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Integrating innovation and financial sustainability in emerging markets: a conceptual framework

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Abstract
Emerging organisations operating in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments face persistent challenges in sustaining financial performance while remaining innovative and adaptive. This conceptual paper develops an integrated framework that links innovation with financial sustainability in such contexts. Drawing on five complementary theories, Blue Ocean Strategy, Dynamic Capability Theory, Ambidexterity Theory, Disruptive Innovative Theory, and Chaos Theory, the paper introduces the Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF) framework. The framework posits that long-term competitiveness and financial sustainability are achieved through a continuous cycle of three interconnected processes: Disruptive Sensing, which enables firms to identify opportunities within turbulence; Regenerating Seizing, which focuses on creating new market spaces and value innovations; and Innovating Reconfiguring, which allows organisations to balance exploration and exploitation for strategic renewal. Using Simbisa Brands as an illustrative case, the paper demonstrates how an emerging African organisation can institutionalise innovation, sustain growth, and maintain financial resilience despite environmental instability. The proposed DRIF framework contributes to strategic management and entrepreneurship literature by offering a holistic model that integrates innovation, adaptability, and financial sustainability. It further provides practical insights for emerging market firms seeking to develop dynamic capabilities, enhance strategic agility, and secure sustainable competitive advantage in unpredictable business ecosystems.
Keywords: Financial Sustainability; Innovation; Emerging Markets; Conceptual Framework; Strategic Agility.

1. Introduction

In today's hyper-dynamic global economy, organisations in emerging markets operate within environments characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, collectively known as the **VUCA** context (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Pu et al., 2021). According to Khan et al (2022), the rise of technological disruption, currency instability, political fragility, and shifting consumer behaviour has amplified the need for firms to simultaneously innovate and remain financially sustainable. Traditional strategic management models, while valuable, often fail to provide the integrative mechanisms needed to balance innovation with financial discipline in these turbulent settings (Tan et al., 2020). Thus, for emerging market multinationals, the question is not whether to innovate, but **how to embed innovation within financially sustainable strategic frameworks** that ensure long-term competitiveness (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).

Scholars increasingly advocate for holistic models that integrate dynamic capabilities, entrepreneurial innovation, and adaptive learning to ensure organisational survival and growth in complex ecosystems (Batra et al., 2022; Xue et al., 2022). However, there remains a theoretical gap in linking **innovation-led growth** directly to **financial sustainability** within emerging market contexts, where volatility often undermines strategic coherence and resource efficiency. Addressing this gap requires a conceptual model that captures how firms can continuously regenerate, innovate, and reconfigure resources to thrive amid chaos (Khurana et al., 2021).

Guided by the study by Khan et al., (2022), this paper responds to a gap reviewed through introducing the **Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF)**, an integrative conceptual framework that synthesises insights from **Blue Ocean Strategy** (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005), **Dynamic Capability Theory** (Teece, 2018), **Ambidexterity Theory (**Tushman & O'Reilly, 2013), **Disruptive Innovation Theory (**Christensen et al., 2016), and **Chaos Theory** (Forgues, 2019) as cited in the study by Khan et al., (2022). Using **Simbisa Brands**, a fast-growing African multinational, as an illustrative case, the framework demonstrates how continuous disruption, regeneration, and innovation can underpin both strategic agility and financial sustainability in emerging markets.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the next section reviews contemporary literature on emerging organisations and the theoretical foundations underpinning innovation and sustainability. The subsequent section develops and presents the **DRIF conceptual framework,** integrating key theoretical insights. This is followed by a critical discussion illustrating how Simbisa Brands embodies the DRIF principles in practice. The paper concludes by summarising the key theoretical contributions, managerial implications, and recommendations for embedding innovation-driven financial sustainability in emerging market firms.

2. Background and the Case of Simbisa Brands as an Emerging Innovative Organisation

Emerging organisations are increasingly recognised as pivotal drivers of economic transformation and innovation across developing economies (De Barros et al., 2025). Defined by agility, adaptability, and entrepreneurial leadership, such organisations often emerge in response to dynamic and volatile environments characterised by political uncertainty, resource constraints, and shifting consumer behaviour (Lv et al., 2021). Within these contexts, financial sustainability and innovation are not isolated objectives but mutually reinforcing imperatives that determine organisational survival and long-term competitiveness (Xue et al., 2022). Mhlanga et al (2021) aver that the capacity to balance rapid growth with strategic financial management is a hallmark of success among emerging market firms, particularly those operating in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and quick-service restaurant (QSR) industries, where market turbulence is acute.

Simbisa Brands: Evolution and Market Context

Founded in 2015 as a spin-off from Innscor Africa Limited, Simbisa Brands Limited has evolved into one of Africa's leading QSR conglomerates, operating across more than nine countries, including Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, and Mauritius (Simbisa Brands, 2025; Irfan et al., 2022).The company's brand portfolio—comprising locally owned brands such as Chicken Inn, Baker's Inn, Pizza Inn, and Creamy Inn, alongside international franchises like Nando's, RocoMamas, and Galito's—reflects its multidomestic strategy aimed at catering to diverse consumer preferences across socio-economic segments (Simbisa Brands, 2025). The company's name, *Simbisa*—derived from the Shona word meaning "to strengthen" or "to empower"—symbolises its commitment to resilience, empowerment, and continuous renewal (Simbisa, 2025; Mhlanga et al., 2021). The company's rise coincides with an increasingly VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) African business environment, marked by inflationary pressures, currency instability, and unpredictable policy shifts (Xue et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, Simbisa Brands has managed to sustain profitability and expansion, reporting a 7% year-on-year revenue growth to USD 157.5 million in the first half of 2025 (Simbisa, 2025). Tan et al (2020) suggest that this success underscores its innovative adaptability and effective strategic leadership which are key indicators of a financially sustainable emerging organisation.

Innovation and Technological Transformation

Innovation remains central to Simbisa's growth trajectory. The company has consistently disrupted traditional restaurant models by integrating digital technologies and data-driven decision-making to enhance customer experience (Simbisa Brands, 2023; Irfan et al., 2022). The introduction of Dial-a-Delivery, an online and mobile-based food ordering and delivery service, has revolutionised the QSR industry in several African markets by combining affordability with convenience—a hallmark of disruptive innovation (Gerber & Matthee, 2019; Simbisa, 2025).

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More recently, Simbisa's partnership with Innbucks Microfinance Bank, a fintech subsidiary leveraging the QSR network to deliver mobile-based financial services, has redefined its business model from a traditional restaurant chain to a hybrid QSR-fintech ecosystem (Simbisa, 2025). As cited by Lv et al., (2021), this diversification aligns with Dynamic Capability Theory developed by Teece (2018), which emphasises the need for firms to continuously sense, seize, and reconfigure resources in response to market volatility. By embedding innovation into both operational and financial systems, Simbisa enhances resilience and creates new, uncontested market spaces consistent with Blue Ocean Strategy principles (Ahmed & Hashim, 2025; Mutua and Wangari, 2024).

The company's digital transformation also includes automated customer feedback systems, real-time inventory monitoring, and renewable energy integration, initiatives that reinforce operational efficiency and environmental sustainability (Mhlanga et al., 2021). Such practices demonstrate that innovation within emerging organisations extends beyond product development to include process, structural, and financial innovation, ultimately strengthening financial sustainability (Irfan et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial Leadership and Organisational Culture

Leadership remains a critical determinant of innovation and financial performance within emerging organisations (Pandey et al., 2022). Simbisa's executive leadership, originating from the entrepreneurial legacy of Innscor Africa, has fostered a culture of continuous experimentation, customer-centric innovation, and strategic agility (Simbisa, 2023). This leadership ethos embodies Ambidexterity Theory, which stresses the need for organisations to balance exploration (innovation, experimentation, and new ventures) with exploitation (efficiency, optimisation, and cost management) (Clauss et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021).

Through decentralised decision-making and franchise partnerships, Simbisa has successfully cultivated a culture that empowers managers at various levels to innovate while adhering to financial discipline (Simbisa, 2025). This balance of creativity and control allows the organisation to pursue sustainable growth even amid macroeconomic instability (Batra et al., 2022; de Barros et al., 2025). Moreover, the company's investment in leadership development and employee training fosters internal resilience and alignment with its innovation-driven mission (Simbisa, 2023; Khurana et al., 2021).

Financial Sustainability and Strategic Agility

Financial sustainability for emerging firms is not merely about profitability but also about strategic agility—the ability to allocate resources dynamically to exploit opportunities and mitigate risks (Pandey et al., 2022). Simbisa's listing on the Victoria Falls Stock Exchange (VFEX) in 2022 (Nguyen et al., 2021) enhanced its access to capital and investor confidence, reinforcing its long-term financial strategy (Simbisa, 2025). The company has also implemented cost-containment measures such as local sourcing, solar energy adoption, and digital efficiency systems, which have reduced operational volatility and enhanced financial stability (Simbisa, 2025; Mhlanga et al., 2021). Such adaptive financial management practices reflect the tenets of Chaos Theory, which acknowledges that small, deliberate adjustments in strategic direction can yield disproportionate effects in complex, non-linear environments (Su, 2021). By embracing non-linearity and continuous learning, Simbisa demonstrates how emerging organisations can thrive within seemingly unpredictable markets (Khurana et al., 2021).

Market Disruption and Regeneration

Simbisa Brands has consistently demonstrated the capacity to disrupt, regenerate, and innovate—three core dimensions of the Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF) framework proposed in this paper. The firm's evolution from a domestic food chain to a regional powerhouse exemplifies regenerative innovation: leveraging existing resources to create new markets while renewing organisational capabilities. As guided by Tan et al., (2020) this cyclical process aligns with the sensing–seizing–transforming sequence of Dynamic Capability Theory (Teece, 2018) and the renewal principles of Ambidexterity Theory (Clauss et al., 2021) as cited in their study.

The regeneration of menu offerings, modernisation of outlets, and ongoing expansion into new territories reinforce Simbisa's adaptive strategy, ensuring that innovation translates into financial resilience rather than short-term novelty. As highlighted by Ediagbonya et al., (2023) sustainable innovation requires integrating ethical and strategic considerations, and Simbisa's renewed focus on customer experience, digital inclusion, and responsible practices embodies this approach.

In summary, Simbisa Brands exemplifies how an emerging African organisation can achieve financial sustainability through innovation-led growth and strategic regeneration. Its success is rooted in the deliberate integration of innovation across its business model, encompassing technology, finance, leadership, and culture, underpinned by adaptive strategic frameworks. By continuously sensing environmental shifts, seizing market opportunities, and reconfiguring resources, Simbisa demonstrates the principles of a Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF) capable of thriving in a VUCA environment. The case thus provides a robust empirical foundation for the conceptual framework developed in the next section, which seeks to systematise the relationship between innovation and financial sustainability in emerging markets.

3. Theoretical Framework

Understanding how emerging organisations sustain innovation and financial performance in volatile environments requires an integration of multiple strategic management theories. Traditional models often explain parts of organisational success but fail to capture the dynamic, regenerative processes needed in complex, uncertain markets (Duque-Grisales et al., 2020). This paper synthesises five interrelated theories**, Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT), Ambidexterity Theory (AT), Disruptive Innovation Theory (DIT),** and **Chaos Theory (CT),** to develop a unified framework for innovation-driven financial sustainability in emerging markets.

Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS): Creating Uncontested Market Space

As cited by Butt (2024) the **Blue Ocean Strategy** developed by Kim and Mauborgne (2005) posits that firms achieve sustained growth not by competing within saturated "red oceans," but by creating "blue oceans" new, uncontested markets through **value innovation**. Value innovation involves simultaneously pursuing differentiation and low cost to make competition irrelevant (Butt et al., 2024).

In emerging markets, where hypercompetition and economic turbulence constrain profitability, Blue Ocean thinking allows organisations to unlock new demand by redefining market boundaries and targeting underserved customer segments (Wangari and Mutua, 2024). Recent studies show that firms adopting blue ocean approaches demonstrate superior adaptability and financial resilience in uncertain contexts (Shafiq et al., 2019).

However, critics highlight that BOS lacks empirical rigor and long-term sustainability mechanisms (Le et al., 2022; Mutua and Wangari). The model assumes that competition can be permanently avoided, ignoring market imitation and the high costs of innovation (Tan et al., 2020). To address this limitation, BOS principles must be complemented with theories that explain continuous renewal and capability reconfiguration, areas where **Dynamic Capability Theory** and **Ambidexterity Theory** provide critical insights.

Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT): Building Adaptive and Financially Resilient Organisations

As cited by Gremme et al (2022), the **Dynamic Capability Theory,** pioneered by Teece and Pisano (1997) and expanded in Teece (2018), emphasises a firm's ability to **sense, seize,** and **transform** in response to environmental changes. It extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) by

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focusing on how organisations dynamically integrate and reconfigure internal and external competencies to sustain competitive advantage (Ahmad et al., 2024). Dynamic capabilities enable emerging market firms to continuously align their strategies with shifting macroeconomic, technological, and consumer trends (Pu et al., 2021). This adaptability is especially vital in volatile economies like Zimbabwe and Kenya, where firms such as **Simbisa Brands** must innovate under fluctuating currencies and regulatory uncertainties (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence confirms that dynamic capabilities underpin both innovation and financial sustainability, linking operational flexibility to long-term profitability (De Barros et al., 2025). Nonetheless, scholars argue that the DCT suffers from conceptual ambiguity and underestimates the role of serendipity and chance in strategic adaptation (Gremme et al., 2022). Moreover, frequent reconfiguration can erode stability and increase operational costs (Ramadan and Susanto, 2024). Therefore, sustainable success depends on balancing transformation with efficiency, a central concern addressed in **Ambidexterity Theory.**

Ambidexterity Theory (AT): Balancing Exploration and Exploitation

The **Ambidexterity Theory**, proposed by Tushman and O'Reilly (2013) as cited by Clauss et al (2021), argues that organisations achieve long-term success by maintaining a balance between **exploration** (innovation, experimentation, and new knowledge creation) and **exploitation** (efficiency, optimisation, and refinement of existing operations). This duality is especially critical in VUCA environments where stability and change must coexist (Clauss et al., 2021).

Emerging organisations like Simbisa Brands demonstrate structural ambidexterity by simultaneously modernising existing QSR operations while investing in new digital ventures such as **Innbucks Microfinance Bank**. This balance enhances both innovation capacity and financial sustainability, allowing the firm to adapt without sacrificing profitability. (Baah et al., 2021).

Recent literature underscores that ambidextrous organisations outperform competitors when leadership fosters a culture that values experimentation alongside disciplined execution (Jiakui et al., 2023). However, implementing ambidexterity poses practical challenges, including resource allocation conflicts and organisational resistance (Wangari and Mutua, 2024). Integrating ambidexterity with dynamic capabilities provides a robust foundation for managing these tensions through strategic agility, a critical element of the proposed **DRIF** framework.

Disruptive Innovation Theory (DIT): Transforming Markets and Value Networks

A postulated by Wangari and Mutua (2024), the **Disruptive Innovation Theory (DIT)** originally articulated by Christensen (1997) and later refined by Christensen et al. (2016), explains how new entrants, or incumbent firms that innovate radically transform industries by creating simpler, affordable, and more accessible alternatives that eventually displace established competitors.

In contemporary emerging markets, disruption is no longer confined to startups; established firms can also "disrupt themselves" through internal innovation (Gerber & Matthee, 2019). For instance, Simbisa's early adoption of digital delivery systems and integration of fintech services exemplifies **incumbent-led disruption**, where a dominant firm proactively redefines its value proposition before external challengers emerge (Tiep et al., 2023).

However, as (Jiakui et al., 2023) and (Duque-Grisales et al., 2020) note, disruption must be guided by ethical and sustainable considerations, as the pursuit of innovation can create inequities or environmental harm. Integrating disruptive innovation within a broader framework of regeneration and continuous learning, key components of the DRIF model, enables firms to sustain both competitive and ethical performance.

Chaos Theory (CT): Managing Complexity and Unpredictability

The **Chaos Theory**, rooted in Lorenz's (1963) study of non-linear systems, provides a lens for understanding how small environmental shifts can produce disproportionately large organisational outcomes (Su, 2021; Pu et al., 2021). Applied to business, it suggests that firms must accept unpredictability as an inherent characteristic of modern markets and design adaptive systems capable of self-organisation and rapid learning (Su, 2021; Panait et al., 2023).

Emerging organisations in Africa face macroeconomic and political instability that often defies traditional forecasting (Su, 2021). The **Chaos Theory** complements strategic management by explaining why linear planning models fail in such contexts (Saada et al., 2024). Houry (2012) suggests that, instead, adaptive experimentation, decentralised decision-making, and real-time feedback mechanisms, core principles of the DRIF framework, allow firms to remain viable in chaotic environments.

While Chaos Theory enhances understanding of uncertainty, it lacks prescriptive guidance for managerial action (Houry, 2012; Su, 2021). The integration of Chaos Theory with dynamic and ambidextrous capabilities thus transforms it from a descriptive concept into an actionable management tool.

Integrating the Theories: Towards the DRIF Framework

The synthesis of these five theories reveals an important insight: no single theoretical perspective adequately explains how emerging organisations achieve both innovation and financial sustainability in turbulent environments. Instead, a **multi-theoretical integration** offers a holistic understanding.

- **Blue Ocean Strategy:** provides the creative impetus for market differentiation and value innovation.
- **Dynamic Capability Theory:** explains how firms' sense, seize, and transform resources to adapt.
- **Ambidexterity Theory:** offers the mechanism for balancing short-term exploitation with long-term exploration.
- **Disruptive Innovation Theory:** introduces the logic of proactive self-disruption and renewal.
- **Chaos Theory:** frames the unpredictable context within which these processes unfold.

The convergence of these theories forms the foundation of **t**he **Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF)** framework proposed in this paper. DRIF conceptualises sustainable success as a **continuous regenerative cycle**, where disruption triggers innovation, innovation drives regeneration, and regeneration sustains financial and strategic resilience. This cyclical process reflects the dynamic interplay of sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring capabilities required for firms to thrive in volatile emerging markets.

In summary, this theoretical synthesis highlights that innovation and financial sustainability are interdependent, continuous processes rather than discrete strategic events. The limitations of each theory are mitigated through integration: BOS's creativity gains discipline from DCT; DCT's adaptability gains balance from AT; DIT's disruption gains sustainability from CT's systems thinking. The resulting **DRIF framework** offers a robust, adaptable model for understanding and guiding organisational success in VUCA and BANI environments. The following section presents this conceptual framework in detail, illustrating its mechanisms and application to **Simbisa Brands** as a case example of an emerging organisation that has mastered innovation-driven financial sustainability.

4. The Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF): A Conceptual and Practical Synthesis

Drawing from the critical analysis of the theories a Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework was born as reflected on figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF)

Source: author generated

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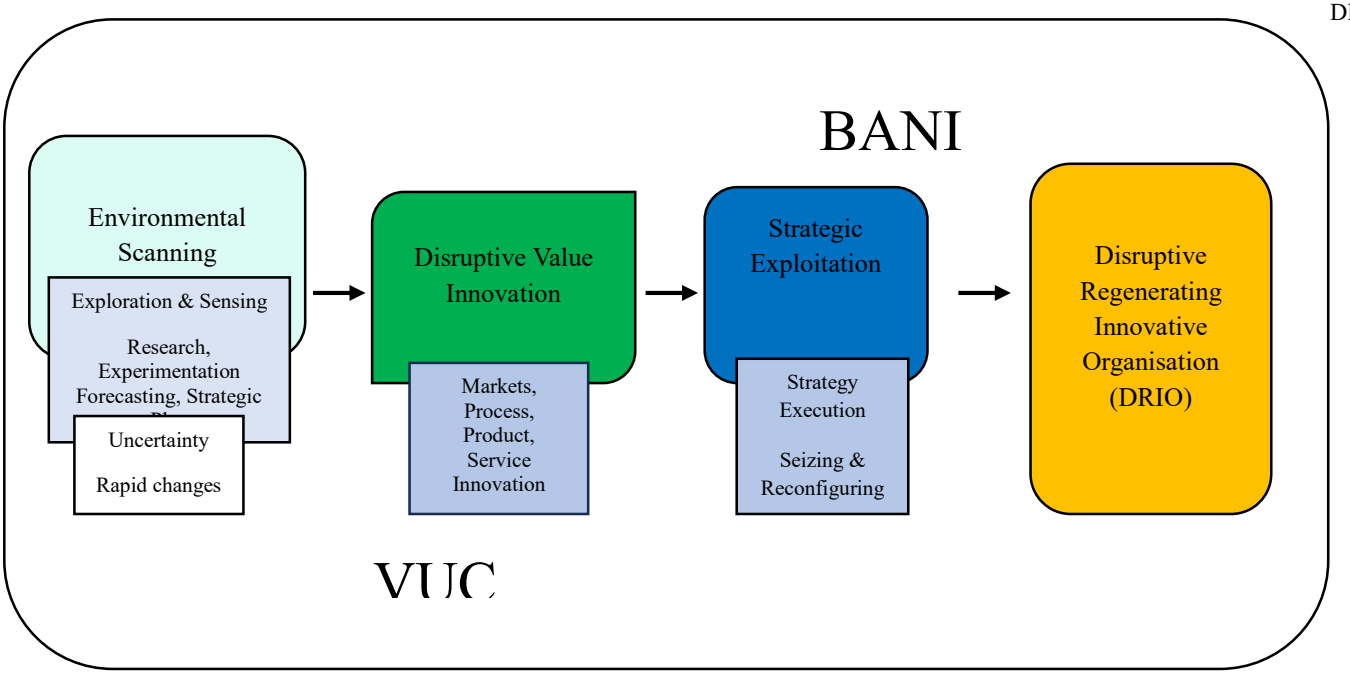
The Disruptive Regenerating Innovative Framework (DRIF) framework represents a dynamic model designed to help emerging organisations achieve sustainable competitiveness and financial resilience within volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments. It provides a cyclical, regenerative structure that links disruption, innovation, and strategic renewal, enabling firms to thrive amid continuous turbulence (De Barros et al., 2025). Building on the idea that long-term survival in such contexts requires both adaptability and strategic foresight, DRIF



integrates the strengths of five theoretical traditions: As cited by Chen et al., (2024), Blue Ocean Strategy (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005), Dynamic Capability Theory (Teece, 2018), Ambidexterity Theory (Tushman & O'Reilly, 2013), Disruptive Innovation Theory (Terry, 2020)., and Chaos Theory (Su, 2021) are key theories for sustainable growth regarding emerging economies.

The framework positions innovation not as a discrete act but as an endless process of regeneration, where organisations continuously sense environmental shifts, seize emerging opportunities, and reconfigure their resources for strategic renewal. It acknowledges that turbulence is not an obstacle to be eliminated but an ecosystem to be navigated and leveraged for growth (Ahmad et al., 2024). Within this paradigm, disruption serves as a catalyst for renewal, and renewal fuels further innovation — forming a self-reinforcing cycle of sustainable success. The DRIF model is particularly relevant for firms in emerging markets such as Africa, where volatility, currency fragility, and policy uncertainty are structural features of the business landscape (Ahmad et al., 2021).

Theoretical Foundations of the DRIF Framework

The conceptual foundation of DRIF is built upon five complementary theories that together explain how innovation, disruption, and adaptability interact to generate financial sustainability.

Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) provides the creative impetus for value innovation — creating uncontested market spaces rather than competing in saturated "red oceans" (Butt, 2024). For emerging firms, this means identifying neglected consumer segments and crafting unique offerings that redefine industry boundaries (Wangari and Mutua, 2024).

Dynamic Capability Theory (DCT) explains how firms can sense, seize, and reconfigure resources to align with environmental change (Pu et al., 2021). These capabilities enable organisations to pivot rapidly when market or technological conditions shift, transforming uncertainty into opportunity.

Ambidexterity Theory (AT) introduces the balance between exploration (innovation and experimentation) and exploitation (efficiency and optimization), allowing firms to pursue both short-term performance and long-term adaptation (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Disruptive Innovation Theory (DIT) emphasizes the power of self-disruption, where firms innovate proactively to redefine value networks and pre-empt potential competitors (Pu et al., 2021).

Finally, Chaos Theory (CT) provides the contextual logic, asserting that non-linearity, unpredictability, and emergent order characterize complex environments (Saada et al., 2024). It calls for adaptive, decentralized, and learning-driven organisations capable of reorganizing continuously (Le et al., 2022).

By synthesizing these perspectives, the DRIF framework conceptualizes sustainable success as a regenerative cycle, disruption stimulates innovation, innovation drives regeneration, and regeneration re-energizes the firm's capacity to disrupt again. This integration allows firms to avoid the weaknesses of each individual theory: BOS's creativity gains discipline from DCT, DCT's adaptability gains equilibrium from AT, and DIT's radicalism gains sustainability from CT's systemic awareness.

Operationalisation of the DRIF Cycle

The DRIF cycle consists of four interconnected and continuous stages — Environmental Scanning, Disruptive Innovation, Strategic Exploitation, and Disruptive Regeneration — all operating within the unpredictable context of VUCA and BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, Incomprehensible) environments (Panait et al., 2023).

Environmental Scanning and Exploration

The first stage involves continuous monitoring of both internal and external environments to identify weak signals, emerging technologies, and latent threats or opportunities (Ahmad et al., 2024). This stage aligns with the *sensing* dimension of DCT and the *exploration* phase of AT, emphasizing curiosity, experimentation, and strategic foresight.

Metaphorically, the entrepreneur must act like an eagle, maintaining sharp vision and situational awareness even in turbulence. Just as the eagle scans for prey despite strong winds, innovative firms must scan volatile environments to spot emerging opportunities before competitors do.

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Environmental scanning thus forms the epistemic foundation of innovation, feeding into the generative phase of disruptive creativity (Ahmed et al., 2024).

Disruptive Innovation and Generative Creation

As guided by Jiakui et al., (2023), building on environmental insights, organisations create simpler, affordable, and accessible innovations that redefine market norms, embodying the essence of Christensen's (1997) Disruptive Innovation Theory. These innovations are not necessarily technological; they can be process-based, structural, or business-model oriented (Jiakui et al., 2023). The goal is to develop new markets and value networks rather than to marginally improve existing ones.

In the African context, disruptive innovation often takes the form of frugal innovation, offering high utility at low cost while addressing local constraints (Ediagbonya et al., 2023). Through this stage, organisations challenge incumbents, democratize access to products and services, and generate fresh demand, hallmarks of the *Blue Ocean* mindset (Wangari and Mutua, 2024).

Strategic Exploitation

Once a disruptive idea achieves market traction, the firm must strategically scale and institutionalize it. This phase corresponds to the *seizing* component of DCT and the *exploitation* element of AT. It involves systematizing processes, optimizing value chains, and capturing economic returns from innovation (Ahmad et al., 2024).

Effective exploitation provides financial stability and builds the capital base required for regeneration. However, over-exploitation risks rigidity; thus, the DRIF model insists that exploitation remain dynamic and informed by constant feedback. In VUCA environments, execution agility, the ability to adjust plans in real time, determines survival (De Barros et al., 2025)

Disruptive Regeneration

The final stage, *regeneration*, embodies the renewal of capabilities, culture, and structure. Firms use the success of prior innovations to rejuvenate themselves, shedding outdated practices and embracing continuous learning (Ediagbonya et al., 2023). Like an eagle moulting its feathers to soar higher, the regenerating organisation discards obsolescence to prepare for the next cycle of disruption.

This stage closes the DRIF loop, linking back to environmental scanning. Through regeneration, firms institutionalize innovation as an ongoing habit, not a reaction to crisis. It also embeds ethical and sustainability considerations into innovation processes, ensuring that disruption contributes to long-term stakeholder value (De Barros et al., 2025).

Application of the DRIF Framework to Simbisa Brands

Simbisa Brands, a pan-African quick-service restaurant (QSR) group headquartered in Zimbabwe, exemplifies the practical application of the DRIF framework. Operating in more than nine countries and facing chronic volatility, inflation, and policy instability, the company demonstrates how continuous disruption and regeneration can yield financial sustainability (Simbisa,2023; Saada et al., 2024).

Environmental Scanning and Sensing

Simbisa has cultivated robust market intelligence mechanisms that enable it to anticipate consumer trends and regulatory changes. Through constant analysis of economic indicators and consumer preferences, the firm has identified opportunities in convenience, digital ordering, and financial inclusion (Simbisa,2025; Ahmad et al., 2021). These insights have guided the company's early entry into mobile-based food delivery and its diversification into financial services via InnBucks Microfinance Bank, which extends its QSR ecosystem into fintech (Simbisa, 2025; Ahmed et al., 2024).

This reflects DCT's *sensing* dimension, detecting shifts before competitors, and BOS's imperative to search for uncontested market space.

Disruptive Innovation in Practice

Simbisa's Dial-a-Delivery platform and InnBucks represent major disruptive innovations. By digitizing the customer journey and integrating payments and rewards into a single mobile ecosystem, Simbisa transformed the traditional restaurant model into a hybrid QSR-fintech enterprise. This innovation enhanced customer convenience while generating new revenue streams and loyalty loops (Simbisa,2025; Gerber & Matthee, 2019).

Furthermore, by targeting underserved urban and peri-urban markets, Simbisa created value innovation consistent with Blue Ocean Strategy principles, offering differentiation through convenience and low cost (Mutua & Wangari, 2024; Simbisa 2022).

Strategic Exploitation and Agility

Having created this disruptive model, Simbisa has strategically exploited it through systematic scaling, efficient franchising, and technological integration. Listing on the Victoria Falls Stock Exchange in 2022 enhanced its access to capital, enabling reinvestment in innovation and outlet expansion (Ahmad et al., 2021).

At the same time, management-maintained agility through cost containment, local sourcing, and renewable energy adoption, demonstrating ambidextrous management that balances efficiency with experimentation (Clauss et al., 2021). The company's swift pivot during the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding delivery operations while modernising outlets, illustrates operational exploitation that fuels regeneration (Panait et al., 2023).

Disruptive Regeneration and Renewal

Simbisa's continual renewal is evident in its ongoing modernization of stores, menu diversification, and investment in human capital development. The organisation has reconfigured its supply chain to mitigate currency volatility and has adopted solar energy to reduce cost exposure (Simbisa,2025). These adaptive initiatives exemplify the regenerative stage of the DRIF cycle, using accumulated capabilities to reinvent operations for the next wave of disruption.

Moreover, Simbisa's proactive management of regulatory pressures, such as adopting USD reporting and flexible pricing strategies amid tax changes, reflects regenerative adaptability grounded in Chaos Theory's principle of non-linearity (Su, 2021).

Ethical and Governance Dimensions

Simbisa's experience also reveals the ethical dimension of innovation. The company's temporary missteps, such as the 2021 exchange-rate controversy, underscore the need for responsible innovation, ensuring that strategic experimentation remains aligned with ethical and regulatory norms (Pavie & Egal, 2011; Panait et al., 2023). The DRIF framework emphasises that genuine regeneration involves not only technological and structural renewal but also moral recalibration and transparent governance.

Strategic and Ethical Implications

The DRIF framework offers strategic lessons for organisations confronting hyper-volatility. First, continuous sensing must become institutionalized, firms should maintain dedicated innovation units and analytics functions to monitor trends and weak signals (Ramadan & Susanto, 2024). Second, self-disruption is essential; incumbents must be willing to reinvent business models before competitors do (Saada et al., 2024).

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Third, ethical regeneration ensures that innovation strengthens social legitimacy rather than undermines it (Ahmed et al., 2024). As Simbisa's case demonstrates, anticipating regulatory shifts, embracing transparency, and prioritizing stakeholder trust are vital for sustainable innovation in emerging markets.

Finally, integrating VUCA and BANI perspectives enhances resilience by helping managers understand both volatility and systemic fragility. Firms must be designed to be "anti-fragile" — benefiting from shocks through adaptive learning and modular structures (Menaria, 2024, Ahmad et al., 2024).

Managerial Insights and Conclusion

From a managerial perspective, the DRIF model transforms the way organisations conceive innovation and sustainability. It recasts turbulence as an opportunity for strategic regeneration and establishes a blueprint for perpetual reinvention. The model suggests that leaders must foster ambidextrous cultures, encouraging both disciplined efficiency and creative exploration (Panait et al., 2023).

For Simbisa Brands, institutionalising the DRIF framework implies developing a permanent innovation department, expanding digital integration, and enhancing supply chain resilience through regional sourcing. Leadership development should focus on cultivating "chaos-competent" managers who can operate effectively amid uncertainty (Ahmed et al., 2024). Data analytics and AI-driven insights should guide both strategic sensing and operational execution.

Ultimately, the DRIF framework demonstrates that in emerging markets, financial sustainability and innovation are not opposing goals but mutually reinforcing capabilities. Through continuous disruption, regeneration, and innovation, firms can build dynamic resilience, create new market spaces, and maintain long-term competitiveness. As shown in the case of Simbisa Brands, adopting the DRIF cycle allows organisations not merely to survive turbulence but to thrive because of it, transforming volatility into a strategic resource for growth.

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