



Building Business Adaptability: Navigating Organizational Adaptation in Times of Disruption

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Abstract: *Disruptions, such as digital innovations, economic crises, legislative shifts, conflicts, and pandemics, are becoming increasingly frequent and complex, necessitating a heightened organizational capacity for rapid adaptation. While this adaptive capacity is often associated with agility, resilience, and robustness of the business model, its precise definition within the context of business adaptability remains unclear. This paper aims to clarify these concepts by providing a comprehensive overview of their meanings and distinctions, ultimately offering a unified definition of business adaptability. Furthermore, an in-depth review of the key determinants influencing business adaptability is presented. Drawing on secondary data from selected relevant databases, this study synthesizes findings from the literature. In addition to delivering a clear definition of business adaptability - which implies the ability to respond to disruptions - this paper offers valuable insights into the determinants that enhance business adaptability. The proposed recommendations help managers and decision-makers develop strategies for organizations' business model adaptive capacities.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Market competition in a turbulent and rapidly changing environment requires adaptability in the perception and development of business opportunities and changes needed to maintain business stability and ensure continuous growth and development. A turbulent environment is an undeniable reality for all industries, driven by the frequent disruptions that impact organizational operations on an almost daily basis (Buliga et al., 2016; Indrianti et al., 2024). Disruptions are events that interrupt the operations of organizations or slow down the usual course of business (Novak et al., 2022). They are divided into internal and external, where internal ones are related to factors that are under the control of the organization and can be reduced or prevented, while external ones are related to factors that are sudden and not under the control of the organization. Internal disruptions are related to the capacities of the organization such as information disruption, time disruption, digital and technology disruption, logistics and transportation disruption, and capacity and process disruption. External disruptions are natural disruptions, economic and financial disruptions, legal disruptions, demand and supply disruptions, as well as pandemic disruptions (Novak et al., 2022). Driven by the growing frequency of these disruptions, business changes are accelerating exponentially.

Under the influence of constant disruptions, organizations are continuously evolving. This transformation is not merely about competing with rivals but about advancing and innovating business models. According to Forbes, 70% of organizations fail in their transformation efforts and, ultimately, their attempts at change (Gleeson, n.d.). To remain competitive in an increasingly complex world, businesses must adapt their models over time to achieve sustainable value creation (Dayioglu et al., 2024). The ability to evolve business models is essential not only for seizing new opportunities but also for mitigating the risks posed by disruptions that arise when a company relies on the same strategy for too long.

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The success of organizations and their business models is increasingly characterized by terms such as agility, robustness, and resilience. However, the precise meanings of these terms remain ambiguous, posing a significant research problem. The attributes associated with these concepts often lack clarity, as their usage frequently fails to specify how organizations can develop the necessary capabilities to achieve agility, robustness, and sustainability. Existing literature tends to define these terms in similar or overlapping ways, without adequately distinguishing their unique features. For an organization's business model to thrive, it must effectively navigate disruptions and foster the capacity for transformation, innovation, and the creative development of new solutions. According to this, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What is business adaptability, and how are agility, resilience, robustness, and other related attributes described within this context?
2. What are the determinants of business adaptability?

This research aims to clarify the meaning of key attributes commonly used to describe business models and to identify the determinants necessary for organizations to develop their capabilities. To achieve this, three specific research objectives have been defined:

1. Explain the terms agility, resilience, and robustness as attributes that apply to describing a business model.
2. Provide a unique definition of business adaptability
3. Define the determinants of business adaptability.

The methodology of the research is described below. The third chapter provides an overview of the definitions of terms that characterize a successful business model, namely agility, robustness and resilience. The fourth chapter provides an overview of the research results to establish a single definition of business adaptability and its determinants. The paper concludes with the recognized research limitations and a review of future research efforts.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Business Model Ontology

The ontology of the business model represents a comprehensive representation of the business that is presented through nine building blocks. They are Value Proposition, Target Customer, Distribution Channel, Relationship, Value Configuration, Capability, Partnership, Cost Structure, and Revenue Model. These building blocks represent key elements of every business model for which every organization should define what they represent, their purpose, how they are implemented and controlled, and their connection to other elements. The nine building blocks or elements are interrelated and together, they can model any business (Chungyalpa et al., 2016; Mazzoletti, 2004).

The Value Proposition represents the core benefit or purpose that an organization delivers to its customers or other relevant stakeholders through its products, services, or additional value. The Target Customer encompasses all customers and stakeholders for whom the organization creates value and seeks to offer its solutions. The Distribution Channel comprises all touchpoints that facilitate interactions and engagement between the organization and its customers or stakeholders. The Relationship refers to the organization's connection with its customers and stakeholders, shaping engagement and long-term interaction. Value Configuration encompasses the processes, activities, and resources deployed to generate and deliver value effectively. Capability denotes the organization's ability to execute critical processes and activities essential for value creation. The Partnership includes all entities within the organization's value chain that contribute, directly or

indirectly, to the value creation process. The Cost Structure accounts for all expenses incurred during value creation and associated supporting activities. Finally, the Revenue Model captures all sources of income generated through the delivery of value (Chungyalpa et al., 2016). For an organization to successfully navigate and adapt to new conditions shaped by disruption, it must demonstrate adaptability in identifying optimal adjustments to key elements of its business model that align with customers' needs.

2.2. Business Adaptability

Business adaptability represents the ability of an organization, which is often described in the scientific literature through agility, resilience and robustness, or the definition is intertwined around these terms. Namely, agility, flexibility and others are often used as synonyms for adaptability (Zhang et al., 2021). Business adaptability as an ability refers to adapting to new conditions due to various internal or external disruptions. Some factors associated with business adaptability are the acceptance of risk and uncertainty, the importance of human resources, innovation and experimentation, culture, structure (and restructuring) and the full use of new technologies (Latham-Green, 2015), but these are not all.

Given the growing frequency of disruptions and the increasing complexity of organizational demands, the conceptual framework of business adaptability should be designed to incorporate various factors essential for developing real-time adaptive capabilities. Building adaptability is a continuous process, requiring organizations to enhance their responsiveness, innovation, problem-solving agility, learning, and ability to adjust to dynamic environments (Waty et al., 2022).

3. METHODOLOGY

This research is grounded in a comprehensive literature review to gain an in-depth understanding of the research domain. Secondary data were collected from the Scopus database using three specific queries: (1) (“agility”) AND (“business model”), (2) (“robustness”) AND (“business model”), and (3) (“resilience”) AND (“business model”). These queries were designed to identify relevant literature exploring these attributes within the context of business models. The search focused on article titles and included additional filtering criteria. In the first step, only articles accessible for review were considered based on the total number of listed papers. In the second step, the abstracts and contents of the articles were analyzed to extract answers to the research questions from the existing literature. A synthesis of these findings was then conducted to provide a comprehensive overview of the results, systematically addressing the research questions.

4. RESULTS

An analysis of articles based on the defined research queries revealed a notable increase in interest in this field over the past four years, beginning in 2020. Before 2020, only a small number of articles addressed this topic. Specifically, by 2020, the concepts of agility, robustness, and resilience in the context of business models were discussed in a total of 29 articles, whereas 53 articles have been published since then (Figure 1). This trend reflects a growing interest in the subject, highlighting the importance of further exploration and the need to clarify the distinctions and interconnections among these terms.

The search results varied across the three research queries. The first query, (“agility”) AND (“business model”), yielded a list of 28 articles, 20 of which were available for analysis. Of these, 19 provided relevant data to answer the research questions. The second query, (“robustness”)

AND (“business model”)), identified 10 articles, with 4 available for detailed analysis. Among them, 2 offered meaningful insights into the research topic. The third query, ((“resilience”) AND (“business model”)), resulted in 44 articles, of which 30 were available for review. From this pool, 10 articles provided significant insights, contributing to the outcomes of the research.

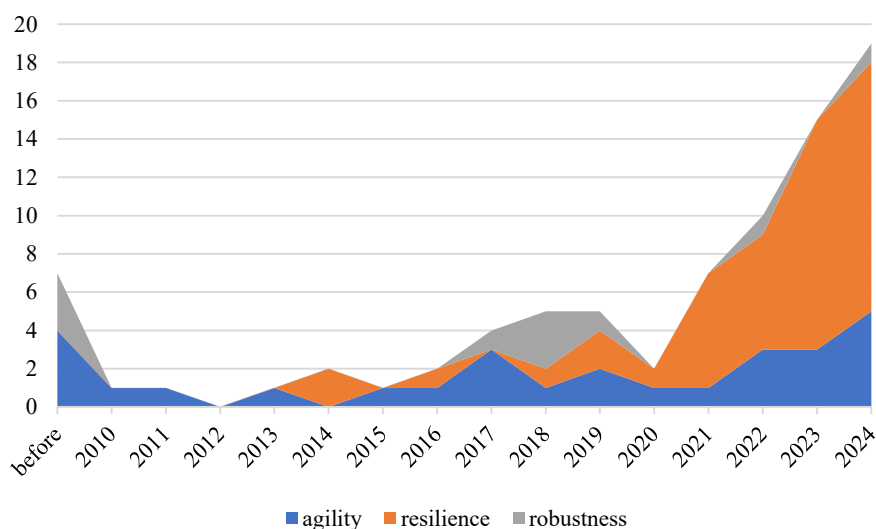


Figure 1. Trends in article publications over the years based on defined queries (1), (2), and (3)

Source: Own research

4.1. Agility of Business Model

Agility refers to the ability to quickly respond to short-term changes in demand or supply and to react simply to external disruptions (Feller et al., 2006). Agility represents the ability to move quickly to new challenges, manage disruptions by doing things differently, and find ways to create and deliver value in line with customer requirements (Strategic Direction, 2024).

Table 1. Business model agility determinants according to literature

| Determinants | References |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Strategic sensitivity | (Arbussa et al., 2017; Battistella et al., 2017; Clauss et al., 2021; Dayioglu et al., 2024; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Mina' & Michelini, 2024; Strategic Direction, 2017; Strategic Direction, 2024; Waty et al., 2022) |
| Leadership unity | (Arbussa et al., 2017; Clauss et al., 2021; Dayioglu et al., 2024; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Mina' & Michelini, 2024; Ramadan et al., 2023; Strategic Direction, 2017) |
| Resource fluidity | (Arbussa et al., 2017; Battistella et al., 2017; Clauss et al., 2021; Dayioglu et al., 2024; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Mina' & Michelini, 2024; Strategic Direction, 2017) |
| Business model innovation | (Battistella et al., 2017; Idrees et al., 2022; Liao et al., 2019; Mihardjo et al., 2019; Piñera-Salmerón & Sanz-Valle, 2024; Ramadan et al., 2023; Troise et al., n.d.) |
| Networking | (Battistella et al., 2017; Feller et al., 2006; Helaakoski et al., 2007) |
| Knowledge and skills management | (Idrees et al., 2022; Piñera-Salmerón & Sanz-Valle, 2024; Ramadan et al., 2023) |
| Operational agility | (Idrees et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2016; Liao et al., 2019; Mihardjo et al., 2019; Piñera-Salmerón & Sanz-Valle, 2024; Troise et al., n.d.; Waty et al., 2022) |

Source: Own research

Agility can be viewed from two different perspectives, as an outcome and as a way of working. The first perspective, agility as an outcome, implies behavior in the context of adaptability to unforeseen situations where an appropriate reaction, or outcome, to the problem is expected. The second perspective views agility as a way of working in everyday operations (Bouwman et al., 2017). Developing agility is not about making continuous small-scale improvements, but rather

about embracing radical changes and adopting an entirely new way of doing business. Agility is not defined by every action within an organization, but by how elements are interconnected, how they interact, and how quickly and effectively these connections can respond when needed (Helaakoski et al., 2006).

Strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity are three essential capabilities of strategic agility (Arbussa et al., 2017; Clauss et al., 2021; Dayioglu et al., 2024; Doz & Kosonen, 2010; Strategic Direction, 2017) and can be viewed as key determinants of agility, although they are not final. In addition, Table 1 shows the remaining determinants of agility, such as Business model innovation, Networking, Knowledge and skills management, and Operational agility.

4.2. Robustness of Business Model

Robustness implies the long-term sustainability and feasibility of a business model under certain conditions of the future environment. In this case, long-term sustainability refers to the success of operationalizing plans in business and the impact on financial implications, while feasibility refers to the implementation and application of certain plans in business practice due to disruptions (Haaker et al., 2017). Resilience can be defined as the ability to adapt to structural changes by modifying business processes, products and technology. Disruptions in business create challenges that can lead to a new “normal” with lasting consequences. An organization’s ability to proactively adapt to this new reality and evolving market conditions hinges on its resilience (Cohen & Kouvelis, 2021).

Methodological approach for evaluating the resilience of a business model is the Business Model Stress Test (Haaker et al., 2017; Niyonsaba et al., 2024), and it can be considered a model for analyzing the determinants of business adaptability. The purpose of the framework is to systematically assess the structural integrity of a business model in response to various external and internal disruptions, facilitating the development of a more robust and adaptable model. The primary objective of stress testing is to identify scenarios in which specific components of the business model may be vulnerable or compromised. Consequently, this analysis enables the formulation of targeted strategic actions aimed at enhancing the adaptability and resilience of the business model in the face of disruptions (Bouwman et al., 2017). The business model stress test, as a methodological approach, is based on six steps, which are (1) Description of the business model, (2) Identification and selection of stress factors, (3) Mapping the business model to stress factors, (4) Creating a heat map, (5) Analysis of results, (6) Formulation of improvements and actions. These steps can be used to analyze the impact of certain disruptions on the business model by analyzing all components of the business model (Haaker et al., 2017).

4.3. Resilience of Business Model

Resilience is defined as a multidisciplinary construct that implies the ability to resist and/or recover from disruptions (Feng et al., 2024). Organizations must recover swiftly and reestablish the desired equilibrium. A truly resilient organization is expected not only to restore its previous state but to achieve an improved condition surpassing the one that existed before the disruption. The critical drivers of a resilient organization are considered to be the organization’s core internal values, a strong emphasis on risk awareness, effective leadership that takes care of the culture, and communication aimed at raising awareness of the challenges and uncertainties in the market (Strategic Direction, 2021). Resilience often involves participating in crisis management and emerging better from challenging situations. The concept of resilience in economics is divided

into two categories: static resilience, which represents the ability of a unit or system to maintain business continuity, and dynamic resilience, which represents the speed at which a business returns to its desired state (Salamzadeh et al., 2023). By increasing the resilience of its business model, the organization ensures the continuity of processes and used resources in a value-creating process (Mao et al., 2021). Table 2 shows the identified determinants of resilience.

Table 2. Business model resilience determinants according to the literature

| Determinants | References |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Digital capabilities and technologies | (Mao et al., 2021; Mattsson et al., 2022; Radic et al., 2022; Sadeghi et al., 2024) |
| Core internal values | (Buliga et al., 2016; Radic et al., 2022; Sadeghi et al., 2024; Strategic Direction, 2021) |
| Leadership | (Feng et al., 2024; Indrianti et al., 2024; Radic et al., 2022; Strategic Direction, 2021) |
| Risk management | (Feng et al., 2024; Radic et al., 2022; Strategic Direction, 2021) |
| Collaboration and communication | (Feng et al., 2024; Radic et al., 2022; Strategic Direction, 2021) |
| Situational awareness | (Indrianti et al., 2024; Mattsson et al., 2022; Sharma et al., 2024) |
| Human resources and competences | (Sadeghi et al., 2024; Schaffer et al., 2021) |
| Process reengineering | (Feng et al., 2024; Sadeghi et al., 2024) |

Source: Own research

5. DETERMINANTS OF BUSINESS ADAPTABILITY

This section presents a unique definition of business adaptability and identifies its key determinants based on synthesized research findings. Business adaptability refers to an organization's ability to:

- (1) identify and recognize disruptions along with the challenges they pose.
- (2) swiftly and effectively adjust to new conditions arising from these disruptions.
- (3) leverage its internal capabilities to develop an appropriate response—innovating new ways to create and deliver value that aligns with customer needs.
- (4) ensure the long-term sustainability and viability of its business model within a given environment.
- (5) generate new opportunities for growth, resilience, and continuous advancement over time.

Fourteen dimensions of business adaptability were identified, namely Strategic sensitivity, Leadership, Resource fluidity, Business model innovation, Collaboration and communication, Networking, Knowledge and skills management, Digital capabilities and technologies, Human resources and competencies, Operational agility, Core internal values, Risk management, Reengineering process, and Situational awareness.

All these dimensions have a significant impact on certain elements of the business model. Strategic sensitivity refers to the awareness of managers, but also of all employees, about trends and insightful shaping of opportunities in combination with a participatory process of strategic planning (Albayraktaroglu, 2024; Clauss et al., 2021). Leadership implies a way of managing where a culture of experimentation and learning is encouraged, while human resources and competencies include working on knowledge and skills and building the experience of all stakeholders in the organization (Radic et al., 2022; Strategic Direction, 2021). Core internal values involve focusing on fundamental internal values that include trust, commitment, and empowerment (Strategic Direction, 2021). Networking, as well as Collaboration and communication, refer to all forms of cooperation and building relationships with users and all stakeholders of the organization (Feller et al., 2006; Feng et al., 2024). Situational awareness is the ability to recognize disruptions and adapt to new conditions that are related to Risk management, which entails a structured approach to identifying, analyzing, evaluating, and addressing risks through clearly defined actions (Strategic Direction, 2021). Operational agility refers to the flexibility and adaptation of business processes in the value chain, while process reengineering implies that processes are reviewed and changed

in such a way as to optimize parameters related to quality, speed, costs and value service for all stakeholders (Feng et al., 2024). Digital capabilities and technologies refer to a transformative process enabled by digital technologies, where their functionalities support value chain processes and enhance business model adaptability. Resource fluidity refers to the internal ability to reconfigure and quickly redistribute resources in processes (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). Business model innovation refers to the way an organization will create value, deliver value, and act on a strategy towards all stakeholders (Buliga et al., 2016).

6. CONCLUSION

The growing uncertainty on both external global and internal organizational levels, driven by disruptions, significantly impacts organizational operations in today's world. Organizations need to be ready to adapt the business model under the influence of circumstances that differ in the extent of their impact on business and the new conditions they shape in the market. This paper has contributed to defining business adaptability as an important capability that is often explained as a synonym or similar term to agility, resilience and robustness. For this reason, a unique definition of business adaptability has been provided, which represents the ability to identify disruptions and challenges, quickly and easily adapt to them while finding an appropriate solution in accordance with customer needs, ensuring sustainability with continuous future progress. Fourteen determinants have been identified that characterize business adaptability and are related to certain elements of the business model. A limitation of this paper relates to the number of papers included in the analysis, where a smaller number of papers were identified as relevant to the research questions posed. This indicates an additional need to expand this research, in the context of increasing the number of papers included in the analysis, but also other concepts identified with business adaptability. Future work will be focused on developing a measurement instrument for assessing business adaptability that will be based on the identified determinants of business adaptability, linking them to specific elements of the business model.

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