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A Conceptual Review of Uber as an Emerging Organisation in Zimbabwe

Mutarisi A[1], Mutambara E[2], Bischoff C[3], Botha C[4]
[1]Researcher - North-West University Business School, South Africa
[2]Professor - North-West University Business School, South Africa
[3]Professor - North-West University Business School, South Africa
[4]Professor – North-West University Business School, South Africa

Abstract
This theoretical review explores Uber as an archetype of an emerging organisation, analysing its development through the lens of strategic management theories such as the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Blue Ocean Strategy. The paper situates Uber's innovative trajectory within the global context, then reflects on its implications for emerging enterprises in Zimbabwe. By examining Uber's deployment of intangible and tangible resources, platform-based business model, and internationalisation strategies, the review highlights how emerging organisations can leverage internal capabilities and innovative market positioning to achieve competitive advantage. The study further discusses the scalability of such models in the Zimbabwean context, considering infrastructural, regulatory, and technological constraints. Ultimately, the paper provides a conceptual foundation for understanding how emerging organisations in developing economies can draw lessons from global disruptors like Uber while tailoring strategies to local realities.
Keywords: *Uber, Emerging Organisations, Resource-Based View, Blue Ocean Strategy, Innovation, Zimbabwe, Platform Economy, Strategic Management, Business Model, Internationalisation*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

At no time in the history of organisations have they operated within a discontinuous environment as they do now. Organisations increasingly need to overcome a plethora of complex challenges, and harness the opportunities, emerging from dizzying changes in the geo-political, socio-economic, technological and innovation environments.

Emerging organisations occupy a critical space in today's organisational ecosystem. By their innovation and technology-driven nature, emerging organisations are key drivers of economic growth, value creation and societal advancement. The growth trajectory of today's successful economies is largely driven by emerging organisations; hence it is incumbent on any nation to foster the growth and sustainability of these emerging organisations. An emerging organisation, however, faces a myriad of challenges when traversing the road from start-up to growth, which if not carefully managed, can retard its growth or lead to its premature demise. A carefully and deliberately crafted growth strategy is key in ensuring that an emerging organisation grows, thrives, and reshapes its industry's landscape.

Zimbabwe's economic blueprint, vision 2030, is anchored on innovation-led economic growth (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020), which puts emerging organisations in the limelight of the country's developmental agenda.

This paper defines the key terms that are central to an understanding of the topic under discussion. The paper then briefly discusses the life cycle of an organisation, to highlight some of the salient features that are relevant to an EO scaling from the infancy to the growth stage. The next section discusses three strategic models namely, the Resource-Based View (RBV), the Blue Ocean Model and the Network theory to aid in examining the scaling strategies of EOs. Examples of organisations that have scaled successfully based on these models are highlighted. Embedded in the discussion of these theoretical models, the paper evaluates some growth strategies that an EO can utilize to scale successfully, particularly in relation to the role of innovation, market entry strategies, and funding options. Lessons learnt are summarized in the conclusion.

1.2 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.2.1 Emerging organisations

Defining emerging organisations (EOs), compels academicians to draw comparisons with traditional organisations. EOs have been observed to be distinct from traditional organisations on several aspects:

More than thirty years ago, management guru Peter Drucker foresightedly warned that the coming new organisation would be an information-based organisation characterised by a flatter structure (Drucker,

1988). Contemporary definitions of the term EO concur with Drucker's (1988) view. For instance, Gutterman (2023) observes that EOs distinctively focus on innovation in their business models. Unlike traditional organisations which are sluggish in their innovation efforts, EOs are characterized by rapid and often disruptive innovations, which innovations are oftentimes driven by the resource limitations that EOs generally face (Ostergaard, 2019). Unlike traditional organisations with their risk aversion, EOs generally adopt an entrepreneurial risk-taking culture which is the hallmark of innovation (Drucker, 1988). Another distinguishing factor is the change-aversion culture of traditional organisations, which is a complete departure from the change-ready culture of EOs (Hertz, 2017). This makes EOs agile, fluid, and responsive to a rapidly evolving environment and market. When it comes to emerging organisations, there seems to be no generally accepted definition of the term nor of the characteristics of the firms that might fall within the scope of the definition (Gutterman, 2023), but the aspects of innovation, adaptability and agility predominate all views of emerging organisations. Borrowing from the foregoing discussion, this paper defines EOs as young or new organisations or established organisations, that are anchored on innovation, information, and entrepreneurship, which create completely new industries, or redefine the landscape of the industries in which they operate.

1.2.2 Scaling

In their 2024 article that sought to clarify if scaling is the same as growth or if its outcomes pertain to growth, economies of scale, or returns to scale, Coviello et al. (2024), suggest that scaling is a process whereby a firm leverages technological innovations to rapidly expand its outputs through internal organisational transformation, without a corresponding ex-ante increase in inputs. Scaling functions to generate returns to scale and create growth in a firm's customer and revenue base, through internal system and process transformation, investment, market globalization, replication, and persistency (Coviello et al, 2024). Growth and scaling are close in meaning but are essentially different concepts. Both are intended to change the organisation's fortunes and performance but differ in their approach. Growth entails getting linearly bigger, achieving revenue improvement that is achieved through a commensurate increase in resource deployment whereas scaling entails getting better, without a related increase in resource deployment (Viter, 2022). Based on the above authors' compelling views, this paper defines scaling as the improvement in an organisation's revenues, market share and profitability, that is achieved through crafting of more efficient systems and processes that leverage technological resources.

1.2.3 Innovation

The current VUCA environment has brought to the fore, the need to be innovative, particularly in an organisation's quest to emerge, survive, grow, and thrive. Innovativeness is distinct from innovation in that the former leads to the latter (Accept Mission, 2021). Innovativeness denotes the inherent trait, mindset, culture, or capacity within an individual or organisation for coming up with novel ideas, processes, and products. Innovation on the other hand denotes the process of new idea, product, or process generation, which manifests in new products, services or systems that purpose to fulfil unmet needs (Accept Mission, 2021; Innovations 4 EU, 2024). This paper defines innovation as the creative process of coming up with novel organisations, organisational processes, and products.

1.3ORGANISATIONAL LIFE CYCLE

Like human beings, organisational beings go through a life cycle from birth or start-up to death or decline as shown in Fig 1 below. According to Mosca and Gianecchini (2021) the organisational life cycle looks at the life of a firm as a sequence of different developmental stages.

Figure 1: Organisational life cycle (Aerts and Jacobs, 2022)

The traditional organisation had the luxury to gradually scale the life cycle curve. The EO however operates within the vortex of a VUCA environment, where change is discontinuous, and an innovation or a whole organisation may be rendered obsolete before launch. The pace of change demands that the

EO match or outpace it, to survive and thrive. Scaling as discussed earlier in the paper is about becoming not just bigger, but better in terms of the ratio of resource deployment/results. As is apparent from Fig 1 above, the start-up phase of an organisation is characterized by low sales, high costs and little to no profits. This start-up phase would therefore require sustained working capital funding until the revenue and profit growth can provide operational cash flow. The lack of cash flow can spell the demise of an EO. The growth phase is when profits begin to be realised as costs decrease and sales increase. Cost reduction and revenue growth are often a function of market growth (higher revenues), scale (bringing in economies of scale), and innovation (which often enable better efficiencies).

Because of the current pace of change, the EO's transition from start-up to growth needs to be traversed quickly enough to realise potential benefits before the inevitable change cuts the EO from the opportunity line. The starting up and scaling of EOs is of particular importance Zimbabwe, with the current economic blueprint, Vision 2030 being underpinned by an innovation focus on all spheres (Republic of Zimbabwe, 2020).

Genedy et al (2024:1) remind us that "all leading and famous companies, such as Apple, Google, Facebook, Amazon, Uber, and Spotify, went through periods of scaling when they were young". When one looks at the Calibre of firms mentioned above, the criticality of scaling to an EO that intends to make an imprint into the fabric of organisational history cannot be overemphasized. EOs strategic scaling considerations are varied, but this paper will look at innovation, market entry strategies and financing options.

1.4.1 The Resource-based view

The Resource-Based View (RBV) model is a strategic framework which proposes that value creation emanates from internally within the unique resources, both tangible and intangible (for example assets, capabilities, knowledge, information, alliances, or internal processes) that a firm possesses (Jurevicius, 2023). The model was first proposed in the 1980s, by such luminaries as Prahalad and Hamel, Wernerfelt, and Barney (Jurevicius, 2023). It contends that an organisation's distinct resources and core competencies create an inimitable competitive advantage for the firm, which its competitors will be hard pressed to replicate, and are therefore the basis for value creation (Yu, 2021).

A company can leverage the unique internal resources such as its unique skill set, proprietary knowledge or technological edge to outcompete rivals and set itself apart as illustrated in Fig 2 below.

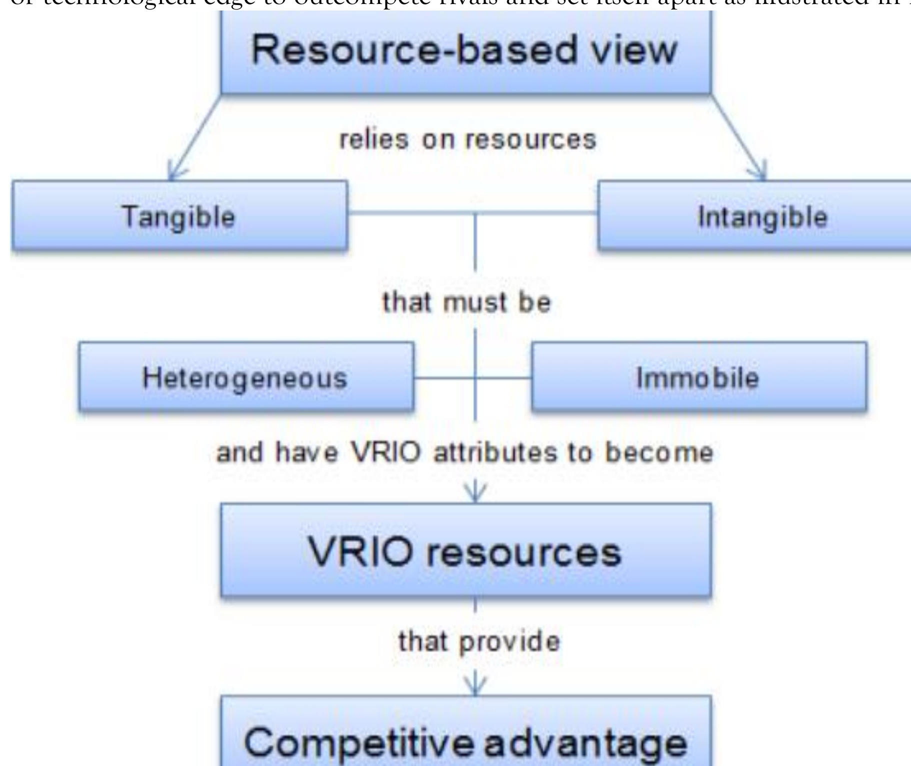

Figure 2: RBV model of value creation (Jurevicius, 2023)

Jurevicius (2023) suggests that a resource that has VRIO attributes enables the firm to gain and sustain competitive advantage, as summarized in Fig 3 below.

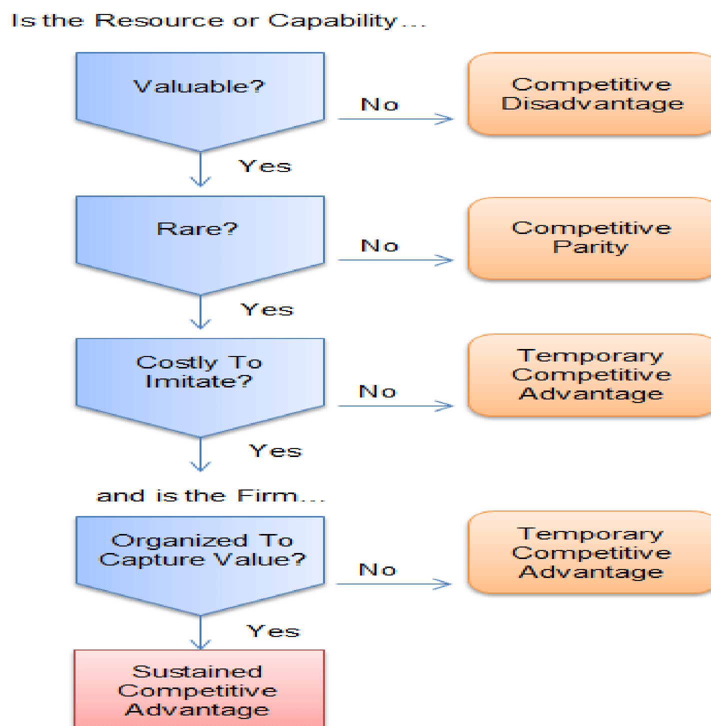

Figure 3: Resource attributes (Jurevicius, 2023)

For resource-based competitive advantage to accrue to a firm, the resource must be valuable (allowing differentiation or decreasing costs), rare (otherwise it will result in competitive parity), costly to imitate (in order to sustain competitive advantage), and the firm must have the organisational capability to exploit the resource (otherwise it remains of latent value, and not a source of competitive advantage) (Jurevicius, 2023).Unique resources that are costly to imitate will enable an EO to rapidly gain market share. This upscaling results from the immense competitive advantage that the EO will enjoy before imitation products catch up. Hence, an EO with a unique resource set will find it easier to scale successfully. Unique resources will enable the firm's products or services to earn uncontestably higher margins in the market, allowing the EO to firmly establish dominance in the market space. Unique resources also make it easier to access funding which is a catalyst for innovations be they product, process, or market innovations, which are underlying factors for successful scaling. An EO intending to scale its operations must therefore assess its resource pool and leverage those unique resources that give it a competitive edge. This affords the firm valuable time to establish itself, earn higher margins, and expand its operations before market contestation becomes intense. Investing in continuous innovations is a must, not an option, for any EO. Resource strength both in terms of material resources and skills, provides needed impetus for innovation, which needs to be built upon a foundation of organisational leadership that promotes an innovative culture at all levels within the organisation.

An organisation that provides an interesting take on the RBV model-based scaling is Uber. The following section discusses the case of uber to gain valuable insights into its scaling case based on the RBV model.

1.4.1.1 Uber Technologies Inc

Uber is arguably one of the best exemplifications of an emerging organisation. It is an on-demand ride service, essentially a two-sided digital taxi marketplace (Alonso, 2023). The hallmark of the Uber system is simplicity, convenience, and ease of use for both the driver and passenger, which simplicity belies the sophisticated set of technologies underlying this simplification (Kumari & Sharma, 2019). This could be likened to a duck seemingly floating on the surface of the water, and yet frantically paddling its feet under water. This technology is the unique resource that launched the Uber brand and catapulted it into a formidable industry player within a truly short space of time. This innovative technology was catalytic in Uber's rapid market share gain, and its ability to mobilise investment funding, and hence its ability to scale successfully. Uber's success timeline is shown in Fig 4 below and provides an interesting view into the EO's rapid rise from its founding in 2009.

Figure 4: UBER success timeline (Kumari & Sharma, 2019)

Clearly, Uber's transition from the start up to the growth phase was an immense success. From its launch in 2009 as a ride-hailing service firm, the firm quickly expanded into other geographical markets both nationally within America (San Fransico in 2010, New York City in 2012) and internationally (London in 2012, South Africa and India in 2013, China and Nigeria in 2014), and into other service lines like car-pooling and cargo, as shown in Fig 4 above. In addition, for the company to grow to its market capitalization in 2017 of over $22b in a space of eight years evidences a focused scaling strategy. Its ability to mobilize funding from divergent sources, including angel investors and even celebrities is truly remarkable (Bugador, 2019). The reasons for this successful scaling from the start-up to growth stages by Uber are lessons that any EO must emulate.

Uber epitomises the RBV model as it disrupted the traditional transport model, especially the taxi industry, to become the market leader in a completely new ride-hailing market. Uber's network platform linking the customers and drivers over an easy interfacing platform endowed it with a worldwide presence, and consistent service quality. This proprietary technology gave Uber the edge and ability to enter multiple geographical markets and cement its position as market leader within a remarkably short period. Uber essentially managed to create a blue ocean market based on its unique proprietary technology. Operating in a blue ocean provides a solid scaling platform for any EO, which should leverage this advantage to further innovate before the market becomes a red ocean as competitors move in. Bugador (2019) observed that the ride-hailing app industry, the basis for Uber's supremacy, was now understood to have low entry barriers, and various ride-hailing companies have emerged replicating the Uber business model. If a resource is relatively easy to replicate as in the Uber technology, then any competitive advantage is short-lived, and the firm must move to scale quickly before competing and imitation firms move in.

Looking at Uber's business model, the firm has minimal physical resources, which is perhaps one of the reasons why it is a highly agile business model. Uber utilises the driver's vehicles, meaning the firm is unencumbered by the sluggishness that comes with owning and operating physical vehicles. Looked at from the lens of the RBV model, Uber's asset-less model enabled the firm to penetrate far-flung geographic markets within a truly short time, utilizing its key technological innovation resource. Aversa, Huyghe and Bonadio (2021:1726) clarify and buttress this strategic stance that allowed Uber to scale successfully in saying "Digital new entrants might tackle customer needs in unprecedented ways by mobilizing resources which incumbent firms might have formerly ignored. For instance, 'collaborative consumption' firms mobilize users' under-utilized assets to create new marketplaces for goods which formerly were almost exclusively accessible through ownership". In this regard, the Uber App created a

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platform to utilise under-utilized physical resources such as motor vehicles and drivers. The Uber App eliminated the limitations that come with owning physical assets and brick and mortar operations that are characteristic of most organisations, and this gave Uber immense first-mover advantage in the ride-hailing market (Kumari & Sharma, 2019). Before imitating brands caught up, Uber had already scaled from start-up to a formidable brand. In this age where the world is a global village, an EO that will scale successfully is one that will leverage the power of the interconnectedness of today's global market to increase its market reach. Operating beyond a firm's home market provides benefits including market and risk-diversity (countries face different political, social, and economic risks), higher revenue potential (due to the wider customer base), cost advantages (due to lower labour, material, operational costs, and benefits from concessionary regulations in other countries) (Coviello et al, 2024). In this respect Uber managed to leverage its resource advantage to increase its market share in several key geographical jurisdictions. This entry into multiple markets gave Uber a platform to rapidly scale from infancy to growth. EOs must emulate this model to scale successfully. Bugador (2019) distinguishes between how EOs such as Uber internationalize; what they call the "born-global" approach, and the incremental internationalization that is characteristic of incumbent multinational enterprises. Highly innovative EOs internationalize quicker because of the agility of their organizational structure and assets (Bugador, 2019). Uber utilized a variety of market entry strategies to gain a foothold in the different geographical jurisdictions wherein it operates. In some cases, the company entered foreign markets through directly investing in local subsidiaries (Gupta, 2015). Uber also formed partnerships and strategic alliances with local firms to grow faster and to help navigate the local regulatory environment. For example, it went into partnerships with Times Internet in India, Baidu in China, AmericaMovil in Latin America, and American Express in the US, a move which is aligned with Uber's strategy of creating local partnerships in key markets (Gupta, 2015). The firm recently partnered BP in what it views as a global convenience partnership that will avail more than three thousand retail outlets to Uber Eats (Uber, 2022). The speed with which Uber launched in multiple cities helped it to speedily build brand recognition and visibility. Uber's market entry strategies were instrumental in Uber rapidly gaining market share. Gaining market share meant rapid revenue growth, which is a prerequisite for successful scaling from start-up to growth. Based on the RBV model, one can surmise that Uber effectively utilized its innovative technological prowess to penetrate markets in widespread geographical markets, where it would have taken years to attain. According to the VRIO framework in Fig 3 above, Uber's technological resource can be considered as valuable. In terms of rarity, the technological resource was rare for a short time after launch before imitation brands entered the fray. Uber's strategic decision to invest heavily in building its brand identity and to patent and trademark its intellectual properties make them valuable resources, which are key in delivering value to its stakeholders (Khan & Khan, 2013). Uber's technology may be considered moderately costly to imitate, Uber's brand presence and particularly the brand identity and reputation are resources that are difficult to replicate in the short-term (Duvovskiy, 2022). A company may have a valuable resource, but if it lacks the capability to exploit that resource to derive value, then the resource's value remains dormant. Uber exhibited a high capability to organise itself to create value from its key resource which is its technology.

Uber's incredible scalability is a function of it asset-light strategy, which has been a huge draw for investors and the reason why the company has attracted over venture capital funding in excess of $24B (Alonso, 2023).Uber has consistently managed to leverage its technological resources and its innovative business model to create innovative services. The firm's technological supremacy enabled it to upscale and to establish other strategic business units like UberCargo, UberEats, UberPool, using the same business model. This focus on innovation has enabled Uber to scale successfully and morph into the industry leader in a short space of time. Its innovative technology was replicated in other industries, allowing the firm to grow rapidly, due to permeative market expansion. The firm clearly allocated and channelled resources towards scaling its operations in terms of market reach. That may be a noted failure among many an EO, because resources often end up being misallocated due to a premature consumptive mentality. In the early days of an EO, it may be prudent to re-invest profits towards the firm's organic growth than to declare a dividend before the firm grows.

Funding options are an endemic challenge when it comes to EOs trying to scale to the growth stage. A lot of EOs are born out of technological innovations, oftentimes struggling to secure funding to grow these EOs into big enterprises. From Fig 4 above, one can see that Uber was remarkably successful in mobilizing funding through a series of equity calls to achieve a market valuation of $22.2B in a few years.

Funding options would have been available to Uber more readily because of its multi-national presence. This would mean that the firm could take advantage of funding possibilities in different countries.
Based on the RBV model, the availability of resources enables an EO to upscale successfully because it is more readily able to channel resources to innovation initiatives. Resources also enable an EO experience a market boom faster enabling exponential early-stage growth.

1.4.2 The Blue Ocean Strategy

In their pioneering submissions on the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS), Chan and Mauborgne (2004) highlighted that the strategy is about creating and capturing uncontested market spaces, thereby making the competition irrelevant. The BOS focuses on the simultaneous pursuit of differentiation and low cost to, rather than competing in existing market spaces, opening new market spaces (blue oceans), and creating new demand (Kampa, Cziulik & Estorilio, 2012). It is particularly useful in markets with high competition and low differentiation. Creating new demand follows creation of novel products or services. The blue ocean space is an ideal environment for an EO to develop new products and services that attract new customers or enhance value for existing customers. This is key to successful scaling for an EO. The BOS suggests that instead of cutthroat head-to-head competition over a shrinking profit pool, firms should focus on creation of unique business and market spaces and innovate unique ways to reinvent the industry (Chan & Mauborgne, 2004). The blue ocean implies uncontested space and a shift away from zero-sum competition, highlights Jackson (2024), surmising that competing in uncontested space gives an organisation immense advantage on all fronts including profit margins, market leadership and customer lock-in. For an EO intentioned on scaling successfully, a blue ocean market penetration strategy will enable an organisation to capture immense market share and create customer lock-in/retention, leading to revenue growth. By operating in a blue ocean, an EO benefits on several aspects. It can command vast market share. It can earn higher profits, which can be reinvested into scaling the EO's operations. It may attract investment or funding easier than a firm operating in a red ocean. Faster Capital (2024) extends this view, adding that the Blue Ocean model makes competition irrelevant, and demand is created rather than fought for. The model intimates that firms should break free from the confines of defined market boundaries and reimagine/reconstruct their own market space, a situation which nudges organisations to heed non-traditional competitors residing in industries ulterior to the firm (Faster Capital, 2024). Some of the tenets of the BOS are creation of value for customers based on eliminating unnecessities from products, hence simplifying the user experience, and reducing costs (Faster Capital, 2024). The forthcoming section will discuss these with reference to Apple Incorporated (Apple), a company that demonstrates scaling using blue oceans.

1.4.2.1 Apple Incorporation

One may pose the question of why Apple is considered an EO for this paper. The concept of blue oceans itself implies creation of new market space, which a firm can enter with either an existing product or a new product. Apple is one of the foremost firms that exemplifies the Blue Ocean Model in its strategic product and market decisions, and an EO in the way it continuously reinvents itself. As Greb (2023) highlights, the company has scaled immensely to surpass $3 trillion in terms of market valuation, way ahead of Microsoft; its next competitor making it the world's most profitable company. Evidently apple has over a sustained period, made a series of successful market-creating blue ocean moves including such boundary shattering innovations like the iMac, iPod, iTunes, iPhone, the App store, and iPad (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015) as shown in Fig 5 below

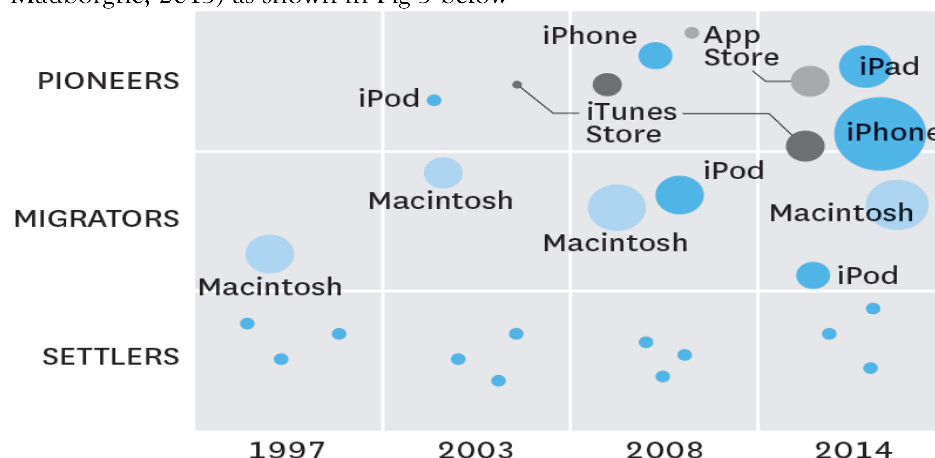

Figure 5: Apple's portfolio of products 1997-2017 (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015)

The above map not only highlights Apple's predominantly blue ocean focus, but also its occasional foray into red ocean territory. Kim and Mauborgne (2015) observed this market-space duality by Apple, noting for example that when imitation caught up with the iPod, Apple countered by launching a range of variably priced iPod versions such as the iPod mini, the iPod shuffle, iPod nano, and the iPod touch. This strategic decision by Apple to offer other variants of the iPod ensured that the firm would command a higher share of the market for longer, as imitators planned and executed their catch-up strategies. Any blue ocean for a specific product is bound to get crowded with time and gradually become a red ocean, at which time the product can be deemed to have reached maturity. A company can decide to continue with the product in a different market, compete head-to-head in the red ocean, or terminate the product. Successful scaling demands that an EO create blue oceans where it can be a market leader, accruing relevant benefits before that market becomes a red ocean, at which time the firm can defend its territory. Resource strength accrued in a blue ocean can be utilized to scaleup the operation. The genius of Apple's blue ocean strategy was that by the time the iPod's blue ocean became packed with imitators, Apple had created another blue ocean by introducing the iPhone (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015).

Apple entered the mobile market fray with its iPhone in 2007, and it received widespread praise for its unique design, touch-screen capabilities, and lack of a conventional keyboard (Greyb, 2023). At the time of its launch, the iPhone exemplified the BOS in that its features like a touchscreen interface, app store, and multi-touch gestures, which were not available in any other phone at the time of its launch (Faster Capital, 2024).

Apple used the Blue Ocean model in developing the iPhone, marking a complete departure from other products in the traditional mobile phone market, thereby creating a novel market in which it faced little to no competition for a sustained period (Jackson, 2024). This strategic thrust continues to give Apple impetus to scale.

Any forward-thinking organisation that intends to define its industry's fate would benefit from Apple's strategic decision-making prowess. Grey (2023) attributes Apple's growth and success to its business strategy which encompasses its design capabilities, hardware proficiency, software expertise, and strategic acquisitions, which effectively engineered an ecosystem that gives the user a complete and wholesome experience. Great products like the iPhone, iPad and iPod offer customers wonderful experiences, enhance their productivity and quality. Creating new and exciting products that disrupt the market and, in the process, create one of the biggest and most profitable companies in the world, is the highest form successful scaling. This is what Steve Jobs and Apple Incorporated achieved. Starting from its slogan to 'think different', Apple made a strategic decision to chart its own course, to create its own unique market, to create value based on its own innovations rather than go head-to-head with industry incumbents like Samsung, Nokia, and others (Jackson, 2024). 'Think different' has proven to be a deliberate strategic decision to creatively differentiate, not just a by-line. As Faster Capital (2024) alludes, disruptive innovation creates new business models that confront or substitute existing ones, by offering superior value propositions, lower costs, or greater convenience. Apple has consistently created technological innovations that have shaped the tech industry, allowing the firm to grow rapidly in its blue oceans. This strategic decision has succeeded in creating and sustaining value for the company, as the firm can benefit from higher margins in the blue oceans, while it defends its territory in the red oceans. It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the blue ocean model bestows immense scaling capabilities on product, service or process pioneering companies.

The foregoing discussion evidences that leveraging blue oceans creates novel markets which enable an EO to grow its revenue in higher margin generating markets where there is no competition. An innovation focus also enables an EO to create innovative products that satisfy unmet and undefined needs in a new market. As cited in the Uber example above, an EO operating in a blue ocean is likely to access more attractive and effective funding options than one in red ocean space.

1.4.3 Network theory

The value network model focuses on the interactionism, the co-relationships, and co-interactions within an ecosystem of organizations, be they suppliers, customers, lenders, and other partners, which relationships together create and deliver value (Mapanga, Miruka & Mavetera, 2017; Stobierski, 2020). Understanding an organisation's value network is important because it provides a bird's-eye synopsis of the company's operations and how it relates with other organisations and can therefore help the organisation's leaders make informed strategic decisions regarding partnerships, outsourcing, product development, and market expansion strategies to create value (Stobierski, 2020). A firm that will go

further faster, is one that will leverage the experiences, assets, and competencies of other organisations in whom critical value resides. Mapinga et al (2017:2) underscore the importance of relationships in value creation in complex organizations, proclaiming that the contemporary organisation must rely on "relation-specific assets, knowledge exchange mechanisms and resource combinations". The forthcoming section discusses the scaling journey of Innscor with a particular focus on the network theory.

1.4.3.1 Innscor Africa Limited

Innscor Africa Limited (Innscor) is a pertinent local example of value creation and scaling through an organisation's value network. Innscor has become Zimbabwe's foremost food industry brand (Innscor Africa Limited, 2023) and exhibits purposeful pursuit of value creation through its value networks. From its founding in 1987, the firm has grown in gigantic leaps to straddle such sectors as fast foods, retailing, grain farming, stock feeds, poultry, beef, and pork (farming, processing, retailing), bottling, and even automotive as shown in Fig 6 below. The pace of scaling demonstrated by Innscor shows a strategic focus on sustained meteoric growth which the firm has pursued, to become arguably the dominant player in the nation's food space. The firm has created well-aligned value networks that have fed into its scaling scope and allowed the firm to scale exponentially.

Innscor has utilized its value network to identify and structure joint venture agreements with value-enhancing organisations across its wide value network, which acquisitions allowed Innscor to restructure and realign processes with the individual business units allowing it to create a network of value-dependent and value-enhancing firms. Evidence of this is Innscor's strategic decision to acquire companies that are a key component of its industry value network as shown in Fig 6 below, as an apparent move to add value by being in control of key aspects of the value chain.

Figure 6: Innscor History (Innscor Africa Limited, 2023)

An example is Irvine's, the poultry production company. One of Innscor's iconic brands is the Innscor fast food chain which includes Chicken Inn, Nando's and Steers, all predominantly chicken fast-food brands. These all benefit from the strategic decision to integrate backward vertically into the poultry farming space and show a determination by Innscor to dominate the local fast-food market space. These acquisitions were also a strategic launch-pad into the regional market, as evidenced by Innscor's foray into the regional markets including Zambia, Ghana, and Kenya (Innscor Africa Limited, 2023). Similar acquisitions were made in the beef and pork value chain and include Colcom and Texas Meats. The company went even further down the meat value chain by acquiring stock-feed companies National Foods Stock Feeds and Profeeds, which feed into its meat farming businesses. The strategic decision to backward integrate is integral to Innscor's dominance in the Zimbabwe food sector. The above is an example that demonstrates Innscor's unparalleled strength in marshalling the value network. The fast-food business has grown to own and franchise outlets across Africa, including Zimbabwe, Zambia, Kenya, DRC, Ghana, Malawi, Namibia, Mauritius, and Swaziland (Innscor Africa Limited, 2023). Innscor was able to scale successfully, to become the industry leader that it is today, partly because of its marketing decision to franchise brands like Nando's, Rocomammas, Ocean Basket and others. Backward and forward integration enabled the company to be in control of the backward processes of supplying its raw materials, and its market processes through its fast-food outlets and retail operations. The stratospheric growth of Innscor can be understood from the lens of the networks it created. The networks benefited Innscor in the market space, as well as the funding dimension. By its sheer size, Innscor would command the audience of any bank or lending institution, making funding easier to access. By the reputation that it

has built, Innscor would command the attention of any potential network partner, making it easier to scale successfully.
The foregoing discussion has demonstrated how a company can generate value and scale successfully based on its value network. There is a lot more to learn from the Innscor example, but the cited examples show that this company is indeed genius at generating value for the stakeholders and customers based on its value network. Innscor was able to leverage its value network to create the formidable industry front-runner that it is today.

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

That EOs face challenges when trying to scale their operations is apparent. EO leaders need to heed the following recommendations to make a success of their scaling efforts:
It is needful to leverage the organisation's unique resources to create unique markets, to break the boundaries of traditionally defined markets and to benefit from higher margins. Resources give an EO an edge in innovation, therefore an organisation's leaders must create necessary funding for innovation initiatives. A culture of innovation must be embedded within the fabric of the organisation at all levels, and resource deployment must be focused towards scaling the firm.
It is also needful for the EO to focus marketing and innovation efforts towards blue ocean markets, as these de-necessitate for head-to-head competition. Blue Oceans also give space for higher profitability which gives impetus to sustained scaling.
An EO must create and leverage its value networks to scale successfully. These value networks allow for synergistic value streams to flow between and among the firms in the network, hence enhancing their capacity to scale.
Today's firm, the EO must stay cognisant of the fact that it will only survive and thrive by employing the power of digital and other technologies.

1.6 CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that EOs are a critical cog in the organisational ecosystem. Their very existence is premised on, and depends on their ability to innovate new products, services, and processes to serve new markets. Three theoretical models were discussed, which showed the strategies that EOs can adopt to scale successfully. The role of innovation, unique market entry strategies and financing options were discussed to shed light on how EOs can scale successfully. There is no argument that EOs are the organisations of the present and future. The EO model and characteristics are what every future-conscious organisation needs to adopt for it to survive and thrive.

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