

**Developing Organisational Resilience to Fundamental Crises:
Evaluating Social Media as a Key Enabler for Resource Bricolage
within Retail micro-SMEs**

Dafydd John Cotterell BSc, AFHEA

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Abstract

Recent years have presented the UK economy with a series of fundamental crisis events, fostering complex challenges for UK businesses. These crisis events continue to test the adaptive capacity of businesses and have impeded the continuity of trade within several UK sectors. Such crisis events have had particularly sobering effects for the UK retail sector, and more specifically retail micro-SMEs. This research evaluates the experiences of retail micro-SMEs across the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis, evaluating the role of effective social media use as an enabler for resource bricolage. Resource bricolage receives much precedent within crisis literature as an effective vector of organisational resilience in the face of crisis, however little is known regarding the key enablers of the bricolage process. With social media's well documented ability to support positive commercial outcomes within business functions such as marketing, internationalisation, and innovation, it is logical to consider its role as an enabler of resilience.

This study used a qualitative methodology where a semi-structured interview was applied as the research instrument. Overall, 20 interviews were conducted of which all participants were owner managers of retail micro-SMEs. The data collected was analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis, where prevalent themes were identified within the data. The study found that social media did indeed enable resource bricolage, where resource bricolage was an effective activity for developing resilience. Furthermore, the research identified that the degree of social media use, business experience and externally derived crisis forces all significantly contributed to the resilience of retail micro-SMEs. In addition to these three factors, the role of support mechanisms was also identified as a determining factor for businesses. These four factors cumulatively interceded the resilience of retail micro-SMEs, were businesses could be classified into one of three resilience categories. These three categories included businesses that failed, survived and thrived as a result of the crisis.

Declaration of Statements

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed:



Date:

30th October 2023

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed:

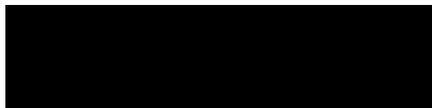


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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	7
List of Figures	8
List of Tables	9
List of Abbreviations	11
Associated Publications	12
Awards and Accreditations Attained Through this Period of Research	14
Chapter 1: Introduction	15
1.1: Research Motivation.....	15
1.2: Research Context.....	16
1.3: Theoretical Positioning	17
1.4: Research Aim and Objectives	17
1.5: Methodological Design	20
1.6: Contribution to Knowledge	20
1.7: Thesis Structure	21
Chapter 2: Literature Review – Managing Crisis in Organisations	23
2.1: Understanding Crises	23
2.1.1: Defining a Crisis	24
2.1.2: Crisis Typologies	26
2.1.3: Crisis Event Sequence	29
2.2 Managing Crises	31
2.2.1: Defining Crisis Management	32
2.2.2: Defining Organisational Resilience	33
2.2.3: Crisis Research Concerning Large and Complex Organisations.....	34
2.3: SME Focused Crisis Research.....	39
2.3.1: Defining a micro-SME	40
2.3.2: Small Business Crisis Theory.....	41
2.3.3: Fundamental Crisis Research (Pre-Covid-19)	44
2.3.4: Covid-19 Specific Research	50
2.4: Chapter Summary	54
Chapter 3: Literature Review – Developing a Sectorial Focus	56
3.1: The Retail Sector as a Sector of Interest	56
3.1.1: Defining Retail	56
3.1.2: Covid-19 and the Retail Sector	57
3.1.3: Defining a Retail micro-SME	61
3.1.4: Implications of Covid-19 for Retail SMEs.....	61
3.2: Social Media Use within SMEs	63
3.2.1: Defining Social Media.....	63
3.2.2: Key foci of SME Social Media Research.....	64
3.2.3: Social Media Use within the Context of Crisis.....	69
3.3: Identifying a Contribution.....	70
3.3.1: Identifying a Gap in the Literature	71
3.3.2: Adopting a Theoretical Perspective – Resource Bricolage Theory.....	73
3.3.3: Considerations for Context	76

3.3.4: Presenting the Conceptual Framework	77
3.3.5: Presenting the Research Questions	83
Chapter 4: Methodology	86
4.1: Method Rationale	86
4.1.1: Research Philosophy	87
4.1.2: Consequential Philosophical Position	89
4.1.3: Approach to Theory Development	92
4.1.4: Research Purpose.....	93
4.1.5: Methodological Choice	94
4.1.6: Research Time Frames.....	99
4.1.7: Data Collection Approach.....	99
4.1.8: Data Analysis Approach	101
4.2: Method Operationalisation.....	103
4.2.1: Research Instrument Design	103
4.2.2: Pilot Testing.....	110
4.2.3: Identifying Study Participants	114
4.2.4: Practical Implementation of the Interview Process	117
4.2.5: Resulting Sample	118
4.2.6: Commitment to Confidentiality and Ethics	119
4.2.7: Data Analysis Technique.....	119
4.3: Chapter Summary	122
Chapter 5: Findings – Presenting the Participants and Pre-Crisis Context....	124
5.1: Presenting the Participating Businesses.....	124
5.1.1: Participant Profile	124
5.1.2: Thematic Mapping	129
5.2: Thematic Analysis: Owner Manager Background	132
5.2.1: Business Experience.....	132
5.2.2: Crisis Management Experience	135
5.2.3: Social Media Experience.....	138
5.3: Thematic Analysis: Pre-Crisis Business Model.....	139
5.3.1: The Pre-crisis Business Model.....	140
5.3.2: Pre-crisis Social Media Use	142
5.3.3: Pre-Crisis Business Performance	147
5.4: Chapter Summary	150
Chapter 6: Findings – Crisis Impact	151
6.1: Thematic Analysis: Trans-Crisis Business Model	151
6.1.1: External Crisis Forces	151
6.1.2: Support Mechanisms.....	155
6.1.3: Trans-Crisis Social Media Use	158
6.1.4: Resource Bricolage Activities.....	166
6.1.5: Trans-Crisis Business Performance.....	170
6.2: Thematic Analysis: Post-Crisis Reflections.....	174
6.2.1: Crisis Learnings.....	175
6.2.2: Future Resilience Considerations	178
6.3: Chapter Summary	179
Chapter 7: Discussion	181
7.1: Enabling Organisational Resilience within Retail Micro-SMEs.....	181
7.1.1: Relationship to Core Crisis Management Concepts	181
7.1.2: Informing the SME Crisis Research	183
7.1.3: Informing Previous Retail Research.....	188

7.1.4: Informing Previous Social Media Research	189
7.1.5: Social Media as an Enabler of Resource Bricolage	191
7.2: Consulting the Research Questions	193
7.2.1: Research Question 1.....	194
7.2.2: Research Question 2.....	196
7.2.3: Research Question 3.....	198
7.2.4: Research Question 4.....	200
7.3: Re-Visiting the Conceptual Framework	202
7.3.1: Comparison of Conceptual Themes and Empirical Themes.....	202
7.3.2: An Empirically Informed Framework	205
7.4: Chapter Summary	209
Chapter 8: Conclusion	210
8.1: Summary of Key Findings	210
8.2: Thesis Contribution to Knowledge	213
8.2.1: Contextual Contribution.....	213
8.2.2: Theoretical Contribution	214
8.2.3: Implications for Practice	214
8.2.4: Implications for Policy.....	215
8.2.5: Study Limitations and Future Research	216
8.3: Reflecting on the PhD Process.....	217
8.3.1: Reflective Account from the Researcher.....	217
References.....	220
Appendices.....	259
Appendix 4.1: Similar Studies to this Research	259
Appendix 4.2: Interview Research Instrument	260
Appendix 4.3: Example Email Sent to Perspective Participant	265
Appendix 4.4: Informed Consent Form.....	266
Appendix 4.5: Ethical Approval.....	267
Appendix 4.6: Initial Data Codes	272
Appendix 4.7: Finalised Data Codes	279
Appendix 4.8: Action Log	284

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List of Figures

Figure 2.1: Gundel's (2005) Typology Matrix	28
Figure 2.2: Three Phased Chronological Order of a Crisis	30
Figure 2.3: Areas of Enquiry within Small Business Crisis Research	40
Figure 3.1: The Conceptual Framework	79
Figure 4.1: The Research Onion	87
Figure 4.2: Effects of Assumptions on Research Paradigm	89
Figure 4.3: The Abductive Approach Applied to this Thesis	93
Figure 4.4: Rationalisation Analysis for the Methodological Approach to this Thesis	95
Figure 5.1: Thematic Map	131
Figure 7.1: Forces Present within the External Environment	206
Figure 7.2: Final Empirically Tested Framework	208

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Crisis Event Sequence Models	31
Table 2.2: UK Companies Act 2005 SME Definitions	41
Table 3.1 Research Questions	84
Table 4.1: Alternative Terminologies for the Research Paradigms	90
Table 4.2: Assumptions of the Two Key Paradigms	90
Table 4.3: Additional Paradigms that Exist Across the Continuum	91
Table 4.4: Studies that can be Considered Similar to this Thesis	95
Table 4.5: Methods Applied within Previous Studies	96
Table 4.6: Research Instruments Applied within Previous Qualitative Studies	98
Table 4.7: Research Time Horizon	99
Table 4.8: Eligibility Criteria of Participating retail SMEs	100
Table 4.9: Similar Studies Adopting an Interview research Instrument	101
Table 4.10: The Braun & Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis Process	102
Table 4.11: Strategy Towards the Interview Structure	104
Table 4.12: Research Questions for this Study	105
Table 4.13: Interview Questions Relating to each Interview Section	106
Table 4.14: Alignment of Research Questions with Interview Questions	108

Table 4.15: Pilot Study Stages	110
Table 4.16: Professional Profile of PhD Supervisor Taking Part in Stage 1 of the Pilot Process	111
Table 4.17: Professional Profile of Academics Taking Part in Stage 2 of the Pilot Process	112
Table 4.18: Profiles of Participants Taking Part within Stage 3 of the Pilot Process	113
Table 4.19: Process Applied to identify Potential Interview Questions	114
Table 4.20: Technique used to Secure Participants	117
Table 4.21: Three Phased Approach to the Braun & Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis Method	120
Table 5.1: Overview of Participating Businesses	126
Table 7.1: Research Questions	194
Table 7.2: Themes from the Conceptual Framework	202
Table 7.3: Themes Developed from the Empirical Findings	203

List of Abbreviations

BMI – Business Model Innovation
B2B – Business to Business
B2C – Business to Customer
CJRS – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
CMT – Crisis Management Teams
CRM – Customer Relationship Management
DOI – Diffusion of Innovation
ESM – Enterprise Social Media
ESS – Earthquake Support Scheme
EU – European Union
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency
FMD – Foot and Mouth Disease
GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation
GFC – Global Financial Crisis
HRO – High Reliability Organisation
ICT – Information Communication Technology
RBV – Resource Based View
SBA – Small Business Association
SME – Small and Medium sized Enterprise
TAM – Technology Adoption Model
TOE – Technology Organisation Environment Model
TRA – Theory of Reasoned Action
UK – United Kingdom
US – United States (of America)
UTAUT – United Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

Associated Publications

Conference Contributions with Published Proceedings

Dafydd Cotterell, Abdalla Badhrus, Fatma Jeneby, Dennis Dennehy (2023). An Activity Theory Approach to Understanding Relations between Funding Agencies and Organisations in the Global South, ISTAS conference, School of Management, Swansea University, Swansea, UK, 13th-15th September.

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Awards and Accreditations Attained Through this Period of Research

James Callaghan Research Prize 2022-2023

This award was presented to the author of this thesis to recognise the research enclosed as of excellent quality. This is a prestigious University wide award presented annually to a Swansea University Postgraduate student, carrying a financial reward of £1,000.

Best Paper in Track Award 2021

Presented for the submission 'Developing Organisational Resilience to Fundamental Crisis: An Evaluation of Social Media as a key Enabler for Resource Bricolage within Rural SME's' within the rural enterprise track at the 43rd annual Institute of Small Business and Entrepreneurship (ISBE) conference.

Associate Fellowship of The Higher Education Academy (AFHEA)

During the PhD process the author also attained AFHEA status in relation to teaching duties held at Swansea University. At this time, the author was the first student to attain this accreditation while studying for a PhD at Swansea University's School of Management.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the contents of this thesis. Starting with the research motivation and context, Chapter 1 takes the form of 8 sections covering the key aspects which explain the position and intention of this study. These aspects include the study's theoretical positioning, research aim and objectives, methodological design, contribution to knowledge and finally the thesis structure.

1.1: Research Motivation

This research is primarily motivated by the need for an increased volume of crisis research within a small business context (Doern et al., 2019). While crisis research is well established in the literature, small business contexts are often overlooked (Herbane, 2010). Furthermore, the study of high impact crises is scant where difficult to predict, and difficult to prevent crises do not receive due attention. Extending this field of study is of paramount importance to managerial research, as the global economy faces an increasing volume of crisis events. At the time of writing, many examples exist of such events. These include Russia's conflict with Ukraine, Israel's conflict with Gaza, America's tensions with China, fears of another pandemic and the effects of climate change more broadly. Such events create volatility and uncertainty for business, with potentially damaging consequences. It is important that managerial practitioners and researchers alike are armed with knowledge to help prepare for and reduce the impact of such events.

The unique research opportunity to study micro-SME resilience came about during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, between 2020 and 2022. Within this study the pandemic is characterised as a fundamental crisis – i.e. being both difficult to predict and difficult to impact or prevent (see section 2.1.2 for further explanation). By considering Covid-19 as a fundamental crisis more broadly than a pandemic, it is possible to examine aspects of the crisis that could be judged similar to other crises, thus generating findings that could inform approaches to future fundamental crisis events. Within the case of Covid-19, the retail sector can be seen as one of the most heavily effected sectors, thus making it a worthwhile sector of interest (Altig et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2021 Chenarides et al., 2021). Consequently, this thesis aims to evaluate the

resilience of retail micro-SMEs during the Covid-19 crisis, and examine the role of social media within. For a more extensive explanation of this study's research aim and objectives see section 1.4.

1.2: Research Context

This research is set within the geographical context of the United Kingdom (UK). The UK is one of many countries effected by the Covid-19 crisis, where Government issued multiple nationwide lockdowns, affecting businesses across the country (UK Parliament, 2023). At the time of writing the UK had seen over 24 million reported cases of Covid-19 with over 229,000 confirmed deaths (World Health Organisation, 2023a). In addition to the disastrous public health implications of the virus, Covid-19 had severe consequences for the economy, costing UK taxpayers £376 billion, with £147 billion paid out in financial support to businesses (UK National Audit Office, 2022). The UK is an example of a sovereign state that was heavily affected by the Covid-19 crisis, as well as being the home country of the researcher. This provided a logical basis to undertake this research within the UK.

This research is set within the organisational context of retail micro-SMEs. Within the UK it is estimated that SMEs account for three fifths of employment across the UK economy, and account for half the turnover of all private sector businesses (Federation of Small Businesses, 2023). According to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2023) there were approximately 5.5 million SMEs established within the UK at the time of this research, where over 5.2 million of these were micro-SMEs. When applying a sectorial view of UK SMEs, it is possible to identify that the retail sector accounts for around 10% of all SMEs, making it one of the most significant sectors for SMEs (UK Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, 2023). It was therefore logical to undertake this research within a retail micro-SME organisational context, due to the significance of the sector in terms of its economic contribution, but also because it was one of the most heavily effected sectors by the Covid-19 crisis (Altig et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2021 Chenarides et al., 2021).

1.3: Theoretical Positioning

This thesis is positioned within the field of organisational resilience, where research aims to examine and explain organisational responses to crises. This area of research can more broadly be interpreted as that of business continuity management where the study of resilience is an evolutionary step within the lineage of the field. Where practices such as crisis management aim to regain normal business functioning during crisis, organisational resilience focuses on maintaining normal business functioning (Williams et al., 2017). Within this field of study, it is possible to see a limited focus on small business research, where the field is dominated by research set within the context of larger and more complex organisations (Herbane, 2013). Within the small body of literature researching small businesses resilience, Resource Bricolage Theory can be seen as a prominent theoretical perspective. Resource Bricolage Theory concerns the ability of a business to use the generic resources it has to hand, for the development of situationally specific responses to problems encountered within the business environment (Baker & Nelson, 2005). Although many theoretical perspectives can be seen to apply a resource focus, only bricolage takes a resource focus within a resource-constrained business environment. This thesis therefore applies Resource Bricolage Theory as its theoretical perspective, to understand the organisational resilience activities of retail micro-SMEs. For a more extensive rationale for the use of Resource Bricolage Theory please see section 3.3.2. Furthermore, this thesis considers social media as an enabler to the bricolage process. Previous literature has identified social media as a key enabler for business success in many business functions, which includes internationalisation and marketing (see section 3.2.2). With social media receiving much precedent within academic literature for creating business value, it is therefore logical for this thesis to consider social media's ability to enable bricolage for the purpose of developing resilience.

1.4: Research Aim and Objectives

This research began with an extensive literature review process where a single research aim and four research objectives were established. The research aim began as one that was broad in nature, setting the direction of the research. As the literature

review became more informed, the research aim was refined until a penultimate research aim was established. The research aim of this study can be seen below:

RA: To evaluate the propensity of effective social media use as a key enabler for resource bricolage activities within retail micro-SMEs, as a method of developing organisational resilience to fundamental crisis.

The research aim was constructed to understand how effective social media use enabled resource bricolage within retail micro-SMEs operating within the UK. Although Resource Bricolage Theory receives much precedent within small business crisis literature, the enablers of resource bricolage are under-researched. With social media's well documented role of creating commercial value within organisations, it was logical to consider its role as an enabling resource within the bricolage process. More specifically, this thesis set out to investigate the ways in which (effective) social media use enabled resilience as opposed to the presence of social media as a resource more generally.

To ensure the fulfilment of the research aim, four research objectives were established. The intention of these research objectives was to cumulatively contribute to the fulfilment of the research aim, by highlighting key areas of focus within the research process. Research objective 1 can be seen below:

RO1: To identify if social media experience was a determinant in the effective use of social media for bricolage purposes, within the trans-crisis phase of a fundamental crisis.

This thesis considered Covid-19 as a fundamental crisis (see section 2.1.2). Fundamental crises can be characterised as those that are difficult to predict at a business level, meaning that the crisis cannot be foreseen by the business. Furthermore, a fundamental crisis is one that is difficult to impact, meaning that at a business level the genesis of the crisis cannot be impacted. Within the context of such a crisis, it is difficult for businesses to prepare for and detect the event. In this case it is necessary that businesses develop the capability to mitigate a crisis at the time of the crisis, quite often within the trans-crisis phase. If social media is to be evaluated

as an enabler of bricolage within the context of fundamental crisis, the role of social media experience must be clearly understood. It is on this basis that research objective 1 was constructed for the purpose of this study.

Research objective 2 sought to consider the effectiveness of social media platforms as outlined below:

RO2: To evaluate any disparities in the effectiveness of social media platforms for the purposes of developing resilience through bricolage.

While the enabling ability of social media is more broadly considered within the research aim, this objective was constructed to identify any nuances and disparities in the capability of social media platforms. This research objective was therefore constructed to understand whether particular social media platforms held particular characteristics that might make these more effective for supporting bricolage.

Research objective 3 examined the important resources utilised by micro-SMEs as part of the bricolage process, further to that of social media. Research objective 3 can be seen below:

RO3: To identify and evaluate the crucial retail micro-SME resources that are present for bricolage to act as an effective process for developing resilience to fundamental crisis.

Whereas objectives 1 and 2 focus on the role of social media specifically, objective 3 focuses on the bricolage process. To ensure the study was rigorous in nature it was important to consider the bricolage process and the diversity of resources that might contribute to developing resilience. As such, this research objective was constructed to more fully understand the spectrum of resources that best contribute to the bricolage process.

The final research objective constructed for the purpose of this study set out to identify capabilities as opposed to resources, as shown below in research objective 4:

RO4: To identify and evaluate the range of capabilities developed, when using social media as an enabler for bricolage within the trans-crisis phase of a fundamental crisis.

This research objective was constructed to more fully understand the range of business capabilities that retail micro-SMEs were able to develop in cases where social media had successfully enabled bricolage. This research objective was important because it allowed for the identification of the outputs of the bricolage process that shaped the resilience of retail micro-SMEs. All the above-mentioned objectives were operationalised to research questions ahead of the data collection aspect of the research. The research questions for this study can be seen within section 3.3.5.

1.5: Methodological Design

Taking a pragmatic philosophical stance, this study was undertaken using a qualitative research design, utilising a semi-structured interview research instrument to gather data on retail micro-SMEs. The unit of analysis was the business, and the owner manager was considered as a component part of the business. In total 20 interviews were conducted across 20 businesses, where all interviews were held with the owner manager of the business. All interviews were subsequently transcribed and subject to a rigorous Reflexive Thematic Analysis, where it was possible to identify themes within the data. For a deeper explanation of the methodological design for this study see chapter 4.

1.6: Contribution to Knowledge

While this study can be seen to extend current research in many ways, it makes two substantive contributions to knowledge. This thesis can be seen to make a contextual contribution to knowledge and a theoretical contribution. Contextually this research makes a contribution by extending knowledge of retail micro-SME behaviour during a time of fundamental crisis. Previous small business crisis research has not sufficiently differentiated micro, small and medium businesses and instead classifies all small businesses under the label of SME in most cases (see section 2.3). This research therefore extends current research by outlining the specific business behaviours of

retail micro-SMEs as opposed to SMEs more broadly. Furthermore, this thesis also makes a theoretical contribution where it extends the understanding of the enablers of resource bricolage (cf. Baker & Nelson, 2005). Previous research has failed to adequately research the enablers of resource bricolage and it is thought that understanding the enablers of bricolage is key to understanding the critical link between theory and practical implementation (see section 3.3.2). This study contributes to current knowledge by identifying effective social media use as an enabler of bricolage. A more extensive explanation of this study's contribution to knowledge can be seen within sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2.

1.7: Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured in a way that is conducive to displaying the important and relevant aspects of this research. The substantive elements of the thesis begin in chapter 2, the first literature review chapter. Chapter 2 presents a discussion on core crisis theory, including that of small business specific research. Chapter 3 is the second literature review chapter and examines retail and social media specific research. The literature review is concluded within chapter 3 with the presentation of the conceptual framework (see section 3.3.4) and research questions (see section 3.3.5).

Chapter 4 proceeds to outline the methodological approach to this thesis, where the rationalisation and operationalisation of the data collection and analysis processes are outlined. The methodological rationale applies a foundation based upon methodological research and relevant managerial research, where an academic precedent for the methodological approach is identified. The operationalisation section of the chapter provides the granular details on how the data was collected and analysed. Chapters 5 and 6 outline the findings of this study by presenting the data in order of themes identified within the Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Chapters 5 and 6 present data collected from participants regarding the pre-crisis and trans-crisis phase, where differences in business behaviours are identified. Data is also presented regarding the post-crisis reflections of participants.

Chapter 7 provides a rich discussion, critically comparing findings to previous research. This chapter utilises the research questions as a structure to illustrate how this study extends previous research. The final chapter of the thesis, chapter 8, presents and summarises the conclusions. This chapter outlines the contributions to knowledge made by this thesis in addition to its implications for practice and policy. The closing chapter sections provide suggestions for future research before outlining some reflections from the researcher.

Chapter 2: Literature Review – Managing Crisis in Organisations

The aim of chapter 1 was to clearly delineate the study's position and intention. Chapter 2 now provides the theoretical background to this study by undertaking a detailed review of previous crisis research. This chapter aims firstly to provide an understanding of crisis events by defining the term, adopting a crisis typology, and adopting a crisis chronological model (section 2.1). Furthermore, the chapter proceeds to examine the two key concepts of crisis research within management studies, namely the crisis management and organisational resilience concepts (section 2.2). Both areas of research offer valuable theoretical contributions that can be seen to be applied across several organisational contexts. After presenting both concepts, focus turns to examining SME specific crisis research (section 2.3). Chapter section 2.3 draws on a range of classical studies that have defined the field, but also identifies recent contextual and seminal studies that are foundational to this research. Furthermore, chapter section 2.3 provides a detailed discussion on Covid-19 specific literature. The chapter concludes with a detailed chapter summary, outlining gaps in current research.

2.1: Understanding Crises

Managing crisis requires a critically important first step in the proper identification of a crisis situation, and that is to understand the crisis at hand (Burnett, 1998). Only by intricately understanding a crisis situation, can stakeholders select the appropriate mode of action needed to mitigate the event (Coombs, 1998). What is evident however is that research seeking to understand crisis is fragmented and complex (Buchanan & Denyer, 2013; Shrivastava, 1993). The objective of this chapter section is to develop an understanding of crisis events in isolation, before proceeding to discuss any further crisis research within a managerial context. This chapter section firstly defines a crisis event, where there is no universally applied definition for crisis in an organisational setting (Herbane, 2010; Coombs, 2012). This chapter section then proceeds to identify a suitable typology that effectively categorises the Covid-19 crisis (section 2.1.2). A variety of crisis typologies can be seen to exist, all adopting different perspectives on how to categorise crisis events. It is therefore important to evaluate these typologies and identify the most appropriate typology for this thesis. Finally, section 2.1.3

considers the plethora of crisis event sequence models, before adopting a model that appropriately represents the chronological order of a crisis such as Covid-19, the crisis considered within this thesis.

2.1.1: Defining a Crisis

The subjectivity of the term crisis creates much ambiguity within crisis literature, where there is no universally accepted definition for the term (Herbane, 2010; Coombs, 2012). Crisis can be considered as part of a lexicon of terms describing negative events impacting on business operations. Other terms synonymous with crisis include business malfunctions, accidents, disasters, failure, mistakes, near misses or serious incidents only to name a few (Buchanan & Denyer, 2013). This has led to an academic discourse seeking to decrease the subjectivity of the term crisis and present a clear definition. One perspective adopted to better understand crises has involved the examination of the relationship between the term crisis with the term disaster. Borodzicz (2005) distinguishes a crisis as 'the event' and a disaster as 'the outcome,' a notion concurred by Boin (2006). This is while Laws & Prideaux (2006:6) define a crisis as "an unexpected problem seriously disrupting the functioning of an organisation" and a disaster as an "unpredictable catastrophic change that can normally only be responded to after the event". Conversely, it is also possible to observe academic discourse discussing the terms crisis, disaster and associative terms synonymously (Gorski, 1998; Weick, 2010; Gundel, 2005) with some adopting blanket terms such as 'extreme event' as an overreaching label for all terminology associated with crises (Hannah et al., 2009). Academic discussion such as this has resulted in the observation that terms such as disaster and crisis are somewhat resistant to unambiguous definitions that can be applied universally (Buchanan & Denyer, 2013).

Academic literature can be seen to conceptualise crisis as a process where natural weakening occurs of the organisations systems, leading to a disruption (Williams et al., 2017). However, it is apparent that most definitions of crisis rely on the notion that a crisis is any event that is extreme, unpredictable, and that create challenges for the organisation requiring an urgent response to minimise business losses (Doern et al., 2019). This conceptualisation of crisis is built upon definitions such as that offered by

Pearson & Clair (1998), Hermann (1963) and Stafford et al. (2002) who all point to a crisis as an event that is not foreseen, is unlikely to occur, and can incur negative implications for business performance requiring a swift organisational response. This conceptualisation can be seen to be adopted in several entrepreneurship and small business studies (cf. Dutton, 1986; Doern, 2016; Herbane, 2010; Herbane, 2013). Within entrepreneurship studies, Pearson and Clair's (1998) definition can be observed as frequently adopted (Doern et al., 2019). Pearson and Clair (1998:66) define a crisis as:

“A low probability, high impact situation that is perceived by critical stakeholders to threaten the viability of the organisation and that is subjectively experienced by these individuals as personally and socially threatening. Ambiguity of cause, effect and means of resolution of the organisational crisis will lead to disillusionment or loss of psychic and shared meaning, as well as the shattering of commonly held beliefs, values and individuals' basic assumptions. During the crisis, decision making is pressed by perceived time constraints and coloured by cognitive limitations”.

Despite the Pearson & Clair (1998) crisis definition being quite dated in academic terms, it continues to be a frequently applied definition in entrepreneurial studies. One reason for this is because it is particularly suited to studies which examine the emotional impact of crisis on owner-managers and how they react to crisis (Doern, 2016). The Pearson & Clair (1998) conceptualisation of a crisis does however fall under criticism from some researchers, suggesting that such a conceptualisation limits the scope of crisis research as it excludes crises that do not conform to this definition (Doern et al., 2019; Bazerman & Watkins, 2004). Since this definition was presented by Pearson & Clair (1998) minimal progress has been made in further developing a crisis definition which exhibits a greater level of precision. Instead, academic interest deviated to classifying crises within typologies (see section 2.1.2). There is therefore a pertinent gap in current research where a more robust crisis definition needs to be explored.

In summary of the above discussed literature, it is important that this thesis adequately defines a crisis to ensure the validity of this research. Firstly, it is important to consult the lexicon of terms used to describe crisis type events and decide upon the term used within this thesis. Academic literature has proved inconclusive as to providing clear

unambiguous definitions separating terms such as crisis and disaster, with clear contradictions across studies as discussed above. This thesis therefore considers crisis as an umbrella term under which all associative terms such as disaster, business failure and adverse event can fall beneath. Herbane (2010) can be seen to use this same approach of using crisis as an umbrella term to describe such events. Other researchers have taken the approach of using overreaching terms such as 'extreme event' in previous studies (cf. Buchanan & Denyer, 2013). This approach of introducing additional new terminology is likely to create further confusion within the field, adding to the already expansive lexicon of associative crisis terms. By using the term crisis as an overreaching term this also allows for events such as disasters, pandemics, and system failures to be categorised using a singular conceptualisation, decrease subjectivity and ambiguity. Discourse that conceptualises a crisis as a process is noteworthy, however, the notion that a crisis is triggered by a progressive weakening of an organisation's systems suggests a crisis causation that originates within the organisation. Within the case of Covid-19, the crisis can be seen as an external event that is independent of any given retail micro-SME. Therefore, this study does not consider a crisis from the perspective of a crisis as a process. Covid-19 does however conform to the Pearson & Clair (1998) conceptualisation. Namely, it can be seen that Covid-19 is an event that is unlikely to occur, has a high impact on the organisation, and requires an organisational response in a short time frame. It is therefore upon this basis that this study adopts the Pearson & Clair (1998) definition of a crisis.

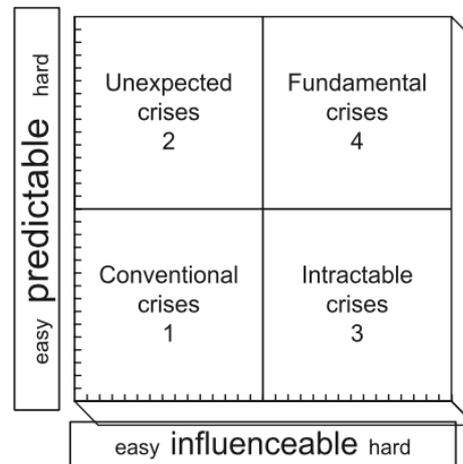
2.1.2: Crisis Typologies

In addition to defining the term crisis, academic research also attempts to categorise crises within a range of classifications, referred to as crisis typologies. These typologies offer crisis classifications from a range of perspectives and can be seen to add value and further develop the understanding of crisis variants. One of the earliest typologies applied to crises was that of categorising crises as intentional man-made crises or as natural external crises (Hart et al., 1993). Furthermore, crisis typologies have also attempted to classify crises as sudden or smouldering crises, making reference to the speed of crisis onset (James & Wooten, 2005). The location of crisis conception has also been used as a determining factor for classifying crises. Mitroff et al. (1988) categorise crises as internal crisis and external crisis. Further studies can

be seen to classify crises in terms of crisis magnitude and as natural, normal or abnormal accidents (Mitroff & Alpaslan, 2003). With such a vast plethora of typologies in existence, academic discourse has called for a universal crisis typology that can be applied unilaterally to all crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Bjorck, 2016). A lack of such a typology has been described as exceptionally painful in the context of crisis research by some researchers (Quarantelli, 2001).

Attempts at universal crisis typologies can be seen in a variety of disciplines including financial mathematics, sociology and psychology, in addition to managerial studies (Taleb, 2007; Weiner, 1995). Two universal classifications can be identified across crisis literature, the first presented by Coombs (1998) and the later by Gundel (2005). Coombs' (1998) typology originates within the field of crisis communication. The typology classifies crises based on the different types of crisis response stakeholders can employ. Perhaps a more relevant typology to this thesis is that proposed by Gundel (2005), a typology developed based upon crisis characteristics. Gundel (2005) states that in order to develop an effective crisis classification framework the classifications should be mutually exclusive, exhaustive (to ensure that every type of crisis is included), have practical applicability, and have a manageable number of classifications. Gundel (2005) also draws attention to the fact that such a typology should allow flexibility for new types of crises not yet seen, i.e. new types of crises that could develop in the future. A matrix was developed in accordance with two metrics: predictability and influenceability. These metrics allude to the predictability of a crisis, and the degree of influence an organisation can exert on crisis formation and effects. As a result, Gundel (2005) was able to classify crises into four categories noted as (1) conventional crisis (2) unexpected crisis (3) intractable crisis and (4) fundamental crisis. Gundel's (2005) Predictability - Influence Matrix can be observed in Figure 2.1 overleaf.

Figure 2.1: Gundel's (2005) Typology Matrix



The typology can be seen as a scale of crisis severity, where conventional crises are the least severe crisis type, and fundamental crises are the most severe crisis type. This scale of severity can be applied to all crises, although these crises may still be categorised in accordance with other typologies also. It is important to note that although the crisis classifications offered by Gundel (2005) are mutually exclusive, crisis events are not mutually exclusive to any individual typology. For example, 9/11 could be considered a fundamental crisis. However, it could still be classified as a criminal crisis in relation to Mitroff & Alpaslan's (2003) Normal Accidents Typology. Furthermore, 9/11 could also be classified as a sudden crisis in accordance with James and Wootan's (2005) typology. It is therefore possible to observe that the universality of Gundel's (2005) typology presents itself in the form of an overreaching typology in which all types of crises can be categorised.

The matrix presented by Gundel (2005) can also be seen to share similarities with the crisis definition provided by Pearson and Clair (1998), the crisis definition applied within this study. Gundel (2005) refers to predictability in the same way as Pearson and Clair (1998) refer to probability, an unexpected event of some kind. Both studies also speak of the degree of impact an organisation can exert on mitigating crisis effects. Gundel's (2005) study can be seen as a natural extension in the understanding of crisis classifications by adding a scale of magnitude to these two conditions of crisis, previously identified in-part by Pearson and Clair (1998). This compatibility with the

Pearson and Clair (1998) crisis definition provides a logical basis for the adoption of Gundel's (2005) Predictability - Influence Matrix within this study.

It is worth noting that within many management studies it is possible to see Covid-19 classified as a pandemic (cf. Dwivedi et al., 2020; Gursoy & Chi, 2020). Last (2001:7) define a pandemic as:

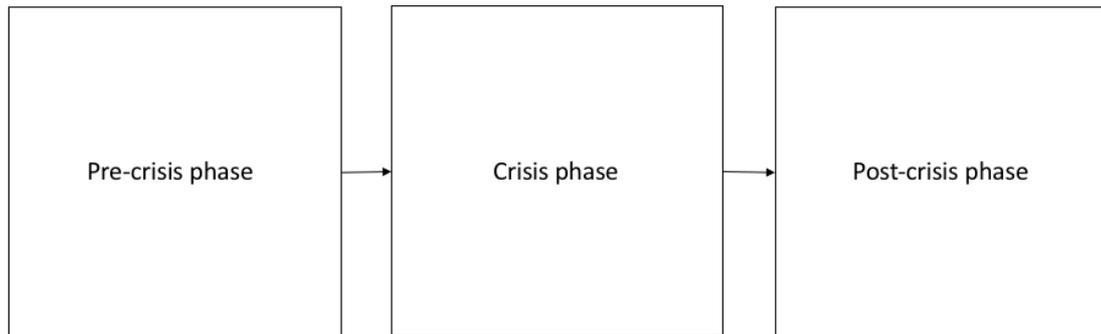
“An epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people”.

Although Covid-19 could indeed be classified as a pandemic for the purpose of this study, this would likely limit the generalisability of the outputs of this research. Pandemics are events that occur very irregularly within society (UK Government, 2023). Therefore, structuring this thesis in a way that would make the outputs specific to pandemic management within small businesses, would likely limit the impact of the research for policy and practice. It is upon this merit that Covid-19 is not considered primarily a pandemic within this thesis, but instead is considered more generally as a fundamental crisis, where both classifications are not mutually exclusive.

2.1.3: Crisis Event Sequence

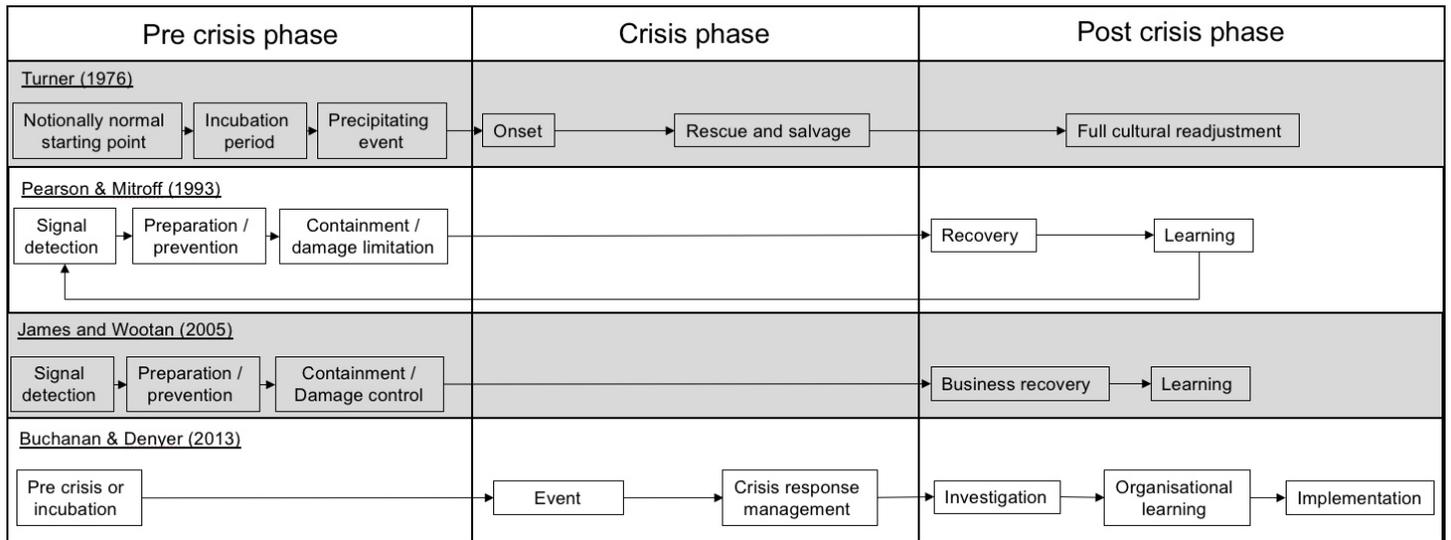
This chapter section has already defined a crisis and adopted a crisis typology. This chapter section now proceeds to develop an understanding of crises from a chronological perspective, before adopting a crisis event sequence model for the purpose of this thesis. Similarly to the previously discussed literature there has been no one set approach to classifying the chronological phases of a crisis where many variations exist across crisis literature. Generally, it can be observed that crises follow the three phases of pre-crisis, trans-crisis, and post-crisis phases (Coombs & Laufer, 2018). These three sequential phases can be illustrated by Figure 2.2 overleaf.

Figure 2.2: Three Phased Chronological order of a Crisis



Although accepted as a basic event sequence for a crisis, academic discourse has led to more detailed understandings of the crisis event sequence. Turner (1976) identifies seven chronological phases to a crisis. The seven phases consist of: the notionally normal starting point, incubation period, precipitating event, onset, rescue and salvage and full cultural re-alignment. Furthermore, Pearson & Mitroff (1993) introduce a cyclic five phase chronological order for crises. The authors outline the five phases as: signal detection, prevention / preparation, containment / damage limitation, recovery, and learning. With a number of studies attempting to theorise the crisis event sequence Buchanan & Denyer (2013) conduct an in-depth literature review and develop a six phase chronological event sequence that can explain the chronological sequence of a crisis. Buchanan & Denyer's (2013) crisis event sequence consists of six crisis phases, namely: pre-crisis or incubation, the crisis event, crisis response management, investigation, organisational learning and implementation. However, the authors stress that this event sequence is an ideal type event sequence and should not be used as a predictable sequential process; it is simply a way of structuring the description of events. Buchanan & Denyer (2013) instead describe the phases as a benchmark with which crises can be compared with one another. With a variety of crisis event sequences present, Table 2.1 provides an illustration of how these models interact and compare.

Table: 2.1: Crisis Event Sequence Models



Buchanan & Denyer’s (2013) six phase model is based on holistic research that includes widely adopted crisis event sequence models. This can be seen to provides a logical basis to treat the presented model as an evolution and enhancement of previous academic work. However, as stated by the authors, this crisis event sequence does not represent a predictable sequential process, and such cannot be used to predict the possible stages of the Covid-19 crisis. As discussed within section 2.1.2. and section 2.4.4, Covid-19 is a crisis that was not predictable at a business level and therefore it would be negligent to assume that it would have a predictable event sequence. As such, this thesis will adopt the three phased event sequence of a crisis, with pre-crisis, trans-crisis and post-crisis forming the three phases.

2.2 Managing Crises

With a thorough understanding of crisis events provided within chapter section 2.1, this chapter section now proceeds to consult academic research that examines the management of crisis events within a business context. Doern et al. (2019) finds there are two emergent key foci within crisis and management research. These foci are identified as the crisis management concept and the organisational resilience concept. Although this thesis makes a contribution to organisational resilience theory, chapter section 2.2 will also provide a definition of crisis management due to its close relation to organisational resilience. This chapter section then proceeds to provide an overview

of research within both crisis management and organisational resilience areas (section 2.2.3), of which holds relevance to this thesis.

2.2.1: Defining Crisis Management

Crisis management primarily focuses on crisis planning, preventative action, and how organisations respond to organisational failures, accidents, and interruptions, with the aim of mitigating crisis events (Herbane, 2013). Research within this area is yet to provide a widely applied definition of the term crisis management, with academic discourse presenting several definitions to date. Pearson et al. (1997:52) describe crisis management as a process to:

“Help organisations avert crises or more effectively manage those that do occur”.

Other definitions also include that presented by Canyon (2020:8) who defines crisis management as:

“The measures and methodologies used to recognise, control and limit the damage of a crisis, and its ripple effects”.

What is evident across most definitions is that crisis management is described as the process of bringing an organisation back to a state of normal functioning during or after a crisis event (Coombs, 2015; Sommer & Pearson, 2007). What is common within crisis management studies is a focus on an organisation’s ability to limit or eliminate the negative effects of crisis on the organisation. Within Williams’ et al. (2017:740) comprehensive literature review of both crisis management and resilience fields the authors can be seen to present an integrated definition of crisis management:

“The actor’s attempt to bring a disrupted or weakened system at any stage of a crisis back into alignment to achieve normal functioning [where normal functioning is representative of how the business operated before the crisis]”.

As previously mentioned, there is no widely accepted definition of the term crisis management across crisis management studies. As such, this thesis must identify and

adopt a suitable definition of the term for the purpose of this research. This thesis adopts the Williams et al. (2017) crisis management definition, as stated above. The adoption of this definition is rationalised upon the merit of two considerations. Firstly, the Williams et al. (2017) definition is based upon an extensive literature review of crisis research. It can therefore be seen that this definition is an evolution of previous schools of thought, increasing the relevance of the definition to current research. Secondly, Williams et al. (2017) also define the term organisational resilience using a similar conceptual approach (see section 2.2.2). Both definitions relate to the conceptualisation of 'normal functioning' and the subsequent business behaviours that differentiate both management practices. Applying definitions of crisis management and organisational resilience that are conceptualised comparatively allows for the differentiation of both management practices within the data collection phase of this research (see chapters 6 and 7).

2.2.2: Defining Organisational Resilience

While chapter section 2.2.1 defines the term crisis management, this chapter section defines the term organisational resilience. Notions of resilience have been explored within a variety of social contexts. These contexts are inclusive of the individual, community, organisational and Governmental level (cf. Hartmann et al., 2020; Sharifi, 2016; Burnard & Bhamra, 2011; Barbera et al., 2017). Discussions of resilience are long established within academic discourse with resilience studies spanning numerous decades (cf. Holling, 1973; Weik & Sutcliffe, 2001; Vargo & Seville, 2011). Formative discussions of organisational resilience can be seen to describe the concept as the process that allows organisations to become stronger in the face of challenges (Gallos, 2008). It is also possible to see earlier discussions of organisational resilience resemble that of crisis management, where organisational resilience has been described as the ability of an organisation to return to normal operation (Rudolph & Repenning, 2002). However, more recent discourse has seen definitions of organisational resilience evolve to become more distinguishable from crisis management definitions. Whereas crisis management focuses upon the ability of an organisation to return to normal functioning, organisational resilience focuses upon maintaining normal functioning through a period of disruption (Doern et al.,

2019). Within their comprehensive literature review of both crisis management and organisational resilience, Williams et al. (2017:742) define resilience as:

“The process by which an actor (i.e. individual, organisation or community) builds and uses its capability endowments to interact with the environment in a way that positively adjusts and maintains functioning prior to, during and following adversity”

As outlined within the definition, this definition can be applied within several social contexts. For the purpose of this study, this definition will be considered within the context of organisations, and as such the definition of organisational resilience can be seen as:

“The process by which an organisation builds and uses its capability endowments to interact with the environment in a way that positively adjusts and maintains functioning prior to, during and following adversity”

What is noteworthy regarding this definition is its mentioning of capability endowments. Williams et al. (2017) discuss capability endowments as resources and capabilities that allow organisations to become resilient. Where this study applies Resource Bricolage Theory as its theoretical perspective, it is possible to draw similarities between Williams’ et al. (2017) definition of Organisational Resilience and Baker & Nelson’s (2005) definition of bricolage. Both definitions can be seen to suggest that the ability of an organisation to extricate itself from a challenging situation can be explained by how these organisations apply their resources to the situation at hand. The Williams et al. (2017) definition of organisational resilience is also compatible with the definition of crisis management presented within section 2.2.1. The compatibility across definitions provides a logical and rational basis on which this study adopts the Williams et al. (2017) definition of organisational resilience.

2.2.3: Crisis Research Concerning Large and Complex Organisations

With both crisis management and organisational resilience defined within chapter sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 respectively, this chapter section now proceeds to present the macro level typography of crisis research. Although small business crisis literature

can be seen as the seminal literature for this study, it is important to identify contextually applicable literature. Many key crisis theoretical constructs have been developed within the context of larger more complex organisations, and subsequently applied to small business studies. It is therefore apparent that such academic discourse should be examined in order to gain a holistic understanding of crisis research. Much research can be seen to identify the intrinsic value that formal crisis mitigating managerial activity provides to organisations. Fink (1986) illustrates that organisations with formal crisis management plans recover twice as quickly as those who do not during times of crisis. Further research conducted by Spillan & Hough (2003) showed that 90% of businesses without crisis plans go out of business within the two-year period after a crisis. Despite the strong precedent within academic literature waging the importance of crisis management activity, it is often a neglected management function within organisations, with studies indicating that 75% of organisations are unequipped to manage unfamiliar crises (Mitroff & Alpaslan, 2003).

It is prevalent that crisis is researched within a variety of organisational contexts. This includes High Reliability Organisations (HROs), where such organisations must operate at exceptionally high levels of reliability, demonstrating the ability to avoid crisis over an extended time periods (Agwu et al., 2019; Haavik, 2011; La Porte, 1996; Perrow, 1984). Further research foci also include a focus on crisis communication, where notions such as trust and ethics are prevalent phenomena under investigation (Lee & Jahng, 2020; Ashcroft, 1997; Wells, 1978). Furthermore, a research focus can also be observed on the role of Crisis Management Teams (CMT) (Uitdewilligen & Waller, 2018). Such academic discourse can be seen to investigate phenomena such as crisis management training and crisis team decision making (Kwok et al., 2019). Although all aforementioned research is important to the field, it is possible to identify research foci that have particular pertinence and relevance to this thesis. These research foci are discussed below.

A key research focus that can be considered relevant to this study is that examining the role of resources within the organisational resilience process. Within this area of research, the role of slack resources is examined. Previous studies have examined the role of financial slack as an enabler of organisational resilience, where financial slack can act as a buffer to the external environment (Marczyk et al., 2023; Schäffer,

2020; Bradley et al., 2011; Hobfoll, 1989; Gittel et al., 2006). The literature notes that organisations facing financial challenges before a crisis are more likely to then become affected by the crisis (Zagelmeyer & Heckmann, 2013). Literature also identifies the role of relational resources, where internal and external relationships are identified as contributory to organisational resilience (Hartel & Latemore, 2011). Further literature also posits the usefulness of technological resources within the resilience process (Labaka et al., 2016). Andersson et al. (2020) delineates the importance of technological resources within the process of anticipating crises. The authors proceed to identify monitoring system, information systems and communication systems as resources that allow for more effective crisis mitigation. In addition to examining the role of resources within the resilience process, research can also be seen to consider the role of operational slack (Tognazzo et al., 2022). Essuman et al. (2022) find that resource slack improves operational resilience through operational attention. Further work by Leuridan & Demil (2022) concludes that constructing situationally specific slack resource practices is an important aspect of enabling organisational resilience. It is noteworthy to observe that this behaviour is somewhat characteristic of the bicolour as proposed by Levi-Strauss (1967).

In addition to academic discourse considering the resources that enable the resilience process, academic literature also examines the attributes of individuals that allow for individual resilience (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). This research can be seen to conclude that organisational resilience is not simply a composite additive to the individual capabilities of employees but is more associative with the actions of individuals and their interactions with the organisation (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Aschmos & Huber, 1989). It is inferred the capacity for developing resilience is developed from a unique blend of organizational level cognitive, behavioural and contextual capabilities and routines (Legnick-Hall & Beck, 2005; Legnick-Hall & Beck, 2016). Organisational level cognitive capabilities refer to a business' constructive conceptual orientation which includes; adopting a strong sense of purpose, core values, a genuine vision and the organisation's ability to constructively sense make, enabling a given organisation to interpret negative events such as crisis (Freeman et al., 2004; Weick, 1995). This literature adds precedent to the argument made by Aitken & Morgan (1999) who posit that possessing the ability to assimilate new information helps actors interpret and navigate new environments. Behavioural capabilities refer

to the action alternatives and behavioural repertoires embedded within the organisational design that can contribute to resilience (Williams et al., 2017). A key behavioural element identified in the literature is that of resourcefulness, where organisations possess the ability to extricate themselves from seemingly insolvable problems by identifying solutions (Legnick-Hall et al., 2011). Resourcefulness can be combined with other key behaviours such as that of counterintuitive agility and useful habits (Legnick-Hall & Beck, 2005; Sheremata, 2000). Whereas this thesis considers bricolage activities in the context of organisational resources, previous work examining behavioural capabilities points to the assimilation of behavioural capabilities as a vector for organisational resilience. It is identified that organisations can develop resilience by engaging in the disciplined creativity needed to develop unconventional, robust, responses to unpredictable challenges (Legnick-Hall & Beck, 2003; Coutu, 2002; Legnick-Hall et al., 2011). Such behaviour can be seen as characteristically similar to that of bricolage. Contextual conditions also act as antecedence to resilience activities. Legnick-Hall & Beck (2003:2005) outline four contextual conditions: psychological safety, deep social capital, diffuse power and accountability, and broad resource networks. These four factors combine to promote interpersonal connections and resource supply lines that enable fast action under crisis conditions (Legnick-Hall et al., 2011). It can also be seen that emotional capabilities play a part in developing individual resilience to adverse events. Such emotions include that of mental fortitude and hardiness that provide actors with the ability to cope with crisis situations and produce positive outcomes (Williams et al., 2017). On an individual level, emotions provide human actors with psychological resources needed to pursue high risk commercial endeavours (Baron et al., 2016). Weick et al. (2005) suggest that the emotions of individuals play a functional role in facilitating how organisations sense-make and assign meaning to their environment. However, disparities can be observed in the way that organisations utilise and regulate emotions which can shape organisational outcomes such as responses to adverse situations (Parke & Seo, 2016).

Further to the above-mentioned research, researchers can also be seen to investigate the crisis management activity of preparing. Preparation activities for crisis events often refers to the act of developing pre-crisis resilience by establishing preventative measures (Williams et al., 2017). Wootan & James (2008) argue that effective training

and employee engagement can form one aspect of effective preparation for a crisis. Moreover, Rezaei Soufi et al. (2018) argue that many organisations implement business continuity management systems as a form of developing preventative measures. While preparation and prevention measures are acknowledged as the most favourable course of action for the mitigation of known crisis events, it is also acknowledged a certain type of crisis - one that is unpredictable - will always exist (de Brunijne et al., 2010). This type of crisis requires a course of quick action at the time of crisis in order to maintain business performance (Schulman et al., 2004). This is the type of crisis considered in this thesis, a fundamental crisis. Although generally within crisis literature this type of crisis is sparsely researched, it is possible to see some research within the context of HROs. Studies related to HROs can be seen to provide a range of responses to such crises, including that of being able to expand resources at the time of the conception of unpredictable crises (Roberts, 1990; Roberts et al., 1990). Wildavsky (1995) found that HROs were able to withstand unpredictable crises by establishing organisational practices which enabled organisations to reconfigure generic resources, as and when they were needed to mitigate the effects of the crisis. This notion of reconfiguring and combining resources can be seen to share the notions of resource bricolage as a method of mitigating crisis events.

In addition to the role of planning, the role of responding to a crisis can also be seen as receiving attention within academic literature. Research explores how organisations respond to major disturbances triggered by an external event that results in the creation of operational degradation (Williams et al., 2017). Stacey (1995) suggests that the best responses to such crises tend to be those that exhibit the organisation's ability to innovate and adopt continually changeable behaviour. Such business behaviours share a sentiment with the notion of flexibility, discussed by other researchers (Chunsheng et al., 2020; Carmichael, 2015). Legnick-Hall & Beck (2005) state that a positive behavioural attitude towards adverse events can enable organisations to move forward through periods of crisis. Studies that have considered cognitive responses from organisations suggest that the ability to notice and interpret changes in the business environment allow for maintaining normal business functioning also (Dewald & Bowen, 2010). In the context of major crises, bricolage behaviour can also be seen to emerge. Bechky & Okhuysen (2011) identified that organisations manage uncertainty by developing socio-cognitive resources through

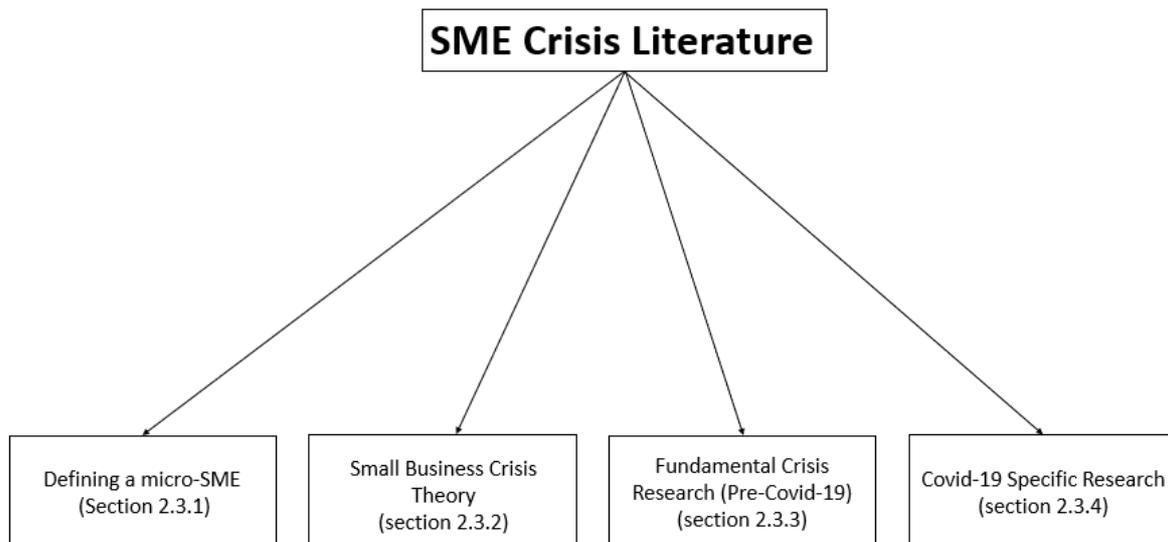
bricolage. These resources included role shifting, reorganising routines and reassembling work activities.

In summary, research conducted within the context of larger and more complex organisations than SMEs offers valuable insights into the organisational activities that facilitate the development of resilience. This includes the recognition that formalised crisis management plans increase an organisation's ability to effectively deal with crisis (Fink, 1986; Spillan & Hough 2003; Mitroff & Apaslan, 2003). Furthermore, the value of maintaining slack resources is evident within previous research. Such literature identifies that financial, relational and digital resources are among the most useful resources at a time of crisis (Marczyk et al., 2023; Hartel & Latemore, 2011; Andersson et al., 2020). Although literature concerning larger organisations does not substantially include theoretical perspectives such as bricolage, the notions of bricolage can be seen through work such as that of Leuridan & Demil (2022), who identify that constructing situationally specific slack resources is an important aspect of developing resilience. Section 2.3 now moves to explore important research streams within the context of SMEs.

2.3: SME Focused Crisis Research

While section 2.2 defines key terms and provides a high-level overview of crisis research, this chapter section presents a discussion of small business crisis research. Current crisis research can be seen to disproportionately research crises in the context of large complex organisations, with a relative paucity of research conducted within the context of small business (Doern, 2016; Herbane, 2010; Spillan & Hough, 2003). This is despite research showing that smaller organisations recover from crises more slowly, evidencing the need for enhanced crisis research within an SME context (Corey & Deitch, 2011). Within the small body of crisis research concerning small business, studies can be seen to follow similar research avenues as that of larger more complex organisations, adopting the two key perspectives of crisis management and organisational resilience (Doern et al., 2019). To ensure a robust review, and to present the most seminal research, this chapter section adopts four key areas of enquiry. These areas of enquiry are illustrated within Figure 2.3 overleaf.

Figure 2.3: Areas of Enquiry within Small Business Crisis Research



Chapter section 2.3.1 firstly defines the term micro-SME. The following section, section 2.3.2, delineates small business crisis theory. Furthermore, section 2.3.3 delineates pre-Covid-19 studies that consider fundamental crisis, before finally proceeding to section 2.3.4 which presents Covid-19 specific crisis research.

2.3.1: Defining a micro-SME

The definition of a Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) varies from country to country with no universally accepted worldwide definition. Bolton (1971) can be seen as one of the first notable contributions to developing an understanding of SMEs using quantitative metrics, informing the creation of the then European SME definition. Currently, the European Commission outlines an SME as an organisation that employs less than 250 employees, has a turnover of less than or equal to €50 million and a balance sheet that is equal to or less than €43 million (European Commission, 2023). This definition has previously been widely adopted in entrepreneurship research in a UK context (Storey, 2016). However, in recent years the UK has made the democratic decision to leave the European Union (EU) rendering this definition unsuitable for new research set within a UK context. This thesis will therefore adopt an SME definition as set out in British law. Table 2.2 outlines the UK SME definition along with subsequent small and microenterprise definitions that fall under the SME classification.

Table 2.2: UK Companies Act 2006 SME definitions

Classification	The relevant Companies Act 2006 Section	Must satisfy two of three listed criteria		
		Turnover not exceeding (£)	Employee count less than	Balance sheet must not exceed (£)
Medium	465	36 m	250	18m
Small	383	10.2 m	50	5.1
Micro	284A	632,000	10	316,000

(UK Companies Act, 2021)

The above legal definitions of micro, small and medium entities are embodied by Companies House and their subsequent account rules (UK Government, 2022). This thesis aims to examine the micro segment of SMEs and as such will adopt the micro business definition outlined within Table 2.2. Therefore, for the purpose of this study an SME will be defined as:

“A commercial entity that conforms to at least two of the three criteria listed in conjunction with a micro SME within Table 2.2.”

With the term micro-SME defined, this thesis now proceeds to consult small business crisis literature as outlined within the introduction of this chapter section.

2.3.2: Small Business Crisis Theory

Whereas section 2.3.1 defined an SME, this chapter section undertakes a review of generalisable small business crisis research. It is important to distinguish that two types of study exist within small business crisis research. Firstly, it is possible to see studies that focus on one specific crisis event. Such studies are presented within chapter sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.4. However, it is also possible to see studies that are not conducted within the context of one specific crisis. These studies can be seen to research crises more generally, and as such can be labelled generalisable small business crisis theory. Relevant research of this nature is presented within this chapter section.

Literature in this area can be seen to pursue a variety of foci, including studies that evaluate the relationship between business size and mitigation effectiveness. Research examining the effect of business size can be seen to conclude that as the size of the organisation increases, businesses are more likely to adopt formal business continuity processes, and as such develop the ability to mitigate crisis events more effectively (Woodman & Hutchings, 2010; Keller et al., 2005). Some research however, demonstrates that a small business size can foster advantages. This includes Jin (2010) who argues that due to their more limited resources, small businesses pay more attention to internal business problems than larger businesses. However, what is noteworthy within this area of research is that findings suggest most crises create negative implications towards entrepreneurship activity (Monllor & Murphy, 2017; Bullough et al., 2014). With small business size often framed as disadvantageous during times of crisis, studies aim to extend understandings of small business behaviour during times of crisis.

Herbane (2010) examines the resourcing of crisis management activities within a small business context. Herbane (2010) identifies four areas of activity: identifying risks, the three-dimensional crisis, learning from crisis and stifled support systems. The activity of identifying risk within small businesses is observed as a more tacit activity, with less formalised risk identification policies and procedures when compared with larger organisations. Three dimensional crisis refers to the effects induced by crisis. These effects can be seen to go further than outline crisis as an event that inhibits business activity, and outlines crisis as a composite of three dimensions, a lack of control, limited finance and a compressed time constraint. In terms of learning, it was identified that small businesses showed limited learning from crises. Stifled support systems were also outlined as negatively impacting crisis mitigating activity, with over 75% of respondents expressing doubt over the value of third-party support. Finally, the study outlines two types of response from small businesses, where crisis is framed as either a growth vulnerability paradox or as risk elastic. Small businesses that perceive a crisis as a growth vulnerability paradox view activities such as diversification as opportunities to build resilience. Small businesses that view crisis as risk elastic avoid growth opportunities and financial outlay in order to reduce financial uncertainty.

Further studies can be seen to evaluate the role of crisis experience. Spillan & Hough (2003) outline that once a small business experiences the devastating effects of crisis it generates a greater concern for potential future crises. The authors conclude that there is no greater driver for formal crisis management plans within small businesses than experiencing a crisis first hand. Simon-Moya et al. (2016) also advocate the role of crisis experience within their study of opportunity driven entrepreneurs, adding that crisis training and resource availability also underpin effective crisis management. Martinelli et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of resources in the crisis management processes, where they delineate that the most resilient entrepreneurs exhibit the ability to create change and opportunity by developing available resources.

Moving on from the role of experience, Herbane (2013) examines the role of crisis planning within small businesses. The study revealed six factors that correspond to developing resilience, namely; planning, financial impact, operational crisis management, the perfect storm, the aftermath of survival, and atrophy. Furthermore, Herbane (2019) can be seen to extend understanding of organisational resilience within an SME context, by examining how SMEs vary in their formulation of activities intended to achieve strategic growth and to enhance resilience. Based on a sample of 265 UK based SMEs, four clusters were identified: attentive interventionalists, light planners, rooted strategists, and reliant neighbours. Attentive interventionalists are characterised as businesses that can be seen to display high formalisation levels of strategic resilience. Light planners make up a demographic that can be seen to hold less than sufficient crisis planning measures. Rooted strategists possess high levels of strategic formulation but place less value on crisis specific planning, training, certification, roles and resources. The final identified demographic is that of reliant neighbours. Reliant neighbours have very little strategic planning for resilience in place, with sources of support more limited. In addition to the aforementioned studies, academic research can also be seen to examine the role of stakeholder perception during times of crisis. Boder & Vaughan (2009) find that stakeholder perceptions play a key role in the process of identification and recovery from threats potentially leading to jeopardy of long-term survival of small businesses after crises events.

In summary, although some generalisable small business crisis theory does exist within current entrepreneurship research, this area is mainly under explored. What is particularly absent from current research is theory developed specifically for crises that can be seen as fundamental in nature, where such events are difficult to predict and difficult to impact at a business level. There is therefore a pertinent gap in current research where more research is needed to further understand the behaviours of SMEs during times of fundamental crises.

2.3.3: Fundamental Crisis Research (Pre-Covid-19)

In addition to exploring crisis in a small business context more generally, it is possible to see research foci dedicated to specific crisis events. Over recent decades there have been several crisis events that could be considered fundamental crises while applying Gundel's (2005) Typology Matrix. Such crises have received attention within small business crisis research, and thus such research will be discussed within this chapter section. The Covid-19 crisis is a first of its kind in the context of a modern economy, with seldom research examining the economic effects of a pandemic in a modern context. It is upon this merit that this review consults research on fundamental crises more broadly, rather than pandemic management more specifically.

Irvine & Anderson (2004) can be seen to offer a notable contribution to academic literature with their study of a fundamental crisis in a UK context. The authors investigate economic effects for rural SMEs from the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) within Northern regions of England. Where Covid-19 is a pandemic of human disease, FMD was an epidemic of animal disease. It can be posited that in both cases similarities exist in the economic sanctions applied at a Governmental level. Where UK wide local lockdowns were applied to restrict the movement of people by way of reducing Covid-19 transmission, a restriction of movement on livestock was applied during the FMD outbreak as a means of transmission reduction, inhibiting effected agricultural businesses from trading (Sumption et al., 2020). Although the magnitude of economic sanctions differ significantly, perhaps Irvine and Anderson's (2004) study is one of the most contextually similar studies to this thesis, considering a disease stimulated fundamental crisis researched from a small business perspective. In the study conducted by Irvine & Anderson (2004), the research investigates the effects of

FMD on tourism SMEs within the Cumbria and Grampian regions of northern England. The Cumbrian region was heavily affected by the FMD outbreak with a high number of disease cases. In contrast, the Grampian region was an area with no reported cases of FMD but suffered economically purely by association through the media. The study demonstrates that FMD lead to immediate, dramatic drops in business volume, profitability and staff employment. The study also shows that smaller businesses suffered more severely than larger SMEs due to worse planning and a lack of support from professional bodies due to a lower volume of membership. It was also identified that many SMEs decided to halt or significantly reduce business investments; a trend identified in the early stages of the Covid-19 crisis (Thorgren & Williams, 2020). In contrast to the more negative commercial implications of FMD, signs of organisational resilience where identified, although in a relative paucity. Some tourism SMEs adopted substitute products as a means of resilience. In one instance, it was observed that an animal visitor attraction substituted their usual sheep for geese, an animal not affected by FMD which allowed them to remain open. Another venue was observed to serve chicken rather than their usual beef offering as a way of avoiding FMD restrictions so that they could remain trading.

In addition to the FMD crisis, researchers can be seen to research further fundamental crises event including Hurricane Katrina. Hurricane Katrina's effects were first experienced on 23rd August 2005 within the American state of Florida, as a category one hurricane (in accordance with the Saffir-Simpson hurricane wind scale), before intensifying to a category five hurricane across the Gulf coast of the United States (US) (National Hurricane Center, 2011a). After coming to an end on the 30th August 2005 it had claimed a death count of 1200 people making it the third deadliest hurricane on record (National Hurricane Center, 2011b). Hurricane Katrina was also the costliest hurricane in the history of the US, at a cost of \$172.5 billion (National Hurricane Centre, 2021). Runyan (2006) explores the impact of the hurricane on small businesses across five communities on the Gulf coast of the US, testing the Pearson & Clair (1998) definition of a crisis. Runyan (2006) identified five key barriers to crisis recovery in addition to proving that all elements of Pearson & Clair's (1998) crisis definition applied to Hurricane Katrina. The study also identified poor crisis planning within participating small businesses. From the seventeen interviewees, only two had formal disaster plans in place before Hurricane Karina. Furthermore, it was identified

by Runyan (2006) that small businesses were vulnerable to cash flow interruptions in the immediate post-crisis phase. Businesses faced low levels of trade due to difficulty in sourcing products, in addition to the hurricane's induced poverty at a local level. A further factor identified by Runyan (2006) was a lack of access to capital for business recovery. The Small Business Administration (SBA) allocated large sums of finance for those affected by the hurricane as a means of aiding recovery, however only a very small number of businesses qualified for and received loans. Federal assistance, although for the most part aided community recovery, also caused negative implications for small businesses. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in a bid to remove debris and rebuild the community, confiscated many lorries and large goods vehicles which left small businesses with low inventory. The final factor identified by Runyan (2006) was that of how serious infrastructure problems impeded small business recovery. Again, although very different to the Covid-19 crisis, Hurricane Katrina can be considered a fundamental crisis, as it satisfies the definition. Although a hurricane was easily predictable by the effected business owners, the magnitude of the hurricane and its effects were not (Runyan, 2006). Prevention of the hurricane at a business level was also impossible, making it a similar crisis to that of Covid-19 along a scale of predictability and influenceability. Further studies can also be seen to discuss the impact of Hurricane Katrina on small businesses. This includes a study by Torres et al. (2019) who identify that social capital as well as linking capital to institutions was an important determinant of resilience to the crisis. Haynes et al. (2018) also identified the importance of securing crisis support loans. The study identified that those who secured crisis support loans were significantly more likely to survive over the longer terms.

Moving on, it is also possible to identify research that examines the affect of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on small business. The GFC can be seen as the worst financial crisis since the great depression in the 1930s, with implications for numerous economies world-wide (Erkens et al., 2012). Studies relating to the GFC are of notable interest to this thesis on the merit of two factors. Firstly, both the GFC and Covid-19 can be considered of comparative magnitude in terms of their global reach. Secondly, the Covid-19 crisis could be seen to create numerous economic and socio-economic implications, some of which were similar to the GFC (Nicola et al., 2020). The GFC can therefore be seen as a crisis of interest to this research. Smallbone et al. (2012)

examine small business responses to the GFC, finding that although many small businesses displayed vulnerability to external change instigated by the GFC, many demonstrated underlying resilience and a high level of adaptability and flexibility. Most surviving and resilient small businesses were less likely to engage in price cutting activities of their market offering. Instead, it was shown that surviving businesses had mainly engaged in one of two activities, revenue generating or cost cutting measures, where revenue generating measures were most popular. The study found that these surviving businesses had a stronger pre-crisis financial position which meant they were less susceptible to the effects of the GFC. Smallbone et al. (2012) identify adaptive capability as the key enabler for business performance throughout the GFC. Finally, the study outlines the importance of Government action to increase financial stability for small businesses in the short-term after a crisis.

Davidsson & Gordon (2016) identify resilient entrepreneurial activity within their study of the GFC. In their study of nascent entrepreneurs, the authors find that entrepreneurs founding new start-ups engaged in one of four activities: disengagement, delay, compensation and adaptation. Although the GFC impacted the activities undertaken by entrepreneurs the authors found that entrepreneurial intentions were surprisingly persistent to the effects of the crisis. Conversely however, other literature can be seen to demonstrate negative implications for entrepreneurial intentions as a result of the GFC. This included such literature as Klapper & Love (2011), who in their study of panel data from 93 countries found that new business generation decreased as a result of the GFC. Further work by Zubair et al. (2020) found that SME investments decreased during the time of crisis, undermining their operations. Cowling's et al. (2012) study of UK SMEs examined external financing behaviours of small UK businesses across the GFC. The study illustrates that although the number of small businesses seeking finance across the GFC was high, only a small number of businesses were successful in the acquisition of the requested finance. This trend resonates with that of Runyan (2006) who noticed a similar trend across Hurricane Katrina.

In addition to the GFC further crises can be seen to be researched within small business literature. This includes the Christchurch Earthquake in New Zealand. This earthquake took place 5km south-east of the Christchurch region on 22nd February

2011 with a magnitude of 6.2, killing 185 people (GeoNet, 2011). This crisis has been researched from several perspectives including a community resilience perspective and infrastructure resilience perspective (cf. Paton et al., 2015; Clifton et al., 2011). There is also a small body of literature researching the crisis within a small business context. De Vries & Hamilton (2021) conduct a longitudinal study of ten enterprises within the Christchurch region between the years 2011 and 2018 to identify key determinants of organisational resilience. The study concludes that all 10 of the businesses analysed as part of the study displayed some form of resilience in the form of individual resilience. Six of the ten businesses survived through to 2018, of which three recovered particularly strongly. These three shared the notable characteristics of owning their business premises, operating business-to-business models and were able to adapt and follow path extension strategies. De Vries & Hamilton (2021) conclude that the most prominent and important form of resilience to small business survival is that of adopting strong business model resilience as opposed to individual resilience. Within the context of the Christchurch Earthquake, it is possible to observe the implementation of the Earthquake Support Scheme (ESS), a similar scheme to that of the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) where 11.5 million jobs were furloughed (Office of National Statistics, 2021). Fisher-Smith (2013) investigate the ESS, a subsidy intended to act as a temporary source of income for employees to relieve financial pressure for businesses. Fisher-Smith (2013) identify that the ESS was a critical factor in the survival of small businesses in the initial period after the earthquake.

The London Riots in 2011 can also be considered a fundamental crisis studied within a small business context. The fatal shooting of Mark Duggan by the Metropolitan Police in August 2011 is credited with inciting the sequence of violent events, later labelled as the London Riots (Briggs, 2012). This widespread violence is thought to have been fuelled by the spreading of misinformation on social media platforms (Panagiotopoulos et al., 2011). The detriment caused by the London Riots to small businesses has been captured by a notable study within small business crisis literature. Doern (2016) can be seen to discuss the losses incurred by the crisis for small businesses, in addition to capturing the factors that influence vulnerability and resilience. The study highlights how SMEs engaged in activities to minimise losses by offering customer discounts, a contradictory trend to that identified by Smallbone et al.

(2012). The most substantial contribution to knowledge made by this study is its argument that the resilience or vulnerability of small businesses is determined by three key factors: mind-set, crisis experience and resources. The study found that a lack of experience led to intensifying negative emotions and feelings of loss, created more ambiguity and decision-making pressures, and stretched already limited resources. Mind-set was also outlined as an important determining factor. Doern (2016) suggests that owner managers possessed a containment mind-set as opposed to an anticipation mind-set. The study identified that owner managers' ability to build metacognition awareness (a cognitive process that aids adaptive thinking) influenced their ability to cope with crisis. The third and final factor that is considered a key determinant of resilience or vulnerability is that of resources. The study concludes that small businesses with the most resources are the most resilient, and are more likely to experience post-crisis success.

The most recent fundamental crisis preceding the Covid-19 crisis can be seen as that of Brexit, the UK's withdrawal from the EU. This crisis can be considered a fundamental crisis as defined by Gundel (2005) due to its difficult to predict implications which many businesses were unable to influence and resolve. There are several studies that examine Brexit within the context of small business and crisis. Brown et al. (2019) use survey responses from 10,000 UK SMEs and find that export-oriented SMEs were particularly affected by the implications of Brexit. The study finds that many exporting SMEs saw the need to make changes to their business strategies, reducing capital investment and scaling back growth-related plans. Further research conducted by Brown et al. (2020a) finds that UK SMEs saw further Brexit implications resulting in reductions of employment and innovations. Brown et al. (2020a) identifies that domestically focused low innovation SMEs were less negatively affected. However, the study concludes that overall many SMEs experienced major difficulties both operationally and strategically. Sindakis & Aggarwal (2022) find that Brexit caused numerous implications for UK small businesses, however e-commerce adoption was a key enabler of adaptation to the new business environment faced by SMEs. The authors find that many SMEs turned to new technologies to facilitate the generation of new revenue. Furthermore, the study also found that e-commerce adoption also supported the development of new capabilities to effectively facilitate strategic planning during the crisis.

2.3.4: Covid-19 Specific Research

Whereas the previous chapter section outlines the key crises studied by researchers within a pre-Covid-19 era, this chapter section aims to develop an understanding of Covid-19 specific literature. It is particularly important to examine Covid-19 small business literature, as Covid-19 is the fundamental crisis event being researched as part of this study. The Covid-19 crisis differs from the crises discussed within chapter section 2.3.3. This is because Covid-19 can be seen as the only crisis in recent history that has involved the transmission of a disease through a human population on a global scale. Although, theoretical similarities can be seen in the way previous crises impacted small businesses, it is important to fully understand the context of the Covid-19 crisis and its unique characteristics.

Covid-19 is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, affecting the respiratory system within humans (World Health Organisation, 2023b). What is concerning about the Covid-19 virus is that it has the capacity to be transmitted in a human-to-human capacity at an alarming rate (Chesbrough, 2020). The Covid-19 crisis was declared an international public health emergency on the 30th of January 2020, and was later declared a pandemic on the 11th of March 2020 (Cankurtaran & Beverland, 2020). The first case of Covid-19 within the UK was recorded on the 28th of January 2020, with the disease subsequently spreading nationwide (Lillie et al., 2020). Since the conception of the crisis, it is possible to see that small and medium sized business have become the most heavily affected by the crisis (Beker & Schmid, 2020; Humphries et al., 2020; Albonico et al., 2020). Resultantly it is therefore possible to see researchers publish a range of studies within small business management academic literature, documenting the crisis' effects (De Massis & Rondi, 2020; Ratten, 2020). Although Covid-19 specific studies within a small business context still exist within a relative paucity, there are several studies that bare relevance to this thesis.

A central focus in Covid-19 small business research has involved studying the response of small businesses to the crisis. Doern (2021) examines how small businesses responded to the Covid-19 crisis within the initial crisis impact period. The study found that owner managers engaged within several types of behaviour. Using a

boxing analogy, these behaviours could be framed as, going the distance, checking vitals, blocking, deflecting and tactical awareness. Doern (2021) argues that owner managers could be seen to engage in business activity that increased the probability of business survival, while also monitoring the functioning of the business to ascertain losses. Furthermore, participants within the study could be seen to adjust business activities as a method of absorbing the negative effects of the crisis. This included furloughing staff and clearing stock and debt as a method of reducing financial risks. It could be seen that a proportion of participants went further than simply absorbing crisis induced forces and created counter opportunities. Examples of such behaviour included mobilising resources from networks and creating new business opportunities. Finally, the study identified that as the crisis matured participants were able to develop situational awareness of the crisis at hand and start to anticipate future effects of the crisis and change business behaviour accordingly.

Further studies considering the effects of Covid-19 on small business include that of Kuckertz et al. (2020), who examine the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on start-up businesses. The authors delineate that participants encountered a range of challenges during the crisis which included avoiding immediate failure, adapting to disruptions in core start up infrastructure, driving business growth against all odds and responding to mismatched policy measures. It can be seen within the study that participants used a bricolage approach to developing resilience to these challenges, where participants constructed new capabilities by reorganising the business resources that were to hand. Further work by Bivona & Cruz (2021) evaluates the role of Business Model Innovation (BMI) as a form of mitigating Covid-19. The study finds that there were two key innovation processes that SMEs undertook to gain resilience to the Covid-19 crisis. These included leveraging readily available resources and current business knowledge to react to the changing environment. Secondly, it could be seen that SMEs applied the process of transforming existing resources to create novel products and solutions. Although Bivona & Cruz (2021) did not adopt the theoretical lens of Resource Bricolage Theory, this business behaviour identified within the study is reminiscent of resource bricolage activity. Further research on the role of BMI can be seen to highlight business behaviour that is characteristic of resource bricolage. Clauss et al. (2021) investigates the ability of SMEs to create temporary business models during the Covid-19 crisis as a form of mitigation. The study finds that

modifying business models was a legitimate managerial mechanism that allowed for strategic flexibility and the construction of new capabilities during the Covid-19 crisis. By adopting this approach, study participants were able to survive the crisis, and in some cases improve. Within Covid-19 small business specific literature, it is also possible to see the examination of the notion of resourcefulness and its value for mitigating crisis events. Resourcefulness is often described as the behaviour of achieving more with less, where businesses utilise and combine limited resources (Welter et al., 2018). Purnomo et al. (2021) study SMEs that either experienced profound disruption or rapid growth during the Covid-19 crisis. The study identifies that the determining factor between survival and growth was that of a positive mindset towards adversity. Those that were able to exhibit a positive mental mindset were able to adopt a competitive mindset, where they could leverage flexibility, speed, innovation and strategic leadership to create resilience outcomes. The study concludes that those that were able to mitigate the crisis most effectively utilised bricolage as a means of becoming resourceful, positively influencing business success during the crisis.

Puthusserry et al. (2022) also identify the responses of SMEs to the Covid-19 crisis. The authors present a four-dimensional response typology, outlining SME responses as either reactive, proactive, conforming or innovative. It was identified that business that pursued a reactive strategy were those with more limited social capital which limited their ability to come up with more transformational strategies. SMEs pursuing a proactive mitigation strategy usually possessed greater social capital at the senior manager level and as such were more able to develop flexibility within the business by modifying the organisational design. It was also identified that those SMEs pursuing a proactive strategy displayed a greater appetite for taking risks to address external challenges. The third Covid-19 response identified by Puthusserry et al. (2022) was that of a conforming strategy. SMEs that pursued a conforming strategy typically had a technically qualified leadership team with sophisticated understandings of industry dynamics. SMEs pursuing a conforming strategy were also able to effectively pursue internal and external contingencies. The final mitigation response outlined by Puthusserry et al. (2022) is that of innovation. Businesses that were innovative in their response to the crisis were able to derive the strategic flexibility to control and develop their organisational design by integrating, building and reconfiguring their organisational competencies. Harel (2020) examines the impact of the Covid-19 crisis

on the performance and innovation activity of small businesses. The author identified small businesses which had engaged in contractual work for larger organisations showed an increased level of resilience in comparison to those who did not. Furthermore, Harel (2020) also identified that those who had access to international markets were able to trade at a higher level of reliability where they could more easily manoeuvre around government induced restrictions.

An additional research focus can be seen to examine the financing behaviours of small businesses during the Covid-19 crisis. This includes the study conducted by Thorgren & Williams (2020) who identify that small businesses immediately deferred investments within the onset of Covid-19. The study also found that small businesses reduced financial outlay by cutting labour costs and other expenses. Thorgren & Williams (2020) identify that study participants ultimately did not engage in any activity that might increase their debt-to-equity ratio. Further to this study, Brown et al. (2020b) identified that Covid-19 negatively affected the availability of seed finance for small businesses, with nascent entrepreneurial startups most severely affected. Cowling et al. (2020) examine SME financing and the role of Government financial support mechanisms. The study finds that although financial support mechanisms positively influenced the ability of SMEs to mitigate the Covid-19 crisis, they did not completely make up for the lost profits experienced by businesses. As such the authors found the role of capital reserves to be instrumental for developing resilience to crises such as Covid-19. A further study can be seen to address the role of support mechanisms during the time of Covid-19. Bressan et al. (2021) identifies several support mechanisms that were deemed useful by study participants. These support mechanisms include the role of key stakeholders such as staff, customers and financial support mechanisms.

In addition to research foci exploring small business responses to the Covid-19 crisis, literature can also be seen to focus on the effects of the crisis on the wellbeing of business owners. Stephens et al. (2021) apply the Kubler-Ross Five Stage Model of Grief and provide insight into the emotional relationship between a business owner and their business. The study identifies that those business owners who had to close their business during the crisis experienced significant negative psychological and emotional impact. A further study conducted by Stephan et al. (2023) also investigates

the wellbeing effect of the Covid-19 crisis on small business owners. The study which included respondents from 20 countries identified that more severe lockdown policies led to a greater detriment to small business owner wellbeing. However, the study also found that those business owners that actively attempted to identify new opportunities and plan accordingly experienced increased levels of overall wellbeing. Yue & Cowling (2021) find that small business owners saw a disproportionately large reduction in both working hours and income across the Covid-19 crisis, contributing to the degradation of their wellbeing when compared with waged workers. The study concludes that the individual resilience of small business owners was severely impacted by the reality of dealing with a rare crisis event such as Covid-19.

2.4: Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has covered several key areas of research that can be considered pertinent to this thesis. Chapter section 2.1 effectively delineates core crisis theory that is pertinent to the understanding of crisis. Consequently, this thesis has been able to define a crisis in accordance with the Pearson and Clair (1998) definition, where Gundel's (2005) Typology Matrix was adopted to classify Covid-19 as an example of a fundamental crisis. It was also identified that the three-phase crisis event sequence would be most favourable for understanding a fundamental crisis such as Covid-19. Chapter section 2.2 proceeded to provide an understanding of how organisations manage crisis using both a crisis management and organisational resilience approach. This chapter section defined both terms, drawing both similarities and disparities across these approaches. From the literature presented within section 2.2 it was apparent that behavioural characteristics of bricolage could be seen within a variety of studies conducted within the context of large, complex organisations. Such examples included Leuridan & Demil (2022) who identify developing situationally specific slack resourcing practices as important for enabling resilience. Furthermore, Wildavsky (1995) finds that HROs are able to withstand unpredictable crises by establishing organisational practices which enable such organisations to re-configure generic resources as needed. Finally, it was also possible to consult work by Bechky & Okhuysen (2011) who posit that organisations develop socio-cognitive resources through bricolage by way of managing uncertainty.

Section 2.3 delineates additional precedent for the role of bricolage within the context of managing crisis. This can be demonstrated by Kuckertz et al. (2020) who posits that small businesses successfully developed capabilities in response to Covid-19 induced challenges by using bricolage. Furthermore, Bivona & Cruz (2021) identified that businesses developed resilience by leveraging resources already available to the business, which shares the sentiment of bricolage behaviour. Finally, it was also possible to see Purnomo's et al. (2021) study which identified that small businesses were able to become resourceful in the face of crisis by applying bricolage behaviour. When consulting this chapter in its entirety it is therefore possible to see a strong precedent for the role of resource bricolage as a crisis mitigating activity across a range of organisational contexts.

Chapter 3: Literature Review – Developing a Sectorial Focus

Whereas chapter 2 focuses predominantly upon core crisis theory, this chapter focuses on presenting both retail sector research and social media research. The chapter is presented within three parts. Chapter section 3.1 presents an understanding of the retail sector, addressing the key challenges posed by the Covid-19 crisis. Chapter section 3.2 moves to present literature focusing upon the use of social media within SMEs. The final chapter section is that of section 3.3. This chapter section summarises the literature review in its entirety, presenting key considerations for the research, along with the theoretical perspective applied within this thesis. This chapter section also presents the conceptual framework for this study along with the research questions.

3.1: The Retail Sector as a Sector of Interest

The advent of Covid-19 caused numerous challenges for a range of sectors, where the retail sector can be seen as one of the most severely impacted (Wang et al., 2020). Challenges experienced by the retail sector included changes in customer shopping habits, national lockdown policies, and disruption to product availability (cf. Gündeş et al., 2023; Dyason et al., 2021; Burgos & Ivanov, 2021). It is the intention of this chapter section to first define the term retail, before then providing a detailed review of the most pertinent retail literature to this study, applying both a sector-level perspective and a retail SME perspective.

3.1.1: Defining Retail

The term retail can be defined simply by the Collins English dictionary (2009:497) as “selling goods individually or in some small amounts to the public.” However, for the purpose of this study this definition will need to be expanded to incorporate a meaningful and inclusive definition that stands representative of the type of retail business explored within this study. As such, it is appropriate to consult the retail definition presented by the UK Government for the purpose of this research. The UK House of Commons Library (2021:5) defines the retail sector as:

“Any business or individual involved with selling products directly to customers. The retail sector includes shops, department stores, supermarket, market stalls, door-to-door sales and internet retailers.”

This research is a UK based study and conducts research into the effect of Covid-19 on retail micro-SMEs. As such, it is important to adopt a retail definition that correctly represents retail micro-SMEs within a UK context. It is upon this merit that the UK House of Commons Library (2015) definition is applied within this study.

3.1.2: Covid-19 and the Retail Sector

Although Covid-19 can be seen to test the resilience of many sectors, the crisis proved particularly challenging for the retail sector (Altig et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2021; Chenarides et al., 2021). Retailers were subjected to wide scale disruption which created cost inflations, poor product availability and forced closures of physical retail premises (Hobbs, 2020). As a result of the crisis and its implications for the sector, it is possible to see researchers investigate the effects of the crisis on retail businesses. While reviewing Covid-19 retail sector research, it is possible to see two foci emerge that are of relevance to this thesis. These foci can be seen as; changes in consumer behaviour, and disruption to the retail supply chain and business model. These research foci are presented below.

It is well documented that within times of crisis consumer behaviour can become distorted and undergo change (Hamilton et al., 2019). The Covid-19 crisis was no exception as consumers could be seen to significantly change the way in which they purchased goods and services (Hall et al., 2020). Changes in shopping habits observed during the crisis can primarily be attributed to consumers trying to decrease the risk of contracting the virus (Knowles et al., 2020). It can also be attributed to the strong Government guidance that suggested consumers use websites and click and collect services as an alternative to traditional retailing methods (Pantano et al., 2020). Consequentially, customers subsequently engaged in increased levels of online buying and decreased their shopping activity within physical retail stores (Khayru, 2021; Klaus & Manthiou, 2020). Jikova & Kralova (2021) identify that during the Covid-19 crisis consumers increased their consumption of food and non-alcoholic beverages and began searching for and purchasing these goods through online retailers instead

of offline physical retailers. The study also identified that consumers changed the way they shopped online by changing the devices that they used to conduct shopping activities. Jikova & Kralova (2021) identify that consumers moved away from using handheld devices to shop, and instead increased their usage of personal computers, where this became the preferred device for searching and purchasing products online.

Further to Jikova & Kralova's (2021) study, Tyrväinen & Karjaluoto (2022) find that perceived usefulness, ease-of-use, positive emotions, trust, price value, subjective norms, social influence, and consumer attitude all positively influenced online purchasing intentions during the Covid-19 crisis. The authors note that Covid-19 represented a unique situation where consumers were forced to uptake online shopping, as opposed to voluntarily adopting this form of shopping, which subsequently reduced customer sensitivity to product pricing. Further research can be seen to examine the phenomenon of 'panic buying' where consumers stockpile goods in anticipation of real or perceived shortages (Akhtar et al., 2020; Tsao et al., 2019). Several studies can be seen to examine the role of panic buying during the Covid-19 crisis. This includes a study by Islam et al. (2020) who investigate the phenomena using the Stimuli-Organism-Response Model and Competitive Arousal Model to understand how the panic situation generated by Covid-19 influenced consumer purchasing. The study finds that product scarcity and limited time scarcity influence consumer emotions in a way that positively increased obsessive purchasing. Islam et al. (2020) also argue that social media intensified this behaviour and in turn positively supported panic buying during the crisis. Prentice et al. (2020) can also be seen to investigate the phenomenon of panic buying during the Covid-19 crisis. The authors found that during the crisis, the fear of missing out on essential goods was a significant antecedence to panic buying behaviour.

In addition to changes in consumer behaviour, the Covid-19 crisis also brought about disruption to supply chains (Pujawan & Bah, 2021; Araz et al., 2020). What made Covid-19 particularly disruptive to supply chains was that organisations were not prepared for a crisis of a pandemic nature (Yu & Aviso, 2020). Handfield et al. (2020) argue that the disruption caused to supply chains by the Covid-19 crisis was on a scale never seen before. Although many sectors experienced supply chain difficulties, it was possible to see these difficulties disproportionately effect retail supply chains (Burgos

& Ivanov, 2021; Chowdhury et al., 2020). Retailers could be seen to experience shortages in labour, exacerbated fluctuations in product demand, and undermining of supply chain infrastructure (Kumar et al., 2020; Ivanov, 2020). Such disruption has resulted in increased costs for consumers, poor order fulfilment rates, and decreased availability for retail products (de Vass et al., 2020). Such challenges held particularly sobering effects for ultra-lean retail supply chains that carried very low stock volumes (Salman et al., in press; Garnett et al., 2020). In response to challenging conditions retailers had to act quickly and respond to the crisis, given their role of being responsible for supplying essential goods to members of the public (Rizou et al., 2020; Ivanov & Dolgui, 2020).

Butt (2022) identified six retailer behaviours applied to mitigate the disruptive effects of Covid-19 for supply chains. Firstly, the study identified that retailers engaged in securing required demand. This process involved working closely with key stakeholders to ensure that retailers had sufficient stock volumes of products which experienced surges in demand. Secondly, the study outlined that retailers had protected cash flows as a form of ensuring resilience to disruption. Butt (2022) outlines that many of the study participants reported they had revised internal policies and supplier incentives as a form of reducing cost. Thirdly, the study shows that retailers redirected their itinerary as a form of developing resilience. Participants could be seen to become reactive to products with Covid-19 induced product demand and increase stock levels accordingly as a way of generating additional sales. Fourthly, Butt (2022) outlines that many retailers added storage capacity to distribution centres as a form of storing more stock to avoid future product shortages. Study participants could be seen to strive for flexibility and agility as a form of mitigating supply chain disruption. Retailers that participated within the study could be seen to employ different supply chain models as a way of gaining flexibility and agility. This involved encouraging suppliers to ship goods directly to stores as opposed to shipping to distribution centres as a method of keeping up with fast selling product types. Finally, Butt (2022) identified that many retailers took evasive action to ensure the reliability of their supply chains during the Covid-19 crisis. Many study participants reported sizeable increases in online sales orders as essential and non-essential differentiations were made across retail products. In the case of many participants Butt (2022) delineates this created decreased demand on retail stores and increased demand on distribution centres. To

secure reliability, the study showed that retailers moved staff from stores to distribution centres as a means of increasing the efficiency of processing customer orders.

In a further study, Do et al. (2020) can also be seen to investigate the responses of UK based retailers to supply chain disruption resulting from the Covid-19 crisis. The authors identify two key behaviours in which retailers engage, namely that they sense and seize capabilities. Do et al. (2020) delineate that retailers who successfully navigated supply chain disruptions were those that were able to identify and assess relevant opportunities within the supply chain context. Additionally, the authors argue that those who most successfully mitigated challenges were able to seize capabilities by acquiring, combining, and modifying tangible and intangible resources at the time of disruption. Although this study applied the Theory of Dynamic Capabilities (Teece et al., 1997) the observed business behaviour can be seen as somewhat characteristic of Resource Bricolage Theory (Baker & Nelson, 2005), and as such it can be considered noteworthy for the purpose of this study.

Further research can be seen to examine the challenges posed by the crisis to the retail business model in addition to the supply chain. In reaction to Covid-19 induced legislation, many retailers could be seen to modify business model infrastructure to support selling within a predominantly online capacity as opposed to a physical in-person capacity (Verhoef, 2021). Although some retailers could remain open, these retailers were still required to follow strict guidance meaning that often limits were imposed upon customer numbers in store, masks were compulsory for staff and customers, and socially distanced queuing systems were mandatory (Untaru & Han, 2021). It was therefore apparent that during the crisis many retailers were operating a survival strategy as opposed to a competitive strategy (Pantano et al., 2020). During the Covid-19 crisis it became apparent that more retailers were fusing both online and offline sales channels to better serve the needs of customers (Coco & De-Jean-Vigaray, 2022). Retailers could be seen to develop services such as click and collect where customers could order products online and collect in store (Amis & Janz, 2020). It was apparent that such service innovations were developed in response to maintaining cash flow and positively adjusting to ensure business survival, while also ensuring customer safety (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020). In addition to providing click and collect services, retailers could also be seen to offer home delivery services

by way of ensuring the continuity of trade through the crisis (Unnikrishnan & Figliozzi, 2021). Although omni-channel retailing models were well applied before the Covid-19 crisis, the crisis could be seen to positively increase uptake of an omni-channel approach to retailing (cf. Liu et al., 2022; Levy et al., 2013; Piotrowicz & Cuthbertson, 2014; Li et al., 2018) where an omni-channel retailing model can be defined by Rigby (2011:4) as:

“An integrated sales experience that melds the advantages of physical stores with the information rich experience of online shopping.”

3.1.3: Defining a Retail micro-SME

Now that chapter section 3.1.2 has provided an understanding of the effect of Covid-19 on the retail sector, the review must now turn to examine retail literature that is specific to retail SMEs. For this to be done this section will define the term retail micro-SME for the purpose of this study. Both the terms micro-SME and retail have already been defined under sections 2.3.1 and 3.1.1 respectively. As such, in order to define the term retail micro-SME both definitions can be combined to form one unified definition. As such, this study will define a retail micro-SME as:

“Any business or individual involved with selling products directly to customers, that also conforms to at least two of the three criteria listed in conjunction with a micro-SME listed within Table 2.2. The retail sector includes shops, department stores, supermarket, market stalls, door-to-door sales and internet retailers.”

With this retail micro-SME definition identified as the definition applied within this study, the review can now proceed to present the most prevalent retail SME literature to this thesis.

3.1.4: Implications of Covid-19 for Retail SMEs

With the term retail micro-SME now defined, this chapter section will move to present pertinent literature on the effect of the Covid-19 crisis on retail SMEs specifically. Although this study examines retail micro-SMEs, this review will present retail SME research more broadly to avoid the exclusion of highly relevant contributions. What

makes retail SMEs of interest to this research is that this business type sits upon the intersect of two key Covid-19 dimensions. Chapter section 3.1.3 has already documented the severe effects of Covid-19 for the retail sector, where the sector is regarded as one of the most severely affected by the crisis (Altig et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2021; Chenarides et al., 2021). Additionally, chapter section 2.3.4 has also demonstrated the profound effect of the Covid-19 crisis on SMEs, where SMEs can be seen as the most severely affected by the crisis, in terms of business size (Beker & Schmid, 2020; Humphries et al., 2020). Consequentially, it is therefore possible to see that retail SMEs are likely to be one of the most severely affected business types by Covid-19.

The advent of Covid-19 has generated a small academic interest in the effect of the crisis on retail SMEs. Previous to the Covid-19 crisis, small business crisis research lacked sector specific discourse, and as such a retail sector focus was completely absent from the literature (Robertson et al., 2022). Within the very small body of Covid-19 retail SME literature, it is documented that retail SMEs were specifically vulnerable to the crisis (Klein & Todesco, 2021). During the Covid-19 crisis many retail SMEs faced a wide range of challenges which included changes in customer behaviour (as documented within section 3.1.2) and access to capital to enact business changes (Sandburg et al., 2020). Robertson et al. (2022) argue that as a form of resilience many retailers engaged with digital technologies to maintain business functioning. The authors demonstrate that those that were digitally mature exhibited more resilience to the crisis than those who were not. Robertson et al. (2022) found that digitally mature retail SMEs (those that had adopted digital technologies in advance of the crisis) demonstrated resilience across three key metrics. The authors label these dimensions as, situation awareness to the changing environment, the management of vulnerabilities and the adaptive capacity to adjust during the crisis. Robertson et al. (2022) identify that the greatest difference in resilience between digitally non-mature and mature retail SMEs was across the adaptive capacity metric. Those that could be considered digitally mature displayed an increased level of innovation and creativity in their response to the crisis.

In summary, it is evident that retail SMEs faced a range of challenges in addition to those mentioned within section 3.1.2. However, what is also evident is the role of digital

technologies as a resource available to SMEs which enables resilience. With the role of digital resources as an enabler for resilience clearly identified, this chapter now proceeds to examine the use of social media within SMEs.

3.2: Social Media Use within SMEs

Whereas chapter section 3.1 examined retail sector research, this chapter section examines social media research. The chapter section starts by defining the term social media before then proceeding to examine social media research within an SME context. Finally, the chapter section consults social media research that has been conducted within the context of crisis.

3.2.1: Defining Social Media

The primary intention of social media is to act as that of a mechanism for communication, collaboration and interaction, which facilitates the sharing of information via many-to-many, one-to-one and one-to-many methods (Quinton & Wilson 2016; McCann & Barlow, 2015). Due to its ever-growing popularity businesses increasingly conduct commercial activities through popular platforms which includes selling, marketing, and advertising (Ainin et al., 2015). Resultantly, this has generated an academic interest which aims to better understand the phenomena and its applications within a business context (Alalwan et al., 2017). Management research can be seen to adopt several foci, predominantly within digital marketing (Dwivedi et al., 2015). Foci of digital marketing literature can be seen to include studies that examine social media advertising, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and social media adoption (cf. Bolton, et al., 2013; Harrigan et al., 2017; Popp & Woratshek, 2016; Kim & Drumwright, 2016; Maecker et al., 2016). Beyond digital marketing research it is also possible to identify studies that examine the role of social media as a resilience tool, although these studies exist within a relative paucity (Kim et al. 2016). This chapter section will now seek to define the terms social media so that a detailed review of pertinent literature can be presented later in the chapter (see chapter sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3).

Academic discourse concerned with defining the term social media generally aims to differentiate the term from other similar terms (such as social network), and categorise social media types (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Carr & Hayes, 2015). A variety of social media definitions can be seen to exist within a commercial context, of which includes that put forward by Leonardi et al. (2013:2) who define Enterprise Social Media (ESM) as:

“Web-based platforms that allow workers to (1) communicate messages with specific co-workers or broadcast messages to everyone in the organization; (2) explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular co-workers as communication partners; (3) post, edit, and sort text and files linked to themselves or others; and (4) view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else in the organization at any time of their choosing.”

This definition can be seen to define social media within the context of its internal use where stakeholders use social media to communicate. Further definitions can be seen of social media that consider social media use more broadly. This includes that of Kaplan & Haenlein (2010:61) who define social media as:

“A group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user – generated content.”

This definition is a widely cited social media definition and has been applied within several small business research studies concerning SMEs (Morris & James, 2017; Ahmad et al. 2019). This definition is also suitably broad where it would allow for its application to a crisis scenario such as Covid-19, where a breadth of social media activity is likely to occur. It is therefore upon this merit that this thesis adopts this social media definition for the purpose of this research.

3.2.2: Key foci of SME Social Media Research

Whereas the last chapter section defined the term social media, this chapter section now presents a detailed discussion of social media usage within SMEs. Social media

research can be seen as part of a wider discourse focusing on Information Communication Technology (ICT) research (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020). It is well documented within academic literature that ICT adoption is important for small businesses if they wish to develop increased competitiveness and profitability (Simmons et al., 2011; Simmons et al., 2008). It is apparent that the adoption of social media specifically, positively influences SME performance (Ainin et al., 2015; Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014). The core benefit of social media for SMEs is that it offers a cost-effective communication method where SMEs can communicate with customers regarding new products and services (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). This chapter section will provide a detailed overview of pertinent small business social media research, consulting key research foci. It is apparent that there are three key foci that can be considered relevant for the purpose this study, where these are considered below.

Firstly, it is possible to see researchers investigate why SMEs choose to adopt social media. Researchers can be seen to apply a variety of theoretical models including the Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) Model (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990). AlSharji et al. (2018) adopt the TOE model to establish key drivers of social media adoption within SMEs. The study identifies that both organisational context and environmental contexts hold more significance for social media adoption than the technological context of a given SME. The external business environment and the actions of managers are identified as key drivers for social media adoption in SMEs. Schaupp & Bélanger (2014) present technology competence, pressure from identifying new clients, and characteristics of the environment as significant attendances for social media adoption. A further study by Ahani et al. (2017) more specifically evaluates social CRM, examining a range of factors determining adoption. From these factors, it was determined that within a given SME, compatibility, information capture, IT knowledge of employees, top management support, information sharing, competitive pressure, cost, relative advantage, and customer pressure were the most important factors influencing social CRM adoption. Further studies applying the TOE Model can also be seen to discuss the drivers of social commerce for SMEs. Schaupp & Bélanger (2019) found that the most significant drivers of social commerce were that of stakeholder pressure and partner pressures.

In addition to the TOE framework, several additional technology adoption models have been applied within SME social media research. One such model is that of the United Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Adam et al. (2016) examine the adoption of s-commerce (an integration of e-commerce and social media) and its effect on business growth. The authors applied the six variables used by UTAUT as a basis for the research framework. Multiple factors corresponding to these variables are presented which influence the intention of acceptance and use of s-commerce, however these are not supported by primary empirical work. Nawi et al. (2017) in their study of student entrepreneurs examine the relationship between adoption and acceptance using UTAUT and outline performance expectancy, perceived risk, perceived trust, and perceived enjoyment as having a significant effect on social media adoption.

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI) (Rogers, 1962) has also been applied in the context of social media adoption and SMEs. Odoom et al. (2017) examine the motivations and performance benefits of social media accrued from social media by SMEs. The study uncovers that social media usage and social media motivations are positive but erratic across product-based and service-based SMEs. Tangible product-based SMEs are outlined as more likely to adopt social media due to cost-efficiencies, whereas service-based SMEs are more likely to adopt social media based on its capacity or interactivity.

The motivations of entrepreneurs to use social media has also been examined with the use of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Turan & Kara (2018) using TRA showed that entrepreneurs' perceptions about effort needed, performance expectations and various social influences explained social media usage motivations. Finally, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1993) can be seen to be applied to understand social media adoption in an SME context. Gavino et al. (2019) in their study of social media adoption among Latino entrepreneurs, illustrate through TAM that Latino and Hispanic entrepreneurs more regularly use social media platforms for personal use as opposed to business use. The study also finds that there was no relationship between personal or business social media use and revenue generated from the SME's.

Further social media research within a SME context can be seen to examine social media's utility as an effective business tool. One of the key applications of social media can be seen in the area of marketing, where the relationship between social media and entrepreneurship is well documented (Jones, 2010; Hensel & Deis, 2010). It can be seen that social media use is more frequently employed across Business-to-Customer (B2C) SMEs as opposed to Business-to-Business (B2B) SMEs (Kantorova & Bachmann, 2018). Cant (2016) argue that social media is revolutionising marketing activities where entrepreneurs can achieve cost advantages over traditional advertising methods. Academic research also delineates how social media affords entrepreneurs better product visibility (Brink, 2017; Dutot & Bergeron, 2016). SMEs can be seen to adopt social media as a CRM tool, where customer endorsements and promotion information play a valuable role in addition to brand management activities (Ahmad et al., 2018; Shih et al., 2014). However, what is noteworthy within the literature is that an estimated 65% of SMEs do not measure the Rate of Return on Investment (ROI) of commercial social media use (McCann & Barlow, 2015).

Further research illustrates that entrepreneurs can be seen to use social media as a form of information searching, due to its propensity to aid SMEs in gaining essential external information and build social capital (Naudé et al., 2014). Social media use as an information searching tool has been applied in a number of ways to combat business information challenges (Quinton & Wilson 2016). Such business challenges include a lack of funds to hire experts and a lack of expertise in their geographical area; social media has leveraged SMEs to develop the ability to conduct their own market research without the need for involving third parties (Kuhn et al., 2016). Olanrewaju et al. (2020) also found within their literature review that there was sufficient academic precedent that social media was used for the purpose of networking. Both Ahmed et al. (2018) and Wang et al. (2017) suggest that social media can be used to foster large business networks, which can incorporate members from different geographical areas, and different socio-economic and demographic profiles, a capability unrivalled by previous offline business networking mediums. Further research illustrates a positive role for social media in facilitating effective crowd funding for SMEs (Yang & Berger, 2017). Kaur & Gera (2017) can be seen to examine the role of social media's use within successful crowdfunding campaigns, finding that social media significantly increased donations.

Further research has also examined the relationship between social media and the development of strategic capabilities. Sigfusson & Chetty (2013) examine how SMEs used social media to harness the resources needed for internationalisation through a study of international entrepreneurs. This study highlights that social media can be used to effectively facilitate the procurement of key resources in the pursuit of internationalisation. Guha et al. (2018) find that social media use can be characterised as a dynamic capability in resource constrained SMEs and can be used as a method to outweigh resource constraints over the long term. Both studies support the notion that social media may hold a natural propensity to aid SMEs in extricating themselves from difficult and adverse scenarios. Odoom & Mensah (2019) in a study of brand orientation and performance, consider social media as a capability that can harness thus positive outcomes. Findings from this study suggest that social media offers positive moderating effect on performance and brand orientation, although an acknowledgment is made that this moderating effect can vary across medium and small businesses.

Whereas academic research can be seen to identify social media as an effective business tool, it is also possible to see literature examine social media's ability to create commercial opportunity. Social media is a technology that is available at a low cost and requires a low level of skill to operate fundamentally, in turn making the technology accessible to entrepreneurs where it can be used to create business value (Nakara et al., 2012). Lehmkuhl & Jung (2013) suggest that such value can come in the form of reducing transaction costs, enhancing information access and increased transmission through communication channels. Social media has also been recognised as playing an important role in the conception of new enterprises (Butler et al., 2010), and more specifically a role in the opportunity recognition process (Mack et al., 2017; Butler et al., 2010). This research demonstrates social media's ability to positively influence the opportunity recognition process, suggesting that social media could hold a natural propensity to support SMEs in times of crisis, where new methods of conducting business might need to be identified. Bocconcelli et al. (2017) point to the positive role of social media within the growth stage of an SME. Research also identified that social media usage positively supports business performance, where performance increases can be observed across both financial and non-financial

business metrics (Rialp-Criado & Rialp-Criado, 2018). It is also evident that social media plays a role within entrepreneurial innovation, where DuarteAlonso & Bressan (2016) suggest that the use of social media in itself can be seen as a form of service and product innovation. Mohajerani et al. (2015) can be seen to support this notion.

3.2.3: Social Media Use within the Context of Crisis

As previously stated within this review, it can be seen that the Covid-19 crisis posed significant challenges for SMEs, with many struggling to survive (Papadopoulos et al., 2020). With the advent of Covid-19 restrictions, many customers were forced to transfer their shopping activities from an in-person median to an online median, where social media was a key platform for interaction (Sugandini et al., 2020). However, what is evident is that social media is poorly researched within the context of crisis (Saroj & Pal, 2020). From the literature that does exist, organisational studies are mostly absent from the literature, where SME studies are scantiness further still. Most studies of social media within a crisis context tend to focus on the role of social media across community resilience and individual resilience (Jurgens & Helsloot, 2018). Community resilience research has highlighted several key applications of social media. Jung & Moro (2014) identify five functions of social media use during times of crisis which include, interpersonal communication, group communication, mass communication, information sharing and gathering, and direct channels between different actors. The authors identify these functionalities of social media as representing the key application of social media by citizens of society during times of crisis. Further research by Hughes et al. (2014) and Binder (2012) identify social media as an important communication tool within times of crisis. Additional work by Kongthon et al. (2014) identifies that during a time of crisis social media allows citizens to search for information and develop intricate understandings of the crisis situation. Spialek et al. (2016) found that citizens with constant access to social media are also more likely to perceive their own community as being resilient.

Although community resilience research can be seen as the dominant research foci within research that examines social media use within the context of crisis, some attention can be seen to be ascribed to organisations (Veil et al., 2011). The study of social media applications within the context of organisational crisis has mainly involved

examining the role of social media for both communication and public relations management (Allagui & Breslow, 2016; Lin et al., 2016). However, it is possible to see some research consider social media usage within the context of Covid-19 and SMEs. Applying the TOE model Trawnih et al. (2021) validate that the Covid-19 significantly affected social media adoption within SMEs, where Salam et al. (2021) examine the perceptions of SME owner managers towards the usage of social media for marketing purposes during the Covid-19 crisis. Salam et al. (2021) find that owner managers had a varying outlook towards social media marketing. Salam et al. (2021) identified that the lack of understanding of how to use social media was a barrier in the ability of some owner managers to adopt the technology. Patma et al. (2021) also evaluate the role of social media marketing during the Covid-19 crisis, where the authors seek to understand the determinants of uptake. The authors identify that during the crisis the key determinants of uptake were perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use and cost. Syaifullah et al. (2021) examine the relationship between social media marketing and business performance in mSMEs during the Covid-19 crisis. The study identifies that mSMEs who utilised social media marketing during the crisis saw better business performance than those that did not adopt. Syaifullah et al. (2021) identified within the study that increased business performance came in the form of increased sales, stronger customer relationships, better productivity and increased creativity.

In summary, although some entrepreneurial research focuses on the role of social media during time of crisis, more research is needed within this area that is specific to small businesses. There is therefore a pertinent gap within the research where more research is needed to understand the capabilities of social media for developing resilience within small businesses.

3.3: Identifying a Contribution

This chapter section now seeks to conclude the extensive literature review undertaken as part of this study. The chapter section is divided into five parts where chapter section 3.4.1 firstly summarises current literature, identifying the gap in current research. Section 3.4.2 then outlines the rationalisation for the use of Resource Bricolage Theory as the theoretical perspective of this study, before chapter section 3.4.3 outlines key consideration for context within the research. Finally, chapter

section 3.4.4 presents the conceptual framework, before section 3.4.5 presents the research questions that this research will aim to answer.

3.3.1: Identifying a Gap in the Literature

This literature review has provided an extensive and detailed analysis of the most pertinent academic research to this study. Chapter two set out by addressing core crisis theory where the term crisis was defined using the Pearson & Clair (1998) conceptualisation. The chapter then proceeded to present the Gundel (2005) Typology Matrix, defining the Covid-19 crisis as a fundamental crisis. Chapter section 2.1.3 proceeded to adopt the three phased crisis chronological order as described by Coombs & Laufer (2018) as a method of characterising the stages of the Covid-19 crisis. The chapter then moved on to examine key crisis concepts which included the crisis management and organisational resilience concepts. Both these concepts were defined using the Williams et al. (2017) definitions, which identifies the discrete comparative difference across both concepts. Finally, the chapter proceeds to examine crisis research within the context of SMEs, paying specific attention to generalisable crisis theory, the study of previous fundamental crisis and the study of the Covid-19 crisis. Chapter three proceeded to consult academic research that is specific to the retail sector. Here the term retail was defined before then providing a sector level analysis of the effect of the Covid-19 crisis. The chapter moved to define a retail micro-SME before examining retail SME specific literature. Finally, the focus of chapter three turned to the analysis of social media research. This section of the literature review examined the adoption of social media within SMEs while identifying key business applications of social media where the technology has proved an effective business tool. The chapter also examined academic discourse discussing social media applications within a crisis context. As a result of this extensive literature review process, it was possible to identify a gap within the literature, where the gap is discussed below.

Firstly, it was apparent from this extensive review that current crisis research does not adequately research crisis within a small business context. Furthermore, from the small body of literature that does exist, little focus is attributed to crises that can be defined as fundamental. However, what is prevalent within small business crisis

literature is the precedent for the identification of resource bricolage as a method of managing crises (cf. Kuckertz et al., 2020; Bivona & Cruz, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021; Purnomo et al., 2021). Further precedent of resource bricolage as a method of managing crisis can also be demonstrated from contextual literature, including that of the study of resourcefulness (cf. Legnick-Hall et al., 2011; Legnick-Hall et al., 2005; Sheremata, 2000; Bechky & Okhusen, 2011), and High Reliability Organisations (cf. Wildavsky, 1995). Researchers can also be seen to identify resource bricolage characteristic behaviours within retail sector research where retailers seize capabilities by acquiring, combining and modifying tangible resources as a form of developing resilience to the Covid-19 crisis (Do et al., 2020). However, what is evident from current research is that although resource bricolage is an established theory that explains how small businesses manage crisis, no literature exists that identifies the enablers of the bricolage process. While crisis literature does not identify enablers of the bricolage process, social media research conducted within the context of SMEs also fails to adequately identify potential applications of social media within a crisis context. There is much precedent within SME research for social media's ability to create commercial value within SMEs (cf. Brink, 2017; Quinton & Wilson, 2016; Sigfusson & Chetty, 2013), however little attention is given to understanding the role of social media within a crisis situation. This is a noteworthy gap in the research due the overwhelming precedent for social media's use within other business contexts. It is therefore upon this basis that this research will evaluate the propensity for effective social media use as an enabler of Resource Bricolage Theory, where resource bricolage is the applied theoretical perspective. The thesis will aim to execute this aim by conducting the study within the context of retail micro-SMEs, where this sector and business size can be seen as severely affected by the Covid-19 crisis (cf. Altig et al., 2020; Beckers et al., 2021; Chenarides et al., 2021; Baker & Shmid, 2020; Humphries et al., 2020). Conducting this research within the context of retail micro-SMEs therefore increases the impact of the research. With Resource Bricolage Theory identified as the theoretical perspective for this study, it is now important to develop an understanding of the theory and its application to this thesis.

3.3.2: Adopting a Theoretical Perspective – Resource Bricolage Theory

Resource Bricolage Theory forms one of the multitude of resource based theoretical models that aims to understand business behaviour. The Resource Based View (RBV) can be seen as a dominant theoretical perspective that seeks to understand the process of competitive advantage by classifying resources in accordance to the four attributes of valuable, rare, inimitable and sustainable (Barney, 1991; Barney et al., 2001; Barney, 1995). Further frameworks include that of Dynamic Capability Theory, which explains how businesses create dynamic capabilities by using resources as firm-specific assets (Teece et al., 1997). However, both models do not consider resource constrained organisations, where they can in fact be seen to consider those organisations that are resource rich. Conversely, Resource Bricolage Theory can be seen to be applied within the context of resource constraint and deprivation.

Resource bricolage phenomenon was first theorised by Levi-Strauss (1967) in a study of aboriginal and civilised members of society. The study found that aboriginal and civilised people were equally entrepreneurial and framed two types of human behaviour. Levi-Strauss (1967) found the two types of behaviours demonstrated to be that of the engineer and bricoleur. The engineer plans ahead and gathers the exact resources needed for a particular project in advance of initiating the project. The bricoleur, however, uses the resources at hand to craft capabilities to accomplish projects, as the project develops. The study concludes by describing the bricoleur approach as the process of engaging in radical experimentation as opposed to engaging in planning. This theoretical perspective has since been applied in several entrepreneurship research foci (Davidsson et al., 2017).

A study conducted by Baker & Nelson (2005) can be seen as a classical study within research concerning resource constrained small businesses, where this study was the first study to successfully apply Levi-Strauss' (1967) resource bricolage conceptualisation. The authors examine the ability of resource constrained small businesses to use resources at hand to render unique capabilities allowing for increase competitiveness. Previous to Baker & Nelson's (2005) study Open Systems Theory was applied to understand how variations in resource availability effected small businesses' performance (cf. Boulding 1956; Katz & Khan, 1978; Scott 1998). It is

therefore possible to see the study conducted by Baker & Nelson (2005) as a new approach to understanding resource constrained small businesses. Within the study Baker and Nelson (2005:333) define Resource Bricolage Theory in the context of small business as:

“making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities.”

The authors deconstruct this definition into three elements; making do, combinations of resources for new purposes, and resources at hand. The study frames making do as a refusal to enact limitations, or otherwise stated as a refusal to accept the outcomes of a situation as disadvantages, and to as such develop a response based on the resources available to the business. Secondly, Baker & Nelson (2005) refer to the action of constructing combinations of resources for new business purposes. This element refers to the business' ability to reconfigure and reuse resources for new applications than to those that were originally intended. The final element detailed by the authors is that of resources at hand. Resources at hand are characterised as those that are available cheaply or freely. It is therefore possible to see these three-element come together to form the basis of Resources Bricolage Theory within a small business context.

Following the advent of Baker & Nelson's (2005) study, Resource Bricolage Theory has been widely applied within the study of resource constrained small businesses, where resource constraint usually refers to a lack of financial, human and physical resources (Chliova & Ringov 2017; Linna, 2013). Atarah et al. (2019) identify that female entrepreneurs often engage in recourse bricolage activity when faced with scarce financing availability. An additional study within the same research area, conducted by Digan et al. (2019), examines the relationship between business performance and female empowerment, finding that female empowerment is positively related to business performance, where resource bricolage and psychological capital re-enforce this relationship. Further studies within the field of entrepreneurship also indicate that resource bricolage positively influences the process of opportunity recognition (An et al., 2018), in addition to enabling innovation within SMEs (Senyard et al., 2014). With the acknowledgment that bricolage creates successful outcomes

for small businesses, Buch & Barkama (2021) identify that resource bricolage can be successfully scaled through replicating the process, shifting mindsets and aiming to unlock the value of previously economically undervalued resources.

Within the context of this study however, the most pertinent application of Resource Bricolage Theory is that within a crisis context. Where Resource Bricolage Theory has been applied broadly across entrepreneurship (Davidsson et al., 2017), it is also possible to see the theory applied within SME crisis research (Doern et al., 2019). Within their study of dynamic capabilities through times of crisis Martinelli et al. (2018) identify that several participants were able to demonstrate bricoleur behaviour by using business resources at hand to move forward as a business and proactively create change during a time of crisis. Further studies include that of Gilbert-Saad et al. (2018) who study entrepreneurial behaviour within the context of absolute uncertainty. The authors identify decision heuristics as a method of coping with uncertain conditions, defining decision heuristics as “replacing optimal decisions with close enough decisions” (Gilbert-Saad et al., 2018:77). The authors also define a behaviour entitled as deign heuristics, the process of “replacing the impossibility to decide objectively my subjective motives in an imagined future” (Gilbert-Saad et al., 2018:77). The authors state that the process of deign heuristics allows for an individual to generate creative options and expand outcomes. The authors discuss that design heuristics have the ability to enable resource bricolage capability, by “replacing the rigidity of established rules aimed at achieving objective efficiency with subjectively constrained simple rules linking resources and opportunities” (Gilbert-Saad et al., 2018:78). Further research by Kwong et al. (2019) identified bricoleur behaviour within the context of war. The authors found that entrepreneurs engaged in two forms of bricolage, internal and external bricolage where these bricolage formats refer to the origin of the resource at hand. What is also evident is the application of Resource Bricolage Theory within the context of Covid-19. As illustrated in section 2.4.4 it is possible to see several studies explore bricolage, either by identifying bricolage behaviour within empirical research, or by adopting Resource Bricolage Theory as a theoretical perspective (Kuckertz et al., 2020; Bivona & Cruz, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021; Purnomo et al., 2021).

In conclusion of the above, it is possible to observe the substantial precedent for the use of Resource Bricolage Theory within small business research. This thesis will therefore adopt Resource Bricolage Theory as its theoretical perspective. As with many of the studies above (Kuckertz et al., 2020; Atarah et al., 2019; Senyard et al., 2014;) this study will apply Baker & Nelson's (2005:333) interpretation of Resource Bricolage Theory, and as such will define Resource Bricolage Theory as:

“making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities.”

The study will also adopt Baker & Nelson's (2005) three constructs of Resource bricolage Theory consisting of; making do, combinations of resources for new purposes, and resources at hand.

3.3.3: Considerations for Context

While identifying a theoretical perspective is important when conducting small business research, it is also important to consider the context of small businesses (Walter, 2011). Within management studies context is often described as providing the constraints and opportunities that shape the occurrence of business behaviours (Johns, 2006). Although the context of businesses is undoubtedly an important consideration within research, there exists a deficit in studies that are appropriately contextualised (Johns, 2017; Johns, 2018). While entrepreneurship research often captivates a business' environment, this cannot be considered the sole context of the business, as internal context must also be considered (Baker & Walter, 2020). Walter & Gartner (2016) argue that differences in context often mediate entrepreneurial behaviours and outcomes, and as such delineate the rationalisation that context should be an inaugural element of management research. Management research can be seen to produce several theoretical constructs which seek to explain the contextual determinants of businesses. This includes that of Trett & Burnett's (2003) Trait Activation Model. This model seeks to describe how specific personality traits interact with particular features of jobs to influence performance. An additional contextual model is that of the Contextual Theory of Social Media presented by McFarland & Ployhat (2015). The authors evaluate the differences between face-to-face

interactions, digital media use and social media use across a continuum of context. However, the most established theoretical framework applied within entrepreneurial research is that of Zarah & Wright (2011), who define the dimensional elements of context as, time, spatial, practice and change. Zarah et al. (2014) later extended these theoretical dimensions to also include business characteristics, ownership, and governance.

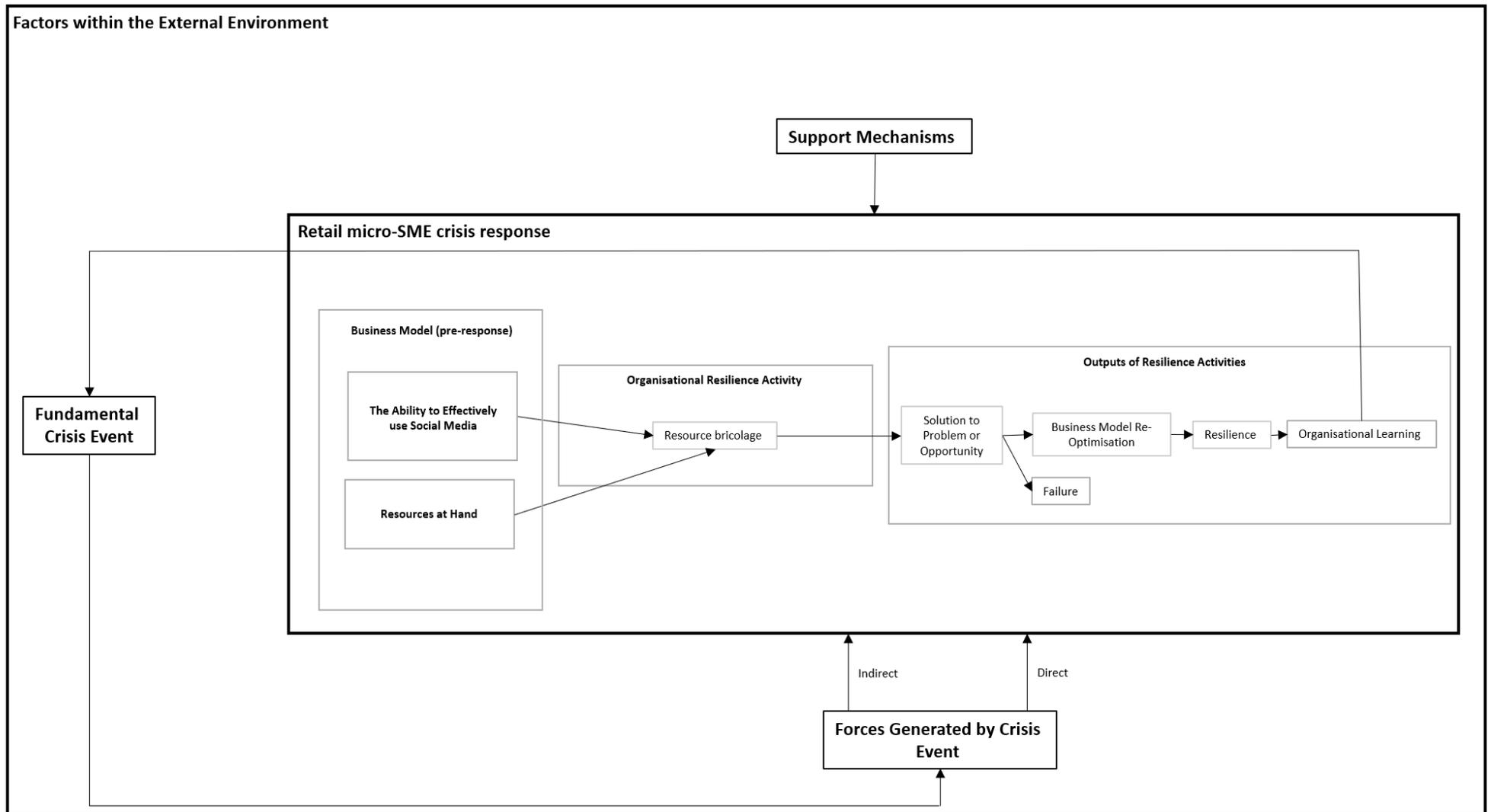
As previously discussed within section 2.1.2, Covid-19 can be seen as a fundamental crisis; one that is difficult to predict and difficult to impact at a business level. As such, during the trans-crisis phase Covid-19 transformed the economic context of small businesses, creating new and unique challenges as discussed within section 2.4.4. As such, it is therefore important to understand the unique context of participating businesses throughout the Covid-19 crisis, in order to develop valid findings within this study. Although this study adopts Resource Bricolage Theory as its theoretical perspective, this study will also consider the implications of the seven dimensions of context as defined by Zarah et al. (2014), in an effort to ensure that this research is appropriately contextualised.

3.3.4: Presenting the Conceptual Framework

With a clear gap in the research outlined with section 3.4.1 and a theoretical perspective identified within chapter section 2.4.2, it is now possible to present a conceptual framework for the purpose of this thesis. The conceptual framework developed within this research sits at a fixed point in time (across the trans-crisis phase) and takes a business level analysis, considering the key internal and external factors influencing the resilience response of the retail micro-SME. External factors include the forces generated by the crisis, where these forces can be deconstructed as both direct and indirect forces. Additionally, crisis support mechanisms are included as an external factor acting upon the business during a time of fundamental crisis. Three factors are presented internally, and are labelled as the pre-crisis business model, resilience activities and resilience outputs. Effective social media use is considered in conjunction with business resources, while bricolage is considered as the core crisis mitigating activity determining resilience. Resilience outputs differentiates survival and failure, with organisational learning and business model re-

optimisation as sequential processes following effective crisis mitigation. The conceptual framework for this thesis is displayed within Figure 3.1. All aspects of the conceptual framework have been developed upon a substantial base of previously published academic research. This chapter section will now proceed to present the academic precedent that underpins each aspect of the framework.

Figure 3.1: The Conceptual Framework



One of the core elements of the conceptual framework is that it is based upon the conceptualisation of a fundamental crisis. A fundamental crisis is one that is defined in accordance with Gundel's (2005) Typology Matrix as being difficult to predict and difficult to impact upon a business level. This means that such a crisis has a low probability of conception and is one where business stakeholders cannot influence the nature of the crisis. Based upon the extensive review process enacted within this review it is possible to conceptualise Covid-19 as a fundamental crisis within the context of this study (see sections 2.1.2 and 3.1.2). The fundamental crisis is located within the external environment as the Covid-19 crisis can be seen as originating outside of the retail micro-SME. Further to the identification of a fundamental crisis the conceptual framework also outlines the forces generated by the crisis. Such forces are those that can be considered to act on the retail micro-SME, to which the micro-SME must develop a response. Such forces would include those identified within section 3.1.2. From the review conducted within this section of the literature review it is evident that a number crisis generated forces acted upon retailers. These include changes in consumer behaviour and disruptions to business operations (cf. Hobbs, 2020; Knowles et al., 2020; Islam et al., 2020; Araz et al., 2020; Butt, 2020).

In addition to outlining crisis induced forces the framework also outlines the role of support mechanisms. It is evident from the literature review that support mechanisms play an important part in the crisis mitigation process. As outlined within section 2.3.3 and 2.3.4, research identifies a range of support mechanisms that influence business survival within times of crisis. These range from localised informal support mechanisms to larger more complex forms of support. Doern (2016) finds that the emotional support offered by family and friends during times of crisis is of value to owner managers during times of crisis. More complex formats of support include financial loans offered by Governments during times of crisis. Runyan (2006) illustrate that Government loans aided the support of SMEs during the trans-crisis phase of the Hurricane Katrina crisis. Further work by Smallbone et al. (2012) honed similar results within the study of the GFC, where it was found that loan packages proved very important for business survival. Within the context of the Christchurch Earthquake crisis Fisher-Smith (2013) found that the Earthquake Support Scheme (ESS) – a similar scheme to that of the Covid-19 Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) – was an instrumental factor within the recovery of SMEs. Both Runyan (2006) and

Smallbone et al. (2012) outline that difficulties securing funding packages made available inhibited the ability of SMEs to mitigate the crisis at hand effectively. The role of Government financing is also outlined as a pivotal form of support within Cowling's et al. (2020) study set within the context of Covid-19.

With all external aspects of the conceptual framework presented above, it is now possible to outline the academic precedent underpinning the internal crisis factors displayed within the framework. The first factor consulted is that of the pre-crisis business model. The pre-crisis business model forms an important aspect of the conceptual framework and can be divided into two components; business resources at hand and the effective use of social media. Examples of resources at hand could include financial capital, staff, or physical resources such as the business premises or equipment. Baker & Nelson (2005) illustrate that during times of crisis small businesses can reconfigure their generic resources at hand to meet new problems or opportunities. Literature can be seen to suggest some resources that might enable resilience within a crisis situation. The role of human resource (or human capital) is clearly demonstrated by Doern (2016) who shows that owner manager mindset and experience form two of the three factors that determine resilience from vulnerability. Within earlier work both Aiken & Morgan (1995) and Weik (1995) also indicate that an individual's ability to sense make and assimilate new information plays a part in one's ability to cope with a crisis. It is therefore of note to this study that the knowledge, experience and skill of human actors is of importance to the resilience process. It is also possible to see discourse that evaluates the role of financial slack as a component of organisational resilience. Both Bradley et al. (2011) and Essuman et al. (2022) can be seen to pledge the importance of financial slack as an enabler of resilience.

In addition to outlining the generic resources at hand, the conceptual framework also outlines the effective use of social media as an enabler of the bricolage process. Effective social media use relates to the business' ability to use social media to create successful business outcomes, for example through marketing or identifying new market opportunities. Much precedent is attributed within the literature to the role of social media as an enabler of positive business outcomes. This includes the work of Naudé et al. (2014) and Brink (2017). Further work by Guha et al. (2018) characterise social media as having the ability to outweigh resource constraints faced by some

SME's. It is also possible to see the study of social media applications within a crisis context (cf. Trawbuh et al., 2021; Salam et al., 2021; Patma et al., 2021; Syaifullah et al., 2021). Such research illustrates that conceptually, social media could have an enabling effect for resource bricolage activity within a crisis context.

In addition to the pre-crisis business model, the conceptual framework also outlines the factor of organisational resilience activities. This factor considers the bricolage activity with which the retail micro-SME applies during the trans-crisis phase. The Resource Bricolage Theory forms the underpinning theory to this thesis and therefore is considered as the central crisis mitigating activity within the framework. Bricolage is enabled within the framework by social media, meaning that the effective use of social media allows businesses to reconfigure business resources to create new situationally specific capabilities at the time of crisis. Examples of such behaviour could include using social media to communicate to customers modifications to the business' website so that the business can accept online orders. In this case social media has enabled the business to change the way it currently uses its website (resource) to fulfil a new or extended purpose. Within this example, this could not be done successfully without the use of social media to communicate the change to customers. Resource Bricolage Theory pertains a rich precedent within academic literature. Resource Bricolage Theory was first theorised by Levi-Strauss (1967), but was later applied within the context of resource constrained SMEs (cf. Chliova & ringov, 2017; linna, 2013; Atarah et al., 2019; Digan et al., 2019; An et al., 2018). Subsequently resource bricolage was extended to applications within SME crisis literature. Martinelli et al. (2018) suggest that bricolage has the ability to spur change in times of crisis and create opportunity. Brunjes & Revilla-Diez (2013) also outline the propensity of bricolage to create commercial opportunity and nature business development. Kuckertz et al. (2020) identify bricolage as an effective mitigating activity during the Covid-19 crisis, the fundamental crisis studied within this thesis.

The final factor outlined within the conceptual framework is the outputs of resilience activity. The bricolage process aims to create situationally specific capabilities that mitigate the crisis at hand. Kuckertz et al. (2020) study bricolage activity within the context of Covid-19 and find that bricolage can create capabilities to adapt and modify business operations and capabilities. The penultimate consequence of mitigating

activity is success or failure, as illustrated within the framework. The conceptual framework proceeds to illustrate that in the case of success SMEs will engage within a form of business model re-optimisation. This can be illustrated by work conducted by Clauss et al. (2021) who find that during the Covid-19 crisis small businesses undertook business model optimisations as a form of resilience. Business model optimisations as a form of resilience is also noted within further research studies (cf. Butt, 2022; Robertson et al., 2022). The conceptual framework proceeds to outline resilience as an output of business model re-optimisation, outlining this possibility of creating resilience with the use of this business activity. Finally, organisational learning can be seen as a part of the conceptual framework. Organisational learning receives much precedent within the literature (James & Wootan 2005; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Learning from previous crisis is highly regarded as contributing to crisis experience which can be seen as one of the most important antecedences for effectively dealing with crises in an SME context (Doern, 2016). Within the crisis event sequence offered by Buchanan & Denyer (2013) organisational learning is also denoted as a key phase of crisis. Organisational learning is denoted at the end of the trans-crisis phase representing the cumulative learning process over the course of the trans-crisis phase, making observation that learning is not always a sequential crisis stage but is diffuse across the crisis event. The conceptual framework also includes a feedback loop suggesting that learnings from the experienced fundamental crisis can be used to continually improve and prepare for future fundamental crises.

3.3.5: Presenting the Research Questions

With the gap in the research clearly presented and the conceptual framework established, research questions can now be presented for the purpose of this research. This thesis sets out with the aim of evaluating the propensity of effective social media use as a key enabler for resource bricolage activities within retail micro-SMEs, so that organisational resilience to fundamental crises can be developed. To this end the following research questions were developed.

Table 3.1: Research Questions

Research Question 1	Does social media experience differentiate successful social media use from unsuccessful social media use for the purpose of developing resilience during a fundamental crisis?
Research Question 2	Which social media platforms best supports bricolage activity for resilience purposes across the trans-crisis phase of fundamental crisis within retail SMEs?
Research Question 3	Which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for resource bricolage activities in the face of fundamental crisis?
Research Question 4	Which retail SME capabilities can be developed by using social media as an enabler of bricolage?

The first research question seeks to address the role of social media experience within the bricolage process. Fundamental crises such as Covid-19 are those that are very difficult to predict at a business level. This means that preparation in the form of social media adoption is not feasible in the event where SMEs must enact bricolage activity as a form of resilience. As such, a key consideration in understanding the capability of retail micro-SMEs to use social media as an enabler of bricolage, will be to identify if prior experience of social media use is a determinant of success. Success can be evaluated by the ability of retail micro-SMEs to use social media to develop resilience during the Covid-19 crisis. Research question two seeks to identify the social media platforms that best support resource bricolage. With a breadth of social media platforms in existence it is important to understand both the capabilities and parameters of prominent social media platforms so that those which best support bricolage activity can be identified.

The third research question aims to identify which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for the bricolage process. Current literature does not sufficiently examine the core resources that hold a propensity to be effective within the bricolage process, and as such these resources need to be identified for the purpose of this study. The final research question aims to understand which retail SME capabilities can be enabled by resource bricolage. Whereas it is important to understand the enabling ability of social media, it is also important to understand the outputs of the resilience process by way of identifying the most effective capabilities for mitigating

fundamental crises events. It is by answering all four research questions that this thesis can achieve the research aim and more fully understand the phenomenon under investigation.

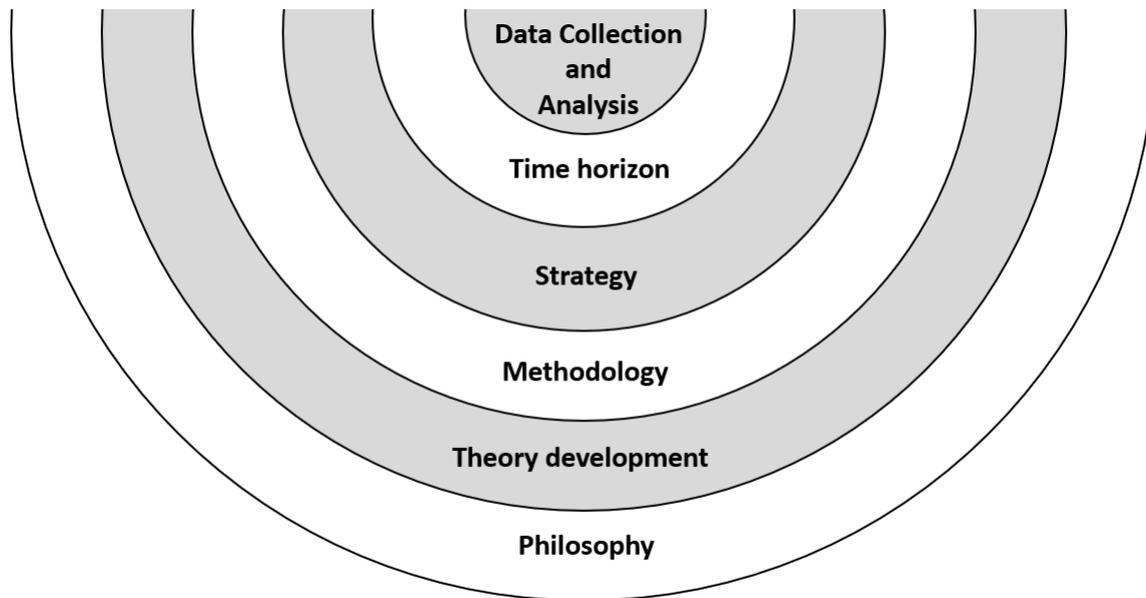
Chapter 4: Methodology

Whereas chapters 2 and 3 present the literature review, this chapter now presents the research design for this thesis. In previous chapters, this thesis has considered the study's theoretical background and produced a conceptual framework (section 3.3). The analysis of current literature allowed for the formation of viable research questions that satisfy the research aim. This chapter now outlines the qualitative research design implemented to fulfil the research questions. Section 4.1 rationalises the methodological choice addressing the research philosophy, approach to theory development, choice of research instrument, research timeframe, and the data collection and analysis approach. Section 4.2 proceeds to detail the practical implementation of the research process, providing detail on the research instrument design, pilot testing, research ethics and details of the data collection and analysis methods.

4.1: Method Rationale

The intention of this chapter section is to outline the rationale of the proposed research method for this research. The rationale is presented using the structure of Saunders & Lewis' (2018) Research Onion as guidance for the key considerations for identifying an appropriate methodological choice. The onion consists of six layers, all of which contribute to producing an effective research methodology. The two outermost layers concern the research philosophy and the approach to theory development. The three central layers reflect the need to consider methodological choice, the research strategy and time horizon. Finally, the centre of the onion concerns data collection and analysis. Figure 4.1 outlines the research onion overleaf.

Figure 4.1: The Research Onion, adapted from Saunders & Lewis (2018)



4.1.1: Research Philosophy

Saunders & Lewis (2018:106) define the term research philosophy as “the overall term that relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge in relation to research”. When conducting research, the subscribed research philosophy of the researcher inevitably influences the research project at hand (Howell, 2012). Such influence can be seen to present itself across three primary types of assumption, namely, ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions (Leavy, 2014). Ontological assumptions refer to the researcher’s perspective and subsequent assumptions regarding the nature of reality (Hammersley, 1992; Lincon & Guba, 2013). Epistemological assumptions pay reference to the researcher’s assumptions regarding knowledge, and what constitutes acceptable, legitimate and valid knowledge (Gray, 2013; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Finally, axiological assumptions refer to the importance of values and ethics within the research process (Saunders & Lewis, 2018; Hill, 1984). Such assumptions inevitably inform the theoretical positions taken and guide the overall research design (Crotty, 1998).

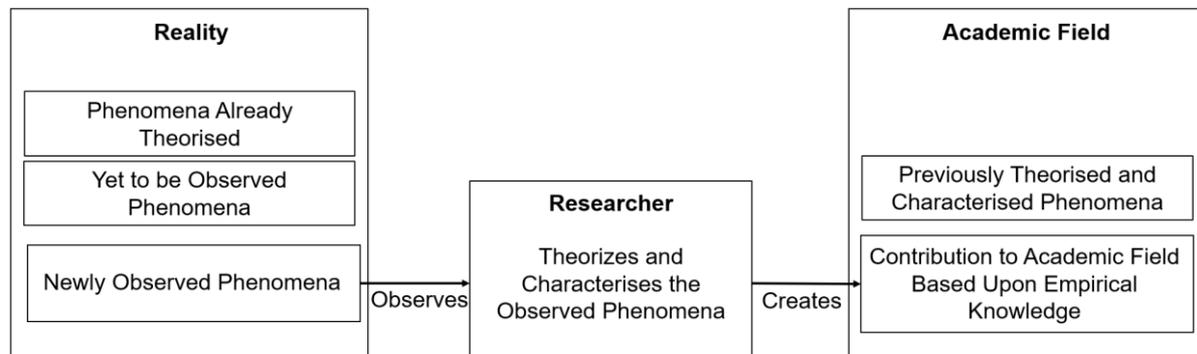
This research takes the ontological position that there are multiple realities (Guba & Lincon, 1989). The researcher takes the perspective that there is one physical world in which society resides, and that every member of human society individually experiences the world creating their own unique reality. This position can be applied

within the context of small business and crisis. Crises can be observed as tangible occurrences within the physical world and society. Such events are not by nature, neither negative nor positive in their effects. Rather, their effect is shaped within the perceptions and personal experiences of small business actors. Some crises by nature may present commercial opportunity for some small business actors, where it might represent uncertainty and commercial loss for others. Small business actors therefore experience a crisis from their own unique perspective, thus constructing their own unique reality, where this reality might differ from other members of society.

The researcher takes the axiological position that it is inherently difficult to separate oneself from the research process and the data collected. Although some researchers would argue that one should strive to separate oneself from the research process, in practice this can be difficult to attain, especially within the context of social science studies such as business and management. As such, the researcher believes that a researchers beliefs and behaviours inexplicably influence the research process, especially when collecting qualitative data.

Finally, the researcher takes the epistemological position that there is a wide range of knowledge that is acceptable and valid. The author feels that the validity of knowledge lies mainly within the way in which it is collected, as opposed to the knowledge form itself. The researcher believes that managerial researchers should investigate phenomenon by applying a theoretical lens, therefore differing from managerial practitioners. The author considers business and management to be an over-reaching label applied to that of a dynamic cluster of sub-phenomena. It is the role of the researcher to characterise and theorize phenomena once observed, as such creating a reservoir of knowledge that resembles that of an academic field. This academic field acts as a common ledger of knowledge from which other individuals, independent from the researcher, can retain and apply. The growth and enhancement of academic knowledge - in the form of an academic field - therefore lies in the collection and analysis of data regarding newly observed phenomena applying a multitude of theoretical perspectives. Here the researcher therefore observes phenomena and converts such phenomena into a legible, usable and legitimate medium - knowledge - fit for use and dissemination by members of society. This process can be represented in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Effects of Assumptions on Research Paradigm



The researcher believes that such knowledge should primarily be presented in the form of empirical knowledge, where the process of attainment (i.e., methodology) of that knowledge is tried and tested. Additionally, the researcher feels that neither qualitative nor quantitative knowledge types can be considered universally superior to one another. Instead, the validity of the knowledge type is attributed to the context of both the research study and phenomenon under investigation. Although quantitative research methods can be seen as legitimate methods for creating law like generalisations, the author feels that such methods often lack the ability to collect rich and intricate data. Social science systems are often presented as dynamic and complex, where behaviour cannot be generalised in a meaningful way. As such, under these conditions it is important to more intricately investigate phenomenon so that nuanced relationships can be identified and captured more accurately. Therefore, the author believes that to fully understand a phenomenon within a social science context, qualitative data often offers a richness and depth of data that is unrivalled by quantitative methods (Cohen et al., 2000).

4.1.2: Consequential Philosophical Position

The three discussed assumptions discussed within section 4.1.1 influence the research paradigm of the researcher (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). Within the context of management studies, it is apparent that there are two opposing research paradigms namely the positivist paradigm and phenomenological paradigm (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). The lexicon surrounding both paradigms can be seen as somewhat confusing

where many authors substitute a range of terms in place of the terms used above. Table 4.1 illustrates the common variations in terminology previously applied within social science literature concerning research philosophy.

Table 4.1: Alternative Terminologies for The Research Paradigms, adapted from Hussey & Hussey (1997)

Positivist Paradigm	Phenomenological Paradigm
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantitative 2. Objectivist 3. Scientific 4. Experimentalist 5. Traditionalist 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Qualitative 2. Subjectivism 3. Humanistic 4. Interpretivism

The positivist and phenomenological research paradigms can be seen as opposing sides of a research paradigm continuum (Rahman & Alharthi, 2016). Such poles are posited as philosophical extremes with differing ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives. Table 4.2 highlights differences between these paradigms with respect to the three assumptions discussed within section 4.1.1.

Table 4.2: Assumptions of The Two Key Paradigms, adopted from Hussey & Hussey (1997)

Assumption	Positivist	Phenomenological
Ontological	Reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher.	Reality is subjective and multiple as seen by participants in a study.
Epistemological	Researcher is independent from that being researched.	Researcher interacts with that being researched.
Axiological	Value-free and unbiased.	Value-laden and biased.

Creswell & Plano Clarke (2011) argue that although the positivist and phenomenological paradigms can be seen as polar extremes, several additional paradigms exist along the continuum. Such paradigms include, post-positivism, constructivism, participatory and pragmatism (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2011). Such

paradigms can be differentiated in accordance with ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions, similarly to the positivism and phenomenological paradigms. Table 4.3 outlines the ontological, epistemological and axiological implications for the differing paradigms.

Table 4.3: Additional Paradigms That Exist Along the Continuum, adapted from Creswell & Plano Clark (2011)

Assumption	Post-positivism	Constructivism	Participatory	Pragmatism
Ontological	Singular reality (e.g. researchers reject or fail to reject hypotheses)	Multiple reality (e.g. researchers provide quotes to illustrate different perspectives)	Political reality (e.g. findings are negotiated with participants)	Singular and multiple reality (e.g. researchers test hypotheses and provide multiple perspectives)
Epistemological	Distance and impartiality (e.g. researchers objectively collect data on instruments)	Closeness (e.g. researchers visit participants at their sites to collect data)	Collaboration (e.g. researchers actively involve participants as collaborators)	Practicality (e.g. researchers collect data by “what works” to address research questions)
Axiological	Unbiased (e.g. researchers use checks to eliminate bias)	Biased (e.g. researchers actively talk about their biases and interactions)	Negotiated (e.g. researchers negotiate their biases with participants)	Multiple stances (e.g. researchers include both biased and unbiased stance)

When observing both Table 4.2 and Table 4.3, the assumptions of the author of this thesis can be seen to resonate with a range of paradigms. For example, the author takes the ontological position of multiple realities which resonates with constructivism, pragmatism, and phenomenological worldviews. Furthermore, the researcher takes an axiological position that coincides with positivism, post-positivism, and pragmatism. However, the key assumption that determines the researchers research paradigm is

that of their epistemological position. Here the researcher holds the perspective that every research project is unique and as such requires a unique methodology that meets the needs of the research aim of the research project in question. This perspective is illustrative of a 'what works' approach as described by the epistemological perspective of a pragmatic worldview (Creswell and Plano Clarke, 2011).

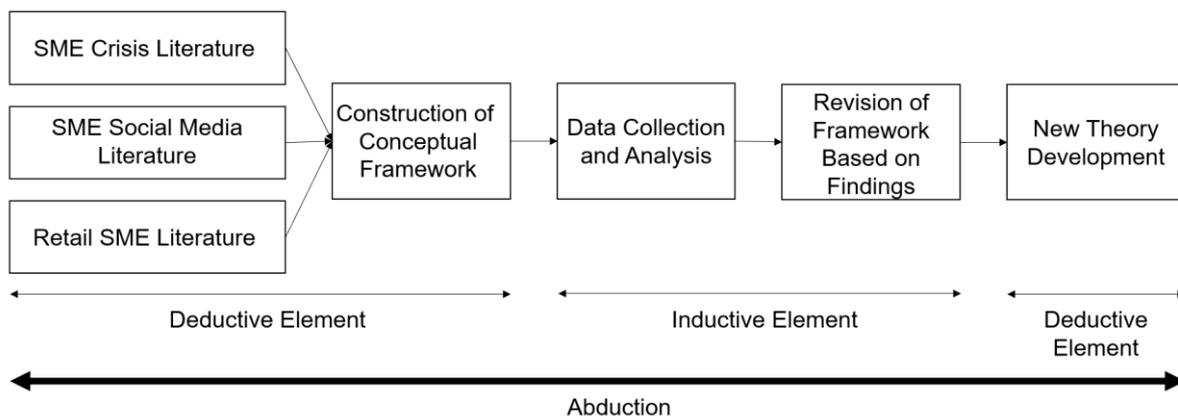
The researcher can therefore be seen to deviate from the traditional research paradigms of positivism and phenomenology and adopt a pragmatic approach to research. Accordingly, in this case the author believes that a qualitative approach would best meet the requirements of this thesis and collect what could be classified as valid knowledge. While adopting the theoretical lens of Resource Bricolage Theory, this thesis seeks to understand the experiences of small businesses during the Covid-19 crisis and evaluate their use of social media to create resilience responses. The exploratory nature of this research, and the nature of the applied theoretical lens, means that there will likely be highly complex and dynamic business behaviours observed across the Covid-19 crisis. Additionally, the unique contexts in which retail SMEs operated across the Covid-19 crisis means that it is likely that a wide variety of new phenomenon will be observed during the data collection phase. In order to capture new phenomena effectively, it is therefore important to apply a research methodology that is suitably flexible, a quality of which qualitative research methods afford (Williams, 2007). Yin (2003) argue that new and unique phenomenon often cannot be adequately measured with quantitative measures without taking an unacceptable leap of faith.

4.1.3: Approach to Theory Development

While section 4.1.2 identified the philosophical position of this study, it is the intention of this section to rationalise the approach to theory development that this thesis will take. Saunders & Lewis (2018) state that there are three primary research development approaches: deduction, induction, and abduction. Deduction involves the testing of a theoretical proposition by using a research strategy specifically designed to collect data for the purpose of its testing (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Induction can be considered an opposite approach to deduction (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), thus

induction involves the building of theory from analysing data already collected, moving from specific observations to generalisable patterns or laws (Locke, 2007). The third approach to theory development is that of abduction. Abduction refers to the collection of data to explore phenomena, before then identifying themes to explain patterns that generate new theory or additions to theory which are subsequently tested (Kennedy & Thornberg, 2018). The abductive approach therefore can be seen to move back and forth between the induction and deduction approaches to theory development. This thesis adopts an abductive approach, where the deductive and inductive elements of the research are outlined within Figure 4.3 below. This research can be considered abductive in nature due to its systematic approach, where it firstly presents a conceptual framework developed upon an extensive literature review, before then collecting data and revisiting the framework to enact revisions.

Figure 4.3: The Abductive Approach Applied to this Thesis



4.1.4: Research Purpose

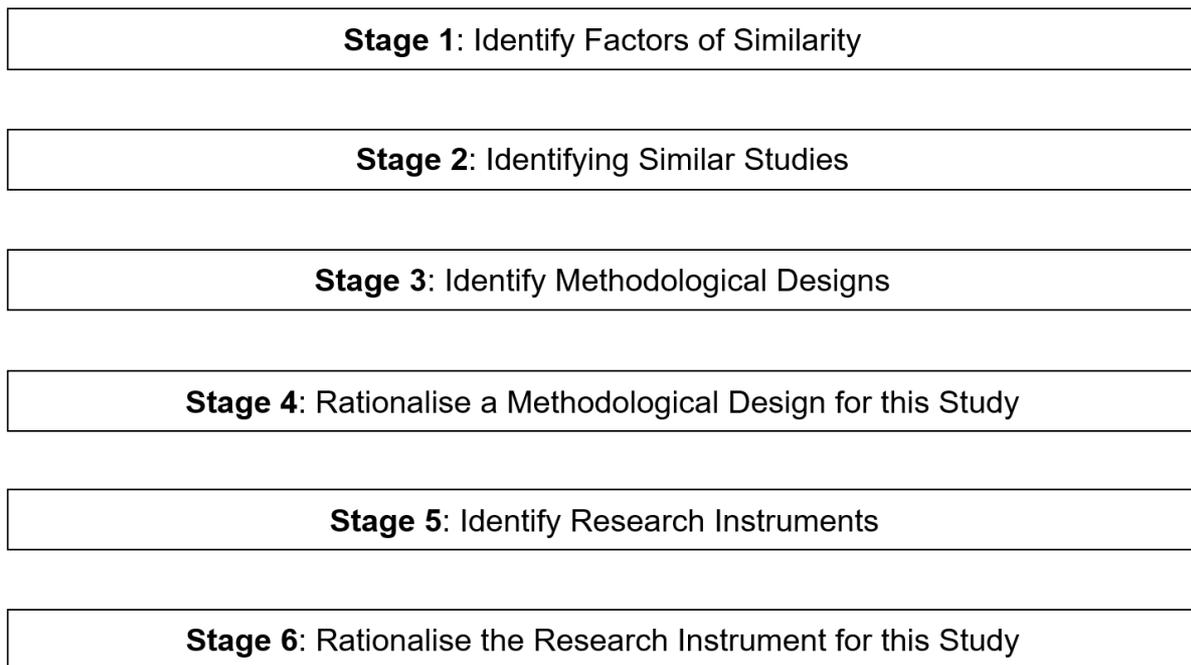
In addition to identifying the approach to theory development, the research purpose must also be established. Researchers can be seen to conduct research with three purposes. These research purposes can be seen as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory (Stebbins, 2001). Exploratory studies aim to seek new insights, ask new questions and assess topics in a new light, whereas descriptive studies are designed to produce an accurate representation of persons, events or situations. Explanatory studies focus on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationships between variables (Stebbins, 2001). This thesis takes an exploratory approach as it

evaluates bricolage within a new light, considering social media as a key enabler of the bricolage process within the context of a fundamental crisis event.

4.1.5: Methodological Choice

It is the intention of this chapter section to rationalise the methodological choice for this research. This chapter has already established a pragmatist worldview, which in part supports a rationale for a qualitative approach, however further rationale must be established to present a sound reasoning for this approach. To develop the methodological rationale further this chapter section turns to the current academic literature within the field, identifying the methodological designs adopted by researchers within similar research. This chapter section takes a structured approach, where it first identifies two factors of similarity. These factors of similarity are used to identify a population of studies that can be considered similar to that of this research. The chapter section then moves to identify the methodological design and research instrument of similar studies. It is from this analysis that this study derives additional rationale as to which methodology should be applied for the purpose of this research (see section 4.1.2 for philosophical rationale). The six steps of the analysis are presented overleaf within Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: Rationalisation Analysis for the Methodological Approach to this Study



To identify previous studies that can be considered similar in nature to this study, it was necessary to identify the key characteristics of this research. This thesis can be seen to exhibit key characteristics that make it similar to previous studies with regard to the phenomenon it investigates. These characteristics are:

1. That it studies bricolage within the context of adversity and SMEs
2. That it considers SME social media use within the context of crisis

By applying these two characteristics to previous SME literature it is possible to identify a population of studies that are alike to this study. These studies are displayed within Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Studies that can be Considered Similar to this Research

Similarity Characteristics	Studies
SME studies that consider bricolage within the context of adversity (8)	Martinelli et al., 2018; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Kwong et al., 2019; Bivona & Cruz, 2021; Clauss et al., 2021; Purnomo et al., 2021; Atarah et al., 2019; Baker & Nelson, 2005.

SME studies that consider social media use within the context of crisis (6)	Trawnih et al., 2021; Salam et al., 2021; Patma et al., 2021; Syaifuhhal et al., 2021; Sandburg et al., 2020; Robertson et al., 2022.
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With the above studies identified, an analysis of the above-named studies was undertaken to determine the most frequently applied methodological design. To identify the employed methodologies within these studies the studies were read in their entirety, paying special attention to the methodology sections. From this analysis, it was possible to construct Table 4.5 where the differing methodological approaches are outlined. A full breakdown of the methodological designs of each study can be seen within appendix 4.1.

Table 4.5: Methods Applied in Previous Studies

Similarity Characteristics	Method Applied		
	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed Method
SME studies that consider bricolage within the context of adversity	7	0	1
SME studies that consider social media use within the context of crisis	1	4	1
Total	8	4	2

The above table allows for the methodologies across each similarity factor to be aggregated, revealing the total applications of the various methodologies across similar studies. This is of interest as it allows for the identification of the most frequently applied methodologies within this research area. From the analysis it can be seen that qualitative methods are most frequently adopted. This is reflective of observations made by Doern et al. (2019) who state that SME crisis studies more prolifically adopt qualitative methodologies over quantitative methodologies. Furthermore, Doern et al. (2019) proceed to state that this can be attributed to the fact that qualitative methodologies are well suited to capturing the crisis event more effectively. Precedent

for a qualitative methodology can also be derived from Herbane (2010) who argues that business practitioners do not like to engage with crisis management studies due to the sensitive nature of the topic where they might need to admit failure or poor financial performance. Furthermore, both Buchanan & Denyer (2013) and Herbane et al. (2004) highlight the difficulty in obtaining high response rates within the organisational study of crisis. It can therefore be seen that adopting quantitative methods within crisis studies can prove difficult due to their reliance on large response rates in order to produce meaningful findings (Runyan, 2006; Mitroff et al., 1988; Keller et al., 2005). Within the current academic study of crisis within an SME context, it is therefore possible to see a strong precedent for a qualitative research methodology.

Covid-19 offers a unique opportunity to study a crisis that influenced the operations of retail SMEs on a national scale (see section 2.3.4). With such a broad scope of affected businesses the possibility of highly diverse and unique resilient responses is acute. As such a qualitative method will likely allow for a more effective data collection operation that encompasses the flexibility to capture rich data and provide insights into the research phenomena under investigation. Miles & Huberman (1994) point to the richness of data offered by qualitative research, and its ability to preserve chronological flow precisely illustrating which antecedents lead to which events. This thesis is highly dependent on preserving chronological flow, due to the nature of Resource Bricolage Theory. To assess the change in use of resources during the trans-crisis phase, data will need to be collected regarding the pre-crisis and post-crisis phases. Understanding this timeline is very important. Further precedent for a qualitative methodology can also be derived from Silverman (2000) who discusses the added flexibility provided by qualitative research. Silverman (2000) suggests that qualitative methods allow for researchers to innovate and better understand the observed phenomena. Although generally qualitative methodologies produce smaller samples, the use of smaller samples can add value to the research process. King (2004) and Hycner (1985) both argue that smaller data sets allow for a deeper analysis of the data.

Based upon the above, it was possible to identify a precedent for the adoption of a qualitative research method, where a qualitative research method would allow for the collection of research to collect a depth and richness of data capable of fully

captivating the diversity of phenomena likely to be observed within the primary data collection phase of this research. With a qualitative methodology identified it was then necessary to select a research instrument for the purpose of this study. It was possible to rationalise the choice of research instrument by consulting the qualitative studies identified within Table 4.5. The breakdown of research instruments across qualitative studies is illustrated within Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Research Instruments Applied within Previous Qualitative Studies

Similarity Characteristic	Research strategy			
	Interviews	Case study	Focus groups	Diary studies
SME studies that consider bricolage within the context of adversity	4	3	1	1
SME studies that consider social media use within the context of crisis	1	1	0	0
Total	5	4	1	1

This table includes qualitative elements from mixed method studies.

Table 4.6 illustrates a spectrum of qualitative research instruments across the three similarity characteristics. The use of case studies, focus groups and diary studies can all be seen to be applied within previous studies. However, what is evident is the use of interviews as the most frequently adopted instrument. Both Doern (2016) and Runyan (2006) both advocate the use of interviews as they enable researchers to collect data closer to the crisis event without delay. Although interviews can be seen as the most widely applied research instrument, it is also possible to see the use of case studies. Case studies can also be seen as highly effective research instrument when conducting organisational research (Feagin et al., 1991). However, within small business research participating businesses are usually very small in size. This is particularly the case in studies where participants are micro-SMEs. As such, the line between interviews and case studies can be seen as blurred when compared to the study of large organisations. The retail sector is also very diverse with a wide range of businesses selling a wider range of products and services. As such, adopting interviews would likely allow for a slight larger sample size without compromising upon the richness of the data collected. On the basis of the above discussed literature, it

can therefore be seen that interviews would form the most effective research instrument for the purpose of this study.

4.1.6: Research Time Frames

With a qualitative methodology and interview research instrument selected, this chapter must now consider the research time horizon, where the research time horizon refers to the duration of time allotted in the research process for data collection and analysis (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). This study was time constrained, as it formed part of the assessment for a PhD. The time allotted for the completion of this study in its entirety was three years. Respectively the data collection and analysis phases occupied nine months of time within the three-year period. This research study therefore took the nature of a cross-sectional study, collecting data at one interval. The time frames for both data collection and analysis are outlined within Figure 4.7.

Table 4.7: Research Time Horizon

Data Collection						Data Analysis		
2022/23						2023		
August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April

4.1.7: Data Collection Approach

A key element within this study was collecting the correct and necessary data. This study aims to evaluate the propensity of effective social media use as a key enabler for resource bricolage activities within retail micro-SMEs, as a method of developing organisational resilience to fundamental crisis. To this end, the sample of selected businesses needed to be centred around that of UK retail micro-SMEs. To ensure that retail micro-SMEs were identified and targeted in conformance with the research aim, the study applied a rigorous criterion of which participants needed to meet. This criterion can be seen as niche, however this ensured that the required level of richness of data was achieved by selecting businesses that were of most interest to the study. This criterion is detailed within Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Eligibility Criteria of Participating Retail SMEs

Criteria	Description
1	The business must conform to the definition of a retail micro-SME as outlined within section 3.1.3. The business must have conformed to this definition before the Covid-19 crisis entered the UK (January 2020). Participating businesses do not have to conform to this definition for the duration of the crisis (January 2020 – March 2022). Businesses classified as dissolved, small, medium or large within this period are eligible so that a spectrum of resilience can be evaluated. For businesses that were established during the crisis, these must have been registered as a micro-SMEs upon registration with Companies House.
2	The business must reside and operate within the United Kingdom. UK based retail micro-SMEs who maintain an online presence serving an international market are eligible for participation within this study.
3	The business must be contactable so they can be invited to participate in the study.
4	The business must have operated in-full or in-part during the period between 29 th January 2020 & 1 st March 2022.
5	The business must be / have been registered on Companies House as a legitimate enterprise.
6	The business itself must have an online social media presence. This does not include personal social media accounts of business owners or staff, unless that social media account has been used for the commercial benefit of the business.

In order to identify participants that were suitable for this study it was important to apply a tried and tested sampling technique. As such, this research applied two sampling techniques. Firstly, convenience sampling was applied. Convenience

sampling, also labelled non-probability sampling is a process of selecting participants based upon their availability to the researcher (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Secondly, a maximum variation sampling techniques was applied. Maximum variation sampling concerns the selection of a diverse range of participants with the aim of identifying common patterns across the data (Gray, 2013). Using maximum variation sampling will ensure that this research is representative of businesses of various characteristics, such as experience, location, and retail specialisation. Combining the use of both sampling techniques was considered necessary by way of ensuring a spectrum of resilient behaviour across study participants.

4.1.8: Data Analysis Approach

In order to identify a suitable data analysis approach, previous research was once again consulted to understand which data analysis techniques receive the most precedent within this area of research. Table 4.9 outlines similar studies that adopt interviews as the research instrument, along with their data analysis method.

Table: 4.9: Similar Studies Adopting an Interview Research Instrument

Study	Data Analysis Method
Martinelli et al. (2018)	Content Analysis
Kuckertz et al. (2020)	Grounded Theory
Kwong et al. (2019)	Thematic Analysis
Purnomo et al. (2019)	Content Analysis
Salam et al. (2021)	Thematic Analysis

From the studies listed within Table 4.8 it is evident that there are three data analysis methods adopted across these studies. These data analysis methods are thematic analysis, grounded theory analysis and content analysis. Boyatzis (1998) argues that thematic analysis cannot be considered an analysis method within itself, with Guest et al. (2012) deeming thematic analysis to be phenomenological in nature. However, when examining methodological literature, it is evident that there are indeed several studies that classify thematic analysis as an analysis method, where there are several well applied variations (cf. Aronson, 1994; Attride-Stirling, 2001; Joffe & Yardley, 2004; Tuckett, 2005). A notable variation is that applied by Braun & Clarke (2006) which has

been cited over 170,000 times (Google Scholar, 2023). The Braun & Clarke (2006) method can be seen to outline six key phases of thematic data analysis, all of which are detailed within Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: The Braun & Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis Process

Phase	Description
Data Familiarisation	This stage first involves transcribing the interviews before familiarising oneself with the data in its entirety. The authors stipulate that the researcher should read and re-read all transcripts in addition to conducting the interviews themselves.
Generating Codes	The authors then outline two approaches to coding; inductive and deductive. Deductive coding involves creating pre-conceived codes before data analysis takes place. Inductive coding involves creating codes during the analysis process.
Identifying Initial Themes	After the coding process has taken place themes can be identified. Braun & Clarke (2006) outline themes as groups of reoccurring/ patterns of codes.
Refining Themes	After themes are identified these themes can be refined to create the penultimate themes. To refine themes the authors suggest using thematic maps. Thematic maps were used in this study.
Defining and Naming Themes	Once the final themes have been defined these themes can be named appropriately. A detailed analysis is written regarding each theme stating how they relate to the overall 'story' of the data and research questions.
Producing the Final Report	This phase initiates after all analysis is complete and discusses the findings of the analysis relating findings back to the research questions.

What is unique about this method is that it is theretically flexible and free standing as an analytical tool, meaning it can be applied within a wide spectrum of theoretical frameworks and philosophical positions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Further to the

publication of the Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis method, the authors have gone on to revise the method and further increase its validity. Braun & Clarke (2021) introduce the concept of reflexivity, labelling the method as Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The authors present reflexivity as the process where the researcher must reflect upon subjectivity, their engagement with theory, data and interpretation. Whereas Braun & Clarke (2006) presented the concept of data saturation (the point at which no new themes emerge), Braun & Clarke (2022) present the notion of information power. Information power is the process by which the researcher determines if the richness of the data is of a suitable quality that would allow for the fulfilment of the research aim and research questions.

The Braun & Clarke (2022) method can therefore be seen as attractive to this study on a number of merits. Firstly, this method of analysis is theoretically flexible, making it compatible with an exploratory study such as this. Secondly, the model is compatible with a wide range of philosophical positions, of which include the pragmatic position. Finally, it is rigorous and well established as a valid form of qualitative data analysis. It is therefore upon this merit that this thesis adopted this method of data analysis.

4.2: Method Operationalisation

Where section 4.1 outlines the rationale for the methodological choices made within this thesis, chapter section 4.2 outlines the practical implementation of the research method. This section presents detail on the full range of operationalised aspects of the data collection and analysis process. This will include details on the research instrument design, pilot testing, identifying study participants, practical implementation of the interview process, commitment to confidentiality and ethics, and data analysis technique.

4.2.1: Research Instrument Design

With interviews selected as the research instrument, it was important to ensure the instrument collected the necessary data that would allow for the fulfilment of the research aim. As such the interview questions were closely guided by both the conceptual framework and research questions developed for this study (see sections 3.3.4 and 3.3.5). The thesis adopts the theoretical lens of Resource Bricolage Theory.

Resource Bricolage Theory explains the way in which a business reconfigures or enhances its recourses, to create specific solutions to problems and opportunities arising within the business environment (see section 3.3.2). Therefore, to effectively evaluate business behaviour, data needed to be collected across the crisis event sequence. As such, the interview structure was reflective of this and considered the pre-crisis, trans-crisis and post-crisis phases in turn. To ensure the effective presentation of questions to participants, the interview took the form of five sections. The interview sections adopted were Section 1: Owner Manager Background, Section 2: Business Profile Pre-crisis, Section 3: Business Profile Trans-crisis, Section 4: Trans-crisis Social Media Usage, and Section 5: Closing Questions. The logic for each interview section is outlined within Table 4.11.

Table 4.11: Strategy Towards the Interview Structure

Interview Section	Section Logic
Section 1: Owner Manager Background	Section 1 aimed to collect data regarding the business owner taking part in the study. The unit of analysis for this study is the business and not the owner manager, and therefore this data was collected for demographical purposes, and to assess the business management and crisis management experience of the owner manager. It was important to account for this to assess the role of the owner manager within the business.
Section 2: Business Profile Pre-crisis	Section 2 aimed to collect data regarding the business across the pre-crisis phase. This was important so that an understanding of the business' pre-crisis social media use and operating practices could be developed. This could therefore be established as a point of reference from which trans-crisis change could be understood.
Section 3: Business Profile Trans-crisis	This section aimed to develop an understanding of the business' operating practices across the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. By combining the data collected from sections 2 and 3 it was possible to understand the degree of change within the business. This data

	would ultimately explain the business' resilience response.
Section 4: Trans-Crisis Social Media Usage	Section 4 aimed to collect data that would allow for the detailed understanding of the business' social media usage during the crisis. This was an important aspect of the research, as the enabling ability of social media for supporting a resilience response needed to be evaluated to fulfil the research aim.
Section 5: Closing Questions	The final section of the interview was dedicated to asking reflective questions regarding the post-crisis phase. This section was needed to evaluate the business' ability to recover from the crisis and to understand how the business might have learnt from the crisis experience. Due to the timing of the data collection phase, this element of the instrument only provided insights to the post-crisis phase as significant enough time had not elapsed since the end of the crisis.

With an overreaching interview structure applied, it was important to develop robust questions that would contribute to the effective fulfilment of the research aim. Upon completing the literature review, this thesis identified four research questions (see section 3.3.5). These research questions were identified to ensure that the research aim could be fulfilled, making a contribution to knowledge. The research questions can be seen in Table 4.12 below.

Table 4.12: Research Questions for this Study

Research Question 1	Does user experience differentiate effective social media use from ineffective social media use for the purpose of developing resilience during a fundamental crisis?
Research Question 2	Which social media platforms best supports bricolage activity for resilience purposes across the trans-crisis phase of fundamental crisis within retail SMEs?
Research Question 3	Which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for resource bricolage activities in the face of fundamental crisis?

Research Question 4	Which retail SME capabilities can be developed by using social media as an enabler of bricolage?
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The interview was designed to be semi-structured in nature, to allow for a degree of flexibility to further explore any unexpected phenomena. Each interview question was accompanied by a sub-list of mandatory criteria. This mandatory criterion was not presented to the participant but was used by the researcher to ensure that the correct areas of enquiry had been covered within the answer from the participant. Table 4.13 outlines the 19 interview questions and the interview sections that they were placed within. The full template used within the interview process is attached within Appendix 4.2.

Table 4.13: Interview Questions Relating to each Interview Section

Interview Section	Interview section
Section 1: Owner Manager Background	Q1: Can you first tell me a little bit about your background as a business owner? Could you start by telling me for how long you've run your own business, and the experience you have as a business owner.
	Q2: Could you tell me why you decided to run your own business?
	Q3: During the Covid-19 crisis did you contract the virus, and did this have an impact on the business in any way?
Section 2: Pre-crisis Business Profile	Q 4: Please start by telling me about how the business operated and what products / services you sold?
	Q5: How would you describe the financial performance of the business before Covid-19?
	Q6: Could you explain how the business used social media before the Covid-19 pandemic?
Section 3: Trans-crisis business Profile	Q7: Could you outline how the Covid-19 pandemic affected your business?

	Q8: How would you describe the financial performance of the business during the Covid-19 pandemic?
	Q9: Which sources of support were most useful during the pandemic?
<p>Section 4: Trans-crisis Social Media Use</p>	Q10: During the Covid-19 pandemic did your social media usage change?
	Q11: Did the business continue to use the same social media platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic or did the business use additional platforms?
	Q12: Could you talk me through how the business used these platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic?
	Q13: Were there any platforms that you found particularly useful?
	Q14: To what degree did social media play a part in the firm's ability to make changes and survive?
	<p>Q15: I would now like to talk about the person responsible for the business' social media account. For how long have they used social media in a personal capacity?</p> <p>Or,</p> <p>I would now like to talk about your social media experience. For how long have you used social media in a personal and professional capacity?</p> <p>(this question would depend on who is operating the social media accounts for the business)</p>
<p>Section 5: Closing Questions</p>	Q16: Has the business made any key learnings from the Covid-19 crisis that might benefit the business in the future?
	Q17: Overall how would you describe the Covid-19 crisis? Did the crisis present a business opportunity or cause major disruption?
	Q18: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe that your business was to the Covid-19 crisis?

	Q19: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe your business is now?
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With the interview questions in mind, it is important to understand how such interview questions relate to the research questions identified upon completion of the literature review. As such, the alignment of the research questions and interview questions are presented within Table 4.14. It is worth noting that some interview questions were designed to provide details for more than one research question. As such, some interview questions are repeated within Table 4.14 to represent this. After the data collection process was complete, it also became apparent that usable data was gathered from interview questions that were not originally intended to answer non-corresponding research questions. This ultimately added value to the research process, providing unexpected additional data.

Table 4.14: Alignment of Research Questions with Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
1.0. Does user experience differentiate effective social media use from ineffective social media use for the purpose of developing resilience during a fundamental crisis?	Q1: Can you first tell me a little bit about your background as a business owner? Could you start by telling me for how long you've run your own business, and the experience you have as a business owner.
	Q2: Could you tell me why you decided to run your own business?
	Q15: I would now like to talk about the person responsible for the business' social media account. For how long have they used social media in a personal capacity? Or, I would now like to talk about your social media experience. For how long have you used social media in a personal and professional capacity? (this question would depend on who is operating the social media accounts for the business)

<p>2.0. Which social media platforms best supports bricolage activity for resilience purposes across the trans-crisis phase of fundamental crisis within retail SMEs?</p>	<p>Q6: Could you explain how the business used social media before the Covid-19 pandemic?</p>
	<p>Q10: During the Covid-19 pandemic did your social media usage change?</p>
	<p>Q11: Did the business continue to use the same social media platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic or did the business use additional platforms?</p>
	<p>Q12: Could you talk me through how the business used these platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic?</p>
	<p>Q14: To what degree did social media play a part in the firm's ability to make changes and survive?</p>
	<p>Q15: I would now like to talk about the person responsible for the business' social media account. For how long have they used social media in a personal capacity?</p>
<p>3.0. Which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for resource bricolage activities in the face of fundamental crisis?</p>	<p>Q 4: Please start by telling me about how the business operated and what products / services you sold?</p>
	<p>Q5: How would you describe the financial performance of the business before Covid-19?</p>
	<p>Q7: Could you outline how the Covid-19 crisis affected your business?</p>
	<p>Q8: How would you describe the financial performance of the business during the Covid-19 pandemic?</p>
	<p>Q9: Which sources of support were most useful during the pandemic?</p>
	<p>Q16: Has the business made any key learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic that might benefit the business in the future?</p>
	<p>Q17: Overall how would you describe the Covid-19 pandemic? Did the crisis present a business opportunity or cause major disruption?</p>

	Q18: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe that your business was to the Covid-19 pandemic?
	Q19: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe your business is now?
	Q3: During the Covid-19 pandemic did you contract the virus, and did this have an impact on the business in any way?
4.0. Which retail SME capabilities can be developed by using social media as an enabler of bricolage?	Q12: Could you talk me through how the business used these platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic?
	Q13: Were there any platform(s) that you found particularly useful?
	Q14: To what degree did social media play a part in the firm's ability to make changes and survive?

4.2.2: Pilot Testing

After completing a rigorous process for developing the research instrument, the interview questions needed to be tested in the form of a pilot study. A pilot study is a useful process that allows for the testing of the research instrument to ensure validity (Oppenheim, 2000). The approach used within this pilot study was to apply a three-stage approach, detailed within Table 4.15. This three-staged method was inspired by Dillman (2000) who outlines considerations for an effective pilot process. Dillman (2000) can be seen to suggest that a pilot study should include the testing of the instrument with both academic colleagues and practitioners, to ensure the understandability of questions.

Table 4.15: Pilot Study Stages

Stage	Description
1	Supervisor Review
2	Wider Faculty Review
3	Practitioner Interviews

The first stage of the pilot process consisted of a preliminary stage where the research instrument was shared with the PhD supervisors. Each PhD supervisor reviewed the

instrument in isolation without collaborating with the other supervisors, thus providing their own un-bias feedback. An important consideration in this process was the professional profile of each PhD supervisor, thus determining their ability to effectively perform this process and provide valuable feedback. The professional profile of each supervisor is outlined within Table 4.16. The supervisors names have been anonymised and presented within the table in order of review. It was deemed, based upon these professional profiles that each supervisor was highly qualified within the field of qualitative methodology and Entrepreneurship research. Upon this basis, it was therefore decided that feedback from all three supervisors would add tremendous value to this research and be a valid method of validating the research instrument.

Table 4.16: Professional Profile of PhD Supervisors Taking Part in Stage 1 of the Pilot Study

Supervisor	Professional Profile
1	At time of review, this supervisor had been an academic researcher for a number of years, holding an academic position as Lecturer in Entrepreneurship. This supervisor has published a high number of peer-reviewed, qualitatively based research papers.
2	At time of review, this supervisor was a long-standing Professor of Entrepreneurship, who had published a wealth of both qualitative and quantitative peer-reviewed journal articles. Additionally, this supervisor held an Editor in Chief role for a ABS 3* peer-reviewed academic journal.
3	At time of review, this supervisor held the role of Associate Professor in Entrepreneurship. This supervisor had also published a high number of qualitative peer-reviewed academic journal articles.

The feedback provided by all three supervisors was very positive, with only one point of minor feedback presented. This feedback was to ensure uniformity in the use of business terms to prevent participant from becoming confused. A specific example of

this was that the research questions used the terms company, firm, business and enterprise to ask questions about the participants business. All terminology of this type was then changed to reflect the use of the term business unilaterally. With this feedback implemented, the pilot could then proceed to the next stage, which was to obtain reviews from academics across the wider Faculty that were not members of the supervisory team or active researchers within the area of Entrepreneurship. This was done to collect feedback on the research instrument from the perspective of researchers that did not understand the research or the field, and thus would be unaware of specialist terms. This more distant form of appraisal was also designed to remove any prejudice or biases supervisors might have sub-consciously developed by being involved within the research for an extended period of time. Again, in this case, the eligibility of such reviewers was considered and six academics from the Faculty were identified as being eligible. From the six Faculty members contacted, three agreed to review the research instrument. Once more, the identity of these reviewers has been anonymised, with the professional profile of reviewers being presented within Table 4.17 in order of review.

Table 4.17: Professional Profile of Academics taking part in Stage 2 of The Pilot Process

Reviewer	Professional Profile
1	This reviewer held the academic position of Senior Lecturer in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the time of review. This reviewer had published qualitatively based papers in peer-reviewed academic journals.
2	This reviewer held the academic position of Professor in Operations Management at the time of review. They had published over 100 peer-reviewed academic journal articles with much of these being qualitatively based.
3	At the time of review, this reviewer held the role of Lecturer in Operations Management. They had published a number of peer-reviewed academic journal articles of which a proportion were qualitatively based.

The feedback received from this pilot stage was very positive with no suggested revisions. Upon completion of the second pilot stage, the pilot study then proceeded to the third and final stage of the process. This stage consisted of interviewing five participants that fitted the research participant criteria outlined within chapter section 4.1.7. Before conducting these pilot interviews, it was deemed that if there were minor to no corrections needed with regard to the research instrument, then the collected data would contribute to the sample data. If major corrections were needed it was deemed that the data collected would not be used as part of the research. Identification of suitable participants was based upon obtaining a spectrum of participants that would likely reflect the spectrum of participants within the penultimate sample. The intention of this stage of the pilot was to assess whether interview questions would be clearly understood. Table 4.18 clearly outlines the profile of each participant. Participants are listed in order of review.

Table 4.18: Profiles of Participants Taking Part within Stage 3 of the Pilot Process

Participant	Participant Profile
1	This participant was educated to Master's degree level at the time of interview. This participant had previously run a retail business before and during the crisis. This business was an example of a business that had failed during the Covid-19 crisis.
2	This participant had no previous university education. At the time of interview the participant was running a successful retail business that had thrived during the Covid-19 crisis.
3	This participant was educated to undergraduate level at the time on interview. The participant ran a successful retail business that thrived during the Covid-19 crisis.
4	At the time of interview, this participant was educated to undergraduate degree level. They ran a business that survived the Covid-19 crisis.

5	This participant held an undergraduate degree at the time of interview. This participant had previously run a retail business which failed during the crisis.
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After completing all five interviews there were no problems identified with the comprehension of interview questions in any of the interviews. This outcome was likely due to the rigorous process adopted in stage one and two of the pilot process. However, this should not suggest that this pilot stage was fruitless. Key learnings arose from this process in terms of the practical implementation of the interview process. This arose mainly in terms of assessing which times of the day were best to arrange interviews. It became apparent from this process that early morning and late afternoon interview times were problematic. From the interviews conducted at the business premises there were instances where the owner manager was taken away from the interview to serve customers at the counter. This did not negatively influence the data collected, however it did extend the length of the interview. From the five interviews two were conducted in a coffee shop. After completing all five interviews, it was decided that all interviews could be included within the sample for the study, as the data collected was of the required quality.

4.2.3: Identifying Study Participants

Identifying participants that would present high value data was a key aspect of the practical implementation of the methodological process. As stated within section 4.1.7 this research applied both convenience sampling and maximum variation sampling to ensure that the data contained a spectrum of behaviour. The sampling process was implemented practically using five stages as outlined within Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Process Applied to Identify Potential Interview Participants

Stage	Description
Stage 1: Interviewing Participants that were Available to the Researcher (Convenience Sampling)	The initial stage of identifying participants was to interview participants that were available to the researcher. The researcher had access to a small number of participants that spanned a spectrum of behaviour from businesses that failed, survived and thrived during

	<p>the crisis. After conducting initial interviews maximum variation sampling could then be used to broaden the sample and increase representation across business types.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Using a Companies House Database (Maximum Variation Sampling)</p>	<p>This process utilised an open access Companies House database that was readily available online. This was an extensive, up to date database, outlining the basic details of 800,000 UK based SMEs across all sectors. Using the filters available within the Excel datasheet it was possible to narrow the dataset to SMEs that were appropriate for the study thus meeting the criteria set out in chapter section 4.1.5.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Use of Search Engine Searches (Maximum Variation Sampling)</p>	<p>Search engine searches were used to identify businesses. This was considered an effective way of identifying participants as part of the participant criteria outlined within section 4.1.7. Two primary search engines were used to identify businesses. These were Google Search Engine and Yell for Business.</p>
<p>Stage 4: Reviewing Media Sources (Maximum Variation Sampling)</p>	<p>In addition to finding potential participants through the use of search engines, searches were undertaken on Google News, a feature of the Google Search Engine. This was done in an effort to identify businesses that might have received media attention for their experience of the Covid-19 crisis, thus presenting themselves as potentially interesting cases.</p>
<p>Stage 5: Use of Google Maps (Maximum Variation Sampling)</p>	<p>The fifth stage of the participant identification process involved using Google Maps to identify high-street businesses. Google Street View was used within randomly selected towns and villages to identify businesses that were trading on the high-street. The Covid-19 crisis forced many businesses to seek online trading opportunities as an alternative to in-person trading. This change in operating practice is something that can be characterised as the resource bricolage process. Therefore, capturing this within the</p>

	research would add to the richness of the data collected.
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The stages of participant identification outlined within Table 4.18 had varying degrees of success for fulfilling their purpose. The first stage proved fruitful with a small number of interviews secured. The second stage for identifying participants was at first promising. However, what was absent from the data set were the contact details for the businesses listed. This was coupled with the fact that most businesses listed did not trade under the name that they were registered with Companies House. The combination of both these issues made it very difficult to track down businesses, which ultimately led to a highly inefficient process that was not sustainable within the research process. Eventually after much perseverance, this approach to identifying potential participants was discontinued. The third stage of the process was subsequently implemented as the primary stage for identifying potential participants. This became an effective way of identifying participants that complied with the participant criteria outlined within section 4.1.7. This stage of the participant identification process was by far the most lucrative in terms of generating a volume of businesses that could be contacted.

With this research being exploratory in nature, stages four and five were also added to the participant identification process. The intention of these stages was to add the richness of data that would allow the research to capture the full extent of the Covid-19 crisis. Stage 4 was implemented in order to identify businesses that might have received media attention for their experience of the Covid-19 crisis. Evidence of engagement with a media outlet was considered by the researcher as a potential sign that a business might choose to participate in the study. The researcher also speculated that businesses with extreme experiences of the crisis (i.e., had failed or thrived) might have attracted media attention and would be identifiable. Including such businesses within the study would allow for the collecting of data across a spectrum of resilience, adding value to the thesis. This stage of participant identification did prove valuable, and prospective participants were identified. The final stage applied was that of using Google Street Maps to identify prospective participants. This was done to ensure that high-street retailers were included within the potential participant list. A high proportion of retail businesses were forced to move to an online operating

model during the Covid-19 crisis and as such this phenomenon needed to be captured within the study.

4.2.4: Practical Implementation of the Interview Process

With a robust research instrument in place and a comprehensive list of potential participants, an effective process was needed for contacting and interviewing participants. It was decided that a variety of techniques would be utilised to maximise participation within the research study. The approach used to successfully secure participants is outlined in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20: Techniques used to Secure Participants

Technique Used	Description
Stage 1: Making Initial Contact	The first stage of contacting potential participants was to send a personalised email to the business' email address. An example of an email inviting a potential participant can be seen in Appendix 4.3.
Stage 2: Following Up with an Additional Email	If a response was not received from the initial email then a follow up email was sent 14 days later reminding the potential participant of the initial email.
Stage 3: Contacting the Business via Telephone	In cases where there was no reply to either of the previous emails, the business was contacted via telephone to request participation in the study.
Stage 4: Conducting an In-person Visit to The Business Premises	In the event that all previous methods of contact were unsuccessful, the researcher would visit the business premises of the potential participant where possible.

Upon securing a participant, the researcher would arrange a date and time to meet with the participant to undertake the interview. Before the commencement of the interview, participants would be asked to sign an informed consent form, providing detail to the participant on the research project but also on how their data would be handled. The informed consent form also made participants aware of their right to withdraw from the research study at any time. A copy of the informed consent form has been attached in Appendix 4.4. While conducting the interview, the researcher

would move through the questions slowly ensuring to read each question carefully. In some cases, where requested, some participants were also presented with the questions in written form (without the key criteria discussed in section 4.2.1). The researcher has a strong South Wales accent and therefore was sure to make allowances for this by talking clearly and slowly. An important aspect of the research process was to ensure a high degree of consistency in how questions were asked across interviews. To ensure that this was the case, the researcher would read the questions from the interview template. There were some minor instances where participants would request more information regarding key terms and as such the researcher would provide any necessary explanation of terms. Interviews were conducted in person and over the phone, with an average duration of 1.25-hours. The researcher enacted interviews with no perception of the expected duration of the interview. Instead, interview length was guided by the need to collect the required data. Interviews were drawn to a close when it was evident that all the necessary data had been collected and no further discussion was needed.

4.2.5: Resulting Sample

By applying the processes outlined within sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4, 156 businesses were identified as potential participants. From the 156 businesses identified, 20 businesses chose to participate within the study. The subsequent response rate was 12.82%, which is comparative with previously qualitative studies within crisis research (cf. Runyan, 2006; Herbane, 2010). Gathering participation proved difficult within this study with many prospective participants showing hesitance to take part in an interview. Poor participation within crisis studies is notoriously discussed within literature. It is deemed that potential participants are often hesitant to engage within crisis studies due to the sensitive nature of possibly discussing poor business performance during a crisis (Buchanan & Denyer 2013; Herbane et al., 2004). It is evident that because of this many of the most widely cited classical papers in the field use very small sample sizes (cf. Elliot et al., 1999; Fink, 1986; Turner 1976). In light of the above, the researcher considered 20 interviews to be a satisfactory sample size. Further detail regarding knowledge power as per a consideration of Reflexive Thematic Analysis can be found within section 5.1.2 of the thesis.

4.2.6: Commitment to Confidentiality and Ethics

An important element of this work was to ensure confidentiality and ethical practice. Before the enactment of the data collection process, a summary of the research was submitted to Swansea University's School of Management Ethics Board, for ethical approval. Ethical approval was granted in the first instance. The ethical approval documentation is provided within appendix 4.5. When conducting the research, the confidentiality of participants was assured at all times. All data relating to participants was stored on a computer which was password protected, to which only the researcher had access. Upon successful completion of the PhD thesis, all data regarding the identity of participants will be destroyed as it will no longer be required. All digital files will be deleted, and all physical documents will be shredded. Anonymised data will be retained in the event that the researcher seeks publication. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this action is compliant with the UK's General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), upon which the researcher has received full training.

4.2.7: Data Analysis Technique

Whereas section 4.1.6 outlined the rationale for the use of the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method, this section will now provide detail on how this analysis method was implemented within the research process. To form the skeleton of the analysis, the data analysis process applied the six phases as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), to ensure a systematic approach to the analysis. However, the analysis also went further to ensure the inclusion of the reflexive element of the method. To ensure validation and rigour, the Reflexive Thematic Analysis method was therefore applied across three phases. The first phase involved inductively coding interview transcripts. Inductive coding involved developing codes as the analysis unfolds and not importing codes from those used within previous research. This technique was applied because at the time of the analysis, little Covid-19 specific research had been published. A high proportion of previous research had been based upon previous crisis events. Although Covid-19 can be considered similar to previous crises under the classification of a fundamental crisis, however many of its characterises were still very different. As such, it would have been inappropriate to use codes from previous studies. In addition to applying an inductive approach, the first phase of analysis was also reflexive, where each transcript was revisited as part of a cyclic approach. This was important to ensure

the reflexive element of the analysis. By revisiting transcripts after they were initially coded this allowed for the identification of deeper meanings within the data.

After the first stage was complete the researcher then filtered codes to produce a finalised list of codes. The first phase of coding generated many codes that were eventually deemed irrelevant. The irrelevance of codes was determined when it became evident that some codes were not repeating in further transcripts e.g. there were codes that only appeared within one transcript. After all irrelevant codes were removed, a finalised list of codes was developed which could then be carried forward to the third phase of the analysis. Stage three involved deductively coding all transcripts using the finalised list of codes developed as part of the second phase of analysis. Once again, all transcripts were re-visited by way of ensuring the identification of key themes and deeper meaning within the data. By the end of the analysis process, this therefore meant that all transcripts had been coded at least four times to ensure that all meaningful data was extracted. This illustrates a significant commitment to rigour within the analysis process. Table 4.21 outlines the acute detail of each data analysis stage.

Table 4.21: The Three-Phased Approach to the Braun & Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis Method.

Stage of analysis	Description
Stage 1: Inductive Coding	<p>This stage of the analysis applied all six phases presented by Braun & Clarke (2006). This stage of the data analysis process first involved printing all interview transcripts and ensuring data familiarisation by meticulously reading all transcripts. Although the researcher conducted all interviews this additional reading was implemented as an additional step of rigour. After printing and reading all transcripts, each transcript was coded manually with a red coloured pen and ruler, identifying accompanying extracts to evidence each occurrence of a code. All codes were recorded using an Excel spreadsheet as a method of data organisations and visualisation, where codes were named as they were created. This Excel spreadsheet was simply used as a tool to manage data codes and was not a component part to the analysis.</p> <p>After all transcripts were coded for the first time the researcher was able to gather an enhanced understanding of the richness</p>

	<p>of the data. It was therefore logical to revisit all transcripts with this in mind to ensure a consistent interpretation of the data that was informed by the data within the corpus. This process also accounted for the identification of missed codes. By conducting the coding in this way this allowed for the utilisation of the reflexive element of the analysis method.</p>
<p>Stage 2: Code Filtration</p>	<p>Upon completion of the first stage of the data analysis process, a definitive list of codes was produced with patterns of varying strengths. As such codes that displayed no pattern were deemed irrelevant and were removed at this stage. Codes were deemed irrelevant if they had not formed a pattern across transcripts. In addition to being removed, some codes were also merged. This process was applied in the case where codes were duplicated. Finally, codes were also re-named. During the inductive coding phase, several codes were developed in a way that was overly specific, as such limiting their application in following transcripts. As such these codes were re-named to make their application more meaningful, thus more clearly indicating underlying patterns in the data.</p> <p>Upon completion of this phase of analysis a finalised list of codes was presented, and preliminary themes were identified. An action log was kept of all changes made to codes, as a form of assuring rigour and validity. Appendix 4.6 outlines the initial data codes developed within the study, where appendix 4.7 outlines the finalised list of codes. Appendix 4.8 outlined the action log.</p>
<p>Stage 3: Deductive coding</p>	<p>As a form of rigour, a third phase of data analysis was applied. Again, all elements of the six phases outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) were implemented. The third phase of analysis used a deductive approach towards coding, based from the list of codes developed in stage two of the process. Whereas in stage one the data coding process was applied manually, phase three applied the coding process using NVivo. This was done to provide an additional form of rigour due to the data management tools offered by the software. Upon completion of the third phase of analysis, a finalised pattern of codes was presented with finalised data extracts. The analysis of these codes led to the development of the finalised sub-themes and superordinate themes.</p>

After the Reflexive Thematic Analysis process presented within Table 4.21 was implemented, it was possible to interpret the data in its entirety and construct a thematic map.

When implementing the analysis process, it was important to ensure rigour in how the analysis was carried out. Rigour was ensured by using defined procedures for handling data. These procedures were implemented and monitored by using an Excel spreadsheet. Within the first stage of the analysis all codes were recorded within the spreadsheet, identifying which codes were present across each transcript. This allowed the researcher to easily identify patterns in a transparent and robust way. Within the second phase of the analysis all codes were filtered using the spreadsheet. An action log was also recorded within the spreadsheet clearly articulating the changes made within the filtration process, contributing to good rigour. The action log captured information regarding when changes were made within the filtration process, which included the date and time of changes. This helped establish the chronological order of changes and how the codes might change over the course of the analysis. Finally, the spreadsheet was also used to ensure rigour within the third phase of analysis. Once again, the spreadsheet was used to record the presence of codes within transcripts, where this was then overlayed with the coding patterns from phase one of the analysis. The similarity of the coding patterns across phase one and two illustrated that the coding procedure had been rigorous, as in effect coding had been carried out twice, where the same result was achieved in both cases.

4.3: Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter rigorously covers the methodological design and implementation of this study. Chapter section 4.1 presents the methodological rationalisation, where a pragmatic philosophical position is established. Furthermore, this section also provides the rationale for a qualitative research design and interview research instrument. Section 4.1 also established a rationalisation for the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis as the form of data analysis within this study.

Moving on, chapter section 4.2 proceeds to cover the operationalisation aspects of the methodology. This chapter section outlines important processes such as the logic and design of the research instrument, before also outlining the pilot testing process and interview process. Furthermore, this chapter section clearly explains how Reflexive Thematic Analysis was implemented practically. With the methodology of this research presented, it is now possible to convey the findings within the proceeding chapters.

Chapter 5 and 6 present the findings of this study in the form of the themes identified within the data.

Chapter 5: Findings – Presenting the Participants and Pre-Crisis Context

This chapter's purpose is to outline the findings from this study. The totality of the findings is presented over two chapters, where chapter 6 forms the later chapter. This chapter, chapter 5, includes three substantive sections. Section 5.1 presents the profile of the participants which took part within this study, in addition to an introduction to the themes identified within the analysis. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 proceed to present two of the four superordinate themes developed within the analysis. These superordinate themes are applicative to the pre-crisis phase, providing an understanding of the pre-crisis position of participants. Understanding the pre-crisis position of participants is important to provide context to the changes in behaviour present across the trans-crisis phase. The final chapter section, 5.4, provides a chapter summary of the findings enclosed within the chapter.

5.1: Presenting the Participating Businesses

After enacting the process outlined within section 4.2.3, 156 businesses were identified as potential participants for this study. All businesses were subsequently contacted using the techniques outlined within Table 4.19 (section 4.2.4), from which 20 businesses agreed to participate. All those that agreed to participate within the study were owner managers of the respective business contacted. This resulted in the effective procurement of 20 in-depth interviews with an average duration of 1.25 hours. Knowledge power was achieved upon the completion of interview 18. With the last two interviews already scheduled, the researcher saw it as worthwhile to complete the remaining two interviews to ensure knowledge power had indeed been achieved. This chapter section will proceed to outline the profile of participants, before outlining the thematic map representing the data collected.

5.1.1: Participant Profile

To fully understand the crisis experience of the 20 retail micro-SMEs that participated within this study, it is important to consider the degree of business change experienced by each participating business. This can be explained by comparing characteristics of

the business across the pre-crisis and trans-crisis phase. Table 5.1 outlines the profile of each participant making reference to the degree of change across revenue, social media use and trading location between the pre-crisis and trans-crisis phase.

Table 5.1: Overview of Participating Businesses

Participant Code	Primary Retail Type	Approximate Pre-crisis Revenue (£)	Approximate Trans-crisis Revenue (£)	Social Media Adoption Before Covid-19	Change in Social Media Adoption During Covid-19	Primary Trading Location Before Covid-19	Primary Trading Location During Covid-19
OM1	Clothing and Wearable Items	10,000	5,000	Medium	Increased	Online Only	Online Only
OM2	Hardware	300,000	400,000	High	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Physical Location and Online
OM3	Clothing and Wearable Items	150,000	60,000	High	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM4	Cards & Gifts	200,000	490,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM5	Cards & Gifts	N / A	10,000	N / A	High	N / A	Online Only
OM6	Food & Drink	60,000	550,000	High	Increased	Online Only	Online Only
OM7	Cards & Gifts	1,000	0	Medium	Decreased	Online Only	Online Only

OM8	Horticulture	130,000	90,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM9	Homeware	180,000	160,000	Low	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM10	Antique Items	200,000	300,000	Low	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM11	Food & Drink	30,000	2,000	High	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM12	Musical Instruments and Accessories	75,000	7,500	Low	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM13	Cards & Gifts	220,000	120,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM14	Clothing and Wearable Items	1,200,000	1,500,000	Medium	Stayed the Same	Online Only	Online Only
OM15	Clothing and Wearable Items	110,000	70,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM16	Clothing and Wearable Items	350,000	0	High	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only

OM17	Clothing and Wearable Items	90,000	50,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM18	Cards & Gifts	70,000	0	Low	Increased	Physical Location Only	Physical Location Only
OM19	Cards & Gifts	160,000	50,000	Medium	Increased	Physical Location and Online	Online Only
OM20	Food & Drink	N / A	30,000	N / A	High	N / A	Online Only

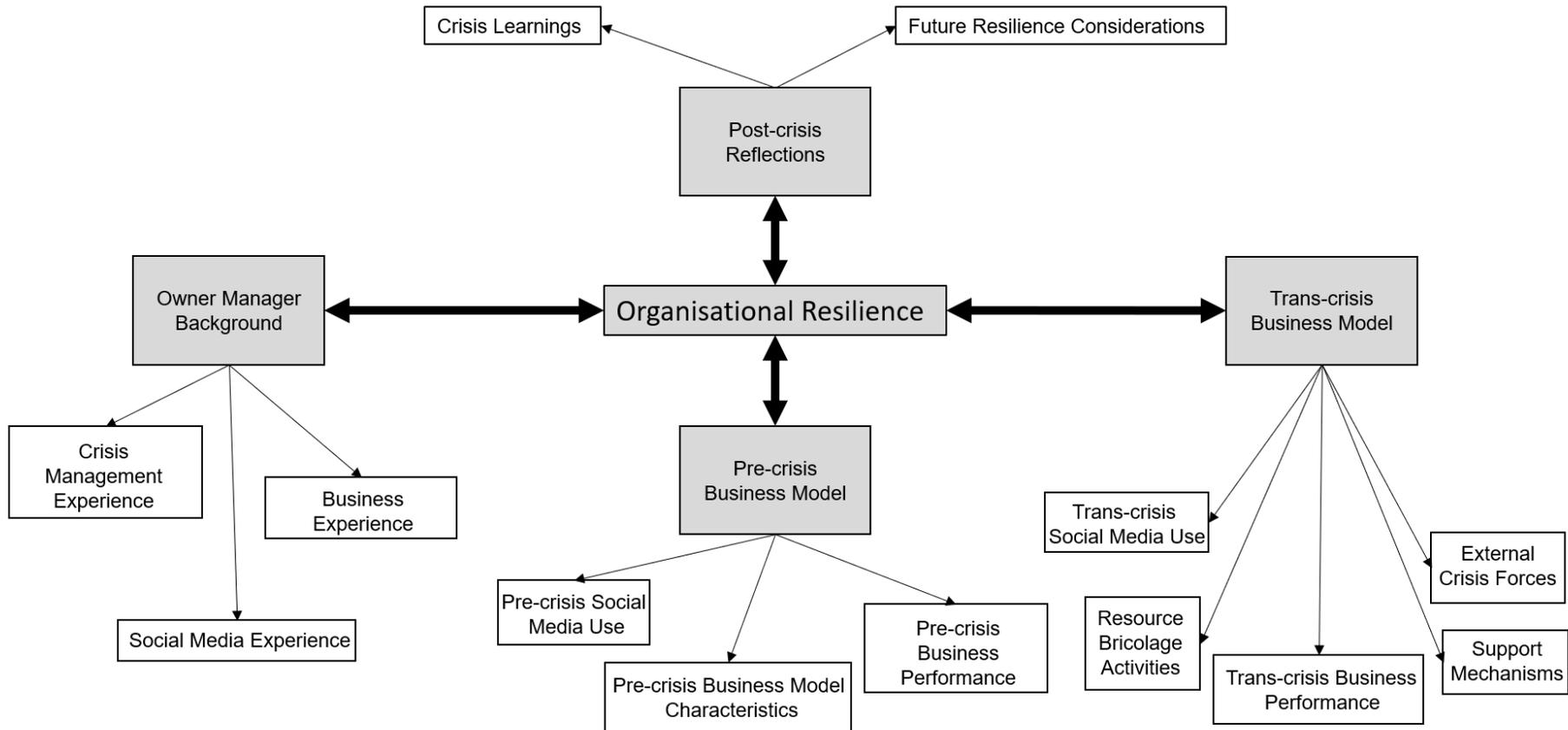
Table 5.1 firstly provides detail on the participant label applied to each business. The label 'OM' is derived from the term owner manager, with the associative number referring to the order in which interviews were undertaken. For example, OM1 was the first owner manager interviewed and OM20 was the final owner manager interviewed. In addition to outlining the participant code, Table 5.1 also outlines the primary retailing type of each participating business. The terms applied to describe the retailing type of each participant are superordinate in nature, with participants selling a broad spectrum of products under the applied retailing description. The further six columns outline the business characteristics of: revenue, social media adoption and trading location. The table can be seen to outline the degree to which these three characteristics changed across each participating business. These characteristics were included within the table as these were the characteristics observed to undergo the most change as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. All owner managers interviewed reported changes in revenue over the course of the crisis, with a high proportion also reporting changes in social media usage and trading location. Across the 20 participating businesses it is possible to see a spectrum of organisational resilience where each participant has responded differently to the crisis. It is worth noting that pre-crisis data is not listed within the table for OM5 and OM20. This is because both businesses were Covid-19 start-ups and had not traded prior to the crisis. Including such businesses within the sample increase the spectrum of participants by including both established and new businesses.

5.1.2: Thematic Mapping

With the participant profiles presented, this chapter section now proceeds to present the themes developed within the data analysis element of the research. This study rigorously applied the Braun & Clarke (2022) Reflexive Thematic Analysis process to the specifications of that outlined within section 4.2.7. The first phase of analysis identified 275 codes using an inductive method, all of which could be evidenced by extracts from transcripts. These codes are presented in appendix 4.6. The second phase of analysis involved refining all identified codes, performing up to 5 actions across a range of codes. These actions included; removing unnecessary codes, merging overly specific codes, changing the name of codes, adding additional codes and changing the location of codes on the list within the Excel spread sheet. A detailed

action log of all changes applied to the codes can be seen within appendix 4.8. The filtration phase produced 184 final codes, of which can be seen within appendix 4.7. These codes formed four superordinate themes, of which there were 13 sub-themes across all superordinate themes. The finalised themes developed for the analysis are displayed within Figure 5.1 overleaf in the form of a thematic map.

Figure 5.1: Thematic Map



5.2: Thematic Analysis: Owner Manager Background

This superordinate theme concerns that of the owner manager's background. Although this study adopts the micro-SME as its unit of analysis, owner managers form a constituting part of any given micro-SME, and as such form an important aspect of this study. Within this superordinate theme four sub-themes were developed within the data analysis process. These sub-themes concern the different types of experience identified across participants. These sub-themes are detailed below using data extracts to support their existence.

5.2.1: Business Experience

Business experience was a sub-theme identified within the data analysis process and represents the commercial experience of participants. After analysing the data, it was apparent there was a spectrum of previous business experience among participants. Some participants had very limited business experience, which can be exhibited by OM1 who managed a relatively new venture:

“Well at the time when I started the business, I had zero experience. This was my first proper company before getting a proper job. Before starting the business the most experience, I ever had was working in a coffee shop”.

(Participant OM1)

In contrast however, other participants had extensive business experience, where they had run a successful business for many years. This can be exhibited by an extract from OM10:

“Well, I've been an antiques dealer for 37 years, so I've had my fair share of experience in the industry. I've always loved antiques and been interested in them. The business is a very long-standing business and yeah, it's my passion”.

(Participant OM10)

As the analysis continued, it was possible to see that business experience was not simply represented by the number of years participants had spent running a business.

Instead, it went beyond this and also included participants' broader motivations for running a business and why they chose self-employment as opposed to employment.

Several owner managers (such as OM1, OM11, OM20) discussed the freedom offered by business ownership, framing this as their primary motivation for running a business. Freedom was discussed in several contexts. Some participants discussed freedom in a commercial context, professing that business ownership allows them to express their own management style. Some owner managers felt that this contrasts when compared to working as an employee for another business. This can be demonstrated by an extract from OM16:

"I think in terms of what really motivates me. It's having the ability to run the business the way I want to. When you work for another business your kind of forced to do things their way even if you don't agree with it". (Participant OM16)

Freedom was also discussed in the sense of a non-commercial, personal context. This included having the ability to work a more flexible working week to suit family commitments and obtain a better work life balance. This can be exhibited by OM17:

"Well, I think me and my sister just wanted more flexibility in our working lives. We both had young children and found that we couldn't spend as much time with them as we wanted. I think we just both wanted a work life balance". (Participant OM17)

Several participants (such as OM19, OM3, OM6) also spoke of passion as their primary form of motivation to run a business. Discussions around passion as a primary form of motivation usually formed around a passion for selling a specific type of product, as opposed to a passion for business in itself. This can be represented by an extract from OM14:

"Well, I always had an interest in watches ever since a young age. So back at around the time when eBay became a thing I started dabbling in Omega and Tag [Heuer] watches, flipping them on eBay. I then went to trade vintage watches for a while. I then decided that I wanted to go beyond flipping watches

and form a business, but I didn't want to be a watch dealer. I saw a gap in the market for watch straps. It seemed hard to get a quality strap that would match the quality of a Swiss watch, so that is where the business started really".
(Participant OM14)

The financial rewards associated with business ownership were also discussed by participants, however this was lesser mentioned. A small number of participants mentioned financial reward as a form of motivation. This can be exhibited by an extract from participant OM18:

"At the end of the day I think if you work for someone else's business then ultimately, you're basically spending all your life doing what you're told and not doing the things that you want to do. I just can't see the benefit from it myself. Also, I think that running your own business is just more financially rewarding too". (Participant OM18)

What became apparent as the analysis proceeded was that a participant's motivation for running a business ultimately framed how they ran the business during the Covid-19 crisis. Those that were financially motivated prioritised solely the financial interest of the businesses. This can be demonstrated by an additional extract from OM18 where the participant outlined how they simply closed the business during the Covid-19 crisis, making use of the Government grants as opposed to trying to protect the brand. This can be evidenced by the following extract.

"Well once I was told to shut, I thought I might as well shut completely. I didn't have the ability to sell anything on the web. I wasn't going to start selling anything online, I didn't want the hassle of all that. This business has very little costs, so I decided to just stay shut completely. The grants I had from the Government were enough to pay the bills plus give me a little bit of a salary".
(Participant OM18)

In some cases, it was possible to see that the unique perspective and experience of each participant was a constituting factor that influenced their decision-making during the Covid-19 crisis. Business owner managers with extensive previous experience of

running a business, demonstrated a focus on the resilience of the business. Although many did not use the word resilience, they indirectly referred to generalised business activity which enabled resilience during the Covid-19 crisis. This was evident when experienced participants talked of the role of financial resources. Many experienced business owners were able to talk from experience and pledge the importance of maintaining low debt and a financial buffer. This can be demonstrated by OM16:

“Well the only thing I would say is that, well, I think Covid [-19] was a reminder that you never know what’s round the corner. And at the end of the day what I have always done is make sure that we have very low debt in the business. I think that’s key really to the longevity of any business”. (Participant OM16)

In summary, it was apparent that there was a range of business experience across participants. Some participants could be seen to be more novice business owners and had only been running a business for a relatively short amount of time. This was while other participants could be seen to be seasoned business owners who had run businesses for a long period of time. Across participants, it was also possible to identify a range of motivations for why participants chose to run their own businesses. These motivations included the desire to have greater freedom within their working life and also to have the ability to pursue their passions. It was also evident that participants’ motivations for running their business also had an impact on how they ran their business during the Covid-19 crisis.

5.2.2: Crisis Management Experience

While the role of previous business experience was a sub-theme identified within the data analysis process, so was that of previous crisis management experience. Across the study participants, a spectrum of crisis management experience was observed. Many of the participants (such as OM1, OM11, OM18) had minimal crisis management experience, with little to no contact with managing through a time of crisis. When asked about their previous crisis experience, such participants replied by stating that they had no experience at all. This can be exemplified by OM11:

“No not at all mate. So I started running the business a few years before Covid [-19] and during that time I hadn’t experienced any crisis no”. (Participant OM11)

While none of the participants regarded themselves as having a high degree of crisis management experience, some were able to provide examples of when they had previously managed through a time of crisis. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was cited by some participants as being similar in proportion to that of Covid-19. An example of this can be presented using an extract from OM19:

“Well, I had to manage the business through the 2008 credit crunch. I think that was the only crisis I have had to work through, I think. Yeah, I can’t think of any others”. (Participant OM19)

It was noteworthy to observe that while many participants could not provide specific examples of crisis events that had influenced the business, many spoke more broadly about hardships encountered by the business. To illustrate this point, it is possible to examine the case of OM12. OM12 ran an independent music shop selling musical instruments and associative items. OM12 gave an example of how changes in technology had affected their business over time. During their period of business ownership, OM12 mentioned how changes in technology affected the way music was disseminated, creating challenges for the business. This can be exemplified using an extract from the interview:

“Well nothing comparable to the pandemic I don’t think. But what I have experienced is a lot of changes in technology with respect to music. So once upon a time we would sell cassette tapes. We then moved away from cassette tapes and started selling CD’s. These then ultimately went out of fashion as people started to use things like Spotify and more recently Apple music. So within the music industry we are quite used to these huge shifts in how music is distributed. Although I wouldn’t say that these were crises they did have a big impact on how the business would operate. So for example if you were buying your cassettes from a certain supplier, and you then wanted to start selling CD’s you might have to change supplier for example. Amazon was a big thing for me

too. Most of the stuff that I sell such as guitar strings for example, can be bought now on Amazon, and the reality is I can't compete with the Amazon prices. When Amazon started to emerge I did see a change in income because of that. So yeah, to answer your question in short I wouldn't say that I have any experience of running a business during a time of crisis before, but I have run a business during difficult periods of adjustment before now, and before the pandemic". (Participant OM12)

It was apparent that participants who had been subjected to business hardships or crisis previously, exhibited reflection and learning in relation to such events. OM10 shared a reflection of the 2008 GFC that ultimately shaped their strategy during the Covid-19 crisis. OM10 mentioned that usually during a crisis the initial period of crisis onset is the most difficult for a business. This can be evidenced using an extract from their interview:

"Well what you find with a crisis like that is that everyone stops buying things overnight. Scaremongering goes on with the press and things and people instantly draw in the purse strings. What I found back in 2008 was that I gritted my teeth for a few months and people started to spend again". (Participant OM10)

Furthermore, OM8 made a reflective remark regarding a previous crisis, exhibiting a learning from that experience. This can be evidenced with the following extract:

"Well they were both very different really [2008 GFC and Covid-19 crisis]. I can't say that it was a huge help but I suppose I did gain some skills from it, like I always count my pennies as a business owner, I don't take chances financially". (Participant OM 8)

In summary, it was possible to observe that despite not being able to predict the Covid-19 crisis based on previous experiences of hardship, some participants had been able to develop useful habits that underpinned their approach towards the Covid-19 crisis. It could also be observed that participants who had been trading for a longer period had generally encountered more instances of business hardship in the past. As such,

they were more equipped to deal with fundamental crisis events such as Covid-19. This suggests that both business experience and crisis experience can be considered significant, where increased business experience often provides increased exposure to hardship that can prove useful in a crisis situation.

5.2.3: Social Media Experience

The final type of owner manager experience encountered within the data analysis process was that of social media experience. This sub-theme goes beyond representing the commercial social media experience of participants, and instead represents their personal social media use. A theme addressing the commercial use of social media within participating businesses is outlined within sections 5.3.2 and 6.1.3. These sub-themes were separated so that the analysis reflects the need to answer research question 1.

Similarly, to the other forms of experience already discussed, a spectrum of social media experience was observed across participants. It was apparent to see some participants possessed a low level of social media experience, as demonstrated by the following extract:

“I would say maybe 5 years. It’s the only social media I’ve ever had [referring to WhatsApp], I try to keep away from social media”. (Participant OM18)

In contrast, other participants had extensive social media experience. This can be demonstrated by an extract from OM14:

“Well for years to be honest [referring to extent of social media use], probably since social media started to become a thing. I would say over 10 years at least”. (Participant OM14)

Similarly, to the types of experience outlined within sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2, again it was possible to see that social media experience could not simply be represented by the number of years it had been used by a participant. Instead, the intensity and format of use was also of relevance. Some owner managers specifically used social media

within a commercial setting and had not used it within their personal life in any regard. This is apparent in an extract from OM19:

“No I only use it for the business, I don’t have any personal social media accounts”. (Participant OM19)

However, other participants had indeed used social media within a personal context, going beyond simply using it commercially within the business. This can be evidenced by an extract from participant OM11:

“So I started using it in School like everyone else really. I used it as much as anyone else I think. I use it a few times a day I would say, mainly Instagram and Facebook. And Snapchat”. (Participant OM11)

To summarise, this theme identified that a spectrum of social media use existed across participants. Some had only used social media within a commercial context and had not used social media within a personal context. This was while others had indeed used social media to varying degrees within their personal lives, in addition to within the business.

5.3: Thematic Analysis: Pre-Crisis Business Model

Now that the first superordinate theme has been delineated, it is important to turn attention to the second superordinate theme identified. The superordinate theme entitled pre-crisis business model, refers to the pre-crisis activity of participating businesses. This thesis evaluates the enabling effect of social media towards resource bricolage. As such, an understanding is required of the pre-crisis activity of participating businesses, so that the change in business behaviour trans-crisis can be evaluated. This superordinate theme is comprised of three sub-themes that capture the spectrum of behaviour observed across participant’s pre-crisis activities. Each sub-theme is discussed below.

5.3.1: The Pre-crisis Business Model

In order to develop an understanding of participants' pre-crisis business models it is firstly important to consider the age range of participating businesses. Across the 20 participating businesses, a spectrum of business age was present. Some businesses were young in age (under one year old) and were start-ups during the Covid-19 crisis. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM20:

“So I started the business in January 2021. This wasn't when we started trading, it was when I started planning the business out and things”. (Participant OM20)

Others were more established, but could still be considered young in age. These had been established for more than one year, but less than three years before the crisis. This included the business operated by participant OM3:

“We only established in 2019 so before the pandemic we were still very much trying to find our feet”. (Participant OM3)

While several of the participating businesses (such as OM1, OM5, OM20) could be considered young in age, there were also several businesses (such as OM8, OM14, OM10) that could be considered mature in age, where they had been established for over 15 years. This includes the business operated by OM8:

“Yeah so, I've run my own business since 2006. I first opened the shop elsewhere but then shortly moved to this location”. (Participant OM 8)

Additionally, it was possible to see multigenerational businesses within the sample, where a long-established business had been passed down from a family relative. This was evident in the case of OM9:

“Yes. So, in terms of the business, the business has been established for about 36 years, since 1987. My dad started the business originally, but I then got involved as I got older” (Participant OM9)

Furthermore, it was apparent that pre-crisis, each business operated a unique operating model that was tailored to effectively sell and market the merchandise offered by the business. The perception of effectiveness was often shaped within the eye of the owner manager. It was possible to see that most participants (including OM12, OM15, OM2) had some form of online presence before the initiation of the Covid-19 crisis, while operating a hybrid in-person and online presence. This can be represented by an extract from OM16:

“Yes, we do. We have a website that we sell through too [in addition to the shop], I saw that as something important a long time ago to be honest. I think a business without a website is a business without a future these days”.
(Participant OM16)

In many cases, it could be seen that these businesses adopted an online presence as a secondary channel for generating sales, with the shop accounting for the majority of revenue. This can be illustrated using an extract from OM9:

“Yes so we sold primarily in the shop but we also sold online. I would say that about 70% of our sales came from the shop and about 30% of our sales came from the website”. (Participants OM9)

With the majority of participants adopting a hybrid approach to retailing (see Table 5.1), there was representation within the sample of businesses that maintained a purely in-person presence, and a purely online presence. OM18 was an example of such a business that maintained a purely in-person business presence:

“No I’ve never sold online. I only sell from the shop. I’m lucky that I am the only long-standing card shop around here and I’ve got a long-established customer group”. (Participant OM18)

In contrast, OM6 maintained a purely online presence with no established physical location for trading:

“Yeah just online. Having a store was out of the question with the cost of that, online was a key route to market for us. At the beginning”. (Participant OM6)

In summary, a range of pre-crisis operating models were captured within this thesis. It was noteworthy that the vast majority of owner managers had realised the potential of utilising online sales methods as a form of adding value to the business. In the majority of cases, those that had invested heavily in online resources such as a website, were able to construct enhanced resilience responses to the Covid-19 crisis. This will be addressed fully within section 6.1.

5.3.2: Pre-crisis Social Media Use

An important aspect of the study was to collect data around the pre-crisis social media use of participating businesses. This was deemed necessary as the research aim seeks to identify the potentially enabling ability of social media for resource bricolage activities. As such, it was important to establish the breadth and magnitude of social media use across participants before the Covid-19 crisis, to understand how this might have changed trans-crisis. Whereas section 5.2.3 consults the social media experience of owner managers, this theme concerns the use of social media by the business pre-crisis. This study evaluated the extent of social media use based on the regularity of use and breadth of use across business functions.

Across respondents, a range of social media use could be observed. Firstly, it was apparent there was a range of usage frequency, in the sense of how regularly social media was used for commercial activity. Some participating businesses pledged to use social media daily. This can be represented by an extract from OM1. After being asked how regularly they used social media within the business OM1 stated:

“Flat out would be the best description! I was using it daily to post content and stuff”. (Participant OM 1)

While some participants used social media commercially on a daily basis, others pledged to use it weekly. This can be represented by an extract from OM12:

“Probably a few times a week I would say [referring to usage of social media], maybe three times a week. But only for short periods of time, maybe to make a post or something like that, and that would be it”. (Participant OM 12)

Furthermore, it was also apparent to see that several participants used social media very infrequently. Such participants stated that they only used social media on a monthly basis. This can be evidenced by an extract from participant OM10. When asked how regularly they used social media within the business OM 10 replied:

“I would say, probably once a month maybe, twice a month”. (Participant OM 10)

None of the participants claimed to use social media less frequently than on a monthly basis. This was to be expected, in the sense that the study participant criteria presented within section 4.1.7 aimed only to include active social media users within the study. Businesses that do not actively adopt social media within a commercial capacity would be of little value to this study, due to the nature of the research aim.

In addition to identifying the frequency of social media usage across participants, data analysis also identified the breadth of social media activities applied by participating businesses. Within the pre-crisis phase, it was apparent that many participants (such as OM1, OM2, OM17) engaged within a common group of activities, mainly associated with sales and marketing. Participants used social media as a form of channelling sales towards the company website. This can be illustrated using an extract from OM1:

“We use social media to channel sales towards the website, where they would be able to purchase goods” (Participant OM1)

Additionally, participants could be seen to use social media to increase awareness of the business and the products that they sold. This can be shown using an extract from OM 19:

“Well, I mainly used it to make posts about the business. So, I would make posts about any sales [price offers] I might have, or new products for example”.
(Participant OM 19)

Participating businesses achieved this to varying degrees of success, with some participants leveraging significant commercial advantages. One such participant had managed to generate substantial interest within the business by adopting YouTube as a social media platform. To increase the visibility of the business OM2 had successfully created an annual Christmas advert for several years leading up to the Covid-19 crisis. This was done with the intention of a gimmicked attempt to compete with larger high-street retailers:

“Well, we started using YouTube in 2017, and it started off as a bit of a gimmick to be honest, we wanted to do a Christmas advert as a bit of fun more than anything. But it actually took off quite a bit”. (Participating OM2)

OM2 further elaborated by stating:

“The likes of John Lewis and M&S inspired us to come up with the idea of a Christmas advert. Definitely. The only thing I would say is, as I said, we weren’t trying to take them on or anything it was simply a bit of fun for us as a business”.
(Participant OM2)

The resulting effect of adopting YouTube as a social media platform to disseminate an annual Christmas advert, was that the business attracted significant attention within the year 2019. OM2 described how on this occasion the Christmas advert gained unprecedented popularity:

“Once we had shot the video and had it edited shortly after, in the coming days we were ready to upload the video to YouTube. Once we did this the video views went up in the usual fashion, we had a few thousand views in the first few days. This is usually because the locals here share it online and things. However, as the days went on the views started to clime quite rapidly”.
(Participant OM 2)

OM2 proceeded to describe how the business attracted substantial media attention across the UK as a result of the video:

“The following day I received a phone call from Good Morning Britain and BBC Breakfast. I was asked to go on a Zoom call with Ben Shephard to discuss the video, which I couldn’t quite believe at the time. Good Morning Britain also asked if I could travel to the studio with my son the following day to discuss it live on air. I declined as I didn’t want to travel through the night with my son because he was young. So, they then sent a film crew to the shop and did that way”. (Participant OM 2)

The Christmas advert developed by the business ultimately went on to attract 2.5 million views on YouTube, also attracting additional media attention from American broadcasters:

“I was on entertainment weekly, Fox News in America, and TIME Magazine also did a story on us. It literally was unbelievable”. (Participant OM2)

It is worth noting that the above was achieved with a total budget of £100.00 for the Christmas video:

“So, the budget of that video was £100.00, and the reason it was £100.00 was because there was an America singer that I know of, a small-time singer, and I wanted to have her sing the Christmas song we would use in the video”. (Participant OM2)

The above example illustrates that micro-SMEs are capable of creating significant commercial value by using social media, without generating exuberant costs for the business. In this particular case it was also possible to observe how this successful engagement with social media created opportunity for OM2 within the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. This example will be revisited within section 5.4.

In addition to creating marketing value, participants also used social media to communicate with stakeholders pre-crisis. This sometimes came in the form of managing customer service. This can be represented by an extract from OM6:

“Yes, we would, sometimes customers would send messages to our Facebook page or Instagram page and we would deal with their queries. These were usually questions about payment and delivery for example”. (Participant OM6)

There was also evidence that participants had used social media to contact additional stakeholders, such as suppliers OM18:

“Well basically my main use for it [social media] before the pandemic was to contact my suppliers and sometimes my customers. It was always useful for doing that” (Participant OM18)

The social media activities discussed above were commonly undertaken across Facebook and Instagram platforms. Although there were examples of extensive social media use outside of these platforms, such as that of OM2, these presented themselves as most prolific. Instagram was commonly regarded by participants as being an effective marketing tool mainly due to the layout of the platform, with this frequently being cited by participants as the merit for its use.

“The difference is that Insta is better for marketing really, It makes the products just look that much better, whereas the Facebook platform is not quite as clean and sharp” (Participant OM20)

Facebook was heavily cited by participants as having a good reach for targeting older audiences. Participants rationalised the use of Facebook upon this basis. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM4:

“So, we predominantly used Facebook and Instagram. We tend to have older customers so more middle-aged customers as opposed to younger customers. Because of that we use Facebook more because the older generation tend to use Facebook more than Instagram I think” (Participant OM4)

What was interesting to see was that Twitter was heavily cited by participants as delivering poor commercial results. Participants delineated that in the past they had used Twitter, but had stopped using the platform due to poor commercial returns:

“We did use Twitter, but we didn’t find it that good, so it didn’t form a big part of our social media platform” (Participant OM 20)

In summary, this sub-theme represents the social media background of participating business pre-crisis. Across participants there was a range of social media use, in terms of both frequency of use, and the activities conducted on social media platforms. This resulted in a spectrum of overall social media adoption, where each business attempted to add value to the business in some way, attaining varying degrees of success. Chapter section 6.1.3 proceeds to provide a detail outline on how social media adoption changed during the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. This chapter section includes detail on how the frequency of social media use changed in addition to the nature of its use.

5.3.3: Pre-Crisis Business Performance

The final sub-theme identified as part of the pre-crisis business model was that of business performance. An important aspect of understanding the organisational resilience of participating businesses was to establish their pre-crisis business performance. This made it possible to understand how the business performance of participating businesses might change during the trans-crisis phase, indicating their ability to be resilient. Again, similarly to the sub-themes already discussed within this chapter, a spectrum of business performance was observed. Across the sample there were some owner managers that were not content with the performance of the business pre-crisis. This can be represented by an extract from OM15:

“Well I would say that the business was doing ok. We weren’t losing money it was just a case that we weren’t making money neither. Cash flow was good. You know the business was growing to some respects, in terms of attracting

new customers. The business just needed to have a spring put back in its step”.
(Participant OM15)

However, generally most participants (such as OM2, OM4, OM14) were happy with the performance of the business. This can be represented by an extract from OM19:

“I was very happy with it. I love the business; it’s my life and passion and I like to think that reflects on the business. Yeah, the business was doing well”.
(Participant OM19)

When questioning owner managers about business performance, it was possible to see perceptions of good business performance vary across participants. Several owner managers placed emphasis on financial performance as a measure of business performance. When asked about their contentment with the performance of the business before the Covid-19 crisis OM14 replied:

“Well yeah it was good I would say. We were growing year on year by about 10% to 15%. Revenue for the year 19 to 20 [2019-2020] was about £1.2 million, I think the business was developing nicely”. (Participant OM14)

However, what was noteworthy, was that some owner managers did not simply discuss their degree of contentment based purely on financial metrics. Instead, the perception of business performance was often dictated by the expectations placed by the owner manager upon the business. This can be exemplified by OM4. The business operated by OM4 was one of the most financially successful businesses that participated within this study. However, OM4 made it clear that their motivation for running the business came from the fact that they wanted to gain more freedom to spend time with her family:

“Well with this business it was very much to make sure I could be flexible. I had young children at the time and so did [business partner name]” (Participant OM4)

OM4 elaborated by stating:

“We both wanted to make sure that we could work around your children, it was important to us that we spend lots of time with our children and not send them to nursery. We very much wanted to run a business to support our lives and not live to work if you know what I mean”. (Participant OM4)

What was interesting to see was that when OM4 was asked about their contentment with the business pre-crisis she definitively replied:

“I was happy with it. I enjoyed running the business as I raised the kids”
(Participant OM4)

It can be seen that based upon this extract, OM4 defined the success of her business based on the fact that she could run the business alongside raising her children. This illustrates the nuanced relationship between motivation as discussed within section 5.2.1, and the perception of a good business performance. Additionally, it could be seen that business context was a key determinant that influenced the contentment of owner managers with the performance of their business pre-crisis. OM1 can be seen as one of the least prosperous participating businesses. This was ultimately due to the fact that it was a business that was young in age and was still very much in the conception phase of its growth. However, it was evident the owner manager still exhibited contentment with performance of the business:

“I was satisfied with the financial performance of the firm as a whole. Like we weren’t making millions, but it met my expectations like”. (Participant OM1)

Moving on, when asked about the performance of the business pre-crisis some participants raised the fact that the business had been facing challenges pre-crisis. The vast majority of these challenges were highly unique to the businesses however one theme did develop as the data analysis process continued. This theme was that of Brexit. Brexit was quoted by some businesses as having exerted two primary types of challenge upon the business. The first was that of price increases, exerting financial pressure of the businesses. This can be represented by an extract from OM16:

“So, after Brexit our delivery costs [delivery from supplier to the business] went up by £1,000 a week which is a huge amount for us. The worst thing about it was that this hadn’t even started to go down. For a business like our this is the new normal”. (Participant OM16)

Additionally, it was also purported that Brexit created availability issues for participants, where they found difficulty in sourcing items that they had previously been able to source hassle free:

“We had some trouble from Brexit, with regard to getting hold of a few things, stock I mean” (Participant OM17)

To summarise, it was possible to observe a spectrum of business performance across participating businesses. A small number of businesses considered themselves to be performing to a poor standard, or at least a standard that owner managers were not content with. This was while the majority of businesses could be considered to be performing to a good standard, or at least were meeting the expectations of the owner managers. With the pre-crisis performance of participants delineated, it is possible to contrast this theme with that of section 6.1.5 to establish the change in performance using the Covid-19 crisis.

5.4: Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has achieved two objectives. It has first provided an understanding of the study participants, delineating important demographical information regarding the businesses participating within this study. It has secondly presented an overview of how participating businesses operated during the pre-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. With the pre-crisis context of participants established, it is now possible to understand the trans-crisis and post-crisis position of participating businesses within chapter 6. This will allow for the evaluation of business change, and the bricolage process within.

Chapter 6: Findings – Crisis Impact

This chapter's purpose is to outline the superordinate themes, Trans-Crisis Business Model and Post-Crisis Reflections. Whereas the previous chapter set out to delineate the profiles of participating business, in addition to the pre-crisis context of participants, this chapter outlines the impact of the Covid-19 crisis illustrating its effect upon study participants. Section 6.1 outlined the superordinate theme; Trans-Crisis Business Model. Section 6.2 outlined the superordinate theme; Post-Crisis Reflections. Finally, the chapter concludes with section 6.3, which provides a summary of the chapters findings.

6.1: Thematic Analysis: Trans-Crisis Business Model

The first superordinate theme presented within this chapter is that of the Trans-Crisis Business Model. This superordinate theme captures the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on the businesses participating within this study. Several sub-themes could be identified within the trans-crisis phase, of which are presented below.

6.1.1: External Crisis Forces

A key determining factor influencing the organisational resilience of participating businesses was that of crisis induced forces. These were captured under the sub-theme, External Crisis Forces. As the name suggests, these were forces acting upon participating businesses originating from outside the business, often proving to be beyond the control of owner managers. There were several such forces identified. These forces were not positive nor negative in nature, rather their impact was often experienced within the unique reality of the owner manager. One of the key external crisis forces encountered, was that of the construction of new Government legislation defining retail businesses as either essential or non-essential. This new distinction within Government legislation could be seen to impact participating businesses both negatively and positively. Some participants were positively affected by this change in legislation. These businesses were generally businesses that were classified as essential retail and could therefore continue trading. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM2:

“Ok well the restrictions first hit within March 2020. This was when we first heard of this idea of essential and non-essential retail. We were lucky because as a hardware store we were classed as essential retail and could stay open”.
(Participant OM2)

Conversely, some participants were negatively affected by the essential and non-essential distinction. Those negatively affected were generally participants classified as non-essential retail businesses. This can be exhibited by an extract from OM4:

“Obviously our revenue from the store significantly straight away. We quickly shifted to selling just online”. (Participant OM4)

Although this was generally observed across participants, there were some examples of businesses that defied this pattern of behaviour. For example, OM11 operated a business that was classified as an essential business but was still negatively affected by Covid-19 legislative changes. OM11 was a seller of food and drink but was reliant on in-person events such as fairs and markets. With public gatherings deemed illegal at the time, this meant this business still lost a significant amount of revenue, ultimately failing. When asked how the Covid-19 crisis effected their business OM11 replied:

“Well it pretty much decimated it. Putting it very simply. The thing is as a supplier of food technically I could have still traded but the trouble was that public gatherings were illegal”. (Participant OM11)

There were also examples of participating businesses that were classified as non-essential retail businesses but had managed to defy the stereotype this classification offered. OM14 operated a business that traded solely online using a website. This allowed the business to trade using their pre-crisis method during the crisis, with minimal disruption within this regard. This can be evidence by this extract from OM14:

“So, as I mentioned earlier, we are an online business so we could still trade as normal in that respect”. (Participant OM14)

In summary, it was possible to see that in many cases the classifications of essential and non-essential retail had a sizable impact upon the ability of participants to develop resilience responses to the Covid-19 crisis. However, there were nuanced examples where the participants' business model was able to counteract the limitations or benefits offered by these classifications. Those that were able to successfully mitigate the negative effects to this legislative change - such as OM14 - could therefore be considered to operate more resilient business models than those that fell foul to this new distinction in legislation.

Within the data analysis process, it was also apparent that changes in market conditions generated by the crisis contributed to the resilience outcome of participating businesses. It could be seen within the data that Covid-19 caused several market shifts during the trans-crisis phase, where some of these market changes caused challenges for retail micro-SMEs. This can be exemplified using the case of OM8, a well-established florist who had operated for over 15 years. This owner manager had invested in online resources, selling through a website in addition to through a physical store prior to the Covid-19 crisis. Although this owner manager operated a seemingly resilient business model, it was still adversely affected by a change in market conditions. This was because weddings and other social gatherings were prohibited. Therefore, despite investing in online resources such as a website and social media, a decrease in business functioning was still experienced by the business. This can be evidenced by the following extract:

“The second issue was that public gatherings were prohibited so things like weddings were cancelled. Now things like weddings are a big thing for us as a business because of the volume of flowers would purchase. This is a big part of our business. This caused a £40,000 hit in revenue for us”. (Participant OM8)

However, what was more nuanced was that OM8 was still able to limit the negative effects of this market change by using an online sales method. OM8 mentioned that during the Covid-19 crisis an increased number of people gifted flowers to relatives' due to the socially excluding nature of Covid-19. OM8 was able to successfully engage with this new market trend by processing sales through a website. This can be evidenced by the following extract:

“What was of help was that because people couldn’t meet up and see each other people were sending more flowers. This did help us out a bit because we were getting around 70 bouquets a week in orders which is quite a lot. But this didn’t make up for the lost orders from weddings and things”. (Participant OM8)

In the case of OM8, it was possible to see that although market changes induced challenges for the business, utilising an online sales method as part of the business model dampened the effect of these challenges. Within further interviews, it was possible to see the effect of additional market changes. OM9 experienced a district change in consumer behaviour as a result of the Covid-19 induced lockdowns. This can be exhibited by the following extract:

“What we actually found as the pandemic went on was that some trends started to emerge. For example, because people were stuck at home they were turning to things like cooking as a way of occupying themselves. Whereas previously maybe they didn’t have time to cook cakes, pies and things like that, now they did have the time. As such, then people were starting to buy cookware products, so we did see an increase in customers from that perspective”. (Participant OM9)

In addition to the case of OM9, further examples of crisis induced market changes could be observed. OM10 delineates how the shift to working from home created opportunities for their business. This can be evidenced by the following extract from OM10:

“Another thing that we couldn’t get over was that actually Covid-19 ultimately turned out to be a boom time for the antiques business. So, if you think of it what was the two biggest things with Covid [-19], (1) people working from home (2) there were loads of people dying. A lot of those people were also elderly because the elderly were more susceptible to die from it. That basically flooded the market with antiques as families would clear out houses after the death. Things were coming up that I had not seen for years. Suddenly the things that you would have to look and look for, you could get hold of quite easily and quickly. So that was a huge help for us. So in terms of working from home, as

I told you earlier, before the pandemic most of my business would have been wardrobes, kitchen tables, chairs, general house hold items. With everyone working from home we were still selling those things as usual more or less but we were also selling desks and bookcases, desk chairs, because people needed them” (Participant OM10)

In summary, this theme illustrates that external crisis forces generated by the Covid-19 crisis were a determining factor for the resilience of retail micro-SMEs. Changes in Government legislation, market changes and consumer behaviour all contributed to determining the resilience outcomes of participants. In cases where external crisis forces created opportunity, it was possible to see participating businesses take advantage of these commercial opportunities, creating resilience. Furthermore, in cases where external crisis forces created challenges for participants, participants were able to leverage digital resources to minimise the negative effects. Such examples would include the case of OM8 as stated above.

6.1.2: Support Mechanisms

In addition to the observation of external crisis forces, the data analysis process also uncovered the role of support mechanisms available within the external business environment. The value of a diverse range of support mechanism was identified as being pivotal to the resilience of retail micro-SMEs across this study. Within the data analysis process, it was identified that support mechanisms were present at a variety of levels ranging from emotional support from family and friends to the financial support offered by Government. Several participants (such as OM5, OM7, OM13) highlighted the value of emotional support from close friends and family. Participants communicated that as business owners they had to deal with the personal implications of the Covid-19 crisis, as well as the business implications. This can be evidenced by an extract from an interview with OM16:

“Well yes, I suppose it was useful to have a someone to talk things through with. Covid-19 was a very sad time for a lot of people wasn’t it. I think what was good for me was that because we are a family firm, the family understood the business. My children have grown up with the business, my husband is involved

with it too since the beginning. My mother was also a good source of support for me, because we are really close. The thing is as someone who was running their own business through the pandemic, I had the worry of running the business on top of the worry of catching the virus myself, or a family member catching the virus. That last thing I wanted was my mother catching it.”
(Participant OM16)

In addition to the role of emotional support mechanisms, financial support mechanisms were also of value to participating businesses when developing resilience. These could be considered vectors of change in the sense that they instigated tangible change during the time of crisis. Whereas emotional support offered comfort to owner managers, it was scarcely observed as creating direct tangible change. This can be exemplified by OM11:

“I lived with my mates in student accommodation at the time, so it was them that I spoke mostly to about it. Although it was nice to talk about it at the same time it didn’t change the situation you know.” (Participant OM11)

Study participants also spoke of the role of the UK Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), also known as Furlough. Many participants (such as OM15, OM13, OM16) saw this scheme as a vital lifeline that enabled their business to mitigate the crisis more successfully. OM19 conveyed the JRS was of value to his business during the Covid-19 crisis. This can be illustrated by the following extract:

“Furlough was also massively helpful for the business too, I used it for the first six months of the pandemic. I couldn’t have done without either of them.”
(Participant OM19)

The important role of Government support grants was also conveyed by a high proportion of participants. Participants detailed how the support scheme allowed their businesses to maintain liquidity during the crisis by replacing revenue. It was noteworthy that several participants attested that Governmental financial support contributed to their business’ survival. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM12:

“Well, the Government grants were a god send really for the business. Without those we would have certainly failed. They essentially were able to replace our revenue over the lockdown periods, which as I said made the difference between failing and surviving.” (Participant OM19)

It is noteworthy that within the analysis process, a proportion of participants also spoke of difficulties in obtaining financial support offered by Government. It became apparent that business age was a factor in the eligibility of businesses to successfully secure funds, and as such businesses that were younger in age encountered difficulty. Businesses that had been established for less than 3 tax years were not eligible for Covid-19 specific financial support. It is possible to exemplify the barrier presented by the format of this eligibility criteria with an extract from OM5:

“To be honest they were terrible. I contacted business Wales, and they weren’t at all helpful. When I looked at the grants in details there were loads of loop holes that meant you weren’t eligible. Because I hadn’t been trading for three years, that meant I couldn’t have any grants.” (Participant OM5)

It was also possible to see participants ascribe their inability to secure funding to the penultimate failure of their business. Making further reference the case of OM5, it is possible to see that this business ultimately failed during the Covid-19 crisis. OM5 made the following point:

“To be honest they were terrible. I contacted business Wales, and they weren’t at all helpful. When I looked at the grants in details there were loads of loopholes that meant you weren’t eligible. Because I hadn’t been trading for three years, that meant I couldn’t have any grants.” (Participant OM5)

In summary, it was apparent to see that support mechanisms played an important role in enabling resilience for participating businesses. Furthermore, it was possible to see a balance of soft support such as the emotional support offered by family and friends, in addition to the more tangible support obtained through Government funding initiatives. Access to financial support from Government schemes can be seen as a

key determining factor within the resilience of participating businesses, with those who had not been operating for the specified period of time being at a distinct disadvantage.

6.1.3: Trans-Crisis Social Media Use

In addition to the aforementioned sub-themes the data analysis process also identified the sub-theme, Trans-Crisis Social Media Use. This sub-theme outlines how participants used social media within the trans-crisis phase of the crisis, but more notably how participant social media use changed when compared with the pre-crisis phase. It was apparent from the analysis that trans-crisis social media usage increased substantially within the case of many participants (such as OM9, OM10, OM12). A high proportion of participants reported using social media at an increased rate of frequency when compared with pre-crisis levels. This can be exhibited by an extract from OM3:

We started scaling up the Instagram page as a result of being closed. The first thing we did was start selling through our Instagram stories. So basically, we would post a picture of a product on our Instagram story and post the price with it.” (Participant OM3)

In the case of most participants, it was apparent that the increased use of social media was attributable to changes made to the business model as part of the business' mitigation response to the Covid-19 crisis. With changes in Government legislation - as discussed within section 6.1.1 - defining retail businesses as either essential or non-essential, many participants (such as OM13, OM17, OM19) were forced to sell products in an online capacity as opposed to an in-person capacity. This meant that for many study participants the use of social media for commercial purposes became more important when compared to the pre-crisis phase. This pattern of behaviour can be exemplified using the case of OM13. OM13 previous to the crisis, sold products primarily within an in-person capacity through the use of a high street store, where online selling accounted for a very small proportion of business revenue. This can be illustrated with the following extract:

“[Business name] is quite a niche business really but I would say that the shop was doing ok. I was happy with it. Our revenue was about £220,000 the year before the pandemic. Around £25,000 of that was coming from online.”
(Participant OM13)

As a business that was reliant on selling through a physical store pre-crisis, this participant had to optimise the business model to mitigate the legislative changes generated by the crisis, which involved selling through an online capacity. As such, OM13 saw it necessary to increase social media use to support this business change:

“Well it [social media use] had to change, to put it bluntly. We had to try and re-orientate the business towards online as I said. A big part of this was to use social media to drum up business. All of a sudden social media was a serious part of the business for us, it became an essential part of the business. I wanted to try and encourage as much buying from the website as possible” (Participant OM13)

What became apparent as the analysis continued, was that during the trans-crisis phase social media became a primary business activity rather than a secondary business activity for most participants. As within the case of OM13, many of the participants within this study operated a primarily in-person business model pre-crisis. These business models in most cases used a shop or stall as the primary trading location, where social media use was a less relied upon business activity. During the trans-crisis phase, many participants (such as OM13, OM17, OM19) saw a necessity to transform the business model to one which primarily sold online, using a website as the primary trading location. This process therefore saw social media use become a larger proportion of the business' base of operations. OM8 noted social media as the metaphorical shop window of the business during the trans-crisis phase, replacing the physical shop window previously utilised:

“We started to think of it [social media] as our shop window. We were updating it and making sure we had enough on there [content] for everyone to see what we sold. We also run things like bouquet of the week where we would post a photo of the best-looking bouquet we had sold that week.” (Participant OM8)

Within the case of most participants, the increased use of social media was therefore coupled with a realisation that social media was a key component for attracting custom during the trans-crisis phase. As such, it was possible to identify that several participants changed the nature of their social media strategy to be more commercial in nature. This can be exhibited by the case of OM4. When asked about the business' social media use before the Covid-19 crisis the participant responded:

“We always tried to not be too ‘selly ’on their [social media]. We didn’t want to come across as pushy, we just wanted to display what we were selling.”
(Participant OM4)

Moreover, when queried about the business' social media usage during the crisis, the participant responded:

“We definitely got more commercial with it [social media] in comparison with before Covid-19. We were using it more regularly and in the name of selling.”
(Participant OM4)

It was apparent that one of the primary roles played by social media was to market the business. It was possible to observe participants using social media to market the business, making the business visible to perspective customers:

“Our main aim when using them [social media platforms] was to advertise the business and to show people that we were here and still trading online. We would make a variety of posts ranging from posts about the products that we had in stock, to post about opening times and competitions.” (Participant OM17)

Within this capacity it was possible to see participants use social media platforms in tandem with a website, where participants would funnel customers towards the business' website using social media:

“So we didn’t sell directly through social media. What we would do is make posts of our products and then attach the link to the website where they could make the purchase if they wished to, you know.” (Participant OM12)

Through discussions with participants regarding the use of social media as a marketing tool, many participants voiced opinions on the usefulness of different platforms through the crisis. A high proportion of participants conveyed that Facebook and Instagram were the most useful platforms for mitigating the crisis. Facebook was considered useful by participants due to its ability to engage customers. The sample consisted of retail micro-SMEs, which are small scale businesses. As such, most participating businesses had relatively small social media followings. Participants could be seen to suggest that because of this Facebook proved more useful than the likes of Instagram. This point can be illustrated by OM15:

“The problem with Instagram is that it only really exposes the customers who follow you to your posts. If you have loads of followers then it’s fine. If you don’t have many followers though it limits the reach you can have. I think Facebook is better if you are starting off and don’t have many followers for example” (Participants OM15)

Participants also revealed that Facebook was more effective for targeting older customer audiences, stating that they yielded enhanced engagement with this customer group during the crisis. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM9:

“Our customers tend to be slightly older and prefer to use Facebook. So for example if we put a post out on our Facebook page, during the pandemic, more people will like it and share it than on other platforms” (Participant OM9)

However, it was also possible to see participants delineate that Instagram created commercial value during the Covid-19 crisis in terms of its use for marketing. Instagram was described as useful due to its highly visual nature, making it a good platform for showcasing merchandise:

“If you get the lighting right and the angle you can make the products look good on there without a huge degree of effort. It’s ideal for marketing.” (Participant OM10)

Whereas Facebook was outlined as useful due to its ability to successfully engage older audiences, Instagram exhibited the ability to successfully engage younger audiences:

“Our customers tend to be younger, fitness focused people. These types of customer are big Instagram users I think, so we had good traction.” (Participant OM20)

In addition to social media’s use for marketing the business, it was also possible to see participants use social media to replace pre-crisis customer service models. Where participants operated in-person business models within the pre-crisis phase, participants also operated customer service models that were reliant on in-person interactions. With many participants shifting to sell in an online capacity, it was apparent that many used social media to manage customer service. This can be illustrated by the following extract from OM12:

“So sometimes customers would send a message to the page [social media page] asking a question or making a query. So, you might have a customer asking what guitar string is best for a certain type of guitar for example you know. So, I would deal with these queries through the site.” (Participant OM12)

It was also prevalent that shifting customer service demand from an in-person capacity to an online capacity proved challenging in some cases. OM3 the owner manager of a retail business deemed non-essential, expressed how selling online in an increased capacity generated congestion on the business’ social media page:

“We did though start a new Instagram page. Basically, our main page was becoming over-run with people messaging the page asking to buy items. Once this started happening, I made the decision to start a separate page just to handle the

sales, and to keep the main page for marketing the business only.” (Participant OM3)

Further analysis of interview transcripts outlined that social media was also used by participants as a communication method. For those that operated physical stores pre-crisis, business information was primarily communicated verbally to customers as they shop in-store. The trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis was one which generated many business changes, where communicating these changes proved difficult within a verbal and physical context. As such, many participants used social media as a method of communication, finding it useful for disseminating key information about the business. The following extract from OM15 illustrates how the owner manager used Facebook and Instagram to communicate new additions to his product range, which comprised part of his approach to adapting to the crisis:

“Our main use during the pandemic was to communicate to our customers that we were now expanding our product range to include these new ranges. So, what we basically did to start with was to announce the change to the business. So, we made a number of posts across Facebook and Instagram to inform people of the change. What we then did was we would do feature posts of the new products that we were selling. So, once we added a new product to our website or store we would make a post specific to that product. We would include a photo, a description of the product, and the link to purchase.”
(Participant OM15)

It was also possible to observe that social media was used as a communication method within a business-to-business capacity. This can be highlighted by an example from OM10 who operated an antiques store. OM10 explained that previous to the Covid-19 crisis the antiques industry was highly reliant upon auction houses as a method for trading merchandise between dealers. With social distancing laws coming into effect during the trans-crisis phase, auction houses were forced to close to ensure legal requirements. OM10 delineated that with the closure of action houses, antiques dealers needed a new alternative for trading merchandise. OM10 explained how social media groups on platforms like Facebook and Instagram were able to mimic the role

of auction houses as a method of trading merchandise. An extract from OM10 is provided below:

“The antiques industry is an old industry you see. We aren’t always the first to start using new technology or anything. As an industry, we are all highly reliant on the auctions. We thought with these closing it would hit us massively and it did to a degree. I personally thought the business would have to close, they were my initial thoughts at the beginning of the pandemic. However, what then happened was that groups started to emerge on Facebook and Instagram. So, these groups had thousands of members in them, all antiques dealers and people interested in buying antiques. So, what basically happened was that these groups replaced the actions in many ways.” (Participant OM10)

OM10 later went on to state:

“We would all be buying and selling to each other through these groups which I thought was brilliant. As someone who had never really been interested in social media, and never saw the value in it really, it was ridiculous. I couldn’t get over it.” (Participant OM10)

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, it was apparent to see that social media played a positive role in supporting retail businesses. Social media was referred to by many participants as having contributed significantly to the survival of the business. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM8:

“Well I think it definitely played a part in the businesses survival. We were reliant on it really. It allowed us to sell when we otherwise couldn’t have. It also made use visible to our customers which we couldn’t have done with a website alone.” (Participant OM8)

However, what was also frequently encountered was that social media was not the sole driver of resilience. It was apparent to see many participants explain that social media formed part of the business’ ability to effectively mitigate the crisis. Many

participants alluded to a more integrated approach to mitigation as opposed to the use of social media alone. This can be demonstrated by OM15:

“I would always say that there is never one specific decision or reason rather that underpins the success of a business. It is a combination of things. In this case the decision to make the change was a good decision, the type of change we made to expand the product range was also a good decision. I think social media definitely supported the change in the sense that it provided us with a way of communicating new products and things to customers.” (Participant OM15)

In summary, across the analysis it was possible to observe that social media played an enabling role within the Covid-19 mitigation activity of retail micro-SMEs. It was possible to see many participants re-optimising their business models to ones that primarily sold in an online setting. Social media played a supporting role within implementing this business change. Most notably it could be seen that social media provided participating businesses with the flexibility to undertake these business changes. In most cases, social media provided this flexibility by enabling participating businesses to replace or mimic pre-crisis business activity across the trans-crisis phase. It was possible to observe participants using social media as the primary resource for marketing the business during the crisis, replacing the traditional marketing methods used by participants within their physical store’s pre-crisis. It was also observed that social media was used to manage customer service during the trans-crisis phase as a way of replacing pre-crisis customer service models which were reliant upon physical interactions. Finally, it was apparent how social media acted as a communication method during the time of crisis, allowing for owner managers to communicate with their customer audience. More nuanced examples were also observed, where social media was used to communicate in a business-to-business capacity as a way of replacing pre-crisis trading structures. From the data collected, it was also possible to see participants use a range of different social media platforms, where Instagram and Facebook emerged as the most widely used. It was apparent from the analysis that the utility of these platforms for resilience purposes was heavily influenced by contextual factors of the business, which included the type of product sold by the business and the target customer demographic.

6.1.4: Resource Bricolage Activities

Whereas section 6.1.4 focused on trans-crisis social media use, delineating how social media was used to support business change, this chapter section outlines the recourse bricolage activities of owner managers. As such, this sub-theme is suitably named: Resource Bricolage Activities. Across the trans-crisis phase it was possible to see that many owner managers repurposed or reconfigured business resources. In many cases, the intention of undertaking such activity was to create new business capabilities as a method of developing resilience to the crisis. Several different resources were perceived as valuable by participating businesses during the trans-crisis phase. These could be seen to include examples of financial, physical, and human resources. Participants could be seen to refer to the usefulness of liquid capital. Owner managers described a financial buffer as being of value during the trans-crisis phase:

“I always keep a buffer. That buffer came in handy during Covid-19 many a time.” (Participant OM18)

It was possible to see participants describe liquid capital (i.e. cash at bank) as providing comfort and security to the business:

“Well having financial security was definitely important. We had enough money in the bank which gave us security.” (Participant OM4)

What was noteworthy was that participants also saw liquid capital as a source of flexibility for the business. Several participants saw the need to purchase new equipment during the crisis, as part of the business changes needed to comply with legislative changes. It was apparent that financial resources often supported the changes that were required. This can be exhibited by an extract from OM2:

“Having cash in the bank gave us a lot of comfort. It’s also what allowed us to buy stuff like the PPE and get things in order so we could make home deliveries and things.” (Participant OM2)

In addition to discussions around the usefulness of financial resource, it was also possible to see discussions around the usefulness of physical resources. A high proportion of participants (including OM2, OM8, OM15) outlined the business' website as a useful resource during the trans-crisis phase:

"We were lucky, I think, that we were already selling online. This helped the business keep going, so at least we didn't lose absolutely everything overnight."

(Participant OM13)

In addition, participants described the shop as a useful resource during the trans-crisis phase. Despite being closed in many cases, participants could be seen to perceive the shop as useful, due to its ability to continue marketing the business. This can be exhibited by OM9:

"Well it [the shop] was definitely of use because it was free marketing really. With how people are these days, if they see a shop they like, say as they are driving through a town like this, they google it. So, I don't know, but I would imagine that people would have still done that through Covid-19 and we were able to attract customers like that." (Participant OM9)

While financial and physical resources were identified as useful, what could be seen as human resources were also seen as useful by participants. Participants described their business experience as being of use during the crisis. OM2 explained how their experience of running the business was instrumental in their attempts to mitigate the crisis, as illustrated in the following quote:

"I think operational experience in running the business was very useful. I found myself drawing upon my business experience a lot and I also drew upon my grandparent's business experience a lot too." (Participant OM2)

It was also possible to see participants pledge the importance of using volunteers during the crisis. OM1 describes how the use of volunteers allowed the business to continue functioning by also reducing business costs:

“I also had help in the form of volunteers, and when I say volunteers I mean family members! This was a great resource to the business as it helped with getting to grips with new laws and stuff. It was also good for getting the orders out as it was free labour essentially.” (Participant OM1)

What was noteworthy however, was how participants reconfigured their resources to form new uses. It was possible to see many of the study’s participants use resources in a way in which they had not been used before, to serve a new business need. What was commonly observed across interviews was the way in which they used their stores during the trans-crisis phase. Whereas previous to the crisis, participants unanimously used their stores to showcase merchandise and process sales transactions, during the trans-crisis phase a high number of participants repurposed this commercial space. To mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 crisis, many participants (such as OM13, OM17, OM19) turned to selling primarily within an online capacity. The sale of merchandise through an online capacity was enabled by social media, where social media was a key resource that provided the business the flexibility to make this change. The flexibility provided by social media mainly arose from its ability to allow participants to communicate business changes to customers and also market products. Resultingly, it was therefore possible to see that participants needed to convert their sales floor space into a space suitable for support and prepare online orders. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM8, a non-essential retailer:

“It was of use to us as we could use it as a place to process the orders you see. So, see all this area here [pointing to the customer entrance area of the shop] this was all laid out to make up the bouquets. The customers would then collect their orders at the door.” (Participant OM8)

Although some participants expressed opinion that the usefulness of their store plummeted during the trans-crisis phase, other participants explained how the store was an essential part of the business’ strategy when bouncing back from the Covid-19 crisis. There was a commonly held belief by participants that Covid-19 would be a temporary state of affairs and that it would eventually come to an end. Participants expressed the benefits that a shop provides and therefore were able to rationalise how

the store delivered value to the business. OM19 explains their perception of the value their shop provides to the business, and how they thought it was an instrumental part of the shop's ability to regain normal functioning post-crisis.

“Well I wouldn't have given the shop up. At the end of the day I had to have hope that I would eventually re-open and that things would go back to normal, and they did for the most part. I don't think I ever thought that we wouldn't go back to normal really. And the thing is the shop does give you expose to customers, people still see the shop and you know it would have reminded a lot of people we were still here. At the end of the day too, I needed somewhere to store all the stock [ready for reopening].” (Participant OM19)

With a variety of bricolage activities applied by participants, it was possible to see that many of these bricolage activities were simple business changes. It was evident that participants did not aim to incur unnecessary complexity or sources of cost. Instead, participants aimed to navigate the trans-crisis phase using simple solutions to challenges incurred by the Covid-19 crisis. A high proportion of bricolage activities were undertaken in support of the development of creating new capabilities that better suited the Covid-19 trans-crisis context. As discussed within a previous section (section 6.1.3), several businesses developed the capability to drive in-person sales towards an online sales platform. In addition to developing this capability, participating businesses also developed the capability to offer customers home delivery services and store collection services. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM13:

“Yes, we did yes. So, I offered doing both [home delivery and collections] those things. I offered home delivery and click and collect for customers where they could come to the store and collect anything they wanted to buy.” (Participant OM13)

Although these new capabilities provided some mitigating affect towards crisis induced challenges, it was possible to observe that many participants (such as OM3, OM9, OM15) could not scale these activities to the magnitude where the business was able to maintain normal functioning. Participants encountered difficulty in maintaining the

volumes of custom that were proportionate to pre-crisis levels by adopting these means. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM19:

“Well you know it helped but it didn’t make up for the huge loss in customers we experienced because we were shut. The thing is as a shop in a prime location like this a lot of custom comes from passers buy, people who are in the town shopping and decide to pop in.” (Participant OM19)

In summary, it was possible to see participants change the way in which they used business resources across the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. Participants reported a range of resources as useful in mitigating the challenges induced by the crisis. It was also possible to see participants undertake several bricolage activities as a method of mitigating the crisis.

6.1.5: Trans-Crisis Business Performance

The final sub-theme identified under the superordinate theme Trans-Crisis Business Model is that of Trans-Crisis Business Performance. During the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis it was possible to observe a range of financial performance across participating businesses. Whereas most participants held a stable financial position during the pre-crisis phase, financial turbulence was observed across participants during the trans-crisis phase. It was possible to see that Covid-19 induced business failure upon some participants. This included that of the business owned and operated by OM11, who described how he had to formally liquidate the business as a direct response of the crisis:

“So, I sold lots of the equipment off. I kept the car. That freed up some money. But yeah, the business is non-existent at the moment. It literally was wiped out.” (Participant OM11)

What was consistent across those that failed was their young business age. All failed businesses had been operating for a period of less than 3 years at the time of the crisis. It was possible to see these businesses attribute their failure to their inability to

qualify for Covid-19 specific Government support schemes. Making further reference to OM11's interview it was possible to see the participant make the following point:

"Yeah so I've heard a lot of people say good things about the Government loans. I think a lot of people did ok with them to be honest. The problem was that I hadn't been trading for three years. This meant that I wasn't eligible for anything. That's ultimately what sealed the fate of the business." (Participant OM11)

Although it was apparent that some participating businesses failed, it was also possible to see other businesses survive the crisis. Financial performance across these businesses varied significantly. A number of these businesses could be seen to sustain severe financial losses during the crisis but were able to find a route through the trans-crisis phase. The critical lifeline to many of these businesses was the successful engagement with Covid-19 specific Government support schemes. Many businesses reported that these sources of finance were critical to the survival of the business. This can be demonstrated by an extract from OM19. When asked about the financial performance of the business during the crisis, OM19 responded:

"There was no financial performance. The grants saved us, it was as simple as that." (Participant OM19)

In addition to making use of support schemes as a form of mitigation, it was also possible to see some participants reduce financial losses by increasing online trading. What was noteworthy however, was that a proportion of participants were not able to fully replace pre-crisis revenue levels by making this change. Therefore, within the case of many participants (such as OM3, OM17), trading online was a damage limitation exercise. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM12:

"A lot of people are under the impression that if you sell online you can just run the business like normal even if the shop is closed. The thing is it doesn't work like that. So, my sales online versus in store is hugely different. I would say that 90% of what I sell is in the store. So, if you lose the store you effectively lose 90% of your revenue then don't you." (Participant OM12)

While a proportion of participating businesses failed, and many participants struggled to maintain good financial performance, it was also possible to see some participants achieve financial success during the crisis. Some participants managed to increase business revenue during the trans-crisis phase, when compared with pre-crisis levels. This can be represented by the case of OM6. When asked about the financial performance of the business during the Covid-19 crisis, the participant responded:

“Well if I’m honest our business transformed over-night. Our sales went up x10 or x15 what they were before the pandemic. Before the pandemic we were taking about £100.00 a day through the website, that went up to about £1,000-£1,500, and it was sustained. We actually got to a point where we were selling so much that we had logistical difficulties, we couldn’t get the stock here quick enough.” (Participant OM6)

Within the case of those that encountered increased financial performance during the crisis, it was possible to see two key factors contribute to creating this outcome. Most notably it was possible to see that many of these businesses had taken advantage of changes in market conditions generated by the crisis, as discussed within chapter section 6.1.1. Within such cases participants serendipitously capitalised upon crisis induced market changes. An example of such a business includes that of the business owned by OM10. As previously discussed within chapter section 6.1.1, OM10 experienced a rapid increase in demand for the merchandise sold by their business. OM10 was able to effectively capitalise upon crisis induced changes in demand for certain merchandise by only slightly optimising their product offerings. The extract used within chapter section 6.1.1. from OM10’s interview is recounted below:

“Another thing that we couldn’t get over was that actually Covid-19 ultimately turned out to be a boom time for the antiques business. So, if you think of it what was the two biggest things with Covid [-19], (1) people working from home (2) there were loads of people dying. A lot of those people were also elderly because the elderly were more susceptible to die from it. That basically flooded the market with antiques as families would clear out houses after the death. Things were coming up that I had not seen for years. Suddenly the things that

you would have to look and look for, you could get hold of quite easily and quickly. So that was a huge help for us. So, in terms of working from home, as I told you earlier, before the pandemic most of my business would have been wardrobes, kitchen tables, chairs, general house hold items. With everyone working from home we were still selling those things as usual more or less but we were also selling desks and bookcases, desk chairs, because people needed them” (Participant OM10)

OM10 stated later in the interview:

“Honestly during Covid [19] I did more business than I had in 8 years. We just had this captive audience.” (Participant OM10)

With the case of OM10 being representative of several participants that serendipitously saw increased financial performance during the trans-crisis phase, it is possible to equate such success to business luck. However, it was noteworthy, that a minority of respondents managed to attain an increased level of financial performance without serendipitous conditions. Businesses that had operated online centric business models prior to the crisis managed to trade through the trans-crisis phase without major disruption. As such, these businesses were able to continue to grow in the same manner as they had previously experienced before the crisis. An example of such a business includes that of OM14, who operated a business that traded solely online. When asked about the financial performance of the business through the Covid-19 crisis, OM14 responded:

“Well turnover was unaffected, we grew by 15%, I told you that I think... uhm... yeah we did fine. I can't say that we had any financial troubles during the pandemic at all because from a financial perspective you wouldn't know we had gone through Covid[-19] really.”

Such participants were able to exhibit the ability to increase financial performance during the crisis due to their already strong online presence. Participants such as OM14 were already accustomed to the commercial use of online resources such as a website and social media. Such participants also already maintained customer

audiences that were accustomed to shopping with the business through a website as opposed to a store. Within such cases, it was possible to identify that social media played a pivotal role in allowing participants to increase financial performance during the crisis.

In summary, the data analysis process led to the identification of three broad categorisations of financial performance. These categorisations could be seen as; businesses that failed, business that survived and business that thrived. Businesses that failed were those that could not acquire the financial capital to sustain operating the business through the trans-crisis phase. In all cases, these businesses were those that could not obtain financial support from Government initiatives. Businesses that survived were those that could sustain a degree of financial functioning, either by securing Government funding from Government initiatives, or by dampening the effect of financial losses by optimising the business to sell through on online medium. Finally, businesses that thrived were those that could be observed as having increased the financial performance of the business during the Covid-19 crisis. These businesses were able to increase financial performance by one of two methods. It was possible to see some participating businesses increase financial performance serendipitously, by taking advantage of changes in market conditions that lead to an increased demand for merchandise sold by the participating business. Furthermore, participants increased financial performance by operating business models that were highly resilient to the Covid-19 crisis. These businesses in all cases, operated business models that traded entirely within an online capacity, before and during the crisis. By trading within an online capacity before the crisis, these businesses had already developed the capability to use online resources effectively to captivate customer audiences. Additionally, these businesses already maintained a customer audience that was accustomed to purchasing merchandise within an online capacity.

6.2: Thematic Analysis: Post-Crisis Reflections

The final superordinate theme presented within this chapter section is that of: Post-Crisis Reflections. All interviews were conducted after the 31st March 2022, the date that signified the official end to the Covid-19 crisis. With interviews taking place between September 2022 and January 2023, it was possible to capture participant

reflections on the crisis. This chapter section delineates the themes that were identified within this segment of the data collected.

6.2.1: Crisis Learnings

When enacting the data analysis process, it was possible to see that study participants experienced enhanced understandings with regard to their experience of the Covid-19 crisis. It was apparent that several participants believed that the crisis had made them more resilient as a business owner. Participants made reflective statements where they would critique their original emotional response to managing a business through the Covid-19 crisis. This can be exemplified by an extract from OM20:

“I would also do my best to separate my emotions from the business. You have to keep pushing. I found that sometimes it could get on top of me if we had a bad day. The problem is that feeling down about it doesn’t make any difference. As I said you have to just stay focused and keep moving forward. That’s my learnings really.” (Participant OM20)

It was also possible to see participants develop further understanding by reflecting on the way in which they operated their business through the crisis. Participants could be seen to reflect upon the importance of maintaining low debt within the business. This can be illustrated by an extract from OM16:

“Well the only thing I would say is that, well, I think Covid [-19] was a reminder that you never know what’s around the corner. And at the end of the day what I have always done is make sure that we have very low debt in the business. I think that’s key really to the longevity of any business.” (Participant OM16)

In addition to a focus on low debt, it was also possible to see participants reflecting more specifically on what they believed would make their business more resilient in the future. What was noteworthy was that participants perceived Covid-19 as an experience that would enable them to run a business more effectively during a time of crisis in the future. This can be evidenced by an extract from OM6. When asked how

the experience of Covid-19 had informed their future strategy towards resilience OM6 responded:

“Running the business during the pandemic has bred good traits into us as a business so we should have what it takes to survive.” (Participant OM6)

Study participants also ascribed importance to their online presence, when outlining what made their business resilient to the crisis. Participants could be seen to emphasise the importance of having the option to sell within an online capacity across the trans-crisis phase. This can be exemplified by OM8:

“I think that as a business we were quite resilient. We have recovered now. We are back up to pre-pandemic levels in terms of customers and revenue. I think our online presence was a big thing for us as a business. Without that we would have been done for it think.” (Participant OM8)

Within statements around the importance of online presence, it was apparent that specific emphasis was placed upon the importance of social media, in terms of resilience to the crisis. Participants presented social media as a key enabler of resilience for their business. This is exemplified by OM10:

“I think we were resilient. I would never have said that before the pandemic. I would have said we would be vulnerable to a crisis of that nature but we weren’t. Yeah, I would say we were resilient, and mainly because of social media. Without we would have missed some big opportunities because I wouldn’t have been able to get hold of stock.” (Participant OM10)

In addition to outlining the value of an online presence in developing resilience, participants detailed further aspects of the business that they believed enabled the business to be resilient. This included the type of products offered by the business. Owner managers perceived the products they sold to enable resilience for the business, during the trans-crisis phase. Participants that were defined as essential retailers, perceived their products as essential. Due to the essential nature of their

products, many owner managers saw this as a key enabler for the resilience of their business to the Covid-19 crisis which is evidenced by the following quote:

“Well as a retail business selling essential items I think we were very resilient. If you sell products that people need on a daily basis, then there will always be demand for you products no matter what.” (Participant OM2)

Conversely, it was also possible to see participants delineate that the type of product sold by the business created vulnerability for the business. This was discussed mainly by participants that operated non-essential retail businesses, and as such felt that the products they offered were not essential, detracted from the resilience of the business. This can be exemplified by OM12:

“I think the industry I am in didn’t help either because music is something that unities people together and is quite a social thing. Obviously with no social gatherings going on it just lowered the demand for the stuff that I sell.”
(Participant OM12)

In summary, it was possible to see participants discuss a range of learnings when reflecting upon their time running a business during the Covid-19 crisis. Most notably, participants conveyed that Covid-19 had developed their ability to be more resilient as individuals, providing them with a greater capacity to deal with emotionally uncomfortable situations. Additionally, several participants pledged that they had learnt that the financial security of the business is of paramount importance when managing the business. Further to these discussions, it was possible to see that many participants felt that Covid-19 had instilled habits that would be useful for mitigating future crises. Participants made reflections upon specific elements of the business that they felt contributed to the resilience of the business. Within such discussions, it was possible to see participants highlight the role of maintain an online presence in the process of enabling resilience. Further discussions could be seen to specifically focus on the role of social media as an enabler of resilience during the Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, discussions focusing upon the enablers of resilience also included emphasis upon the role of product type as a determinant of business resilience.

6.2.2: Future Resilience Considerations

Whereas the previous sub-theme focused upon participant learnings with regard to the Covid-19 crisis, this sub-theme delineates the future considerations for resilience made by participants. Within discussions with participants, it was possible to see respondents consider the resilience of their business and how they might optimise their future business operations to develop resilience. This is a noteworthy finding from the analysis process as it outlines a proactive approach to the mitigation of future crisis, as opposed to the reactive behaviours observed within the data collected around the response of participants to the Covid-19 crisis. Participants discussed the impending cost of living crisis and how they were planning to adapt in preparation to this crisis. OM18 detailed how she was considering optimising her product offerings in preparation for economic conditions where customers might have a decreased disposable income:

“I think the cost of living crisis will mean that people have less money to spend so I will probably need to stock some cheaper cards to react to that.”
(Participant OM18)

Through further discussions regarding the cost of living crisis with other participants, it was also possible to see participants consider diversification as a form of resilience. OM13 detailed how they planned to diversify the business to make enhanced use of the commercial space that was available within the store. OM13 detailed how they planned to rent the ground floor of the store to another retailer as method of attracting another income stream:

“We have some stuff that’s sitting on the shelf for too long before selling through. I’m actually thinking about renting out the bottom floor to another shop. So [business name] will trade on the second floor only and the new business will trade on the bottom floor then.” (Participant OM13)

OM17 also provided details on how they were considering making changes to the business as a form of creating resilience. OM17 details how they were considering making changes to their product range in a bid to remain competitive:

“I think with the cost of living crisis, people will be less ready to buy the more premium clothes we sell maybe. I think how resilient we are a business will be defined by if or how we change our product range I think.” (Participant OM17)

In addition to making the above business model optimisations, it was also possible to see participants make changes to the business’ financial structure. It was possible to see that participants had lowered the financial risk previously carried by the business in an attempt to safeguard the future resilience of the business. This can be demonstrated by an extract from OM14:

“I have made changes to the business with respect to Covid [-19], like making sure that we don’t take on too much debt for example. So, we should be alright I think.” (Participant OM14)

In summary, it was possible to see participants engage within a range of activities in an attempt to develop resilience to potential sources of future adversity. These activities included making optimisations to the business model by changing the product offerings made to customers. Additionally, participants diversified their businesses to include additional sources of revenue as a method of increasing resilience. Finally, participants could also be seen to bolster the financial position of the business as a form of resilience.

6.3: Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has presented key themes from the data analysis process that explain the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on participating businesses. The chapter identified that a range of crisis induced forces contributed to the determination of the resilience of participants. It was also established that support mechanisms played an integral role in securing survival for most participants. Resource bricolage was found to have contributed to developing resilience for participants, where bricolage was enabled by social media. Penultimately, it was identified that three degrees of resilience were prevalent across participants. These three degrees of resilience could be seen as businesses that failed, survived, and thrived. In addition to providing the

understanding of the resilience outcomes of participants, this chapter section also identified the impact of the crisis on owner managers, in the form of reflections and learnings. The chapter identified that as a result of the crisis, many owner managers adapted their business practices as well as business model, in an attempt to increase the resilience of the business over the longer term.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings from this thesis. This chapter systematically discusses these findings, presenting what is novel. This chapter includes 4 sections. Chapter section 7.1 first consults core bodies of knowledge, presenting how the findings of this research inform current academic discourse. Chapter section 7.2 then provides responses to each of the research questions presented within chapter section 3.3.5. Furthermore, chapter section 7.3 re-visits the conceptual framework, identifying both similarities and differences across conceptual and empirical themes. Finally, the chapter concludes with a chapter summary within section 7.4.

7.1: Enabling Organisational Resilience within Retail Micro-SMEs

This chapter section aims to present how the findings from this thesis inform previous research. Chapter section 7.1.1 firstly consults core crisis management concepts, discussing their applicability to this research. Section 7.1.2 proceeds to discuss previous SME crisis research, delineating how this thesis contributes to current discourse. Section 7.1.3 discusses how this thesis contributes to previous retail research, where section 7.1.4 discusses how this thesis contributes to previous social media research. Finally, section 7.1.5 discusses the role of social media as an enabler of bricolage, making specific reference to the three theoretical constructs presented by Baker & Nelson (2005).

7.1.1: Relationship to Core Crisis Management Concepts

The literature review outlined within both chapters 2 and 3 provides a detailed overview of the previous research pertinent to this thesis. One of the concepts examined within the review was that of the definition of a crisis event (see section 2.1.1). This thesis identified the Pearson & Clair (1998) definition as most suitable to this research, with the definition establishing a crisis as a low probability high impact event. From the data collected within this research it is evident that these two constructs of the Pearson & Clair (1998) definition were indeed applicative to that of the Covid-19 crisis. Participants reported the unforeseen nature of the Covid-19 crisis, while also reporting the high degree of impact that the crisis inflicted upon the business. The classification of a fundamental crisis, as outlined by Gundel (2005) also

emerged as applicable to the Covid-19 crisis, where participants displayed no predictive capacity of the crisis, and were powerless to influence the genesis of external crisis forces. In the case of this study, external crisis forces included Government legislation differentiating essential and non-essential retailers, in addition to social distancing and movement restrictions. Participants had to accept the reality of such forces and construct responses accordingly. Furthermore, the three-phased chronological event sequence outlined within chapter section 2.1.3 was also evident across the data collected within this thesis. From the data collected, it was evident that the Covid-19 crisis followed the three phases of pre-crisis, trans-crisis and post-crisis phases, where each phase influenced the experience of the business, requiring the participating businesses to change behaviour.

The definitions of crisis management and organisational resilience presented by Williams et al. (2017) also emerged within the data collected, with two key behavioural attributes exhibited by participating businesses. Williams' et al. (2017) definition of crisis management includes the construct of restoring the business to a state of normal functioning as part of a businesses' response to a crisis. This behaviour was evident across a range of participating businesses, where businesses experienced an initial degradation in business functioning but were able to offset this phenomenon by employing tailored responses. This behavioural response was ultimately able to secure the survival of the business across the crisis. Within this thesis, it was possible to label such businesses as the 'crisis survivors'. Williams et al. (2017) also defines the term organisational resilience, basing this definition on the construct that resilience involves maintaining normal functioning during a crisis, where an initial degradation of business functioning is not experienced. Although this business behaviour did emerge within the data collected, this thesis was able to extend this understanding and identify that some businesses managed to increase business functioning during the Covid-19 crisis, increasing revenue. Examples of such behaviours involved the robust adoption of online resources such as social media, and subsequently developing a strong customer base. Participating businesses that maintained or increased business functioning across the Covid-19 crisis could therefore be labelled 'crisis thrivers'. Conversely, there was a dichotomy where some participants were unable to restore functioning after experiencing business degradation and ultimately failed. These participating businesses could be labelled 'crisis failures'.

7.1.2: Informing the SME Crisis Research

Previous SME crisis research can be seen to identify the profound impact of crises on small businesses (Doern et al., 2019). Such literature includes that of the Covid-19 crisis (Albonico et al., 2020; De Massis & Rondi, 2020). Upon collecting and analysis the data it was possible to identify the emergence of key crisis concepts within the data collected, and determine how this thesis builds upon previous SME crisis research. For example, Herbane (2010) presents the concept of the three-dimensional crisis as, lack of control, limited finance, and compromised time constraint. Within this thesis it was possible to see evidence of all three constructs across the data collected. Several participants could be seen to lose the degree of control over the business that they had enjoyed pre-crisis. This often meant participating businesses experienced forced change and were not able to conduct business using their preferred methods. Additionally, many participants experienced decreases in financial performance due to decreased revenue. Thus, participating businesses were less able to cover business costs and maintain a healthy performance. The third and final dimension outlined by Herbane (2010) is that of a perceived time constraint generated by the crisis. This crisis dimension was also present across the data collected within this study. This was identifiable when understanding the speed in which essential and non-essential retail Government policy was imposed upon participating businesses, where participants had to enact business changes within compressed time frames. In addition to Herbane's (2010) study, this research can also be seen to be confirmatory of the study conducted by Spillan & Hough (2003), who identify that the experience of crisis generates greater concern for future crises. This was evident within the data collected, where participant post-crisis reflections usually contained apprehensions regarding the cost-of-living crisis and implications of the war in Ukraine.

Several previous studies point to the positive role of crisis experience. Within their study of entrepreneurs, Simon-Moya et al. (2016) point to the importance of crisis experience in the process of managing a crisis. Furthermore, Doern (2016) points to the importance of crisis experience within a study of SME responses to the 2011 London Riots. This research collected data that extends the understanding of the role of crisis experience within the management of crisis. Although the data collected identifies the important role of crisis experience, the study data also exhibits the

importance of business experience. It can be seen from the participating businesses that those who had been established longer were more likely to have managed during a time of hardship. Although some of the most established participating businesses had not been subject to an event that could be defined as a crisis - as defined by Person and Clair (1998) - participants had experienced managing through periods of adversity. Such adversity included, the adoption of new technologies, seismic market shifts and significant changes in consumer behaviour. It was evident from the data collected that such events had informed the responses of owner managers to the Covid-19 crisis. This thesis can therefore extend existing research by positing that previous business experience as a composite with crisis experience, enabled retail micro-SME resilience across the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis.

Further to the role of experience, this thesis also extends research discussing the role of support mechanisms during times of crisis. Previous studies have identified a broad range of support mechanisms that influence the crisis experience of businesses. This includes Doern (2016) who outlines the role of emotional support from friends and family during crisis. Furthermore, Bressan et al. (2021) outlines the additional support mechanisms of staff, customers, and sources of financial support. This study is able to identify the presence of many of these support mechanisms within the context of retail micro-SMEs. The role of emotional support from family and friends, and Government financial support were particularly emphasised by participants. Many participants explained how the emotional support of family and friends contributed to their well-being during the crisis. The nature of the Covid-19 crisis meant that many participants had experienced personal illness or the illness of family. It was prevalent from the data collected that the emotional support structures of owner managers enabled participants to persevere and continue to run the business during challenging times. Furthermore, it was also possible to see that many participants outlined Government financial support as the key factor that secured business survival. Many participants reported that financial support from dedicated Covid-19 support funds were able to replace or supplement the revenue streams of the business. What was noteworthy however was that many participants stated that although emotional support from family and friends was useful, it was not conducive to a successful crisis outcome. It was evident that although participants found emotional support useful, participants perceived financial support as the key support mechanism that secured

business survival. This thesis can therefore be seen to extend current academic discourse that considers the positive role of crisis support mechanisms.

In addition to the positive role of support mechanisms, this thesis also identifies challenges associated with the successful attainment of financial resource from dedicated crisis support mechanisms. Current academic discourse clearly identifies the challenges of attaining financial resource from crisis dedicated support mechanisms. This includes work by Runyan (2006), Cowling et al. (2012) and Cowling et al. (2020) who all point to the inadequacy of financial support mechanisms during times of crisis. Herbane (2010) also identified the negative impact of stifled support within his study of SMEs. This thesis contributes to such discourse by identifying that support mechanisms often created challenges for micro retail-SMEs. Many of the younger businesses that took part within this study reported that business age was a determining factor in the application process for crisis specific financial relief schemes. Retail micro-SMEs that had been established for less than 3 years were in-eligible to receive financial relief. As such, it can be seen from the data collected, such businesses were particularly vulnerable to the crisis and subsequently experienced an increased mortality rate when compared to that of older businesses.

Previous SME crisis research can also be seen to examine the role of business model optimisations within the context of crisis. This includes Bivona & Cruz (2021) who identify two crisis behaviours exhibited by SMEs. The authors firstly identify that SMEs leveraged readily available resources and current business knowledge to react to the changes in environment. Secondly, Bivona & Cruz (2021) also outlined that SMEs transformed existing resources to create novel products and solutions during the time of crisis. Clauss et al. (2021) identify that SMEs engaged in business model optimisations during times of crisis. The authors identify that modifying the business model was a legitimate managerial mechanism that allowed for strategic flexibility and the construction of new capabilities during the Covid-19 crisis. The behaviours identified by both Bivona & Cruz (2021) and Clauss et al. (2021) were also identified within the context of retail micro-SMEs as part of this study. Participants within this study exhibited a broad range of retail business model optimisations in response to the new business environment generated by the Covid-19 crisis. Study participants engaged in such behaviour by way of creating new business practices that were

tailored to the crisis situation and its unique characteristics. Examples of such behaviour included modifying business models that were predominantly shop / stall focused pre-crisis, to becoming online focused. Such business model optimisations were minor in some cases, where participating businesses already relied upon online trading for a sizable part of the business turnover. However, in the case of other participants the optimisation to sell online was more acute. While optimising the business model to develop the capacity for online sales volume was an important optimisation for many participants, supporting online sales was also of importance. Supporting activity included the adoption of digital marketing techniques, and delivery and collection services. This thesis can therefore extend discourse within this academic area by identifying that many retail micro-SMEs went beyond simply optimising the business model and in fact underwent significant business model transformation.

In addition to discussing the pertinence of this research to the above themes present within previous SME research, it is also possible to identify how the findings of this research relate to that of previous fundamental crisis events. As detailed within section 2.3.3, the FMD crisis can be seen as a previous example of a fundamental crisis. Irvine & Anderson (2004) identify that during the FMD crisis local lockdowns had a substantial negative effect on SMEs, where such businesses experienced a dramatic reduction in business volume and revenue. This pattern of behaviour was also identified within this study, where a proportion of participating businesses experienced profound decreases in revenue because of lockdown legislation. However, this research extends Irvine & Anderson's (2004) study, who state that SMEs offered substitute products by way of avoiding lockdown restrictions. Although within the case of this thesis it was possible to see participants modify their product offerings, no substantial changes in product range were identified. This was because a high proportion of participating businesses were able to use online resources as a way of mitigating the effects of Covid-19 legislation. This extension to Irvine & Anderson's (2004) work is likely to be signified by changes in the availability of online resources for micro-SMEs, which subsequently reduced the need to change the product offering. Further to Irvine & Anderson's (2004) work, it is also possible to see Runyan (2006) investigate the effect of Hurricane Katrina on SMEs. Runyan (2006) identify that very few participating businesses had foreseen the crisis and put in place crisis recovery

plans. This behaviour was once again identified within this study where not one of the participants involved within the study foresaw the Covid-19 crisis. Runyan (2006) also identified that during Hurricane Katrina, SMEs encountered difficulty in attaining crisis specific financial relief. As previously stated, this behaviour was also identified within this thesis. Moving on it is also possible to see the GFC as a fundamental crisis previously researched in SME crisis literature. Smallbone et al. (2012) identify that although most SMEs showed signs of vulnerability during the GFC, there were examples of SMEs that were resilient to the crisis. This pattern of behaviour was also identified within this research where unexpectedly, the data collected illustrated that some micro-retail SMEs had indeed thrived during the Covid-19 crisis. Davidsson & Gordon (2016) research the effect of the GFC on start-up businesses. The authors found that start-ups exhibited four behaviours when confronted by the reality of the GFC. These behaviours could be seen as, disengagement, delay, compensation, and adaptation. This thesis was able to extend the study conducted by Davidsson & Gordon (2016) by identifying that within the context of Covid-19 start-ups responses did not include compensation as start-up retail businesses were ineligible for crisis specific relief.

In addition to the crises discussed above, it is also apparent to identify fundamental crises more recently. This includes that of the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. The effect of the Christchurch earthquake on SMEs can be seen to researched by de Vries & Hamilton (2021). The authors identify that within resilient SMEs it was possible to identify three common resilient characteristics. Namely, it was apparent that those most resilient owned their own business premises, operated business-to-business models and followed path extension strategies. Although this study was conducted specifically within the retail sector, it was possible to identify that those with a strong pre-crisis financial position displayed an increased propensity to be resilient to the crisis. Furthermore, it can also be seen that previous crisis research has examined the experience of SMEs during the 2011 London Riots. Doern (2016) identified that mind-set, crisis experience and resources differentiated vulnerable businesses from resilient businesses during the crisis. This research can be seen to extend the findings of Doern (2016) by also identifying the role of crisis experience and resources. As discussed earlier within this chapter section, the role of experience was a prominent antecedence to those businesses that were able to develop resilience to the Covid-19 crisis.

Furthermore, the positive role of access to resources was also identified as important to the resilience process, where more detail is presented within chapter section 7.2.2. Further to the 2011 London Riots it is also possible identify the study of Brexit as a fundamental crisis. Brown et al. (2019) identified that SMEs saw the need to make changes to their business strategy as a result Brexit induced forces, a behaviour also identified within the context of Covid-19 within the findings of this study. Furthermore, Sindakis & Aggarwal (2022) identify in their study of Brexit that e-commerce adoption was key to enabling adaptation to the new business environment, where e-commerce supported the development of new capabilities. This thesis extends this research by identifying the role of social media as a key enabler of resilience activity, where social media allowed for the development of new situationally specific business capabilities as part of the mitigative action against the Covid-19 crisis.

7.1.3: Informing Previous Retail Research

In addition to SME crisis literature, this thesis extends current crisis research that is specific to the experience of the retail sector during the Covid-19 crisis. Several studies can be seen to investigate the effect of Covid-19 on retail consumer behaviour, where it is identified that many consumers changed the way they shopped during the crisis. One of the main phenomena identified within current literature is that of panic buying (cf. Akhtar et al., 2020; and Tsao et al., 2019). Islam et al. (2020) identify that panic buying during the Covid-19 crisis was driven by perceived time and product scarcity, while Prentice et al. (2020) identify panic buying was driven by the fear of missing out. Although this thesis did not identify the phenomenon of panic buying, it did identify increases in product demand by consumers, as identified by Ivanov (2020) and Kumar et al. (2020). While a proportion of participating businesses reported increased demand across certain product groups, what was noteworthy was that many participants also reported shifts in product demand. In many cases, participants reported that customer shopping habits changed during the trans-crisis phase, where customers turned to alternative products which had previously experienced lower levels of demand pre-crisis. Such shifts in product demands included changes in the way customers bought clothes, furniture, and food. It was apparent within this study that shifts in consumer shopping habits had a considerable influence on the resilience of participating businesses. Some participants were able to take advantage of

newfound demand by utilising digital resources. The increased use of digital resources allowed participating businesses to become more flexible, adapting to changes in consumer behaviour more easily. In many instances this occurred as owner managers were able to more effectively gauge changes in consumer shopping habits by maintain an awareness of social media trends and enhancing digital marketing techniques. There were however some cases where market changes negatively influenced business resilience, where participants were not able to gain a sufficient degree of flexibility using digital resources. This was usually because new product types demanded by customers where not as profitable as the previously sold products. Furthermore, there were some product types such as fresh flowers that were not easily sold through an online medium. However, it is again noteworthy that even within these cases, digital resources dampened the negative effect of changes in consumer shopping habits.

In addition to the effects of changes in consumer behaviour, current retail sector research conducted within the context of Covid-19 also identified supply chain disruption as a negative effect of the crisis (cf. de Vass et al., 2020; Butt, 2020; Do et al., 2022). Within this study, supply chain disruption could not be identified within any substantive regard with relation to Covid-19. However, what was apparent was that Brexit had generated product availability and cost inflations for participants within the pre-crisis phase. Brexit generated forces such as these, therefore it could be seen to undermine the pre-crisis position of many participants, placing participants at a disadvantage when attempting to mitigate the crisis.

7.1.4: Informing Previous Social Media Research

In addition to the SME research discussed within the preceding chapter sections, it is also possible to see how this thesis contributes to academic discourse concerning SME social media use. While Saruj & Pal (2020) argue that social media use within the context of crisis is poorly researched, social media has been researched extensively within a SME context more generally. Quinton & Wilson (2010) argue that SMEs use social media as a method of combating business information challenges, while Kuhn et al. (2016) argue that SMEs use social media to conduct market research. Furthermore, both Mack et al. (2017) and Butler et al. (2010) previously

identify the application of social media by SMEs as a method of opportunity recognition. This thesis contributes to such discourse by identifying that such behaviours were also observed within retail micro-SME during the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. Many of the participating businesses within this study could be seen to use social media by way of conducting market research. Although participants did not report using social media to conduct a formal market research process, participants did report using social media to monitor changes in the market where they later professed to make reactive changes to the business. This thesis can therefore extend previous research by illustrating the presence of previously identified business behaviour within a crisis context.

Previous SME research can also be seen to identify the use of social media as a communication method with customers. Lehmkuhl & Jung (2013) identify that social media can be used by SMEs to increase transmission of information with customers. This thesis can extend such discourse by identifying that during the Covid-19 crisis social media was the primary communication method used by retail micro-SMEs when contacting customers. The trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis presented a unique situation for owner managers where verbal communication in a face-to-face capacity was difficult to implement. This coincided with a time where retail micro-SMEs were required to undergo a process of rapid change in order to adapt to the crisis situation. As such, an intersect existed where businesses needed to communicate key business information (such as new opening and closing times or new services) with customers when face-to-face communication was difficult to action. It was upon this basis that social media became a key communication medium during the Covid-19 crisis.

Within the small body of social media research conducted within the context of crisis, it is possible to see that social media can be used as an effective marketing tool during a crisis situation. Syaifulla et al. (2021) identified that SMEs who adopted social media for marketing purposes during Covid-19 experienced enhanced business performance over those that did not. Syaifulla et al. (2021) identified that such enhanced business performance presented itself in the form of increased sales and stronger customer relationships. This thesis contributes to such discourse by also identifying the positive role of social media during the Covid-19 crisis. A high proportion of participants reported that the use of social media was a key enabler of the business' survival, and

that business performance would have been dramatically reduced without its adoption. Participants articulated that social media enabled the resilience of the business in several ways that included generating sales, managing customer relationships and maintaining the visibility of the business when the store was forced to closed due to Government legislation.

7.1.5: Social Media as an Enabler of Resource Bricolage

It is the intention of this chapter section to discuss how the findings of this research inform Baker & Nelson's (2005) Resource Bricolage Theory. Baker & Nelson's (2005) bricolage is defined with the use of three constructs, making do, combinations of resources and resources at hand. This section will discuss the prevalence of these three constructs across the findings of this study, while also identifying how social media enabled the bricolage process within the specific context of Covid-19.

Baker & Nelson (2005) outline the construct of making do as the refusal to accept limitations. This construct as presented by Baker & Nelson (2005) was prevalent across the data collected within this study. It was possible to see that the majority of participants accepted the new reality created by the crisis and become resourceful in identifying new ways of operating. In many cases this involved exploring Government funding opportunities and streamlining business activity in efforts to avoid any activity that did not relate to directly increasing revenue. It therefore could be seen that many participants where operating survival strategies as opposed to competitive strategies which is reflective of work conducted by Panteno et al. (2020). However, what was noteworthy within this study was that although making do could be identified as a construct in its own right, in most cases making do was exhibited by engaging in Baker & Nelson's (2005) further outlined behavioural constructs of combinations of resources and resources at hand. It could therefore be seen that the acts of combining resources, and utilising the resources at hand, were in fact the primary method of how participants would make do within the time of crisis. It was possible to see social media as complicit in the process of combining resources.

With the above identified, it was possible to see that many participants exhibited innovative methodologies in combining resources for new business purposes, which

was enabled by effective social media use. Baker & Nelson (2005) describe combinations of resources as the process of constructing new combinations of resources to fulfil new business purposes. Within the case of many participants, it could be seen that this new business purpose was to re-optimize or modify the existing business model in an attempt to continue trading through the crisis. Many participants used social media to re-organise and combine resources in a reactive attempt to meet the needs of the new business environment, dictated to them by the crisis. For those that could be considered crisis failures (see section 7.1.1), it was evident that such businesses were not able to effectively engage in combining resources and subsequently did not achieve the capacity to mitigate the crisis effectively. In many instances such businesses were not able to effectively use social media to find solutions to problems or opportunities. Conversely, those that could be considered crisis survivors (see section 7.1.1) were able to effectively combine resources to meet new business needs. Those that could be considered crisis thrivers (see section 7.1.1) again exhibited the ability to combine resources effectively as a form of crisis mitigation. Resource combinations included re-purposing business resources to form new business functions. This included the re-purposing of physical trading premises in response to the opportunities presented through the effective use of social media and e-commerce sales channels. In their attempt to re-optimize or transform the business into a primarily online business, many participants re-purposed stores as storage facilities where stock would be managed with regard to online sales. Furthermore, participants also re-purposed their social media accounts. Whereas a proportion of participants used social media in a non-commercially focused capacity pre-crisis, many started to use it more commercially trans-crisis. Pre-crisis participants were seen to use social media as an additional avenue for customer engagement, whereas during the crisis the use of social media became core to survival. Furthermore, what was noteworthy within the case of crisis survivors and thrivers, was that social media played an enabling role for combining resources. Social media as a resource was able to present participants with a wider range of commercial options during the crisis in addition to enabling micro-SMEs to take advantage of crisis induced opportunities. Where trading through an online medium became the sole method of survival for many participants, social media played a key part in the bricolage process where it allowed participants to market the business and maintain communication with customers.

The final construct outlined by Baker & Nelson (2005) was that of resources at hand. The authors describe resources at hand as the resources available to the business freely or cheaply. What was apparent within the study was that none of the participants had engaged in drastic outlays of financial resources in an attempt to acquire the necessary resources for survival. Instead, participants utilised the resources already available to the business or acquired resources that were indeed available at a low cost. A high proportion of the participants simply made do with the resources that they had already used pre-crisis. The most prominent resource at hand used by participants was that of social media, where participants were able to freely and cost effectively create value for the business. The use of social media enabled businesses to develop resilience by substituting pre-crisis business activity with a digital equivalent. Examples of such behaviour included marketing products. Whereas many participants primarily marketed products with the use of a shop window during the pre-crisis phase, participants could be seen to replace this behaviour with marketing through social media posts. Additionally, where participants would have previously communicated with customers in a face-to-face fashion during the pre-crisis phase, participants used social media as their primary communication mechanism trans-crisis.

7.2: Consulting the Research Questions

Chapter section 7.1 presented a discussion of the findings of this research in relation to previous research. This chapter section revisits the research questions presented within chapter section 3.3.5, presenting how the findings of this research answers each question. Table 7.1 outlined the research questions developed for the purpose of this research. Each of the research questions presented within Table 7.1 will be consulted within the following chapter sections.

Table 7.1: Research Questions

Research Question 1	Does social media experience differentiate effective social media use from ineffective social media use for the purpose of developing resilience during a fundamental crisis?
Research Question 2	Which social media platforms best supports bricolage activity for resilience purposes across the trans-crisis phase of fundamental crisis within retail SMEs?
Research Question 3	Which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for resource bricolage activities in the face of fundamental crisis?
Research Question 4	Which retail SME capabilities can be developed by using social media as an enabler of bricolage?

7.2.1: Research Question 1

Research question 1 was developed so that the role of social media experience could be more clearly understood. Covid-19 can be understood as a fundamental crisis where the crisis is difficult to predict and difficult to impact at a business level. The need for previous social media experience is therefore an important consideration if social media is to be considered as an enabler of resilience to this type of crisis. As such research question 1 was developed as stated below:

RQ1: Does social media experience differentiate successful social media use from unsuccessful social media use for the purpose of developing resilience during a fundamental crisis?

Previous social media research can be seen to be researched as part of the wider ICT body of knowledge, where the use of the technology is well documented as supporting SME performance (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Ainin et al., 2015). Such performance benefits include enhanced communication with customers, and increased marketing capabilities (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). The recognition of commercial social media benefits within an SME context has led to a research interest in the antecedence of social media adoption (see section 3.2.3). Such research has identified that both the organisational and environmental context significantly influence the adoption of social

media (Schaupp & Bélanger, 2019; Alsharji et al., 2018). For the purposes of this research, it was important to further understand the relationship between social media experience and successful outcomes within a Covid-19 crisis context, and to evaluate if social media experience was a determining factor of success.

From the rich data collected within this study, it was apparent that a range of social media experience existed across participating businesses. Some participants had extensive social media experience while others had very limited experience. The findings from this study suggest that extensive social media experience did not determine the success of social media applications as a form of developing resilience. It was evident that in some cases, those with little social media experience were able to develop more successful responses than those with extensive experience. It could be identified that social media experience did not determine the outcomes of resilience responses as many of the functionalities used by participants were very basic, where complex social media applications were not applied. For example, participants did not engage in highly sophisticated applications of social media such as manipulating algorithms or following marketing campaign tactics. Instead, the majority of participants simply used social media platforms by way of constructing posts about products and services, and shearing information about the business. As such, it could be determined that any social media experience beyond a basic understanding of the technology, was not identified as providing participants with an added advantage when using the technology to create resilience responses.

In contrast however, it was apparent that business experience positively influenced the ability of owner managers to use social media for resilience purposes. Owner managers with the most extensive business experience clearly demonstrated the ability to use social media more effectively for the purposes of developing resilience responses. It was possible to identify that this was because in most cases owner managers were able to successfully apply their previously accrued business acumen and knowledge to social media resilience responses. For example, it was apparent that those owner managers that had extensive experience of marketing products pre-crisis, were able to apply their marketing knowledge to the application of social media trans-crisis. Furthermore, many experienced owner managers were able to demonstrate an in-depth understanding of their customer audience and target market,

and as such were able to apply the capabilities of the technology more effectively (social media capabilities discussed in detail within section 7.2.4).

To summarise, it is therefore possible to identify that extensive social media experience did not differentiate effective social media use from ineffective social media use. Rather, it was more apparent that extensive business experience enabled the successful application of social media to create successful resilience responses, where business knowledge and acumen had been accrued. This therefore allowed novice social media users to apply social media, for the purposes of resilience.

7.2.2: Research Question 2

Research question 2 was developed to better understand the role of platform specific functionality for the purposes of resource bricolage activity. With a breadth of social media platforms in existence it was important to establish the most popular platforms adopted by participants, and to assess their capabilities and parameters. Research question 2 can be seen below.

RQ2: Which social media platforms best supports bricolage activity for resilience purposes across the trans-crisis phase of fundamental crisis within retail SMEs?

Where social media positively influences SME performance, it is possible to see that the technology allows for greater cost-efficiencies and increased capacity for interactivity (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Odoom et al., 2017). The opportunities offered by social media are well documented, where social media offers increased marketing opportunities, better customer relationship management and increased information searching abilities (Jones, 2010; Hensel & Deis, 2010; Ahmad et al., 2018; Naudé et al., 2014). However, what is less understood within current research is that of platform specific functionality. For the purpose of this research it was therefore important to understand the functionality of various social media platforms and determine those that hold a propensity to support bricolage activity during the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis.

From the richness of data collected within this thesis, it was possible to identify a spectrum of social media platforms used by participating businesses. These included WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Snapchat. However, it was apparent that Facebook and Instagram were the most heavily adopted for resilience purposes by a considerable margin. The heavy adoption of these platforms was primarily due to the fact that participating businesses perceived these as the most effective for reaching their customers. Generally, it was apparent that both platforms offered participants the opportunities to create resilience, where neither emerged as superior over one another. Instead, the effectiveness of each platform was dependent on the activities the businesses were trying to conduct and the customer demographic. Instagram was frequently cited by participants as having good visual qualities. Participants would express that the visual qualities of Instagram meant that it was very effective in marketing and selling products. The 'stories' functionality of Instagram was also reported as being useful, adding to the commercial capability of the platform. Instagram was cited as being highly effective for targeting younger customer audiences within the context of the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. The findings did however reveal a negative characteristic of Instagram where it was reported that the success of its usage was often determined by the number of followers already following the page. Within some cases this therefore limited the application on Instagram for resilience responses, if the retail micro-SME had a low volume of followers' pre-crisis. Further to discussions around Instagram, the findings also revealed the usefulness of Facebook as a platform. Participants reported how Facebook was highly efficient at targeting older audiences. Additionally, participants also reported that Facebook harnessed more interaction with customers, where customers were more prepared to engage with posting comments and communicating.

In summary, it was possible to see that both Instagram and Facebook emerged as the most useful social media platforms, allowing retail micro-SMEs to create successful resilience responses. It can be seen that although both platforms proved useful for participants, the degree of success experienced with the adoption of the platforms was mainly contingent on business specific characteristics and the customer audience.

7.2.3: Research Question 3

Research question 3 was developed to more effectively understand the role of resources within the bricolage process. Although the research aim evaluates the enabling ability of social media for the bricolage process, it is important to understand if there are any crucial resources that might be applicative to the implementation of bricolage within times of fundamental crisis. Therefore, research question 3 was constructed as stated below:

RQ3: Which retail SME resources can be considered crucial for resource bricolage activities in the face of fundamental crisis?

Although the construction of situationally specific resources can be seen as a method of creating resilience responses to crisis (Lauridan & Demil, 2022), the resources necessary for the successful implementation of bricolage is poorly researched. Only a limited body of research can be seen to examine the role of resources within the context of crisis, where financial and operational slack are the most prevalently identified as supporting resilience (Marczyk et al. 2023; Tognazzo et al. 2022; Schäffer, 2020). Further research has identified the supporting role of relational resources for resilience, however research within this area remains limited (Hartel & Latemore, 2011). Research identifying the supporting role of technological resources for resilience is also under researched (Andersson et al., 2020). Therefore, it was the intention of this thesis to expand academic discourse within this area by further investigating the crucial resources for bricolage within the context of fundamental crisis.

From the rich data collected within this study, it was apparent that a wide variety of resources were used by participants. It was possible to identify that financial resources were frequently called upon by participants as a form of developing resilience responses. Most notably, liquid capital (cash at bank) was most frequently cited as of value within the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. Participants reported the use of liquid capital as providing the flexibility to purchase new equipment that was conducive to mitigating the effects of this crisis. Such equipment included personal protective equipment and similar items. Further discussions with participants also revealed that liquid capital provided participants with added psychological security

during the time of crisis, providing peace of mind and alleviating anxiety. In addition to discussions around the role of financial resource it was also possible see participants advocate the role of digital resources. Websites were cited as supportive towards creating resilience responses, where participants identified websites as providing the flexibility to modify the business model. In most cases, such flexibility was derived by providing the ability to sell products and services online, without the need of a store. Although this thesis aims to identify the role of effective social media use as an enabler of resilience, it was also possible to identify that social media was a crucial resource for resilience. Without access to social media, the ability to effectively use social media to create resilient responses would not have been possible. Participants could also be seen to use social media in tandem with a website, where social media was used to channel sales towards the website. It was therefore possible to see that websites also formed an important recourse for retail micro-SMEs, within the face of fundamental crisis.

Additional resources that were listed as crucial included that of the physical store premises. Although many participants were forced to close their stores as a result of Government legislative changes, many participants still found value within their business premises. This included using the physical store as a storage facility for fulfilling online orders. Participants also believed that the physical store still provided marketing value during the Covid-19 lockdowns as it reminded customers that the business was still operating. What was noteworthy was that many participants also believed that the physical store premises supported the bounce back of the business as the trans-crisis phase of the crisis came to an end and lockdowns eased. In addition to financial, digital, and physical resources, it was also possible to see participants cite the value of human resources. This included discussions around the importance of previous operational experience of running the business, a composite of business experience. Volunteers were reported as valuable as they provided additional support to the business without the need for financial outlay. Finally, it was also noted that participants went beyond the resource pool of the business and also reached into their personal resources. This included the use of personal vehicles to develop the capability of performing home deliveries to customers.

In summary, it was possible to identify a range of resources used by participants to create resilience responses. Such resources could be attributed to the groups of financial, physical, technological and human resources. Although financial resources were most frequently cited as valuable towards creating resilience responses, it was not possible to identify one resource that could be seen as the most crucial resource. Instead, it was identifiable that bricolage – and subsequently resilience – was derived by uniquely constructing a situationally specific set of resources that supported the needs of the business, in response to the forces generated by the crisis.

7.2.4: Research Question 4

The final research question identified was that of research question 4. The intention of research question 4 was to identify the business capabilities developed through the use of social media, which ultimately enabled participating businesses to derive resilience through bricolage. Research question 4 can be seen below:

RQ4: Which retail SME capabilities can be developed by using social media as an enabler of bricolage?

Previous research can be seen to identify a range of business capabilities that are enabled by social media. Such capabilities include that of effective marketing as presented by Cant (2016), who identifies the cost advantages for using social media marketing within SMEs over traditional methods. Furthermore, Shih et al. (2014) point to the advantage of using social media within SMEs as a method of increasing brand visibility. Further examples of capability development through social media include that of increased networking opportunities (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Wang et al. (2017) find that social media enabled SMEs to foster larger business networks, where Kaur & Gera (2017) find that social media also supports the crowdfunding activities of SMEs. However, what is noteworthy within previous research is that social media can also be applied in order to acquire business resources. Sigfusson & Chetty (2013) find that social media enabled the identification and acquisition of the necessary resources needed to internationalise. Furthermore, Guha et al. (2018) also found that social media can outweigh resource constraint within SMEs. With such research identifying

the enabling role of social media for capability development, it was important to understand social media capability development within a crisis context.

From the data collected within this study it was possible to identify a range of capabilities developed using social media. Principally, it was apparent that such capabilities enabled businesses to enact business model optimisations and transformations, allowing for retail micro-SMEs to develop resilience responses. The capabilities developed by participants could be seen to take a variety of forms. This included the capability of communicating with customers. At a time where participating businesses were enacting considerable business changes, social media allowed for changes to be communicated to customers cheaply and effectively. It was also possible to see social media provide the capability of communicating with business stakeholders. This included communicating with suppliers, where social media replaced pre-crisis structures. Furthermore, it was also possible to identify that participants utilise the marketing capabilities of social media during the trans-crisis phase of the crisis. Previous to the Covid-19 crisis, many participants described their shop window as their primary marketing tool. It was apparent that during the crisis social media platforms became the primary marketing tool used by participants to effectively market products to customers, which in turn increased the viability of the business also. In addition to providing communication and marketing capabilities, social media also allowed participants to manage customer service in a Covid-19 compliant manner. This included using the one-to-one messenger features of the platforms by way of dealing with customer queries and concerns.

In summary, it was apparent that participants perceived social media as a key resource that supported their ability to create a resilience response to the crisis. A high majority of participants acknowledged social media as a primary resource that enabled resilience, where it was able to provide participants the capabilities that allowed for the optimisation or transformation of the business model in response to the crisis. Social media allowed participants to develop the capabilities of communicating with customers, marketing products and services, and managing customer service. Social media can therefore be seen as a valuable resource that allowed retail-micro SMEs to develop these crucial business capabilities during the crisis. Without the critical role of

social media, in many cases it would not have been possible for participants to develop the resilience responses identified as part of this study.

7.3: Re-Visiting the Conceptual Framework

With each research question robustly answered, it is now possible to re-visit the conceptual framework, where it can be informed empirically by the findings of this study. This chapter will firstly contrast the themes identified within the conceptual framework against the themes identified within the finds of the study, before then revising the conceptual framework.

7.3.1: Comparison of Conceptual Themes and Empirical Themes

The conceptual framework presented within section 3.3.4 formed the basis of this study and outlined 12 themes. These themes were framed across the trans-crisis phase of a crisis and took a business level perspective. This was done to reflect the business level unit of analysis applied within this study. The 11 themes presented within the conceptual framework are listed within Table 7.2 below.

Table 7.2: Themes from the Conceptual Framework

Themes
<p><i>Present within the External Environment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fundamental Crisis ▪ Support Mechanisms ▪ Crisis Generated Forces (indirect) ▪ Crisis Generated Forces (direct)
<p><i>Present within the Business</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Ability to Effectively use Social Media ▪ Resources at Hand ▪ Resource Bricolage ▪ Solution to Problems or Opportunities ▪ Business Model Optimisation ▪ Failure ▪ Resilience ▪ Organisational learning

Further to the presentation of themes within the conceptual framework, data was collected and analysed accordingly, where a thematic map was developed

representing the findings of the study (see section 5.1.2). The findings are represented by 4 themes of which there were 14 sub-themes. The themes identified, in addition to their respective sub-themes can be seen within Table 7.3 below.

Table 7.3: Themes Developed from the Empirical Findings

Themes
<p><i>Owner Manager Background</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Business Experience ▪ Crisis Management Experience ▪ Social Media Experience
<p><i>Pre-Crisis Business Model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-crisis Social Media Use ▪ Pre-crisis Business Model Characteristics ▪ Pre-crisis Business Performance
<p><i>Trans-Crisis Business Model</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trans-Crisis Social Media Use ▪ Resource Bricolage Theory ▪ Trans-Crisis Business Performance ▪ External Crisis Forces ▪ Support Mechanisms
<p><i>Post-Crisis Reflections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Crisis Learnings ▪ Future Resilience Considerations

When contrasting the conceptual and empirical themes it was possible to identify both similarities and differences. This chapter section will now discuss these similarities and differences so that a revised framework can be developed, informed by empirical evidence.

The first theme identified within the conceptual framework is that of a fundamental crisis, where a fundamental crisis is defined as a difficult to predict and difficult to impact crisis (see sections 2.1.2 and 3.3.4). From the empirical findings of this study, it is possible to support this conceptual theme and identify that Covid-19 could indeed be classified as a fundamental crisis, where participants were not able to predict the crisis or impact externally derived crisis generated forces. Furthermore, the conceptual

theme of support mechanisms could also be supported by the empirical findings of this study. Support structures were conceptualised as structures that support SMEs during times of crisis (see section 3.3.4). The findings from this study identify that retail micro-SMEs made benefit from several support mechanism during the Covid-19 crisis, included emotional support from family and friends and more formalised crisis specific financial relief funds. Within the external environment the conceptual framework also outlines the theme of crisis generated forces, where crisis generated forces are differentiated into direct and indirect forces. From the empirical themes identified within the findings of this study it was not possible to differentiate crisis forces in this way. Instead, it was evident that the direct and indirect components of crisis forces were indistinguishable, where often these would be the same force acting upon the owner manager and business concurrently.

Of those forces acting within the business, it was again possible to identify both similarities and differences across conceptual and empirical themes. The ability to effectively use social media was identified as a conceptual theme. This theme emerged within the data collected where effective social media use was identified as enabling resource bricolage. Furthermore, resources at hand were also identified within the empirical data as a pertinent enabler of bricolage. The conceptual theme of resource bricolage itself, was again prevalent within the empirical data. It was evident from the data collected that participants engaged in a range of bricolage activity in an effort to develop a resilience response to the Covid-19 crisis. The conceptual theme of solutions to problems or opportunities could also be validated by empirical findings. However, what was noteworthy within the empirical data was the extent of opportunity that was available to some participants. Whereas the conceptual theme was based upon literature that primarily suggested the use of bricolage as a method of addressing solutions to business problems, the empirical data more strongly indicated the use of bricolage to adapt to opportunity. The conceptual theme of business model optimisation was also extended by the empirical findings. It was evident that many participating businesses went beyond optimising the business model and indeed transformed the business model. This was signified by more radical alterations to how the business traded products and services, where often a complete shift in business practices was identified. The conceptual themes of failure and resilience could be seen to be extended by the empirical findings. Although it was possible to see participants

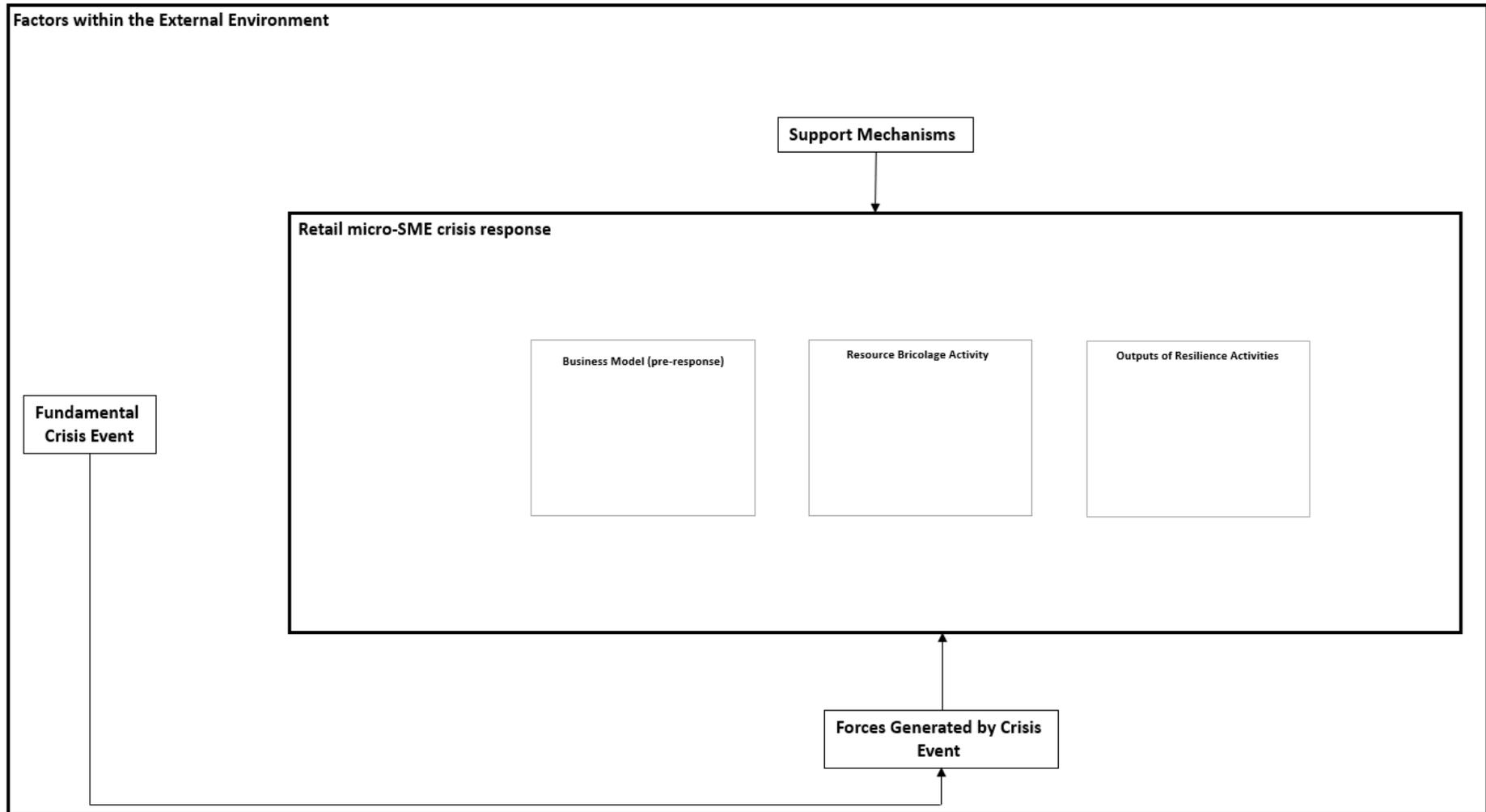
become resilient or fail, it was apparent that this was not a dichotomy. Resilience was more nuanced, where a range of resilience was observable. Instead, it was identifiable that participating businesses either failed, survived or thrived during the crisis. Previous literature had not identified the ability of retail micro-SMEs to thrive within times of fundamental crisis (see section 2.3). Finally, the conceptual framework presented the theme of organisational learning as a conceptual theme. From the data collected within this study it was possible to validate this theme, where participants exhibited the ability to reflect upon the crisis and create learning that they perceived to be of value for future crises.

7.3.2: An Empirically Informed Framework

With the conceptual and empiric themes discussed, it is possible to revisit the conceptual framework and implement empirically informed revisions. The original conceptual framework was structured in a way where it considered the forces acting upon the business during the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. The framework was presented in a way where it adopted a business level perspective, where forces could be considered both externally and internally. After analysing the data collected it is possible to identify that the approach of structuring the framework in this way is valid. As such, these characteristics of the framework do not require amendment and will remain unchanged.

When understanding the external environment, it is possible to identify that the themes of fundamental crisis and support mechanisms should remain unchanged. As stated within section 7.3.1 there was sufficient data to support these themes. The theme of crisis generated forces differentiating indirect and direct forces should however be revised. This research did not find sufficient data to support the notion that forces can be differentiated within this way. As such, this theme should be adjusted to encompass crisis generated forces singularly. It is therefore possible to see that after completing empirically informed revisions, the forces acting within the external environment should be as outlined within Figure 7.1.

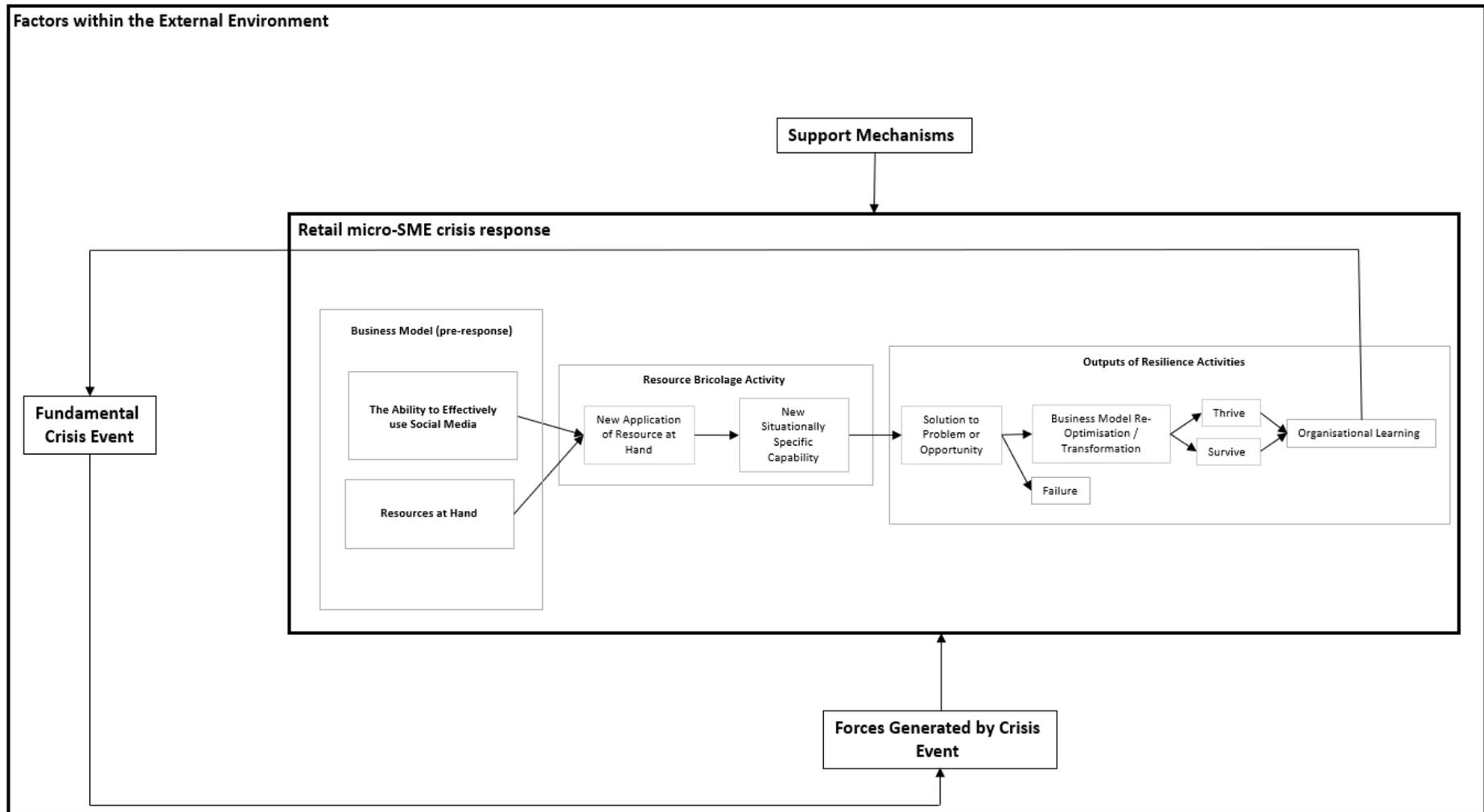
Figure 7.1: Forces Present within the External Environment



When consulting the internal crisis forces it is possible to identify that the conceptual theme entitled the ability to effectively use social media was supported empirically. From the data collected it was possible to identify that effective social media use did indeed enable the successful implementation of bricolage. Furthermore, the conceptual theme of resources at hand was also supported empirically by the findings of this study. Therefore, this theme also requires no amendment. In addition to the aforementioned themes, the conceptual theme of bricolage could also be validated using the rich data collected, and as such this theme requires no revision.

The greatest area of change within the framework is with that of the themes that can be represented by the label, Resource Bricolage Activity and Outputs of Resilience Activity. Through an examination of previous research, it was possible to identify bricolage as a business activity that allowed small businesses to mitigate crises. However, through this research it has been possible to understand the activity of bricolage more deeply. Through the analysis of the data collected, it was possible to see that social media allowed for new applications of the resources participating businesses had to hand. The new application of these resources subsequently allowed participating businesses to develop new situationally specific capabilities which presented solutions to problems or opportunities. In terms of the aspect of the framework labelled Outputs of Resilience Activity, conceptually it was determined that the bricolage process would directly enable solutions to problems and opportunities. Although this was empirically verified, the bricolage process enabled retail micro-SMEs to achieve more than simply re-optimize the business model. Instead, it was possible to identify that some participants were able to transform the business model by applying bricolage. This in turn allowed many participating businesses not only to survive, but in some cases to thrive during the crisis. It is however worth noting, that the conceptual theme of failure was identified across participants. The final conceptual theme presented within the framework is that of organisational learning. From the empirical findings of this thesis, it was also possible to validate this theme, where a significant majority of participants exhibited learnings from the crisis. With the above alterations identified, it is possible to present a revised framework that is empirically tested using the empirical findings of this study. This framework is presented in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2: Final Empirically Tested Framework



7.4: Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has provided a comprehensive discussion of how the findings of this research have informed previous research. Section 7.1 delineated how the findings of this research informed key bodies of knowledge that were examined within the literature review. Furthermore, this section was able to illustrate the presence of Baker & Nelson's (2005) three constructs of bricolage, identifying the enabling role of social media. Section 7.2 proceeded to provide robust answers to each research question, by consequence illustrating how this study fulfilled the research aim set out in section 1.4. In light of the discussion of section 7.1 and 7.2, section 7.3 then revisited the conceptual framework, where the framework could be informed empirically. This chapter section produced an empirically informed framework, based upon the findings from this research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The intention of this chapter is to conclude upon the extensive research undertaken as part of this thesis. Previous chapters have presented the literature review, methodology, findings, and discussion aspects of this research. This chapter will now summarise the findings of this research, highlight the contribution to knowledge, identify the limitations of this research, and suggest potential future research avenues. The chapter concludes with reflections from the researcher.

8.1: Summary of Key Findings

This research set out to evaluate the propensity of effective social media use as a key enabler for resource bricolage activities within retail micro-SMEs, so that organisational resilience can be developed to fundamental crisis. Upon construction of this research aim, subsequent research objectives were identified (see section 1.4). Penultimately these research objectives were operationalised into research questions (see section 3.3.5), where a robust methodological process was enacted to collect and analyse data in fulfilment of answering these questions. This thesis has robustly presented answers to these questions within section 7.2. This research as such produced several notable findings, most prominently that it could be identified that resilience was determined by four key factors. These factors included the effective use of social media use, owner manager business experience, externally derived crisis forces and access to support mechanisms. It was prevalent that these four factors determined resilience, where participants could be classified within one of three resilience categories; those that failed, survived or thrived.

The effective use of social media was intrinsically important towards resilience. It was apparent that all participants needed to perform bricolage to at least a marginal degree, with most implementing transformational changes to the business model. When implementing such changes, effective social media use enabled participants to communicate business changes with customers, where face-to-face communication was not possible. This positivity contributed to participants ability to perform business changes in response to the crisis situation. In addition to acting as a communication

method with customers, social media also enabled sales and marketing activity across the trans-crisis phase, where participants could attract customers towards a website.

In addition to the important role of effective social media use, it was also possible to identify the important role of business experience. Those most resilient had often been established longer, and as such had more knowledgeable owner managers with more experience of hardship. The experience of long-established owner managers often proved an important resource to call upon during the crisis. It was evident that experienced owner managers were able to apply their business knowledge and skills to the application of social media, where they could develop resilience responses through bricolage. It was therefore possible to see that owner manager experience was a key resource within the bricolage process. Furthermore, the research found that extensive business experience interceded effective social media use more so than social media experience. It was apparent that any social media experience beyond a simple understanding of the technology did not increase the capacity of businesses to effectively use social media when creating resilient responses. This was because the use of social media by retail micro-SMEs rarely proceeded beyond the technology's basic functionalities. As such, it was the commercial awareness of owner managers (harnessed through experience), that most influenced their ability to use social media commercially for the benefit of the business.

A further determinant of resilience was that of externally derived crisis forces. Such forces included changes in Government legislation, retailing business type and market changes. It was identified that during the trans-crisis phase of the crisis, changes in Government legislation played a pivotal role in the experience of retail micro-SME's response to the crisis. Many experienced forced changes, where they had to close their physical premises by law. Meanwhile, others were able to remain trading with a very similar method to the pre-crisis phase, with the exception of small optimisations. An antecedent factor that heavily determined the effect of Government policy changes on participants was in many cases the retailing type of the business. Those that sold non-essential retail product types were forced to close by law, where businesses selling essential retailing product types could remain trading. However, what was noteworthy within the findings of the study was that wider market changes also influenced the resilience of retail micro-SMEs. Many participants saw dramatic changes in the

shopping habits of customers, where many customers chose to purchase different product types in comparison to the pre-crisis phase. This key finding was demonstrated mainly within the context of non-essential retail businesses. In many cases, such changes in market conditions presented opportunity for participants where they were able to take advantage of such changes in conditions and drive revenue through the business. However, conversely within cases where participants could not adapt to selling the different product types requested by customers, the change in market conditions compounded the negative effect of being defined as a business selling non-essential retailing products. It was again noteworthy, that the ability to use social media effectively played a key role within participant's ability to implement business changes (through bricolage) in response to market changes. It was evident social media either provided a clear foundation to perform business changes successfully or mitigated the negative effects of market changes to a tolerable degree.

The final determinant of resilience was that of access to support mechanisms. It was apparent from the data collected that many participants called upon a variety of support mechanisms as a method of securing the survival of the business. These support mechanisms ranged from emotional support from family and friends to financial support offered by Government. It was determined that access to Government funding was a key determinant of resilience where newly established businesses could not attain Government funding support. Such businesses could be seen as those who had been established for less than 3 years. All participants that had been trading for less than 3 years subsequently failed, highlighting the detrimental effect of non-attainment of financial support. In the case of those who successfully attained Government funding, it was apparent that funding played a key role in limiting business losses and maintaining a state of functioning that was temporarily sustainable across the trans-crisis phase. In most cases businesses who could be classified as survivors were more reliant on financial support from Government than those who could be classified as thrivers. Those who could be classified as thrivers were much less reliant on support mechanisms, and in some cases did not receive any financial support. This was because such businesses were able to harvest resilience internally within the business.

8.2: Thesis Contribution to Knowledge

Within the findings of this research, it was possible to identify two substantive contributions to knowledge. From these contributions, one can be considered contextual, where the remaining contribution can be considered theoretical. This chapter section outlines these contributions before then outlining the studies implications for policy and practice, limitations and future research.

8.2.1: Contextual Contribution

Contextually this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge by extending the understanding of UK micro-SME behaviour across the trans-crisis phase of a fundamental crisis. Previous SME crisis literature (see section 2.3) has taken a limited size specific focus where many studies do not define the classification of SMEs (cf. Doern, 2016; Herbane, 2019; Brown et al., 2022). Instead, such studies investigate the crisis experience of small businesses using the blanket term of SME (see section 2.3). This has limited the focus of previous research where size specific (i.e., micro, small and medium) business behaviours during times of crisis have not been explored sufficiently. This research therefore contributes to this meaningful gap within research, providing an understanding of the unique behaviours of micro-SMEs across the trans-crisis phase of a crisis.

Furthermore, previous research has not specifically investigated the experience of retail micro-SMEs during a time of crisis to any meaningful magnitude (see section 3.1.4). Small business crisis research does not sufficiently focus on the sectoral differences between SMEs. Therefore, retail specific behaviours are poorly understood within the context of crisis. This thesis contributes to previous research by making a specific contribution to this prevalent gap in the research, where the behaviour of retail micro-SMEs during crisis is explored. Moreover, previous SME research has not sufficiently explored the experience of retail micro-SMEs specifically within the context of a fundamental crisis, where a fundamental crisis can be characterised as a crisis that is difficult to predict and impact at a business level (Gundel, 2005). This research therefore makes a precise contribution to knowledge by understanding how retail micro-SMEs experience fundamental crises specifically.

8.2.2: Theoretical Contribution

Further to the contextual contribution identified within section 8.2.1 this thesis also makes a theoretical contribution to previous research concerning resource bricolage. Resource bricolage receives much precedent within current research as an effective method for mitigating the implications of crisis events (cf. Bivona & Cruz, 2021; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Kwong et al., 2019; Gilbert-Saad et al., 2018). However, what is absent from previous research is a focus on how bricolage can be enabled within a time of crisis (see section 3.3.2). This thesis extends bricolage theory by firstly identifying that bricolage can indeed be enabled. Furthermore, the research identified effective social media use specifically as an enabler of bricolage. This research established that by using social media effectively participants could develop the capacity to demonstrate the three constructs of Baker & Nelson's (2005) bricolage, namely making do, combining resources and resources at hand. Effective social media use enabled the bricolage process by providing participants with the facility to support business change using an online medium, in response to crisis generated forces. It was further identified that bricolage also allowed participants to capitalise on crisis generated opportunities.

8.2.3: Implications for Practice

While this research carries important implications for current crisis research, it also carries important implications for managerial practices within retail micro-SMEs. Previously the enabling ability of bricolage was poorly understood, meaning the critical link of understanding the practical implementation of bricolage was absent from academic research. This research has identified effective social media use as holding a propensity for enabling the bricolage process. This is exhibited within the thesis by demonstrating that effective social media use enables retail micro-SMEs to develop new combinations of resources to form new capabilities in response to problems or opportunities created by the crisis.

Within the findings of this research, it is possible to identify the practical steps required to implement bricolage within practice. This thesis would recommend that retail micro-SMEs adopt social media platforms as part of the business's commercial strategy. The effective use of social media can allow retail micro-SMEs to develop strong communication channels with customers, which can prove useful in times of crisis

where changes might need to be made to the business. Furthermore, using social media effectively can enable retail micro-SMEs to re-orientate the business towards selling through alternative sales channels such as a website if required through a period of crisis. This thesis does, however, illustrate that a physical store still holds value across the trans-crisis stage. Not only does the store serve as a useful asset that can be used as part of a bricolage response, but it is also important for bouncing back as the crisis comes to an end. This thesis therefore suggests that practitioners should maintain a duality to the business model where it has both strong online and offline sales channels.

By implementing the above, this research identified that effective social media use enables retail micro-SMEs to develop flexibility when reacting to crisis forces. Such flexibility was seen to allow retail micro-SMEs to develop new market propositions for customers while also selling through new sales mediums. As such, retail micro-SMEs were able to change the way they marketed, sold and communicated with customers. With the bricolage enabling ability of social media identified, this research suggests to practitioners that they should implement effective social media use into their businesses by way of optimising their crisis management practices.

8.2.4: Implications for Policy

In addition to the implications for practice presented within section 8.2.5, this thesis also offers implications for policy. This research has evaluated the impact of fundamental crisis upon retail micro-SMEs, identifying the contributory factors to organisational resilience. It is apparent that several of these contributory factors are controlled or influenced by Government and as such this research provides insight to the role of Government with regard to organisational resilience. From the findings of this study, it is possible to identify that Government initiatives intended to provide financial support for retail businesses where for the most part of great value to participants. However, it was also possible to identify some cases where these initiatives were discriminatory of businesses that were younger in age, specifically under the age of 3 years old. This research can therefore inform Governmental policy by identifying that in the case of future crises, support initiatives should be considerate to those businesses that are younger in age. Furthermore, this research also identified the effect of introducing essential and non-essential retail legislation. This research

identified that the implementation of such legislation over a short time frame created significant challenges for retail micro-SMEs, where many were forced to close their physical retailing premises. This research can therefore inform future retailing policy by identifying that retail micro-SMEs should receive further support when Governments implement radical legislation with such substantive effects.

Finally, this research can also inform policy by exemplifying the supporting role of social media for developing business resilience. With social media's well documented role as an enabler of bricolage, and consequently resilience, this research advocates the need for social media access for UK retail micro-SMEs. Findings from this research suggest that Government should actively ensure that retail micro-SMEs are socially included within relevant Government initiatives that might bolster retail micro-SME access to social media. This can also include initiatives on reducing the digital divide which aims to ensure fair access to high-speed internet accords the country. Furthermore, this research would suggest Government also invest in projects and programmes which can be aimed at providing retail micro-SMEs with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge that might increase their ability to use social media effectively.

8.2.5: Study Limitations and Future Research

Although this study applied a rigorous research process it was also constrained by several limitations. Firstly, the study solely adopted Covid-19 as an example of a fundamental crisis. Although this in part contributes to the contextual contribution to knowledge outlined within section 8.2.1, it does also constrain the study. Covid-19 as a crisis is highly unique and as such is unlikely to share many similarities with other fundamental crisis, other than the predictability and impactability aspects, as characterised by Gundel (2005). As such, it is only possible to see Covid-19 as an example of a fundamental crisis which cannot stand representative of all future fundamental crises in all regards. It would therefore be logical to conduct future research within different crisis contexts where such research could further inform the findings of this research.

The second limitation identified is that of the fact that this research occupied a single focus on the retail sector. Although this allowed for great depth within the data collection and analysis elements of this research, it did limit the scope of the research by

excluding the experience of micro-SMEs from other sectors. Further research could therefore be conducted within additional sectors to further understand the sectorial differences in the experience of micro-SMEs across the trans-crisis phase of the Covid-19 crisis. Such sectors could include the manufacturing sector and hospitality sectors as sectors of interest.

Finally, while this research gathered a richness of data by adopting a cross-sectional research methodology, a longitudinal design could also be applied. This study collected data from the pre-crisis phase and trans-crisis phase predominantly. Although some data was collected from the post-crisis phase, the extent of this data was not sufficient to perform post-crisis comparisons. This was principally because of the data collecting timeframe. In some respects, this limits the research as it does not capture the long-term effects of the Covid-19 crisis for retail micro-SMEs. Therefore, future research could include revisiting the participants of this study within a sensible time frame to evaluate the organisational resilience of participants over the longer term.

8.3: Reflecting on the PhD Process

Upon completing the writing of the PhD thesis, the researcher undertook a rich reflective process to capitalise upon learning from the experience. The researcher who undertook this research is an early career researcher, who is currently trying to enhance their practice to further develop the academic skills required for an academic career. As the final chapter section of this thesis, this chapter section encloses the reflections of the researcher.

8.3.1: Reflective Account from the Researcher

I began the PhD process under what could be termed unconventional circumstances. The Covid-19 crisis was very much in full swing, where as a student I began studying for the PhD remotely from home. Although looking back this does not sound particularly challenging, at that point in time the idea of studying from home was very new to me, especially because my previous degree had not included any virtual elements. Furthermore, I was also approaching a research-intensive academic qualification for the first time, as I had not previously completed a Master's degree. My lack of a Master's degree presented itself as a sizable barrier within the early stages of the PhD,

as I considered myself to be at a large disadvantage. I had managed to convince myself that I did not hold the knowledge and skills required to undertake the PhD, and looking back now, I was right. I vividly remember meeting with my supervisory team for the first time and becoming filled with doubt in my ability to complete what lay ahead. I remember the content of the meeting included a discussion about the development of the literature review, of which at that time I did not understand its utility.

The consequence of the above was that I set myself the objective to acquire the skills and knowledge required as quickly as possible. I spent the first three months of the process intensively working towards the attainment of the skills needed to be successful within the PhD process. This culminated into working very long hours daily to build my understanding of the core elements of the PhD process, that would eventually allow for the completion of this monumental challenge. After the first three months of the process, I had managed to produce an early draft of my first literature review chapter. This was a turning point within my Postgraduate experience, where thereafter I began to build confidence within my academic ability. Later that year, I went on to achieve a best paper in track award at an established national conference which further boosted my confidence.

After the completion of the first year, I began to find my stride as a PhD researcher, where I started to enjoy the process. There were still several occasions where I found the PhD to be quite challenging, however with the foundational skills that I had honed within the first year, I had confidence within my ability. Each stage of the PhD presented a fresh challenge, moving from literature review, to methodology, to data collection and analysis, and finally the writing up process. Each stage felt as if I was passing through a new dimension of the research, where I experienced what could only be described as a 'knowledge reset'. I always seemed to find myself within a position where once I had mastered one element of the thesis, it was time to move onto the next.

When I reflect upon the PhD process as a whole, I look back fondly. The PhD has undoubtedly been the most challenging academic endeavour I have ever embarked upon. Within my personal experience, nothing has rivalled the all-encompassing challenge of my PhD. Although a PhD is a difficult process designed to test your academic ability to the highest level, it is also a very worthwhile process. The PhD

process has developed my academic skills far beyond what could be considered 'normal'. The skills acquired through this process will not only be of benefit within my working life, but will also be of benefit within my life in general.

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Appendices

Appendix 4.1: Similar Studies to this Research

Author	Methodology Desing	Research Instrument
Studies that consider bricolage in the context of adversity		
Martinelli et al. (2018)	Qualitative	Interviews and Focus Groups
Kuckertz et al. (2020)	Mixed methods	Interview & Archival
Kwong et al. (2019)	Qualitative	Interview
Bivona & Cruz, (2021)	Qualitative	Diary Studies
Clauss et al. (2021)	Qualitative	Case study
Purnomo et al. (2021)	Qualitative	Interview
Atarah et al. (2019)	Qualitative	Case Study
Baker & Nelson (2005)	Qualitative	Case Study
Studies that consider SME social media use within the context of crisis		
Trawnih et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Survey
Salam et al. (2021)	Mixed Methods	Interviews / Survey
Patma et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Survey
Syaifuhhal et al. (2021)	Quantitative	Survey
Robertson et al. (2022)	Quantitative	Survey
Sandburg et al. (2020)	Qualitative	Case Study

Appendix 4.2: Interview Research Instrument

Interview Questions

Pre-Interview Questionnaire:

Demographical information (to be collected before interview begins):

Owner manager age:	
Owner manager gender:	
Business location:	
Number of business partners:	
No of employees:	
Approx. annual revenue before Covid-19	
Approx. annual revenue during Covid-19	
Predicted annual revenue after Covid-19	

Section 1: Owner Manager Background

Q1: Can you first tell me a little bit about your background as a business owner?

Could you start by telling me for how long you've run your own business, and the experience you have as a business owner.

Criteria to cover:

1. *Experience as a business owner, what does that look like?*
2. *Any experience of managing in times of crisis before, Did it help with Covid-19 mitigation?*
3. *Social media experience personal / commercial?*
4. *Level of education, performance?*

Q2: Could you tell me why you decided to run your own business?

Criteria to cover:

1. *Motivations for running your own business?*
2. *What are your future ambitions for the business?*
3. *Happy with where the business is today?*

Q3: During the Covid-19 pandemic did you contract the virus, and did this have an impact on the business in any way?

Criteria to cover:

1. *Did this impact the business in any way, did they need to take any time off etc?*
2. *Any relatives contract the virus?*
3. *How did it affect them emotionally?*

Section 2: Pre-crisis Business Profile

Prompt: Ok so can you tell me about the business before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Q4: Please start by telling me about how the business operated and what products / services you sold?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Tell me about the products / services you sold?*
2. *Where did you trade?*
3. *Please explain your business model to me? (give clarification if needed)*
4. *Was the business facing any challenges, no matter how small?*
5. *If so, did this impact the ability of the firm to mitigate Covid-19? Brexit derived?*
6. *Did the business foresee a crisis like Covid-19, and did you feel you had any control or power over the impacts of the crisis? (give clarification if needed)*

Q5: How would you describe the financial performance of the business before Covid-19?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Financial reality match financial ambitions?*
2. *Revenue, profit, cash flow?*
3. *Growth. Business growing / business declining / steady?*

Q6: Could you explain how the business used social media before the Covid-19 pandemic?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Usage regularity.*
2. *Platforms used.*
3. *Business activities conducted.*

Section 3: Trans-crisis Business Profile

Prompt: I would now like to ask you questions about the business during the Covid-19 crisis, and how you coped with the crisis.

Q7: Could you outline how the Covid-19 pandemic affected your business?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *What were the key changes you made?*

2. *Did this ultimately change your business model? (give clarification if needed)*
3. *What were the 'most key' resources that enabled you to survive the Covid-19 crisis? Financial resources, human resources, physical resources. (supply list if needed)*
4. *Did the business form any new capabilities?*
5. *How did you adapt to any new legislation?*

Q8: How would you describe the financial performance of the business during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Revenue, profit, cash flow?*
2. *Financial instruments?*
3. *Growth. growth, decline, steady.*

Q9: Which sources of support were most useful during the pandemic?

Key Criteria to cover:

1. *UK Government financial support.*
2. *Financial support from family & friends.*
3. *Emotional support from family & friends.*
4. *Open source information such as books and the internet.*

Section 4: Trans-Crisis Social Media Usage

Prompt: I would now like to dig deeper into your use of social media over the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Q10: During the Covid-19 pandemic did your social media usage change?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Usage regularity*
2. *Business activities conducted*

Q11: Did the business continue to use the same social media platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic or did the business use additional platforms?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Any additional platforms*
2. *Any redundant platforms*

Q12: Could you talk me through how the business used these platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *Share company content?*
2. *Selling products and services / directing to website?*
3. *Marketing?*
4. *Communicating with customers / managing customer service?*
5. *Viewing competitor content?*
6. *Networking?*

Q13: Were there any platform(s) that you found particularly useful?

Key criteria to cover?

1. *Why was it useful?*
2. *How did it benefit the business?*

Q14: To what degree did social media play a part in the firm's ability to make changes and survive?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *What were the key capabilities that made social media so useful?*
2. *Cut costs (marketing), communication with customers (external), communicating with staff (internal), identify new business opportunities, reach a broader customer audience, sell products online, move into new markets.*

Q15: I would now like to talk about the person responsible for the business' social media account. For how long have they used social media in a personal and professional capacity?

Or,

I would now like to talk about your social media experience. For how long have you used social media in a personal and professional capacity?

Criteria to cover:

1. *How long have they been responsible for the business' social media accounts?*
2. *How do they manage the social media presence of the business?*
3. *Have they received any social media / digital marketing education or training?*

Closing Questions

Q16: Has the business made any key learnings from the Covid-19 pandemic that might benefit the business in the future?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *How have you developed as a business owner?*
2. *How would the business do things differently if presented with a 'Covid-19 like event' again?*

Q17: Overall how would you describe the Covid-19 pandemic? Did the crisis present a business opportunity or cause major disruption?

Key criteria to cover:

1. *IF opportunity; do you believe that the crisis facilitated this opportunity or created the opportunity? (give clarification if needed)*
2. *IF cause of major disruption; In hindsight looking back do you believe that there were any missed opportunities that could have been exploited? (give clarification if needed)*

Q18: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe that your business was to the Covid-19 pandemic?

Q19: How resilient / vulnerable do you believe your business is now?

Prompt: Thank you for your time, and for taking part in the interview.

Appendix 4.3: Example Email Sent to Perspective Participant

Dear [participant name],

I'm currently studying for a PhD at Swansea University focusing on the experiences of retailing businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I first became aware of your business upon reading a [newspaper name] article dedicated to the business back in May. I've been tracking the successes of your business ever since. I feel that you have a very interesting business, that has managed to create a successful brand in [location], while also supporting other businesses such as [business names]. I wondered if you would be open to being interviewed as part of my PhD?

I would be very interested in hearing your story, and your experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Anything discussed within the interview would be anonymised and protected by Swansea University's research polices. I cannot offer you a monetary incentive for taking part, however what I can say is that my PhD thesis is on track to be published in a management journal and has already won an award at a management conference. Upon publication I could provide you with a copy of the academic publication.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,



Dafydd Cotterell BSc (Hons)

Linkedin: [Dafydd Cotterell](#)

Appendix 4.4: Informed Consent Form

Informed Consent Form

Title of Research Project: Developing Organisational Resilience to Fundamental Crises: Evaluating Social Media as a Key Enabler for resilience within UK Retail SME's.

Name of Researcher: Mr Dafydd Cotterell (PhD student)

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.
3. I understand that my responses will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.
4. I agree for the data collected from me to be used for the purposes of this project
5. I agree to take part in the above research project.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

For more information please contact:

Mr Dafydd Cotterell

Email: [REDACTED]

Appendix 4.5: Ethical Approval

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, SWANSEA UNIVERSITY

FIRST STAGE ETHICAL REVIEW FORM

To be completed for all research involving human subjects OR datasets of any kind OR the environment

Name of PI or PGR Student	Dafydd John Cotterell
Staff Number or Student ID	██████████
Supervisors*	Prof Paul Jones, Dr Robert Bowen, Dr Louisa Huxtable-
Date Submitted	17 th January 2022.
Title of Project	Developing Organisational Resilience to Fundamental Crises: Evaluating Social Media as a Key Enabler for bricolage within Retail SME's.
Name of Funder / Sponsor*	Self-funded.
Finance Code / Reference*	-
Duration of Project	3 years.

Aim of research project (250 words):

The aim of this research is to evaluate the propensity of effective social media use as a key enabler for resource bricolage activities within retail SME's in order to develop organisational resilience to fundamental crisis events.

* Complete if appropriate

Risk evaluation: Does the proposed research involve any of the following?

✓ **Tick** those boxes for which the answer is **YES**

X **Cross** those boxes for which the answer is **NO**

Participants

- Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data or premises and/or equipment? If this is the case, the project **must** be reviewed by the NHS. Please see the following NHS online tools for help with this <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/> and <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/ethics/>
- Does the study involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent? (e.g. people with learning disabilities: see Mental Capacity Act 2005. All research that falls under the auspices of the Act **must** be reviewed by the NHS)
- Does the research involve other vulnerable groups: children, those with cognitive impairment or in unequal relationships? (e.g. your students). This

may require NHS review, and will typically require the researcher to get **Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) clearance** (formerly CRB checks)

- Will the research harm or pose any risk to the environment? (e.g. research in environmentally sensitive areas (e.g. SSSIs); permission needed to access field sites; transport of samples between countries (e.g. soil); sampling of rare or hazardous material (e.g. invasive species) that could deplete or endanger)

Please describe the participants involved in your research (if no participants, state 'none'): *max 250 words.*

The participants within this study will be SME owner-managers, entrepreneurs or senior business leaders within retail SME's across the UK. Retail SME staff may also become involved in this study at the case study stage.

Recruitment

- Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of self-help group or residents of nursing home?)
- Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people or use of social media content)
- Will the research involve any form of deception? (e.g. misinformation or partial information about the purpose or nature of the research)
- Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?
- Does the research involve members of the public in a research capacity? (e.g. participant research; participants as co-producers or data collectors)

Please explain the recruitment of participants involved in your research (if no participants, state 'none'): *max 250 words.*

Participants will be identified through internet presence and business directories and contacted via email to identify if they wish to participate in the study. If they consent, they will be sent a link to a survey and asked to complete the relevant sections as applicable to their business. Case study participants will be identified from participants in the original survey and contacted to identify whether they are prepared to participate in this stage of the survey. If they consent, then the data collection process of the case study stage will be explained to them via email and the process initiated.

Research Design

- Will the study discuss sensitive topics or require the collection of sensitive information? (e.g. terrorism and extremism; sexual activity, drug use or criminal activity; collection of security sensitive documents or information)
- Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?
- Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?

- Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?
- Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. foods or vitamins) to be administered to study participants, or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? (If any substance is to be administered, this **may** fall under the auspices of the Medicines for Human Use (Clinical Trials) Regulations 2004, and require review by the NHS)
- Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants? (This would fall under the terms of the Human Tissue Act 2004. All research that falls under the auspices of the Act **must** be reviewed by the NHS)

Please summarise your methodology in detail and provide reflective comments with regards to the design of your research: *max 250 words*.

This PhD thesis is a Business Management PhD. It will take the form of a mixed methods methodological design meaning that qualitative and quantitative data will be collected and analyzed. At this stage the quantitative phase is due to employ a survey research strategy. The qualitative phase at this stage is due to employ a case study research strategy. Data will be handled ethically and with integrity and with the consent of all participants. Participant anonymity will be preserved at all times.

Data Storage and anonymity

- Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate data controllers and/or individuals before use?
- Will the research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given?
- Will the research involve respondents to the Internet or other visual/vocal methods where respondents may be identified?

Please describe how you will store your research data and for how long, and, if appropriate, how you will ensure anonymity of your data subjects: *max 250 words*.

All data will be stored on personal and secure computers belonging to myself Dafydd Cotterell. This data will be kept until the end of the PhD at a minimum. It is my intention to publish this research after the completion of this PhD. Upon this merit, data will be kept past the completion date of the PhD. It is my ambition to secure an academic position of employment after the PhD has come to an end. In this event, I will be keeping the collected database of retail SME's contact details to conduct further unconnected studies in the future. The survey respondents will be identified from open source data sources. Survey and case study data respondents will be anonymized at all times either within the thesis or within any research outputs produced from the thesis.

Safety and Risk

- Has a risk assessment been completed?
- Is there a possibility that the safety of the researcher may be in question? (e.g. in international research: locally employed researchers)

- Will the research take place outside the UK where there may be issues of local practice and political or other sensitivities?
- Could the research impact negatively upon the reputation of the University, researcher(s), research participants, other stakeholders or any other party?
- Do any of the research team have an actual or potential conflict of interest?
- Are you aware of any other significant ethical risks or concerns associated with the research proposal? (If yes, please outline them in the space below)

Please describe the health and safety considerations in relation to both participants and researchers (250 words max): *If there are significant concerns an appropriate risk assessment and management plan must be attached.*

The health and safety risk for this research project is very low. A very high proportion of this thesis is office based and therefore no new risks will be encountered under these circumstances. For the purpose of conducting case studies site visits to retail SME premises is possible although current Covid regulations will be followed when the time arises. Under these circumstances health and safety law and regulations will be strictly followed.

Other significant ethical issues or concerns: (If None, then please state 'None')

None.

If any answer to the questions above is **YES**, then a **Second Stage (Full) Ethical Review** **MAY** be required.

If the project involves **none of the above**, complete the **Declaration**, send this form and a **copy of the proposal** to **Amy Jones the School of Management Research Support Officer**: [REDACTED] Research may only commence once approval has been given.

Declaration: *The project will be conducted in compliance with the University's Research Integrity Framework (P1415-956). This includes securing appropriate consent from participants, minimizing the potential for harm, and compliance with data-protection, safety & other legal obligations. Any significant change in the purpose, design or conduct of the research will be reported to the SOM-REC Chair, and, if appropriate, a new request for ethical approval will be made to the SOM-REC.*

Signature of PI or PGR Student

D COTTERELL

Signature of first supervisor (if appropriate)

W P Jones

Decision of SOM-REC			
Ethical Risk Assessment	Green <input type="checkbox"/>	Yellow <input type="checkbox"/>	Red <input type="checkbox"/>
Signature of SOM-REC Chair or SOM-REC deputy Chair			
		Date	
SOM-REC Reference number (office use only)			

Appendix 4.6: Initial Data Codes

Business Experience (low)
Business Experience (high)
Identified a Gap in the Market
Crisis Management Experience (low)
Crisis Management Experience (medium)
Crisis Management Experience (high)
Crisis Management Experience of Value
Experience of Previous Crisis Helped with the Mitigation of Covid-19
Previous Experience of Difficult Economic Conditions (Helpful)
Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (medium)
Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (high)
Social Media Training (informal)
Personal Social Media Experience (low)
Personal Social Media Experience (high)
Active Social Media User (personal)
Education (masters degree)
Education (undergraduate degree)
Usefulness of Higher Education (medium)
Usefulness of Higher Education (high)
Undergraduate Degree Skill (social media marketing)
Motivation to Start Business (freedom)
Motivation to Start Business (financial reward)
Motivation to Start Business (pride)
Motivation to Start Business (follow passion)
Ambition (to grow business)
Ambition (move away from Entrepreneurship)
Business Operates Within a Resilient Sector
Family Member Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem
Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem
Identified a Business Opportunity During the Pandemic
Initial Business Model (online only)
Business Performance at Business Conception (happy)
Significant Growth at Conception
Initial Social Media Adoption (high)
Initial Social Media Use (regular)
Business Age (very young)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (importance placed on USP)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (in store only)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (trading online only)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (online and in store)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (purchase from wholesalers)

Business Model Before Covid-19 (buy from producers)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (manufacturing on-site)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (re-investing all profits)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (flawed)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (reliant on attending in-person events)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (developed with risk in mind)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (not own brand)
Realisation that E-commerce is Important
Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships
Trading Online Lowered Barrier to Entry
Commitment to Business (medium)
Intended USP (sustainability)
Sales Channel (website)
Social Media Use (channelling sales)
Social Media Use (advertising)
Social Media Use (fear of over saturation of posts)
Social Media Use (customer service)
Social Media Use (communicating with stakeholders)
Facebook (shearing content)
Instagram (use of story function)
E-commerce Benefit (receive payment before purchasing stock)
Pre-existing Barrier (access to supplier)
Pre-existing Barrier (networking)
Pre-existing Barrier (stock availability due to Brexit)
Pre-existing Barrier (increased costs due to Brexit)
Did not Foresee Covid-19
Difficult to Impact the Covid-19 Crisis
Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (happy)
Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (unhappy)
Business Facing Financial Challenges Before the Pandemic
Growth Before Pandemic (gradual)
Cashflow Before Covid-19 (good)
Revenue Before Covid-19 (growing)
Social Media use Before Covid-19 (regularly used)
Social Media use Before Covid-19 (low)
Number of Social Media Platforms used Before Covid-19 (2)
Social Media Platform used Before Covid-19 (Facebook)
Social Media Platform used Before Covid-19 (Instagram)
Business Performance (happy)
Financial Performance (high at conception)
Business Growth (exceptional)
Attempts to Extend Product Life Cycle
Change in Products Sold

Eventually Sales Declined
Decreasing Aptitude for the Business
Inability to Develop New Products
Increased use of Social Media Towards end of Pandemic
Adds Generate Interest but Interest doesn't Convert to Sales
Initial Uncertainty
Operating in a Low Innovation Sector
Social Media Acting as a Substitute for Pre-pandemic Activity
Business Model was Vulnerable to Covid-19
Financial Transformation
Strategy (customer experience)
Strategy (customer retention)
Strategy (ease of access for customers)
Growing Pains (logistics)
Success Driver (genuine USP)
Success Driver (luck)
Brand Visibility (high due to good SEO)
Key Business Challenge (scaling up)
Key Business Challenge (cost generated by legal compliance)
Experience of Christmas Growth Helped Scaling challenges
YouTube (content creation)
YouTube (created commercial opportunity)
YouTube (lead to additional marketing opportunity)
YouTube (lead to financial reward)
YouTube (rapid dissemination of content)
Instagram Very Visual (good for marketing)
Instagram Good for Linking to Website (good for marketing)
Facebook Messenger Service (good for customer service during Covid-19)
Use of Third-party Software to Manage Social Media Account
Retail Type (essential)
Retail Type (non-essential)
Increased Growth due to Less Competition
Diversify (home delivery)
Diversify (collections)
Diversity (new products)
Diversify (difficult)
Logistical Issues due to Partners Living Across the Country
Covid-19 Presented a Missed Opportunity
Business Made Some Effort to Move Online
Business Operations Impacted
Business Encountered Adversity During Pandemic
Customer Demand decreased During the Pandemic
Making the Best of the Situation

Selling Differentiated Products (higher price)
Assumed the Same Business Model During Pandemic as Before the Pandemic (positive)
Assumed the Same Business Model During Pandemic as Before the Pandemic (negative)
Unsuccessful Effort to Make Business Change
No Business Changes Were Made
Failure Due to Bad Luck
Negative Mental Model
Not a Bad Business Idea (change in circumstance)
New Capability
Developed the Capability to Attract New Customer Base
Failure to Develop New Capabilities
Overall Failure to Adapt
Covid-19 Benefit (more time to pursue new sales method)
Covid-19 Benefit (more time to pursue renovations)
Covid-19 Government Grants (useful)
Covid-19 Government Grants (process of attainment difficult)
Covid-19 Furlough (useful)
Covid-19 Government Grants (used)
Resource (Cash at bank useful)
Resource (low debt / high equity)
Resource (access to road vehicle)
Resource (social media knowledge)
Resource (business experience)
Resource (volunteers useful)
Resource (Council Grants Better than Government Grants)
Resource (Shop as a Commercial Space for Storage)
Resource (shop as a marketing tool)
Resource (website)
Resource (staff)
Business Started Acting out of Necessity
Resilience (good customer relations)
Resilience (selling online reduced barrier)
Resilience (mental attitude)
Adaptive capacity
Vulnerable (business model)
Restrictions (caused confusion)
Brexit Adversity - Poor Stock Availability
Covid-19 Caused Loss of Opportunity
Business Became Financially Unsustainable
Financial Performance (decline during Covid-19)
Financial Performance (stayed the same during Covid-19)

Financial Performance (increase during Covid-19)
Financial Performance (huge increase during pandemic)
Managed to Retain all Business for After the Pandemic
Cashflow During Pandemic (good)
Emotional Support from Family and Friends (useful)
Emotional Support of Family and Friends (not useful)
Finding Information on Government Website (useful)
Finding Information on Government Website (difficult)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (use all platforms the same)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (change of focus)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (use generally stayed the same)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (decrease in usage)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (slight increase in usage regularity)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (notable increase in usage regularity)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (communicating)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (became essential)
Social Media Usage Regularity (decreased)
Social Media Effect (huge increase in followers)
Missed Opportunity to use Social Media
Efforts Made to Adapt (unsuccessful)
Social Media Generally (used to network)
Social Media Generally (used to view competitor content)
Social Media Generally (allowed business to attract a broader customer audience)
Social Media Generally (use platforms in same way)
Social Media Activity Fundamentally (little change during Covid-19)
New Social Media Platform Adopted During Covid-19 (no)
Social Media (added value activities)
Facebook (used for customer service during Covid-19)
Facebook (used to view competitor content during Covid-19)
Facebook (used for advertising)
Facebook (more effective than Instagram for older audience)
Facebook (more effective than Instagram for managing customer service)
Facebook (good for networking)
Facebook (directing customers to website)
Facebook (sell from directly)
Facebook (better due to groups)
Facebook (more interaction than Instagram)
Facebook (most useful platform)
Instagram (cheaper to advertise than on Facebook)
Instagram (directing customers to website)
Instagram (used for advertising)
Instagram (start additional page)
Instagram (good for managing customer service)

Instagram (good for targeting younger audience)
Instagram (view competitor content)
Instagram (sell from directly)
Instagram (reels and stories good)
Instagram (have to take photo to post) (negative)
Instagram (visual)
Instagram (best for marketing)
Instagram (most useful platform)
YouTube (most useful platform)
YouTube (used to increase brand awareness)
Twitter (not useful)
Social Media Played a Part in Firm Survival
Social Media Allowed the Firm to Thrive as Opposed to Survive
Key Social Media Capability (advertise to large audience)
key Social Media Capability (identify new business opportunity)
Key Social Media Capability (cut marketing cost)
Change in Market Conditions During Pandemic (positive)
Change in Market Conditions During Pandemic (negative)
Covid-19 was a Business Opportunity
Covid-19 was a Business Disruption
Covid-19 (mix of disruption and opportunity)
Business was Close to Failure During Pandemic
Covid-19 as an Opportunity Post Pandemic
Missed Opportunity (covid-19 would have created more product demand)
Business Stopped Trading During Pandemic
Ability to use Website Effectively to Attract New Custom
Learnings from Covid-19 (use business continuity plan)
Learnings from Covid-19 (skill to make big decisions in small time frames)
Learnings (thinking about the resiliency of the sector I'm going into)
Learnings (become more resilient as a person)
Learnings (decrease unnecessary debt)
learnings (reduce risk)
Learnings (importance of making profit at earliest opportunity)
Learnings (consider what could go wrong)
Learnings (awareness of supply chains)
Learnings (made a change to the business model to make it more resilient)
Learnings (importance of online)
Learning (importance of customer retention)
Learnings (consider resiliency of business model)
Learnings (reduce costs in future)
learnings (ensure that the business adapts to change)
learnings (realise value of social media)
Selling online (missed opportunity)

Evidence of Recovery
Resilient due to Online
Resilient Business Model
Resilient due to Social Media
Resilient due to Online
Resilient due to Product Type
Not Resilient to Covid-19 (due to lack of online presence)
Not Resilient to Covid-19 (due to business type)
Experience of Covid-19 will help in Future Crises
Future Resilience (positive mental model)
Future Resilience (customer retention)
Future Resilience (due to online)
Future Resilience (due to customer demographic)
Future Resilience (due to product type)
Future Resilience (more uncertain than covid)
Future Resilience (confident for the future)
Future Resilience (lowered financial risk)
Future Resilience (due to business changes)
Not Resilient with Regard to Future (changes needed)
Positive Mindset Towards Potential Future Adversity
Future Plans to Re-engage in Entrepreneurship

Appendix 4.7: Finalised Data Codes

Business Experience (low)
Business Experience (medium)
Business Experience (high)
Crisis Management Experience (low)
Crisis Management Experience (medium)
Crisis Management Experience (high)
Crisis Management Experience (valuable)
Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (low)
Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (medium)
Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (high)
Social Media Training (informal)
Personal Social Media Experience (low)
Personal Social Media Experience (medium)
Personal Social Media Experience (high)
Active Social Media User (personal)
Higher Education
Higher Education (was of value to the owner manager)
Motivation to Run Business (freedom)
Motivation to Run Business (financial reward)
Motivation to Run Business (pride)
Motivation to Run Business (follow passion)
Ambition (to grow business)
Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem (self or other)
Business Age (young)
Business Age (mature)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (in store only)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (trading online only)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (online and in store)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (purchase saleable goods from suppliers)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (manufacturing on-site)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (re-investing all profits)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (reliant on in person element)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (developed with risk in mind)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (not own brand)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (e-commerce was important aspect of the business)
Business Model Before Covid-19 (website sales channel)
General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (channelling sales to website)
General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (marketing)
General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (customer service)
General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (communicating with stakeholders)
Pre-existing Barrier (stock availability due to Brexit)

Pre-existing Barrier (increased costs due to Brexit)
Did not Foresee Covid-19
Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (happy)
Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (unhappy)
Social Media use Before Covid-19 (regularly used)
Social Media use Before Covid-19 (low)
Pre-existing Factor (low innovation sector)
Pre-existing Factor (business model was vulnerable to Covid-19)
Strategy (customer experience)
Strategy (customer retention)
Strategy (ease of access for customers)
Force Generated by Crisis (essential retail)
Force Generated by Crisis (non-essential retail)
Force Generated by Crisis (increased growth due to market changes)
Force Generated by Crisis (decreased demand for products sold)
Force Generated by Crisis (more time)
Force Generated by Crisis (positive change in market conditions)
Force Generated by Crisis (negative change in market conditions)
Diversify (home delivery)
Diversify (collections)
Diversity (new products)
Diversify (difficult)
Bricolage (no fundamental change made to business model positive)
Bricolage (no fundamental change made to business model negative)
Bricolage (unsuccessful effort to make business change)
Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government grant useful)
Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government difficult to attain)
Support Mechanism (furlough used)
Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government grants used)
Support Mechanism (emotional support from family and friends)
Support Mechanism (open-source information online)
Support Mechanism (local authority grants)
Resource (Cash at bank useful)
Resource (low debt / high equity)
Resource (access to road vehicle)
Resource (social media knowledge)
Resource (business experience)
Resource (volunteers useful)
Resource (Shop as a Commercial Space for Storage)
Resource (shop as a marketing tool)
Resource (website)
Resource (staff)
Capability Development (maintain customer relations)

Capability Development (reduce the barrier to selling online)
Capability Development (ability to use website to attract new custom)
Capability Development (attract new customer base)
Failure to Develop New Capabilities
Social Media Capability (networking)
Social Media Capability (view competitor content)
Social Media Capability (attract a broader customer audience)
Social Media Capability (no change in capability)
Social Media Capability (advertise to large audience)
Social Media Capability (identify new business opportunity)
Social Media Capability (cut marketing cost)
Social Media Capability (communicating)
Social Media Capability (increase following)
Brexit Adversity - Poor Stock Availability
Financial Performance (decline during Covid-19)
Financial Performance (stayed the same during Covid-19)
Financial Performance (increase during Covid-19)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (use all platforms the same)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (change of focus)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (use generally stayed the same)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (decrease in usage)
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (increase in usage regularity)
Adds Generate Interest but Interest doesn't Convert to Sales
Social Media Acting as a Substitute for Pre-pandemic Activity
Missed Opportunity to use Social Media
YouTube (content creation)
YouTube (created commercial opportunity)
YouTube (lead to additional marketing opportunity)
YouTube (lead to financial reward)
YouTube (rapid dissemination of content)
YouTube (used to increase brand awareness)
Facebook (used for customer service during Covid-19)
Facebook (used to view competitor content during Covid-19)
Facebook (used for advertising)
Facebook (more effective than Instagram for older audience)
Facebook (more effective than Instagram for managing customer service)
Facebook (good for networking)
Facebook (directing customers to website)
Facebook (sell from directly)
Facebook (better due to groups)
Facebook (more interaction than Instagram)
Facebook (most useful platform)
Facebook Messenger Service (good for customer service during Covid-19)

Instagram (cheaper to advertise than on Facebook)
Instagram (directing customers to website)
Instagram (used for advertising)
Instagram (start additional page)
Instagram (good for managing customer service)
Instagram (good for targeting younger audience)
Instagram (view competitor content)
Instagram (sell from directly)
Instagram (reels and stories good)
Instagram (have to take photo to post) (negative)
Instagram (best for marketing)
Instagram (most useful platform)
Instagram (very visual so good for marketing)
Instagram (good for linking to website)
YouTube (most useful platform)
Twitter (not useful)
Social Media Played a Part in Firm Survival
Social Media Allowed the Firm to Thrive as Opposed to Survive
Covid-19 was a Business Opportunity
Covid-19 was a Business Disruption
Covid-19 (mix of disruption and opportunity)
Business was Close to Failure During Pandemic
Covid-19 as an Opportunity Post Pandemic
Business Stopped Trading During Pandemic
Learnings from Covid-19 (use business continuity plan)
Learnings from Covid-19 (skill to make big decisions in small time frames)
Learnings from Covid-19 (thinking about the resiliency of the sector I'm going into)
Learnings from Covid-19 (become more resilient as a person)
Learnings from Covid-19 (decrease unnecessary debt)
Learnings from Covid-19 (reduce risk)
Learnings from Covid-19 (importance of making profit at earliest opportunity)
Learnings from Covid-19 (consider what could go wrong)
Learnings from Covid-19 (awareness of supply chains)
Learnings from Covid-19 (importance of online)
Learnings from Covid-19 (importance of customer retention)
Learnings from Covid-19 (consider resiliency of business model)
Learnings from Covid-19 (reduce costs in future)
Learnings from Covid-19 (ensure that the business adapts to change)
Learnings from Covid-19 (realise value of social media)
Resilience Driver (due to online presence)
Resilience Driver (resilient business model)
Resilience Driver (social media presence)
Resilience Driver (due to product type)

Vulnerability Driver (lack of online presence)
Vulnerability Driver (due to product type)
Future Resilience Enabler (experience of covid-19)
Future Resilience Enabler (customer retention)
Future Resilience Enabler (due to online)
Future Resilience Enabler (due to customer demographic)
Future Resilience Enabler (due to product type)
Future Resilience Enabler (more uncertain than covid)
Future Resilience Enabler (confident for the future)
Future Resilience Enabler (lowered financial risk)
Future Resilience Enabler (positive mindset towards adversity)
Future Resilience Barrier (business changes needed)
Future Plans to Re-engage in Entrepreneurship

Appendix 4.8: Action Log

KEY
R - Removed
M - Merged
NC - Name Change
AC - Additional Code
CL - Changed Location

Initial code(s) name	Action	New code name (is applicable)	Date of action	Time	Notes
n/a	AC	Business Experience (medium)	27/03/2023	12:50	This code was added to give a better picture of the role of previous business experience
Identified gap in the market	R	n/a	27/03/2023	12:51	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Crisis Management Experience of value	NC	Crisis Management Experience (valuable)	27/03/2023	14:15	Better description
Experience of Previous Crisis Helped with the Mitigation of Covid-19	M	Merged with code 'Crisis Management Experience (valuable)'	27/03/2023	14:17	Duplicate code
Previous Experience of Difficult Economic Conditions (Helpful)	M	Merged with code 'Crisis Management Experience (valuable)'	27/03/2023	14:18	Duplicate code

n/a	AC	Previous Experience of Using Social Media within a Commercial Setting (low)	27/03/2023	14:22	This code was added to give a better picture of the role of commercial social media experience
Education (masters degree)	M	Higher Education	27/03/2023	14:26	Overly specific codes
Education (undergraduate degree)	M	Higher Education	27/03/2023	14:26	Overly specific codes
Usefulness of Higher Education (medium)	M	Higher Education (was of value to the owner manager)	27/03/2023	14:33	Overly specific codes
Usefulness of Higher Education (high)	M	Higher Education (was of value to the owner manager)	27/03/2023	14:33	Overly specific codes
Undergraduate Degree Skill (social media marketing)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	14:36	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Motivation to Start Business (freedom)	NC	Motivation to Run Business (freedom)	27/03/2023	14:38	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (financial reward)	NC	Motivation to Run Business (financial reward)	27/03/2023	14:38	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (pride)	NC	Motivation to Run Business (pride)	27/03/2023	14:38	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (follow passion)	NC	Motivation to Run Business (follow passion)	27/03/2023	14:38	Better description
Ambition (move away from Entrepreneurship)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	14:39	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Operates Within a Resilient Sector	CL	n/a	27/03/2023	14:42	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

Family Member Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem	M	Contracting Covid-19 caused Business Problem (self or other)	27/03/2023	14:45	Overly specific codes
Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem	M	Contracting Covid-19 Caused Business Problem (self or other)	27/03/2023	14:45	Overly specific codes
n/a	AC	Personal Social Media Experience (medium)	27/03/2023	14:51	This code was added to give a better picture of the role of previous personal social media experience
Identified a Business Opportunity During the Pandemic	R	n/a	27/03/2023	14:54	code not needed, no developing pattern
Initial Business Model (online only)	NC	Covid-19 Start Up (Initial business model online only)	27/03/2023	14:56	Better description
Business Performance at Business Conception (happy)	NC	Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	27/03/2023	15:06	Better description
Significant Growth at Conception	M	Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	27/03/2023	15:08	Overly specific code
Initial Social Media Adoption (high)	NC	Covid-19 Start Up (initial social media adoption high)	27/03/2023	15:09	Better description
Initial Social Media Use (regular)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:10	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Age (very young)	NC	Business Age (young)	27/03/2023	15:11	Better description

n/a	AC	Business Age (mature)	27/03/2023	15:12	This code was added to give a better picture of the role of business age
Business Model Before Covid-19 (importance placed on USP)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:14	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Model Before Covid-19 (purchase from wholesalers)	CN	Business Model Before Covid-19 (purchase saleable goods from suppliers)	27/03/2023	15:28	This code offers a better description. This codes illustrates that a business does not manufacture their own goods but buys all goods from a supplier in a state that is ready to sell
Business Model Before Covid-19 (buy from producers)	M	Business Model Before Covid-19 (purchase saleable goods from suppliers)	27/03/2023	15:30	Overly specific code
Business Model Before Covid-19 (flawed)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:32	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Model Before Covid-19 (reliant on attending in-person events)	NC	Business Model Before Covid-19 (reliant on in person element)	27/03/2023	15:33	Generalises the code, makes it more applicable to other business scenarios
Realisation that E-commerce is Important	NC	Business Model Before Covid-19 (e-commerce was important aspect of the business)	27/03/2023	15:36	Better description
Mutually Beneficial Supplier Relationships	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:37	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Trading Online Lowered Barrier to Entry	M	Business Model Before Covid-19 (e-commerce was	27/03/2023	15:38	Overly specific code

		important aspect of the business)			
Commitment to Business (medium)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:45	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Intended USP (sustainability)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:45	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Sales Channel (website)	NC	Business Model Before Covid-19 (website sales channel)	27/03/2023	15:49	Better description
Social Media Use (channelling sales)	NC	General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (channelling sales to website)	27/03/2023	15:52	Better description
Social Media Use (advertising)	NC	General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (marketing)	27/03/2023	15:53	Better description
Social Media Use (fear of over saturation of posts)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:53	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Use (customer service)	NC	General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (customer service)	27/03/2023	15:55	Better description
Social Media Use (communicating with stakeholders)	NC	General Social Media Use before Covid-19 (communicating with stakeholders)	27/03/2023	15:56	Better description

E-commerce Benefit (receive payment before purchasing stock)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:57	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Pre-existing Barrier (access to supplier)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:58	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Pre-existing Barrier (networking)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:58	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Facing Financial Challenges Before the Pandemic	R	n/a	27/03/2023	15:59	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Growth Before Pandemic (gradual)	M	Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (happy)	27/03/2023	16:00	Overly specific codes
Cashflow Before Covid-19 (good)	M	Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (happy)	27/03/2023	16:01	Overly specific codes
Revenue Before Covid-19 (growing)	M	Financial Performance Before Covid-19 (happy)	27/03/2023	16:01	Overly specific codes
Number of Social Media Platforms used Before Covid-19 (2)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	16:02	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Platform used Before Covid-19 (Facebook)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	16:04	No code needed - will be evident from extracts
Social Media Platform used Before Covid-19 (Instagram)	R	n/a	27/03/2023	16:04	No code needed - will be evident from extracts
Covid-19 start up (Initial business model online only)	CL	n/a	27/03/2023	16:11	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	CL	n/a	27/03/2023	16:11	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Covid-19 Start Up (initial social media adoption high)	CL	n/a	27/03/2023	16:11	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Business Performance (happy)	M	Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	27/03/2023	16:13	Overly specific code
Financial Performance (high at conception)	M	Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	28/03/2023	12:11	Overly specific codes
Business Growth (exceptional)	NC	Covid-19 Start Up (initial growth was high)	28/03/2023	12:12	Better description
Attempts to Extend Product Life Cycle	NC	Covid-19 Start Up (attempts to extend product life cycle)	28/03/2023	12:16	Better description
Change in Products Sold	R	n/a	28/03/2023	12:33	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Eventually Sales Declined	R	n/a	28/03/2023	12:34	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Decreasing Aptitude for the Business	R	n/a	28/03/2023	12:34	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Inability to Develop New Products	R	n/a	28/03/2023	12:35	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Increased use of Social Media Towards end of Pandemic	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	12:36	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

Adds Generate Interest but Interest doesn't Convert to Sales	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	12:38	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Initial Uncertainty	NC	Covid-19 Impact (created initial uncertainty)	28/03/2023	12:41	Better description
Operating in a Low Innovation Sector	NC	Pre-existing Factor (low innovation sector)	28/03/2023	12:42	Better description
Social Media Acting as a Substitute for Pre-pandemic Activity	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	12:43	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Business Model was Vulnerable to Covid-19	NC	Pre-existing Factor (business model was vulnerable to Covid-19)	28/03/2023	12:45	Better description
Financial Transformation	M	Financial Performance (huge increase during pandemic)	28/03/2023	12:49	Overly specific code
Experience of Christmas Growth Helped Scaling challenges	R	n/a	28/03/2023	14:36	Overly specific code
YouTube (content creation)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:39	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
YouTube (created commercial opportunity)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:39	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
YouTube (lead to additional marketing opportunity)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:39	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
YouTube (lead to financial reward)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:39	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

YouTube (rapid dissemination of content)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:39	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Instagram Very Visual (good for marketing)	NC	Instagram (very visual so good for marketing)	28/03/2023	14:40	Better description
Instagram Good for Linking to Website (good for marketing)	NC	Instagram (good for linking to website)	28/03/2023	14:42	Better description
Instagram (very visual so good for marketing)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:45	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Instagram (good for linking to website)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:45	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Facebook Messenger Service (good for customer service before Covid-19)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:46	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Use of Third-party Software to Manage Social Media Account	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	14:48	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Retail Type (essential)	NC	Force Generated by Crisis (essential retail)	28/03/2023	14:39	Better description
Retail Type (non-essential)	NC	Force Generated by Crisis (non-essential retail)	28/03/2023	14:40	Better description
Increased Growth due to Less Competition	NC	Force Generated by Crisis (increased growth due to market changes)	28/03/2023	14:41	More generalisable
Logistical Issues due to Partners Living Across the Country	R	n/a	28/03/2023	14:56	Code not needed, no developing pattern

Covid-19 Presented a Missed Opportunity	R	n/a	28/03/2023	14:56	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Made Some Effort to Move Online	NC	Bricolage (effort made to move online)	28/03/2023	14:58	Better description
Business Operations Impacted	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:00	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Encountered Adversity During Pandemic	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:01	Code not needed, no developing pattern. Over generalisation
Customer Demand decreased During the Pandemic	NC	Force Generated by Crisis (decreased demand for products sold)	28/03/2023	15:02	Better description
Force Generated by Crisis (decreased demand for products sold)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	15:02	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Making the Best of the Situation	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:03	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Selling Differentiated Products (higher price)	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:03	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Assumed the Same Business Model During Pandemic as Before the Pandemic (positive)	NC	Bricolage (no fundamental change made to business model positive)	28/03/2023	15:07	Better description
Assumed the Same Business Model During Pandemic as Before the Pandemic (negative)	NC	Bricolage (no fundamental change made to business model negative)	28/03/2023	15:07	Better description
Unsuccessful Effort to Make Business Change	NC	Bricolage (unsuccessful effort)	28/03/2023	15:08	Better description

		to make business change)			
No Business Changes Were Made	M	Bricolage (no fundamental change made to business model positive)	28/03/2023	15:10	Code was coded twice
Failure Due to Bad Luck	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:11	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Negative Mental Model	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:12	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Not a Bad Business Idea (change in circumstance)	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:23	Code not needed, no developing pattern
New Capability	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:24	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Developed the Capability to Attract New Customer Base	NC	Capability Development (attract new customer base)	28/03/2023	15:25	Better description
Overall Failure to Adapt	R	n/a	28/03/2023	15:26	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Benefit (more time to pursue new sales method)	CN	Force Generated by Crisis (more time)	28/03/2023	15:27	Better description
Covid-19 Benefit (more time to pursue renovations)	M	Force Generated by Crisis (more time)	28/03/2023	15:28	Overly specific code
Force Generated by Crisis (more time)	CL	n/a	28/03/2023	15:29	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Covid-19 Government Grants (useful)	CN	Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government grant useful)	28/03/2023	15:37	Better description

Covid-19 Government Grants (process of attainment difficult)	CN	Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government difficult to attain)	28/03/2023	15:38	Better description
Covid-19 Furlough (useful)	CN	Support Mechanism (furlough useful)	28/03/2023	15:39	Better description
Covid-19 Government Grants (used)	CN	Support Mechanism (covid-19 Government grants used)	28/03/2023	15:41	Better description
Business Started Acting out of Necessity	R	n/a	30/03/2023	14:10	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Resilience (good customer relations)	NC	Capability Development (maintain customer relations)	30/03/2023	14:16	Better description
Resilience (selling online reduced barrier)	NC	Capability Development (reduce the barrier to selling online)	30/03/2023	14:19	Better description
Resilience (mental attitude)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	14:20	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Caused Loss of Opportunity	R	n/a	30/03/2023	14:22	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Business Became Financially Unsustainable	M	Financial Performance (decline during Covid-19)	30/03/2023	14:24	Overly specific code
Financial Performance (huge increase during pandemic)	M	Financial Performance (increase during Covid-19)	30/03/2023	14:25	Overly specific code

Managed to Retain all Business for After the Pandemic	R	n/a	30/03/2023	14:26	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Cashflow During Pandemic (good)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	14:27	No code needed - will be evident from extracts
Emotional Support from Family and Friends (useful)	CN	Support Mechanism (emotional support from family and friends)	30/03/2023	14:29	Better description
Emotional Support of Family and Friends (not useful)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	16:05	Not needed - states obvious if code ' Support Mechanism (emotional support from family and friends) ' present / not present
Finding Information on Government Website (useful)	CN	Support Mechanism (open source information online)	30/03/2023	16:06	Better description
Support Mechanism (open source information online)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:06	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Finding Information on Government Website (difficult)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	16:07	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (notable increase in usage regularity)	M	Social Media Use During Covid-19 (increase in usage regularity)	30/03/2023	16:09	Can be combined to create one meaningful code
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (slight increase in usage regularity)					
Social Media Usage Regularity (decreased)	M	Social Media Use During Covid-19 (decrease in usage)	30/03/2023	16:18	Duplicate code

Social Media Effect (huge increase in followers)	CN	Social Media Capability (increase following)	30/03/2023	16:19	Better description
Efforts Made to Adapt (unsuccessful)	M	Bricolage (unsuccessful effort to make business change)	30/03/2023	16:21	Duplicate code
Social Media Generally (used to network)	CN	Social Media Capability (networking)	30/03/2023	16:29	Better description
Social Media Generally (used to view competitor content)	CN	Social Media Capability (view competitor content)	30/03/2023	16:31	Better description
Social Media Generally (allowed business to attract a broader customer audience)	CN	Social Media Capability (attract a broader customer audience)	30/03/2023	16:37	Better description
Social Media Generally (use platforms in same way)	CN	Social Media Capability (no change in capability)	30/03/2023	16:38	Better description
Social Media Activity Fundamentally (little change during Covid-19)	M	Social Media Use During Covid-19 (use generally stayed the same)	30/03/2023	16:39	Duplicate code
New Social Media Platform Adopted During Covid-19 (no)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	16:41	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media (added value activities)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	16:45	Overly specific code
Social Media Capability (networking)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:46	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

Social Media Capability (view competitor content)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:46	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Social Media Capability (attract a broader customer audience)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:46	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Social Media Capability (no change in capability)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:46	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
YouTube (used to increase brand awareness)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	16:49	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Use of Third-party Software to Manage Social Media Account	R	n/a	30/03/2023	16:55	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Key Social Media Capability (advertise to large audience)	CN	Social Media Capability (advertise to large audience)	30/03/2023	16:56	Better description
key Social Media Capability (identify new business opportunity)	CN	Social Media Capability (identify new business opportunity)	30/03/2023	16:59	Better description
Key Social Media Capability (cut marketing cost)	CN	Social Media Capability (cut marketing cost)	30/03/2023	17:00	Better description
Change in Market Conditions During Pandemic (positive)	CN	Force Generated by Crisis (positive change in market conditions)	30/03/2023	17:05	Better description
Change in Market Conditions During Pandemic (negative)	CN	Force Generated by Crisis (negative change in market conditions)	30/03/2023	17:06	Better description

Force Generated by Crisis (positive change in market conditions)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	17:07	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Force Generated by Crisis (negative change in market conditions)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	17:07	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Missed Opportunity (covid-19 would have created more product demand)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	17:10	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Ability to use Website Effectively to Attract New Custom	CN	Capability Development (ability to use website to attract new custom)	30/03/2023	17:11	Better description
Selling online (missed opportunity)	R	n/a	30/03/2023	17:20	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Resilient due to Online	CN	Resilience Driver (due to online presence)	30/03/2023	17:22	Better description
Resilient due to Online	CN	Resilience Driver (resilient business model)	30/03/2023	17:24	Better description
Resilient due to Social Media	CN	Resilience Driver (social media presence)	30/03/2023	17:25	Better description
Resilient due to Online	M	Resilience Driver (due to online presence)	30/03/2023	17:26	Duplicate code
Resilient due to Product Type	CN	Resilience Driver (due to product type)	30/03/2023	17:26	Better description

Not Resilient to Covid-19 (due to lack of online presence)	CN	Vulnerability Driver (lack of online presence)	30/03/2023	17:27	Better description
Not Resilient to Covid-19 (due to business type)	CN	Vulnerability Driver (business type)	30/03/2023	17:30	Better description
Experience of Covid-19 will help in Future Crises	CN	Future Resilience Enabler (experience of covid-19)	30/03/2023	17:30	Better description
Not Resilient with Regard to Future (changes needed)	CN	Future Resilience Barrier (business changes needed)	30/03/2023	17:32	Better description
Positive Mindset Towards Potential Future Adversity	CN	Future Resilience Enabler (positive mindset towards adversity)	30/03/2023	17:33	Better description
Future Resilience Enabler (positive mindset towards adversity)	CL	n/a	30/03/2023	17:35	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Growing Pains (logistics)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:27	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Success Driver (genuine USP)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:27	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Success Driver (luck)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:28	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Brand Visibility (high due to good SEO)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:29	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Key Business Challenge (scaling up)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:30	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Key Business Challenge (cost generated by legal compliance)	R	n/a	05/04/2023	11:33	Code not needed, no developing pattern

Lessons learnt	CN	Post-pandemic Reflections	05/04/2023	11:43	Better description
Business Profile During the Pandemic	CN	Trans-crisis Business Profile	05/04/2023	11:48	Better description
Business profile before the pandemic	CN	Pre-crisis Business Profile	05/04/2023	11:49	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (freedom)	CN	Motivation to Run Business (freedom)	05/04/2023	11:58	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (financial reward)	CN	Motivation to Run Business (financial reward)	05/04/2023	11:58	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (pride)	CN	Motivation to Run Business (pride)	05/04/2023	11:58	Better description
Motivation to Start Business (follow passion)	CN	Motivation to Run Business (follow passion)	07/04/2023	11:58	Better description
Instagram (visual)	M	Instagram (very visual so good for marketing)	07/04/2023	16:30	Duplicate code
Learnings from Covid-19 (made a change to the business model to make it more resilient)	M	Learnings from Covid-19 (consider resiliency of business model)	07/04/2023	17:00	Duplicate code
Vulnerability Driver (business type)	CN	Vulnerability Driver (due to product type)	07/04/2023	17:15	Better description
Support Mechanism (furlough useful)	CN	Support Mechanism (furlough used)	07/04/2023	19:12	Better description
Resource (Council Grants Better than Government Grants)	CN	Support Mechanism (local authority grants)	07/04/2023	19:17	Better description

Support Mechanism (local authority grants)	CL	n/a	07/04/2023	19:19	Better description
Business Operates Within a Resilient Sector	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:20	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Facebook (shearing content)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:20	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Instagram (use of story function)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:23	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Difficult to Impact the Covid-19 Crisis	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:24	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 start up (Initial business model online only)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:37	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Start Up (happy with financial performance at conception)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:41	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Start Up (initial social media adoption high)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:41	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Start Up (initial growth was high)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:45	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Start Up (attempts to extend product life cycle)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:47	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Covid-19 Impact (created initial uncertainty)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:50	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Bricolage (effort made to move online)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	19:50	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Capability Development (attract new customer base)	CL	n/a	07/04/2023	19:50	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Failure to Develop New Capabilities	CL	n/a	07/04/2023	19:51	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list

Adaptive capacity	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:01	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Vulnerable (business model)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:01	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Restrictions (caused confusion)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:01	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (notable increase in usage regularity)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:01	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (communicating)	CN	Social Media Capability (communicating)	07/04/2023	20:02	better description
Social Media Capability (communicating)	CL	n/a	07/04/2023	20:17	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Social Media Use During Covid-19 (became essential)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:17	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Increased use of Social Media Towards end of Pandemic	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:17	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Social Media Capability (increase following)	CL	n/a	07/04/2023	20:30	No changes made to the code. Code location moved on list
Evidence of Recovery	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:30	Code not needed, no developing pattern
Future Resilience Enabler (positive mental model)	R	n/a	07/04/2023	20:30	duplicate code

End of Thesis