the narrative, suggesting that competition has a positive financial impact on micro-businesses. This positive effect is attributed to the multitasking working environment that is characteristic of the industry, which not only promotes financial success but also contributes to the emotional well-being of micro-entrepreneurs, highlighting the importance of considering the psychological and emotional aspects of entrepreneurs. In addition to financial outcomes, data add to this narrative indicating how competition has a positive financial effect on their business. This positive effect of competition on micro-entrepreneurs' financial performance is attributed to the multitasking work environment, which in turn promotes their emotional well-being. This finding has important implications for the understanding of the complex interplay between environmental pressures, environmental behaviour and well-being outcomes, highlighting the importance of considering the psychological and emotional aspects of entrepreneurship in addition to financial outcomes. The qualitative analysis revealed that micro textile enterprises perceive branding as a cost-intensive activity, largely due to their limited financial resources. They prioritise the strategic allocation of revenue, directing funds toward essential operations such as rent payments and inventory procurement. A key subtheme that emerged was customer retention, primarily driven by word-of-mouth marketing. Established micro textile businesses rely on their industry experience and focus on producing high-quality, customer-driven garments to remain competitive against large retail corporations. The budgetary constraints have caused them to rely on less skilled artisans to create directional signage and branded logos. Unfortunately, this approach has led to unappealing signage lacking attractiveness and emotional resonance, diminishing the effectiveness of branding as a customer retention strategy tool. As a result, these efforts inadvertently hinder customer retention by failing to foster a sense of connection or brand affinity. This assertion is supported by the findings in section 5.6.3, which presents competitive strategies. Specifically, customer retention recorded a mean score of 2.97 with a standard deviation of 1.18, indicating a strong level of competitiveness within the sector. Furthermore, the data reveal that technology usage is predominantly favoured by the younger generation, those aged 40 and below, who typically possess tertiary qualifications. In contrast, the older generation tends to rely on more traditional business practices like producing quality garments to retain customers. For technologically incapable customers, banking serves as a key metric for success; they equate a positive increase in banking balance with growth in business achievement. Sections 5.2.3.3 and 5.2.3.4 indicate that 20 out of 50 participants show low technological engagement, with a mean score of 3.98 and a standard deviation of 1.25 suggesting a pronounced reluctance or discomfort towards using technology. Data reveal a relationship between age and technological use.

Qualitative findings from sections 5.2.4.1 and 5.2.4.2 indicate that micro textile entrepreneurs demonstrate a collaborative spirit, openly sharing trade secrets, unlike traditional retailers, who tend to guard such information closely. Supporting this, sections 5.6.5 and 5.6.6 report a mean score of 3.62, with a standard deviation of 1.43, reflecting a generally positive attitude toward mutual support. This cooperative mindset is evident in procurement challenges, where entrepreneurs willingly assist one another by sharing pricing details and procurement information. The spirit of Ubuntu among micro textile entrepreneurs fosters a culture of generosity and mutual support, driven by a collective desire for survival for all. Their primary motivation in business is to provide for their families, with profit being secondary.

5.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided both descriptive and inferential analyses to address the research questions. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, beginning with the presentation of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data. A triangulated exploratory sequential design was adopted, wherein qualitative data was initially presented, followed by quantitative analysis, with a primary emphasis on quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis primarily focused on understanding organisations' behaviours, business practices, opinions and experiences. Subsequently, the quantitative findings were presented, including an assessment of reliability and validity through Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and factor analysis. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was employed to examine the significance of generic management strategies utilised by micro-textile enterprises in achieving a competitive advantage. The key sub-constructs analysed included resource capability, action planning, plan review, strategic importance, industry competitiveness, customer targeting strategies, development strategies, and relative competitiveness. Furthermore, the study tested the reliability and validity of strategic effectiveness.

The findings were structured into two main sections 5.2 and 5.13 corresponding to the quantitative and qualitative analyses, respectively. The study was predominantly quantitative, focusing on descriptive statistics and the application of factor analysis to establish reliability and validity. This was followed by the presentation of qualitative findings, which included thematic analysis of micro-textile entrepreneurs' perspectives on strategic decision-making. The findings from the qualitative analysis were found to support the quantitative results and are further explored in detail in Section 5.13. Building on this foundation, the next chapter will summarise each objective in line with the findings to note whether objectives were achieved. The chapter further gives recommendations from what the study achieved and what should be taken forward, where the study had shortcomings.

CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the results of the qualitative and quantitative data. The chapter made use of thematic analysis to analyse this qualitative data. Thereafter, it used descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse this quantitative data. This chapter presents the study's principal findings from the previous chapter to evaluate the generic management strategies employed by micro-textile entrepreneurs within the textile industry. The discussion is structured around the research questions posed in Chapter 1, providing a comprehensive analysis of the results. Subsequently, the chapter draws conclusions based on the key findings, recapitulating the main outcomes in relation to the research objectives outlined in Chapter 4. The conclusions grounded in the data analysis presented in Chapter 5 highlight the main outcomes of the study. Additionally, the chapter discusses the limitations of the research, providing a foundation for recommendations for future studies.

6.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The study yielded the following key findings:

Micro-textile entrepreneurs develop innovative indigenous strategies by harnessing their innate capabilities and available resources. These strategies highlight resilience and adaptability in resource-constrained environments. While they prioritise competitive pricing and product quality to drive growth, many show limited enthusiasm for adopting technological advancements. A significant number of female entrepreneurs embrace Ubuntu-based management approaches, drawing on shared values and community support to gain a competitive edge. These businesses are largely necessity-driven, relying on established models rather than creating original strategic plans. Entrepreneurial traits such as openness, emotional intelligence, and customer awareness play a vital role in influencing customer retention and overall business success, closely working with resource capabilities with most micro-enterprises being women-owned and operate from modest spaces such as small offices or home-based premises.

6.2.1 Key findings on objective one

The study sought to determine whether micro-textile enterprises use generic strategies to survive the first crucial five-year phase. Thomas (2020) argued that micro-businesses cannot sustain themselves by directly competing with global corporations but must target niche markets overlooked by larger players as a survival technique. In the context of Durban's textile industry, the infancy stage typically spans at least 12 years, with 56% of micro-textile enterprises still in

this phase, despite operating for more than 15 years. The findings reveal that businesses last longer than the conventional five years observed in other industries and countries. The study provides knowledge of entrepreneurial practices and strategies employed by micro-textile entrepreneurs to navigate the challenging early stages of operation. It highlights the importance of technical inclusion in manufacturing high-quality products, which facilitates customer retention and fosters long-term relationships. It further reveals the prevalence of a survival-oriented focus among small business owners, which is influenced by factors such as short-term focus, economic uncertainty, and strategic decision-making processes. This framework points out the significance of accountability and robust management systems for sustained growth.

6.2.2 Key findings on objective two

The study explored how entrepreneurial personality traits affected Durban's informal micro-textile enterprises' resource capabilities to edge competition. The traits of interest were resilience, adaptability, confidence, and innovation, identified as key determinants of business growth, influencing both customer attraction and strategic decision-making. The findings support Adamu (2023:1-2) and Edwards and Ketchen's (2015:169) view that it is important to distinguish between the resources a business owns and the capabilities it applies. They argue that competitive advantage depends on how entrepreneurs use their personal strengths to make the most of available resources, advancing traits like confidence, creativity, independence, and risk tolerance as key role players in shaping decisions and driving business success.

The study identified two strategies employed by micro-textile enterprises to achieve competitive advantage. Some enterprises pursue differentiation by manufacturing high-quality, premium-priced products, while others adopt moderate pricing strategies focused on customer retention and loyalty programmes. A segment of businesses targets budget-conscious consumers by producing low-cost, custom-made garments, demonstrating a strong relationship between affordability and demand elasticity. These findings show that a clear strategic planning, better education, and technological adoption are critical factors in ensuring long-term sustainability. The emphasis on personality traits as key drivers of business growth suggests that fostering entrepreneurial resilience and adaptability is crucial for achieving a competitive advantage in the informal textile sector. Concluding that personality traits and resource capabilities work together to drive the success of micro-textile businesses.

6.2.3 Key findings on objective three

The study's findings suggest that micro-entrepreneurs either intentionally design and implement management strategies or adopt them inadvertently over time. A well-structured corporate strategy is essential for strengthening internal capabilities, allowing businesses to navigate external competitive pressures effectively, and ensuring sustainable growth that ultimately benefits stakeholders by mitigating adverse market conditions. During the early stages of micro-textile enterprises, entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in guiding and overseeing operations to ensure business survival, independence, and eventual competitive advantage.

Data reveal that more than half of micro-textile entrepreneurs in Durban revise their management strategies only once or twice a year, with these strategies initially developed during the early stages of business formation and gradually refined as the enterprise matures. Notably, a quarter of entrepreneurs formulate strategic plans within their first three years of operation, while three-quarters execute well-structured strategies as they progress toward business autonomy. This period is critical, as it determines whether enterprises transition into self-sufficient entities capable of sustained operations without direct managerial oversight. These findings align with those of Rezai et al. (2010:19), who argue that entrepreneurial objectives are shaped by predefined visions as well as the socioeconomic and personality traits of the entrepreneur. Consequently, the formulation of a well-defined business strategy is fundamental to any investment plan, as it provides a roadmap for achieving long-term goals.

6.2.4 Key findings on objective four

The study's findings indicate that technology adoption among entrepreneurs in the micro-textile industry is significantly lower than expected, in comparison to developed economies where the textile sector is capital-intensive and reliant on advanced manufacturing techniques. Unlike their counterparts in technologically advanced economies, micro-textile enterprises in Durban, South Africa, operate within a labour-intensive framework, a characteristic commonly observed in developing economies (Behling and Lenzi, 2019:256). These businesses, primarily owner-managed and operating on a small scale, lack the necessary resources and technical skills to integrate advanced technologies into their production processes. Consequently, they remain highly dependent on manual labour, employing fewer than five workers per enterprise, with employees typically receiving low wages (FP&M SETA, 2014).

Despite the industry's focus on high-end garment production, the absence of technological innovation escalates fabric costs, leading to increased prices for finished products. To remain competitive, designers are compelled to produce superior-quality garments that align with consumer preferences, relying on premium materials to differentiate their products. However,

owing to the industry's technological lag, garment production remains time-consuming and labour-intensive, requiring extensive human resources and driving up production costs. The study highlights a negative relationship between prioritising the use of modern technology and prevailing industry practices, reflecting a broader dependence on traditional, labour-intensive methods. This reliance contradicts global trends emphasising energy-efficient and sustainable textile production, which leverage advanced weaving technologies to enhance productivity, reduce waste, and minimise energy consumption (Costa et al., 2020:86-87).

In conclusion, technology is a critical driver of organisational growth, cost reduction, and long-term competitiveness. However, micro-textile entrepreneurs in developing economies face substantial barriers to technological adoption, including limited formal education, inadequate training in finance and marketing, and financial constraints. These factors collectively hinder their ability to integrate technology into business operations, resulting in slower growth and reduced market competitiveness. Comparisons with more technologically advanced regions indicate that micro-textile enterprises that embrace strategic planning and technological innovation experience greater customer loyalty, revenue growth, and operational efficiency.

6.2.5 Key findings on objective five

The study's analysis of the relationship between entrepreneurial personality traits and organisational performance reveals a significant connection, indicating that personality traits play a fundamental role in shaping entrepreneurial thinking and business success. Findings suggest a relationship between an entrepreneur's personality and their approach to business, highlighting the profound influence of psychological attributes on decision-making, resource acquisition, and strategic planning. Entrepreneurship, while inherently challenging, remains a pursuit that attracts individuals who embrace risk, innovation, and problem-solving to achieve their vision. Faustino (2023) likens the entrepreneurial mindset to a potter's wheel, constantly evolving, where ideas are refined and transformed into profitable ventures.

Successful entrepreneurs exhibit a combination of critical thinking, adaptability, self-confidence, creativity, and resilience. These traits are essential in navigating market complexities and fostering business growth. The study shows that taking risks, thinking clearly, having skills, and knowing the industry all help entrepreneurs succeed. Furthermore, key psychological constructs, including the need for achievement, locus of control, self-efficacy, and resilience, are identified as integral to an entrepreneur's ability to sustain innovation and overcome challenges (Cao et al., 2022:1-2).

The relationship between entrepreneurial personality traits and the African philosophy of ubuntu within the micro-textile industry is an important finding for the study. The concept is found to be deeply embedded in the business strategies of entrepreneurs in this sector. The relationship between Ubuntu-oriented values and effective leadership styles influences both customer relationships and competitive strategies. Entrepreneurs who embody ubuntu principles are shown to foster strong interpersonal relationships, promote fair business practices, and cultivate customer loyalty, reinforcing Machi's (2018) assertion that the adoption of ubuntu fosters harmony between businesses and their stakeholders while ensuring sustainable profits. In conclusion, the research points out the significant role of personality traits in entrepreneurial success within the micro-textile industry. By embracing ubuntu and fostering personal attributes such as resilience, adaptability, and strategic thinking, entrepreneurs develop sustainable and community-driven businesses.

6.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective one: *To assess whether micro-textile enterprises employ generic strategies to survive the first crucial five-year phase*

In objective one, the study investigated micro-enterprises' ability to use strategic management practices of micro-textiles enterprises in Durban, with a focus on their ability to survive the first crucial five-year phase, which were assessed. The findings reveal that micro-textile entrepreneurs develop and execute effective indigenous organisational strategies, but these strategies fail to ensure business survival without owner involvement. The study highlighted the critical role played by owner-management presence in micro-textile enterprises, extending the infancy period to exceed the conventional five-year mark observed in other industries and countries.

Objective Two: *To assess whether managerial strategies are designed according to the resource capability of the enterprise or according to the preference and personality traits of the micro-textile entrepreneur*

This study examined the relationship between managerial strategies and the resource capabilities and personality traits of micro-textile entrepreneurs. The findings reveal that enterprises with distinctive resources and capabilities have a competitive advantage in meeting customer needs in ways that are difficult to replicate. Such firms are more likely to succeed by pursuing differentiation strategies. Additionally, the personality traits of micro-enterprise leaders play a crucial role in shaping business strategies, influencing decision-making, and determining

long-term sustainability. Over time, entrepreneurial experience fosters the ability to adapt, innovate, and enhance capabilities in response to changing market conditions.

The study further highlights that focus strategies, which leverage internal business capabilities to create unique market advantages, are essential for micro-textile enterprises. Key variables such as developmental strategies, strategic planning, and periodic reviews were identified as critical components of effective focus strategies. The findings suggest that entrepreneurial personality traits and resource capabilities are interdependent, collectively driving the success of these enterprises.

Ultimately, the research illuminates the importance of structured strategic planning, continuous education, and technological adoption in ensuring the long-term sustainability of micro-textile enterprises. The emphasis on entrepreneurial resilience and adaptability as key drivers of business growth suggests that fostering these traits can enhance competitive advantage in the informal textile sector.

Objective Three: *To assess whether micro-entrepreneurs deliberately conceive, plan and implement a management strategy to use or whether they default to one unintentionally*

This study examined whether micro-entrepreneurs deliberately conceive, plan and implement a management strategy to use or default into one unintentionally. The findings reveal that 27% of micro-textile entrepreneurs actively formulate and implement their own operational pricing strategies based on factors such as product quality and production time. However, many informal businesses enter the market without a clear strategy, owing to a lack of education and training. This lack of strategic planning leads necessity-driven entrepreneurs to adopt existing business models, defaulting to ethnicity-driven approaches rather than developing unique competitive strategies. In contrast, younger entrepreneurs easily embrace new strategic approaches, when supported by formal education, which provides a foundation for industry-specific skills and long-term planning.

The findings emphasise the importance of formal education and training in enhancing the strategic management capabilities of micro-textile entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for support and resources to enable entrepreneurs to develop and implement effective management strategies.

In conclusion, this study enhances the understanding of strategic management practices in micro-enterprises, within Durban's textile industry. The research first identifies a significant challenge: the difficulty micro-enterprises face in successfully implementing product

diversification, a crucial factor for business growth and stability. Many entrepreneurs struggle with this process owing to a lack of strategic knowledge, an unclear long-term vision, and weak competitiveness goals. These limitations prevent them from adapting, innovating, and sustaining their businesses in a dynamic market environment.

Furthermore, the study reveals that some business leaders lack the expertise required to develop and execute competitive strategies, making it even more difficult for them to establish a lasting presence in the industry. These findings provide valuable discernment to entrepreneurs, policymakers, and industry stakeholders looking to support the growth and development of micro-textile enterprises in South Africa.

To address these challenges, the study emphasises the urgent need for targeted education, strategic training, and mentorship programmes. Equipping micro-entrepreneurs with the necessary skills for effective business planning and management will not only improve business sustainability but also drive long-term growth and competitiveness in the informal textile sector. Finally, future research should explore tailored support mechanisms to bridge the knowledge gap and empower micro-entrepreneurs to thrive in an ever-evolving business landscape.

Objective Four: *To assess whether the use of technology assists micro-textile enterprises in the industry to achieve a competitive advantage*

This study examined whether the use of technology assists micro-textile enterprises in the industry to achieve a competitive advantage. The findings reveal that textile industry managers recognise the importance of adopting the latest technology to enhance production efficiency, with 7% emphasising its significance. However, this is slightly lower than the emphasis placed on knowledge and understanding of the business environment at 7.4%. Notably, managers in the industry prioritise producing high-quality products as their foremost concern. The study reveals a significant gap and inadequate skills development within the industry, which heavily relies on government support. As a result, technological advancement is not the primary focus for managers, who instead emphasise the importance of maintaining top-quality products.

Further findings indicate that technological limitations influence competitive partners, leading to reduced production despite the potential to increase output through greater personalisation in the digital textile revolution. However, the study also suggests that technological advancements can drive down costs, improve efficiency and result in more competitive pricing, ultimately shaping the industry's pricing structure. Overall, the study emphasises the need for textile

industry managers to balance their focus on quality production with the adoption of the latest technologies to remain competitive in the digital era.

Objective Five: *To assess whether the personality traits of the entrepreneur are organisational aligned or influenced by African ubuntu philosophy*

This study examined whether the personality traits of the entrepreneur are organisationally aligned or influenced by African ubuntu philosophy. This study highlights the strong positive relationship between an entrepreneur's personality and their approach to business, emphasising the crucial role of psychological traits in decision-making, resource acquisition, and strategic planning. Successful entrepreneurs exhibit a blend of critical thinking, adaptability, self-confidence, creativity, and resilience, traits that are vital for navigating market complexities and fostering business growth. Additionally, attributes such as risk-taking propensity, cognitive ability, human capital, and domain knowledge significantly contribute to entrepreneurial success.

An important finding is the relationship between entrepreneurial personality traits and the African philosophy of ubuntu, which emphasises community mutual support and ethical leadership. This concept is deeply embedded in the business strategies of entrepreneurs in this sector. The study suggests that ubuntu can act as a catalyst for entrepreneurial activities, in developing regions such as Southern Africa. Entrepreneurs who embrace ubuntu can build stronger customer relationships, establish trust, and create sustainable enterprises. Furthermore, the findings highlight relationship between ubuntu-oriented values and effective leadership styles, influencing both customer relations and competitive strategies. This is evident among elderly women entrepreneurs, influencing both customer engagement and competitive business strategies. Ubuntu plays a crucial role in business strategy alignment as it influences personality traits.

6.3.1 Recommendations

Based on findings and conclusions presented in section 6.2, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the strategic adoption of micro-textile entrepreneurship in the textile industry, thereby fostering competitiveness.

Recommendation 1: Encourage the adoption of management strategies and technology

Micro-textile entrepreneurs should be encouraged to adopt effective management strategies and leverage technology to reduce costs, enhance resource quality and pricing, and foster

innovation. By doing so, entrepreneurs can improve their operational efficiency, increase competitiveness, and drive business growth. The study highlights the pivotal role of technology adoption, personality traits, and sustainability in driving competitiveness, emphasising the importance of enabling organisations to adapt and thrive in dynamic and ever-changing environments.

Ultimately, this study reveals that micro-entrepreneurs can drive business growth by leveraging their unique resource capabilities blended with entrepreneurial skills and personality traits to make informed decisions. Thus, by embracing these strategies that foster business knowledge, managers with desirable personality traits can effectively attract customers, produce high-quality products, and optimise prices using technology.

Recommendation 2: Register incubation hubs to enhance competitiveness

To enhance competitiveness, this study recommends that micro-enterprises register for incubation hub programmes offered by Small Enterprise Development Agencies. These programmes provide textile training, funding, and support, enabling micro-enterprises to refine their skills, improve product quality, and scale up operations. Micro-textile enterprises can improve their distribution channels and overall competitiveness by affiliating with these hubs. To achieve this, the study recommends training micro-enterprises to enable them to produce high-quality garments to meet the quality standards of retail conglomerates and ultimately satisfy customer demands.

Recommendation 3: Encourage the adoption of branding garment strategies

To enhance competitiveness and customer retention in the micro-textile industry, the study recommends that entrepreneurs adopt branding strategies for their products or garments. This involves attaching unique logos or branding to their garments as well as utilising branded packaging. By doing so, micro-textile entrepreneurs can differentiate themselves from competitors, establishing a recognisable brand identity and ultimately improving their market presence.

This recommendation is grounded in the findings of the study, which highlight the importance of organisational characteristics associated with competitiveness in facilitating customer retention and informing strategic planning. By leveraging branding strategies, micro-textile entrepreneurs can capitalise on customer retention and build a competitive edge as enhancements for their growth and survival.

6.3.2 Conceptual Model

Ultimately, the study explains the complex relationship within the micro-textile industry, revealing a multifaceted framework that shows the various factors influencing organisational performance among entrepreneurs. This conceptual model, Figure 6.1, provides a comprehensive understanding of the interrelated dynamics that impact the success and sustainability of micro-textile entrepreneurs, offering valuable insights for future research, policy development, and entrepreneurial practice. It presents the complicated relationships between Ubuntu management strategy, entrepreneurial passions, visions, resource capability, women's participation, negotiation, communication, personality traits, management strategies, product quality, price strategy, customer targeting, and competitive strategy.

This model, Figure 6.1, provides a comprehensive and systematic approach to understanding the complex dynamics driving organisational performance and guides the development of hypotheses and research questions that were empirically tested in this study. It offers a nuanced understanding of the interrelated dynamics that influence the success and sustainability of micro-textile entrepreneurs. The framework highlights the significance of management strategies employed by entrepreneurs, which are shaped by individual personality traits, communication skills, negotiation skills, and passion for their work.

Lastly, the study reveals that organisational structure and resource capabilities play a critical role in creating value. These findings provide significant implications for future research, policy development, and entrepreneurial practice, ultimately contributing to the growth and development of micro-textile enterprises.

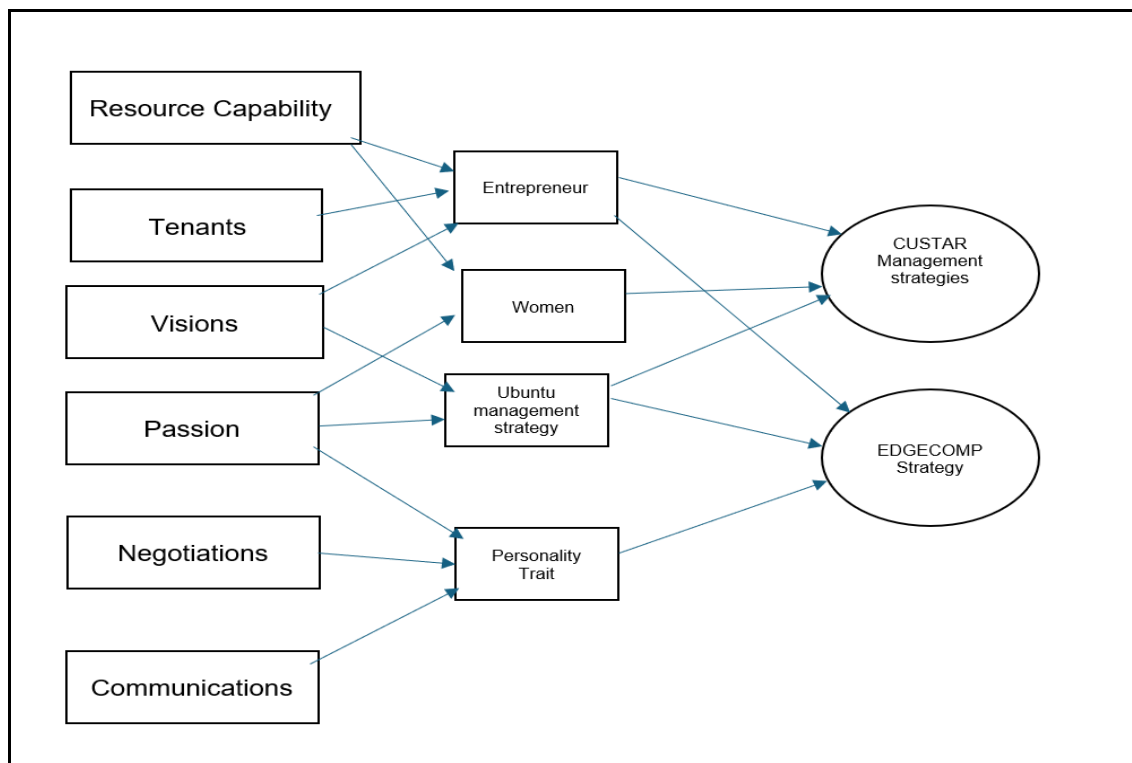


Figure 6.1: Conceptual relationships model

Source: Own

6.4 CONTRIBUTION

This research study contributes meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. Firstly, it establishes that entrepreneurs' personality traits, specifically passion, effective communication, and negotiation skills, are essential to achieving organisational objectives. These personality traits significantly influence the entrepreneurs' strategic mindset, in terms of risk tolerance and the pursuit of long-term success, thereby shaping their ability to attain strategic goals.

Secondly, the study developed a conceptual model that elucidates this complex relationship between effective communication, as a personality trait, and its impact on competitive strategy. The findings reveal that effective communication plays a pivotal role in developing and implementing competitive strategies, ultimately affecting the organisations' ability to gain and sustain competitive advantage.

Previous studies have primarily focused on strategies that apply generic management strategies in formal and corporate entities, with limited attention given to informal micro-enterprises. This study contributes to this knowledge gap by exploring the applicability of generic strategies in informal micro-textile enterprises. Findings contribute to the existing theory of knowledge by establishing a framework for traditional strategies that micro-enterprises can

employ to navigate the competitive environment and ensure sustainability. Notably, the study reveals that informal micro-enterprise female entrepreneurs readily adopt ubuntu management strategies, owing to the necessity-driven nature of their entrepreneurial endeavours, which are characterised by communal entrepreneurship. These female entrepreneurs prioritise providing for their families and contributing to the local economy and individual well-being.

Lastly, the study shows that young entrepreneurs use their resources effectively to improve pricing strategies, offering insight into how their approach shapes business direction. Micro-textile entrepreneurs clearly prefer market-based strategies, focusing on pricing and product quality, while showing less interest in using technology-driven approaches. Young, educated entrepreneurs are more likely to base their business decisions on available resources, market needs, and customer preferences than older, less educated entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, this study presents a critical consideration for aspiring micro-entrepreneurs: the infancy phase of a micro-enterprise typically spans 12 years. As a result, new entrepreneurs are forewarned to prepare themselves to anticipate a prolonged and challenging journey. Awareness of this timeline enables them to enter the industry with greater preparedness, fostering a resilient and adaptable mindset that can navigate challenges more effectively.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was affected by the following limitations. Firstly, there is a paucity of literature on the application of Ubuntu as a management philosophy. This aspect needs further research, especially within the Southern African states. Ubuntu is a significant concept that has a massive impact on an entrepreneur's upbringing, management styles, and decision-making. However, there is a scarcity of Afrocentric literature on ubuntu as a management strategy.

The study was further limited by the scarcity of literature on the application of Porter's generic strategies by informal micro enterprises. The inapplicability of this theory in this sector of the economy meant the study could not dwell on this matter. However, it enabled the study to generate new knowledge, particularly for developing countries.

To address experienced methodological limitations, future research should focus on expanded and grounded in theory rather than relying on a limited set of items. This study employed exploratory factor analysis using a limited set of variables, which may restrict the depth of theoretical interpretation. As exploratory analysis is primarily intended to reveal underlying patterns rather than test established theories, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research should incorporate a broader range of theoretically grounded measurement

items and apply confirmatory factor analysis to validate the structure identified. Additionally, expanding the sample size and including diverse contexts would enhance generalizability and strengthen the robustness of the conclusions of issues characterising micro-textiles in Durban.

6.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study has achieved its objective and answered the research questions raised, it is believed that it has also opened possible areas of research for future researchers to consider as possible areas of investigation.

- There could be research on management strategies used by micro-enterprises in the informal sector.
- How personality traits affect micro-entrepreneurs in developing countries on their entrepreneurship journey.
- Further research is required on ubuntu as a management philosophy in Southern Africa
- An interesting study can emerge on how to reform necessity-driven entrepreneurs to opportunity-driven in developing countries.
- Inapplicability of Porter's generic management strategies in informal enterprises in developing countries.

The research aimed to assess generic management strategies on the competitiveness of micro-textile entrepreneurs in Durban, South Africa. It employed an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach to assess the competitiveness in the industry. It found that the conception and implementation of a generic management strategy rely on the educational level of entrepreneurs, personal traits, the capability of organisational resources, and financial resources. This competitiveness further depends on industrial upgrading and innovation, technological development, and continuous improvement in investments.

6.7 CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

The overarching objective of this research was to investigate the impact of generic management strategies on the competitiveness of micro-textile enterprises in Durban. The findings provided substantial evidence that these micro-enterprises employ unique strategies, including personalised trade practices, to inform their management approaches. Notably, these strategies are rooted in the African philosophy of ubuntu, which is deeply embedded in the local culture. The study was motivated by the notion that generic strategies can serve as a blueprint for organisational success. However, this study's findings suggest that Porter's generic management theory has limited applicability to micro-enterprises where formal strategies, policies, and procedures are lacking. Instead, the results indicate that customer retention

strategies, organisational strategic planning, and strategic reviews are more pertinent to the success of micro-enterprises. This research contributes significantly to the existing literature by developing a novel theory referred to as Machela's theory. This theoretical construct elucidates the complex interactions within micro-enterprises and highlights the crucial role of entrepreneurial personality traits in guiding organisational success.

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APPENDIXES:

Appendix A: QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

SECTION B

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY MARKING (X) IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1 MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1.1 Did you have a textile or clothing qualification?		
1	YES	X
2	NO	

1.2 Is your organisation (employees operating without business owner) able to survive without your presence as the business owner ?		
1	YES	
2	NO	

1.3 Is the organisation (employees operating without business owner) able to retain and attract new customers without intervention of business owner?		
1	YES	
2	NO	

1.4 Does the organisation (employees operating without business owner) follow any prescribed organisational policies or laws?		
1	YES	
2	NO	

1.5 Does the organisation have a clear set of plans, actions and goals outlined on how it will compete in a particular market, that customers know and practice?		
1	YES	
2	NO	

1.6 Is your plan of action documented or intuitive?		
1	DOCUMENTATED	
2	INTUITION	

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below. Indicate your answer by placing an X on the option that you choose using the following scale (1) Very Important (2) Important (3) Neutral (4) less Important (5) Least Important

1.7 Prioritise In order of importance below listed development of strategies (plans, actions and goals) for the business		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	For the organisation to price correctly	X				
2	For the organisation to produce quality products	X				
3	For manager to have good personality trait and ability to attract customers			X		
4	For manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment		X			
5	For manager to use latest technology that speeds up production					X

1.8 Prioritise In order of importance the effectiveness of your organisations set of strategies (plans, actions and goals) against competition		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	Strategies (plan, actions and goals) are not a priority					
2	The most important strategy (plan, action and goal) is to lower shipping and storage costs					
3	The most importance strategy (plan, action and goal) is to get more opportunities within the textile industry					
4	The most important strategy (plan, action and goal) is to work on improving e-business and e-marketing					
5	The most important strategy (plan, action and goal) is to grow the business					

1.10 In order of importance which of the below organisations would you like your business to be similar with in customer targeting?		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	<i>I really do not know</i>					
2	<i>PEP (cost leadership) (selling at low cost)</i>					
3	<i>Woolworths (working towards being different) (selling at medium)</i>					
4	<i>Niche market (selling only at a high price, high quality)</i>					
5	<i>We have our own pricing strategy (We set price depending on time we spent on producing and quality)</i>					

1.11 Which bracket best displays your organisation's revenue bracket		
1	<i>Below R100,000 PA</i>	
2	<i>R100,001 – R150,000 PA</i>	
3	<i>R150,001 – R200,000 PA</i>	
4	<i>R200,001 – R250,000 PA</i>	
5	<i>Above R250,001 PA</i>	

1.12 Is your business registered getting help from any business hub ?		
1	YES	
2	NO	
3	REGISTERED AND GETTING HELP	
4	REGISTERED BUT NOT GETTING ANY HELP	

1.13 Prioritise In order of importance your organisations strategies (plans, actions and goals) according to your resource capability?		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	<i>Setting prices of produced textiles</i>					
2	<i>Quality of clothing the organisation produces</i>					
3	<i>Manager's personality and ability to attract customers</i>					
4	<i>Knowledge and understanding of the business environment</i>					
5	<i>Use of technology to speed up production</i>					

1.14 Prioritise In order of importance for your organisation the retaining and influencing of customers in this industry		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	<i>Ability to grow the business revenue</i>					
2	<i>Ability to attain a pricing strategy that will stabilise the organisation</i>					
3	<i>Ability to direct the to outgrow competition</i>					
4	<i>Ability to retain customer loyalty and satisfaction</i>					
5	<i>Ability to retain and adopt marketing concept</i>					

1.15 Prioritise below listed in order of importance on plan of actions for your organisation		1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	5 TH
1	<i>Setting laws and regulations</i>					

1.15 Prioritise below listed in order of importance on plan of actions for your organisation		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
2	<i>Personality trait of managing director to influence customer</i>					
3	<i>Overcoming competition from other businesses</i>					
4	<i>Monitoring and keeping up with changes in how competitors function</i>					
5	<i>Attaining and keeping up with new technological equipment</i>					

1.16 Prioritise in order of importance strategic plan for your organisation		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	<i>I am so busy that I do not have time to plan, I work on intuition</i>					
2	<i>I simply copy what competitors are doing</i>					
3	<i>I work on my own following my own style of work</i>					
4	<i>I regularly brain storm with colleagues on ways and where to improve</i>					
5	<i>I specifically look at what market leaders are doing and follow their practises</i>					

1.17 Prioritise in order of importance the reviewing plan of action for your organisation		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	<i>It should be done once a year</i>					
2	<i>It should be done once in three months</i>					
3	<i>It should be done once in four months</i>					
4	<i>It should be done once in six months</i>					
5	<i>It is never done</i>					

1.18 Tick according to order of importance in competition in the industry		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	Large organisations (National Chain stores) e.g. Woolworths, PEP					
2	Medium organisations (Provincial clothing stores)					
3	Small organisations (Local clothing stores)					
4	Informal organisation (Micro textiles)					
5	No competition					

1.19 Prioritise below list in order of importance for items that can assist the competitiveness of your organisations		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	To opbtain external financial investment					
2	To be able to extend infrastructure to compete					
3	To be price or cost competitive					
4	To be able to gain and retain customers for a successful growth					
5	To able to sell clothing to meet customer demands and requirements (price, quality, quantity)					

1.20 Prioritise below list in order of importance according to how your organisation beats competition		1ST	2ND	3RD	4TH	5TH
1	We produce low-priced cheap textile					
2	We produce average- priced affordable textile					
3	We produce expensive high-priced quality clothing					
4	We have deep financial resources allowing us to us a highly technological equipment					
5	We advocate for brand loyalty to retain and attract customers					

+

THE END

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Appendix B: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW

SECTION A

PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY MARKING (X) THE APPROPRIATE BOX

1) *DEMOGRAPHICS*

1.1 PLEASE INDICATE YOUR GENDER

MALE	X
FEMALE	

1.2 WHICH AGE BEST SUITS YOU:

BELOW 30	31 - 40	41 - 50	51 - 60	ABOVE 61
		X		

1.9 WHICH ETHNICITY BEST DESCRIBES YOU:

INDIAN	AFRICAN	COLOURED	WHITE	NON SOUTH AFRICAN
				X

1.10 WHAT IS YOUR HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION?

HIGH SCHOOL CERTIFICATE	CERTIFICATE QUALIFICATION	DIPLOMA QUALIFICATION	DEGREE QUALIFICATION	POST GRADUATE QUALIFICATION
	X			

2 TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 HOW LONG IS YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY?

0 - 3 YEARS	3 - 6 YEARS	6 - 9 YEARS	9 - 12 YEARS	12 - 15 YEARS	ABOVE 15 YEARS
				X	

2.2 FOR HOW LONG HAS YOUR SET OF PLANS, ACTIONS AND GOALS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION BEEN IN PLACE?

0 - 3 YEARS	3 - 6 YEARS	6 - 9 YEARS	9 - 12 YEARS	12 - 15 YEARS	ABOVE 15 YEARS
			X		

2.3 ON A SCALE OF ONE TO FIVE, ONE BEING EXCEPTIONAL AND FIVE BEING VERY POOR, HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AS A BUSINESS OWNER IN SETTING PLANS, ACTIONS AND GOALS?		1 ST Exceptional	2 ND Good	3 RD Moderate	4 TH Fair	5 TH Poor
1	For the organisation to price correctly	X				
2	For the organisation to produce quality products	X				
3	For manager to have good personality trait and ability to attract customers	X				
4	For manager to have knowledge and understanding of the business environment	X				
5	For manager to use latest technology that speeds up production					X

0 - 3 YEARS	3 - 6 YEARS	6 - 9 YEARS	9 - 12 YEARS	12 - 15 YEARS	ABOVE 15 YEARS
			X		

2.4 IS YOUR ENTERPRISE REGISTERED AND RECEIVING HELP FROM ANY BUSINESS HUB?

NO HUB AFFILIATED WITH

2.5 WHAT INSTRUMENTS DO YOU USE TO MONITOR PERFORMANCE OF THE ORGANISATION?

FINANCIAL BANK BALANCE AND CUSTOMER RETENTION

2.6 HOW MANY EMPLOYEES DO YOU HAVE?

2

2.7 HOW DO YOU EMPOWER YOURSELF TO BE COMPETITIVE?

LISTEN TO CUSTOMERS ADVISE

2.8 HOW ADVANCED IS YOUR TECHNOLOGY IN COMPARISON TO YOUR COMPETITORS?

ALL MACHINES ARE SAME, USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TO ADVANCE COMPETITION AND LOVE FOR THE BUSINESS (ARTISAN)

2.9 WHAT EFFECT DOES YOUR SUPPLIER DELIVERY HAVE ON YOUR FINAL PRICES?

NOT REALLY, I KEEP BULK STOCK, BUYING WHEN PRICES ARE LOW

2.10 ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS ABLE TO SEPARATE YOUR FROM THE ORGANISATION?

YES



Digital Receipt

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

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Tsepo Machela
Assignment title: 2nd Submission
Submission title: New version - Assessment of generic management (Tsepo) ...
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File size: 3.28M
Page count: 235
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Submission date: 24-Jul-2024 08:05PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 2421883231

ABSTRACT

Since South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994, the country has undergone significant political, social and economic transformations. These changes have had a profound impact on the textile industry, bringing both benefits and challenges. While the industry experienced initial growth, it has also faced escalating job losses and a shift towards micro-scale manufacturing as skilled labourers turned to self-employment for survival. This led to the proliferation of both formal and informal textile industries, with the latter intensive informal sector competing with formal retail to demand-driven markets. Scholars have noted that formal and informal business play a critical role in driving economic development in countries with high levels of education, low inflation and effective financial intermediation.

Informal businesses in developed countries are typically characterised by non-rated entrepreneurship, limited capital, unorganised markets and subpar working conditions. In contrast, formal sector businesses are marked by organised operations, significant capital investment, and profit-driven growth. Research suggests that applying Porter's generic managerial strategies can improve managerial practices and profitability in informal businesses. The reason the study seeks to assess the challenges faced by small manufacturers in South Africa's corporate sector, particularly concerning financial inclusion and access. A mixed methods approach was employed to exploring the experiences of these manufacturers and identifying potential solutions to address the problems they face.

Appendix D: TURNITIN (SIMILARITY) REPORT

New version - Assessment of generic management (Tsepo)
Noks 14 MAY 2024.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

15%	15%	8%	6%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	mbali.unizulu.ac.za Internet Source	1%
2	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	1%
3	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	1%
4	ujcontent.uj.ac.za Internet Source	<1%
5	academicjournals.org Internet Source	<1%
6	www.econstor.eu Internet Source	<1%
7	www.coursehero.com Internet Source	<1%
8	www.researchgate.net Internet Source	<1%
9	mafiadoc.com Internet Source	<1%



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

6 February 2023

Mr T Machela
34 Alcock Crescent
Berea
Durban

Dear Mr Machela

An assessment of generic management strategies on the competitiveness of micro textile entrepreneurs in Durban

Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 158/22

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely,



**Zertifikat
Certificat**

**Certificado
Certificate**

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants



Certificat de formation - Training Certificate

Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

Tsepo Machela

a complété avec succès - has successfully completed

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du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2021/06/26

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Swiss Academy of Medical Science (SAMBASMSAMW) (www.samw.ch) - Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (www.kfpe.ch)

[REV : 20170100]



Title of the Research Study :(AN ASSESSMENT OF GENERIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN)

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: (TSEPO MACHELA, Master In Commerce)

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: (SHAME MUGOVE, PhD)

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

Greeting (Start with a greeting, Hello, Good morning, Good Day, How are you etc.).

Introduce yourself to the participant (I am a PhD student at DUT doing research for my PhD degree in BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION.)

Invitation to the potential participant (I would like to invite you to participate in the research)

What is Research (Research is a systematic search or enquiry for generalised new knowledge)

Good day, I am a PhD student at DUT doing research for my DPhil in Management Sciences (Business Management). I would like to invite you to participate in the research. The purpose of this study is to assess generic management strategies used by micro entrepreneurs in Durban to stay competitive. You are welcome to ask any questions that you may have pertaining to this study to have full understanding of the study. You are entitled to discuss the study with your family, and you are under no obligation to commit at this stage.

Outline of the Procedures: (You will be requested to fill in a questionnaire drawn by the researcher (Tsepo Machela) on the topic of generic management strategies used by micro entrepreneurs in Durban. Your name will not be used in any of the documents provided and any information that you give will be kept confidential. There are no injuries expected to results from your participation in this study and there are no cost implications to you.)

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant: This research does not place you under any risk and you may withdraw from the study at any point should you wish not to continue with the process.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdrawn from the Study: (You may be withdrawn from the study if you are non-compliant or ill. There will be no adverse consequences for you should you choose to withdraw from the study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits for you as a participant in this study. However, the findings of this

research will enable organisations improve on the strategies to make your experiences better when conducting business with them.

Remuneration: You will not receive any monetary or other types of remuneration

Costs of the Study: You will not be expected to cover any costs towards the study

Confidentiality: Confidentiality will be maintained during the study by ensuring that your name will not be required on any documents that you fill in. information obtained from you will be treated confidentially and will only be used for purposes of this research only.

Results: The results of this research study will be disseminated through a thesis report which will be made available at the University library.

Research-related Injury: There is no research-related injury expected.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings All electronic and hard copies of this research report will be stored at the University library as the university record keeping policy.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:(Supervisor and details) Please contact the researcher (0820609992.), my supervisor (061 652 7177-) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr L Linganiso on 031 373 2577 or researchdirector@dut.ac.za.

General:

A copy of the information letter should be issued to participants. The information letter and consent form must be translated and provided in the primary spoken language of the research population e.g. isiZulu.

Appendix H LETTER OF CONSENT



Full Title of the Study: AN ASSESSMENT OF GENERIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN

Names of Researcher/s: TSEPO MACHELA

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

☐ I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Tsepo (name of Machela)

researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study -
Research Ethics Clearance
Number: IREC158/22,

- ☐ I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- ☐ I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- ☐ In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- ☐ I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- ☐ I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- ☐ I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

Full Name of Participant

**Date
Right**

Time

Signature /

Thumbprint

(name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

Please note the following:

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level- use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word), selecting of a non-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counselling (Department of Health, 2004).

If the potential participant is unable to read/illiterate, then a right thumb print is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant e.g. parent, sibling, friend, pastor, etc. should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health, 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing this document e.g. a wrong date or spelling mistake, a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has to be kept in the participant's file and not thrown away, and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

References:

Department of Health: 2004. *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes*
<http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/factsheets/guidelines/ethnics/>

Department of Health. 2006. *South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Ed. Available at: http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14

NOTE: Information in brackets in the Letter of Information is to be used as a guide in completing the Letter of Information. This information as well as the general section at the end of the Letter of Information and Consent document must be deleted before attaching the document to the PG 2a.

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW FOR MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN

Nodes\\Thematic Nodes

Name	Description	Files	References
Having employees working for me (2)	"Ensuring the business operates smoothly and strategic decisions are effectively guided by both the owner and employees, even when the owner is not present."	18	18
Other issues affecting Business		0	0
Bank Balance (2)	Monitoring business performance by maintaining a strong and healthy bank balance that reflects financial success and inspires pride.	24	24
Business Hub affiliation (2)	Registering with a business hub to access training and empowerment opportunities for growth and development	30	30
Customer retention (2)	Apply negotiation strategies to attract new customers and retain existing ones by building trust and value.	29	29
Customers ability to separate brand from business (2)	Understand and explain how both the entrepreneur and customers can distinguish between the business and its owner.	28	28
Good Personality Trait (2)	Apply effective communication and interaction skills to attract new	32	32

Name	Description	Files	References
	customers, retain existing ones, and convert interest into sales.		
Lack of Branding	Understand how limited branding in micro businesses can act as a barrier to growth, especially when branding is viewed as an unnecessary expense	29	30
Love for the business (2)	Describe how an entrepreneur's passion for their business motivates them to persevere through challenges, even when they feel like giving up.	26	26
Price and production affected by suppliers price change (2)	Analyse how pricing impacts business growth and decline, especially when frequent supplier price changes force businesses to adjust quoted prices.	24	24
Pricing correctly (2)	Analyse how supplier price changes affect an entrepreneur's ability to set accurate and sustainable prices.	31	32
Product Quality (2)	"Apply creative production skills to develop products that match the quality and appeal of retail competitors.	36	36
Personality issues affecting Business		0	0
Artisan artistic (2)	Apply garment production skills to create high-quality clothing that enhances the customer's appearance according to design specifications.	7	7
Good Personality Trait	Apply effective communication and interpersonal skills to engage with customers, build relationships, and support business growth.	2	2
Listen to Customer (2)	Apply active listening and persuasive communication to meet customer needs while guiding them toward the designer's creative vision.	23	23
Magazines, Catwalks, TV BOOKS and	Use available resources as empowerment tools to learn, grow, and stay updated with current fashion trends	18	19

Name	Description	Files	References
Fashion Shows (2)			
Use of technology to speed production (2)	Evaluate how the absence of advanced production technology hinders industry growth and limits efficiency, making it a major barrier for small businesses.	31	32

Demographic

• gender	• Male	• 48.78%
	• Female	• 51.22%
• Educational	• High school qualification	• 36.59
	• Post High school Certificates	• 24.39
	• Diploma	• 31.71%
	• Degree	• 4.88%
	• Post Graduate	• 2.44%
• Ethnicity	• No-South Africa	• 43.90%
	• African South African	• 48.78%
	• Indian Community	• 7.32%

The Dissertation Design Master



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This is to confirm that the thesis entitled

AN ASSESSMENT OF GENERIC MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF MICRO TEXTILE ENTREPRENEURS IN DURBAN

Authored by

TSEPO MACHELA

Student Number: 22174918

was edited according to Durban University of Technology's specifications.

The author received a detailed report with suggested changes together with their thesis with track changes. The thesis will be fit for submission when the student attends to all suggested changes (**that should be reviewed together with the supervisor**) and obtains permission to submit from the supervisor. This certificate does not warranty permission to submit if the supervisor has not agreed with the student.

Report prepared by:

[Elizabeth Mnyandu](#)

Signature over printed name

Date: 03 December 2025



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