

**A MODEL TO OPERATIONALISE ENTREPRENEURIAL MENTORING:
A STUDY OF EMERGING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
IN KWAZULU-NATAL**

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that the above thesis is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I submitted the thesis to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at UNISA for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.



Signature

5 January 2023

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ABSTRACT

The Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) operational landscape has transformed universally, exacerbated by the 2020 pandemic, thus necessitating innovative research for post-pandemic SME sustainability. Entrepreneurs encounter persistent obstacles in their ventures. South Africa's volatile business climate makes entrepreneurial resilience mandatory. A paucity exists in pragmatic academic research concerning operationalising mentoring in entrepreneurship. A review of extant literature suggested limited information pertinent to a phase-based entrepreneurial mentoring model. The purpose of this study was to develop a contemporary post-pandemic model to operationalise entrepreneurial mentoring, by combining the mentoring process with the entrepreneurship life cycle. Consequently, the stimulants and inhibitors of entrepreneurship were addressed. A qualitative grounded theory case study approach was applied, using a sample of 30 emerging retail entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal, selected through purposive sampling from business forums. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain insight into participants' entrepreneurial experiences, mentoring expectations and competency needs. Congruent with the grounded theory methodology, qualitative data were examined on an iterative basis, subject to open, axial and advanced coding. Eight key themes emerged from the data analysis. The codes and themes were blended during theoretical integration and high-level conceptualisation, culminating in the proposed model. The findings implied a crucial need for mentoring as a tool to inculcate appropriate entrepreneurial competencies during distinct stages of the life cycle. Furthermore, the findings demonstrated that contemporary mentoring practices should address business and personal entrepreneurial factors. The proposed model, termed the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model, combined facets of the mentoring process and the entrepreneurship life cycle phases, factoring a range of competency factors for mentoring focus. The unique nature of the model was the integration of a principal process-based mentoring component with which entrepreneurial development was aligned. The study makes several contributions to literature. It offers a methodological contribution through a qualitative grounded theory case study approach. It presents a multi-faceted contemporary entrepreneurial mentoring model. The study offers pragmatic opportunities for entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting. Additional research can enhance the model by adopting a quantitative or mixed methodology

approach, and by proposing competency factors for established entrepreneurs in the maturity or decline phases of the life cycle.

KEY TERMS:

Competency; emerging entrepreneur; entrepreneurial life cycle; entrepreneurship challenges; mentor-mentee; mentoring model; mentoring process; post-pandemic; retail; SME.

ISIFINYEZO

Isimo sokusebenza kwamaBhizinisi Amancane Namaphakathi (ama-SME) kuye kwashintsha emhlabeni kabanzi, kwabhebhethekiswa ubhubhane lwango-2020, ngakho kwaveza isidingo socwaningo olunobuchule lokugcina ama-SME esebenza ngemuva kwalolu bhubhane. Abasunguli bamabhizinisi babhekana nezingqinamba eziphikelelayo emisebenzini yabo. Isimo sezebhizinisi esingazinzile eNingizimu Afrika senza kudingeke ukuthi abasunguli bamabhizinisi babe qatha. Kunocwaningo oluncane kakhulu lokuthola izixazululo mayelana nokuqeqeshwa kwabasunguli bamabhizinisi kwezokusebenza. Ukubuyekeza kwezincwadi ezikhona kwabonisa ukuthi kunolwazi olulinganiselwe oluhambisana nenkambiso yokuqeqesha abasunguli bamabhizinisi ngokwezigaba zabo. Inhloso yalolu cwaningo kwakuwubela nenkambiso yesikhashana yangemuva kobhubhane ukuze kuqhakanjise ukuqeqeshwa kwabasunguli bamabhizinisi, ngokuhlenganisa inqubo yokuqeqesha kanye nobude besikhathi sokusebenza kwebhizinisi. Ngenxa yalokho, kwasingathwa izinto ezigqoguzela ukusungulwa kwamabhizinisi kanye nezingqinamba. Kwasetshenziswa ucwaningo lwesimo lokuhlola amanani, kusetshenziswa isampula losomabhizinisi abangama-30 abasafufusa KwaZulu-Natali, abakhethwe ngezinjongo zokuba yizibonelo ezithangamini zebhizinisi. Kwaqhutshwa izingxoxo ezihleliwe ukuze kutholwe imininingwane yolwazi lwezebhizinisi lwababambiqhaza, lokho abakulindele ngokuqeqeshwa kanye nezidingo zabo zamakhono. Kanye nesu lombono elinesisekelo, kwahlolwa ulwazi lwezibalo ngendlela ephindelelayo, ngaphansi kwamakhodi avulelekile, azinzile kanye nathuthukisiwe. Kwavela imikhakha eyisishiyagalombili eyinhloko uma kuhlaziywa lolu lwazi. Le mikhakha nezihloko kwahlanganiswa uma kubunjaniswa imibono kusetshenziswa nobuchule obusezingeni eliphezulu, kwaholela esiboniselweni esihlongozwayo. Okwatholakala kwabonisa ukuthi kunesidingo esisemqoka sokuqeqesha njengethuluzi lokugcizelela amakhono afanele okusungula ibhizinisi ezigabeni ezikhethekile zomjikelezo webhizinisi. Ngaphezu kwalokho, okwatholakala kwabonisa ukuthi imikhuba yesimanje yokuqeqesha kufanele icabangele izici zokusebenza kwebhizinisi ezithinta ibhizinisi uqobo kanye nabantu. Isiboniselwe esahlongozwa, esabizwa ngokuthi Isiboniselwe Sokuqeqesha Abasunguli Bamabhizinisi Abasafufusa, sahlanganisa izingxenye zenqubo yokuqeqesha kanye nezigaba zomjikelezo webhizinisi, kwafakwa nezici ezihlukene zamakhono ukuqeqesha okuzogxila kuzo. Okuyingqayizivele

ngalesi siboniselo ukufakwa kwesigaba esiyinhloko esisekelwe enqubweni yokuqeqesha esavunyelaniswa nokuthuthukiswa kwamakhono okusungula ibhizinisi. Lolu cwaningo lunemithelela eminingana emkhakheni wezincwadi. Lunomthelela wenqubo ezolandelwa ngesisekelo socwaningo lwamanani ezibonelo. Luletha isiboniselo samanje sokuqeqeshwa kwamabhizinisi esinezigaba eziningi. Lolu cwaningo lunikeza amathuba ezixazululo kubasunguli bamabhizinisi ngemuva kobhubhane. Ucwangingo oluthe xaxa lungathuthukisa lesi siboniselo ngokusebenzisa inqubo ehlaziya izibalo noma exubile, nangokuhlongoza izici zokuhlola amakhono zosomabhizinisi asebezinzile ezigabeni zokuvuthwa noma zokuwohloka komjikelezo webhizinisi.

AMATEMU ASEMQOKA:

Amakhono; ama-SME; ezentengiso; inqubo yokuqeqesha; isiboniselo sokuqeqesha; izinselele zokusungulwa kwebhizinisi; ngemuva kobhubhane; umjikelezo wesikhathi sebhizinisi; umqeqeshi-umqeqshwa; umsunguli webhizinisi osafufusa.

ISICATSHULWA

Ubume bokusebenza kwamaShishini amaNcinci naPhakathi (SME) lutshintshile jikelele, busenziwa mandundu ngubhubhane wama-2020, ngoko ke kwenze kwafuneka uphando olutsha lozinzo lwe-SME lwasemva kobhubhane. Oosomashishini bahlangabezana nemiqobo ethe gqolo kumashishini abo. Imeko-bume yoshishino eguquguqukayo eMzantsi Afrika yenza ukuqinisa ezoshishino kube sisinyanzeliso. Kukho ukunqongophala okukhoyo kuphando lwezifundo ngokwepragmatika malunga nokubonelela ngemizekelo ukucebisa kushishino. Uphononongo loncwadi olukhoyo lucebise ngolwazi olunqongopheleyo ngokuphathelele kwimodeli yokucebisa esekwe kwisigaba soshishino. Injongo yolu phononongo ibikukuphuhlisa imodeli yyexesha esikulo lasemva kobhubhane ukwenza lusebenze uthantamiso kwezoshishino, ngokudibanisa inkqubo yokucebisa/ yokuthantamisa kunye nomjikelo wobomi boshishino. Ngenxa yoko, izinto ezikhuthazayo kunye nezithinteli kushishino zaye zaqwalaselwa. Kuye kwasetyenziswa ithiyori ezinzileyo esemgangathweni yophononongo lwesiganeko (case study), kusetyenziswa isampulu yoosomashishini abasakhasayo abangama-30 KwaZulu-Natal, abakhethwe ngokwenjongo yesampulu evela kwiiforam zoshishino. Udliwano-ndlebe olulungelelanisiweyo lwenziwa ukuzuzisa ukuqonda/ ingqiqo kumava abathathi-nxaxheba boshishino, izinto ezilindelweyo zokucebisa kunye neemfuno zobuchule. Ngokungqinelana nendlela yenkqubo yethiyori esisiseko, iidatha ezisemgangathweni zavavanywa ngokokuphindaphindiweyo, ngokuxhomekeka ekuvuleni, ukusebenzisa i-axial nogqwetho lombhalo olukwinqanaba eliphezulu. Imixholo esibhozo engundoqo yavela kuhlalutyo lwedatha. Ikhawudi kunye nemixholo zahlanganiswa ngexesha lokudityaniswa kwethiyori kunye nengqikelelo ekwinqanaba eliphezulu, eziphelele kwimodeli ecetyiweyo. Iziphumo zabanisa imfuneko ebalulekileyo yokuthantamisa njengesixhobo sokubethelela ubuchule obufanelekileyo kushishino ngamaxesha ahlukeneyo omjikelo wobomi. Ngaphezu koko, iziphumo zibanise ukuba iinkqubo zale mihla zokucebisa kufuneka zijongane nemiba yoshishino kunye nemiba yoshishino yobuqu. Imodeli ecetyiweyo, ebizwa ngokuba yiModeli yokuCebisa uSomashishini oSaKhulayo, imiba edityanisiweyo yenkqubo yokucebisa kunye nezigaba zomjikelo wobomi zoshishino, ukufaka uluhlu lwemiba yobuchule yokugxila ekucebiseni. Ubume obukhethekileyo bale modeli yaba kukudityaniswa kwenxalenye yenkqubo yokucebisa engundoqo apho uphuhliso loshishino

Iwangqanyaniswa. Uphononongo lunegalelo (iminikelo) oluninzi kuncwadi. Lunika igalelo kwindlela yokusebenza ngokusebenzisa indlela yophando lwethiyori esekelweyo esemgangathweni. Ibonisa imodeli eneenkalo ezininzi zokucebisa kushishino lwale mihla (contemporary). Uphononongo lubonelela ngamathuba koosomashishini kwimeko yasemva kobhubhane. Uphando olongezelelweyo lunokuphucula imodeli ngokwamkela indlela yobuninzi okanye indlela yokusebenza exubileyo, kunye nangokucebisa imiba yobuchule koosomashishini abasele bekumanqanaba okuvuthwa okanye okuhla komjikelo wobomi.

AMAGAMA ANGUNDOQO:

Emva kobhubhane; imingeni yoshishino; imodeli yokucebisa; inkqubo yokucebisa; SME (amashishini amancinci naphakathi); ubuchule; ukuthengisa/ ukurhweba; umcebisi; umjikelo wobomi boshishino; usomashishini osakhasayo/ osakhulayo.

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On a personal note, I am grateful beyond words for the love, support and inspiration of my mother.

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On a poignant note, I will remain eternally grateful to my father for teaching me the value of reading from a young age. Whilst this thesis deals with aspects of the impact of COVID-19, I never imagined that he would succumb to COVID-19 in the midst of my research journey, making the journey arduous at times. The irony is not lost on me. He would have been elated about this milestone. Therefore, I dedicate this thesis to my father.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT	5
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	7
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	9
1.5.1 Primary research question	9
1.5.2 Secondary research questions.....	9
1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	10
1.6.1 Primary research objective.....	10
1.6.2 Secondary research objectives	10
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	10
1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	12
1.8.1 Research philosophy.....	12
1.8.2 Research design	13
1.8.3 Study population and sample	16
1.8.4 Data collection and analysis.....	17
1.8.5 Delineation of the study.....	19
1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH	19
1.10 RESEARCH ETHICS	20
1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMS	20
1.11.1 Entrepreneurship	20
1.11.2 Mentoring	21
1.11.3 Retail industry	22
1.12 CHAPTER ORGANISATION	22
1.13 CONCLUSION	23

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - CONCEPTUALISATION OF MENTORING IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP	25
2.1 INTRODUCTION	25
2.1.1 Structure of the literature review chapter	25
2.2 ROLE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW IN GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH.....	27
PART A: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY	28
2.3 BACKGROUND TO KEY CONCEPTS	28
2.3.1 Mentoring	28
2.3.2 Entrepreneurship	42
2.3.3 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)	52
2.4 MENTORING AND COACHING: MODELS AND THEORIES	65
2.4.1 Elements of a model	65
2.4.2 Operationalisation of a model	66
2.4.3 Mentoring models	67
2.4.4 Mentoring theories	79
2.5 FACTORS THAT IMPACT EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS.....	83
2.5.1 Challenges and inhibitors of retail entrepreneurs	84
2.5.2 Factors that support and stimulate retail entrepreneurial ventures ...	93
2.6 COVID-19 PANDEMIC: IMPACT ON SMES.....	98
2.7 IMPACT OF MENTORING ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS	99
2.7.1 Mentoring success in developed and developing countries	101
2.8 MENTORING MODEL VARIABLES	102
2.8.1 Mentor-mentee traits.....	102
PART B: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY	107
2.9 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY.....	107
2.9.1 Mentoring model components.....	108
2.9.2 Business model components	109
2.9.3 Theoretical foundation: Business Model Canvas (BMC)	110
2.10 GAPS IN EXTANT LITERATURE	114
2.10.1 Mentoring model for emerging retail SMEs	114
2.10.2 Early-stage entrepreneurial mentoring competency needs	115
2.10.3 Methodological gap	116

2.10.4	Addressing pandemic and post-pandemic challenges through mentoring	116
2.11	CONCLUSION.....	117
	CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	119
3.1	INTRODUCTION	119
3.2	RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY	121
3.2.1	Ontology.....	122
3.2.2	Epistemology	122
3.2.3	Axiology	123
3.3	RESEARCH APPROACH	124
3.3.1	Research design	124
3.4	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	125
3.5	RESEARCH STRATEGY	126
3.5.1	Grounded theory: description and rationale	126
3.5.2	Case study	134
3.6	RESEARCH TIME HORIZON.....	136
3.7	RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES	137
3.7.1	Data collection	137
3.7.2	Data analysis and interpretation.....	146
3.8	TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH	149
3.8.1	Credibility	149
3.8.2	Dependability	150
3.8.3	Confirmability	151
3.8.4	Transferability	151
3.8.5	Authenticity	151
3.9	ETHICS IN RESEARCH.....	152
3.10	DELINEATION OF THE STUDY	153
3.11	CONCLUSION.....	154
	CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS	155
4.1	INTRODUCTION	155
4.2	PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS.....	157
4.2.1	Demographic information of participants.....	157
4.3	PROFILE OF SMES	158
4.3.1	Business structure and sphere.....	158

4.3.2	Employees	159
4.3.3	Business age	159
4.3.4	Business platform	159
4.3.5	Insights into entrepreneurship ventures	159
PART A: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS		
.....		160
4.4	DATA ANALYSIS OVERVIEW	161
4.4.1	Initial and intermediate grounded theory coding: emergence of codes and code groups	161
4.5	RESEARCH QUESTION 1	165
4.5.1	Theme 1: Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship	165
4.5.2	Theme 2: Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship	186
4.6	RESEARCH QUESTION 2	195
4.6.1	Theme 3: Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship	195
4.7	RESEARCH QUESTION 3	202
4.7.1	Theme 4: Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring	202
4.7.2	Theme 5: Mentor role in entrepreneurial success	205
4.7.3	Theme 6: Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success	207
4.7.4	Theme 7: Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success	210
4.7.5	Theme 8: Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success	212
PART B: PROPOSED MENTORING MODEL		215
4.8	MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION 4	215
4.8.1	Mentoring themes and preliminary variables	217
4.8.2	Business themes and preliminary variables	217
4.8.3	Rationale for the new model development using theoretical integration	218
4.9	PRESENTATION OF THE NEW MODEL: EMERGING ENTREPRENEUR MENTORING (EEM) MODEL	220
4.9.1	Discussion of the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model	223

4.9.2	Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model comparison.....	230
4.9.3	Presentation of the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model to business forum members.....	232
4.10	CONCLUSION.....	233
	CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	234
5.1	INTRODUCTION	234
5.2	SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY	234
5.3	CONDENSED NARRATIVE OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES.....	235
5.3.1	Research objective 1.....	235
5.3.2	Research objective 2.....	238
5.3.3	Research objective 3.....	239
5.3.4	Research objective 4.....	240
5.4	CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE STUDY.....	241
5.5	CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO LITERATURE	242
5.6	STUDY LIMITATIONS.....	244
5.7	RECOMMENDATIONS	245
5.7.1	Recommendations arising from the study.....	245
5.7.2	Recommendations for further research.....	246
5.8	CONCLUSION.....	247
	REFERENCES.....	250
	APPENDICES.....	321
	APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	321
	APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	323
	APPENDIX C: CERTIFICATE FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE DATA.....	324
	APPENDIX D: CERTIFICATE FROM THE EDITOR.....	325
	APPENDIX E: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE	326

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Structure of the introduction chapter	1
Figure 1.2: Chapter organisation	23
Figure 2.1: Structure of the literature review chapter	26
Figure 2.2: The entrepreneurship process	47
Figure 2.3: Shane's model of entrepreneurship	47
Figure 2.4: The entrepreneurship framework	49
Figure 2.5: Stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle	50
Figure 2.6: GEM entrepreneurship ecosystem and phases	52
Figure 2.7: Revised micro, small and medium businesses in South Africa	54
Figure 2.8: Numbers of SMEs in South Africa.....	55
Figure 2.9: South Africa's TEA ranking	57
Figure 2.10: DOLETA pyramid model	68
Figure 2.11: DOLETA entrepreneurial pyramid.....	69
Figure 2.12: Competence executive coaching model.....	72
Figure 2.13: ADDIE model	77
Figure 2.14: Integral theory four-quadrant model	80
Figure 2.15: Integral model change approach.....	81
Figure 2.16: Education levels of formal and informal sector entrepreneurs	87
Figure 2.17: Causes of SME failure	92
Figure 2.18: Mentor traits	104
Figure 2.19: Entrepreneurial competency skill set.....	106
Figure 2.20: Business Model Canvas (BMC)	112
Figure 2.21: A proposed business model.....	113
Figure 3.1: The research onion	120
Figure 3.2: Structure of the research methodology chapter	121
Figure 3.3: Grounded theory framework.....	131
Figure 3.4: Data analysis process.....	146
Figure 3.5: Qualitative grounded theory data analysis overview	149
Figure 4.1: Presentation of the findings chapter.....	156
Figure 4.2: Word cloud of participant interviews.....	161
Figure 4.3: Transcript files created on ATLAS.ti.....	161
Figure 4.4: Sample of transcript file coding	162

Figure 4.5: Sample code list for entrepreneurial challenges.....	162
Figure 4.6: Sample participant interview text and researcher comment.....	163
Figure 4.7: Sample code categories.....	163
Figure 4.8: Mentoring themes and preliminary variables.....	217
Figure 4.9: Business (entrepreneurial) themes and preliminary variables.....	218
Figure 4.10: Sample memo of researcher thought perspective.....	219
Figure 4.11: Sample memo created by researcher	220
Figure 4.12: Proposed model named Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model ..	221
Figure 5.1: Structure of the conclusions and recommendations chapter.....	234

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1:	Definitions of mentoring	31
Table 2.2:	DOLETA entrepreneurial pyramid tier competencies	70
Table 2.3:	Sources of SME catastrophe.....	93
Table 2.4:	Rewards of mentoring	101
Table 2.5:	Mentoring in developed and developing nations	102
Table 2.6:	Preferred entrepreneurial competencies	105
Table 2.7:	Contemporary entrepreneurial competencies	106
Table 2.8:	Mentoring model components	108
Table 2.9:	Business Model Canvas (BMC) building blocks	111
Table 3.1:	Strategy for the grounded theory research design phases.....	130
Table 3.2:	Data analysis process	146
Table 4.1:	Research participants by gender.....	157
Table 4.2:	Participants by age group	157
Table 4.3:	Participants by educational background.....	158
Table 4.4:	SME by structure and sphere.....	158
Table 4.5:	Code creation example	163
Table 4.6:	High-level themes aligned to the research questions.....	164
Table 4.7:	Conventional marketing challenges	166
Table 4.8:	Social media marketing challenges.....	169
Table 4.9:	Customer challenges	171
Table 4.10:	Financial challenges.....	173
Table 4.11:	Employee challenges	175
Table 4.12:	Management and leadership challenges.....	177
Table 4.13:	Personal challenges.....	179
Table 4.14:	Setup challenges.....	181
Table 4.15:	Competitor challenges	182
Table 4.16:	Inventory challenges	184
Table 4.17:	Supply chain challenges	185
Table 4.18:	Personal factors	187
Table 4.19:	Financial factors	188
Table 4.20:	Customer factors.....	190
Table 4.21:	Product factors	191

Table 4.22:	Relationship factors.....	192
Table 4.23:	Professionalism in entrepreneurship	193
Table 4.24:	Competencies for emerging entrepreneurs.....	196
Table 4.25:	Establishment of the entrepreneurial vision	203
Table 4.26:	Entrepreneurial vision accomplishment through mentoring.....	204
Table 4.27:	Mentor role in entrepreneurial success	206
Table 4.28:	Entrepreneurial mentor attributes.....	207
Table 4.29:	Entrepreneurial mentoring preference variables	210
Table 4.30:	Impact of entrepreneurial mentoring	213
Table 4.31:	Theoretical integration comparison of the proposed model.....	222
Table 4.32:	Addendum for step 4 - detailed personal, business and operational, and ecosystem competencies for entrepreneurial mentoring	228
Table 4.33:	Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model comparison.....	231
Table 5.1:	Challenges of entrepreneurship	236
Table 5.2:	Stimulants of entrepreneurship	237
Table 5.3:	Competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship	238

ABBREVIATIONS

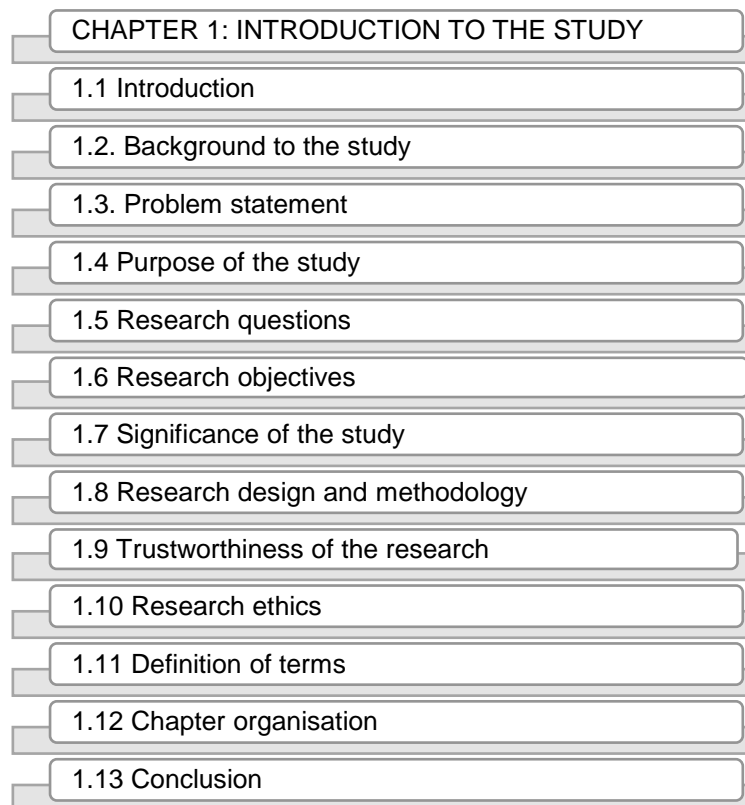
BER	Bureau for Economic Research
BCI	Business Confidence Index
BI	Business Incubator
BMC	Business Model Canvas
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
CIPC	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
COMENSA	Coaches and Mentors of South Africa
CSF	Critical Success Factor
DOLETA	Department of Labour Employment and Training Administration
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EE	Entrepreneurship Education
EEM	Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (Model)
EPL	Entrepreneurship, Professionalism and Leadership
ETA	Employment and Training Administration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
HELP	High Entrepreneurship, Leadership and Professionalism
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ISP	Incubation Support Programme
MBA	Master of Business Administration
OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
PAYE	Pay As You Earn
RBM	Retail Business Model
SABPP	South African Board for People Practices
SACCI	South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry
SARS	South African Revenue Services
SDL	Skills Development Levy
SEDA	Small Enterprise Development Agency
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise

TEA	Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
VAT	Value Added Tax
W&R	Wholesale and Retail

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter affords an overview of the study, which is based on entrepreneurial mentoring, in the case of selected emerging retail entrepreneurs located in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter provides background information to the study, a synopsis of the research problem, the purpose of the study and the presentation of the research questions. Additionally, the chapter provides an overview of the methodology adopted in the study, a definition of the key terms and the approach implemented for chapter organisation. Figure 1.1 outlines the structure of the chapter.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 1.1: Structure of the introduction chapter

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) perform an instrumental role in economies and emerging nations globally, according to pre-pandemic data (World Bank, 2020). SMEs embody 90% of enterprises globally and create in excess of 50% of employment, with registered SMEs contributing approximately 40% of the Gross Domestic Product

(GDP) in developing nations (World Bank, 2020). Comparatively, SMEs in South Africa contribute approximately 22% of the GDP, with the subsistence ratio being comparatively small, resulting in 80% of SMEs failing to survive over a protracted period (Reynolds, Fourie & Erasmus, 2019). Consequently, the high collapse ratio of SMEs has an impact on declining economic expansion in South Africa (Reynolds *et al.*, 2019). The high failure ratio of SMEs in South Africa is further validated by the 2019 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report, which established the endurance rate for SMEs in South Africa as comparatively low, when contrasted to universal norms (Bushe, 2019). SME failure in South Africa is attributed to the inadequate expertise of entrepreneurs when they embark on new business ventures (Reynolds *et al.*, 2019). Although the development of entrepreneurs has progressed comprehensively since 1970, through the adoption of practices such as mentoring or skill advancement, only 5% of entrepreneurial mentoring development practices can be attributed to African nations (Gozali *et al.*, 2017). The World Bank (2020) estimates that 600 million jobs will need to be generated by 2030, particularly in developing nations, to sustain a mounting labour force, implying that SME advancement should be a priority. Therefore, competency development through mentoring, for the purpose of contemporary aptitude advancement, plays a pivotal role in entrepreneurial SME advancement.

Littlewood and Holt (2018) contend that entrepreneurship makes a 30% contribution toward the GDP in South Africa, whereas the contribution in developed countries averages 55%. Thus, mentoring, skills development and entrepreneurial education are crucial instruments to respond to South Africa's entrepreneurial challenges (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). Whilst there is no consensus regarding the actual percentage contribution of SMEs to GDP in South Africa, SMEs in Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (referred to as the BRICS nations) remain the foremost driver of employment creation (Van Vuuren & Alemayehu, 2018). SMEs in BRICS nations account for approximately two-thirds of employment and 42% of the GDP (Van Vuuren & Alemayehu, 2018). South Africa's unemployment challenge is exacerbated by its lack of economic growth (Bushe, 2019). Although the GDP surpasses populace increase per annum in South Africa, it fails to generate employment opportunities (Bushe, 2019). Despite South Africa's economy being positioned after Nigeria in

Africa, its GDP per capita is estimated to be smaller than that of other global emerging markets (Hewitt & Janse van Rensburg, 2020).

The 2017 GEM report indicated a distinct decline in entrepreneurship levels in South Africa (Herrington & Kew, 2017). The Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) index is a key measure of entrepreneurial endeavour, which represents a gauge for entrepreneurial performance in global economies (Herrington & Kew, 2017; Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). The TEA signifies the ratio of individuals aged between 18 and 64 whose business ventures are in the inception phase, referred to as nascent entrepreneurship, or in the phase that follows inception, referred to as managing a new business, according to the 2020 GEM report (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). South Africa's position of 13 below the median exhibits a continual negative movement, where it is ranked 46th out of 65 countries (Herrington & Kew, 2017; Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). South Africa's dismal entrepreneurship statistic reflects the incapacity of its small business sector to make a significant contribution toward decreasing unemployment or stimulating economic development (Herrington & Kew, 2017; Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020).

Entrepreneurship makes a substantial contribution to economic development. The review of extant literature recapitulates entrepreneurship as an opportunity-driven dynamic process of business formation and evolution, which contributes to the economy through employment creation and a reduction in the poverty rate; hence, entrepreneurship positively impacts the GDP of a country, as is the case in South Africa (Backman & Karlsson, 2013; Sitharam & Hoque, 2016; Metallo *et al.*, 2021). Universally, entrepreneurship contributes to innovation, change and progression in world economies (Ahlstrom *et al.*, 2018). It serves as a driver of economic growth, leading to the promotion of entrepreneurial endeavour by governments globally, albeit only later definitions consider it in an African context (Ferreira, Reis & Miranda, 2015; Ahlstrom *et al.*, 2018). Si *et al.* (2020) affirm that indigent people, through the inculcation of appropriate business mindsets and skills, can uplift the quality of their lives in developing nations. This notion is supported by the assertion that there is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial activity and the standard of living of individuals (Hussaini & Noma, 2019). Naminse, Zhuang and Zhu (2018) state that China contributed significantly to a decline in international impoverishment statistics,

by recording a reduction of 82% in its impoverishment ratio over the past three decades, through the stimulation of economic and entrepreneurial activity.

Evolving entrepreneurs in South Africa acknowledge incongruity pertinent to their preliminary optimistic perceptions of entrepreneurship versus their actual adverse entrepreneurial experiences in the form of challenges (Nheta *et al.*, 2020). This serves as a contributory factor to the high failure rate within the first three years of operation (Nheta *et al.*, 2020). Additionally, a lack of formalised business knowledge and skills serves as a major constraint for emerging entrepreneurs (Mahadea & Zogli, 2018). It is recognised that the trials encountered by emerging entrepreneurs in developing countries have been overcome by formalised mentoring and education programmes (Leboea, 2017). Additionally, the likelihood of entrepreneurial success is constructively augmented through formalised training and mentoring (Leboea, 2017; Moreno-Garcia, 2019). However, mentoring is a facet which is deficient in emerging entrepreneurs in South Africa, due to a lack of access and exposure (Leboea, 2017).

An unexpected force, in the form of the Coronavirus outbreak in early 2020 and the subsequent global pandemic, negatively impacted the business landscape for SMEs (Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Salamzadeh & Dana, 2020). The 2020 pandemic exacerbated the deteriorating business situation in developing nations, with particular emphasis on emerging SMEs (Salamzadeh & Dana, 2020). Consequently, SMEs suffered severe economic losses to the point where many businesses experienced closure (OECD, 2020). Sectors such as the industrial sector, construction sector, services sector, tourism, and the retail industry, were adversely impacted (Statistics South Africa, 2020a). A segment most impacted by the global pandemic was the emerging retail SME segment (OECD, 2020). Statistics South Africa (2020b) reported that national retail sales diminished by approximately 7% during the third quarter of 2020, in comparison to the previous year, reflecting poor economic growth in the retail sector. There was no discrepancy between large and small business, since all facets of the retail sector suffered a similar revenue decline of approximately 7% (Statistics South Africa, 2020b). Therefore, new research is paramount to identify the contemporary enablers and inhibitors of entrepreneurship, with an emphasis on abilities which must be inculcated in entrepreneurs to prepare them for future sustainability (Salamzadeh & Dana, 2020). A study of 5 800 SMEs in the United States, at the start of the pandemic, concluded that retail SMEs were impacted through loss of turnover,

closure, employment curtailment and future uncertainty (Bartik *et al.*, 2020). Subsequently, 43% of SMEs experienced closure and 40% trimmed employment costs (Bartik *et al.*, 2020). This implies that prevailing SME business and operational frameworks will be obliterated, although novel prospects may be devised (Liguori & Pittz, 2020). The latter infers the necessity for the development of new models and frameworks to be implemented in a mentoring, operational and sustainability context. The impact of the pandemic on South African SMEs has been similar to that of the United States, thus recognising the need for further SME research (Bartik *et al.*, 2020; Statistics South Africa, 2020a).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Various studies have explored the disciplines of entrepreneurship and mentoring from different perspectives. Pivotal exploration into mentoring and entrepreneurship research includes studies conducted by Kram (1983), Ragins and Kram (2007), Garvey and Garrett (2008), St-Jean and Audet (2012) and Gimmon (2014). Research by the aforesaid authors, in the field of mentoring, has been extensively conducted for workplace or career mentoring in the United States and the United Kingdom. Furthermore, most studies explored mentoring in developed nations with higher income levels, unlike in Africa and developing nations where the accessibility to mentoring is a challenge (Chege, 2019). Limited studies conducted in Africa included studies on workplace mentoring, mentoring connotations, or the benefits of entrepreneurial mentoring (Martin, 2008; Petridou, 2009; Kunaka & Moos, 2019).

Reynolds *et al.* (2019) indicate that 80% of emerging South African SMEs fail within the first five years of operation. This is deemed the highest globally (Msomi & Olarewaju, 2021). Despite SME-related research conducted in other provinces within South Africa (predominantly in Gauteng province), there is a paucity of research exploration in KwaZulu-Natal (BER, 2016). Kwazulu-Natal has the second highest number of SMEs in South Africa (approximately 400 000), with the retail sector being the largest income generator (BER, 2016). Ngobo and Sukdeo (2015) and Mahohoma (2017) posit that limited research has been conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal region to recognise the plight of nascent SMEs, inferring that previous research is inadequate and ambiguous (Sitharam & Hoque, 2016). Therefore, the research context for the current study was within the confines of the South African emerging entrepreneurial

platform. The study used a sample located in KwaZulu-Natal to address the limited research conducted on SMEs in the province. Ayandibu *et al.* (2019) found that the absence of entrepreneurial training and mentoring hindered the success of long-term business operations. This implied the lack of mentoring as a major contributory factor toward the failure of entrepreneurial ventures amongst KwaZulu-Natal-based emerging entrepreneurs (Ayandibu *et al.*, 2019). In addition, Ncgobo and Sukdeo (2015) suggest that approximately 74% of entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal were unaware of entrepreneurial support or mentoring offered in the form of state incubators.

The need to initiate this study was cultivated from the following factors: (1) the elevated rate of SME failure in South Africa, (2) the challenges experienced by SMEs prior to and during the pandemic, (3) the paucity of research conducted on SMEs in Kwazulu-Natal, and (4) the absence of effective contemporary SME mentoring models. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic altered the entrepreneurial topography universally, creating a dearth in the existing body of research knowledge for innovative SME training practices and models (Ratten & Jones, 2021). Novel SME frameworks must henceforth adapt in response to crisis situations (Manolova *et al.*, 2020). Ratten (2020) affirms that a contemporary model is required to help SME entrepreneurs navigate their businesses. A model will identify the essential competency components necessary to produce efficacious business results (Ratten, 2020). This is consequently an expanse that this research study investigated. The intention of the study was to evaluate the mentoring competency needs of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs, drawn from their experiences and challenges, with the objective of operationalising a model for entrepreneurship development. The proposed model will enable entrepreneurs to build competencies and develop resilience for a post-pandemic business environment.

Existing entrepreneurship research suggests a void in how mentoring can be used to build the flexibility of entrepreneurs, principally during crisis circumstances (Ratten & Jones, 2021). This signifies a research gap alluding to the urgency of developing new SME operational mentoring models. The present study was selected for the purpose of enhancing the proficiencies of emerging entrepreneurs, which would ultimately stimulate employment creation, mitigate impoverishment and contribute to economic development. Entrepreneurship skill transfer and mentoring should be developed to

enable entrepreneurs to endure future challenges and create viable business ventures (Ayandibu *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, the retail environment presents unique challenges, such as an absence of effective marketing techniques, problematic training methodologies and sector-specific challenges (Lassk *et al.*, 2012; Martin, 2017). Whilst mentoring has been researched extensively as a process, comparatively little is known about the substance of entrepreneurial mentoring programmes (St-Jean & Audet, 2012; Nabi, Walmsley & Akhtar, 2019).

McKevitt and Marshall (2015) suggest that inadequate research has been conducted on mentoring in small entrepreneurial ventures, implying further exploration to recognise the fortes and trials of new methods. Rhodes (2015) postulates that by implementing such mentoring models, the scope of mentoring has the prospect to inflate its range and elevate as a tool for empowerment and success. Research is required to explore how mentoring affords individuals the opportunity to apply the skills imparted from new strategies and models (Rhodes, 2015). The literature gaps, both in entrepreneurial training and SME development, are endorsed by Rabie, Cant and Wiid (2016), who acknowledge that studies into the advancement of SMEs reflect a research void in a South African context. Hence, the present study contributes to literature by exploring the current SME entrepreneurship climate with the intention of proposing a post-pandemic mentoring model.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to establish how mentoring can be operationalised for emerging retail entrepreneurs. The proposed mentoring model merged the mentoring process with the entrepreneurial life cycle. The study identified that the formation of a contemporary model will establish the focal areas of entrepreneurial development. To achieve the main research aim, an exploration of the inhibitors and promoters of entrepreneurship was conducted, to recognise the skills that entrepreneurs need for venture sustainability. Entrepreneurs provided insight into the proficiencies they deemed deficient. These skills were subsequently incorporated into the development of the proposed model. Entrepreneurs in emerging ventures are not cognisant of operational and functional business aptitudes, such as human resource issues, possibly due to a lack of entrepreneurial and management training (Kemelgor & Meek, 2008; Shaikh, Jhatial & Soomro, 2021). SMEs are confronted with snowballing

challenges in enticing and retaining employees (Bussin, 2014; Baporikar, 2021). Entrepreneurs are faced with numerous trials, such as identifying why employees depart at a rapid rate, and how to modify their management strategies to maximise retention for organisational success (Bussin, 2014). Kemelgor and Meek (2008) assert that the resignation of a single vital employee creates harmful effects that could threaten an entrepreneur's attempts to accomplish the necessary entrepreneurial goals. Entrepreneurs can circumvent the turmoil related to employee and business productivity through the application of proper management practices (Kemelgor & Meek, 2008; Shaikh *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, an exploration of current entrepreneurial challenges, and how these can be circumvented, is necessary.

Dual progression is vital in the field of entrepreneurial education. Firstly, the development of vigorous conceptual models and foundations to sustain entrepreneurial mentoring is needed, and secondly, the introduction of novel mentoring mechanisms is required (Fayolle, 2013; Qureshi & Mian, 2021). Since there is a paucity of research in the field of post-pandemic entrepreneurial mentoring, the themes extracted from this study can be used as a foundation to conceptualise the operational principles of mentoring in diverse contexts pertinent to entrepreneurship. Based on the issues uncovered, recommendations are made to mentoring experts and public bodies which promote mentorship training. Recommendations relate to the incorporation of valuable elements in the design of future mentoring programmes. This would be of practical value concerning the progression of future entrepreneurs. Crede (2016) affirms that the mentoring of entrepreneurs is a distinctive and evolving field. Therefore, there is no consensus regarding a universally accepted definition of mentoring, nor is there the prevalence of a standardised model (Crede, 2016).

Entrepreneurial education is at the forefront of the rapidly rising areas of training universally (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015). However, facets cited as absent include the range of 'what' to communicate and impart through entrepreneurial mentoring, and 'how' it should be imparted (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015). Little is known about the pertinence, relevance, applicability, social effectiveness and efficiency of operational practices in entrepreneurial mentoring (Fayolle, 2013; Qureshi & Mian, 2021). Mahohoma (2017) states that a lack of skill and training diminishes the management capabilities of SMEs in South Africa, implying that it expands the failure rate of entrepreneurial ventures. Neck and Corbett (2018) hypothesise that a chasm exists

between learning the skills associated with entrepreneurship and translating the theory into practice. Entrepreneurial mentoring is required to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Neck & Corbett, 2018). The chasm has been further impacted by the Coronavirus global pandemic.

A gap prevails in mentoring research concerning the operational process for entrepreneurial mentoring, the factors which impact SME mentoring, and the mentoring content applicable to SMEs (McKevitt & Marshall, 2015). Kunaka and Moos (2019) support the view of McKevitt and Marshall (2015), by postulating that preceding mentoring research within a South African framework dealt with issues of mentor characterising, the suitability of mentoring programmes and the nature of mentoring relationships. Limited research prevails on mentoring preferences, content and operational application (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Exploration into the role of post-pandemic entrepreneurial mentoring is limited globally and in South Africa. Therefore, the intention of this qualitative grounded theory study was to establish the requirements to operationalise an innovative post-pandemic mentoring model for emerging entrepreneurs.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary and secondary research questions are presented in the following sections.

1.5.1 Primary research question

The primary research question for this study is: *What entrepreneurial elements are required to establish a contemporary operational mentoring model, for the development of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs based in KwaZulu-Natal, in a post-pandemic setting?*

1.5.2 Secondary research questions

To support the primary question, the following secondary research questions were formulated.

1. How can mentoring support address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs?

2. What support, in the form of business competencies, is needed by retail entrepreneurs through mentoring, to strengthen their ability to manage their ventures effectively?
3. How will mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial success?
4. What elements are required to propose an operational mentoring model to develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary and secondary research objectives are presented in the following sections.

1.6.1 Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study was to establish a post-pandemic contemporary operational entrepreneurial mentoring model, to augment the knowledge and skills of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal, by exploring the factors which impede and stimulate entrepreneurial endeavour, with a view to filling a void that existing mentoring practices lack.

1.6.2 Secondary research objectives

To achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives were identified:

1. To explore how mentoring support can address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs.
2. To determine the business competencies required by emerging entrepreneurs, to strengthen their ability to effectively manage their ventures, through mentoring support.
3. To determine how mentoring will contribute to entrepreneurial success.
4. To propose an operational mentoring model that will develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to the body of literature by developing an operational model in a field where there is an enhanced need for contemporary entrepreneurial learning research (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015). The model will serve to augment the traditional

competencies essential for successful emerging entrepreneurship, ultimately contributing toward national economic growth in a post-pandemic economic environment. The global pandemic caused significant societal and economic challenges, resulting in subsequent business losses, employment reduction, lockdown imposition and business closure. The COVID-19 pandemic was a unique phenomenon, implying that the existing body of knowledge is insufficient to address pertinent and different facets of business.

On a theoretical level, the proposed study makes several contributions to literature. Firstly, it offers a methodological contribution by using a qualitative grounded theory approach, based on a retail case study, to present an operational mentoring model for a post-pandemic business environment. Secondly, it affords the creation of a contemporary model for SMEs after considering new challenges experienced by entrepreneurs. Thus, it builds on existing mentoring models whilst it introduces new knowledge, by merging the mentoring and emerging entrepreneurship processes. Thirdly, the study evaluates the pandemic-related impact of a crisis on SMEs. It offers a solution through mentoring, for future entrepreneurs to be agile and resilient. Fourthly, the study offers an innovative model which aligns mentoring to the emerging entrepreneurial life cycle phases, resulting in an all-encompassing system-based model.

The South African economy crucially requires an increase in entrepreneurial activity in order to enhance development, promote invention and contribute to employment conception (Anwana, 2019). However, the World Bank relegated South Africa's progress assessment status from 1.1% to 0.6% during a one-year period (World Bank, 2021). According to Statistics South Africa (2022), the GDP is anticipated to increase by 1.9%, inferring that entrepreneurial endeavour is critical to contributing toward the economy (Anwana, 2019). Active mentoring and training activities offer vast advantages to emerging entrepreneurs (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Therefore, the outcomes of this study will benefit various stakeholders.

On a pragmatic level, the development of an operational model will benefit entrepreneurs through training and development programmes designed for contemporary business creation in South Africa. SMEs will benefit from this study in various forms. The proposed model will promote competency development for

entrepreneurs. The outcomes of the study will contribute toward the revitalisation of the economy, with SMEs serving as a means of job creation. By improving turnover and profitability, the study will contribute to business sustainability through the application of appropriate management and operational skills. Additionally, emerging SMEs will benefit from the study through the adoption of contemporary practices designed to sustain their businesses.

Business mentors and state-based business incubation programmes can use the outcomes of the study to incorporate suggested competency training into existing mentoring programmes. This study will benefit future researchers and decision-makers, from a position of how mentoring models can be evolved and customised for emerging entrepreneurs. According to Hattingh, McGregor and Ressel (2018b) various areas of mentoring models for entrepreneurs, and incubator-based mentoring, are yet to be explored from an academic perspective. Professional bodies, such as the body of Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA), can benefit from this study through the adoption of a mentoring blueprint for entrepreneurial mentors. Policymakers at national and provincial level can use the outcomes of the study to reconsider the adoption of mentoring practices for entrepreneurs, in addition to implementing comprehensive incubator practices.

1.8 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section provides a synopsis of the pivotal areas of the research design and methodology adopted in the study.

1.8.1 Research philosophy

A research paradigm encompasses the approach adopted to guide a research study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It is the framework or model applied by a researcher to scrutinise the procedural components of the study and is conceived from a theoretical basis (Taber, 2013; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Brown & Duenas, 2020). A paradigm plays a crucial role in research because it offers research principles to adhere to (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Research philosophy provides a basis for the research study, thus incorporating the overall approach (Zefeiti & Mohamad, 2015). The interpretivist paradigm underpinned this study, since it is based on the credence that research participants share their uniquely personal encounters from a detailed perspective

(Punch, 2009; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Within an interpretivist paradigm, data are collected for the invention of knowledge by employing mechanisms that enable the comprehensive grasp of a situation. Interpretivism pursues a holistic comprehension of a distinct situation where the actuality is socially created (Willis, 2007; Gunbayi, 2020). Ontology infers the researcher's stance on the scope of realism, whereas epistemology provides the researcher's stance toward comprehending and interpreting realism (Crotty, 2003; Wang, 2020). In the case of this study, the researcher is of the belief that a single objective reality does not apply to unique entrepreneurial situations and that numerous truths exist. Hence, the ontology and epistemology applicable to this study were based on the premise of subjective and varied entrepreneurial experiences, which permitted the researcher to comprehend core issues applicable to emerging entrepreneurship.

1.8.2 Research design

The research design affords the global composition of a research study and provides the outline for data gathering and analysis (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Asenahabi, 2019). Additionally, research design is a procedural roadmap for a research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research design determines the practical techniques for directing the study, culminating in the methodology, data collection and data analysis approach adopted (Gray, 2014). The focal objective of research design is to circumvent a position where the data collected are not synchronised with the research questions (Yin, 2009; Asenahabi, 2019).

1.8.2.1 Research methodology

The option of methodology is dependent on the research question, the goals and intentions of the study, and the approaches and techniques employed in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Khatri, 2020). Research methodology embraces the inclusive method selected in the accomplishment of the research study, including the associated design with its procedures of gathering data, exploration and authentication (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research is beneficial for a detailed study of a small number of cases with comprehensive responses (Tewksbury, 2009; Asenahabi, 2019). The benefit of a qualitative interpretive positioning is that the findings regularly provide improved soundness and authenticity, since the method

permits researchers to cultivate a precise appreciation of concepts and problems (Creswell, 2014; Haradhan, 2018). An interpretivist paradigm, underpinned by the qualitative approach, was suitable for this study since reality is socially created and is an echo of individuals' distinctive and personal experiences. The qualitative methodology was selected because it advocates that the research findings are reinforced by exclusive individual encounters. Qualitative methods represent evolving practices incorporating open-ended interview techniques, culminating in themes and patterns emerging (Creswell, 2014; Asenahabi, 2019). Furthermore, because this study is situated within an interpretivist paradigm, the emphasis of the study positioned it toward a qualitative methodological approach.

1.8.2.2 Research strategy

The study employed a combined approach using the grounded theory method based on a case study. This section examines the use of a case study, followed by a discussion of grounded theory methodology. Gray (2014) states that the case study technique is effective when probing questions are applied to a contemporary situation. A case study is useful for understanding a phenomenon rather than comprehending the case itself (Cousin, 2005; De Massis & Kotlar, 2014). Case study research is designated in research as a methodology or a method; a method implies actions adopted in a study, whilst a methodology guides the alignment of the study (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). For this study, the case study was adopted as a method rather than a methodology, implying that it is not the predominant strategy embraced in the study. An instrumental case approach is applicable to a study when the study seeks to attain more than the perception of a distinct scenario or case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The instrumental approach is used in a study that requires a support mechanism for model-building, with the case positioned in a subordinate role (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study is regarded as an entity that is appropriate in a study which applies the grounded theory methodology (Arshad, Ahlan & Ibrahim, 2013). The instrumental case provides the means for the development of the grounded theory model in the present study, taking an ancillary position to, and preceded by, grounded theory.

Yin (2018) advocates that if a researcher intends to study a single entity (such as an individual or a group of individuals) then the study is based on a single case approach, as is the position in this study. It is recommended that a researcher should distinguish

a case prior to execution of the study (Yin, 2014). Whilst there is dissonance amongst scholars around what constitutes a case, a single case is acknowledged for its application to the same scope or research problem (Baxter & Jack, 2008). However, when the same problem is examined with multiple entities, each entity forms an embedded or distinct unit within the same case (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The case in this study comprised the emerging retail SME case, with each SME entrepreneur representing an embedded or distinct unit as part of the universal emerging retail case study.

A case study may be used to advance philosophy pertinent to various areas, such as administrative, executive and management related (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Ridder, 2017). Additional mentoring research necessitates implementing the case study approach to establish innovative post-crisis theories that entrepreneurs can adopt (Ratten, 2020). The present study applies the case study approach, combined with grounded theory methodology, for advancing the skills of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs through mentorship. Gaps in mentoring research are addressed from a research methodology and framework development perspective. Grounded theory creates maximum impact in the fields of research that are novel (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). This is the case with post-pandemic entrepreneurial research. Mentoring models need to be aligned with new economic conditions or new challenges, together with suggested solutions. The impetus for the choice of grounded theory in this study is its flexibility, its capability to develop theory in a relatively short period of time, and its applicability to single researcher studies (Birks, Hoare & Mills, 2019). Furthermore, the ability to develop a model from origin is one of the main benefits of grounded theory research (Birks *et al.*, 2019).

Grounded theory is an effective qualitative research technique which is dependent on the data gathered, unlike other techniques where the data gathered is dependent on the theoretical aspects of the study (Khan, 2014). Charmaz (2014) postulates that grounded theory is an inductive method applied in research, with the focus on new philosophy formation, where the entry and exit levels reside with the data. Grounded theory is defined as a process whereby data are collected and examined to ultimately extract philosophies (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). It is a methodical approach to qualitative data gathering (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021).

The data are collected and analysed on a synchronised basis, leading to the conception of classifications which result in philosophy development (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Lawrence and Tar (2013) postulate that data gathering, coding, and the conception of classifications are steered by the data, with the advent of novel frameworks emerging from this process. Birks and Mills (2015) recommend that grounded theory should be approached in the following manner: the data should be gathered and analysed simultaneously, the classification of data should begin with the intention of identifying concepts, and memos should be maintained to aid the researcher with supplementary evidence until the final framework construction is complete.

1.8.3 Study population and sample

This section provides an overview of the target population, the sample population participants (including access to the sample population) and the sampling methods used in the study.

1.8.3.1 Target population

The unit of analysis for the study comprised individual emerging SME retail entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal. The shared characteristics of the unit of analysis for the target population sampling frame included: (1) SME retail entrepreneurs aged between 25 and 60 years, (2) from the formal and informal sectors, (3) engaged in retail or service businesses for less than three years, (4) with annual turnover limited to R3 million, and (5) the SMEs were in an emerging state. The rationale for the selection of the target population was the limited research conducted on SMEs in KwaZulu-Natal (Ncgobo & Sukdeo, 2015; BER, 2016; Sitharam & Hoque, 2016; Mahohoma, 2017; Ayandibu *et al.*, 2019).

1.8.3.2 Sample population

The sample population participants were located in KwaZulu-Natal in close proximity to, and within reach of, the researcher based on time and cost constraints. The sample size comprised 30 entrepreneurs based on methodology recommendations for grounded theory studies (Flick, 2009; 2018; Khan, 2014).

1.8.3.3 Access to the sample population

The sample population was selected through online business forums comprising databases of SMEs operating in various areas in Kwazulu-Natal. The databases included entrepreneurial SME groups for KwaZulu-Natal on social media platforms. Access to the sample population was achieved through ethical clearance received from the institution and through informed consent from the participants, who offered their written consent to contribute to the study. Additionally, participants consented to the interviews being audio recorded. The researcher assured participants of their anonymity and confidentiality before, during and after the study.

1.8.3.4 Sampling methods

Non-probability sampling is used when it is challenging to characterise the complete population (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Purposive sampling, a technique used to select participants based on predetermined criteria, was applied to this study (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018). A sample size of 30 participants was used for the study in accordance with qualitative grounded theory sample size recommendations.

1.8.3.5 Selection of participants

Advertisements were placed in online forums, between 1 June 2021 and 31 August 2021, inviting participants who fulfilled the listed criteria to partake in the study. Participants were invited to forward their contact information privately to the researcher who thereafter provided a synopsis of the study. The sampling frame characteristics (listed in section 1.8.3.1 of this chapter) enabled the researcher to identify SME entrepreneurs who qualified for the study.

1.8.4 Data collection and analysis

This section describes the data collection methods incorporated in the study, the pilot study used in the preliminary data collection, and the data analysis techniques applied.

1.8.4.1 Data collection methods

A differentiating factor pertinent to the application of a case, underpinned by qualitative grounded theory methodology, is the proposed inclusion of various techniques in the

form of data collection methods or data sources to augment trustworthiness of the study (Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). Data gathering can involve interviews, observations, and relevant documentation, such as field notes, diaries or memos (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Takahashi & Araujo, 2019). However, interviews continue to serve as the foremost data collection method (Harrison *et al.*, 2017). The data collection method considered pragmatic for qualitative case study exploration incorporates interviews (Birks & Mills, 2015).

The present study adopted personal face-to-face interviews as the instrument for data gathering (Birks & Mills, 2015). The interview approach, comprising open-ended questions, is recommended for an expressive study of participant experiences (Flick, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Personal interviews provide comparative response rates and allow for broad responses (Neuman, 2014). Additionally, semi-structured interviews are recommended for grounded theory studies (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the sample population for this study to enable the narrative of the entrepreneurial experience. The instrument comprised open-ended questions which probed participant experiences, their challenges experienced during the entrepreneurial journey, and their mentoring needs and preferences. The instrument used in this study is attached as Appendix B. To enhance the rigour of the study, and to ensure uniformity with grounded theory case study research, data were collected from participants in clusters of three. The data were examined iteratively, with data and memos from previous interviews providing comparative sources for new data collected, in order to permit concept advancement.

1.8.4.2 Pilot study

A pilot study was applied to a preliminary sample comprising three participants. The pilot study was conducted in the first week of September 2021 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The responses from the pilot study participants served as an indicator of the efficacy of the research instrument and determined whether any modifications would be necessary. The interviews were transcribed and initially coded. The pilot study revealed that it was not necessary to revise the research instrument. The instrument sufficed for comprehensibility and research content appropriateness.

1.8.4.3 Data analysis

The interview data were transcribed after the completion of the interviews. The transcriptions were uploaded onto the ATLAS.ti software application. Open coding was applied as an initial form of analysis (Pan & Lin, 2019). In adherence to grounded theory methodology, the interview data were analysed in clusters of three to enable the researcher to begin the process of initial or open coding. As codes emerged, additional codes were identified on an iterative basis using axial or intermediate coding once further transcripts were analysed, to determine the categories from which the themes were generated (Bryant, 2017). This represented the process of theoretical sampling in grounded theory methodology whereby data are constantly analysed to enable the emergence of codes on an iterative basis (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). The researcher alternated between codes created and new interview codes until theoretical saturation was accomplished. The interview data provided data richness. A new model was determined through the analysis of categories and themes (Khan, 2014).

1.8.5 Delineation of the study

This study was concluded with emerging retail entrepreneurs meeting the sampling frame criteria, who operated within KwaZulu-Natal, and whose SMEs were operational for less than three years, with an annual turnover under R3 million.

1.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE RESEARCH

It is vital for a researcher to ensure that deductions derived from the study are validated and corroborated for exactitude to improve the overall integrity of the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This is achieved through qualitative trustworthiness (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The researcher implemented methods such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, transferability and authenticity to ensure rigour during the present study (Creswell, 2014). Credibility was achieved by triangulating several sources of data, such as recordings, transcripts, field notes and reflexive journals, which were maintained by the researcher. Furthermore, an accredited external qualitative ATLAS.ti research consultant was consulted to offer guidance and endorse that the data analysis process was coherent with the methodology. Dependability was supported through the maintenance of records and

the preservation of documentation. Confirmability was accomplished by minimising researcher bias during the research process. Transferability was achieved by incorporating diverse participants from distinct retail SMEs. Authenticity was realised using space triangulation and by employing fairness throughout the study.

1.10 RESEARCH ETHICS

The researcher applied for ethical clearance with the institution's ethics review board preceding the initiation of data collection. The study was categorised as a low-risk study which would cause minimal harm to participants. The ethics approval certificate reference number received from the ethics review board was 2019_CEMS_DAM_008. The ethics certificate is attached as Appendix A.

From an ethics perspective, the researcher ensured that informed consent was received from participants and participants were made aware of the repercussions of the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. COVID-19 protocols, such as social distancing, the wearing of masks, and the use of protective equipment, were adhered to during the interview process.

1.11 DEFINITION OF TERMS

This section introduces the key concepts used throughout the study. Concepts related to entrepreneurship, mentoring and the retail industry are presented. The concepts introduced in this section are further examined in the literature review chapter.

1.11.1 Entrepreneurship

An entrepreneur is an individual who principally generates a notion for a novel product, process or service (Barucic & Umihanic, 2016). Thus, the entrepreneurial process commences with an individual's determination to embark on a business venture as an entrepreneur, integrating a business prospect with opportunity recognition (Barucic & Umihanic, 2016). However, a crucial question for entrepreneurship researchers is how, and why, specific individuals can recognise and capitalise on an entrepreneurial prospect whilst other individuals are not able to succeed (Barucic & Umihanic, 2016). This gives rise to the factors which prepare and encumber entrepreneurs for success. Entrepreneurship is perceived to be a driver of viable economic development as entrepreneurs build innovative organisations and create employment (Mamabolo,

Kerrin & Kele, 2017). It is imperative to possess the talents and abilities necessary to prosper in new business ventures. Furthermore, according to Herrington and Kew (2017), the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) conceptual framework acknowledges entrepreneurship to be a fragment of a multifaceted feedback structure. It denotes the associations between societal beliefs, individual characteristics and numerous systems of entrepreneurial engagement (Herrington & Kew, 2017). Entrepreneurial engagement is consequently a product of both awareness of a business prospect and capability in the form of enthusiasm and ability. Herrington and Kew (2017) suggest that Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) incorporates emerging entrepreneurs who pursue or manage ventures which are less than 42 months old.

1.11.2 Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as an association in a professional environment, in which a knowledgeable individual known as a mentor, aids another individual who is known as a mentee (Nel & Luneta, 2017). The intention of mentoring is the development of abilities and awareness which may augment the mentee's professional and personal progression (Nel & Luneta, 2017). However, Haggard *et al.* (2011), after having reviewed various definitions of mentoring, concluded that mentoring is a progressive association between people. Haggard *et al.* (2011) posit that mentoring comprises three fundamental characteristics, namely, mutuality, progressive gains, and steady collaboration over time. The mentor can contribute to the relationship in the form of productive appraisal, combined with the integration of goal formation and attainment (Nel & Luneta, 2017).

Ferreira, Loiola and Gondim (2017) assert that entrepreneurship mentoring promotes advanced approaches toward entrepreneurship and increases an entrepreneur's insight. This implies that a mentor is an individual who offers valuable information, enhances confidence, and affords holistic guidance (Ferreira *et al.*, 2017). Irby *et al.* (2018) advocate mentoring to be a relationship which affords mentees the latitude to develop individually and professionally. Thus, the authors advocate that mentoring is a reciprocal relationship aimed at development.

1.11.3 Retail industry

A retailer is a business, or an individual, involved in the trade of inventory such as clothing, food and household goods, or alternately trades in services directly to customers, using numerous supply channels with the objective of making a profit (Amadeo, 2018). A retailer may be a tangible entity or may operate in a virtual environment (Amadeo, 2018). Retailing incorporates transactional economic activity, concluded through product and service exchange, for end customer consumption (Terblanche, 2016). The retail industry comprises organisations operating as retailers and forms part of a country's economy (Terblanche, 2016; Amadeo, 2018). The retail industry is broadly recognised as a competitive element of economic undertaking, which describes why numerous nascent retail businesses do not endure an extensive life span (Terblanche, 2016). However, for the entrepreneur who enters the retail market on a satisfactory underpinning of knowledge, skills, business insight and an appealing offering, participation in the industry can be gratifying on a monetary and individual level (Amadeo, 2018).

1.12 CHAPTER ORGANISATION

The study comprises the following chapter organisation. Figure 1.2 illustrates the five chapters presented in the study and how each chapter fits into the overall study.

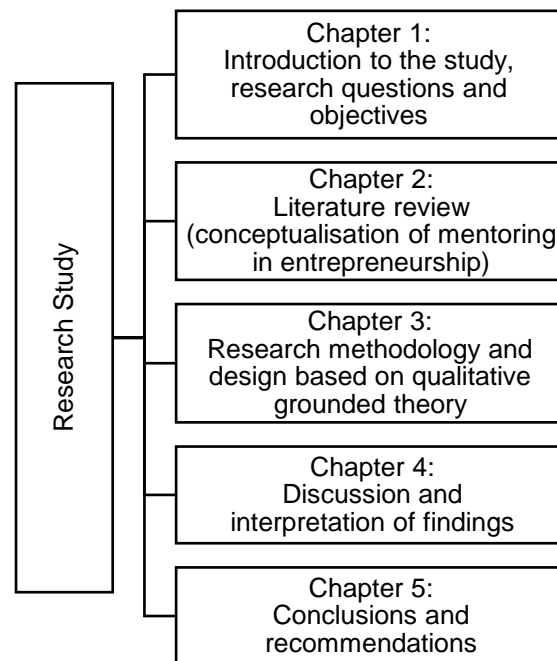
Chapter 1 includes the introduction to the study, which affords information about the research study. This chapter presented the background to the problem, outlined the problem statement, and presented the primary and secondary research questions with the relevant objectives. A synopsis of the research methodology was introduced.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, titled the conceptualisation of mentoring in entrepreneurship, which offers a critical exploration and appraisal of prevailing knowledge applicable to mentoring topics. This chapter appraises the theoretical perspectives of mentoring in entrepreneurship. The chapter comprises sections which focus on the concepts, models and factors that impact entrepreneurship and mentoring with a view to establishing a mentoring model. Chapter 2 is divided into two parts, namely, the conceptual framework which offers a review of literature pertinent to the study, and the theoretical framework which reinforces the study.

Chapter 3 incorporates the research design and methodology, which provides information about the nominated research method and instrument. This chapter highlights the qualitative methodology used in the study. Included in the chapter is a discussion of the research strategy implemented and ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 4 comprises the presentation, discussion and interpretation of the findings. This chapter presents the themes derived from the data analysis. The findings culminate in the presentation of the proposed model.

Chapter 5 comprises the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The chapter includes inferences, interpretations and recommendations for entrepreneurial mentoring.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 1.2: Chapter organisation

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented an introduction to the notions of entrepreneurship and mentoring, offering diverse views on the subject and elucidating uncertainty into the role of entrepreneurial mentoring and models. The chapter offered background to the study contextualising entrepreneurship and mentoring in different contexts. The notions of entrepreneurship and mentoring were appraised in a universal context, in a South African context and in a KwaZulu-Natal provincial context. The research

problem was presented, and the significance of the study was discussed. In addition, a synopsis of the research methodology adopted in the study was delivered, with an outline of the trustworthiness and ethical considerations. The chapter clarified concepts used in the study, and the layout of the thesis was provided. The next chapter provides a review of literature pertinent to mentoring and entrepreneurship.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - CONCEPTUALISATION OF MENTORING IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review chapter presents an appraisal of entrepreneurship and mentoring literature. The chapter begins by exploring the role and positioning of the literature review in grounded theory studies. Prevailing mentoring definitions, theories and models are appraised. The entrepreneurship life cycle is presented. The elements which impede and promote entrepreneurial ventures are reviewed. The final section of the chapter presents the gaps identified in academic literature with respect to emerging entrepreneurial mentoring models.

2.1.1 Structure of the literature review chapter

To achieve the research objectives outlined in Chapter 1 of the study, it is crucial to review existing literature. Figure 2.1 provides a visual representation of the structure of the literature review chapter. The chapter is demarcated into two parts, namely, Part A and Part B.

Part A presents the conceptual framework for the study. This section provides an evaluation of the fundamental elements of the study, namely, mentoring, entrepreneurship and SMEs. A background to the concepts is presented. Mentoring models and theories applicable to the study are explored to establish the foundational areas for operationalising a model. The entrepreneurship process is presented. The nature of SMEs within a South African context is reviewed. The business impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is assessed.

Part B presents the theoretical framework for the study. This section recognises the components which contribute to the development of a proposed model. Mentoring and business model components are established.

The chapter concludes by presenting the gaps recognised in the extant literature from a mentoring, entrepreneurial, methodological and pandemic perspective, as depicted in Figure 2.1.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 Introduction
2.2. Role of the literature review in grounded theory research
PART A: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY
2.3. Background to key concepts
2.3.1 Mentoring
2.3.2 Entrepreneurship
2.3.3 Small and medium enterprise (SME)
2.4 Mentoring and Coaching: models and theories
2.4.1 Elements of a model
2.4.2 Operationalisation of a model
2.4.3 Mentoring models
2.4.4 Mentoring theories
2.5 Factors that impact emerging entrepreneurs
2.5.1 Challenges and inhibitors of retail entrepreneurs
2.5.2 Factors that support and stimulate retail entrepreneurial ventures
2.6 COVID-19 pandemic: impact on SMEs
2.7 Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success
2.8 Mentoring model variables
PART B: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY
2.9 Theoretical foundation for the study
2.9.1 Mentoring model components
2.9.2 Business model components
2.9.3 Theoretical foundation: Business Model Canvas (BMC)
2.10 Gaps in extant literature
2.10.1 Mentoring model for emerging retail SMEs
2.10.2 Early-stage entrepreneurial mentoring competency needs
2.10.3 Methodological gap
2.10.4 Addressing pandemic and post-pandemic challenges through mentoring
2.11 Conclusion

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 2.1: Structure of the literature review chapter

2.2 ROLE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW IN GROUNDED THEORY RESEARCH

A thorough literature review should introduce a reader to how specific research has offered input to an accumulated expertise on a subject, by presenting themes associated with the overall problem in a generic research context (Denney & Tewksbury, 2012; Snyder, 2019). The review for conventional research should include what is presently recognised about a study and what is not recognised, anchoring the justification for further research (Denney & Tewksbury, 2012; Snyder, 2019). However, Hussein, Kennedy and Oliver (2017) argue that the issue of the literature review poses a debate within the ambit of grounded theory methodology. Grounded theory researchers are encouraged to curtail prejudices in the literature review to ensure the study is grounded in the data collected (Hussein *et al.*, 2017). However, researchers must simultaneously appraise prevailing literature to justify the development of a model (Hussein *et al.*, 2017). Charmaz (2016) contends that the literature review affords a prospect for researchers to abridge and review the writings of others, to position themselves relative to contemporary writings (Palmatier, Houston & Hulland, 2019).

The grounded theory integrative method of compiling a literature review advocates the aptitude of the researcher to distinguish innovative information from extant information (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). This is in support of the main objective of grounded theory, since it should add to the body of knowledge founded predominantly on the data collected, instead of rewrite conventional notions beneath the facade of originality (Torraco, 2005; Snyder, 2019). Furthermore, the literature review should be conducted at the outset of grounded theory studies to provide the researcher with a preliminary conception of the subject matter (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Hussein *et al.* (2017) support this view by reiterating that the literature review in grounded theory should be viewed as part of an iterative integrated method. Ramalho *et al.* (2015) posit that a grounded theory researcher should use existing literature as a means toward the association of a notional discourse, without permitting the literature to solely underpin the development of a model.

The stance adopted in this study is in support of a preliminary literature review. The function of the literature review in such a case is to offer an initial substantive

theoretical context within the bounds of grounded theory, through the consultation of various academic journals, theses, books and online academic sites (Jabareen, 2009; Kivunja, 2018). However, despite the preliminary review, the findings will remain grounded in the data collected.

The structure of this literature review is chronological for concept presentation, whilst it is thematic for problem-specific discussions. It is also integrative, such that the models presented and analysed in this chapter are integrated during data analysis, to culminate in a proposed foundational theoretical model. Hence, the extant literature is merged during data analysis to supplement the model founded on grounded theory methodology. The next section presents the conceptual framework for the study.

PART A: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

The conceptual framework provides background to the three focal concepts of the study, namely, mentoring, entrepreneurship and SMEs. The definitions are examined, applicable models and theories are explored, and the contemporary factors that impact entrepreneurship are evaluated.

2.3 BACKGROUND TO KEY CONCEPTS

This section describes the concepts related to mentoring, incorporating the evolution and definitions of mentoring and entrepreneurial mentoring. The characteristics, benefits, drawbacks and mentoring relationships are discussed. Additionally, the concept of entrepreneurship is explored encompassing the entrepreneurship process. The entrepreneurial life cycle is examined. Notions pertaining to SMEs are presented.

2.3.1 Mentoring

Mentoring has developed and transitioned over a period of time. In some disciplines, the concepts of mentoring and coaching are used synonymously, whilst the concepts are contrasted in other disciplines. Despite the increased application of mentoring over the past 40 years, the concept has been applied across an array of fields and in different contexts. Prior to the aforementioned period, the practice of mentoring was used predominantly in the fields of psychology and sport science. To afford a synopsis of progression in the field of mentoring, this section begins by providing a historical storyline of the evolution of mentoring.

2.3.1.1 Evolution of the concept of mentoring

The concept of mentoring was commonly used until early 1970 in the discipline of sport, where sport participants were offered assistance and support by experienced and knowledgeable individuals (Law, 2013; Meng, Krauss & Arshad, 2020). However, there was a radical shift from the discipline of sport to commerce and industry in early 1970 when mentoring or coaching was applied in a commercial environment (Brock, 2009; Wiginton, 2018). The introduction of mentoring to businesses recognised a mindset change toward mentoring. At this point, human capital departments and management employees were enthused by mentoring and its potential (Brock, 2009; Wiginton, 2018). Coaching gained recognition in business, at which point the terms coaching and mentoring were used synonymously, to encompass the training of personnel from entry level to management level (Wiginton, 2018). However, the turning point for mentoring occurred in early 1980 when Kram (1983) produced a popularly cited document on mentoring in enterprises and in the field of entrepreneurial development (Kram, 1983). The concepts of coaching and mentoring were dispersed at this stage. Consequently, the concepts were applied diversely. The diverse approaches included the adoption of mentoring and coaching on a formal, informal, group, supervisory, directorial or organisational basis, implying there was a lack of demarcation in concept and approach (Crompton, 2012). The application of coaching and mentoring reflected an upward trajectory since 1980, when mentoring became a recognised practice (Laird, 2008; Crompton, 2012; Kamarudin *et al.*, 2020). It was during this period that there was heightened interest in mentoring, coaching and model advancement (Ragins & Kram, 2007). Within a 20-year period coaching and mentoring advanced swiftly, but whilst the adoption displayed impetus, formal coaching and mentoring business models were not prevalent.

Consequently, toward the end of 1990, Kram suggested that a model be generated for mentoring to introduce structure and meaning to the concept (Ragins & Kram, 2007; Blake-Beard, Shapiro & Ingols, 2021). From a comprehensive perspective, it is evident that mentoring has advanced only in the past 25 years, with research amplified over this period. It was during this period, after further examination, that the incongruities and similarities between coaching and mentoring became evident (D'Abate, Eddy & Tannenbaum, 2003; St-Jean & Audet, 2012; McKeivitt & Marshall, 2015). The formation of frameworks for mentoring and coaching was proposed to

provide further clarity. The increased creation of mentoring and coaching models was noted in the past 20 years, albeit in diverse disciplines and practices (Cox, Bachkirova & Clutterbuck, 2010; Mendez *et al.*, 2019). The promotion of empirical-based methodology was recommended (Garvey & Garrett-Harris, 2008; Cope, 2018). However, Fayolle and Gailly (2013) argued that mentoring for entrepreneurs should adopt a qualitative approach instead. The latter view is validated by the researcher in the present study, who deems experience-based research, together with a profound understanding of practices, to be the fundamental underpinning for model development in entrepreneurship mentoring. In addition, entrepreneurial experiences have been shaped in diversely unique ways, due to pandemic-related issues experienced since 2020, leading the study toward a qualitative methodology.

2.3.1.2 Definition of mentoring

Because various authors have asserted diverse interpretations concerning the description of mentoring, there is no universally accepted definition. From a generic perspective, mentoring is defined as the function of developing the professional skills of people, providing support through interactive engagement, and facilitating personal advancement (Kram, 1983; Ayer, 2010; Haggard *et al.*, 2011; De Ossorno Garcia & Doyle, 2021). Broad-spectrum mentoring is the relationship between a mentor and mentee. It is the promotion of knowledge transfer by the mentor to advance mentee abilities, with the outcomes measured through proficiencies acquired (Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Makatleho, Venter & Rootman, 2016; De Ossorno Garcia & Doyle, 2021). There is a global escalation of attentiveness and exploration into the subject of mentoring, conceivably due to the significant contribution that the notion affords in varied ways (Makatleho *et al.*, 2016).

Mentoring is implicit in numerous methods and traditions across varied disciplines, contexts and environments (Cole *et al.*, 2015). Examples include employer-employee mentoring, supervisor-student mentoring, leader-manager mentoring and mentor-entrepreneur mentoring (Cole *et al.*, 2015). The diversity of mentoring creates research prospects and opportunities per environment, and per circumstance, because a generic solution cannot be adopted universally. Mentoring may be offered and received both in a personal and professional context. It is designated as boundless knowledge acquisition where superficially incongruent information is

presented to enhance future transformation (Cole *et al.*, 2015). There is a unanimous universal recognition that mentoring procures valuable returns for both parties involved in the relationship (Ehrich, Hansford & Ehrich, 2011; Yitshaki & Drori, 2018). A study of strategic-level stakeholders in the United States, who were exposed to mentoring vocationally, established that seventy five percent of the participants recorded a 28% remuneration increment (Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Yitshaki & Drori, 2018). Furthermore, they were proactive in their job functions and were prone to mentor other employees (Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Yitshaki & Drori, 2018). Despite an increase in mentoring scholarship, limited studies pertain to entrepreneurial mentoring per sector, or to model development specific to a discipline. Limited research exists on entrepreneurial progression in developing nations.

Differences and similarities exist in the definition of the term mentoring, reinforcing the vastness and application of the field. The definitions of mentoring, presented in Table 2.1, include the following, as cited in Haggard *et al.* (2011):

Table 2.1: Definitions of mentoring

Definition	Source
A high-level manager who guides and aids an inexperienced employee.	Kirchmeyer (1995) cited in Haggard <i>et al.</i> (2011).
A person who, from a position of power, guides and oversees the activities of another.	Fagenson (1989) cited in Haggard <i>et al.</i> (2011).
A mentor is an individual who, from a position of power, provides instruction and guidance to aid in accomplishment.	Day and Allen (2004) cited in Haggard <i>et al.</i> (2011).
An experienced manager who moulds the career of an inexperienced employee.	Forret and De Janasz (2005) cited in Haggard <i>et al.</i> (2011).
A mentor is a qualified person, with an advanced standing in a professional atmosphere, who possesses innovative skills and information to assist, direct and develop people. A mentor can be from within or outside the business.	Van Emmerik, Baugh and Euwema (2005) cited in Haggard <i>et al.</i> (2011).

(Source: Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Hieker & Rushby, 2020)

There is a common denominator in all definitions, suggesting that the role of the mentor is to guide and support an individual, thus aiding the accomplishment of

different tasks. Whilst there is a paucity of uniformity applicable to the definition, there is concurrence from a generic definition perspective (Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Pashanova & Gaipov, 2021). This study adopts the most cited definition of a mentor, according to Van Emmerik, Baugh and Euwema (2005), as cited in Haggard *et al.* (2011): a mentor is a qualified person with an advanced standing in a professional atmosphere, who possesses innovative skills and information to assist, direct and develop people. The mentor can be internal or external to the business. In addition to the latter definition, the researcher has created an all-inclusive definition of mentoring applicable to this study. A mentor is an individual with skills, expertise and experience in the field of business and SME entrepreneurship, who can direct the endeavour of emerging entrepreneurs through the application of contemporary knowledge, practices and abilities. Therefore, this study appraises the elements and competencies that entrepreneurs envisage from future mentoring.

2.3.1.3 Definition of entrepreneurial mentoring

Limited research exists on the different types of management and entrepreneurial mentoring, albeit mentoring has risen in popularity (Grant, 2014; Hubbard-Murdoch *et al.*, 2021). There is dissonance with reference to conceptualising the positioning of management mentoring, executive coaching and the different levels of effectiveness afforded (Dahling *et al.*, 2016; Hubbard-Murdoch *et al.*, 2021). However, management mentoring has unanimously been pronounced as a progressive technique for improvement (Hagen, 2012; Grant, 2014; Dahling *et al.*, 2016). To augment the lack of unanimity, future recommended research should accentuate qualitative studies, since past studies have predominantly focused on positivist approaches with empirical outcomes (Hagen, 2012; Cypress, 2020).

Entrepreneurial mentoring is an instrument for addressing the skills shortage that exists amongst emerging SME owners, to adequately prepare them for their ventures to perform optimally (Clough *et al.*, 2019). Mentors serve as a source of expertise and guidance that emerging SMEs have at their disposal to attain their vision. A mentor enhances the competencies of the entrepreneur through the availability of a variety of instruments, such as expert knowledge, business resources, guidance and motivation (Cohen, Bingham & Hallen, 2019). Whilst there is an abundance of literature available on various disciplines, the context of this study aligns with mentoring in the business

and entrepreneurship field. Mentoring provides significant value for SME entrepreneurs who have not had exposure to formal education (Bell, 2014; Nheta, Shambare & Sigauke, 2020). Entrepreneurship mentoring, occasionally acknowledged as business coaching, is similar to conventional mentoring since it involves the evolution of entrepreneurs to become sustainable business owners (Pompa, 2012; Janse van Rensburg, 2013; Stambaugh & Mitchell, 2018). Organisations and business owners have engaged in using mentoring as a form of learning to approach work with enhanced skills (Stambaugh & Mitchell, 2018). However, because of the dynamic nature of the discipline of entrepreneurship, progressive study becomes mandatory (Stambaugh & Mitchell, 2018). Entrepreneurship mentoring may use a combination of strategies and techniques from other disciplines.

2.3.1.4 Characteristics of mentoring

This section reviews the characteristics of mentoring and coaching. Since the terms are often used synonymously, their characteristics may interconnect in some respects and may be diverse in others. Therefore, an appraisal of the characteristics of both concepts is necessary. Mentoring is recognised as an evolving exchange in the form of a continuing progressive affiliation, whereas coaching is linked to short-lived objectives and assistance (D'Abate *et al.*, 2003; St-Jean & Audet, 2012; Seehusen *et al.*, 2021). However, initial mentoring studies were found to be leaning toward identifying mentoring as a solitary principal association, whereas recent studies have redefined mentoring as an assimilation of progressive associations (Gibson, 2005; Brown, Geesa & McConnel, 2020). Klofsten and Oberg (2008) collected data with the aid of 450 coaching and mentoring case studies, using an interpretivist study at seven universities in Sweden, to ascertain whether there is a distinct incongruity between mentoring and coaching. The researchers concluded that operational variances existed between a coach and mentor, stating that coaching is based on generic aptitude whilst mentoring is conducted by a high-quality expert (Klofsten & Oberg, 2008). Mentoring stimulates individuals and inspires them to take control of knowledge, to exploit their strengths, to evolve their talents and to refine productivity (Laukhuf & Malone, 2015; Lerman, 2020). Coaching is an action in which the coach

and the individual interrelate intensely, emphasising it to be a more empathetic association (Reissner, 2008; Muller & Kotte, 2020).

From an entrepreneurial perspective, it can be argued that coaching and mentoring are diverse associations (D'Abate *et al.*, 2003; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). Coaching is an immediate professional affiliation to advance present productivity through knowledge acquisition, whereas mentoring is an intended affiliation that concentrates on enduring objectives and success (D'Abate *et al.*, 2003; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). Irby (2018) is congruent with the view that the theoretical meanings of coaching and mentoring are dissimilar in numerous facets, stating that coaching is task-driven whilst mentoring is people-driven and people-centric. Irby (2018) supports the notion that coaching is a short-term activity whereas mentoring is a long-term association. Three major components of coaching are recognised, namely, relationship-building, vigorous listening and active interrogation, affirming that coaching accentuates relationships (Gormley, 2014; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Carmel and Paul (2015) concur that mentoring, unlike coaching, offers a tactic for evolving a person's professional talents and objectives. Carmel and Paul (2015) contend that coaching is regarded as a relationship between an experienced and inexperienced individual, with the aid of various methods, to assist the inexperienced individual to attain short-term objectives. Kanu (2017) disagrees by averring that coaching is a methodical task-centred approach, whilst mentoring is people-centred. Despite the contribution of each study to research, most studies have neglected to concentrate on discipline-specific focus. In instances where discipline-specific reference exists, the studies are biased toward disciplines such as sport, education and general enterprise management.

Studies support the view that the actions of mentors and coaches occasionally connect (Rolfe, 2016; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). However, it is acknowledged that a coach enables productivity through talent development, whilst a mentor inspires a person's activities for enhanced individual and work-related results (Rolfe, 2016). Coaching and mentoring are time-driven accomplishments, where coaching aids with precise current problems, whereas mentoring entails guidance to channel direction; notwithstanding unison, the two areas are actioned diversely (Rosha, 2013; Walker-Fraser, 2014; Grabmann, Scholmerich & Schermuly, 2019). Mentoring is inclusive of coaching. However, coaching does not involve mentoring, since coaching embraces detailed talents whilst mentoring is all-embracing (Tyler, 2004; Blake-Beard *et al.*, 2020). The

terms coaching and mentoring are used synonymously because the definitions overlap in multiple areas (Koopman, 2013; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). Furthermore, the terms are used synonymously with other terms such as executive coaching, business coaching, entrepreneurial mentoring and entrepreneurial training (Koopman, 2013; Berman, 2019). A mentor may opt to use coaching practices within the confines of a mentoring relationship (Makatleho *et al.*, 2016). The latter hypothesis is advocated through the view that coaching forms the foundation of mentoring (Murray & Owen, 1991; Garvey, Stokes & Megginson, 2017; Irby, 2018). For this study, mentoring is used interchangeably with coaching, in some instances, to permit value-added coaching-related literature to be incorporated into the literature review.

2.3.1.5 Benefits of mentoring

Preliminary exploration recognised numerous benefits of mentoring on an individual and organisational basis (Ayer, 2010). However, this is principally in the field of employee mentoring (Ayer, 2010; Cox *et al.*, 2010; Steinbauer *et al.*, 2020). The benefits evident from mentoring include improved efficiency, enhanced motivation and enrichment of services delivered by the organisation (Baranik, Roling & Eby, 2010; Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Grabmann *et al.*, 2019).

The benefits of entrepreneurial mentoring are summarised by Arruti (2021) as follows:

- Direction is provided to SMEs for entrepreneurial focus.
- Expertise is transferred between mentor and mentee.
- Aptitude development is enabled through the transfer of hard and soft entrepreneurial skills.
- Entrepreneurs improve their capability to implement strategies for future business sustainability (Arruti, 2021).

In a broader context, mentoring can provide benefits for advancement in a workplace environment. In an entrepreneurial environment, the expertise transferred to SMEs may take the form of experiential learning, knowledge contribution and skills training (Baluku, Matagi & Otto, 2020). Moreover, mentoring can expand the SME network, reinforce the entrepreneurial vision, and provide constructive criticism to empower SME entrepreneurs to viably manage their ventures (Baluku *et al.*, 2020).

Therefore, SMEs can circumvent catastrophic situations and enhance the prospect of longevity through the implementation of conventional and non-traditional methods of mentoring skills transfer (Baluku *et al.*, 2020). However, caution must be exercised with respect to the implementation of mentoring practices, such as gender-based preferences and entrepreneurial self-motivation factors (Baluku *et al.*, 2020).

2.3.1.6 Drawbacks of mentoring

Despite its advantages, mentoring has distinct drawbacks if it is not used in its entirety as a tool to promote entrepreneurial development. Mentoring can prove detrimental to both the mentor and mentee if the nature of the relationship is flawed (Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Szabo *et al.*, 2019). Factors which contribute to a negative relationship include a lack of commitment to the relationship, a lack of preparation, a lack of direction and a lack of understanding relating to expectations and outcomes (McLaughlin, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Szabo *et al.*, 2019). Major drawbacks of mentoring include: the lack of access to proper mentoring, time and cost constraints, trust concerns, individual and personality impediments, cultural difficulties, gender obstacles, language issues and generational challenges (McLaughlin, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Bickel & Rosenthal, 2011; Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Szabo *et al.*, 2019).

2.3.1.7 Types of mentoring and mentoring relationships

Multiple researchers concur, irrespective of the type of mentoring applicable, mentoring remains a mutual association that may prevail in a formal or informal setting (Goldner & Mayseless, 2009; Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Ramirez, 2012; Montgomery, 2017). Mentors use numerous styles such as coaching, facilitating, analysing and imparting auxiliary advice, to enable knowledge transfer between mentor and mentee (Lee *et al.*, 2016; Washington & Cox, 2016).

Inzer and Crawford (2005) outline that the mentoring association comprises three parts, namely, the mentor, the mentee, and the nature of the relationship, which can be decided upon between the mentor and mentee. However, there is limited research concerning the exact mentor-mentee relationship specific to a discipline or sector (Lee *et al.*, 2016).

2.3.1.7.1 Mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships are classified according to various types. This section outlines the different types of mentoring relationships prevalent in different fields. Although the discussion incorporates diverse fields such as sport, medicine and education, these fields have been included in this section to ensure that the discussion comprehensively evaluates the application of mentoring in different contexts.

a) Formal and informal mentoring

The nature of the mentoring relationship can be either formal or informal. Informal mentoring is a combination of both mentoring and acquaintance and is the result of idea transfer; formal mentoring comprises the development of a process that culminates in the completion of exact aims, through direct individual interaction (Inzer & Crawford, 2005; Brown & Grant, 2010; Gurjee, 2020). The nature of the relationship can be safeguarded, predominantly in formal mentoring, using sessions which allow the mentor and mentee the opportunity to gauge the effectiveness of each mentoring session (Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Gurjee, 2020).

Conservatively, formal mentoring has been actively applied in workplace situations on a hierarchical basis, whereas informal mentoring is based on individual affiliations and the imparting of knowledge (Brown & Grant, 2010; Dutton, Deane & Bullen, 2021). Mentoring relationships are often dyadic, which may be based on identified individual factors or complementary characteristics of the mentee (Brown & Grant, 2010; Wallace, Moore & Curtis, 2014; Hernandez *et al.*, 2017; Dutton *et al.*, 2021). Although there is pertinent debate concerning the nature of mentoring relationships, this study contends that mentoring may be applied as a formal or informal practice, dependent on the relationship between mentor and mentee and the unique organisational situation. Thus, there is a compelling requisite to ascertain the mentoring relationship for which SME entrepreneurs echo a preference. Through an analysis of the research, different classifications of mentoring relationships were distinguished. These are presented in the following sections.

b) Executive mentoring

Executive mentoring entails mentoring offered to management executives, which is usually associated with succession preparation (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018; Gray 2018). Executive mentoring, alternatively referred to as

leadership coaching, is a mentoring approach that endorses executives to acquire the abilities to function as effective leaders (Gray, 2018; Irving, 2021). The demand for executive mentoring as a progressive mediation tool is constantly present (Feldman & Lankau; 2005; Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018). However, it can be argued that executive mentoring has been disparaged for having a vague academic underpinning and is an area of research that needs development (Kanu, 2017). There is an inadequacy of research showing a linkage between executive mentoring and entrepreneurial mentoring. Although there are aspects which may overlap, research in this area is still developing.

c) Diversity mentoring

Diversity mentoring addresses the range of cultures prevalent in the workplace, thus dealing with methods of managing diversity-related issues that arise from it (Garvey *et al.*, 2017). Diversity mentoring also encompasses gender-based issues (Clutterbuck, Poulsen & Kochan 2012; Garvey *et al.*, 2017; House, Spencer & Pfund, 2018). Diversity mentoring shapes insight into homogeneity by safeguarding the interests of all groups of people in an organisation, strongly linking it to social responsibility and sustainability (Garvey *et al.*, 2017). Diversity mentoring is a crucial relationship-based form of mentoring, for potential inclusion in operationalising entrepreneurial mentoring, given its contemporary significance (Clutterbuck *et al.*, 2013; Sheri *et al.*, 2019).

d) Voluntary mentoring

Voluntary mentoring is associated with the offering of services to individuals in society who need assistance (Miranda-Díaz *et al.*, 2020; Schenk *et al.*, 2021). These individuals may vary from frail people to people who find themselves in disadvantaged situations (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Miranda-Díaz *et al.*, 2020). Inzer and Crawford (2005) posit that this form of mentoring is ideally suited to scenarios based on the premise of informal relationships, where the mentor and mentee experience a level of comfort with each other.

e) Conventional dyadic mentoring

Often perceived to be the main type of mentoring, dyadic mentoring occurs when a mentor affords mentoring services to a mentee to enable individual and professional evolution (Bryant & Terborg, 2008; Garvey *et al.*, 2017). Byars-Winston and Dahlberg

(2019) argue that whilst a dyad, or the relationship between the mentor and mentee, is usually between two people, mentoring has extended theoretically and practically to include triads, communal mentoring and mentoring on different platforms. With the emergence of new technologies, the conventional dyadic form of mentoring is evolving, thus its pertinence remains ambiguous (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019).

f) Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring, applicable to work teams, is a form of mentoring which allows for co-mentoring amongst colleagues in a work situation (Kensington-Miller, 2011; Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Biehle *et al.*, 2021). Peer mentoring can also support the alliance between mentor and mentee, to reduce emotions of seclusion, by partially eliminating the traditional mentoring hierarchy relationship (Byars-Winston & Dahlberg, 2019).

g) E-mentoring

As a retort to innovation and enhancement in the technology field, e-mentoring uses advancements in technology to offer mentoring locally and globally (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Pollard & Kumar, 2020). Thus, its practicality was accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Pollard & Kumar, 2020). Skill transfer, which is established and controlled through computer-generated platforms, forms the basis of e-mentoring (Tinoco-Giraldo, Sanchez & García-Penalvo, 2020). The execution of e-mentoring, commonly referred to as online, virtual or distance mentoring, can present difficulty since mentors and mentees must possess the necessary abilities and resources to assimilate the transfer of skills for mentoring effectiveness (Tinoco-Giraldo *et al.*, 2020). The 2020 pandemic accelerated the shift toward electronic media, but there is limited research on e-mentoring, which ranges from a lack of clarity concerning theoretical insight to its effectiveness (Tinoco-Giraldo *et al.*, 2020). Shrestha *et al.* (2009) concluded, through a qualitative study, that advantages such as convenience and flexibility exist in the use of a technological platform. However, the authors cautioned against the detached nature of the platform which could impact the effectiveness of mentoring (Shrestha *et al.*, 2009; Pollard & Kumar, 2020). Because the onset of the 2020 pandemic triggered a crucial pivot toward the use of electronic platforms, the effectiveness of e-mentoring for entrepreneurs, and its preference from the perspective of mentors and mentees, is an area of research which needs further exploration.

h) Reverse mentoring

Reverse mentoring is age-related, where the mentor, often a young individual, offers professional assistance to an older mentee (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Browne, 2021). Reverse mentoring is the inverse of the pervasive orthodox mentoring relationship which involves the hierarchical transfer of skills (Gugercin, 2017). It provides an opportunity within an organisational climate for the older generation, or senior-level individuals, to equip themselves with skills from the younger generation (Harvey *et al.*, 2009; Kemmis *et al.*, 2014; Gugercin, 2017; Browne, 2021). Thus, reverse mentoring offers prospects to develop effectual consultation within the organisation for the ultimate benefit of external customers (Kase, Saksida & Mihelic, 2019).

i) Hybrid mentoring

The increase in technology usage, combined with the COVID-19 pandemic, promoted collective forms of mentoring, often known as blended or hybrid mentoring (Koopman *et al.*, 2021). The blended approach is asserted to provide the ideal form of mentoring, since it offers a fusion of e-mentoring and conventional dyadic mentoring, thus enabling personalised mentoring using technology (Sanyal & Rigby, 2017; Koopman *et al.*, 2021).

j) Medical mentoring

Medical mentoring or coaching involves the preparatory training provided to medical personnel in an endeavour to forestall unfavourable results (Armson, *et al.*, 2019; Rusch *et al.*, 2019). Trainee medical graduates are mentored to ensure the reliable provision of services to others (Collier, 2017). Studies identified contradictions in the methods used to assess the effectiveness of medical mentoring, demonstrating disparity between training and knowledge application in a practical setting (Kavanagh & Szweda, 2017; Almalkawi, Jester & Terry, 2018).

k) Educational mentoring

Educational mentoring arises in the scholastic field, where experienced teachers focus on the development of less experienced individuals (Garvey *et al.*, 2017; Andersen & West, 2020). The latent effect of mentoring on the careers of academics and students surpasses scholastic heights (Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019). Mentoring in education provides academics with the necessary foundational support to rise to greater echelons in their academic careers (Kutsyuruba & Godden, 2019). Mentoring is

applied to the field of education, in the form of peer mentoring, for educator preparation initiatives (Harris & Sass, 2011; Cypress, 2020). Instructional mentoring entails guidance for trainees to achieve efficacy in the educational environment (Aguilar, 2013; Liaquat, Naz & Nasreen, 2020).

A lack of effective mentoring systems in educational settings suggests that trainee educators encounter a torrent of difficulties, coupled with seclusion and a lack of impact (Goldrick *et al.*, 2012; Liaquat *et al.*, 2020). The elevated staff turnover of educators is prevalent in the field of education; this is observed when contrasted with other vocations (Spoon, Thompson & Tapper, 2018). In addition, sub-standard mentoring techniques can negatively impact the performance of new educators (Goldrick *et al.*, 2012; Spoon *et al.*, 2018).

I) Sport coaching

Sport coaching comprises the use of a knowledgeable coach to develop the physical and psychological performance of sport participants (Moen, Hoigaard & Peters, 2014; Gano-Overway, 2020). A shared commonality between sport coaching and generic mentoring is the imparting of collective proficiencies, such as professionalism and goal accomplishment (Chroni *et al.*, 2013; Kelly *et al.*, 2018). The emphasis in both cases is the development of abilities (Chroni *et al.*, 2013; Kelly *et al.*, 2018).

The literature reviewed in this section indicates that mentoring is prevalent in diverse fields, such as business, management, medicine, education and sport, thus reflecting the need for constant research (McLaughlin, 2010; Coplin, 2012; Tigges *et al.*, 2021). An appraisal of the forms of mentoring implied that a blend may be significant to entrepreneurship. This study consequently explores the mentoring preferences of entrepreneurs.

Irrespective of the mentoring association, a successful mentoring relationship is established when objectives are clearly defined, when consultation drives the association, and when the association is seen as an investment from a personal and professional perspective (Nottingham, Mazerolle & Barrett, 2017). The accomplishment rate of mentoring is reliant on elements such as the characteristics of people, enterprises and environments (Kochan & Pascarelli, 2012; Tigges *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the current study addresses these elements.

2.3.1.8 Standards for SABPP mentoring and COMENSA coaching

The South African Board for People Practices (SABPP) hypothesises practice standards pertaining to mentoring (SABPP, 2017). The standards include positioning mentoring as a progressive instrument for conveying practical knowledge by defining organisational goals (SABPP, 2017). Furthermore, SABPP (2017) stipulates the preservation of privacy and confidentiality between the mentor and mentee, shared agreement concerning the process and monitoring of the process. At present, approximately 1 700 coaches are listed with the Coaches and Mentors of South Africa (COMENSA), a structured professional entity that oversees coaching and mentoring within the confines of the country (COMENSA, 2021; Terblanche, Passmore & Myburgh, 2021). COMENSA affords an avenue for coaches and mentors to collaborate, participate and develop their skills (COMENSA, 2021). As part of the promotion of coaching and mentoring best practice, COMENSA recommends the advancement of principled service offerings through the expert abilities of its coaches and mentors, coupled with veracity, responsibility, diversity and invention (COMENSA, 2021). Both bodies promote mentoring as a practical and professional service offered by experts with the highest ethical standards (SABPP, 2017; COMENSA, 2021). However, there is no prescribed SME mentoring model that either SABPP or COMENSA recommends or implements. Therefore, to establish the elements for incorporation into an entrepreneurial mentoring model, it is necessary to first explore the concept of entrepreneurship. The next section provides a discussion of entrepreneurship-related notions.

2.3.2 Entrepreneurship

This section evaluates entrepreneurship in both a universal and South African context. The section examines the definition of entrepreneurship. The section further explores the categories of entrepreneurs and reviews the entrepreneurship process.

2.3.2.1 Definition of entrepreneurship

Researchers have defined the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurship diversely, implying there is no consensus on the precise definition of the concept (Cunningham & Licheron, 1991; Schmitt & Husson, 2017). An entrepreneur is someone who consistently generates prospects with the capacity to convert an idea into a prospering

commercial endeavour (Bolton & Thompson, 2000; Kearney, Hisrich & Roche, 2009; Aladejebi, 2020). Although entrepreneurs in diverse nations share common qualities, certain qualities are explicit to their unique countries, suggesting they are moulded by social norms (Eroglu & Picak, 2011; Khattab, Ahmed & Mohamed, 2017). An entrepreneur is a pioneer who, when afforded the resources to generate a commercial endeavour, is a risk-taker intricately engaged in the operation of the venture (Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2014; Chioma, Abasiama & Gaiballa, 2020). Additionally, an entrepreneur channels effort into accomplishing anticipated outcomes, to secure profits, by recognising the mental and monetary risks (Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Goncharova, Kartashov & Gavrilova, 2009; Zarhari *et al.*, 2020). Despite various definitions of an entrepreneur, the fundamental foundation in definition suggests a person who owns and manages an organisational venture (Filion, 2011; Saleh & Kinaan, 2021). There is a paucity of research relevant to the success capabilities of contemporary entrepreneurs, since the discipline is varied, dynamic and subject to internal and external change.

Traditionally, entrepreneurship is a multi-disciplinary combination of accounting, business operationalisation, marketing and economics, suggesting a myriad of research positions, thus implying dissonance around the concept (Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Carlsson *et al.*, 2013; Edeh, Edeoga & Dialoke, 2020). Joseph Alois Schumpeter (1883-1950) is considered the initial proponent of entrepreneurship, after investigating an association between economic activity and entrepreneurship, thereby designating an entrepreneur to be a representative of transformation (Carlsson *et al.*, 2013; Henning & McKelvey, 2020). However, entrepreneurship was not a widespread notion until thirty years ago (Carlsson *et al.*, 2013; Henning & McKelvey, 2020). The concept of entrepreneurship, similar to the definition of an entrepreneur, is subject to diverse definitions which developed over time. There are two principal extents of entrepreneurship, namely, venture creation, which is the ability to start a business, and venture performance, which is the ability to operate a business (Carton, Hofer & Meeks, 2000; Lima, Kubo & Oliva, 2021). Entrepreneurship facilitates the seeking of prospects which culminate in business development (Shane, Locke & Collins, 2003; Malebana, 2021). A new dimension was added to entrepreneurship by expanding the definition to incorporate belief, mindset and the innovative ability of an entrepreneur (Ireland, Kuratko & Morris, 2006; Kuratko, Fisher & Audretsch, 2020). Filion (2011)

advocates that entrepreneurship is a universally prevalent activity, which includes sub activities that embrace practical, human, administrative and risk-taking elements. Despite its universal prevalence, the trials that confront entrepreneurs in diverse nations, diverse segments, and at diverse stages of the entrepreneurial journey, need research expansion.

Deliberation exists amongst scholars concerning the transfer of entrepreneurial skills. Comparable to other vocations, it is argued that entrepreneurship skills can be imparted to new venture creators (Fayolle & Gailly, 2013; Ndofirepi, 2020). However, Klein and Bullock (2006) opined a contrasting view. Whilst it is acknowledged that selected competencies are mandatory for decoding emerging ideas into implementation, it is challenging to impart competencies, such as tacit management techniques, or the internal traits required for entrepreneurship (Klein & Bullock, 2006; Robinson & Gough, 2020).

The entrepreneurial journey comprises the following characteristics: (1) opportunity identification, (2) the compilation of a thorough business plan, (3) resource availability, and (4) the general management of a venture (Lotz, 2009; Krisnaresanti *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurship necessitates that entrepreneurs are skilled with respect to these characteristics, to successfully drive their commercial endeavours, inferring that education imparted will mould them to be accountable and deal with challenges (Bbenkele & Ndedi, 2010; Ngibe & Lekhanya, 2019). A recent study emphasised elements such as organisational integrity, entrepreneurial intelligence, personal effectiveness, governance and individual associations, as significant for entrepreneurship (Tur-Porcar, Roig-Tierno & Mestre, 2018). The latter study presents an additional holistic approach to entrepreneurship, accrediting both organisational and personal factors as contributors to entrepreneurial success. The present study adopts the most cited definition of entrepreneurship: entrepreneurship combines the identification of prospects, with the display of entrepreneurial characteristics and entrepreneurial comportment, to discover and develop an opportunity within the business ecosystem (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010; Al-Jubari *et al.*, 2019).

There is debate amongst researchers that the field of entrepreneurship cannot be viewed in isolation (Bruyat & Julien, 2000; Lee, 2019). Instead, it is impacted by the economic situation, inner change and peripheral change (Bruyat & Julien, 2000; Lee,

2019). Research supports the hypothesis that business activities in a new venture can be challenging and dissimilar in emerging market economies (Persinger, Civi & Vistona, 2007; Basit *et al.*, 2020). An emerging economy comprises countries that exhibit households with diminished income levels, which depend primarily on fiscal improvement for progression (Bruton *et al.*, 2013; Cao & Shi, 2021). Because South Africa is a nation prevalent with fiscal, political and societal changes, coupled with a high volume of emerging entrepreneurs, it is regarded as an emerging nation economy (Amolo & Beharry-Ramraj, 2015). Emerging entrepreneurs are defined as individuals engaged in the progression of developing business ventures that are in the start-up or growth phases (Amolo & Beharry-Ramraj, 2015). The extant literature suggests that entrepreneurship has been explored from a global standpoint, where researchers have scrutinised the value that can be generated from it (Ferreira *et al.*, 2015). However, a gap exists in the extant literature pertaining to entrepreneurship in developing economies (Kobia & Sikalieh, 2010; Cao & Shi, 2021). Therefore, this study addresses the gap pertinent to emerging entrepreneurship in South Africa and explores how mentoring can resolve the associated challenges.

2.3.2.2 Categories of entrepreneurs

Zimmerman (2009) hypothesises that entrepreneurs fall into various categories which include:

- The nascent entrepreneur, referring to an individual who embarks on a business venture for the first time.
- The intrapreneur, referring to an individual who embarks on entrepreneurship within an established venture.
- The small business entrepreneur who employs under 50 employees.
- The medium business entrepreneur who employs 50-500 employees.
- The large business entrepreneur who employs more than 500 employees (Zimmerman, 2009).

A nascent or emerging entrepreneur is an individual who pledges effort into creating a commercial undertaking (Wagner, 2004; Vagesh, Thaddaeus & Kumar, 2017). A nascent entrepreneur seeks to capitalise on the prospect of presenting novel commodities or services, exploring a niche market, or improving operations with a view

to maximising profitability (Dimov, 2010; Gonzalez-Lopez, Perez-Lopez & Rodriguez-Ariza, 2021). Based on an empirical study involving a sample of 2 763 nascent entrepreneurs, the skill of planning was proposed to be valuable, because it serves to direct emerging entrepreneurs to achieve higher levels of productivity, profitability and success (Dimov, 2010). Thus, individuals with higher skill levels or higher education are prone to possess the confidence to venture into new businesses (Garcia-Pereiro & Dileo, 2015). These abilities can be transferred to novice individuals (Garcia-Pereiro & Dileo, 2015). Whilst the significance of entrepreneurship is cited, deliberation prevails concerning the exact skills, traits and abilities required for different types of entrepreneurs. Because the current study focuses on the nascent or emerging entrepreneur, this study seeks to propose the competencies which need to be inculcated by mentors to adequately empower emerging SMEs.

2.3.2.3 The entrepreneurship process

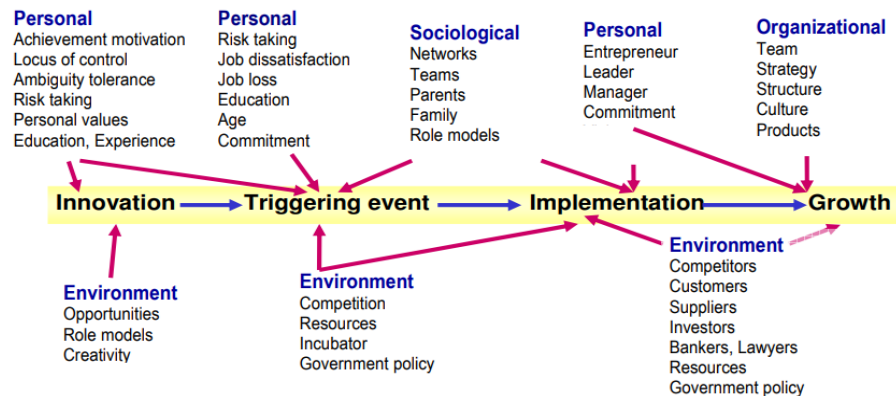
Scholars articulated different perspectives concerning the entrepreneurial process, in the form of approaches, processes or models. Despite the presence of an array of entrepreneurial process models, each model offers its individual set of benefits and shortcomings. A critical analysis of the approaches, processes and models follows chronologically.

2.3.2.3.1 The entrepreneurship process

The conventional Hisrich and Peters entrepreneurship process model, in Figure 2.2, comprises four phases (Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Hisrich, Peters & Shepherd, 2017):

- Recognising, inventing and appraising a prospect, termed the innovation stage.
- Self-motivation to pursue a prospect and the subsequent creation of the business proposal, termed the triggering event stage.
- Identifying the relevant resources to act upon the proposal, culminating in the launch of the business, termed the implementation stage.
- The management of the business, profit maximisation and growth focus, termed the growth stage (Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Hisrich *et al.*, 2017; Van Aardt & Bezuidenhout, 2017).

Furthermore, the qualities of an entrepreneur are moulded by individual characteristics and the situation the entrepreneur is exposed to, represented in Figure 2.2 as personal, sociological, organisational and environmental characteristics (Nassif, Ghobril & Da Silva, 2010).



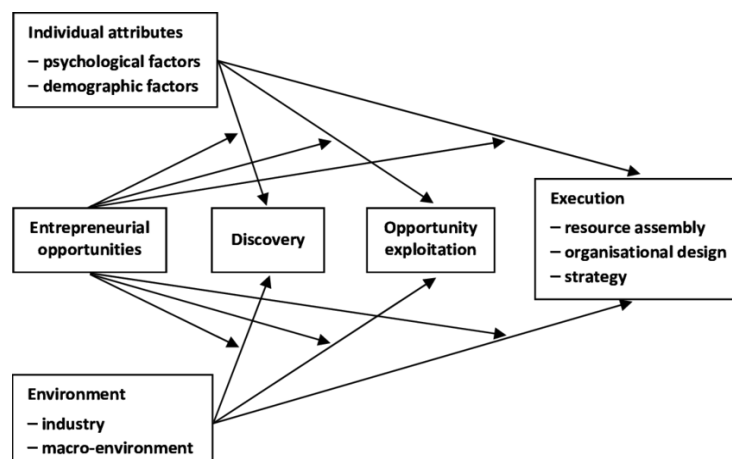
(Source: Hisrich & Peters, 2002; Hisrich *et al.*, 2017)

Figure 2.2: The entrepreneurship process

It is contended that the conventional process accentuated only some aspects of entrepreneurship with little acknowledgement for other entrepreneurial factors or competencies (Shane, 2003). Therefore, although the process is a phased approach, there is little emphasis on the development of entrepreneurial abilities.

2.3.2.3.2 *Shane's model of entrepreneurship*

Shane (2003) opines that the entrepreneurship process necessitates the exploitation of idea recognition and is not necessarily stage bound, as illustrated in Figure 2.3. The entrepreneurship process was presented as the individual-opportunity nexus framework (Shane, 2003; Davidsson, 2015).



(Source: Shane, 2003; adapted from Davidsson, 2015)

Figure 2.3: Shane's model of entrepreneurship

Shane's model splits entrepreneurship into two distinct phases. The first phase, termed idea discovery, is the abstract part of creating a venture from a preliminary concept (Davidsson, 2015). The second phase, termed exploitation, denotes the pragmatic execution of the business concept (Davidsson, 2015). Criticism of Shane's model suggests that it is grounded on the notion of innovative concepts (Mason & Harvey, 2013).

Shane's model presents entrepreneurship without considering the dynamic challenges which impact entrepreneurs from the start of the process. Therefore, its applicability to retail SMEs may be limited because the focal point of the process is invention. Moreover, it can be argued that idea creation does not rest innately with an entrepreneur, since ideas can be borne through entrepreneurial development and mentoring.

A divergent viewpoint was offered from an empirical investigation by Delmar and Shane (2004). A study of 223 emerging Swedish entrepreneurs concluded that the emerging entrepreneurial process should include the following activities, which contribute to long-term business sustainability (Delmar & Shane, 2004):

- The capability to create a legal business.
- The capability to write a business plan, implying basic business acumen aptitudes.
- The formation of communal associations with potential stakeholders, implying personal skills and aptitudes.
- The capability to assemble the necessary resources.
- Product creation and marketing.
- The ability to enlist people resources in the venture (Delmar & Shane, 2004).

This viewpoint emphasised the functional status of a business plan, although the prominence of the plan as an accomplishment tool is disputed (Delmar & Shane, 2004; Davidsson, 2005). Despite questions concerning the prominence of the business plan, methodical and planned activities are advantageous for emerging entrepreneurs (Davidsson, 2005). The recommended activities draw attention to the pragmatic aspects of entrepreneurship, such as resource planning, and the operational, marketing and human resource aspects (Delmar & Shane, 2004).

2.3.2.3.3 *The entrepreneurship framework*

An alternate perspective suggested the entrepreneurial process as a series of phases in sequential order, namely, conception, operations, execution and advancement (Bygrave, 2004). To supplement this perspective, a new conceptual entrepreneurship framework was proposed, as depicted in Figure 2.4 (Zimmerman, 2009). The entrepreneurial process was defined to comprise four areas: (1) process, which encompasses procedural invention factors, (2) venture, which comprises typological factors, (3) entrepreneur, which includes personal behavioural factors, and (4) ecosystem, which incorporates environmental issues. The framework offers a comparatively balanced approach, factoring personal, organisational and environmental factors, despite the preclusion of the stages of entrepreneurship in sequential form.

Procedural	Typological	Behavioral	Environmental
Opportunity Recognition or Creation	Social	Personal Values	Legal System
Innovation or Invention	Lifestyle	Self-Awareness	Education System
Genesis Moment	Intreprenuer	Self Discipline	Research University
Action	Middle Market	Intellectual Curiosity	Vibrant Economy
	Liquidity Event	Intellectual Honesty	
		Accountability	
The Process or the Act	The Venture	The Entrepreneur	The Ecosystem

(Source: Zimmerman, 2009)

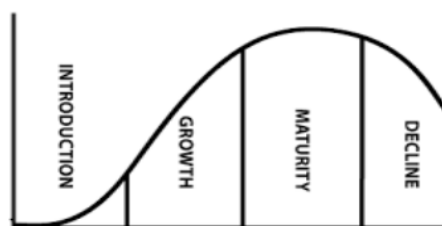
Figure 2.4: The entrepreneurship framework

In contrast, an evolutionary approach proposed three phases for the entrepreneurship process: (1) idea initiation, which involves the implementation of the idea and resource deployment, (2) growth, which encompasses expansion of market share, and (3) maturity, which signifies reaching a plateau or creating disruptive opportunities (Vantilborgh, Joly & Pepermans, 2015). Vullo, Morando and Platania (2017) argue that entrepreneurship involves the inclination to transmute information and expertise to meet the needs of customers. Hence, it serves as an instrument for economic development within the confines of a country or globally. In support of this view, entrepreneurship was proposed as an all-encompassing approach comprising developmental stages (Gielnik, Zacher & Wang, 2018). There are advantages and disadvantages applicable to each model or process reviewed. This study acknowledges that entrepreneurship should be idyllically viewed as a linear process to enable the mentoring of emerging entrepreneurs in a systematic manner.

2.3.2.4 The entrepreneurial life cycle

The life cycle of entrepreneurship, also known as the entrepreneurial ecosystem, is defined by distinct stages (Cantner *et al.*, 2021). Figure 2.5 depicts the stages of the life cycle.

- The introduction or start-up stage: the stage at which an idea is conceived, exploited and launched, signifying the start of the entrepreneurial venture.
- The growth stage: this stage is characterised by expansion and an increase in revenue. There is an upsurge of human resources, physical resources and financial resources, in addition to product abundance.
- The maturity stage: also known as the stabilisation stage, this stage is characterised by new entrants into the market and the application of new methods by competitors, affirming aggressive rivalry amongst businesses.
- The decline stage: the business sees a distinct decline in growth because ideas have been exploited to the point of exhaustion and profitability is negatively impacted (Maylín-Aguilar & Montoro-Sanchez, 2020; Cantner *et al.*, 2021).



(Source: Adapted from Cantner *et al.*, 2021)

Figure 2.5: Stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle

Whilst there is discord concerning the number of stages that comprise the life cycle, four basic stages are part of most life cycles. However, some authors include the diversification and renewal stages between the maturity and decline stages (Yoo, Lee & Park, 2019; Cantner *et al.*, 2021). In addition, there is a contemporary need for entrepreneurs to understand how to develop resilience and flexibility at various stages of the life cycle amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (Cantner *et al.*, 2021).

2.3.2.4.1 Mentoring for early-stage (emerging) entrepreneurs

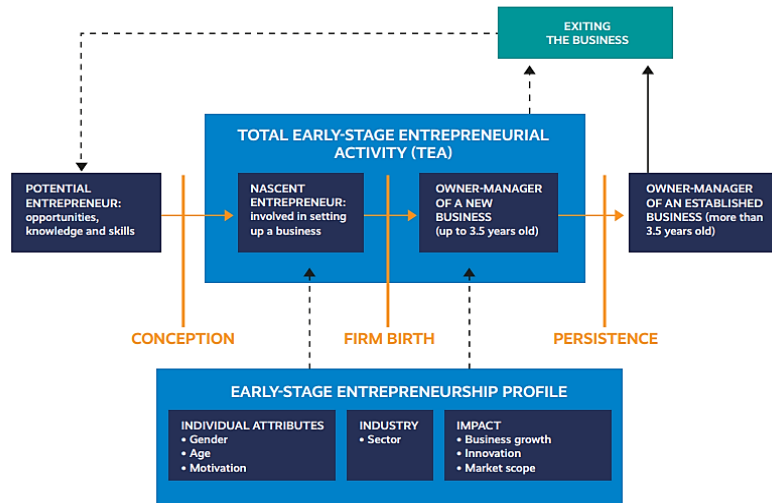
Individuals who have been active in business for under 42 months are considered early-stage entrepreneurs. Nascent entrepreneurship, under 42 months, is thus designated Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (TEA) by GEM (Ionescu-Somers

& Tarnawa, 2020). The focus of this study is on TEA entrepreneurs. It is argued that a crucial factor for sustaining the TEA entrepreneurial venture is education or knowledge capital (Kansheba, 2020). Education comprises the sum of the talents and abilities that can be inculcated in TEA entrepreneurs, through training and mentoring, to promote progression and sustainability (Kansheba, 2020).

Therefore, imminent studies should delve into SME challenges to examine how role players within the ecosystem can support TEA entrepreneurs (Kansheba, 2020). It is evident that research is encouraged to address the lack of abilities amongst TEA entrepreneurs, and to identify the mentoring needs of SMEs during early-stage entrepreneurship. Due to an intensification in the challenges encountered by emerging entrepreneurs, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, mentoring should address early-stage entrepreneurial awareness from different perspectives (Yulastri, 2020). The recommended perspectives include addressing entrepreneurial impetus and mindset, transferring knowledge on the operational principles of managing a business, and understanding innovation (Yulastri, 2020). The latter view is supported by Seet, Lindsay and Kropp (2021) who assert that inculcating the correct mindset is central to the success of SMEs.

Other proposed mentoring aspects are the fundamentals of SME positioning and the adoption of inventive business practices (Seet *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, factors such as the ability to develop a clear vision, the competence to plan, and the proper application of business management skills, should be addressed through mentoring (Gonzalez-Lopez *et al.*, 2021). Mentors should inculcate additional skills, such as strategy formulation, employee-related acumen, personal branding knowledge and technological knowledge (Botha & Taljaard, 2019).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) postulates a different approach for describing the stages of entrepreneurship. The stages depicted in Figure 2.6, which correlate with the stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle, are described as conception, birth, persistence and exiting (Ionescu-Somers & Tarnawa, 2020). Additionally, mentoring should address mindset, individual, and organisational factors. These factors contribute to the TEA ecosystem comprising the entrepreneurship phases (Figure 2.6). The aforementioned elements make up knowledge capital which can be advocated through SME mentoring (Nicotra *et al.*, 2018).



(Source: Ionescu-Somers & Tarnawa, 2020)

Figure 2.6: GEM entrepreneurship ecosystem and phases

2.3.3 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)

A universal global description of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is ambivalent. SMEs are identified by means of regulation across various nations, since ‘small’ and ‘medium’ are characterised in relation to the magnitude of the economy within each country (OECD, 2017). However, despite the absence of an absolute SME definition, nations globally are confronted with the trials of declining growth, fragile trade and obstinately prevalent societal disparity (OECD, 2017). Entrepreneurship is important for the empowerment of people, within the confines of a country, for viable advancement and growth (Abdullahi *et al.*, 2015). SMEs serve as the apparatus for fiscal and societal progress, although SME activity is determined by micro and macro environmental factors (Alvarez, Amoros & Urbano, 2014). This section reviews information pertaining to the nature of SMEs and explores the South African SME landscape. In addition, extant mentoring is reviewed within the retail industry. Government incubators are appraised to provide insight into their efficacy as a mentoring tool.

2.3.3.1 The nature of SMEs

SMEs are crucial in any universal financial system, to serve as a guiding influence for trade, development, modernisation and employment creation (Holatova & Brezinova, 2013). The management function within SMEs is intimate, with multiple roles designated to a select few people, characterised by informal leadership and

communication (Holatova & Brezinova, 2013). SMEs are categorised by virtue of their employee data, annual revenue and profitability (Thiam, 2009). They serve as a central source of a nation's financial evolution through fiscal expansion (Herr & Nettekoven, 2017; Ruchkina *et al.*, 2017; Essel, Adams & Amankwah, 2019). Additionally, SMEs play a role in employment creation and in the delivery of commodities to customers (Mahmudova & Kovacs, 2018).

SMEs diverge from large corporates due to the ambiguous landscape within which they operate (Mahmudova & Kovacs, 2018). Abdin (2019) postulates that SMEs in developing nations contribute positively toward the GDP of a country. However, SMEs in emergent economies are usually deficiency-driven, due to an absence of economic progression and an inability to grow (Herr & Nettekoven, 2017). Therefore, SMEs lack the ability to be pioneering or to boost output (Herr & Nettekoven, 2017). The factors which drive SMEs include the desire for profitability, a commitment to pursue excellence, and a desire for sustainability and innovation (Holatova & Brezinova, 2013).

However, aspects which promote the accomplishment of SMEs in developing countries also serve as limitations (Tambunan, 2019). These aspects include managerial function and ability, procedures adopted, employee skill sets, entrepreneur skill sets, gender, technological capabilities and entrepreneurial intent (Tambunan, 2019). This justifies the need to examine how SMEs in developing nations adjust to factors that impact their sustainability.

2.3.3.2 The nature and landscape of SMEs in South Africa

Since early 2000, the South African entrepreneurial setting has been characterised by a lack of entrepreneurship knowledge, due to social and past difficulties (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Odeku, 2021). As of 20 November 2018, the description of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was reviewed by the Minister of Small Business Development (SA Government, 2019). SMEs in South Africa are presently classified according to two criteria, namely, total full-time employees and total annual turnover (SA Government, 2018). The classification is according to the metrics reflected in Figure 2.7, which resulted from the publication of a government gazette which modified the classification of small, micro and medium enterprises (SA Government, 2018).

SECTOR	SIZE	MAXIMUM TURNOVER
Agriculture	Medium	R35 million
	Small	R17 million
	Micro	R7 million
Mining and quarrying	Medium	R210 million
	Small	R50 million
	Micro	R15 million
Manufacturing	Medium	R170 million
	Small	R50 million
	Micro	R10 million
Electricity, gas, water	Medium	R180 million
	Small	R60 million
	Micro	R10 million
Construction	Medium	R170 million
	Small	R75 million
	Micro	R10 million
Retail, motor trade, repair	Medium	R80 million
	Small	R25 million
	Micro	R7.5 million
Wholesale	Medium	R220 million
	Small	R80 million
	Micro	R20 million
Catering, accommodation, other	Medium	R40 million
	Small	R15 million
	Micro	R5 million
Transport, storage, communication	Medium	R140 million
	Small	R45 million
	Micro	R7.5 million
Finance and business services	Medium	R85 million
	Small	R35 million
	Micro	R7.5 million
Community, social, personal service	Medium	R70 million
	Small	R22 million
	Micro	R5 million

(Source: SA Government, 2019)

Figure 2.7: Revised micro, small and medium businesses in South Africa

Notwithstanding the redefinition of SMEs in South Africa, uncertainty prevails over what *actually* constitutes an SME, since SMEs are identified transversely in research and policy papers (Small Business Institute, 2018). Despite the uncertainty, SMEs are prolific stimulants of comprehensive commercial development in South Africa. Research advocates that SMEs comprise 91% of formalised organisations, they offer employment to approximately 60% of the workforce, and SME productivity accounts for 34% of the GDP (Banking Association of South Africa, 2019). Mahmudova and Kovacs (2018) argue that SMEs in affluent nations contribute more than 51% of the

GDP and 57% of employment, whereas it is approximately 20% of the GDP and the national employment rate in developing nations. Therefore, further research will help establish the reasons why contemporary SMEs underperform.

The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) posits between 55%-65% of national employment may be attributed to the SME sector in South Africa (SEDA, 2019; 2021). However, the conventional SME in South Africa documents turnover of under R 200 000 each year, while 50% of SMEs hire under five employees, according to the SME landscape report (SME South Africa, 2019). The results of the report reflect that the SME sector comprises moderately new ventures, with approximately 60% of SMEs active for under three years; hence, they are classified as emerging SMEs (SME South Africa, 2019). SEDA (2021) estimates that the number of SMEs in South Africa is approximately 2.4 million (Figure 2.8).

Indicator	2020Q3		2021Q2		2021Q3		Quarterly change		Yearly change	
	Number	Distrib.	Number	Distrib.	Number	Distrib.	Number	%	Number	%
Employer	867 938	5.8%	931 797	6.2%	866 747	6.0%	-65 050	-7.0%	-1 191	-0.1%
Own account worker	1 495 575	10.1%	1 539 938	10.2%	1 537 817	10.6%	-2 121	-0.1%	42 242	2.8%
SMME owners	2 363 513	15.9%	2 471 735	16.3%	2 404 564	16.6%	-67 171	-2.7%	41 051	1.7%
Working for someone	12 407 670	83.4%	12 562 944	83.0%	11 986 519	82.8%	-576 425	-4.6%	-421 151	-3.4%
Helping in household business	109 320	0.7%	105 119	0.7%	87 889	0.6%	-17 230	-16.4%	-21 431	-19.6%
Total employed	14 880 503	100.0%	15 139 797	100.0%	14 478 972	100.0%	-660 826	-4.4%	-401 531	-2.7%

(Source: SEDA, 2021)

Figure 2.8: Numbers of SMEs in South Africa

The average age of SME owners in South Africa is 40 years. SMEs operating in the informal sector accounted for 68%, while those in the formal sector accounted for 28% (SEDA, 2021). To safeguard that the economy remains universally viable, it is vital for the SME industry to develop with universal inclinations (Mogashoa & Selebi, 2021). However, SMEs are frequently wedged in a contradictory situation. This is characterised by an emergent SME which is increasing its market share, but its accomplishment is circumvented by an inexperienced approach, ineffective management and unsuitable structure (Larkin, 2018). Moreover, many SMEs are deficient in corrective action, which consequently leads to failure (Larkin, 2018).

South African retailers sustained economic strain across all areas over the years, with the customer market overstretched by Value Added Tax (VAT) escalations, fuel hikes and rising inflation (Larkin, 2018). These factors adversely impact the SME retail industry (Larkin, 2018). The Wholesale and Retail Sector and Training Authority (W&R SETA) asserts that substructures within the retail SME segment are insufficient to

support innovative emerging ventures (W&R SETA, 2014). Therefore, mentors can accelerate the success of entrepreneurs through interventions such as business strategies, knowledge and approach (Mogashoa & Selebi, 2021).

A study of emerging entrepreneurs in developing Kenya found that entrepreneurial mentoring had a positive impact on profitability by an estimated 20% (Brooks, Donovan & Johnson, 2018). However, profitability contracted once the input of the mentor was removed from the study (Brooks *et al.*, 2018). Three core areas determine the success of entrepreneurs globally, namely, (1) the general attitude toward entrepreneurship nationally, (2) the aspirations of entrepreneurs which could impact economic progression, and (3) the ease with which to create new ventures, in the form of entrepreneurial activity, within the confines of a country (Doran, McCarthy & O'Connor, 2018). A major impediment to the survival of entrepreneurship in developing countries is the lack of formalised support structures, together with the imposition of regulatory requirements (Arasti, Zandi & Bahmani, 2014). Atsan (2016) concluded, through a qualitative study of entrepreneurs, that failure in entrepreneurship can be attributed to a lack of access to entrepreneurial information and mentoring. Formalised mentoring promotes the advancement of emerging entrepreneurs, signifying that mentoring contributes toward the development of cognitive entrepreneurial functions and self-efficacy (St-Jean & Audet, 2012). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the areas of mentoring which contribute to the success of the entrepreneurship process.

2.3.3.2.1 SME ranking in South Africa

The journey of an entrepreneurial endeavour is considered volatile, since 50% of new ventures fail within five years (Huang & Knight, 2017). The intention to promote innovation, and exploit market opportunities, serves as the backbone for entrepreneurial activity in South Africa (Henning & Akoob, 2017). However, the growth of entrepreneurship in South Africa is low in comparison to global growth (Sitharam & Hoque, 2016). The 2019-2020 Global Competitiveness Index report reflects that the field of education is diminishing in South Africa, with its territorial position at 119 from a total of 141 nations. In the 2017-2018 report, South Africa was ranked 128, out of 137 countries, in respect of the quality of mathematics and science education (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). Hence, the status quo will have a significant

effect on the success measure of upcoming entrepreneurship growth (Bowmaker-Falconer & Herrington, 2020). The GEM TEA index, which is a significant measure of entrepreneurial effort in macro economies, reflects South Africa's poor performance (Herrington & Kew, 2017). In comparison to other countries, South Africa is ranked 46th, signifying low economic activity, as reflected in Figure 2.9 (Herrington & Kew, 2017).

Year	SA's TEA ranking	SA's TEA rate	Median	Number of positions above/below median
2002	20 th out of 37 countries	6.3	19	1 below
2003	22 nd out of 31 countries	4.3	16	6 below
2004	20 th out of 34 countries	5.4	17	3 below
2005	25 th out of 34 countries	5.2	17	8 below
2006	30 th out of 42 countries	5.3	21	9 below
2008	23 rd out of 43 countries	7.8	22	1 below
2009	35 th out of 54 countries	5.9	27	8 below
2010	27 th out of 59 countries	8.9	30	3 above
2011	29 th out of 54 countries	9.1	27	2 below
2012	22 nd out of 69 countries	7.3	35	13 above
2013	35 th out of 67 countries	10.6	34	1 below
2014	53 rd out of 70 countries	7.0	35	18 below
2015	38 th out of 60 countries	9.2	30	8 below
2016	46 th out of 65 countries	6.9	33	13 below

(Source: Herrington & Kew, 2017)

Figure 2.9: South Africa's TEA ranking

The meagre longevity of emerging entrepreneurs in South Africa emphasises the need to implement institutional involvement, in order to guide entrepreneurs with the relevant business and personal organisation abilities (Herrington & Kew, 2017). Challenges which compromise the success of emerging entrepreneurs include a lack of entrepreneurial training/mentoring, insufficient management knowledge, a lack of understanding concerning finances and operations, legislative challenges and an overall lack of confidence (Ngota, Mang'unyi & Rajkaran, 2018). Since entrepreneurship is perforated with dynamism and evolving forces, the impetus for this study was to explore how and why these challenges occur, and how they can be addressed.

Despite the prevalence of innovation, entrepreneurial activity continues to fail at a rate of 35% in South Africa, with emerging entrepreneurs experiencing adversity with business sustainability (Herrington *et al.*, 2016). Five out of seven new entrepreneurial ventures fail within the first year of establishment in South Africa (Antonites, 2015). Despite the failure of entrepreneurship, emerging entrepreneurs initially deemed mentoring to be instrumental to business growth (Petridou, 2009). The mentor

endeavours to positively influence the entrepreneurial experience, and aid the entrepreneur in developing a business, through the transfer of advice, skills, guidance and direction (Watson, 2004; Kar & Sarangi, 2020). Mentoring is an ancillary tool that motivates people to succeed through personal and business-related goals (Makhado, 2015). Furthermore, it enables individuals to capitalise on their latent abilities, to cultivate business aptitude and to maximise performance (Makhado, 2015). Entrepreneurship role models, in the form of business mentors, remove the stumbling block in the process of new business formation by recognising accomplishment and encouraging the process (Deakins & Freel, 2006; Guerrero, Linan & Caceres-Carrasco, 2020).

Zwane (2022) indicates that trade buoyancy in South Africa weakened by 4.2 index points, according to The South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SACCI), during the publication of the Business Confidence Index (BCI). The BCI represents how industries experience the current trade situation. SACCI states that the adverse influence on the economy can be attributed to lower stock volumes, a decrease in retail sales, a diminishing-value rand and increased inflation (Zwane, 2022). These market conditions have a bearing on retail SMEs. The retail segment is reputed to be one of the harshest to function in, specifically for a small to medium-sized business (Malgas & Zondi, 2020).

The review of the literature infers that the burden of economic challenges extends to SMEs, inclusive of retail businesses. Businesses which do not acclimatise to change are unlikely to remain buoyant in an innovative retail market. This requires an entrepreneur to employ an all-embracing strategy to all facets of the SME, necessitating the individual to be knowledgeable in all aspects. Since mentoring is crucial to the all-embracing strategy approach required by SME entrepreneurs, the development of a new model will facilitate adaptation to change.

2.3.3.3 *Legislation on entrepreneurship in South Africa*

There is a distinct difference between formal and informal businesses. Formal businesses are registered, structured, and controlled, whereas informal businesses are not registered, seldom regulated, and operationally unstructured (Struwig, Kruger & Nuwagaba, 2019). There is a positive correlation between entrepreneurship

legislation and entrepreneurial activity across developed nations (Alvarez *et al.*, 2014). However, the correlation is not sustained in developing nations, implying that legislation can be an impediment (Salinas, Ortiz & Muffatto, 2019). It is further suggested that entrepreneurial training stimulates entrepreneurial activity, whilst stringent legislative factors dampen the entrepreneurial spirit in developing nations (Halil, 2015).

Statutory aspects, such as government regulation in the form of business registration, VAT regulatory requirements, tax amenability, income taxes and levies, serve as barriers to entrepreneurship entry in South Africa (Cassim, Soni & Karodia, 2014; Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). The legislative acquiescence for business registration is onerous for most SMEs (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). Additionally, taxes enforced by the South African Revenue Services (SARS), such as Value Added Tax (VAT), the Skills Development Levy (SDL) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), present further obstacles (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). The SARS-related statutory prerequisites attest to be cumbersome and bureaucratic for emerging SMEs (Cassim *et al.*, 2014; Anwana, 2019; Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). The delay in processing refunds to SMEs causes a resultant cash-flow effect (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). The repercussion of bureaucratic requirements on SMEs leads to a demanding SME operational environment, elucidating why SMEs opt to remain informal (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019).

Entrepreneurs recognise that it is problematic and costly to register a business in South Africa, to remunerate employees according to employment and recommended stipend laws, to adhere to statutory requirements and to operate under constrained public services (Olawale & Garwe, 2010; Anwana, 2019). Gopaul and Manley (2015) opine that SMEs in South Africa are subjected to challenges, such as tedious legislative and administrative processes, labour policies and tax complexities, resulting in difficulty for SMEs to join the sector. Based on empirical research provided by contemporary researchers, it is evident that legislation in South Africa has a significant impact on SMEs.

The next section provides a synopsis of current entrepreneurial mentoring practices within the retail environment, mentoring practices in Kwazulu-Natal and mentoring practices prevalent in public incubators in South Africa.

2.3.3.4 Extant entrepreneurial mentoring practices within the retail industry

Despite retail SMEs contributing to the South African economy, the intricate and dynamic ecosystem within which they operate poses difficulty for venture operation (Malgas & Zondi, 2020). The abundance of retail options available to customers, coupled with the entry of foreign-owned SMEs into South Africa, necessitates a reconsideration of business strategies and methods for future sustainability (Malgas & Zondi, 2020). This implies the need for urgent intervention using innovative approaches. Additionally, mentoring within the retail industry displays vestiges of a relentlessly underestimated resource which can be valuable for entrepreneurs (Forbes, 2018). However, there are different techniques in which mentoring is currently applied within the retail industry. Since it is acknowledged that there is insufficient literature on mentoring within the retail and sales sector, it creates prospects for further advancement in the field (Rollins, Rutherford & Nickell, 2014).

Mentoring within the retail industry has inherently been applied formally or informally. Formal mentoring involves a professional mentor who is appointed to provide mentoring on a regular basis, usually on an individual relationship basis (Crede, 2016). Informal mentoring incorporates a range of companies which provide mentoring in a counselling or advisory capacity (Crede, 2016). Despite the preference for informal mentoring, the type of mentoring implemented has no bearing on results (Bradford, 2014). Although access to mentoring establishments can prove challenging, financial institutions provide entrepreneurial support or mentoring to moderate risk in some instances (Bradford, 2014; Crede, 2016). Mentoring is thus considered a key proponent of SME retailing success (Davies, 2017).

Using a qualitative study involving participants from the retail sector, Rollins *et al.* (2014) concluded that informal mentoring contributes to improved productivity in individual capacities. An experimental study of SME retailers deduced that mentoring enhances SME efficiency, improves turnover and accomplishes business objectives (Kent, Dennis & Tanton, 2003). Mentoring induces employment creation in retail SMEs and develops the abilities of both employees and entrepreneurs (Garvey & Garrett-Harris, 2008). Notwithstanding the evolution of generic mentoring, uncertainty prevails concerning the operationalisation of mentoring in the retail environment.

2.3.3.5 Extant entrepreneurial mentoring practices in KwaZulu-Natal

Mahohoma (2017) posits a high prevalence of income disparity and destitution in South Africa, indicating that 57% of South Africans dwell in destitution. Durban, located in KwaZulu-Natal, is South Africa's third largest city which serves as a viable nucleus of business (Ncgobo & Sukdeo, 2015). However, after completing a qualitative study comprising entrepreneurs based in KwaZulu-Natal, Ncgobo and Sukdeo (2015) found that approximately 74% of entrepreneurs were oblivious of support available. Mutanda, De Beer and Myers (2014) concluded, through a quantitative study comprising entrepreneurs in the central business district of Durban, that entrepreneurs were not sufficiently skilled in the elementary fields of business. Insufficient research exists on retail SMEs in the Durban and KwaZulu-Natal region, despite the ability of SMEs to make a large contribution to the economy (Chazireni, 2017). Furthermore, many retail SMEs in the Durban region fail to survive beyond the start-up venture stage (Chazireni, 2017). Ayandibu *et al.* (2019) recommend that entrepreneurship mentoring should be encouraged to create viable business ventures. Research in the retail environment is limited to mentor-mentee associations, with minor emphasis on content-focused or sector-specific models (Richardson, 2009; Rollins *et al.*, 2014; Wen *et al.*, 2018; Campbell, 2020).

A positivist, empirical study of entrepreneurial spirit in KwaZulu-Natal recognised that poor financing support, and the lack of managerial competencies, served as retail SME challenges (Lekhanya, 2016). The absence of proficiencies in the execution of government projects, through incubation structures, is one of the reasons for entrepreneurial failure in KwaZulu-Natal (Okeke-Uzodike *et al.*, 2018). This alludes to the presence of unsuitable people tasked with providing guidance to business owners. Ngcobo and Sukdeo (2015) propose that the problems experienced by Kwazulu-Natal entrepreneurs include the lack of government support through state structures and incubation. Despite the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) employing public initiatives with the intent to educate entrepreneurs, most entrepreneurs are not informed about the presence of these initiatives (Ngcobo & Sukdeo, 2015).

Khuzwayo (2015) conducted a study of KwaZulu-Natal entrepreneurs, to identify their level of satisfaction with existing mentoring practices in the form of business incubators. Despite the lack of optimism and frustration pertaining to poor support,

entrepreneurs were satisfied with some elements of the mentoring received (Khuzwayo, 2015). Thus, entrepreneurs should be afforded personal inspiration, training and assistance from state-based, private and non-state organisations (Okeke-Uzodike & Ndinda, 2018). Hattingh *et al.* (2018b) posit that SEDA assisted approximately 34 000 SMEs nationally until 2017. Approximately 3 000 SMEs reported an increase in profitability, 3 500 SMEs reported an improvement in revenue, and 2 000 SMEs reported an increase in employees, thus implying room for improvement in success rates (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018b). However, no incubator success rate statistic exist per province in South Africa (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018b).

Formal mentoring programmes available to entrepreneurs in South Africa include those offered by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), Business Mentors, and Business Partners (SEDA, 2020). Recent years have seen the advent of incubator ventures which included a formal mentoring component. KwaZulu-Natal hosts 11 public business incubators, of which five are based in Durban (SEDA, 2020). Success rates for public incubators are not conclusive. Additionally, uncertainty exists over how extensively entrepreneurs use various programmes, and their willingness to adopt the use of mentors in their ventures, specifically when needs are not addressed (Niehoff, 2006; Chavoushi, Nicholls-Nixon & Valliere, 2020). Gopaul and Manley (2015) conducted a study of entrepreneurs, in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, who cited dissatisfaction toward unsatisfactory support and development structures made available. The efficacy of incubators is explored in the next section to ascertain the application and practice involved.

2.3.3.6 Extant mentoring practices in South Africa through government incubators

Recent research has uncovered an increase in business incubators (BIs) or accelerators globally and in South Africa. Incubators were conceptualised to provide support, informal mentoring and knowledge to SMEs in order to fast-track development (Robles, 2017). Business incubators cultivate growth in entrepreneurial businesses, aiding them to subsist during the initial phases when there is a susceptibility to fail (Voisey *et al.*, 2006; Vincent & Zakkariya, 2021). The Incubation Support Programme (ISP) was created by government to promote business incubators and invigorate SME entrepreneurial endeavour (DTI, 2018). Consequently, the ISP

was authorised with the task of inculcating entrepreneurial capabilities (DTI, 2018). Business incubators are attentive during the SME inception phase to encourage ventures to be autonomous (DTI, 2014).

There are diverse research interpretations concerning the efficacy of incubators as SME support vehicles (Chandra & Chao, 2015; Mas-Verdu, Ribeiro-Soriano & Roig-Tierno, 2015). Incubators endorse development in emerging businesses and create business viability (Chandra & Chao, 2015; Mas-Verdu *et al.*, 2015). However, alternate viewpoints hypothesise that incubators lack efficacy and do not promote progression in SMEs (Mas-Verdu *et al.*, 2015). In addition, evolving nations such as South Africa signify a scarcity of mentoring services and entrepreneurial progression mechanisms (Allahar & Brathwalte, 2016). Incubators in South Africa need a reconstruction of framework so that there is greater emphasis on encouraging SME progression (Hewitt & Janse van Rensburg, 2020).

2.3.3.6.1 Nature of public business incubators

The necessity to enhance entrepreneurial activity within a country cannot be underestimated (Salem, 2014). The role of incubators is to: (1) offer emerging ventures an opportunity to form associative partnerships, (2) offer monetary backing through commercial financing and state funding, (3) provide mentoring and business advice, and (4) offer communal office zones (Masutha & Rogerson, 2014). Business incubation is orchestrated by governing bodies to provide auxiliary services and infrastructure to entrepreneurs (Salem, 2014; Lose *et al.*, 2016). Nair and Blomquist (2019) augment the latter view, by indicating that incubators ensure the transition to full entrepreneurship, through coaching practices.

Since incubators provide ventures with guidance from the initiation to growth phases, they engage in the transfer of operational skills (Salem, 2014). However, Nair and Blomquist (2019) contend that incubators are often discerning in the selection process, opting to provide their services only to conveniently chosen emerging ventures. Ndabeni (2008) posited that the role of incubation is a relatively novel notion, both in South Africa and other emergent nations, further bringing into question the effectiveness of incubation services.

2.3.3.6.2 Success factors of public business incubators

Numerous accomplishment gauges reflect an optimistic effect of business incubation in South Africa under the SEDA technology programme (Masutha & Rogerson, 2014). The most important effect is that incubation confined the high failure rate, by signifying that 80% of SMEs were able to sustain their ventures beyond the initial year (Masutha & Rogerson, 2014). Tembe (2018) asserts that incubators contribute toward stimulating employment creation within society, by equipping entrepreneurs with the skills to foster job creation and promote a strong entrepreneurial culture amidst high unemployment. Another factor that supports the role of incubators includes employment creation for its own employees (Masutha & Rogerson, 2014; Hewitt & Janse van Rensburg, 2020). Despite the success factors, Khuzwayo (2015) argues that existing mentoring practices are considered futile by emerging South African entrepreneurs, in the case of public incubator mentoring, due to challenges such as accessibility and practicality. The challenges encountered by public business incubators are explored in the next section.

2.3.3.6.3 Challenges encountered by public business incubators

Kavhumbura (2014) postulates that business incubation in emergent nations is pervaded with difficulties, such as financial and funding constraints, and an inability to attract and retain capable employees. Furthermore, complications arise due to entrepreneurs who do not operationalise the knowledge imparted (Kavhumbura, 2014). Incubators work on generic programmes or product delivery models (DTI, 2018). The issues which inhibit the effectiveness of incubators in South Africa include: (1) the geographic dispersion and inaccessibility of incubators, (2) the mismatch between the needs of entrepreneurs versus the training imparted by incubators, and (3) the lack of initiative from candidates involved in various programmes (Tengeh & Choto, 2015). Incubators are discouraged from providing a universal one-size-fits-all approach without intermittent follow-up (Khuzwayo, 2015).

Incubator mentoring should be cognisant of the trials confronted by SMEs and afford talents according to contemporary issues (Khuzwayo, 2015). Hattingh *et al.* (2018b) suggest there is a void in literature concerning incubator procedures and profitability. Masutha and Rogerson (2014) assert that incubation is a comparatively novel area in

research, despite the pivotal goal of accelerating business growth. South African industry incubators make physical meeting platforms, and internal organisational structure, the focal point of their activities, often overlooking the transfer of soft skills such as professionalism and networking (Justino, 2015). A recommendation is that future research should consider evolving models, thus creating an appropriate model for the mentoring of entrepreneurs in South Africa (Lose *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, mentoring practices should avoid irrelevant issues and focus on sustainable business development (Khuzwayo, 2015). Therefore, a study should be piloted to conclude the effect of professional entrepreneurial proficiencies, through mentoring as a knowledge transfer instrument, on the success of SMEs (Lose *et al.*, 2015).

The next section provides an overview of the mentoring models and theories appraised in this study.

2.4 MENTORING AND COACHING: MODELS AND THEORIES

Despite the existence of formal and informal mentoring programmes, a void is acknowledged in the creation of a formal entrepreneurial mentoring model (Davies, 2017). Thus, the knowledge cavity between mentoring and entrepreneurship is apparent, since entrepreneurial mentoring occurs at different levels across different platforms. This section reviews the requirements for the creation of a model. In addition, coaching and mentoring models used in contemporary practice are evaluated. Six models and two theories are presented in the following sections.

2.4.1 Elements of a model

Notwithstanding the rising status in the creation and use of models, no unique definition subsists for the exact elements of a model. Peric, Durcan and Vitezik (2017) posit that a model can denote an explanation, a depiction, a construct, a theoretical instrument or a strategy. A model is further signified as a postulation, an operational prototype, a system, or a framework, and often a combination of elements (Peric *et al.*, 2017). Foss and Saebi (2018), supported by Morris, Schindehutte and Allen (2005), concur that there is little accord concerning the precise characterisation of a model. However, the authors posit there are shared academic keystones concerning what constitutes a model generically. A business model is a visionary map or plan for a business (Morris *et al.*, 2005; Foss & Saebi, 2018). In essence, it represents an

outline, which constitutes methods and strategies concerning substructure, inferring it is a set of inter-reliant structures for a business (Morris *et al.*, 2005; Khodaei & Ortt, 2019). The construction of a model may be problematic, due to the dynamic nature of factors affecting a business, even though a model adds value by offering innovative perspectives of a study (Chesbrough, 2010; Khodaei & Ortt, 2019). Fielt (2013) suggests a model designates the conceptual approach for how a business will produce value through an interconnected group of fundamental elements. A model is vital for emergent conceptual clarity and course (Robins, 2017). Since it is a depiction of a structure with an underlying method, it can be seen as a symbol underpinned by phases (Robins, 2017). Jabareen (2009) asserts that a conceptual model is a group of concepts, comprising significant aspects, theories, variables and associations. Despite the lack of unanimity concerning the components of a model, a model serves as a framework, roadmap, or conceptual approach, for strategising how to operationalise a process. The present study uses this as a basis for the foundational elements of a model.

2.4.2 Operationalisation of a model

Operationalisation encompasses strategy, which forms a fundamental part of an enterprise's approach, through the enhancement and capitalisation of competencies in the business purview (Slack, Chambers & Johnston, 2010; Avella, Vazquez-Bustelo & Fernandez, 2011). Operationalisation includes the creation of functional systems, practices and techniques for optimal performance (Bakker & Shepherd, 2017). An alternate view of operationalisation is its focus on enterprise competitiveness, pertaining to price and product excellence (Boyer & Lewis, 2002). Furthermore, operationalising is the hypothesising of a method to achieve desired optimal competencies or outcomes (Bingham, Eisenhardt & Furr, 2007). Therefore, the optimal competencies enable SMEs to pursue prospects for growth and sustainability (Felin & Zenger, 2017).

Despite similarities and differences in definition, operationalisation alludes to the practical implementation of a process for maximum output. For this study, operationalisation references how a model and its elements can be applied in SMEs, practically and effectively, to enable ventures to perform optimally to achieve the desired outcomes.

Since an array of mentoring and coaching models presently exist, with diverse approaches to mentoring, an assessment of the common models is presented in the next section. The models and theories pertinent to this study are examined in the following manner:

- Firstly, a brief descriptive narrative of each model is provided to clarify its operational functionality.
- Secondly, a critical assessment is provided per model to ascertain its applicability, usefulness and appositeness to this study.

2.4.3 Mentoring models

Six models were selected for inclusion because of their pertinence, potential applicability, or prospective contribution to the development of the new model. Furthermore, the models and theories are examined for significance in process, functionality, or competency underpinning.

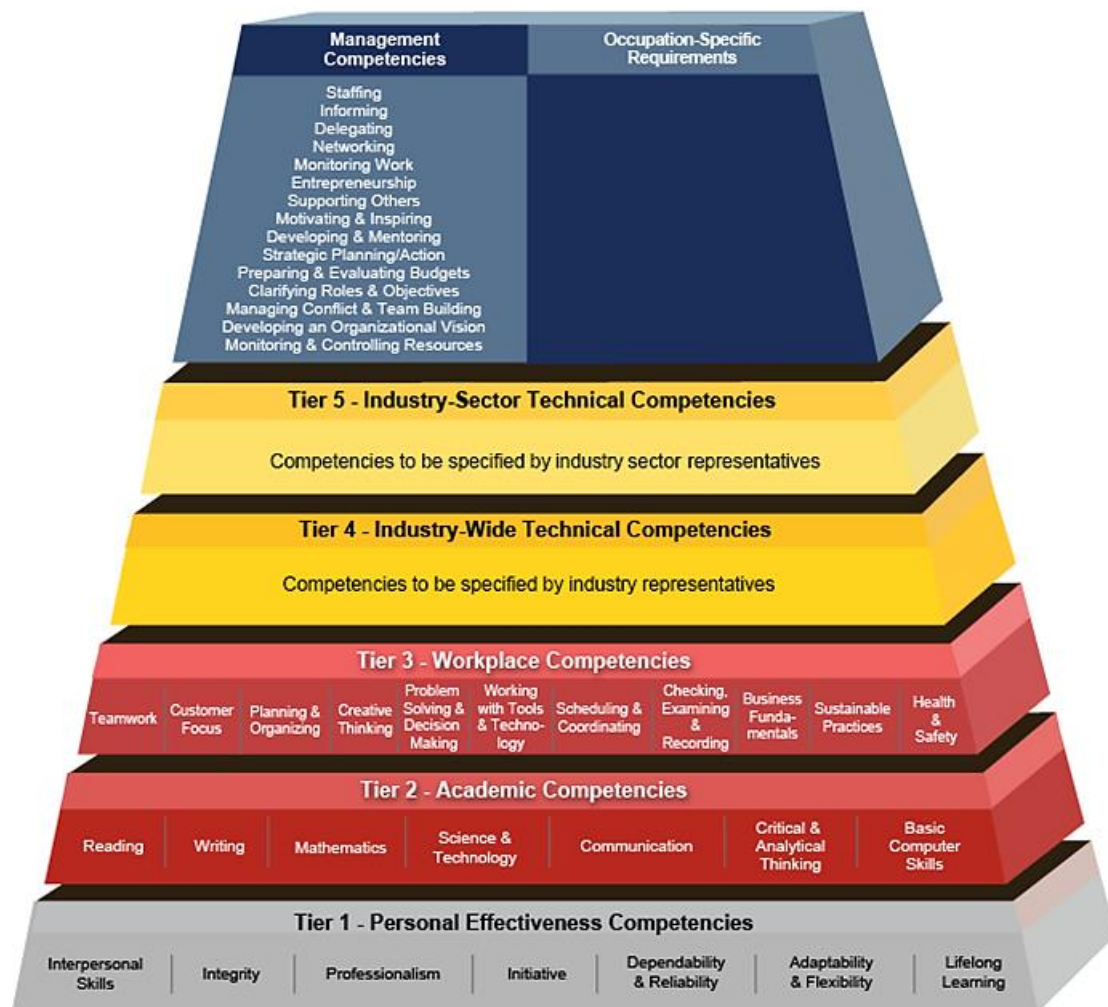
2.4.3.1 DOLETA competency pyramid model

Competency is posited as the aptitude to use information, abilities, capabilities and personal characteristics, to accomplish important endeavours in an occupational position (Ennis, 2008). Mojab, Zaefarian & Azizi (2009) suggest that competency embodies an accumulation of an entrepreneur's behaviour for accomplishment. Thus, competency includes factors such as boldness, principles, views, information, capabilities, insight and overall proficiency (Mojab *et al.*, 2009). A competency model is a graphic instrument which recognises the skills required to complete a task within a business or a sector (Ennis, 2008).

The United States Department of Labour Education and Training Authority (DOLETA) developed a generic competency pyramid model, which illustrates the proficiencies required by individuals on nine levels or tiers, where inferior levels act as support structures for higher levels (Ennis, 2008). The lower tier designates the core or foundational skills with extensive applicability to several sectors and professions, the middle tier designates industry competencies, and the higher tier represents occupational competencies (Ennis, 2008).

The DOLETA Entrepreneurship Competency Model pyramid was developed to direct the training of entrepreneurs in a developed nation, namely, the United States (Ashmore, 2009). The model was used to transfer education or training intended to augment practical entrepreneurial proficiency (Ashmore, 2009). In addition, the DOLETA pyramid model (Figure 2.10) places aptitude clusters on tiers, originating from tier 1 which is located at the bottom (Mokhtar, 2017).

Tiers 1-3 comprise the basic personal and communication skill competencies required for accomplishment in any workplace, and tiers 4-5 comprise the industry-related practical skills (Ennis, 2008). Tiers 6-8 summarise the job-related skills which define performance, and tier 9 comprises the management skills required (Ennis, 2008).

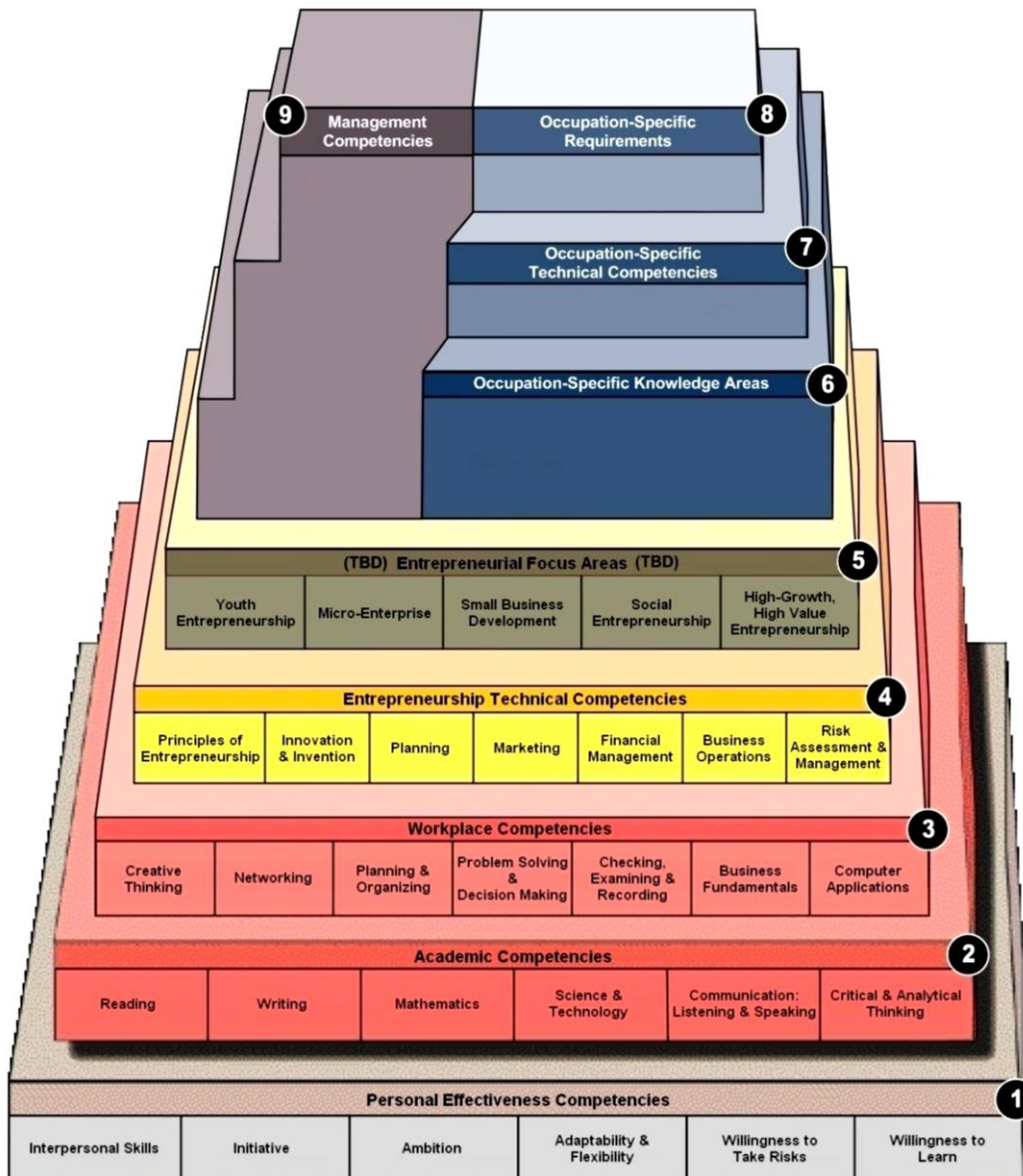


(Source: CareerOneStop, 2019)

Figure 2.10: DOLETA pyramid model

The entrepreneurship factors steered by the DOLETA pyramid, pertinent to generic entrepreneurship, are personal effectiveness competencies, academic competencies, workplace competencies, technical or entrepreneur competencies, and management competencies (Mokhtar, 2017).

Subsequently, the DOLETA pyramid was enhanced to feature specific skills required by entrepreneurs (Figure 2.11).



(Source: CareerOneStop, 2019)

Figure 2.11: DOLETA entrepreneurial pyramid

Ashmore (2009) describes the tiers and competencies which apply to an entrepreneurial situation, per tier, in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: DOLETA entrepreneurial pyramid tier competencies

Tier	Skills and competencies
Tier 1: Personal effectiveness	These skills are largely taught at home, or in the community, and are strengthened in an organisational context. These skills embody individual qualities. For entrepreneurship, the skills include interpersonal skills, risk-taking proclivity and a general ambition to succeed.
Tier 2: Academic competencies	These are fundamental skills transferred in an educational setting. They comprise skills such as reading, writing and communication abilities.
Tier 3: Workplace competencies	These skills signify self-management skills, such as creative thinking, networking, planning skills, business skills (ethics, operations, leadership activities and growth strategies) and fundamental computer abilities.
Tier 4: Industry (technical) competencies	These skills embody entrepreneurial activities, such as the entrepreneurial process, innovation, planning, marketing, finance, operations and risk management skills, which entrepreneurs should possess to execute their tasks effectively.
Tier 5: Industry-wide (focus areas) competencies	These competencies are established through the formation of entrepreneurial awareness clusters, or communities of practice, where like-minded individuals share ideas.
Tier 6-8: Occupation competencies	These levels represent specific skills that are dependent on each entrepreneur's unique business interest.
Tier 9: Management competencies	These skills overlap with some focus on industry competencies, and include the ability to plan, lead, motivate and manage people.

(Source: Ashmore, 2009)

Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010) propose that skills and competencies are diverse instruments that impact entrepreneurial productivity. These skills include the ability of entrepreneurs to leverage attractive prospects, to apply managerial skills to become better strategists, and to be aware of how to apply their skills as valued resources (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). Moreover, entrepreneurial skills are exceedingly connected to the phase of the business life cycle, implying that a range of management competencies and education is imperative for the migration of a venture, from an emerging state to a well-run business (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010). Wickramaratne,

Kiminami and Yagi (2014) used an empirical study in Sri Lanka to explore the correlation between entrepreneurial competency and organisational performance. It was concluded through the study that circumstantial attributes have a direct bearing on organisational success (Kiminami & Yagi, 2014; Wickramaratne *et al.*, 2014). As part of circumstantial attributes, education was positively correlated to constructive abilities and organisational success (Wickramaratne *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, mentoring was emphasised to augment entrepreneurial skills (Wickramaratne *et al.*, 2014).

Although the instruments used to assess entrepreneurial competency and performance remain a grey area, the common techniques encapsulate turnover, progress, operational proficiency, productivity and long-term sustenance (Zizile & Tendai, 2018). Therefore, it is vital that entrepreneurs attain competencies that contribute toward the sustainability of their ventures (Zizile & Tendai, 2018). Whilst the DOLETA model affords areas of competency for entrepreneurship development, it does not provide a process-driven method in which entrepreneurial mentoring can be presented. Additionally, proficiency models offer individualisms which support optimal employee behaviour within organisations. However, this may not be applicable to emerging ventures (Misra & Sharma, 2017). Proficiencies are increasingly recognised as indispensable instruments for enhancing employee accomplishment (Parding & Liljegren, 2017).

Despite the application of proficiency models to employee situations, the DOLETA model designates proficiencies from a wide-ranging perspective, which may be used to incorporate generic management competencies for an entrepreneurial model. Furthermore, this model is pertinent to this study because it affords the prospect to adapt according to different scenarios, sectors or fields.

2.4.3.2 Competence executive coaching model

Koortzen and Oosthuizen (2010) proposed the competence executive coaching model. The fundamental nature of the model is to empower and equip organisational figureheads with the relevant skills to turn their ideas into result-oriented actions.

The model comprises five stages, as illustrated in Figure 2.12.

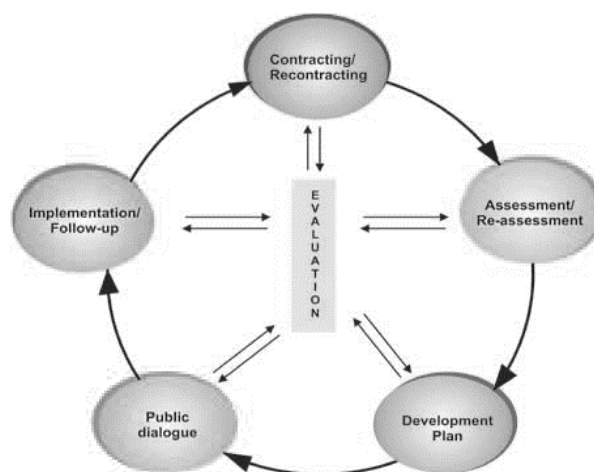
Stage 1 - Contracting/re-contracting: This stage is the foundation of effective coaching participation. It involves developing an agreement with the client based on mutual belief. This implies it is vital to comprehend the background of the client, the perceived client objectives and the skill outcomes (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

Stage 2 - Assessment/re-assessment: This stage comprises a wide-ranging appraisal of the capabilities and skill set of the client. This primarily depends on the nature of the business. Suitable techniques used for assessment/re-assessment include individual performance, organisational performance, or identifying the existing skills versus the anticipated skills. Assessments are completed at the start of the cycle and again at the end (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

Stage 3 - The development plan: This stage encompasses communication and comment pertinent to the assessments conducted. It includes the compilation of a development plan, which stipulates the techniques to be used for skill transfer, ranging from brief to proper training (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

Stage 4 - Public dialogue: If the coaching involves peer-to-peer coaching, this stage includes peers providing comment, during planned discourse sittings, about the general performance of the peer being coached (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).

Stage 5 - Implementation/follow-up: This stage involves the client being afforded various skill transfer mechanisms. It culminates in evaluation at the end of the cycle with remedial action applied, where necessary (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010).



(Source: Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010)

Figure 2.12: Competence executive coaching model

Moritz and Zepuntke (2006) argue that belief, initiated during the contracting/re-contracting stage, is multi-dimensional and can prove challenging in a coaching relationship. However, Moritz and Zepuntke (2006) concede that if the contracting stage is characterised by responsibility, obligation, an ethos of advice and a coach who possesses purposeful and practical knowledge, then the coaching process will be grounded by mutual trust. Hebenstreit and Hinzdorf (2006) postulate that the coaching process can be effective from the point of contract if coaches are able to convince clients of the potential value of the relationship.

Despite executive coaching increasing in popularity, the main hurdle encountered is the lack of mentoring depth, on the part of the coach or mentor, with respect to SME education (Terblanche, Jock & Ungerer, 2019). This alludes to a gap in the techniques adopted by executive coaches and mentors. In addition, the South African coaching landscape acknowledges the need for research into the intricacies of coaching, to determine the elements that can be incorporated into a coaching model (Terblanche *et al.*, 2019).

While the competence executive coaching model presents an approach that applies to mentoring, it does not include a content-specific approach to entrepreneurial mentoring. Since multiple models can be used to develop a new model, this model may offer beneficial elements to the proposed model (Robins, 2017).

2.4.3.3 PRACTICE coaching model

Palmer (2008) developed the PRACTICE model of coaching, which is a process-based model completed in stages, with constant monitoring by the coach. Palmer (2008) reinforced a series of steps in the PRACTICE model. PRACTICE represents the acronym for the steps discussed (Palmer, 2008):

The first step in the model is *Problem identification*, during which the coach and potential client use a consultative approach to discuss issues which need to be resolved, or issues which hinder success and productivity. The second step is the *Realistic and Relevant goals* step, during which goals are documented, using specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely criteria. The third step is the *Alternate solutions* step, where the coach and client evaluate the alternatives available for goal attainment. The fourth step, *Consideration of consequences*, occurs when the coach

and client critique each alternative to identify how it will impact the status quo. The fifth step, *Target most feasible solution*, is where a choice is made from the available alternatives. The sixth step, *Implementation of Chosen solution*, is the execution of the preferred alternative, usually by sub-dividing the tasks. The final step, *Evaluation*, encompasses a review of the effectiveness of accomplishments (Palmer, 2008).

The limited application of the PRACTICE model in business is supported by the hypothesis that the model was predominantly developed for participants seeking psychotherapy, from an anxiety perspective, to empower individuals to apply goal-driven tactics (Dias *et al.*, 2011). The advantage of the model is that it empowers the coaching participant, engaged in entrepreneurial activities, with a selection of options most suitable for a particular situation (Thomson, 2018). Furthermore, the PRACTICE model is suited to knowledgeable coaches, who are advocates of coaching empowerment, willing to allow the participant to select the course of action (Thomson, 2018). However, Thomson (2018) cautions that the coaching participant must possess superior commercial acumen for this model to be optimally used, suggesting it may not be suited to the case of emerging entrepreneurial participants. Whilst this model provides an approach to the coaching process, it lacks clarity from an entrepreneurial coaching position. Additionally, it does not consider business content factors.

2.4.3.4 GROW coaching model

The GROW model, established by John Whitmore in 2002, is presently one of the preferred models used for coaching and mentoring (Brown & Grant, 2010). The abbreviation represents the four stages of coaching, namely, **G**oal, **R**eality, **O**ptions and **W**ay forward (Brown & Grant, 2010). The stages are demarcated as follows:

Goal: The coach or mentor defines the objectives for the coaching participant (Brown & Grant, 2010). Othman (2014) asserts that the emphasis during the goal stage should be on resolutions instead of challenges. Detailed and quantifiable objectives should be set to maximise benefit (Othman, 2014).

Reality: This stage serves to draw attention to current issues and scrutinise the effect of the existing situation on the performance of the coaching aspirant (Brown & Grant, 2010). However, the reality stage is dependent on the coaching aspirant's input from a perspective of future action plans (Othman, 2014).

Options: The coach collaboratively assists the participant with recognising and evaluating potential choices for the way forward (Brown & Grant, 2010). A coach should assist a participant to investigate possible avenues for goal attainment (Othman, 2014).

Way forward: This stage culminates in the development of an action strategy that will equip the participant with techniques to adopt for goal attainment (Brown & Grant, 2010). However, the onus is on the coaching client to ensure that the best possible action strategy is selected (Othman, 2014).

Dippenaar and Schaap (2017) maintain that the GROW model offers a method to create a goal-centric action strategy. It is advocated that the GROW model is a repetitive process with continuous communication between the coach and client (Brown & Grant, 2010). Further coaching sessions in the GROW model entail **R**everiewing and **E**valuating previous sessions. Subsequently, the reviewing stage led to the emergence of the RE-GROW model (**R**eview, **E**valuate, **G**oal, **R**eality, **O**ptions and **W**ay Forward), according to Brown and Grant (2010). The model can be effectively applied to both communal and dyadic situations (Brown & Grant, 2010).

Bishop (2015) proposes that the GROW model strengthens the coach-participant contract by ensuring that the correct alignment is done against objectives and options selected. Using a study sample of management employees, McCarthy and Ahrens (2012) concluded that the GROW model was the shared preferred model that the survey participants designated. McCarthy and Ahrens (2012) established the presence of a positive relationship between coaching, gratification, performance and business objectives. The GROW model offers a concise collaborative approach to participant-inclusive coaching (Gurbutt & Gurbutt, 2016). Since the GROW model is a process-driven model, it may be applicable to an entrepreneurial setting.

2.4.3.5 Kram's mentoring model

According to Kathy Kram (1983), who is viewed as a foremost researcher on mentoring, a mentoring association between a mentor and mentee comprises four distinct stages or phases.

Initiation: This phase represents the start of the mentor-mentee relationship, which could range in duration from six months to a year. The mentee is intent on changing the status quo within a work environment, despite the phase being characterised by informality and a preliminary absence of confidence or belief in each other (Kram, 1983; Memon *et al.*, 2015). The initiation phase progresses to a working relationship once confidence is established (Memon *et al.*, 2015).

Cultivation: The duration of this phase could range from two to five years, when the mentor-mentee relationship evolves into a substantive relationship once the limits of the relationship are acknowledged. Mentors and mentees engage in a formal agreement which details the mentee objectives to solidify the association (Kram, 1983; Memon *et al.*, 2015).

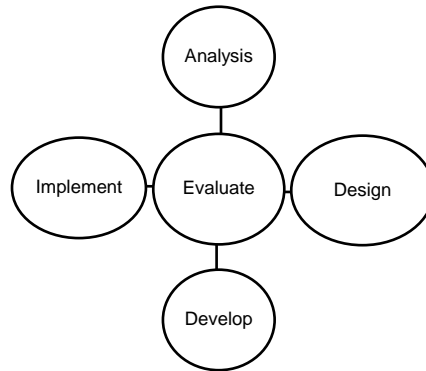
Separation: The duration of this phase ranges between six months to two years, signifying the disruptive period after cultivation, when the mentee has developed functional abilities and self-sufficiency (Kram, 1983). This implies a modification to the operational relationship (Kram, 1983). Memon *et al.* (2015) postulate that this phase symbolises a period when the mentee has reached optimal knowledge capacity or has altered objectives. Hence, the mentor is regarded as irrelevant.

Redefinition: This phase represents the stage at which the relationship between the mentor and mentee either terminates or transforms into a personal association (Kram, 1983). Memon *et al.* (2015) support the view that redefinition is probable once the mentee recognises that the objectives were realised in the previous phase.

It is contended that Kram's model is reliant on the personal nature of the mentor and mentee, and on their social abilities, for the relationship to be established successfully (Chao, 1997). The period allocated for each phase will vary according to the mentor-mentee relationship (Memon *et al.*, 2015). Chao (1997) suggested that the relationship between mentor and mentee, usually in the form of an organisational manager and apprentice, could terminate prematurely should personality issues arise. However, the mentoring association does have the capacity to thrust the progressive aspect of a mentee if approached correctly (Leck & Wood, 2013). Although aspects relating to the mentoring relationship may contribute toward the creation of a model for this study, the model does not provide guidance for SME mentoring.

2.4.3.6 ADDIE model

The ADDIE model serves as the underpinning of a training model, since it is an adaptable paradigm for business training (Brinia, 2016). Widyastuti (2019) suggests that the ADDIE model (Figure 2.13) comprises five stages: (1) analysis, (2) design, (3) development, (4) implementation, and (5) evaluation.



(Source: Adapted from Widyastuti, 2019)

Figure 2.13: ADDIE model

The phases are designated as follows (Widyastuti, 2019):

Analysis: Perform a thorough check of the participant's aptitude and capacity.

Design: Establish a context and approach for the outcomes to be covered in training.

Development: Make concrete progress toward the generation of information to be covered during training.

Implementation: Apply the training approach to participants.

Evaluation: Assess the effectiveness of the training provided (Widyastuti, 2019).

The ADDIE model is prevalent in instructional design, to generate a productive training strategy, using either offline or virtual platforms (Aldoobie, 2015). It is more applicable to a designer-learner atmosphere as is the case in formal teaching and learning (Aldoobie, 2015). Hess and Greer (2016) posit that the ADDIE model can be used to enrich virtual education experiences to boost learner commitment and action. Therefore, the model applies to an academic environment (Hess & Greer, 2016). Cheung (2016) advocates that the model is an educational strategy model to assist academics to streamline the education process. Thus, its uses are predominantly library education and virtual education (Cheung, 2016). However, the benefit of the model is that it offers an uncomplicated perspective to training and education design, and it may be employed in fields that transfer expertise, aptitudes or competencies

(Cheung, 2016). Wibawa *et al.* (2017) posit that the ADDIE model is a beneficial instrument for educational material design in a school environment instead of a business training environment. However, Brinia (2016) asserts that the model can be implemented in business training, suggesting it can be applied for internal training programmes targeted at employee level, instead of entrepreneurial level.

Similar to the ADDIE model, Labin (2017) proposed the AXLES model for business mentoring, which comprises the following phases to develop mentoring curricula. There is currently no academic research available to perform a critical analysis of the AXLES model. However, the phases represent similarity to the ADDIE model (Labin, 2017):

Align: The training and mentoring must be associated with quantifiable business rationale.

Experience: Content development for participants and mentors to utilise and to clarify objectives at the outset.

Launch: The implementation of the mentoring approach in an active scenario.

Effectiveness: Quantification and assessment of the usefulness of mentoring.

Support: The implementation of a plan to identify the needs of the mentor and participants concerning technology requirements and resources (Labin, 2017).

In summary, six models were presented in this section, namely:

- The DOLETA competency pyramid model, which includes pertinent managerial competencies that can be incorporated into model development for this study.
- The competence executive coaching model, which presents a methodological mentoring approach that can be fused into the present study.
- The PRACTICE coaching model, which focuses on a process that can be used in the present study. However, there is no business content specificity.
- The GROW coaching model, which can contribute to this study through its process. However, it is deficient in postulating mentoring substance.
- Kram's mentoring model, which stresses the mentoring relationship between mentor and mentee in a generic context.
- The ADDIE model, and the AXLES model, which can be employed in business training, although more pertinent to practical employee training.

The next section offers a perspective on mentoring theories. Two mentoring theories are presented in the section.

2.4.4 Mentoring theories

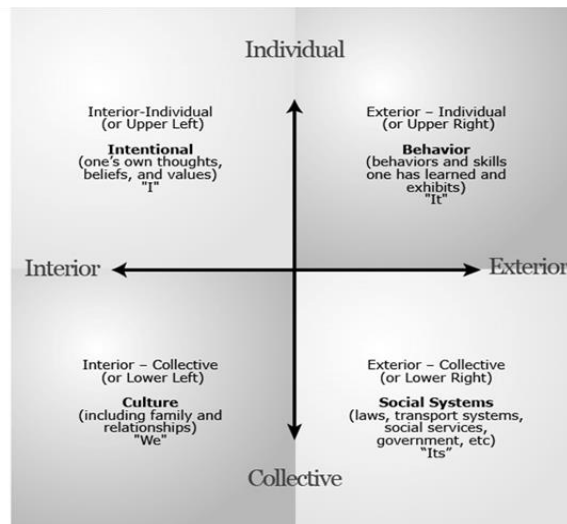
The Integral theory of business coaching and the Gestalt theory of mentoring are discussed in this section.

2.4.4.1 *Integral theory of business coaching*

Jakonen and Kamppinen (2015) emphasised that coaching is foundationally a people-centred progression activity, which involves intensively planned collaboration between the coach and the participant. Executive coaching is an educational activity in the form of collaborative sessions offered by a coach to advance a participant's productivity (Jakonen & Kamppinen, 2015). The Integral theory, established by Ken Wilber, comprises four views or quadrants that coaches may use to identify their coaching participants (Cox, 2015). Esbjörn-Hargens (2012) postulates that the quadrants or perspectives are based on the premise that each area has an internal and external perspective, from a single and dual perspective. The theory offers participants or businesses a model, appropriate for diverse situations on different platforms, whilst still affording authenticity seldom found in other models (Esbjörn-Hargens, 2012).

The Integral theory is designed for implementing change within companies (Landrum & Gardner, 2005). The four-quadrant model, illustrated in Figure 2.14, signifies how people define their stance from each perspective.

- The upper left perspective, which refers to one's individual facet of awareness.
- The lower left perspective, which refers to how individuals collaborate collectively.
- The upper right perspective, which refers to an individual's objective social perspectives.
- The lower right perspective, which refers to objective societal perspectives (Landrum & Gardner, 2005).



(Source: Kashian, 2015)

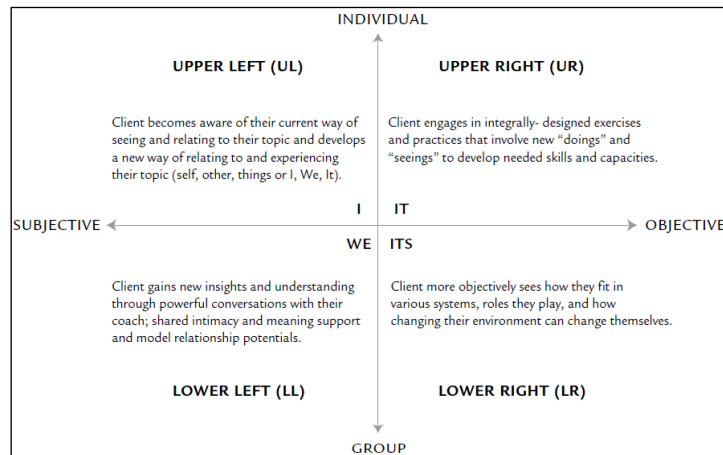
Figure 2.14: Integral theory four-quadrant model

The theory facilitates the accomplishment of innovative echelons of individual and organisational advancement as follows (Landrum & Gardner, 2005).

- The principal perspective, namely, the inner-individual perspective, which focuses on core individual transformation.
- The outer-individual perspective which is indicative of one's department modification.
- The inner-collective perspective indicates social responsibility efforts of organisations.
- The outer-collective reflects the collective energies of separate organisations (Landrum & Gardner, 2005).

Donkers (2016) affirms that Wilber views everything as being representative of holons, where a holon depicts a whole quadrant which is concurrently a segment of a greater entirety. Hence, the compartment of people, groups and structures are interconnected and impact one another. However, the holistic Integral theory approach does not apply to fragmented business scenarios, where situations and challenges are not always holons or fragments of a greater holistic entirety (Hibbard, 2011). Jakonen and Kamppinen (2015) assert that the Integral theory coaching model empowers coaching participants to develop conscious cognisance of their reactions to scenarios and holistic approaches to situations. Hunt (2009) supports the view that change, implemented through effective coaching, can be moulded through the various

quadrants with respect to how a coach and client plan coaching development. The quadrants mould the technique or process for coaching delivery. The theory enables coaching in a form that other models do not accommodate, namely, the integration of the four quadrants to provide holistic coaching to a client from all quadrants (Figure 2.15).



(Source: Hunt, 2009)

Figure 2.15: Integral model change approach

Since the Integral theory offers a comprehensive view on coaching, it is similar to the previous models described in this review. Despite offering a methodological approach to coaching, it does not provide a content-specific approach.

2.4.4.2 Gestalt theory

Max Wertheimer developed the Gestalt theory in 1923, which was constructed from the central laws of psychology, pertaining to issues of awareness, thought processes and sentiment (Wagemans *et al.*, 2012). Although the Gestalt theory was initiated in the field of psychology, it is a multi-disciplinary theory used across an array of fields (Graham, 2008). The theory describes individual parts in which individual fragments contribute to a complete whole (Graham, 2008). The theory encompasses a process or arrangement that comprises segments of individual processes (Graham, 2008). Guberman (2017) emphasises that the term Gestalt implies an integrated whole. Although the theory was a practical approach implemented in the past for the psychoanalysis of people, it has now evolved to the field of coaching. It remains a fundamental Gestalt theory credence that people progress due to relationships. This ultimately leads to change (Simon, 2009).

Partridge and Spoth (2013) posit that the theory encompasses a style of coaching where the emphasis is on method instead of procedure. Although Gestalt coaching has its roots in Gestalt psychology, where the pivotal area was personal healing, it has since evolved to apply to groups and business situations (Cox *et al.*, 2010). The method is based on the following foundations from the perspective of a coach (Cox *et al.*, 2010):

The need fulfilment process: This process integrates the *cycle of experience*, which is the underpinning of the Gestalt theory, on how people satisfy their needs and reach resolution concerning matters experienced. The cycle of experience comprises the phases of: (1) sensation, (2) developing awareness, (3) converting energy to action, (4) initiating contact, (5) constructing a solution, and (6) reaching closure (Cox *et al.*, 2010). The cycle of experience defines the transformation progression that an individual experiences when attempting to accomplish something (Partridge & Spoth, 2013). It therefore starts with an individual in balance or with desires fulfilled, but the balance is altered through emotions to create a new balance (Partridge & Spoth, 2013). The cycle of experience affords a coach the capacity to realise the position a participant is in during the change process (Partridge & Spoth, 2013).

How to use self: The theory encourages participant change through the coach's self-generated methods. This implies that the coach's capacity to inspire participants during coaching stems from the individual's own capacity to recognise personal strengths, defects and principles (Cox *et al.*, 2010).

The coaching relationship: The coach-participant association forms the basis of a participant's motivation to achieve success. Thus, it is vital that a positive collaborative association be achieved between the coach and the participant (Cox *et al.*, 2010).

It is crucial for a coach to comprehend his/her individual existence in the coaching contract to advance ingenuity concerning coaching mechanisms (Robins, 2017). Thus, the Gestalt coaching theory of how to use self, as well as the coaching relationship, ought to be applied cautiously with deliberation and reflection (Robins, 2017). Denham-Vaughan and Gawlinski (2012) contend that the theory requires a coach to spend a long period of time mastering the use of self and learning to build a relationship with participants. Because organisations lack the time or financial resources to invest in such processes, they may be discouraged from applying the

Gestalt theory (Denham-Vaughan & Gawlinski, 2012). Gestalt coaching conjures a participant's cognisance to develop and to initiate change (Young, 2018). Coaching participants are seldom remote participants operating in a void. Instead, they are participants associated with their respective environments. Therefore, the association between participants and a coach is imperative to drive change (Corrie & Lawson, 2017). Since this theory emphasises the relationship between the coach and the participant, it may be useful for introducing change management to emerging SME entrepreneurs.

In summary, two theories were presented in this section, namely:

- The Integral theory of business coaching, which lacks content specificity but can contribute to the present study with respect to methodology.
- The Gestalt theory, which accentuates change management and the relationship between the mentor and mentee.

Research on the various extant mentoring and coaching models demonstrates that no all-inclusive retail entrepreneurial mentoring model exists. Whilst some models placed emphasis on the process itself, others were ambiguous with respect to the exact content to include in mentoring programmes for entrepreneurs. There is dissonance amongst researchers concerning the process-driven aspects of mentoring and the content-related aspects. The gap in existing literature will guide the theoretical framework for the study.

The next section appraises the factors that inhibit and promote emerging retail SME entrepreneurs. An identification of these factors will provide an overview of the entrepreneurial competencies which need development.

2.5 FACTORS THAT IMPACT EMERGING ENTREPRENEURS

South Africa displays a diminished level of entrepreneurial behaviour, with its entrepreneurial activity amongst the lowermost conveyed by economies partaking in the GEM investigation (Herrington, *et al.*, 2016). TEA is exercised in a relatively restrained manner. The business eminence of the SME proprietor is a significant aspect that impacts an SME's capability to accomplish its vision (Guzman & Santos, 2001; Ramanujam, Viswanathan & Ammal, 2019). There is a direct correlation

between the level of perceived competencies and the level of TEA in a country (Herrington, *et al.*, 2016). This supports the premise that education is inseparably connected to entrepreneurial intention, since it impacts entrepreneurial execution (Ayer, 2010; Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Low entrepreneurial behaviour has fundamentally been ascribed to poor education (Herrington, *et al.*, 2016). The GEM report indicates that South Africa's education system does not adequately prepare entrepreneurs to cope with the challenges of entrepreneurship (Herrington, *et al.*, 2016).

The difficulties experienced by emerging entrepreneurs in South Africa include limited contact with customers and suppliers, limited investment and poor education (Peters & Naicker, 2013; Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2017). Furthermore, limited managerial training, infrastructure difficulties, legislative issues and limited management skills are cited as difficulties (Peters & Naicker, 2013; Akinyemi & Adejumo, 2017). The needs of entrepreneurs in the retail sector differ from those in other sectors. The key skills that promote or derail retail ventures include marketing competencies, business management knowledge, information technology expertise, accounting skills, networking abilities and change management skills (Kent *et al.*, 2003; Mabhungu & Van der Poll, 2017).

2.5.1 Challenges and inhibitors of retail entrepreneurs

Several factors have been recognised as contributing to entrepreneurship failure universally and in South Africa. Universally, these range from personal level factors such as a lack of management ability and leadership qualities, to organisational level factors such as a lack of access to finance, regulation issues and competition (Huang & Knight, 2017). Micro, market and macro environmental factors impact SMEs from a perspective of the challenges they encounter (Cant & Wiid, 2013). Inhibitors are hindering factors that arise from a venture's internal and external environment and have a damaging influence on the venture (Justino, 2015). The failure of entrepreneurship is a compound occurrence with a multiplicity of related issues (Holt, 2013). The present study focuses on issues that impact retail entrepreneurs largely on an individual or micro level, which have a consequent impact on organisational level capabilities. A study of emerging entrepreneurs suggested that a lack of internal business process knowledge, limited networking skills, a lack of access to resources,

and a lack of access to role models in the form of mentors, contributed to the failure of new business activity (Schlosser & Tawfik, 2012). Despite South Africans showing a keen interest in entrepreneurial activities, South African entrepreneurs do not accomplish high standing on global business rankings (Luiz & Mariotti, 2011; Bvuma & Marnewick, 2020). A high percentage of the reasons for SME failure can be ascribed to aspects inside the business which are related to personal factors (Arham, Boucher & Muenjohn, 2013).

Macro issues can adversely influence South African entrepreneurial ventures. Macro issues include interest rates, joblessness, criminal activity, technological evolution and regulation, implying that an entrepreneur needs to understand how to react to change (Cant & Wiid, 2013). Individual difficulties and a lack of education are cited as contributory factors (Benazir & Swathy, 2014; Wiid & Cant, 2021). Since there is no unanimity on the factors that contribute to entrepreneurial failure in South Africa, this study sought to explore the contemporary factors which impact entrepreneurship. A discussion of nine commonly observed factors follows. The factors range from management incompetence to mentoring and education, thus emphasising the diverse challenges experienced.

2.5.1.1 *Management incompetence*

The deficiency in business administration talent or entrepreneurial ability impedes the entrepreneurial practice of sustaining business ventures, consequently leading to ineptitude and lost prospects (Nemaenzhe, 2010; Wiid & Cant, 2021). Incompetence is an outcome of business inexperience (Derera, 2011). An entrepreneur's inadequacies are noted during internal planning or in situations where management skills are vital to overcome external pressures encountered (Nemaenzhe, 2010; Bvuma & Marnewick, 2021). Therefore, an entrepreneur's individual management approach contributes to either entrepreneurial failure or accomplishment (Holt, 2013). The failure to acknowledge management incompetence acts as a limitation until entrepreneurs attain the relevant skills to ensure venture sustainability (Van Weele, Van Rijnsoever & Nauta, 2013). Entrepreneurs who focus on refining their competencies are less likely to fail in comparison to their counterparts who do not take cognisance of developing their abilities (Dias & Teixeira, 2017).

The central competencies are divided into three categories, namely, (1) conceptual skills, (2) people skills, and (3) practical skills (Mehralizadeh & Sajady, 2005; Denton, 2020). Arham *et al.* (2013) reinforce that effective management, and consequent leadership, is the main factor that contributes to the overall accomplishment of SMEs. Therefore, deficient management competencies act as the prime reason for the dismal performance of SMEs. The lack of managerial aptitude can be attributed to the lack of instruction and mentoring in the field of entrepreneurship in South Africa (Olawale & Garwe, 2010). Since an entrepreneur's ability to operate a business ensures entrepreneurial longevity, the correct managerial competencies must be instilled in SME owners (Prosperi *et al.*, 2019).

2.5.1.2 Mentoring for entrepreneurs

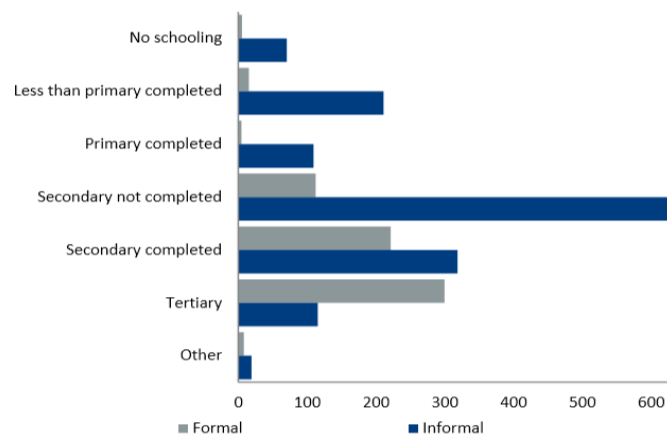
Entrepreneurial research accentuates the need to obtain concrete business knowledge with a skill-based underpinning as a competency enabler (Mallaby, Price & Hofmeyr, 2017). Formal education is not a prerequisite for entrepreneurship. However, mentoring is acknowledged as an invaluable resource for entrepreneurs (Mallaby *et al.*, 2017). The incapacity of entrepreneurs to access knowledge and guidance can be attributed to the lack of entrepreneurial permanency (BER, 2016). Additionally, the access to mentoring is important during the initial phase of entrepreneurship (BER, 2016). Contemporary entrepreneurship intermediation prioritises theoretical skill transfer instead of practical skill transfer (Nemaenzhe, 2010; Zhou & Victor, 2021).

Mentoring has not expanded extensively to the South African entrepreneurial area despite its varied application within the corporate sector and the conventional work situation (Nemaenzhe, 2010; Assenova, 2020). Mentoring can benefit entrepreneurs through the transfer of professional skills and abilities from business experts (Nemaenzhe, 2010; Assenova, 2020). Mentoring affords motivation for entrepreneurs, particularly applicable to women, and enables them to develop effective associational ties (Benazir & Swathy, 2014). Although the status of SMEs in the economy is conclusive, there is comparatively little exploration on SME mentoring (McKevitt & Marshall, 2013). The dearth of mentoring in a South African entrepreneurial context is one of the most noteworthy impediments to emerging entrepreneurship (Chimucheka, 2013).

Entrepreneurial mentoring and skill development involves the advancement of self-efficacy in a business setting (Ogundele, Akingbade & Akinlabi, 2014). In a study of entrepreneurs in the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng regions, Gopaul and Manley (2015) concluded that entrepreneurs cited an ominous need for education, entrepreneurial training and business coaching. A lack of appropriate entrepreneurial training and inspiration poses the greatest challenge for entrepreneurs within the immediate ecosystem (Piadehbasmenj, 2016). In a study of emerging entrepreneurs in the services sector, Farsi and Toghraee (2014) established that entrepreneurs with enhanced guidance or mentoring are more competent and productive, thus designating a distinct association between mentoring and entrepreneurship. Emerging entrepreneurs who are not exposed to mentoring struggle with managing a business, and usually learn from a path of mistakes (Farsi & Toghraee, 2014; Piadehbasmenj, 2016). Mentoring is endorsed to equip emerging entrepreneurs with the abilities to proficiently manage their businesses (Farsi & Toghraee, 2014). However, under prevailing circumstances, the requirements of SME owners may change. This creates a need to establish new mentoring methods and models for adapting to adverse situations.

2.5.1.3 Education

Many entrepreneurs in South Africa possess limited secondary education (60%), a significant number possess tertiary education (19%), whilst only 4% possess no education, as displayed in Figure 2.16 (BER, 2016). Despite a degree of improvement in the level of education of entrepreneurs between 2008 and 2015, entrepreneurial failure nationally remains high (BER, 2016).



(Source: BER, 2016)

Figure 2.16: Education levels of formal and informal sector entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs who possess tertiary training opt to function typically in the formal sector, whereas entrepreneurs with an unfinished secondary education function in the informal sector (BER, 2016). Despite the progress in basic education levels, entrepreneurs continue to encounter issues in their business environments. Economists state that the foremost hindrance to advancement in developing countries is the shortage of skilled entrepreneurs, implying that financial issues are not the foremost impediment (Bawuah, Buame & Hinson, 2006; Radebe, 2019). Instead, it is the lack of entrepreneurial information and ability that contributes to the failure of entrepreneurship (Radebe, 2019). As an instructive resource, Entrepreneurship Education (EE) should be multi-dimensional (Zhang, 2014). Entrepreneurship education should be inculcated from an early stage to prepare individuals with the necessary business ability to reduce risk averseness (Zhang, 2014; Assenova, 2019).

Despite deliberation concerning whether entrepreneurial competency can be imparted, it is evident from American business schools that entrepreneurial ability can indeed be conveyed (Cumming & Zhan, 2018). Therefore, various institutes adopt diverse instructive methods to transfer competencies to individuals. Baggen *et al.* (2017) caution that entrepreneurial education, if imparted without any focus on intricate problem-solving ability, is of no benefit to individuals. Therefore, Bawuah *et al.* (2006) and Radebe (2019) propose that entrepreneurial education in Sub-Saharan Africa should concentrate on aspects such as communication competencies, inventiveness, management competencies and analytical skills. Although the proposed competencies are universally prevalent in developed nations, they also apply in a South African context.

2.5.1.4 Poor planning

There is qualified unanimity that business planning is essential to building and managing a venture (Ferreira *et al.*, 2017). However, scholars recognise that the value of a business plan is a contentious issue (Ferreira *et al.*, 2017). Planning, goal setting, and policymaking contribute to the ability to sustain an entrepreneurial venture (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017). The essence of entrepreneurship is muted by the permeating stress of failure that is prevalent in most businesses due to a lack of business flair and planning (Lotz, 2009). Therefore, entrepreneurs need to have plans in place which may vary from nominal strategies during the initial stage to wide-ranging long-standing

strategies (Mehralizadeh & Sajady, 2005; Denton, 2020). Despite entrepreneurial programmes embracing individual talents, planning is an often-overlooked core skill that should take precedence (Frank, 2007; Denton, 2020).

Frank (2007) and Denton (2020) recommend that entrepreneurial mentoring should prioritise planning competencies, to cultivate a desire to capitalise on and realise opportunities. Initial studies about planning concluded an irresolute correlation between business plans and business output (Burke, Fraser & Greene, 2010). In contrast, SMEs with business plans outperformed those endeavours which did not have any plans (Burke *et al.*, 2010). This implies that proper planning, inclusive of the use of business plans, is perceived to enhance output and efficiency (Burke *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the present study explores how planning can be operationalised in SMEs and how mentoring interventions can promote planning as a tool for vision accomplishment.

2.5.1.5 Communication, networking, and people management

Communication incorporates the application of above-average communication techniques, social abilities and conflict management skills, to effectively interact with employees, customers and suppliers, consequently promoting effective networking (Justino, 2015). Communication skills are essential for entrepreneurs to lead their workforce to accomplish optimal results and to interact with stakeholders (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017). The principal skills include interpersonal abilities, nurturing associations, and intercultural sensitivity (Justino, 2015). Confidence is facilitated by means of the transparent communication and dissemination of information, from business owners to their employees, resulting in inspired employees (Hattingh, De Waal & Parsons, 2018a). Without communication and valuable data, entrepreneurs and their employees fail to be decisive and efficient (Derera, 2011; Abdul, 2018).

Entrepreneurial networks, described as an action by which entrepreneurs shape and nurture individual or business associations, are severely lacking (Derera, 2011; Yusoff *et al.*, 2018). During the emerging state of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs are encouraged to capitalise on associations with other entrepreneurs for mutual benefit (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017). Recent research confirmed that entrepreneurial associations contribute to progressing the effectiveness of emerging entrepreneurs (Brand, Croonen & Leenders, 2018). An improved interrelated business structure

contributes to overall success by means of solidified and consistent business liaisons between entrepreneurs (De Hoyos-Ruperto *et al.*, 2013). Notwithstanding the research value afforded to communication and networking, limited research prevails pertinent to communication in the realm of SME entrepreneurship (Meager, Martin & Carta, 2011; Ulvenblad, Berggren & Winborg, 2013; Yusoff *et al.*, 2018). Communication skills will extend an SME's capabilities and result in enhanced output and development (Shepherd, Williams & Patzelt, 2015).

2.5.1.6 Resource access

An overall lack of resources, such as access to facilities, networks, funding, human resources, technology and training, contributes to the failure of entrepreneurship (Derera, 2011). Resources comprise an access to macro and micro resources. The macro resources category includes financing, technology, regulatory and compliance issues, and infrastructure access (Sefiani, 2013). The micro resources category includes consumer and supplier access, communication and networking resources (Sefiani, 2013). Training and mentoring are critical to overcome the issues pertinent to resource knowledge (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a). Entrepreneurial resources are categorised according to three groups: (1) knowledge, relating to educational development and practice, (2) financial, relating to capital and advances, and (3) relations, comprising individual and professional associations (Uzunidis, Boutillier & Laperche, 2014). In a study of French entrepreneurs, it was deduced that entrepreneurship is dependent on the effective application of the three resource groups that an entrepreneur can capitalise on (Uzunidis *et al.*, 2014). Resources such as machinery, equipment, amenities, and statutory procedures are cited as substantial impediments to SME operations (Cheng & Humphreys, 2016). Although there is a communal theme pertinent to resource limitations and its impact on SMEs, the intensity of impact is dependent on the type of SME and its respective sector (Akanni, Oke & Akpomemie, 2015).

2.5.1.7 Ineffective marketing

The incapacity to market successfully, combined with an inability to conduct a suitable analysis of the market, results in ineffective price systems, ineffective selection of locality and futile promotion techniques (Bushe, 2019). The gradual exodus toward

new technology in emerging SMEs is the main contributory factor toward marketing failure in small business (Alford & Page, 2015). Additionally, the sluggish implementation of technology is attributed to commitment and financial constraints (Alford & Page, 2015).

Emerging entrepreneurs in a South African context display a deficiency in marketing knowledge. SME social media marketing difficulties are ascribed to a void in technology skills and time constraints (Oji, Iwu & Tengeh, 2017). However, Pugnaa *et al.* (2016) contend that SME marketing is reliant on the expertise of entrepreneurs, who usually lack the necessary aptitude, both from a sales and management position. SME sales endeavours are relaxed and combative (Pugnaa *et al.*, 2016). Instead, the marketing endeavour should be planned, with the use of a business plan and technology tools (Pugnaa *et al.*, 2016).

2.5.1.8 Financial incompetence

Maziriri and Chivandi (2020) opine that entrepreneurial financial knowledge is the aptitude to understand financial outcomes and make informed choices concerning monetary business issues. Financial knowledge includes an entrepreneur's ability to comprehend basic financial concepts, budgeting, monetary planning and accounting information (Oseifuah, 2010). Emerging entrepreneurs are prone to business calamity when their financial knowledge is weak (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Monetary awareness plays a role in monetary choices, implying that entrepreneurial financial knowledge establishes mindfulness about business decisions (Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020). A solid financial foundation is a prerequisite for efficacious entrepreneurship, affirming a positive nexus between weak financial knowledge and entrepreneurial failure (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, Ahmad *et al.* (2019) advocate there is a positive correlation between financial knowledge and entrepreneurial intent.

2.5.1.9 Non-entrepreneur related contributory factors

Arasti *et al.* (2014) postulate that entrepreneurial failure can be attributed to four wide-ranging classifications: (1) the universal/general ecosystem, inclusive of economic policies, (2) the immediate ecosystem, comprising clients, creditors, competitors and financial institutions, (3) the entrepreneur, comprising entrepreneurial impetus and abilities, and (4) the business approach, including policies, operational guidelines and

managerial approach. Whilst the classifications are diversely expressed by various authors, there is consensus concerning entrepreneurial failure. Due to the lack of entrepreneurial awareness, exposure to customer and supplier markets is hindered (Chimucheka, 2013). The non-entrepreneur aspects which negatively impact ventures include the business position, locality and business infrastructure (Nikolic *et al.*, 2019). Restricted substructure has a direct bearing on poor entrepreneurial performance (Nikolic *et al.*, 2019). National substructure foundations, such as electricity resources, transport systems and water resources, influence the business productivity of ventures in developing nations (Muogbo & Chuka, 2019).

Legislative and governmental issues pertinent to entrepreneurship are a contributory factor to the failure of emerging entrepreneurship (Nikolic *et al.*, 2019). Intricate protocols, bureaucratic processes, and exorbitant tax responsibilities hinder the promotion of entrepreneurial ventures (Nikolic *et al.*, 2019). The peripheral ecosystem, over which the entrepreneur has no control, can adversely impact an emerging SME in the informal sector, through rivalry from formal enterprises and difficulty with gaining market share (Struwig *et al.*, 2019). Legislative obligation, in the form of levies, excise, and tax policy, is the greatest obstacle to emerging entrepreneurs in South Africa (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017). Despite the state affording assistance to SMEs in the form of SEDA, the process applicable to entrepreneurs to utilise the services is tedious and inefficient, thus limiting advancement and growth.

Bushe (2019) theorises that the variables which contribute toward SME catastrophe can be summarised as follows (Figure 2.17):

<p>Entrepreneur incapacity Lack of the right mindset for business Business skills Business acumen Business culture Lack of motivation and maturity Lack of drive Lack of understanding of relationships Impatience and low self-efficacy Lack of modelling Lack of the spirit of enterprise Inability to meditate Inability to stretch imagination Lack of process Lack of manoeuvring ability Inability to execute plans Inability to make things happen Lack of go-getter demeanour</p>	<p>Environmental inauspiciousness Lack of entrepreneurial support structures Misunderstanding of SMME needs Inaccessibility to requisite funding and capital Unfriendly funding systems Poor PESTELS Inaccessibility of business skills Undeveloped markets Mistrust of entrepreneurs Expensive Property Lack of spread in institutional development systems and structures Poor entrepreneurial culture cultivation Information asymmetry</p>	<p>Enterprise Incompetence Lack of understanding of business needs Lack of employee satisfaction & loyalty Lack of talent management Lack of administrative management Inability to create & deliver value Poor business modelling Lack of business strategy Lack of operations and systems management Customer dissatisfaction & disloyalty Lack of customer relationship management Lack of marketing management Inability to be profitable & grow Lack of financial management Inability to manage business cycle</p>
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(Source: Bushe, 2019)

Figure 2.17: Causes of SME failure

Consistent with Figure 2.17, Bushe (2019) attributes SME failure to the following categories of factors (Table 2.3):

Table 2.3: Sources of SME catastrophe

Type	Source
Entrepreneur-related	Incorrect attitude, absence of business intelligence, absence of business proficiencies, deficiency in process and a lack of motivation.
Environment-related	Absence of support structures and infrastructure, absence of financial support, absence of market analysis and isolation from business training.
Business-related	Absence of good quality human resource and allegiances, inadequate managerial structures, customer challenges and strategy problems.

(Source: Adapted from Bushe, 2019)

Scholars determined contrasting beliefs concerning the inhibitors of entrepreneurship in SMEs. Whilst some scholars are inclined to place a heavy weighting on a specific factor, it is evident that the core inhibitors are entrepreneurial aptitude, communication and networking, resource readiness, marketing ability and financial literacy levels. SME mentoring and development is considered a contributory factor to business sustainability (Njoroge & Gathunas, 2013). Therefore, this study examines the facets of SME mentoring that can be addressed in model development. Moreover, it is imperative to establish the factors which stimulate entrepreneurial ventures since these can contribute as elements for model development.

The next section explores factors such as leadership, entrepreneurial orientation and business skills, which stimulate SME ventures.

2.5.2 Factors that support and stimulate retail entrepreneurial ventures

Mamabolo *et al.* (2017) suggest that whilst numerous factors contribute to the promotion of entrepreneurial ventures in South Africa, there is limited research on precise entrepreneurial training elements appropriate for emerging entrepreneurs. The endorsing factors for personal level success of an entrepreneur include leadership, education, entrepreneurial talent, and interpersonal structures (Filion, 2008). Kareem (2015) contends that entrepreneurial accomplishment determinants are separated into

four groups: (1) psychological aspects, incorporating the desire for inventiveness and achievement, (2) socio-cultural aspects, encompassing societal interconnections, (3) individual aspects, such as knowledge, business skills and training, and (4) opportunity aspects, involving commercial prospects and entrepreneurial education. However, Krasniqi and Tullumi (2013) posit that the critical success factors (CSFs) include the traits of the entrepreneur, managerial aptitude, business support and state participation.

2.5.2.1 Leadership

Effective leadership has an intense influence on creating a productive ethos for personal and organisational output (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a). A good leader should lay the tenor and create focused intention to provide trustworthiness to ambitions within the organisation (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a). Apart from being inventive, an entrepreneur is also someone who applies intentional management techniques to guarantee progression on a strategic level (Irene, 2017). This is achieved through transformational and charismatic leadership (Irene, 2017). Furthermore, this can only be attained through superior leadership skills, effective management and the motivation of employees (Irene, 2017). Laukhuf and Malone (2015) propose that mentoring develops leadership talent by evolving an individual's capacity to inspire and encourage employees. Leadership, inventiveness and invention should be combined for enhanced business management (Mehrez, 2019). Therefore, proper coaching, training and mentoring can augment an entrepreneur's communication capabilities, leadership skills and critical abilities (Rao, 2014).

2.5.2.2 Entrepreneurial characteristics and orientation

Entrepreneurial traits facilitate the process of creating effective visionaries (Abreu, 2017). This is achieved by displaying ingenuity and exhibiting a propensity to transform amid dynamic business conditions (Abreu, 2017). It is also achieved by accomplishing objectives and identifying the significance of a positive outlook (Abreu, 2017). Justino (2015) defines entrepreneurial orientation as the application of mentoring to inculcate talents and abilities, which subsequently leads to sustainable growth. Orientation includes elements such as culture, role models, training, knowledge and individual vision (Justino, 2015; Abreu, 2017). However, a contrary analysis suggests traits that

are indispensable include vision, self-sufficiency, aptitude for change, tolerance for uncertainty, opportunity awareness and fortitude (Justino, 2015). Justino (2015) asserts that the absence of self-assurance remains a hindrance to emerging entrepreneurs, suggesting a void in entrepreneurial education and experience.

2.5.2.3 Fundamental business skills

Entrepreneurs should possess basic talents such as marketing, finance, technology, and business management skills (Nemaenzhe, 2010). Mamabolo *et al.* (2017) support this claim, by postulating that entrepreneurs in South Africa are in critical need of the following fundamental business skills to manage their businesses:

- Business management skills, encompassing planning and operational management.
- Financial management skills, such as the ability to construe basic financial statements and cash flow management.
- Marketing skills, including market research and customer relationship management skills.
- Human resource skills, such as the ability to interact with employees, to motivate, and to execute organisational procedures (Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017).

Whilst some researchers advocate that business skills play a crucial role in SME development, other researchers are not in agreement (Muthalib, 2014; Matchaba-Hove, Farrington & Sharp, 2015). Additionally, there is incongruity concerning how entrepreneurial skills and aptitudes can be transferred on a formal or informal basis (Manyaka-Boshielo, 2019).

2.5.2.4 Professionalism

The degree of professionalism and professional conduct within management is relatively poor, suggesting that the endeavour to improve professional conduct in entrepreneurship should be rejuvenated (Romme, 2016). When an individual is professionally inept, and does not employ competent behaviour/ethics, the implications are extensive for the business, the individual and the stakeholders, since the destruction caused can be irreparable (Amponsah, Boateng & Onuoha, 2016). Mentoring can instil professional conduct and etiquette into entrepreneurs.

A proposed innovative paradigm, comprising high entrepreneurship, leadership and professionalism, consequently referred to as the *HELP* paradigm, is a precautionary approach to managing in a dynamic environment (Palazzeschi, Bucci & Fabio, 2018). Thus, entrepreneurship ability, leadership skills and the adoption of professionalism emerged as fundamental concepts for contemporary entrepreneurship (Palazzeschi *et al.*, 2018). Chan *et al.* (2012) proposed the *EPL* paradigm, namely, the Entrepreneurship, Professionalism and Leadership (EPL) concepts, which concluded a positive correlation between entrepreneurship, professionalism and leadership. SME entrepreneurs are encouraged to gain knowledge about professional practices in business (Fatoki, 2014). Despite studies stipulating professionalism to be a key SME success factor, limited research exists on professionalism within the entrepreneurship field.

2.5.2.5 Networking by embracing information and communication technology

The implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has increasingly altered how entrepreneurs conduct business (Basri, 2016). ICT serves as a tool to empower entrepreneurs in the long-term. An enhanced application of social media platforms, merged with other forms of technology, supports entrepreneurs in applying tactics to escalate business awareness and boost areas such as information sharing (Basri, 2016). Developing a resilient association with business partners is key for goal attainment. Therefore, entrepreneurs should broaden their social networks using technology (Park, Sung & Im, 2017). However, technology application should be carefully monitored and controlled, or it could have a detrimental effect (Park *et al.*, 2017).

Rao (2014) maintains that the evolution of a business rests on its inclusive capability to preserve and expand its network of association with customers, suppliers and business associates. Entrepreneurs with robust networking and communication aptitudes are more successful than those engaged in limited collaboration (Huan, 2016). Cho (2015) advocates that business networking is beneficial for collaborating with other SMEs that are at a parallel point of progression or in parallel expanses of the value chain.

2.5.2.6 External ecosystem factors

The external ecosystem factors that influence entrepreneurship are recognised differently by authors. However, there is a collective similarity in the evaluation. Aelom *et al.* (2016) propose that the external environment components which impact an SME include business rivalry, locality, investment and related financial backing. A contrary theory is for entrepreneurs to utilise the systems model to incorporate external stakeholders and ecosystem fluctuations in decision-making (Turner & Endres, 2017). The external ecosystem which impacts SMEs includes economic, political, institutional, statutory, technical and social factors (Cepel, 2019). Mindset transformation is recommended for entrepreneurs to adapt to changes in the external ecosystem, made possible through the utilisation of individuals who can guide entrepreneurs (Cepel, 2019). Korcsmaros and Simova (2018) contend that most ventures, though impacted by external elements, have slight concern for external elements since they are consumed by business sustainability and managerial issues. However, Muogbo and Chuka (2019) postulate that external elements, such as universal competitiveness, technical expertise and societal issues, should encourage entrepreneurs to adapt and be receptive to transformation.

The aspects within the venture, such as infrastructure, processes and human resource management, are as critical as the outside aspects, such as statutory requirements, economic depression and consumer preferences (Muogbo & Chuka, 2019). Governmental constancy is pivotal for the successful functioning of SMEs, alluding to why entrepreneurs should have a grasp of the external ecosystem to adapt accordingly (Tambari, Chioma & Ononogbo, 2018). SME entrepreneurs should be apprised with the knowledge of consumer preferences, business invention practices and external environmental knowledge to cultivate accomplishment (Eltahir, 2018). The peripheral business ecosystem has the propensity to be more detrimental to SMEs than a scarcity of funds and assets (Appiah *et al.*, 2018). However, constant scrutiny of the environment can equip entrepreneurs to generate actions to manage the consequences.

The challenges and stimulants of contemporary entrepreneurial ventures were presented in this section. The next section discusses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on global and South African businesses.

2.6 COVID-19 PANDEMIC: IMPACT ON SMEs

China experienced a furtive epidemic which emerged in December 2019 in Wuhan City. The epidemic, subsequently identified as COVID-19 or the Coronavirus, became a global pandemic impacting countries across the globe economically and monetarily (Wu, Chen & Chan, 2020; Ede, Masuku & Jili, 2021). The consequence of the pandemic for each country was not dissimilar to countries universally (Ede *et al.*, 2021). However, South Africa comparatively applied extreme lockdown procedures which intensified fiscal contraction (Greyling, Rossouw & Adhikari, 2021). South Africa recorded its initial COVID-19 incident in March 2020, with a national lockdown effected until 2022 (Chitiga-Mabugu *et al.*, 2021). The lockdown was effected at various levels, with the first being complete economic cessation (Chitiga-Mabugu *et al.*, 2021). Fiscal development weakened to 1.9% in 2020, resulting in an increase in joblessness and a negative impact on SMEs (Chitiga-Mabugu *et al.*, 2021). The sectors most impacted by the lockdown were the industrial and trade sectors, comprising SMEs, which declined by an estimated 21% and 17% respectively (Ede *et al.*, 2021). According to Statistics South Africa (2020), 54% of SME operations projected they would survive for under three months due to the lockdown conditions. The pandemic and subsequent lockdown ravaged the South African economy and propagated societal inequities (Staunton, Swanepoel & Labuschaigne, 2020). The impact of the lockdown was deemed more severe on informal businesses (De Groot & Lemanski, 2020). SMEs discovered that they were operating under a new normal environment, with the majority of SMEs adapting the corporate framework of operation to ensure sustainability (Gregurec, Furjan & Tomicic-Pupek, 2021). However, there is limited research on adaptive models and frameworks for pandemic or post-pandemic conditions. The pandemic created a research gap concerning the redevelopment of SME models and the fundamental proficiencies required (Gregurec *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, qualitative research is recommended to allow for experiential engagement (Gregurec *et al.*, 2021).

The challenges experienced by SMEs during the pandemic included declining revenue, a lack of funds, cash flow challenges, downsizing and operational challenges (Effendi, Sugandini & Istanto, 2020). Supply chain delays, a lack of accessibility to customers, organisational reconfiguration and marketing challenges were additionally identified (Effendi *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, SME retail entrepreneurs were required to

realign their business models to changing market conditions (Malgas & Zondi, 2020). SMEs are thus encouraged to focus on mentoring to apply expertise to alter their business models with the aid of a mentor (Malgas & Zondi, 2020). In support of this view, emerging SMEs must be provided with sector-specific mentoring and support during post-pandemic conditions (OECD, 2021). To alleviate the challenges of the pandemic on SMEs, some nations implemented actions to enable SMEs to pursue new opportunities through the creation of ad hoc mentoring programmes (Cepel *et al.*, 2020). Communication was deferred to digital and online media using software such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, electronic media and other virtual media (Clark, 2020). However, the details of the programmes remain ambiguous because of the informal nature adopted.

The following section discusses the impact of mentoring on the success of entrepreneurial ventures.

2.7 IMPACT OF MENTORING ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS

Various researchers have described the benefits of mentoring on entrepreneurs. However, some authors suggested there is limited evidence to support the hypothesis that mentoring is as effective as perceived. The difficulty experienced by SMEs, concerning sales, marketing and funding challenges, necessitates that entrepreneurs pursue peripheral guidance for their ventures (Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Whilst mentoring effectiveness is acknowledged generically, it has not been expressed in the scope of entrepreneurial training (Rankhumise, 2015). Entrepreneurs who advance their talents in functions such as sales, administration, human resource management and procurement, benefit more from mentoring than their counterparts who do not pursue any assistance (Kunaka & Moos, 2019).

Although mentoring is an effective mechanism for skill transfer, its effectiveness on emerging entrepreneurs is subject to research (Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018). However, Rankhumise (2015) acknowledges mentoring as contributory to both efficiency and an improvement in the overall entrepreneurial offering. It intensifies throughput, innovation, communication and management efficacy (Ismail, Abdullah & Francis, 2009; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

The advantages of formalised mentoring are enhanced output, heightened motivation and an augmentation of work quality (Ehrich *et al.*, 2011). Despite the perceived benefits, some factors contribute to the ineffectiveness of mentoring efforts (Rankhumise, 2015). Mentoring is ineffective in cases where there is limited proficiency on the part of the mentor, who in turn is unable to provide the necessary direction to entrepreneurs (Rankhumise, 2015). A scarcity of skilled mentors, short timeframes allocated to the mentor-mentee relationship, and a lack of dedication on the part of mentoring participants, can lead to mentoring ineffectiveness (Rankhumise, 2015). In addition, mentoring does not necessarily yield improved turnover and profitability (Solomon, 2004).

According to Kunaka and Moos (2019), and contrary to the interpretation of Solomon (2004), the impact of mentoring on entrepreneurs can be sub-divided into various categories, namely:

- Skill outcomes, referring to the capability to manage a business successfully.
- Knowledge outcomes, referring to the capability to comprehend the workings and processes of the business.
- Entrepreneur outcomes, in the form of individual advancement and self-confidence.
- Business outcomes, in the form of enhanced profitability, decreased expenses and long-term sustainability (Kunaka & Moos, 2019).

Mentoring offers entrepreneurs numerous advantages, such as improved efficiency, enhanced loyalty to the business, reduction in expenses and heightened planning capability (Leck & Wood, 2013). Baranik *et al.* (2010) affirm that the provision of mentoring initiates communal interaction, such that insights pertinent to business sustenance are created.

However, Chebii (2017) cautions that mentoring can have adverse consequences, such as dysfunctional mentoring, when there is a collapse in the association between mentor and mentee concerning incongruity of objectives and blurred expectations. The collapse of the association between mentor and mentee can prove detrimental to the process, consequently having a negative impact on productivity and accomplishment (Leck & Wood, 2013).

Dimitrova (2016) attributes the collapse in the mentor-mentee association to the following factors:

- Poor communication between the mentor and mentee.
- An inability of the mentor to ensure adequate post-mentoring follow-up.
- An inability of both parties to instil faith in each other.
- An inability to reach consensus on expectations or objectives.
- Personality conflicts between the mentor and mentee (Dimitrova, 2016).

However, entrepreneurs who engage in mentoring display advanced degrees of management confidence and output efficiency, whilst the mentor is rewarded from a perspective of acquiring novel perceptions and individual gratification (Chebii, 2017). The rewards of mentoring, which outweigh the disadvantages, can be divided into three segments, namely, rewards for the organisation, rewards for the mentor and rewards for the mentee, as demonstrated in Table 2.4 (Leck & Wood, 2013).

Table 2.4: Rewards of mentoring

Organisational rewards	Mentor rewards	Mentee rewards
Cost effectiveness	Individual accomplishment	Education and skills progression
Enhanced organisational culture and commitment	Financial advantages	Individual growth
Enhanced overall performance and efficiency	Enhanced self-assurance and acknowledgement	Enhanced self-assurance

(Source: Leck & Wood, 2013)

2.7.1 Mentoring success in developed and developing countries

Tyokumbur (2014) advocates that mentoring is problematic in both developed and developing nations due to individual and organisational issues. The challenges can be attributed to resistance to transformation on an individual basis, and the strained relationships between the mentor and the mentoring participant (Tyokumbur, 2014).

However, mentoring in developed nations exhibits distinct differences compared to developing nations, since the revenue streams are seemingly stronger, as outlined in Table 2.5 (Lescano *et al.*, 2019).

Table 2.5: Mentoring in developed and developing nations

	Developed nations	Developing nations
Access to mentors	High	Low
Attitude toward mentoring	Inspiring and stimulating	Dearth of interrogative thinking
Association between mentor and mentee	Pleasant	Patriarchal
Perception of mentoring	Broad	Constrained

(Source: Adapted from Lescano *et al.*, 2019)

In a study comprising trainee participants from both developed and developing nations, Jeske and Linehan (2020) posited that both sets of participants acknowledged mentoring to have a positive impact from a personal and professional perspective. Furthermore, mentoring displayed a substantial upsurge of business profitability amongst mentees in developing countries (Brooks *et al.*, 2018). If exposed to knowledgeable mentors, mentees in developing nations can develop sustainable ventures, albeit the introduction to expert mentors can be difficult (Brooks *et al.*, 2018). Abuya, Muhia and Mokaya (2019) emphasise that mentors fulfil the position of role models for mentees in developing nations. Therefore, the position of the mentor is crucial for development.

The next section discusses the mentoring and entrepreneurial variables that can be used as the basis for a foundational model.

2.8 MENTORING MODEL VARIABLES

This section explores the variables that impact a mentoring model in the case of emerging SME mentoring. Mentor, mentee and entrepreneurial traits are examined in the section.

2.8.1 Mentor-mentee traits

For a mentoring relationship to be productive, both the mentor and mentee need to display traits that allow them to engage in an efficient manner. This section expounds traits that mentors must possess to be successful in value delivery, traits that mentees must possess to absorb optimal value from the process, and traits of emerging entrepreneurs to establish their competency requirements.

2.8.1.1 Mentor traits

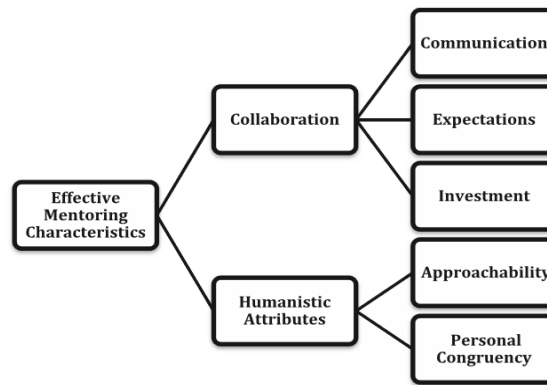
The general trait preferences desired by mentees in a mentor include self-assurance, practical knowledge, approachability and good business acumen (Tsai & Helsel, 2016). The traits relevant to entrepreneurial mentors are industry skills, business skills, and implicit and explicit knowledge (O'Connell, 2017). Other traits which are central to the mentor, as part of the mentoring process, include an obligation to the process, a display of fortitude and mentor trustworthiness (O'Connell, 2017).

A study of emerging entrepreneurs established that the following mentor traits play a role in the mentoring association: direction, self-efficacy, tutoring ability and a genuine interest in the goal attainment of the mentee (Van der Sijde & Weijmans, 2013). Rolfe (2017) proposes that mentors should possess effective soft skills or communication ability, an innovative ability to introduce novel methods and ideas, an effective use of response methods and leadership ability.

Mentors should be selfless, compassionate and dynamic listeners (Straus *et al.*, 2013; Holmes *et al.*, 2018). Productive mentors ensure they are reachable to mentees, specifically at the outset of the relationship (Straus *et al.*, 2013). A focus on service quality, strong business acumen and an inspirational approach, will enhance the effectiveness of a mentor (Grogan, Eviner & Hobbie, 2013). Pennanen, Heikkinen & Tynjala (2018) suggest that practical mentor involvement is key to the mentor-mentee relationship.

From an individual standpoint, tolerance, veracity, and approachability, are significant traits a mentor should display (Grogan *et al.*, 2013). Goldner and Mayseless (2009) suggest a positive correlation between the mentor/mentee association and the outcomes of the mentoring process. Olaoye (2016) opines that an entrepreneurial mentor should display suitable linguistic and self-management competencies to afford value to mentoring participants. The preferred traits for a mentor, suggested by mentees, include effectual collaboration and social traits, such as approachability and integration (Nottingham, *et al.*, 2017).

Figure 2.18 provides a summary of the preferred mentor traits (Nottingham *et al.*, 2017).



(Source: Nottingham *et al.*, 2017)

Figure 2.18: Mentor traits

Common mentor-mentee gender and cross-gender associations afford both unique benefits and shortcomings for mentees (Marshall, 2017). However, there is no preferred gender stipulation concerning the mentor. The mentoring association can become problematic for the mentee if there is restricted contact with the mentor or difficulty in communication (Joubert & De Villiers, 2015).

Mentoring relationships fail due to a collapse in communication, or promises that are not fulfilled, or an absence of mutual conviction in the mentoring process (Cull, 2006). However, Schenk *et al.* (2020) contend that the relationship is determined by robust interaction. The ability of the mentor to effectively comprehend the needs of the mentee results in effective mentoring (Bailey *et al.*, 2016).

2.8.1.2 Mentee traits

The general traits relevant to mentees are adaptability, eagerness to learn, passion, perception, accountability and amiability (Hudson, 2013). Abiddin and Hassan (2012) hypothesise that a mentee should primarily take on the position of an enthusiastic participant in the mentor-mentee association.

Therefore, the characteristics which a mentee should possess include readiness to recognise constructive advice, adaptability to diverse tasks and trustworthiness (Abiddin & Hassan, 2012). Welch (2016) advocates that the underlying foundational principle for mentoring is for the mentee to display an attitude that is pre-emptive, to exhibit onus for knowledge discovery, and to steer the liaison for a viable mentor-mentee association.

2.8.1.3 Early-stage entrepreneurial mentoring requirements

Entrepreneurship competencies can be transferred from a mentor to an entrepreneur, despite debate concerning entrepreneurial knowledge transfer (Azim & Al-Kahtani, 2014). The competencies which entrepreneurs endeavour to attain are categorised as technological, planning, marketing, management and leadership, as outlined in Table 2.6 (Jusoh *et al.*, 2011).

Table 2.6: Preferred entrepreneurial competencies

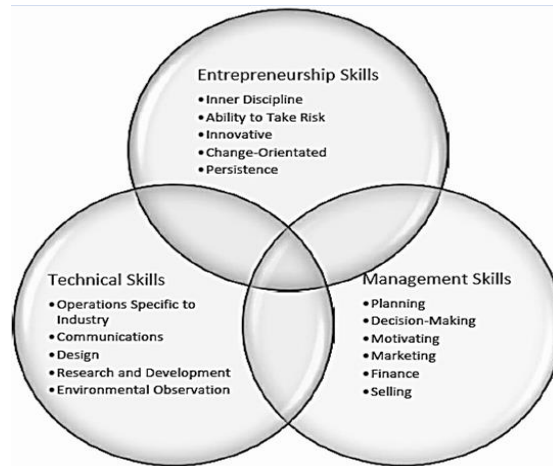
Category	Type of competency
Technological	E-commerce, application software and internet-related competencies.
Planning	Compilation of business plans, and the creation of marketing, sales and financial strategies.
Marketing	Market research, sales practices and promotion techniques.
Management	Employee management, business management, operations management and customer/supplier management.
Leadership	Leading employees and developing effective communication techniques.

(Source: Adapted from Jusoh *et al.*, 2011)

The internal challenges for entrepreneurial success include motivational issues, managerial issues, insufficient record-keeping and service delivery challenges (Cooney, 2012). To alleviate the challenges, Cooney (2012) proposes a skill set for inclusion in entrepreneurial training and mentoring programmes.

The skills identified by Cooney (2012), as illustrated in Figure 2.19, include:

- Entrepreneurial competencies, encompassing inventiveness, creativity and personal competencies such as self-efficacy.
- Managerial competencies, incorporating sales, marketing, planning and decision-making competencies.
- Technical competencies, inclusive of communication ability and industry-specific operational competencies (Cooney, 2012).



(Source: Cooney, 2012)

Figure 2.19: Entrepreneurial competency skill set

Fitriati and Hermiati’s view (2010) is reinforced by Cooney (2012), who posits that entrepreneurial competencies should embrace the three competency sets listed. However, Fitriati and Hermiati (2010) suggest that entrepreneurial traits, such as persistence, veracity and ambition, are equally important to the skill set. Contemporary entrepreneurship necessitates competencies which encompass an array of functional areas, as illustrated in Table 2.7 (Olaoye, 2016).

Table 2.7: Contemporary entrepreneurial competencies

Competency	Application of competency
Decision-making and control	Effective and efficient implementation of decisions in a timeous manner, with the ability to monitor effectiveness.
Finance competencies	An ability to maintain a basic accounting system, and basic financing knowledge.
Human resource competencies	The entrepreneur’s aptitude to employ, train and effectively manage employees.
Resource management	Efficient management of finances, equipment and people.
Marketing competencies	Marketing techniques to segment, entice and grow the customer base of the venture.
Risk managing competencies	The entrepreneur’s ability to identify and mitigate physical, financial and business risks to control uncertainty.
Information technology competencies	The entrepreneur’s ability to implement software applications in a business, and to use technology to market the business.

(Source: Adapted from Olaoye, 2016)

Researchers uphold unanimity concerning the basic skills required by entrepreneurs. Salome, Osita and Marcel's view (2012) is reinforced by Olaoye (2016), who suggests that an additional skill set is imperative for contemporary entrepreneurial activity. The skills recommended include objective-setting, optimal resource management, operations management, employee management, inventory management and basic legal understanding (Olaoye, 2016).

Key entrepreneurial competencies can be supplemented through the effective use of consultants and mentors to facilitate skill transfer (Perks & Struwig, 2005). Al Mamun, Fazal and Muniady (2019) propose that a paucity of business skills serves as the central dilemma for emerging SME ventures. Therefore, governing establishments should offer programmes to SMEs, to augment skills pertinent to business knowledge, marketing ability, collaborative skills and operational proficiencies (Al Mamun *et al.*, 2019).

The preceding section presented the mentoring model variables. Part B of the chapter presents the theoretical framework that underlies the study.

PART B: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY

Mentoring models were presented in Part A of the literature review. Additionally, the concept of entrepreneurship was extensively explored to determine the factors that impact contemporary entrepreneurship.

The following theoretical foundation is an assimilation of the concepts that are relevant to developing an entrepreneurial mentoring model.

2.9 THEORETICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY

To present the theoretical foundation which underpins this study, the components of both a mentoring model and a business model are integrated. Although the positioning of the theoretical framework differs within a grounded theory study, an appraisal of the literature will advance the creation of a new model by expounding the focal components of mentoring and entrepreneurship.

2.9.1 Mentoring model components

Dawson (2014) suggested a list of components to consider for a mentoring model. The process-components clarify the mentoring association between the mentor and mentee and accordingly strengthen the mentoring process. The list of components is outlined in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Mentoring model components

Component	Description
Objectives	The intention and purpose of the mentoring process.
Roles	The contribution of the mentor and mentee to the mentoring process.
Association	The formal or informal extent of the association.
Experience	The knowledge of the mentor and mentee.
Matching	An understanding of the criteria for pairing the mentor and mentee. Matching may be based on gender, expertise, or personality.
Time	The period, contact intervals and sessions allocated to mentoring.
Actions	The prescribed mentoring actions which will be delivered by the mentor.
Resources	The inclusion of resources such as technology, stationery and manuals to facilitate knowledge transfer.
Technology	Software required to enable the process between mentor and mentee.
Training	Online and offline training that may occur between the mentor and mentee.
Compensation	The reward for the mentor in the form of monetary compensation, and for the mentee in the form of enhanced skills.
Policy	Issues around discretion and secrecy are included as part of policy.
Monitoring	The mentor determines how to supervise the process for effectiveness.
Termination	Actions for the conclusion of the mentoring process.

(Source: Adapted from Dawson, 2014)

The mentor is dominant during the initial phases of the mentoring association and may be faced with complications, such as when the mentor-mentee objectives for the association are incongruent (Garringer *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, mentor-mentee matching, founded on resemblances such as age, gender, background and communal areas of focus, is endorsed (Garringer *et al.*, 2015). However, Dawson (2014) cautions that these components are not prescriptive. As early as 1993, Gaskill argued that the most effective mentoring interventions are prearranged to afford optimal advantage to

mentees. Gaskill (1993) proposed a conceptual mentoring framework with the following elements:

- Programme development, which includes mentor-mentee recruitment, training and the mentoring relationship.
- Programme implementation, with a focus on mentoring roles and benefits.
- Programme evaluation, which is an appraisal of the results and the provision of feedback.

Young and Perrewe (2001) conducted research that culminated in a mentoring framework which focused on the relationship between mentor and mentee. However, the framework evolved around the nature of the association between the mentor and mentee. Agholor, Nalda & Barcena (2017) conducted a recent comparative examination of initial mentoring models (Gaskill, 1993; Young & Perrewe, 2001) and suggested an integrated mentoring conceptual framework. The framework comprises elements such as: the formal or informal nature of mentoring, the mentoring duration and frequency, mentor/mentee traits, the matching procedure, mentoring stages, outcomes and feedback (Agholor *et al.*, 2017). The components overlap with those posited by Dawson (2014). Additionally, the process-related components can be adapted for future mentoring (Agholor *et al.*, 2017).

An appraisal of the models in Part A of this chapter established that a mentoring model should comprise process-related and content-specific aspects. This section evaluated the process-related aspects of mentoring. The next section presents the content-specific components of a model, namely, the business/entrepreneurial components.

2.9.2 Business model components

A business model can be a convergence of a depiction, design, theoretical instrument, strategy, or structure (Peric *et al.*, 2017). A business model comprises a set of factors that contribute to business activity (Morris *et al.*, 2005). It emphasises dual objectives, namely, to provide a plan of execution, and to acclimatise to turbulent environmental factors (Silvente, Ciupak & Cunha, 2019). The components of a business model include the business proposition, resources, proficiencies, stakeholders and business practices (Peric *et al.*, 2017).

A business model should be supplemented with components such as value delivery and strategic actions (Johnson, Christensen & Kagerman, 2008). An effectively developed business model, according to initial recommendations by Morris *et al.* (2005), should incorporate six elements:

- Value offering, in the form of products and services.
- Market elements, pertaining to how an offering will be made available to customers and on which platforms.
- Internal competence elements, such as sales methods, operations, technology and networking.
- Competitive strategy elements, which address business positioning, leadership and disruption.
- Economic elements, such as pricing strategy and profitability margins.
- Personal elements, which include the sustainability practices to be applied to support future business operations (Morris *et al.*, 2005).

Wirtz *et al.* (2016) opine that a business model should be sub-divided into classifications or components. Common classifications include value creation, strategy, marketing factors, and administrative factors (Wirtz *et al.*, 2016). It is possible to develop a new business model by revising or adapting components (Ramdani, Binsaif & Boukrami, 2019). Wirtz *et al.* (2016) state that a business model should comprise three main classifications: (1) the strategic elements of the business, (2) the consumer and market-oriented elements, and (3) the value offering elements. Since research on business models is undeveloped and distributed, with an ambiguous theoretical foundation, it necessitates further analysis (Zott, Amit & Massa, 2011).

2.9.3 Theoretical foundation: Business Model Canvas (BMC)

The business model that underpins this study is the Business Model Canvas (BMC), developed by Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010), which describes the fundamental building blocks to position a business for profitability.

Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010) proposed that a business model comprises nine foundational constituents or buildings blocks, as demonstrated in Table 2.9.

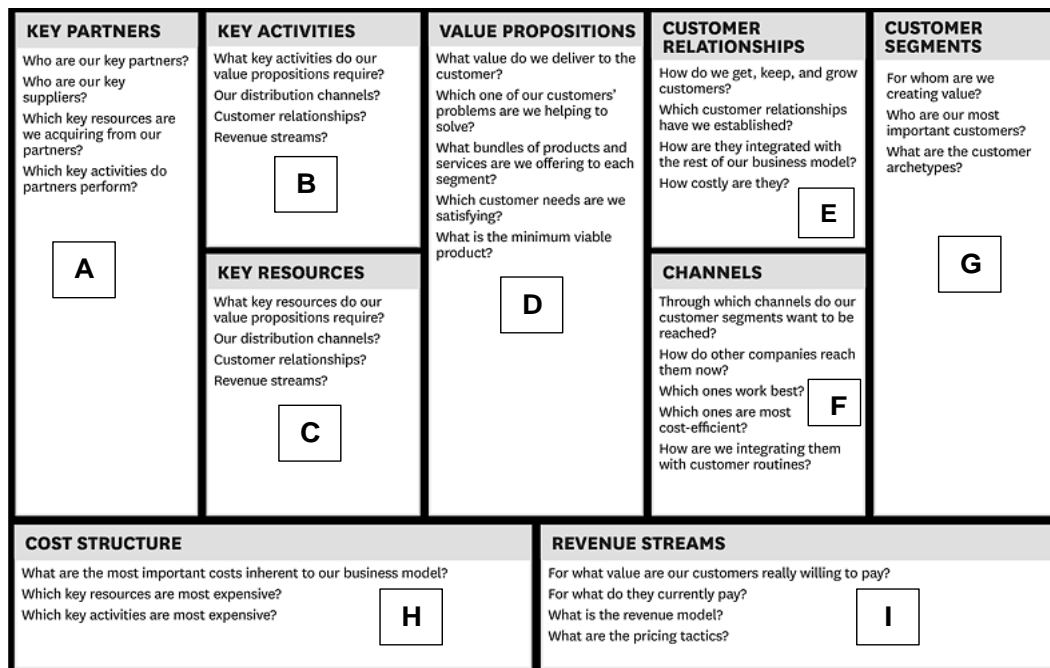
Table 2.9: Business Model Canvas (BMC) building blocks

	Building block	Description
1.	Customer segments	A business defines its consumer base using criteria such as consumer needs or consumer compartment.
2.	Value propositions	The commodities that a business sells to its customer segments. It incorporates addressing consumer issues. Since the inception of technological invention, it includes embracing disruption. Branding and pricing form part of the value proposition.
3.	Channels	Channels involve how an offering is distributed to its target consumers. It includes online and offline sales methods.
4.	Customer relationships	The development of associations with consumers, through self-help, personal help or electronic structures.
5.	Revenue streams	Revenue streams comprise the net income generated per consumer segment. Fee structures which apply to this constituent include static and dynamic pricing structures.
6.	Key resources	These are the wealth-related value originators for consumers. Resources include fixed assets, monetary assets, knowledge assets or people capital.
7.	Key activities	These are the operations which a business engages in, ranging from manufacturing to the building of business associations.
8.	Key partnerships	This includes the relationships that a business develops with stakeholders, such as customers or suppliers, to sustain its operations.
9.	Cost structure	These are the operational expenses incurred to create a value offering. Costs include static and flexible expenses.

(Source: Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010)

Crotty, Kinney and Farren (2017) assert that the focal benefit of the BMC is its illustrative application and minimalism. Benjaminsson, Kronholm and Erlandsson (2019) state that the BMC is an adaptable model that can be easily modified and customised. However, the BMC is inhibited by its static design (Verrue, 2014). Lima and Baudier (2017) contradict the viewpoint of Verrue (2014), stating that the BMC is a responsive method of business modelling used by entrepreneurial ventures and corporates globally. Ganguly and Euchner (2018) contend that the BMC provides no depth concerning the interrelatedness between elements.

Figure 2.20 illustrates the constituents of the BMC. The following labels on the BMC diagram accentuate the elements of value provision: value propositions (D), customer relationships (E), channels (F), customer segments (G), and revenue streams (I). The following labels emphasise the elements of value development: key partners (A), key activities (B), key resources (C), and cost structure (H). The central section (D) incorporates the core element of value propositions (Lima & Baudier, 2017).



(Source: Osterwalder, 2013)

Figure 2.20: Business Model Canvas (BMC)

Ramdani *et al.* (2019) evaluated different approaches to business model transformation, through a literature assessment of contemporary business models. After assessing 219 research papers from various global journals, Ramdani *et al.* (2019) proposed a business model which comprises four key factors (depicted in Figure 2.21):

- Value proposition: The customer-centric value offering.
- Operational value: The business resources, systems and supplier functions.
- Human capital: The development of employees and the creation of incentives.
- Financial value: Income generation, expense allocation and profit generation (Ramdani *et al.*, 2019).



(Source: Ramdani *et al.*, 2019)

Figure 2.21: A proposed business model

A void prevails in the extant literature pertaining to contemporary business model development which addresses modernisation methods and disruptive practices. Andersen, Ljungkvist and Svensson (2015) proposed an updated business model for the model established by Morris *et al.* (2005). Andersen *et al.* (2015) modified the original model to comprise the following six elements: (1) the value element, which pertains to the offering, (2) the market element, which relates to customer recruitment, (3) the commercial element, which involves pricing, (4) the entrepreneurial element, which encompasses personality and motivation, (5) the resource element, pertaining to business assets, and (6) the positioning element, which involves market positioning. A Retail Business Model (RBM) should include distinguishing factors, such as service delivery and implementation, customer-centric endeavours and relationship-building (Sorescu *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, business models for retail entrepreneurs should integrate methods for adjusting to turbulent conditions (Lange & Velamuri, 2014).

The theoretical foundation for this study established the components applicable to mentoring models and entrepreneurial business models. Mentoring model components included a range of variables, such as mentoring roles, the mentoring association, objectives, mentor-mentee matching and monitoring. Business model components included factors relating to the value offering, business channels, resources, marketing, business positioning and entrepreneurial factors. A review of literature in this chapter established a range of factors that inhibit and promote entrepreneurial ventures. In addition, early-stage entrepreneurial competency requirements were appraised. The components, factors and requirements may

contribute to the development of the proposed model once the data are analysed and integrated with the literature using grounded theory methodology.

The next section provides a synopsis of the gaps identified in the extant literature.

2.10 GAPS IN EXTANT LITERATURE

This section presents the gaps recognised in the extant literature after the completion of the literature review. The principal areas recognised include an absence of a contemporary mentoring model for emerging retail SMEs, gaps pertaining to mentoring model variables, early-stage competency requirements for emerging entrepreneurs, a methodological gap and pandemic-related issues.

2.10.1 Mentoring model for emerging retail SMEs

Despite initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship through the conception of SME programmes and SME literature, there is no universal or South African mentoring model which can be used to mentor emerging entrepreneurs in their ventures (Chukwu & Uzochukwu, 2013). Whilst some models addressed mentoring and the mentoring process, and other models addressed the entrepreneurship process, no model has been developed to merge the mentoring and entrepreneurial processes, thus incorporating competency development for emerging entrepreneurs.

From a perspective of proposed model development, the researcher reviewed the process-related and component-related aspects pertinent to mentoring and entrepreneurship. A distinct gap exists in mentoring research to assimilate an innovative model, which can be positioned within the ambit of an evolving entrepreneurial climate, with specific reference to emerging retail SMEs in this case.

2.10.1.1 Mentoring model variables for emerging retail SMEs

The review of the extant literature denoted a lack of consensus concerning the variables which contribute to a mentoring model. Furthermore, from an entrepreneurial perspective, a void exists in research concerning the type of mentor an entrepreneurial mentee would prefer. Whilst the pandemic has accelerated mentoring in different contexts, the preferences of SME entrepreneurs remain indistinct.

2.10.1.1 Mentoring preferences

Although mentors afford knowledge and direction to mentees, little is known about the preferences of SME mentees in the mentoring relationship. For example, there is no prescribed qualification for business mentors apart from their abilities and business acumen. The traits, characteristics and preferences sought by mentees in mentors are unspecified. Limited research prevails regarding the mentoring relationship preferences of SME mentees, such as the nature and permanency of the relationship, or the personal characteristics of mentors sought by SME mentees.

2.10.1.2 Mentor-mentee matching

Incongruity relating to principles and professional ethos can contribute to a relationship breakdown between mentor and mentee (Guse *et al.*, 2016). Marshall (2017) alludes to superficial and intense characteristics that need to be aligned between a mentor and mentee for the relationship to be successful. Superficial characteristics comprise age, gender and ethnic issues, whilst the intense characteristics comprise knowledge and soft skills (Marshall, 2017). Guse *et al.* (2016) acknowledge a gap in contemporary literature, with reference to how mentors and mentees can relate in a congruent manner, to attain the mentoring objectives. If mentors and mentees are matched according to similarity in context and understanding, it may contribute to an enhanced working relationship (Smith, 2015). Laukhuf and Malone (2015) indicate a void in the existing body of knowledge with respect to the exact role and benefit of mentoring for emerging entrepreneurs. Since research remains blurred in this area, it requires exploration.

2.10.2 Early-stage entrepreneurial mentoring competency needs

There is no lucidity pertaining to the competencies that should be inculcated in entrepreneurs to ensure successful entrepreneurship. Additionally, there is an absence of a model or framework comprising the competencies that can be used as a benchmark for mentoring early-stage entrepreneurs. This is accordingly a research gap that this study addressed. This study attempted to explore the experiences of entrepreneurs to refine the competencies that are vital for emerging entrepreneurship.

2.10.3 Methodological gap

Van Ewijk (2018) conducted a systematic literature review of entrepreneurship education, which concluded that researchers displayed a proclivity for quantitative and qualitative studies. In the scope of entrepreneurship research, qualitative research using comparative case studies concentrated on practices and coaching techniques, whilst quantitative research concentrated on measuring results (Van Ewijk, 2018). Van Ewijk (2018) suggested that existing research is frequently associated with existing theories. Hence, there is a paucity with respect to studies that offer the development of new theories in the form of grounded theory research. Mainstream entrepreneurial education and mentoring research is predominantly based on the quantitative methodology (Wang & Chugh, 2014). Extant mentoring research does not incorporate new methodologies to equip contemporary entrepreneurs with new skills (De Aguiar *et al.*, 2019). A large component of mentoring studies in the past 20 years has elaborated on philosophy advancement without consideration for practical operationalisation (Germain, 2011; Cope, 2018). Academic exploration presents numerous gaps in mentoring studies because of the vastness, popularity and diverse application of the concept (Al Hilali *et al.*, 2020). Since qualitative studies based on the grounded theory methodology are limited in the fields of mentoring and entrepreneurship, this study addressed the methodological gap prevalent. In addition, the upward trajectory in the fields of mentoring and emerging entrepreneurship warrants further research.

2.10.4 Addressing pandemic and post-pandemic challenges through mentoring

The 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic, and subsequent lockdown level measures such as those imposed in South Africa, resulted in fiscal regression in developing nations through unemployment and consequential poverty (Kanu, 2020). Prior to the complete lockdown in South Africa, approximately 80% of customers anticipated a reduction in their retail spend; the ensuing lockdown resulted in sales and profitability losses for most retail SMEs (McKinsey, 2020). The sector that yielded one of the highest losses of approximately 17% was the retail sector (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Whilst regular entrepreneurial challenges persisted amongst SMEs, additional challenges encountered during the pandemic included the lack of strategic entrepreneurial

guidance during a crisis, recurring SME cash flow challenges, admission to alternate market channels and employee engagement techniques (McKinsey, 2020). These challenges can be addressed through the correct inculcation of competencies in SMEs and through innovative entrepreneurial practices (McKinsey, 2020).

Emerging SMEs can be assisted through legislative support structures and effective mentoring, as adopted during the crisis in developed nations (OECD, 2020). Limited exploration conducted during the pandemic discovered a need for swift reaction and strategic SME entrepreneurial mediation. To address the limited studies, further research is needed for adaptable approaches to be developed (Hansen, Keenan & Ronning, 2020). Despite state-based incentives and funding during the pandemic, SME research should incorporate catastrophe management proficiencies to improve entrepreneurial skills and prepare entrepreneurs to manage their ventures amid uncertainty (Mahat *et al.*, 2021). To alleviate the pressure on emerging SMEs, mentoring research necessitates tactical approaches for future sustainability (Hansen *et al.*, 2020). Hence, this study examined how mentoring can solidify SME business practices to limit further loss.

2.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter offered an overview of emerging entrepreneurship and mentoring. The chapter was divided into two parts, namely, Part A which comprised the conceptual framework, and Part B which comprised the theoretical framework. Key terms such as mentoring, entrepreneurship, SMEs and early-stage entrepreneurship, were conceptualised and appraised in Part A. Six mentoring models and two theories were presented. Factors that impede and promote entrepreneurial activities were discussed. Mentoring variables and their impact on mentoring success were analysed. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on emerging entrepreneurs was evaluated. The theoretical framework in Part B delivered insight into elements that can be incorporated into a proposed entrepreneurial mentoring model. Mentoring and business model components, such as the BMC, were presented. The gaps in the extant literature were identified to direct this study's contribution to literature. Therefore, to address the advancement of entrepreneurs, mentoring interventions should be offered to maximise entrepreneurs' individual and organisational potential. In this context, the creation of a mentoring model is significant since the literature

review endorsed that mentoring can positively contribute to the success of entrepreneurs. Since there is a lack of unanimity concerning the approach and content that entrepreneurial mentoring programmes should encompass, the grounded theory approach was adopted to aid in the development of an applicable model. The next chapter discusses the qualitative grounded theory case methodology employed in the study for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter expounds the research methodology employed in the study. Based on gaps in the extant literature, the researcher elected to apply the qualitative research methodology, using a case study approach founded on grounded theory, for the development of the mentoring model. The study was nested within the interpretivist paradigm since interpretivism allows for an in-depth understanding of experiences. The chapter incorporates a discussion of the research design, methodology, paradigm, population and sampling methods applied to the study, to aid the researcher in answering the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 of this study.

The main research question presented in Chapter 1 is:

What entrepreneurial elements are required to establish a contemporary operational mentoring model, for the development of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs based in Kwazulu-Natal, in a post-pandemic setting?

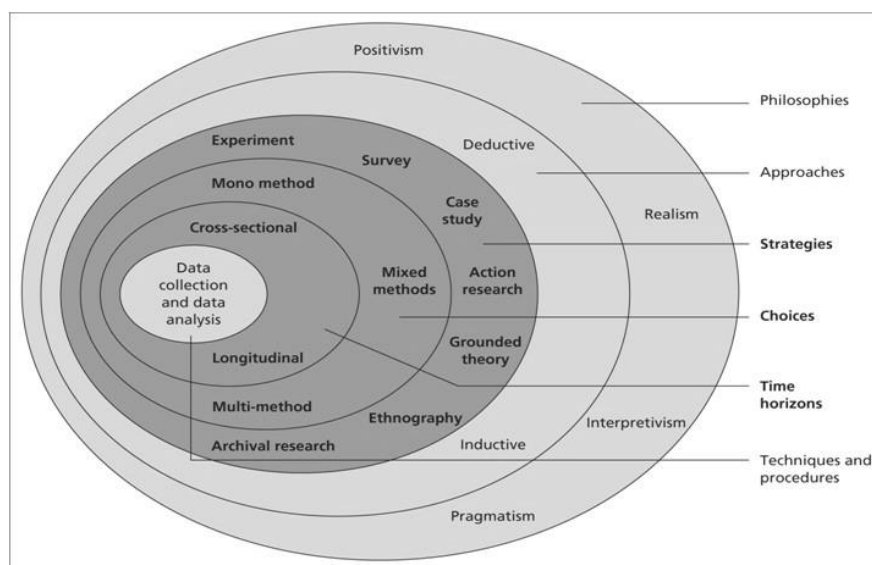
The secondary research questions which supported the main research question are:

1. How can mentoring support address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs?
2. What support, in the form of business competencies, is needed by retail entrepreneurs through mentoring, to strengthen their ability to manage their ventures effectively?
3. How will mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial success?
4. What elements are required to propose an operational mentoring model to develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting?

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) proposed the 'research onion' for developing the methodology section of a study, since it dissects various phases of the research using a layered technique. The research onion, illustrated in Figure 3.1, guides the phases to follow in layers when articulating an applicable research methodology (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The methodology chapter is structured and presented using the phases/layers adapted from the research onion (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Six distinct layers of the research onion are presented in this chapter (Saunders *et al.*, 2019):

- **Research philosophy**, which outlines beliefs concerning the advancement of knowledge.
- **Research approach**, which describes broad beliefs concerning how theory is established.
- **Research choice/methodology**, which references the method used in the study.
- **Research strategy**, which defines the approach that steers the study.
- **Research time horizon**, which encompasses the period over which data are collected for the study.
- **Research techniques and procedures**, which incorporates the **data collection and analysis** methods.



(Source: Adapted from Saunders *et al.*, 2019)

Figure 3.1: The research onion

Figure 3.2 provides a visual representation of the chapter. The chapter is structured according to the layers on the research onion, thus describing the practical application of each layer pertinent to the study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 Introduction
3.2 Research philosophy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3.2.1 Ontology •3.2.2 Epistemology •3.2.3 Axiology
3.3 Research approach
3.4 Research methodology
3.5 Research strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3.5.1 Grounded theory: description and rationale •3.5.2 Case study
3.6 Research time horizon
3.7 Research techniques and procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3.7.1 Data collection •3.7.2 Data analysis and interpretation
3.8 Trustworthiness in qualitative research
3.9 Ethics in research
3.10 Delineation of the study
3.11 Conclusion

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 3.2: Structure of the research methodology chapter

The following sections expound on the research onion, offering a discussion of the philosophy, approach, strategy, methodology, time horizon, and techniques and procedures. For an improved flow, the methodology is presented before the strategy, thus diverging marginally from the order of the research onion.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Research philosophy is described as a set of values and beliefs regarding the advancement of knowledge (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). As a researcher, one usually makes assumptions about actualities, namely, (1) research or ontological assumptions, (2) human knowledge or epistemological assumptions, and (3) the extent to which a researcher's ideals impact the research process, known as axiological assumptions (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Zefeiti and Mohamad (2015) assert

that research philosophy points to a credence about the gathering, understanding and evaluation of data collected in a study, affirming that it underpins the remaining research process. Maarouf (2019) postulates that research comprises three foremost extents, namely, (1) ontology, (2) epistemology, and (3) axiology. The next section describes the ontology, epistemology and axiology applicable to this study.

3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology deals with the issue of whether societal entities can be deemed factual entities or not (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Maarouf, 2019). Furthermore, ontology encompasses the element of reality in a study (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). It impacts the premise which researchers possess concerning the way a domain functions and the assurance linked to specific interpretations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Bryman *et al.* (2011) propose that societal ontology cannot be removed from matters involving business studies. The twofold elements of ontology are: (1) objectivism, which depicts the locus that social beings occur in a reality that is peripheral to their collective environmental enactment, and (2) subjectivism, which depicts the locus that social beings are a consequence of beliefs and opinions related to their collective environment enactment (McGregor, 2018; Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The present study adopted an ontology which is principally inclusive of a subjective social domain of connotations, where entrepreneurs possess their own opinions, understandings, and connotations. This is manifested in the interpretivist methodology and research design techniques employed in the study, such as interviews, which were aimed to construe the experiences of entrepreneurs. The use of a case study combined with grounded theory focalised the experiential aspects of entrepreneurship.

3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is designated as the study of knowledge, its constitution, and its parameters (Kumar, 2011; Kamal, 2019). Epistemology involves a wide-ranging set of premises regarding the paramount methods of probing issues. Since this study focused on the experiences of emerging entrepreneurs, their varied perspectives provided a source of knowledge for the study. Models, principles and philosophies are moulded in the collective context of the study since reality is communally created in a dynamic entrepreneurial environment. Qualitative research embraces the credence

that no single realism exists. Therefore, the researcher focused on understanding the beliefs, approaches, relationships and mechanisms entrepreneurs use to construe the realm of entrepreneurship, thus referencing their social world. The latter epistemological stance is parallel to the view that numerous versions of realism are developed through the interaction between the researcher and research participants. Philosophy is generated through collaborative sharing and analysing of experiences, as is the case in the present study (Kamal, 2019). The emphasis was not founded on empirically based participants' data. Instead, it was to recognise and define the encounters of participants, to enable their personal narratives to contribute toward developing a practically oriented model. The researcher opted to conduct open-ended interviews during the data collection process to support the epistemological underpinning of this study.

3.2.3 Axiology

Axiology is a division of philosophy concerned with conclusions regarding value, which is why the role of the researcher is imperative to guide the credibility of the findings (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). Kivunja (2018) asserts that axiology integrates ethical concerns which need to be deliberated when designing and implementing a study, since ethics involves assessing notions of correct and incorrect conduct concerning the researcher and the research study. Interpretivism is inherently value-filled. The researcher interrelated the data applicable to this study with relevant coding and concepts, allowing themes to emerge during the research process. The researcher ensured that the process was finalised with accuracy, by recording interviews, ensuring transcription accuracy, and maintaining memos. From an axiological standpoint, a level of credibility, dependability and authenticity was applied in the construction of the new model through the implementation of research trustworthiness. Albeit qualitative research lends itself to researcher bias, personal prejudice was minimised by using multiple rounds of coding, to ascertain the themes which contributed to the new model development. Constant code comparison was implemented, until themes were extracted from initial coding, intermediate coding, and advanced coding. The researcher reverted to selected participants for validation during the coding process in the event of initial response ambiguity or confusion. Moreover, field notes were maintained to cross-reference the accuracy of the data analysed.

3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH

Grover (2015) postulates there are three rudimentary parts of a research approach, namely, (1) the theoretical view, (2) the research design, and (3) the techniques for research. Saunders *et al.* (2019) advocate that the research approach to theory development incorporates the degree to which research is involved with philosophy or theory construction. Thus, it is linked to the research design. Induction is an approach whereby a theory is articulated and conveyed in the form of a theoretical structure or model (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). In addition, the examination of a small sample is suitable to establish diverse interpretations of experiences, as is the case with qualitative data gathered (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Induction is the process of collecting data and conjecturing the findings toward the development of a new theory or model (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Since qualitative research is usually built on data from which a new theory or model emerges, it necessitates inductive studies for the progression of research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). The inductive approach includes constructing philosophy built from a foundation that uses qualitative interviewing as the basis of information finding (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Representative interviews equip the researcher with the necessary knowledge to compile new models (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). The current research study was congruent with induction, since the objective was to gain insight into participants' experiences and use their responses for the development of the proposed mentoring model.

3.3.1 Research design

Research design, which offers a procedural roadmap for a research study, comprises the approach selected for data gathering and inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Research design serves as a plan or a directive, steered by the research question, which unites research theory and paradigms. It embraces the opted approach, the data gathering procedures and the techniques for the analysis of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Dannels, 2018). Grover (2015) posits that research design embodies the inclusive approach to problem-solving and comprises an assimilation of various elements in an articulate manner.

Interpretivism, as a paradigm, holds the view that people are dissimilar from physical objects since they produce connotations and experiences (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Thus, interpretivists examine these connotations. Interpretivism affirms that people are divergent in their views and perceptions because they relentlessly adjust in a dynamic environment (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). Additionally, interpretivism supports a qualitative research design, which consequently forms the basis of this study. The intention of interpretivist research is to build novel, robust interpretations of societal entities and situations (Dean, 2018). With qualitative research, researchers interrelate with designated individuals in their natural surroundings, whereas the quantitative method is generally commenced with experimental design (Mackey & Gass, 2016).

Exploratory research, which enhances the research process by gathering new information for qualitative studies, is beneficial when the researcher does not know the central elements to study (Ponelis, 2015). This methodology approach is required when the focal area is innovative or uncharted, or when an issue has not previously been addressed with a particular group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following situations give impetus to a qualitative research problem: (1) a model is undeveloped, owing to a dearth of concepts linked to the subject, (2) a belief prevails that existing philosophies may be imprecise or unsuitable, and (3) a requirement subsists to develop a new model or framework (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The present study is representative of all the aforesaid situations.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology involves the inclusive method selected in the accomplishment of a research study, including the associated design, with its procedures of gathering data, exploration, and authentication (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016). With a qualitative research study, the researcher defines a research problem that is best answered by investigating a notion or phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The option of methodology is reliant on the research question being asked, the goals and intentions of the study, and the approaches and techniques employed in the study (Babbie & Mouton 2001; Taylor *et al.*, 2016). Since data exploration transcends from specifics to universal themes in qualitative studies, it serves as a method for determining the meaning that people or entities accredit to a challenge or situation (Busetto *et al.*, 2020). The research objective of the present

study, namely, probing how and why mentoring can be used to achieve entrepreneurial success, lends itself to an exploratory study. Consequently, the research question for this study is synchronous with the qualitative research methodology (Ugur, 2020). The benefit of a qualitative interpretive positioning is that the findings provide improved soundness and authenticity since the method permits researchers to cultivate a precise appreciation of concepts and problems.

3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY

A qualitative research strategy is demarcated as the implementation of different collaborative approaches to fit the methodology selected for the study (Kakulu, 2014). The research strategy is aligned to the methodology, with the intention to collect data from participants (Kakulu, 2014). The research strategy encompasses the overall blueprint for how the research questions are responded to (Abeysekera, 2019). An apt strategy must be based on the foundation of the research questions and objectives, the level of current information available, time availability and the theoretical keystones of the writer (Abeysekera, 2019). The recognised research strategies which are used in business research include the following types, amongst others: experiments, surveys, case studies, grounded theory, cross-sectional research and longitudinal research (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The research strategies used in the present study, namely, the grounded theory method and the case study approach, are discussed in the next section.

3.5.1 Grounded theory: description and rationale

Grounded theory embodies theory construction facilitated through a blend of induction and deduction (Khan, 2014). The grounded theory strategy is principally supportive toward research that is conducted to envisage and describe actions, with the focus on evolving and constructing theory (Abeysekera, 2019). The significance of grounded theory is its capability to deliver a conceptual synopsis of the phenomenon being explored, since it focuses on participants' perceptions and affords them the ability to express their opinions about aspects they perceive vital (Holton, 2008; Manion, Manion & Morrison, 2018). In essence, grounded theory is a precise methodology to create conceptual philosophy from data that are methodically gathered (Goulding, 2002; Manion *et al.*, 2018). A model should be theoretically complex, entrenched in

theoretical development, such that it should incorporate various theoretical associations offered broadly (Goulding, 2002; Al-Dabbagh, 2020). Thus, model development implies that grounded theory delves into action and collaboration between social units or actors, and not necessarily only on individuals (Goulding, 2002; Cassell, Cunliffe & Grandy, 2018).

The grounded theory strategy is used to investigate an extensive array of organisational and management problems (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Sharma & Choubey, 2020). It is imperative that the data accumulated is reflected on from a conceptual perspective to draw inferences with theoretical acumen (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Sharma & Choubey, 2020). Flick (2009; 2018) hypothesises that philosophy cultivates from the ground, as researchers collect and examine data, thus leading to theory cultivating concept by concept. Lapan, Quartaroli and Riemer (2012) advocate that grounded theory is inductive, repetitive and collaborative, with the intent to generate new theories which may describe or comprehend phenomena. The inductive nature of grounded theory implies that researchers begin by constructing theory when data collection commences, and subsequently move between data collection and theory development (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). Grounded theory spans the scope of individual areas, consequently signifying the development of theoretical concepts in multiple individual areas (Charmaz, 2008; 2017).

The capability of the grounded theory approach, to systematically create notions from data collected, was relevant to this study since the objective was to develop a new model primarily founded on participant experiences. Therefore, the participants for the study were purposively selected to provide insight into their relevant experiences and personal perceptions of entrepreneurship. Their perceptions contributed toward conceptualisation and the construction of a mentoring model grounded in the data compiled. A research study can be a mix of grounded theory, coalesced with the case study approach, and combined with qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Alzaanin, 2020). Grounded theory can be used as a universal technique for evaluation, merged with any form of data compilation, namely, a survey, experiment, or a case study (Goulding, 2002; Alzaanin, 2020). Charmaz (2006; 2017) asserts that grounded theory encompasses the concurrent gathering and evaluation of data. Hence, it affords a researcher the opportunity to produce codes immediately after data collection is initiated (Charmaz, 2017). Since its origin through the work of Glaser and Strauss,

grounded theory enabled researchers to evaluate data from the emergence of the data collection process, to establish associations between concepts and categories (Charmaz, 2006; 2017; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Pan and Lin (2019) concur that the function of grounded theory is to fill the chasm that exists between academic and pragmatic research through the formation of new model development. The inductive underpinning of grounded theory implies that researchers start by examining specific cases, from which they ultimately build on theory (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, it is not uncommon for grounded theorists to alternate between data collection and theory development.

Sbaraini *et al.* (2011) propose that the distinctive rudimentary elements of grounded theory include the following:

- **Openness:** The inductive nature of grounded theory, unlike deductive research, emphasises the shift from the specific to general. This implies that grounded theory is open to various concepts and relationships.
- **Concurrent analysis:** Data analysis occurs concurrently whilst data collection is taking place, unlike in conventional research where data collection is completed before analysis occurs.
- **Continual comparison:** There is a continuous assessment of the previous data collected against the new data collected. The researcher continually moves back and forth between the data.
- **Coding:** Coding cyclically enables the researcher to identify common themes and concepts which ultimately contribute to model development.
- **Theoretical sampling:** This involves the simultaneous progression of data gathering and data evaluation with the objective of generating concepts.
- **Theoretical sensitivity:** This term references the researcher's aptitude to determine crucial data which will contribute to new model development. Theoretical sensitivity is encouraged through the application of an initial literature review, continual comparison and concurrent analysis.
- **Substantive theory development:** Since grounded theory leads to the development of new concepts and specific models, the specific concepts form part of an entirety once the research is concluded (Sbaraini *et al.*, 2011; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Rieger, 2019; Foley *et al.*, 2021).

3.5.1.1 *Grounded theory approaches*

Despite the aims of grounded theory reflecting commonality, theoretical dissonance prevails amongst grounded theory scholars. The three philosophical underpinnings for grounded theory include the following approaches (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Rieger, 2019):

- **Classic (Glaserian) grounded theory:** The classic approach is a conventional technique which discourages the use of prior literature as part of its expansion. It aligns with an objective approach, founded on the positivist paradigm, which prioritises quantitative methodology. The researcher engages with literature at the concluding phase of model development if this approach is adopted in a study.
- **Straussian grounded theory:** Aligned with the interpretivist paradigm, this approach is considered an organised approach to data collection and analysis. Coding techniques (discussed in the next part of this chapter) adopt a rational flow toward the development of a new model. Furthermore, studies based on this approach can pre-engage with literature before data are gathered. This approach is considered a pragmatic approach to a grounded theory study since it is dependent on the way a researcher 'interprets' the data gathered.
- **Constructivist (Charmaz) grounded theory approach:** The constructivist approach is founded on the researcher's affiliation with both the data and the participants of the study. Consequently, the development of theory emphasises a researcher's insight and analysis based on both participant association and participant data. Coding is conducted in a less organised manner in comparison to the Straussian approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Glaser & Strauss, 2017; Rieger, 2019).

The pragmatic Straussian grounded theory approach was adopted for this study since it is congruent with the interpretivist paradigm within which this study is situated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Furthermore, the researcher opted to conduct a preliminary literature review to evaluate the scope of the study for model development. In addition, the Straussian approach afforded the researcher the opportunity to integrate the data collected with the literature reviewed.

3.5.1.2 Grounded theory research design

Table 3.1 summarises a phase-based strategy for the grounded theory research design process, depicting the contribution of the philosophical locus, methodology and the approach adopted (Birks & Mills, 2015). These phases were practically applied to the present research study.

Table 3.1: Strategy for the grounded theory research design phases

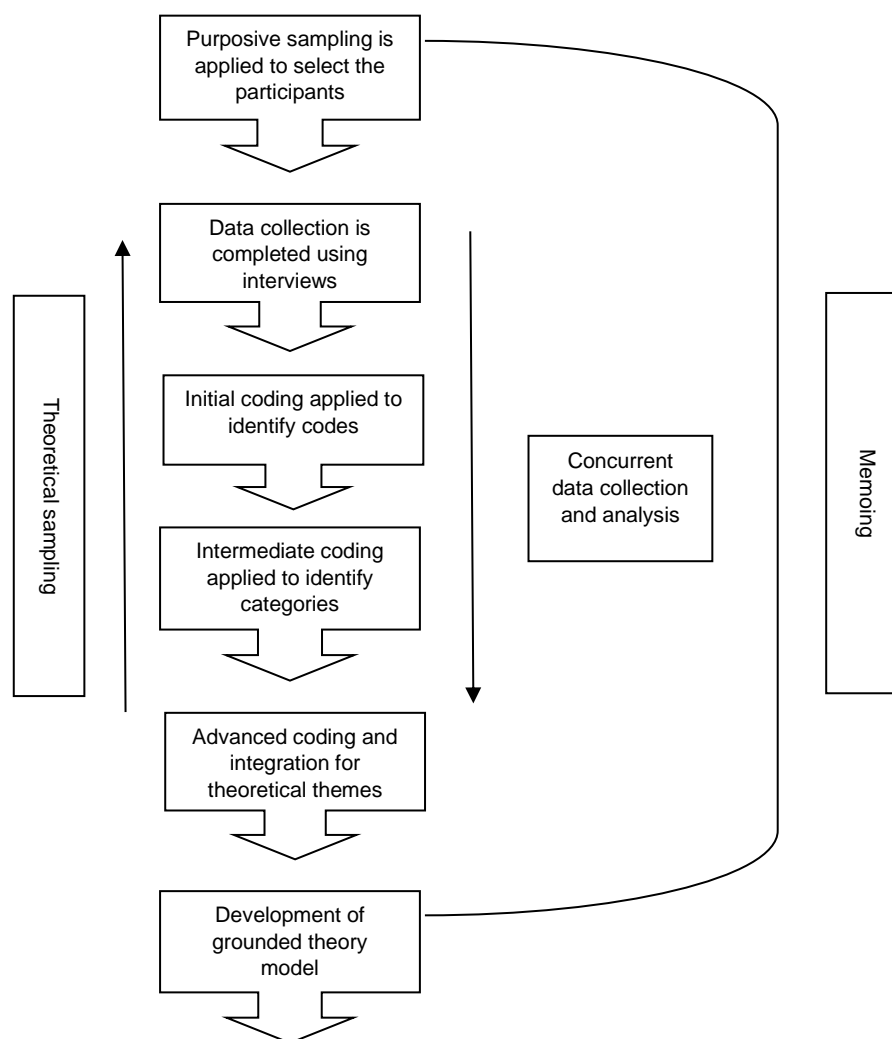
Phase one: Preparation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify a philosophical locus, referencing the paradigm the study is situated in.• Explore the methodological options, referencing the approach for the study.• Plan the research.
Phase two: Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct field implementation and interviews.• Apply grounded theory procedures, such as data analysis and coding.
Phase three: Dissemination
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cultivate a theoretical model based on field analysis, coding and theory incorporation.• Create a dissemination plan for concept-building.• Assess the grounded theory model or concept.• Implement the strategies relative to the findings.

(Source: Adapted from Birks & Mills, 2015)

Researchers can adopt a position of detachment in a study, or a position of recognised presence, through the theoretical principles and the approach embraced (Birk & Mills, 2015). Because the research was situated within the interpretivist paradigm, there was recognised presence in the current study. The qualitative methodology selected for this study impacted the examination of the data. The methodology emphasised the researcher's consideration toward diverse themes. Furthermore, it signalled the researcher to probable organisations and conceptualisations during the course of theoretical construction. Grounded theory is a non-linear all-inclusive process, suggesting that it necessitates a balanced collaboration between theory and data, to regulate the theoretical range of the developing model. Prevailing literature should not be used as the dominant academic backdrop in grounded theory studies (Ramalho *et al.*, 2015). Instead, it should be used for the investigative approaches of the research study (Ramalho *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the literature review precedes data gathering and evaluation because it aids with model development within current literature

(Ramalho *et al.*, 2015). Despite grounded theory’s ability to use numerous sampling methods, most studies originate from purposive sampling. This is trailed by synchronised data collection and analysis over different stages of coding, combined with data examination, theoretical sampling and memoing (Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019). Thus, the method for grounded theory is iterative instead of linear (Tie *et al.*, 2019).

The framework presented in Figure 3.3 is proposed for completing a grounded theory study (Tie *et al.*, 2019):



(Source: Adapted from Tie *et al.*, 2019)

Figure 3.3: Grounded theory framework

Tie *et al.* (2019) posit the following factors to constitute a pragmatic grounded theory framework crucial to the grounded theory phases (Sbaraini *et al.*, 2011; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Tie *et al.*, 2019).

- **Purposive sampling**, which encompasses the process of purposefully selecting participants for the study.
- **Theoretical sampling** is used to recognise and pursue pointers from data evaluation, as the study develops, to advance the iterative process. Saturation is achieved once novel data stops evolving. Data collection and analysis occur simultaneously to permit theoretical sampling (Neuman, 2014).
- **Memo-writing** (also known as memoing) accommodates the researcher's incorporation of new ideas, relationships, and concepts. Memos pertaining to codes are maintained by researchers as they extract the codes. Memoing serves as the transitional phase between code extraction and analysis.
- **Coding** of data occurs through analysis, categories, concepts and themes. Coding is an investigative activity to discover concepts. It constitutes the recognition of codes from the data analysis.

There are different levels of coding with pragmatic Straussian grounded theory:

- **Initial coding:** The function of initial coding is to break down the data to discover resemblances and variations. Coding entails the identification of words or clusters of words.
- **Intermediate coding:** This form of coding converts the initial codes into conceptual ideas permitting philosophy to develop. Data categories become evident during intermediate coding through code associations.
- **Advanced coding:** During advanced coding, also known as selective coding, ideas which emerge from categories become conjectural. Advanced theory is an amalgamation of codes, categories, themes and prevailing literature.
- **Creation of new theory:** Concepts are connected in unified totality during the development of grounded theory. Thus, the trademark of grounded theory is the creation of theory embedded in the data collected by the researcher. Data analysis and interpretation ultimately lead to the development of new theories or models (Sbaraini *et al.*, 2011; Kenny & Fourie, 2015; Moser & Korstjens, 2018; Tie *et al.*, 2019).

The process of data gathering, coding, categorising and theorising from the data is steered by theory as it emerges (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Models are developed during tangible exploration, which is only possible when applying a constant interchange between investigation and data gathering. Hence, the data investigation directs further data gathering (Lawrence & Tar, 2013; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Tie *et al.* (2019) posit that grounded theory characterises a process of analysis and a consequential outcome of that analysis, implying that selective steps can be attuned by the researcher whilst conducting research.

3.5.1.3 Why new model testing is not applicable to grounded theory

The goal of grounded theory methodology is not to develop models with the intention of examining the final proposed philosophy (Suddaby, 2006). Instead, it is to deliver realistic outcomes which can be built upon by subsequent research (Suddaby, 2006; Makri & Neely, 2021). Furthermore, qualitative grounded theory philosophy development is foundationally constructed on the premise that participant experiences are unique and personal. Thus, philosophy development should not be modelled on tests, as is the case with deductive research (Suddaby, 2006; Yin, 2018; Makri & Neely, 2021).

The purpose of grounded theory philosophy development is to use pragmatism to propose philosophy grounded solely in participant versions expressed (Suddaby, 2006). Due to the unique nature of the methodology, which incorporates the repetitive process of data analysis through theoretical sampling, the philosophy that emerges from the data is already exposed to the process of 'testing' numerous times (Suddaby, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2017). Hence, models that emerge from grounded theory do not involve additional testing as is the case with conventional research (Suddaby, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2017).

When model testing is applied to grounded theory philosophy development, it contravenes the fundamental principle of the methodology itself, namely, the advent of theory through repetitive coding (Suddaby, 2006). Therefore, unlike conventional research, grounded theory should identify and describe concepts through complex cohesive coding and remain open to modification or review from future research (Timonen, Foley & Conlon, 2018).

3.5.2 Case study

Case-based research has transformed over time to offer researchers a practical and adaptable approach. This transformation has resulted in incongruity with reference to its technique, description, use and applicability (Starman, 2013; Harrison *et al.*, 2017). The case study approach delves into rigorous analysis of a situation, with the case defined as an individual or business, which is regarded as a level of analysis (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Harrison *et al.*, 2017). Yin (2009; 2018) asserts that the case study research technique facilitates the investigation of universal and significant attributes of experiences. A case study strategy is recurrently applied as a research design since it offers a prospect to achieve an understanding of professional, business and social situations within designated businesses (Parker, 2012). A case study investigates a case in its actual state, with the result subsequently compiled using qualitative methods (Dul & Hak, 2008; Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). Case research is a pragmatic examination to explore a current issue within its actual environment, particularly when the parameters between the object of the study and perspective are not obviously apparent (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). It is an analytical method which is effective for the investigation of intricate problems such as contemporary challenges, topics, or events (Lapan *et al.*, 2012; Yin, 2018). Therefore, a case can comprise incidents, businesses or units (Lapan *et al.*, 2012; Yin, 2018). Case studies are used to emphasise the associations of an entity, including a business or a person, or the associations between the entities, to engender theory that adds to extant research (Mills, Durepos & Wiebe, 2010).

Cases are constrained by interval and activity, such that researchers amass wide-ranging data using a variation of data sources or data collection techniques over a defined timeframe (Creswell, 2009). Ebneyamini and Moghadam (2018) suggest that case studies are invaluable when the researcher is probing 'how' or 'why' issues in business research. There is a propensity to link case studies with qualitative research, which entails observation and unstructured interviewing techniques (Creswell, 2009). This approach is regarded as principally supportive toward the establishment of a thorough examination of a case (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Case studies warrant an important role in business research because they can be effective for evaluating and resolving challenges or for constructing new theory (Ebneyamini &

Moghadam, 2018). A qualitative research study is not restricted to a single case. A study can represent multiple embedded units or cases (Yin, 2018).

Case research is regarded by various authors to be an element of qualitative research; thus, it is either a type, an approach or a scientific method (Starman, 2013). Additionally, case research is a researcher's selection of what to explore, using any strategy, methodology or technique to study a case as the subject. Therefore, the case to be examined is dependent on the research objectives (Starman, 2013).

A single case approach was used in this study, with the emerging retail SME representing the universal case or subject, as is commonly applicable in business and management research (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). The individual SME entrepreneur, who formed part of the study sample of 30 participants, represented an embedded or distinct unit of the emerging retail case. Furthermore, this study applied the case in a subordinate position to the grounded theory methodology. The case served as a representation for emerging retail SMEs and was not bound by rigorous case study methodological operability. Hence, grounded theory formed the overarching strategy of the study based on the retail SME case.

The ultimate goal of a case study is to understand composite events such as business and organisational issues (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). A case study is beneficial in situations where the focus is multifaceted, or an abundance of theory is not prevalent, or when context is imperative for theory development (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). An instrumental case study involves the investigation of a case, such as an individual, specific clusters, a unit or a business, to present understanding about an occurrence or to develop a new theory (Mills *et al.*, 2010; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018). Qualitative research methods support the theoretical foundations of the instrumental case study, in which research participants contribute toward theory development through sharing their experiences (Mills *et al.*, 2010; Harrison *et al.*, 2017). A grounded theory approach can be combined with an instrumental case study approach to delve into issues of organisational interest with the focus of generating new theory (Mills *et al.*, 2010). Despite the present study adopting the blended approach, the instrumental case approach acted as an apparatus, whilst grounded theory was employed as the focal research strategy.

Khan (2014) draws a parallel between the case study approach and grounded theory. The emphasis of grounded theory is to generate theory that is built on data, whilst the emphasis of a case study is to generate a detailed analysis of a case or multiple cases. Lawrence and Tar (2013) assert that a case, in a grounded theory study, is principally appropriate for probing circumstantial factors which represent the principal aim of the study. Moreover, grounded theory is an inductive model development approach that permits the researcher to build a notional account of a specific case (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). Therefore, Arshad *et al.* (2013) promote the strategy of amalgamating grounded theory with case-based studies.

3.6 RESEARCH TIME HORIZON

The cross-sectional design signifies a distinctive form of study design, used to denote events in business and management research, at a single point in time (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). A cross-sectional study is conducted with data that are gathered at a point in time (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A cross-sectional study can incorporate a researcher studying various participants during various stages of the research (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). Thus, a cross-sectional study can apply to an individual case, or various embedded units or cases, at a point in time, unlike a longitudinal case study which investigates changes in a case over a lengthy period (Mills *et al.*, 2010).

Cross-sectional design guarantees comprehensive and complete insight into a case from various viewpoints (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Morse *et al.* (2016) state that the hindrance of a cross-sectional study is that the researcher is unable to identify whether the views of participants evolve over time. However, a longitudinal study is applicable for data collection at various intervals to explore long-term developments (Given, 2008; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The goal of a cross-sectional study is to seek information at a point, predominantly due to time constraints, and not to develop long-term patterns of behaviour (Leavy, 2017).

The current study used a cross-sectional design because the researcher obtained the data from participants once, at a single point, during interviews. Albeit the interviews were conducted on a once-off basis, the researcher ensured optimal participant input, clarity and richness in responses. Furthermore, participant checking was conducted as a form of follow-up to gain further clarity in the event of response uncertainty.

3.7 RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AND PROCEDURES

Research techniques and procedures encompass the manner in which the data are collected and analysed in a study (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Research questions, underpinned by fundamental qualitative research, accentuate the explaining, discovering, or comprehending of experiences, thus necessitating the appropriate methods for data collection (Finfgeld-Connett, 2018).

The sections which follow outline the procedures for data collection and analysis applicable to this study.

3.7.1 Data collection

Data collection in qualitative research incorporates the sampling techniques employed for the population in the study, the data gathering in the form of unstructured or semi-structured interviews, and the procedure for documenting the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Leavy (2017) opines that data collection approaches should be applied because of their capacity to optimally address the research purpose. The components that contributed toward data collection are discussed below.

3.7.1.1 Unit of analysis

A unit or level of analysis is the prime component of measurement or exploration in a study, such as individuals, groups, or societies (Bryman *et al.*, 2011; Lund & Vestol, 2020). The unit of analysis therefore references the entity that is the subject of a study, implying it is subsequently examined through the analysis of the data (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). The unit of analysis for the purpose of this study comprised individuals, in the form of emerging SME entrepreneurs from the retail sector.

3.7.1.2 Population

The population is identified as the entire cluster of individuals or objects from whom data are sought in a study (Wiid & Diggins, 2013; Otzen & Manterola, 2017). Population is delineated as elements that meet the conditions for applicability in a study (Burns & Grove, 2003; Otzen & Manterola, 2017). The sampling frame denotes the collective characteristics of the total individuals for a study based on predetermined criteria (Kothari, 2004). Contextual inclusion signifiers, such as population or

participant situations, are crucial in describing the setting in qualitative research (Kothari, 2004; Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020). The shared characteristics or inclusion criteria of the unit of analysis for the present study included: (1) SME retail entrepreneurs aged between 25 and 60 years based in KwaZulu-Natal, (2) from the formal and informal sectors, (3) with SMEs operational in retail or service businesses for less than three years, (4) limited to an annual turnover of R3 million, and (5) the SMEs were in an emerging state. The unit of analysis may have received prior mentoring exposure. Such settings are used to create coherence with other research settings which could be similar, so that the findings can be translated or applied to other researchers working with SMEs.

3.7.1.3 Sampling approach

The list of individuals that a researcher intends to interact with for the purpose of a study is referenced as the sample (Neuman, 2014). The individuals involved in a study are denoted as the elements of the sample, with the sample acting as a demonstrative subclass of the population (Burns & Grove, 2003; Joseph & Eleojo, 2019).

The two wide-ranging classifications of sampling strategies are probability sampling and non-probability sampling (Leavy, 2017). Probability sampling is grounded on the notion of random choice, which is a technique that guarantees that each element of the population is allocated a recognised chance of selection (Burns & Grove, 2003; Joseph & Eleojo, 2019). Non-probability sampling is not arbitrary, since it is considered biased and purposive due to carefully electing the sample using specific criteria (Burns & Grove, 2003; Joseph & Eleojo, 2019). Non-probability sampling is used when it is impossible to define the full population or when it is challenging to contact the entire population (Burns & Grove, 2003; Joseph & Eleojo, 2019). Non-probability sampling is used in exploratory and qualitative studies (Leavy, 2017). Since the present study was aligned with the qualitative methodology, non-probability sampling was used.

Various non-probability sampling approaches exist, such as accidental sampling, convenience sampling and purposive sampling (Leavy, 2017). Purposive sampling is used when the researcher resolutely chooses elements to include in the sample centred on a list of specific characteristics (Flick, 2009; Sharma, 2017; White *et al.*, 2018). The benefit of this method is that each nominated element matches the

population constraints (Flick, 2009; Sharma, 2017). Cost and schedule issues may influence the selection of non-probability sampling (Thomson, 2011; Sharma, 2017). Neuman (2014) posits that purposive sampling is apposite to hand-picking specific cases that are expressly instructive for the objective of a study. For this study, purposive sampling was used to select entrepreneurs according to the shared characteristics or sampling frame criteria. The inclusion criteria were selected because the sample was geographically accessible to the researcher. The inclusion criteria ensured diversity with respect to the sampling frame. Furthermore, the inclusion criteria enabled the researcher to enhance the validity of the research, contain research costs and abate ethical trepidations. To manage and preclude researcher bias, the researcher ensured that various techniques were employed during participant data collection and analysis. The maximum recommended participant sample size was selected for the study. Participant interviews were recorded, field notes were maintained, and multiple levels of data analysis applied, consistent with grounded theory methodology. The researcher further ensured that the data collection process culminated in rich descriptions of participant interpretations.

3.7.1.4 Sample size

The crucial issue concerning qualitative research, with specific reference to grounded theory, is to produce adequate data to establish concepts, classifications and themes (Thomson, 2011). A suitable sample size for a qualitative study is one that sufficiently answers the research question (Thomson, 2011). For basic or comprehensive research, this may be single numbers, whereas for multifaceted research larger samples and an assortment of sampling methods may be obligatory (Burns & Grove, 2003; Ahmad & Halim, 2017; Majid, 2018). A range of factors determines the sampling method selected, such as cost, scheduling and resource constraints (Flick, 2009).

Guest, Bunce & Johnson (2006) suggest that a sample size of 12 is appropriate to ensure saturation for individual or group consultations in qualitative research. Thomson (2011) advocates an average sample size of 25, stating that the sample size for grounded theory ultimately depends on attaining data saturation. However, Flick (2009; 2018) suggests that a sample size of 30 would support grounded theory coding, progression, saturation and the emergence of concepts. Khan (2014) argues that sample size is ultimately dependant on the specific unit of analysis used in a grounded

theory study. A sample size of 15-30 interviews is suggested for grounded theory research incorporating a single case (Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018).

The sample size for this study comprised 30 entrepreneurs. The maximum suggested sample size was selected to ensure that theoretical sampling, together with data saturation, was accomplished. The sample elements were based in the KwaZulu-Natal province. Exposure to the sample was achieved through online business forums. The sample effectiveness in qualitative research progresses as data are collected (Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, it is the value of the sample, instead of the magnitude, which should form the basis of principal focus (Burns & Grove, 2003; Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018).

3.7.1.5 Data collection instrument

Qualitative researchers are prone to deliver descriptive elements when concluding the findings of a study (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). Researchers are intent on providing clarity, such that the magnitude to which qualitative researchers ask 'why?' questions is often not appreciated (Bryman *et al.*, 2011). The data collection methods that may be applied to qualitative grounded theory case exploration include questionnaires, interviews, documented records, observations and focus groups (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Studies that integrate the grounded theory approach fundamentally stride in the direction of abstract philosophy and theory construction, instead of pragmatic theory-testing (Khan, 2014). Roman, Osinski and Erdmann (2017) advocate that data collection, in the form of interviews, and evaluation can be conducted in rotating structures for grounded theory. The researcher can sub-divide the sample elements into stages, clusters or classes, until the point of theoretical saturation is reached (Roman *et al.*, 2017).

Case study research encourages the use of various methods or sources of data collection for consolidation (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Despite the case being employed as a secondary research strategy mechanism for the current study, each preceding interview in this study served as a data source which was consolidated with new data during data analysis. Additionally, consistent with grounded theory research, memos and field notes were constantly referenced throughout the process. A detailed description of the interview instrument follows.

3.7.1.6 Interviews

The interview, as an instrument of data collection, is used for descriptive exploration in research (Flick, 2009; 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The objective of interviews is to accumulate opinions, views and attitudes concerning previous, current or forthcoming realities, with an emphasis on information that cannot be seen (Blessing & Chakrabarty, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018; Flick, 2018). Interviews afford a structure within which participants can verbalise their individual experiences in their substrata (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thus, interviews allow for profound delving into the dialogue and dynamics amongst people and entities (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

Interviews are characteristically linked with qualitative interpretivist research using small intentionally nominated purposive samples (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). Qualitative interviews provide an opportunity to probe circumstantial connotations and interpretations using unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Flick, 2009; 2018). Furthermore, the interview warrants follow-up communication to acquire extended data and transparency (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018). An interview permits greater depth in comparison to other methods of collecting data (Leavy, 2017).

3.7.1.6.1 Semi-structured interview instrument rationale

Various types of interview techniques exist. Structured interviews include prearranged closed questions, whilst semi-structured interviews comprise questions that afford the prospect for open-ended conversations (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Unstructured interviews contain no prearranged questions (Saunders *et al.*, 2009; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Since semi-structured interviews allow for input from participants concerning their attitudes and opinions, their responses contribute toward the creation of new concepts and theories (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

Semi-structured interviews contain fundamental questions that aid in outlining the expanses to be explored (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). They permit the researcher to deviate to acquire responses with more depth, whereas unstructured interviews do not mirror predetermined notions and are accomplished with little administration (Gill

et al., 2008; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). Data gathering using semi-structured in-depth interviews is apt for exploratory qualitative grounded theory research (Khan, 2014; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The nature of a grounded theory interview should be concentrated, comprising semi-structured dedicated questions that should permit the participant to generate abundant data (Charmaz, 2006; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Therefore, this study adopted semi-structured interviews for each sample element to facilitate theory development through an interpretation of experiences.

Semi-structured interviews are characterised by the following factors: (1) they offer an adaptable method for data collection, (2) they can be applied on a personal or collective level, (3) they enable research participants to drive the study, (4) they facilitate intense discovery of data, and (5) they are effective in qualitative research since they initiate unique responses (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The disadvantage of the instrument is that it can create participant barriers during the research process if participants are hesitant to openly share information (Cohen *et al.*, 2018). In addition, interviews can present impediments when there is a lack of precision concerning the application of the technique or a lack of substance in discussion (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009; Queiros, Faria & Almeida, 2017). Leading follow-on questions are effective during the interview process to circumvent possible barriers (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

The research questions and objectives for the present study were aligned with the interview instrument during instrument design, to enable the researcher to accomplish the study objectives. Participants were afforded the opportunity to describe their entrepreneurial experiences when asked content-related questions. Probes were used by the researcher to delve further into focal areas during the interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The instrument is attached in this study as Appendix B.

3.7.1.7 Pilot study

A pilot study confirms that the phrasing of the interview is comprehensible, and it creates an opportunity to examine participants' responses to the instrument (Ketchen & Bergh, 2006; Lowe, 2019). It is prudent to undertake an introductory evaluation in the form of a pilot study, as it confirms that the instrument is demonstrative and significant to participants (Kothari, 2004; Lowe, 2019). A pilot study is intended to recognise obscurities, clarify the phrasing of interviews, and allow for prompt

uncovering of oversights and obligatory adjustments (Noor, 2008; Lowe, 2019). The function of a pilot study is to measure the practicality of the study prior to the implementation of a full-scale study (Morin, 2013; Lowe, 2019). The absence of a pilot study may collapse the entire effort. A pilot study is an artificial implementation of the principal interview, since it provides the researcher with the opportunity to tweak the instrument to maximise data collection, lending to a more effective study (Hall, 2008; Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2018).

In order to validate that participants identified the vocabulary and perspective of questions posed during the interviews, the researcher considered it vital to execute a pilot study for the present study. A pilot study was conducted with an initial sample of three participants to be representative of the sample. The pilot study was executed during the first week of September 2021 in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The instrument was initially overseen through supervision. Once ethical clearance was received, the responses of the participants were used as a gauge of the effectiveness of the research instrument. No enhancement to the face-value of the instrument was required. The researcher noted that the instrument sufficed for the collection of the data for research purposes. The pilot data were used to begin the process of transcription and initial coding.

3.7.1.8 Data collection process

The data collection phase incorporates demarcating the confines of the study, gathering data through semi-structured or unstructured interviews, and stipulating the procedure for recording the data (Creswell, 2009; Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Model development is resultant from data that are methodically collected and scrutinised during the research progression in grounded theory (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Birks *et al.*, 2019). Thus, data collection, data examination and subsequent model development are in support of each other (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Birks *et al.*, 2019). A researcher may develop a model by implementing various phases of data collection during a cross-sectional study (Jonker & Pennink, 2010; Birks *et al.*, 2019).

3.7.1.9 Application of the instrument in grounded theory

Personal interviews provide the best comparative response rates and allow for extensive probing of issues (Neuman, 2014). The semi-structured interview enables a

descriptive narration of participant experiences inspired by prepared questions (Flick, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The focal data should be generated autonomously by participants with no preliminary interviewer interference. Hence, the interviewer should principally assume the position of an alert listener and engage through signs and short statements (Flick, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018). The interviewer's engagement would be more participatory in the follow-up (Flick, 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

Selected issues should be considered with reference to data collection for grounded theory studies. Memos should be maintained to record notional concepts as they develop. Theory and concepts should frequently be evaluated and assimilated until the point of saturation is attained (Jonker & Pennink, 2010). Theoretical sampling should be applied, with the researcher subsequently collecting data as philosophy materialises (Khan, 2014). Theoretical sampling and comparison echo recurring practices that are fluid (Lawrence & Tar, 2013). To attain the research objectives, researchers should use a phased approach for gathering data, and thereafter use an iterative approach to data analysis until saturation is achieved (Khan, 2014). The data collection for the present study was steered by the theoretical sampling norm of grounded theory, namely, that sampling should occur on a foundation of ideas that provide theoretical significance to philosophy or a new model.

3.7.1.10 Data collection logistics for the present study

The researcher served as the principal interviewer for data gathering. Interviews were prearranged with participants at their convenience. The data collection for the study occurred over a period of three weeks, starting in the final week of September 2021, until mid-October 2021. The data collection encompassed 30 to 40-minute-long interviews conducted individually on a face-to-face basis with participants. Interviews were conducted at convenient locations in Durban, such as offices and meeting venues. Interviews were pre-arranged by the researcher with participants. Despite operating their businesses across cities in the province, Durban was selected by the participants as the convenient meeting location.

Once initial contact was made, the researcher scheduled meetings with participants to notify them of the intended study and meeting locations. Participants were notified that interviews would be recorded, and memos maintained during the data collection

process. Follow-up interviews were scheduled where necessary. Because interviews were conducted during the pandemic national lockdown level, COVID-19 protocols were strictly adhered to. A telephonic pre-assessment was conducted with each participant, prior to the interview, to ensure that neither the researcher nor the participant would expose each other to any form of health risk. Social distancing was respected, sanitiser was made available by the researcher, and masks were used during the interview process to ensure the safety of participants and the researcher.

Additionally, the researcher maintained a narrative register of the study participants, meeting venues and additional data deemed necessary at the time. The register focused on documenting meeting dates, times, venues and demographic data pertinent to the participants. Field memos and reflective records were maintained during interviews. The memos and records comprised an informal insight into participants' reactions, and the researcher's interpretation of the interviews, to support how the sessions were conducted with participants (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.1.11 Data recording

Audio recordings, although initially intrusive for participants, serve as an effective form of transcription (Lapan *et al.*, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2016). Recordings are valuable resources in research, provided that the researcher acquired consent to record, received institutional ethics approval, and gained the trust of participants (Lapan *et al.*, 2012; Taylor *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the capability to use audio recordings is deemed an outstanding resource for data collection and analysis (Mills *et al.*, 2010; Busetto *et al.*, 2020).

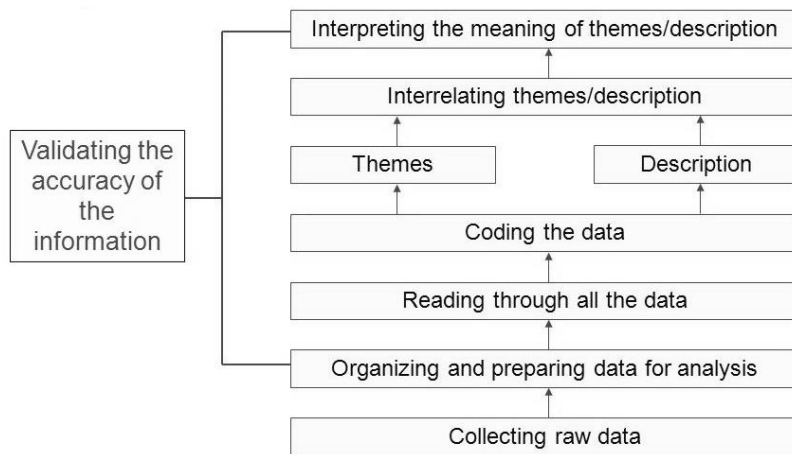
Interviews conducted with participants were audio recorded for this study. A set of field notes and memos was maintained to support the audio recordings. Permission was received from participants prior to the interviews. The interviews served as the source of data transcription. The transcribed interviews were distributed on a confidential basis, by means of email, for appraisal by each participant. As a form of follow-up, participants were invited to supplement further information after appraisal. Minimal modifications were applied to the transcripts.

3.7.2 Data analysis and interpretation

The method of data analysis for qualitative research entails the breaking down of text data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It involves organising data for scrutiny, conducting diverse evaluations, and moving toward detailed description of the data (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative data analysis involves engagement with the particulars and details of the data to determine significant categories, dimensions and interrelationships (Gill *et al.*, 2008; Moser & Korstjens, 2018).

3.7.2.1 Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis for a generic qualitative study comprises the steps depicted in Figure 3.4 (adapted from Creswell, 2009; 2014):



(Source: Adapted from Creswell, 2009; 2014)

Figure 3.4: Data analysis process

The steps for data analysis typically apply as described in Table 3.2 (Creswell, 2014):

Table 3.2: Data analysis process

Step	Description
1. <i>Collect raw data</i>	Raw data is collected for the study using interviews.
2. <i>Organise and prepare the data for analysis</i>	This step comprises transcribing the raw data using audio recordings, hand-written notes and field journals.
3. <i>Read through the data</i>	This step involves obtaining an overall impression of the data and focusing on its implication. The step entails ascertaining the profoundness, trustworthiness and potential value of the data (Creswell, 2014). This can be achieved by making notes and

Step	Description
	maintaining journals. 'Memoing' in grounded theory is the creation of insightful notes about the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Bryant, 2017).
4. <i>Code the data</i>	Coding is the analysis of text in pursuit of a notion or concept (Bryant, 2017). It involves segmenting text into groups and classing the categories with a concept (Creswell, 2014). Coding may be done line-by-line, selectively or in open form (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Bryant, 2017).
5. <i>Themes and description</i>	Codes are used to create categories or central themes. The description comprises a thorough interpretation of information about individuals (Birks <i>et al.</i> , 2019). Researchers use codes to produce approximately five to seven themes or categories (Creswell, 2014).
6. <i>Interrelate the themes/ description</i>	The widespread method for interrelating themes is to provide a descriptive account to deliver the findings of the study. This takes the form of a comprehensive interrelated narrative of the themes. Qualitative researchers may include diagrams or tables in the discussion (Creswell, 2014; Flick, 2018).
7. <i>Interpret the meaning of the themes/ description</i>	Interpretation involves three major areas, namely, a description of the relationships identified, a consideration for peripheral information, and a consideration of pertinent elements to circumvent incorrect interpretation (Ebneyamini & Moghadam, 2018). Qualitative analysis or interpretation is facilitated by means of software, such as Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT) and ATLAS.ti.

(Adapted from Creswell, 2009; 2014)

3.7.2.2 Grounded theory data analysis combined with qualitative data analysis

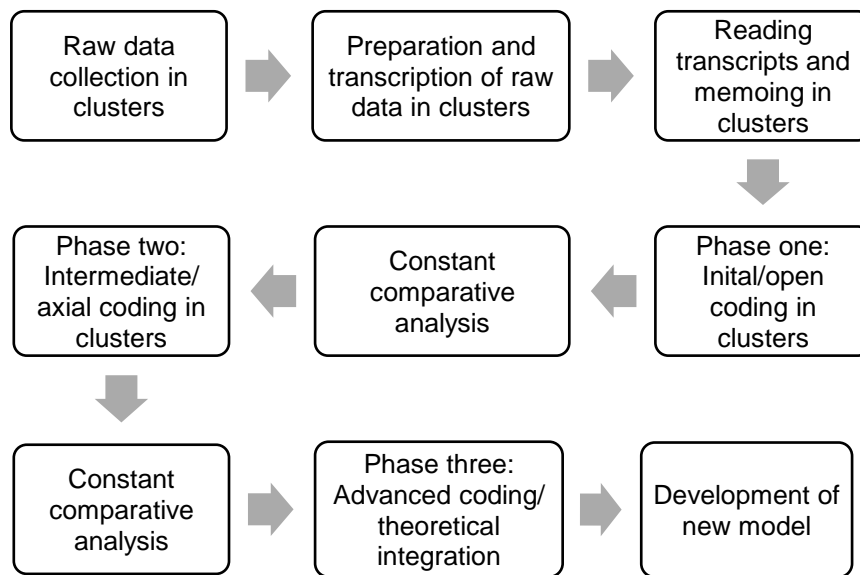
Whilst the standard method of coding discussed in Table 3.2 applied to this study, the data analysis process for grounded theory differed to an extent. Roman *et al.* (2017) posit that data analysis for a grounded theory study should begin once interviewing is initiated and should continue between interviews. Coding assembles categories to create concepts from which themes are generated (Roman *et al.*, 2017).

Consequently, by analysing categories and concepts, new models are generated (Roman *et al.*, 2017).

Interview transcriptions should be coded in three phases, namely, open coding, axial coding, and theoretical integration and advanced coding, as follows (Nubold *et al.*, 2017):

- **Phase one (open coding):** This form of coding refers to data that is thoroughly inspected and clustered into codes, usually on a paragraph basis, connected to more data, and later clustered into categories (Nubold *et al.*, 2017). Pan and Lin (2019) suggest that the use of software be applied to develop a set of initial codes from transcripts.
- **Phase two (axial coding):** Axial coding recognises associations and patterns amongst concepts to produce main and subgroups of codes (Nubold *et al.*, 2017). Axial coding is described as the connection between discovering and creating categories. Axial coding also creates relations between contexts and structures (Pan & Lin, 2019). Initial codes are consolidated into a functional number of categories (Pan & Lin, 2019).
- **Phase three (theoretical integration):** Theoretical integration involves the creation of core categories to drive theory development and model creation. A core category encompasses codes and sub-categories to generate theory in a consolidative manner (Nubold *et al.*, 2017).

This research study adopted all three forms of coding to facilitate theory generation and model development. In essence, the present study combined generic qualitative data analysis with grounded theory analysis (Figure 3.5). Coding was completed using clusters of three transcripts per cycle to allow for codes to emerge. Continuous comparison was applied to each cycle. The study also applied the use of memos to record the outcomes of inquiry.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 3.5: Qualitative grounded theory data analysis overview

Memos enabled the researcher to methodically understand the data, codes and relationships (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Bryant, 2017). Organising memos aids the theoretical incorporation of categories and usually commences with a review of each memo into categories or codes (Bryant, 2017). Diagrams were applied to identify the associations between systematic ideas and to generate theoretical links between codes and categories (Charmaz, 2014; Taylor *et al.*, 2016). The codes and diagrams were extracted with the aid of computer software such Microsoft Excel and ATLAS.ti.

3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative trustworthiness is applied by researchers to warrant the pertinent administration of data by: (1) using precise wide-ranging data, (2) scrutinising interview records, (3) ensuring proper data coding, and (4) endorsing code consistency (Creswell, 2014). Korstjens and Moser (2018) postulate that trustworthiness or credibility in qualitative research is achieved using various methods.

3.8.1 Credibility

Credibility is acknowledged when the researcher interprets the data with precision after protracted engagement with the data (Saldaña, 2011; Johnson *et al.*, 2020). Triangulation involves the assessment of numerous bases of data to construct thematic extraction. Moreover, when qualitative themes are endorsed by utilising various sources of data, it adds to the legitimacy of a research study (Creswell, 2014).

Intense scrutiny of data supplements triangulation, with researcher self-consideration applied to preclude bias (Creswell, 2014). Credibility implies that veracity can be sited on the findings of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

In the case of the present study, credibility was achieved using triangulation, which encapsulated the combination of data collection bases. This included interviews, the maintenance of field notes, the maintenance of a register, the completion of transcripts, participant checking for clarification of transcripts and the maintenance of memos. The application of data triangulation enabled the researcher to collect data from different entrepreneurs or sources at different times, ensuring space triangulation. The researcher ensured that interviews were conducted to a point where data saturation was achieved. Recording transcripts and memos were compared to verify the authenticity of responses. Hence, triangulation was implemented from the perspective of different data analysis methods. Feedback was requested from the participants to clarify the credibility of the interpretation during the data analysis stage.

The second method of ensuring credibility was through the preservation of a log of work completed, in the form of a reflexive journal. The third method was through the application of qualitative data analytics. The adoption of grounded theory ensured that data were scrutinised under review multiple times as the codes emerged from the outset. Additionally, the researcher enlisted the services of an accredited external qualitative ATLAS.ti research consultant. The external consultant provided input and guidance pertaining to the methodology and data analysis process. The independent contribution provided by the external consultant ensured that the analysis was consistent with the methodology selected for the study.

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability involves an appraisal of the findings to validate uniformity and ensure the practicality of simulating a study for further research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Yin, 2018). Dependability was supported by means of an audit trail which included preserving records, recordings and summaries. Thus, the documentation was maintained in a logical manner. In addition, the researcher preserved a range of records for the study. Records included the interview transcripts on ATLAS.ti, the files exported from ATLAS.ti to Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to consolidate participant

information, memos, a log of the work completed, and participant quotations extracted from the interviews for inclusion in the findings chapter.

3.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that the data and findings are not fabrications narrated by the researcher, but visibly consequential of data gathering (Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Johnson *et al.*, 2020). Confirmability was achieved through the removal of researcher bias and prejudice in the interpretation of the data. Furthermore, record-keeping of transcripts was effectively managed by the researcher. Coding accuracy was applied through different levels of coding. The researcher did not have any previous affiliation to the participants that may have informed predisposition on the research study. Additionally, the iterative nature of grounded theory ensured that the data were scrutinised multiple times for the extrapolation of themes. The presentation of the processes adopted in the analysis of the data further ensured confirmability.

3.8.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to whether the outcomes may apply external to the study situation. It refers to the ability to apply the findings to other participants, in other scenarios, in a generalised manner (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Transferability was ensured through the application of detailed descriptions of diverse participants, their SMEs and their research findings. Moreover, the researcher ensured richness of the data during interviews by allowing participants to share their detailed experiences. The researcher outlined the delimitations of the study which can be adapted for future transferability. As notions in grounded theory progress toward a theoretical direction, the resultant philosophy extends its pertinence to diversity situations, and not only to cases restricted to the study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Consequently, it is possible for the model developed in the present study to be transferred to further settings.

3.8.5 Authenticity

A study must project a constructive effect on its population, either through contribution, recommendation, or an effect on research entities (Johnson & Rasulova, 2016). To achieve authenticity in a study, the researcher must candidly depict precise perceptions of the participants. Authenticity or truth was achieved through space

triangulation and fairness implemented throughout the research process, ensuring the absence of research bias. Data were consolidated from various sources to authenticate the study. These sources comprised:

- Interviews conducted with the participants.
- Memos and field notes maintained by the researcher.
- A narrative register compiled during the data collection process.

The connotation of the data analysed was interpreted through aggregation with the initial literature reviewed. The model consequently emerged from integration. Participants were encouraged to access the new model on completion of the study to leverage its benefit in their practical settings.

3.9 ETHICS IN RESEARCH

Ethics is defined as the rightfulness of activities (Neuman, 2014). In essence, it is a holistic moral practice which is reliant on the veracity and principles of the researcher (Creswell, 2014). Ethical comportment is supported by a researcher who has a moral responsibility to remain principled in every research situation (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). Scientific misdemeanour transpires when a researcher misrepresents or alters data, or misrepresents the data gathering procedures, or plagiarises the effort of others without acknowledging the source (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2014). Ethics applications should incorporate the questions to be posed to participants in a research study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). In the case of the present study, the researcher successfully applied for ethical clearance, with the institution's ethics review board, prior to the commencement of data collection (Appendix A). A list of potential questions was submitted to the institution at the time of the ethics approval application. The researcher ensured that credit was given to all sources where reference material was consulted for literature purposes. Participants were notified about the study and subsequently furnished informed consent forms to participate in the study.

Lapan *et al.* (2012) opine the following factors to constitute researcher ethics:

Researcher capability: This references the capacity of a researcher to show compassion toward social, cultural, and other issues (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). In the case

of this study, the researcher ensured compassion and empathy toward the research participants during the interview process. The researcher appreciated and respected the norms of each participant.

Informed consent: Informed consent involves participants' acknowledgement of the research process, and their eagerness to partake on their own accord, unreservedly and willingly (Lapan *et al.*, 2012). The researcher ensured that informed consent forms were distributed to each participant and explained prior to the scheduled interviews. The informed consent forms included willingness by the participants to have the interviews recorded. The researcher ensured that participants were adequately briefed concerning the purpose of the research, including the benefits and risks of participation. An information letter was provided to participants prior to the commencement of the study. The letter outlined the study information and assured participants of privacy and confidentiality during the interviews. Participants were verbally briefed to provide clarity on any additional concerns.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality is an ethical obligation on the part of the researcher to ensure that the findings are conveyed in a manner that will not be connected to a specific participant (Lapan *et al.*, 2014). The researcher ensured that the identity of each participant was not revealed in the findings and discussion section of the study. Personal identifiers were removed during reporting. Identifiers were replaced with pseudonyms. A pseudonym is a fabricated designation that a researcher allots during the data managing and reporting phases, to obscure the identity of a participant (Lapan *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, confidentiality was assured through the information letter distributed to participants.

Storage of confidential data: An assurance was provided to participants that data collected during the study would be treated with utmost confidentiality. The data collected will be maintained in a secure electronic repository, accessible only to the researcher, for a period of five years. Thereafter, all data are to be destroyed.

3.10 DELINEATION OF THE STUDY

This study was concluded with emerging formal and informal retail SME entrepreneurs who operated within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The SMEs were operational for

less than three years, with an annual turnover under R3 million. The participants were aged between 25 and 60 years.

3.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter discoursed the research design applied to the present study. The study practically adopted the Saunders research onion to decode the qualitative methodology implemented. The chapter presented the rationale for choosing the grounded theory strategy as the basis for the study. The chapter presented the researcher's chosen research philosophy and elucidated the choice of qualitative research. Grounded theory, combined with the case study approach, was explored and applied to the study. The chapter provided a narrative of the data collection procedures utilised in the form of the interview instrument (Appendix B). Logistical issues pertinent to the process of data collection were discussed. Data analysis methods, combining qualitative and grounded theory analyses, were presented. These methods encompassed initial, intermediate and advanced coding for theory development. In addition, ethical issues relating to the study were addressed. The next chapter presents the findings and interpretations that emerged from the data analysis after the completion of participant interviews. Consequently, the next chapter culminates in the development and presentation of the proposed mentoring model.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 encapsulated the research methodology employed in the present study. Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the findings of the study. This chapter aimed to demonstrate the findings in a manner that enabled the researcher to answer the research questions appropriately, and to draw sufficient information from the findings to develop a mentoring model for emerging retail entrepreneurs. Data were collected from the research participants in the form of semi-structured interviews. Hence, the unit of analysis for the study was the individual emerging SME entrepreneur. Before the implementation of data collection, a pilot study was conducted using three participants to gauge the effectiveness of the research instrument. The instrument was not modified after the pilot study, as it proved satisfactory from an operational and data collection perspective. The interviews were conducted in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal on an individual basis at mutually selected venues. Durban was selected as the mutual meeting location by participants, even though they operated their businesses across the province.

The chapter begins by describing the demographic profile of the research participants, and the business profile of the SMEs, to provide insight and background information. The research findings are then presented. A discussion of the main findings is incorporated. The study used the grounded theory approach as the backbone for the data collection and analysis processes.

The chapter is presented in two parts. Part A comprises the reporting and interpretation of the findings, whilst Part B presents the proposed model based on the findings of the study. Participant and SME profiles precede Part A. Figure 4.1 offers an overview of the presentation of the chapter.

Additionally, the chapter presents the analysis of the data, as it emerged after applying the practices of coding, classifying, categorising, memoing and constant comparative analysis, aligned with the grounded theory strategy. The data analysed illustrated the participants' versions of their entrepreneurial experiences.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS
4.1 Introduction
4.2. Profile of participants
4.3 Profile of SMEs
Part A: Presentation, discussion, and interpretation of findings
4.4 Data analysis overview
4.5 Research question 1: How can mentoring support address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Theme 1: Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship •Theme 2: Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship
4.6 Research question 2: What support, in the form of business competencies, is needed by retail entrepreneurs through mentoring, to strengthen their ability to manage their ventures effectively?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Theme 3: Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship
4.7 Research question 3: How will mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial success?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Theme 4: Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring •Theme 5: Mentor role in entrepreneurial success •Theme 6: Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success •Theme 7: Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success •Theme 8: Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success
Part B: Proposed mentoring model
4.8 Main research question and research question 4
4.9 Presentation of the new model: Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model
4.10 Conclusion

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.1: Presentation of the findings chapter

4.2 PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the research study comprised various age groups, from different backgrounds, and varied spheres of business in the retail sector, per the sampling frame applied. The researcher engaged with the participants at mutually convenient venues and times to conduct the interviews. The interviews lasted an average of 30 to 40 minutes. Participant interviews were transcribed. The transcriptions formed the basis of extracting the participant profiles.

4.2.1 Demographic information of participants

The sample used in the study consisted of 30 entrepreneurs. Participants comprised emerging entrepreneurs from the retail sector based in Kwazulu-Natal. Participants were unreservedly willing to share their demographic information, such as age and educational background, with the researcher.

4.2.1.1 Gender

The study involved a combination of male and female entrepreneurs, although the dominant gender was female. Table 4.1 depicts the participants by gender.

Table 4.1: Research participants by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Female participants	26	87%
Male participants	4	13%

(Source: Researcher's own)

4.2.1.2 Age

The participants were aged between 25 and 60 years. Table 4.2 demonstrates a breakdown of participants according to age groups.

Table 4.2: Participants by age group

Age group	Frequency	Percentage
25-39	22	73%
40-60	8	27%

(Source: Researcher's own)

4.2.1.3 Education

The educational background of participants varied. However, most participants possessed either secondary education, tertiary education or vocational training in their respective spheres. Vocational training included training for skill sets such as beauty and fitness. Table 4.3 illustrates the educational background of participants.

Table 4.3: Participants by educational background

Education	Frequency	Percentage
Secondary education	11	37%
Tertiary education (undergraduate)	10	33%
Vocational training	9	30%

(Source: Researcher's own)

4.3 PROFILE OF SMEs

This section outlines the business structure, sphere, and nature of the SMEs which formed part of the study.

4.3.1 Business structure and sphere

The research participants operated retail SMEs that formed part of both the formal and informal sectors, ranging from a variety of business spheres. SMEs that formed part of the formal sector were those that were formally registered in South Africa by the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) government agency, whilst SMEs in the informal sector were not legally registered. Table 4.4 reflects the registration status of the SMEs and the retail sphere into which each SME was categorised.

Table 4.4: SME by structure and sphere

Business structure and sphere	Number of SMEs
<i>Formally registered businesses per sphere:</i>	<i>Total 26 (87%):</i>
Beauty and fitness	6
Cleaning	1
Clothing and fashion	6
Event management	3
Florist	1
Food	1

Business structure and sphere	Number of SMEs
Home décor	1
Information technology	3
Marketing	1
Recruitment	1
Textile	1
Travel and accommodation	1
<i>Informal businesses (not registered) per sphere:</i>	<i>Total 4 (13%):</i>
Beauty and fitness	2
Food	1
Marketing	1

(Source: Researcher's own)

4.3.2 Employees

Most formally registered SMEs employed between one and ten employees, whilst most informal SMEs comprised entrepreneurs who operated on an individual basis, without any employees.

4.3.3 Business age

Most formally registered SMEs were operational between two and three years, whereas the majority of informal SMEs had been in operation for under a year.

4.3.4 Business platform

Most entrepreneurs indicated that they operated their businesses from formal business premises. A few entrepreneurs operated from home-based offices to curtail costs. A common factor amongst most entrepreneurs was that they envisaged operating on both offline and online platforms in the future, irrespective of whether they operated from formal premises or home offices. Some entrepreneurs indicated that they operated on dual (offline and online) platforms to the advantage of the business.

4.3.5 Insights into entrepreneurship ventures

Participants provided an array of explanations for venturing into entrepreneurship. Motivations for delving into entrepreneurship included a lack of career prospects in a full-time job, dissatisfaction with a previous position, dissatisfaction with reporting lines

in a previous position, motherhood, and the subsequent yearning to operate a home-based business. Additional reasons included the need to supplement income streams, the independence of self-employment, retrenchment and health-related issues. Selected verbatim responses from participants, represented by pseudonyms throughout this study, included:

Anita: *With little kids at home, I started off the business from a spare room at home.*

Brenda: *What started off as an effort to earn some extra income and help with school fees, today has become a flourishing business for me.*

Sarah: *I spent the first few years working but it did not pay much, and I became so unhappy. I then got into the beauty and fitness industry.*

Wendy: *I worked for a small business for a couple of years. Then, after getting frustrated with no growth, and not being able to find a job, I knew I had to take the leap.*

PART A: PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents a description of the findings in the case of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs. Research participants were forthright in their responses. Most participants embraced the scope of the study from the outset. Participants expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of using a future mentor to guide SME venture sustainability.

The narrative that surfaced during interviews was that mentoring was not a priority at the outset when embarking on their ventures. However, most participants acknowledged that their perception of mentoring was skewed and shared positive sentiments toward the prospect of using a business mentor post-interview. In addition, participants expressed a keen desire to make their business ventures successful and sustainable.

The ATLAS.ti word cloud (Figure 4.2) generated holistically from all interviews reflects the willingness of participants to discuss their business ventures. In addition, it emphasises the focal point of the interviews, namely, SMEs and the issues around business sustainability.

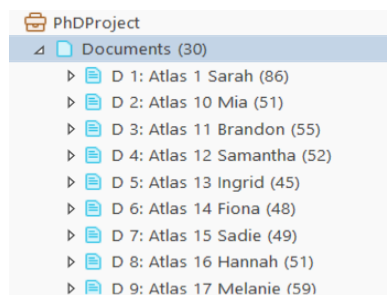


(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

Figure 4.2: Word cloud of participant interviews

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS OVERVIEW

Data collected during the study were analysed using the ATLAS.ti software. The interview transcripts were uploaded as individual files, as part of the PhD project, and data were subsequently examined. Figure 4.3 provides an image segment of the PhD project created on ATLAS.ti, which demonstrates individual participant interview files using pseudonyms. The number after each name displays the codes extracted per transcript.



(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

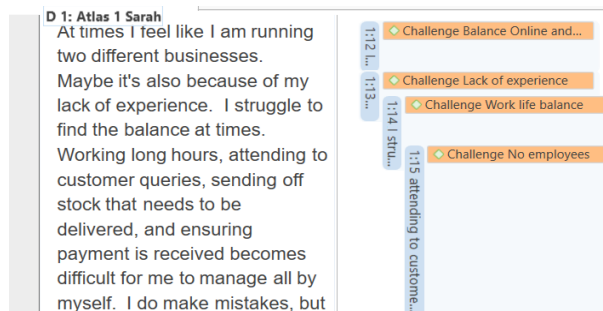
Figure 4.3: Transcript files created on ATLAS.ti

Open coding was applied to develop an initial list of codes. The researcher used a phased approach whereby interviews were coded iteratively, in clusters of three, to allow for the code list to emerge. Consequent codes were then added, consistent with iterative grounded theory application of theoretical sampling.

4.4.1 Initial and intermediate grounded theory coding: emergence of codes and code groups

Phase one and two of coding for grounded theory, namely, initial (open) and intermediate (axial) coding, resulted in the identification of codes, the development of code categories, and the subsequent emergence of themes. Figure 4.4 provides an

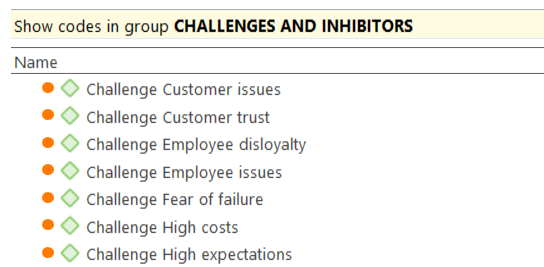
image sample of how the researcher coded a transcript file on ATLAS.ti during initial coding. The researcher codes appear on the right side of the image.



(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

Figure 4.4: Sample of transcript file coding

Upon completion of the interviews and coding in clusters of three, and the application of continuous comparison, the researcher compiled a list of 131 initial codes from the transcripts using open coding. Furthermore, previous transcript codes were supplemented as new interviews were completed. Figure 4.5 provides an image of selected codes that emerged from the code list during data analysis.

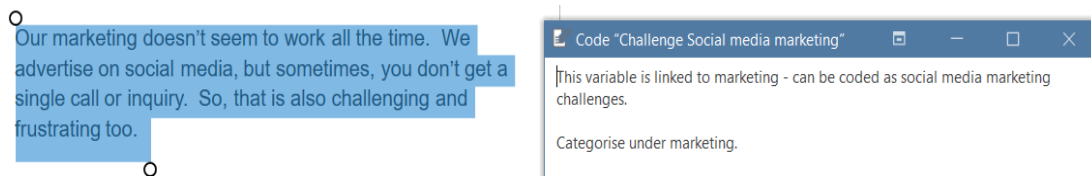


(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

Figure 4.5: Sample code list for entrepreneurial challenges

Memoing aided the researcher with the development of codes. Key words and codes were documented using memoing to add perspective to the analysis. After the completion of open coding in an iterative manner, the researcher categorised the codes into various code categories. Memoing was again used to classify and refine the codes into their respective code categories. A list of 32 code categories emerged. The codes and code categories were used to extract the major themes. The emergence of codes, categories and themes encompassed the initial and intermediate phases of grounded theory coding. In addition to memos, comments were utilised to enable the researcher to identify codes and categories. An image example (Figure 4.6) taken from ATLAS.ti reflects how the researcher started the process of coding by incorporating ATLAS.ti comments. The image reflects the response from participant

Vanessa, highlighted on the left, and the comment created by the researcher on the right, pertinent to the appropriate code.



(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

Figure 4.6: Sample participant interview text and researcher comment

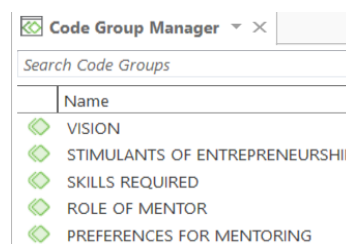
The researcher adopted the method illustrated in Table 4.5 to code and categorise the comment reflected in Figure 4.6.

Table 4.5: Code creation example

Initial open coding	Code derived from initial coding	Category which emerged from axial coding	Theme developed
<i>Ineffective social media adoption</i>	<i>Social media marketing challenge</i>	<i>Marketing challenge</i>	<i>Challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.7 provides a sample image of selected code categories extricated to develop applicable groups, using the code group manager on ATLAS.ti. These ultimately contributed to the creation of themes.



(Source: Generated using ATLAS.ti)

Figure 4.7: Sample code categories

Upon finalisation of initial coding, axial coding and theme development, the themes extracted were used to answer the research questions. A total of eight high-level themes emerged from the data analysis. The eight themes were aligned to the research questions, enabling the researcher to present the findings logically. Table 4.6 provides a synopsis of the themes and their alignment to the research questions.

Table 4.6: High-level themes aligned to the research questions

Research question	Themes (8)	Total categories (32)	Total codes (131)
RQ1: How can mentoring support address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs?	1. Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship	10	34
	2. Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship	6	26
RQ2: What support, in the form of business competencies, is needed by retail entrepreneurs through mentoring, to strengthen their ability to manage their ventures effectively?	3. Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship	4	22
RQ3: How will mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial success?	4. Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring 5. Mentor role in entrepreneurial success 6. Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success 7. Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success 8. Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success	12	49
RQ4: What elements are required to propose an operational mentoring model to develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting?	This research question is answered in Part B, where the themes, codes and data analysed are assimilated to present the proposed model		

(Source: Researcher's own)

To present the findings in a structured manner, each theme is explored in the following sections, incorporating the codes and categories which emerged from initial and axial coding. Additionally, each theme is aligned to its respective research question. The categories equate to the subsections under each theme, comprising the codes that relate to the relevant category. Furthermore, a discussion of the results is combined with the literature, consistent with the Straussian integrated grounded theory method.

4.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 1

How can mentoring support address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs?

To enable the researcher to recognise how mentoring can address the challenges of entrepreneurship, and serve as a vehicle to promote entrepreneurship, it was necessary to delve into the trials experienced by emerging entrepreneurs. Hence, the research instrument probed the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs and the factors they deemed as stimulants in their ventures. Two themes emerged from the data analysis, namely, mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship, and mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship

The factors that impede emerging entrepreneurial ventures are expounded in this section.

4.5.1.1 Mentoring support for factors that inhibit emerging entrepreneurial ventures

Various entrepreneurial challenges emerged inductively from the participant interviews, post-coding of the interview transcripts, and through the incorporation of memos. After deriving a large set of codes, ten categories emerged under the challenges of entrepreneurship. The categories are presented according to grounding significance based on coding analysis. Additionally, participants provided their input for the mentoring support they deemed would alleviate the challenges. The table under each category presents the challenges, the grounding frequency of the codes (which

stipulates the number of participants who answered affirmatively (numeric and percentage), and the mentoring support requested by participants to overcome the challenges. The mentoring support column was derived from participant engagement and from the completion of axial coding for the remaining research questions.

4.5.1.1.1 Marketing challenges

Two central codes emerged within the marketing category, namely, conventional marketing challenges, and marketing challenges associated with digital platforms that encompass social media presence. Table 4.7 presents the conventional marketing codes.

Table 4.7: Conventional marketing challenges

Conventional marketing challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Limited marketing knowledge	29 (97%)	<i>Adoption of a marketing strategy to gain competitive advantage.</i>
Sales techniques to employ	29 (97%)	<i>Implementation of a marketing plan. Adoption of conventional and online marketing/sales promotion techniques.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

The findings recognised that most entrepreneurs cited marketing as a foremost challenge for developing and growing their businesses. From the standpoint of conventional marketing, participants alluded to their lack of marketing expertise as impeding business growth. Insufficient knowledge of effective sales techniques was recognised by most participants as negatively impacting the marketing endeavour. Informal SME participants commented that they were overwhelmed by the marketing function. Participants cited inadequate knowledge in areas of marketing strategy, segmentation and the use of marketing to gain competitive advantage. Many participants indicated that they had not placed enough emphasis on the marketing function. They further acknowledged that the lack of emphasis on marketing proved to be a shortcoming once the business developed. Despite acknowledging that marketing was an essential business function, participants asserted they lacked insight into its execution. Verbatim responses that provided insight into the marketing

challenges included the following from selected participants. The text accentuated in bold reflects the codes identified by the researcher.

Karen: *I wish I knew more about actual marketing techniques and how to win more customers easily. I do not know enough about the marketing side of my business. I mean how to actually market my business.* **Code: limited marketing knowledge.**

Sarah: *I wish I knew how to get more customers for my business. Every method I use to sell or market never works for me.* **Code: sales techniques to employ.**

Vanessa: *Our marketing does not seem to work all the time. We advertise on social media, but sometimes, you do not get a single call or inquiry. It is difficult and frustrating.* **Code: limited marketing knowledge.**

The study's data analysis echoes the view that the marketing function within the scope of SMEs is a complex task for emerging entrepreneurs, despite marketing and sales being crucial for SME sustainability (Drucker, 2008; Siu & Kirby, 2008; Hadiyati & Lukiyanto, 2019). The findings of the study are in support of the literature by Afriyie, Du and Ibn Musah (2019), who indicate that many entrepreneurs misjudge the prominence of marketing in their ventures.

Marketing should include a combination of methods used for establishing, transmitting, distributing and trading products or services to provide value for consumers (Dzisi & Ofosu, 2014; Ebitu, 2016). The marketing function has inherently been curbed by monetary restrictions, SME scope, a decision to not outsource the function, and a lack of marketing knowledge (Bettioli, Di Maria & Finotto, 2012; Westerlund & Leminen, 2018). The findings of the present study are coherent with the above literature since entrepreneurs blamed their inability to exploit the marketing function on their lack of marketing expertise. It is further suggested that the ultimate decision, as far as the marketing endeavour is concerned, lies with the entrepreneur who possesses the ability to capitalise on the marketing function within the SME (Bettioli *et al.*, 2012; Westerlund & Leminen, 2018). The literature in this instance corroborated the sentiments shared by participants in the current study.

A proposed entrepreneurial marketing model should comprise the following elements for effective SME marketing: (1) consumer alignment, which involves responsiveness and communication with customers, (2) entrepreneurial alignment, which links to the

personal practical ability of the entrepreneur; (3) the innovation ability of the SME, and (4) market alignment, which is an amalgamation of methods and reaction to competitors (Jones & Rowley, 2011; Antunes, Lopes & Sousa, 2020). Notwithstanding entrepreneurs capitalising on business networking as an important sales technique, the literature alludes to a void in the individual sales methods employed by entrepreneurs; hence, the marketing shortcoming of SMEs may be attributed to a weakness in entrepreneurial sales methods (Douglas & Omar, 2013). The findings of this study were congruous with the literature of Douglas and Omar (2013) since participants shared their sentiments of not employing effective sales methods. SMEs do not adhere to the standard marketing methods implemented by large corporates; consequently, SME marketing is heavily reliant on decisions taken by the entrepreneur (Awan & Hashmi, 2014).

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicated that sales promotion methods and techniques are crucial for a successful marketing endeavour. Actions such as personal-level sales, sales using digital means, relationship-marketing and online sales promotions, are effective sales techniques which can be employed by entrepreneurs (Centeno & Hart, 2012; Odoom, Narteh & Boateng, 2017). The findings of the present study support the recommendation that an effective marketing plan for SMEs should include the following elements: (1) the product plan, which refers to the value, characteristics, and appearance of the product, (2) the pricing plan, which involves the itemised sales value based on effective costing mechanisms, (3) the promotion plan, which involves advertising mechanisms and individual sales techniques, (4) the place plan, which references the ease of procuring the product, (5) the packaging plan, which involves the presentation and delivery of the product, and (6) the post-sales plan, which encompasses warranties, promises, and post-sales service (Gbolagade, Adesola & Oyewale, 2013; Amin, 2021). The evidence contained in the data collection of this study supports the latter view concerning a marketing plan for SMEs. Furthermore, this study's findings emphasised the elements of a marketing plan that participants requested to be mentored on.

The second category which emerged was that of embracing digital platforms, particularly social media-related marketing challenges. Participants cited a host of challenges concerning social media (represented in Table 4.8). Formal and informal

SME participants indicated that they experienced barriers with embracing various forms of digital platforms due to time and skill constraints.

Table 4.8: Social media marketing challenges

Social media marketing challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Social media communication and responses	28 (93%)	<i>Customer service and relationship marketing.</i>
Balancing online and offline platforms	28 (93%)	<i>Omnichannel marketing. Implementation of a social media marketing plan.</i>
Social media marketing	28 (93%)	<i>Competitive strategy adoption.</i>
Social media competitors	27 (90%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants cited challenges pertinent to maintaining timeous and efficient social media communication with customers and potential customers. Their responses indicated they experienced difficulties with responding to social media marketing-related queries while trying to operate their businesses. This category shared commonality with the responses relating to the balance between online and offline platforms. Participants reported the difficulty experienced between trying to simultaneously service customers on both online and offline platforms, from an operational perspective and a marketing perspective. Most entrepreneurs shared negative sentiments about their online marketing techniques employed on social media platforms. They cited dissatisfaction in the online marketing conducted, the presentation of their marketing efforts and their overall marketing strategy.

The prevalence of competition on online platforms proved challenging for most participants. Participants narrated experiences of online competitors emulating their business ideas and using social media platforms to entice their customers. The online business environment, specifically on social media, was deemed saturated by participants. Hence, the competition level was high, making entry into some markets difficult for participants. Despite the barriers experienced with social media and digital marketing, participants acknowledged that they envisaged social media platforms and technology-based marketing to become a large component of their business operations in the future.

A verbatim response from participant Brandon encapsulated the necessity to create and improve SME social media presence, which most participants endorsed. Furthermore, the participant cited the importance of social media communication.

Brandon: *We could do with improved marketing. Yes, we have a website. We stay in touch with customers on social media, but we can do more. Social media customers want immediate answers, which we do not have the time to do while managing the business. Competition is fierce. Competitors will do anything to draw your customers over. Unfortunately, my business has lost many customers to competitors in this way.* **Codes: social media communication and responses, balancing online and offline platforms, and social media competitors.**

Rugova and Prenaj (2016) posit that online marketing practice is lacking in emergent nations. The results of this study are congruent with the authors' view concerning the lack of marketing practice in emerging SMEs. The literature identified that online marketing, through the application of various social media platforms, can produce new customer relationships, afford SMEs the ability to build their product presence, and expand their customer base (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). However, the authors caution that social media can be detrimental to the status of a business if not managed correctly (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). This is distinctly evidenced in the data collected in this study.

The data analysed in this study further supported the argument presented by Oji *et al.* (2017) that the main impediments to entrepreneurial engagement on social media are technological and time constraints. Furthermore, an inability to identify the appropriate strategy to adopt when engaging on social media platforms can be detrimental to SMEs (Oji *et al.*, 2017). Cheng and Shiu (2019) suggest that SMEs, which have an online existence, successfully amass digital information but have inadequate proficiencies to use the information to convert leads into sales. This is exacerbated by resource and time limitations (Cheng & Shiu, 2019). The results of the current study affirmed the findings of the authors since participants cited the lack of proficiency in managing social media platforms to be a marketing barrier.

Online marketing is beneficial to a business, provided it considers the following aspects: (1) selecting the correct mechanisms which align with the mission of the business, (2) opting to deploy the appropriate online platform, and (3) ensuring that

the marketing endeavour is mindfully considered in aligning with the business values (Deans, 2011; Santos, 2020). The data analysed in the present study aligned with the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework of this study, which suggested that digital marketing platforms must be embraced in the correct manner for optimal benefit (Alford & Page, 2015; Bushe, 2019).

4.5.1.1.2 Customer challenges

Five codes which emerged from the customer challenges category are presented in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Customer challenges

Customer challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Recruiting customers	27 (90%)	<i>Customer recruitment methods.</i>
Developing customer trust	27 (90%)	<i>Solidify brand presence.</i>
Price and payment issues	27 (90%)	<i>Customer engagement and effective communication skills.</i>
Dealing with difficult/demanding customers	26 (87%)	<i>Trust-building techniques and reputation management.</i>
High/unreasonable customer expectations	26 (87%)	<i>Focus on customer relationship marketing.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Most entrepreneurs alluded to customer challenges as an impediment in their ventures. Verbatim responses from selected participants included the following:

Anita: *Customers can be difficult. They complain about everything. From quality, price, payment, my staff, my location, to all of it. I find it utterly difficult to exceed their expectations. They are demanding and difficult to deal with. Codes: dealing with difficult/demanding customers, price and payment issues, and high/unreasonable customer expectations.*

Heather: *When you sell from home or on social media, customers do not always take you seriously. Some do not trust you. Some want to come in and see what you sell. Social media makes customers easily believe you are a fake business or a scam artist. Code: developing customer trust.*

Mia: *Clients complain about my fee and call me expensive. If you want a high-quality provider, you must be prepared to pay for it. My other problem is not collecting monies on time. Customers are quick to negotiate a good price but slow to pay. Then, there is the problem of finding new customers. It is an uphill battle for my business.* **Codes: price and payment issues, and recruiting customers.**

Upon completion of the analysis of the data and code refinement, the challenges that participants dealt with were associated with the unsuccessful recruitment of customers, developing customer trust, price-related concerns, addressing customer concerns and fulfilling high expectations. In addition, participants linked customer challenges to the challenges associated with social media business platforms. They cited their frustrations over difficult customers. Irrespective of which type of business each participant operated, customer issues were common amongst SMEs.

Participants cited that the recruitment of customers posed an even greater challenge since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants attributed this to the general reduction in consumer spending. Concerns were raised over the future of their SME ventures should the decline continue in the future.

The study's findings aligned with research in the literature review chapter which categorises customer-related challenges under the environmental ecosystem of SMEs (Bushe, 2019). Recent literature by Malgas and Zondi (2020) posits that customer purchase decisions can have a negative impact on retail SMEs, fuelled by a competitive SME environment where choice and price are unrestricted. The current study's findings confirmed the adverse effect of consumer spending on SMEs, which was accelerated by the global pandemic. Therefore, building and maintaining interaction with customers can circumvent customer-related challenges (Malgas & Zondi, 2020). This is an area that participants in this study alluded to. They emphasised their desire to improve customer relationships and communication.

A positive correlation between marketing and customer challenges in SMEs is presented by Urban and Maphathe (2021). The authors cite that social media marketing platforms can be used by SMEs to advance concrete customer interaction and engagement. Hence, social media can be used to harness the following areas of customer interaction (Urban & Maphathe, 2021).

- Solidify SME brand presence.
- Recruit new customers.
- Develop customer trust through interactive engagement.
- Promote products and prices.
- Engage with customers to address criticism and comments (Urban & Maphathe, 2021).

The findings of this study concur with the outcomes of the study by Urban and Maphathe (2021). The present study’s findings emphasised similar challenges that can be overcome by embracing digital platforms. However, contemporary mentoring models do not address the in-depth significance of digital platforms as part of SME mentoring. Therefore, incorporating the latter is crucial for developing a contemporary mentoring model, an area which the present study addresses in the proposed model.

4.5.1.1.3 Financial challenges

The data analysis indicated that financial challenges presented a problem for SMEs, intensified by the global pandemic. Codes which emerged from the data are listed in Table 4.10:

Table 4.10: Financial challenges

Financial challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Insufficient financial literacy and knowledge	26 (87%)	<i>Mentoring on financial literacy awareness.</i>
Rising costs and declining turnover	26 (87%)	<i>Budgeting techniques. Cost control methods.</i>
Low profit margins	25 (83%)	<i>Cash flow management.</i>
Cash flow issues	25 (83%)	<i>Awareness of funding options and channels.</i>
Lack of money/funding	25 (83%)	

(Source: Researcher’s own)

Participants cited that their financial acumen was limited. The knowledge limitation subsequently caused them to feel overwhelmed in their ventures. Participants expressed frustration because they lacked the knowledge about basic financial terminologies such as revenue, overheads, profit margins, pricing strategies, money

management and equity-related concepts. Rising costs, diminishing turnover, and the subsequent impact on profitability, proved challenging for participants. The resultant effect was cash flow problems. Participants expressed heightened levels of anxiety over concerns about the payment of overheads. The lack of money and access to funding proved problematic in their ventures. Apart from expressing marginalisation regarding access to funding, participants also expressed a lack of knowledge regarding access to funding channels. Most participants emphasised that access to finance through financial institutions was controlled by bureaucracy, making the process cumbersome for SMEs. Furthermore, a few participants indicated that funding through state-based programmes or incubation mechanisms often marginalised SMEs, based on size or type, thus presenting barriers for access to finance.

Selected verbatim participant responses included:

Harvey: *I would say my weakness is the financial aspect and the accounting end of the business. Not being familiar with the accounting aspects in as much detail as I would like.* **Code: insufficient financial literacy and knowledge.**

Vanessa: *On the finance side, learning more about the finance part of my business. What needs to be done to control costs, since costs are increasing all the time. How to keep expenses down and still make a profit. I have months with very little profit, which leaves me with money short of paying my staff and suppliers.* **Codes: insufficient financial literacy and knowledge, rising costs and declining turnover, low profit margins, and cash flow issues.**

Brandon: *I could do with some assistance on the finance side on how to better keep track of money and look at how to understand the accounts side. I also want to find easier methods to fund the business. I have many plans with limited funding.* **Codes: insufficient financial literacy and knowledge, and lack of money/funding.**

The findings of the study supported previous research findings, discussed in the literature review section, which identified a positive correlation between financial knowledge and entrepreneurial success (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019; Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020). The present study's findings echoed that participants who perceived their financial knowledge level to be low also envisaged their entrepreneurial success to be compromised. Furthermore, developing nations display an inferior level of financial mastery amongst SMEs, inferring that decision-making is impacted negatively due to

a lack of financial knowledge (Mashizha, Sibanda & Maumbe, 2019). In addition, 70% of SMEs that operated for under two years lacked sufficient financial knowledge (Mashizha *et al.*, 2019). Thus, introductory financial literacy should be incorporated as part of SME instruction (Mashizha *et al.*, 2019). This sentiment was acknowledged by the participants involved in the current study.

The present study introduced new insights from a financial knowledge perspective. In addition to limited access to funding, and a lack of financial knowledge, SMEs need to be informed about information access. Many SMEs lacked the fundamental capability to extract financial-related information from various online platforms. Despite financial skill-related studies for SMEs lacking, South African SMEs do not prioritise the value of maintaining appropriate financial-related information, such as income, expenditure and budgets (Msomi & Olarewaju, 2021). Therefore, development initiatives, guidance and mentoring interventions are encouraged to advance the financial mastery of SMEs (Msomi & Olarewaju, 2021). The results of the present study demonstrated that financial mastery should be inculcated in entrepreneurs from an early stage.

4.5.1.1.4 Employee challenges

Table 4.11 presents the codes that emerged from the employee challenges category.

Table 4.11: Employee challenges

Employee challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Lack of employee loyalty, commitment and attitude	25 (83%)	<i>Focus on training and development of employees.</i>
Lack of employee training and experience	25 (83%)	<i>Work delegation methods. Inculcation of work ethic.</i>
High employee turnover	25 (83%)	<i>Employee peer mentoring.</i>
Not having employees	7 (23%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participant experiences were grounded in four codes. This included the isolation of entrepreneurship without retaining any employees. For SMEs that did retain employees, problems arose due to a lack of loyalty, commitment and employee training. Firstly, participants cited that employee attitude caused dissatisfaction amongst customers, to the point of SMEs losing their customers. Secondly, SME

owners expressed frustrations over the lack of skills that employees possessed and their inability to develop autonomy after training was provided. Thirdly, participants expressed feelings of betrayal when employees opted to learn the trade and subsequently start their own businesses, resulting in the migration of customers. Finally, high employee turnover was disconcerting to most SME participants.

Additionally, participants attributed several areas of dissatisfaction amongst customers due to a lack of commitment on the part of employees. This included incorrect stock distribution, incorrect accounting procedures and an overall lack of business etiquette when dealing with customers. Participants described feelings of dismay after discovering that employees were engaged in the theft of inventory and money. Employee theft was a recurring problem in some instances, with participants consequently opting to employ people known to them, instead of opting to use the recruitment process to replace their employees.

Selected verbatim responses from participants outlined the challenges encountered:

Michael: *My problem is the young staff I have. They are young, inexperienced and make loads of mistakes. They take down instructions incorrectly, or do not take instructions at all, or simply ignore customer requests. I end up having to spend a great deal of my time putting out fires instead of managing my business. Code: lack of employee training and experience.*

Heather: *So many staff problems. I train staff, they work for six months, and then they leave. Then the cycle starts again. Worse still, I have had my staff learn the trade, start a new business, and take my customers too. It is frustrating to experience this. Codes: lack of employee loyalty, commitment and attitude, and high employee turnover.*

Anita: *Stock has been stolen, and even money stolen. That is when I let all my staff go. I now do it entirely on my own, but I am not coping. It becomes too much to manage a business and do the work of five people. Codes: lack of employee loyalty, commitment and attitude, and not having employees.*

The findings of the study were coherent with the theory evaluated in the literature review section, which posited that the lack of access to resources, such as human resources, contributes to entrepreneurial failure (Derera, 2011; Bushe, 2019). Employee challenges were considered part of the SME ecosystem. However,

literature has not delved into these challenges in SMEs with intensity, despite labour challenges being addressed holistically from an unemployment perspective.

A recent study by Mafundu and Mafini (2019), in a South African SME context, affirmed the human resource findings derived from the current study. SME human resource challenges included the following (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019):

- A scarcity of knowledge and proficiency amongst employees.
- Lack of employee initiative and effort.
- Poor work ethic amongst employees.
- Underachieving personnel who lack high productivity levels (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019).

The findings of the current study suggested that the human resource function is a crucial aspect of any SME. Entrepreneurs need to be informed and mentored on how to manage the function. Despite the literature review elucidating the significance of the human resource function (Justino, 2015; Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a), the findings of the present study indicated a dire need for entrepreneurs to be trained in achieving employee productivity and providing guidance to employees. This overlaps with the importance of communication management within an SME.

Therefore, a proposal for SMEs, from a human resource position, is for improved employment practices to be adopted, for enhanced job design to be applied and for investment in employee development (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019). The proposed suggestion presents the notion for basic human resource practices to be included as part of future SME entrepreneurial mentoring.

4.5.1.1.5 Management and leadership challenges

The codes derived in this category (Table 4.12) implied that a lack of understanding of the management and leadership functions is a concern for entrepreneurs.

Table 4.12: Management and leadership challenges

Management and leadership challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Insufficient business knowledge and acumen	27 (90%)	<i>Managerial mentoring in the functional areas of SMEs.</i>

Management and leadership challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Ineffective communication	25 (83%)	Communication skills.
Time management challenges	25 (83%)	Time management skills.
Absence of policies, processes and systems	24 (80%)	Implementation of processes and systems.
Lack of planning and growth	24 (80%)	Focus on strategic planning.

(Source: Researcher's own)

Despite participants' attempts to manage their businesses optimally, they recognised that their limited knowledge contributed to SME challenges. Participants acknowledged that limited business acumen, ineffective communication techniques, a lack of time management skills, and an absence of systems and planning, served as barriers to SME effectiveness.

Selected verbatim responses from participants encapsulated the codes derived:

Karen: *I would say that my first problem is not knowing everything about how to run a business. I feel despondent when I do not know the course of action to take when things go wrong. My knowledge is just poor in all areas of business. Also, my own communication needs some improvement. I know that if I communicate better, it will help resolve many problems.* **Codes: insufficient business knowledge and acumen, and ineffective communication.**

Brenda: *The most difficult part of running my business is the planning. Planning future sales or knowing what to expect in the next month or the next few months. Trying to check trends that may interest customers and overall trying to market my business. The planning part is my nightmare. I often do not get it right.* **Code: lack of planning and growth.**

Susan: *I struggle with running the business at most times. There is nobody to help me and I feel like I am drowning. There is never enough time to do everything. I suppose there is time, but I am not doing it correctly. Everything in my business seems chaotic to be honest. Documents and files are everywhere, so I can never find what I am looking for. My customer system is not very organised.* **Codes: insufficient business knowledge and acumen, time management challenges, and absence of policies, processes and systems.**

Contrary to the research reviewed in the literature section (Rao, 2014; Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017; Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a), where the functions of management, leadership, communication and business skills were described as mediators of entrepreneurship, the data analysed in this study demonstrated inversely. In the present study, most entrepreneurs cited the lack of business acumen as a foremost hurdle in the entrepreneurial journey. The findings were consistent with the premise that leadership aptitude is lacking in SME owners and business understanding is deficient (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019). The lack of vision and progress arises from the lack of planning and the non-implementation of a formal communication strategy (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019). Thus, more effective interpositions need to be adopted by SMEs from a planning, leadership, and communication perspective. The findings of the present study corroborate the viewpoint of Mafundu and Mafini (2019), in support of leadership development, planning competencies and communication aptitudes for entrepreneurs. This alludes to an inclusion of these elements for future mentoring.

4.5.1.1.6 *Personal challenges*

Table 4.13 presents the codes that emerged from the personal challenges category.

Table 4.13: Personal challenges

Personal challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Limited support structures	23 (77%)	<i>Focus on work-life balance.</i>
Loneliness of entrepreneurship	23 (77%)	<i>Collaborative networking.</i>
Fear of failure	22 (73%)	<i>Mindset motivation.</i>
Work-life balance	22 (73%)	<i>Focus on entrepreneur's</i>
Lack of experience	22 (73%)	<i>personal development.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants cited the personal aspects of entrepreneurship which posed difficulty in the context of SME ownership. This included the loneliness of delving into entrepreneurship with no prior experience, and no family or support structures in many instances. This was compounded by an inability to maintain a steady work-life balance, specifically during the pandemic lockdown levels. Additionally, participants stated that a lack of experience in business or specialised areas of expertise resulted in personal

stress. They conceded that the fear of failure was a contributory factor to personal entrepreneurial challenges.

Verbatim participant responses in support of the codes included the following:

Claire: *I don't want to have to work until late hours doing quotes and checking payments. It affects my family life and the lives of my kids as a single mother. Unfortunately, there is very little support for me in my personal and business life.* **Codes: limited support structures, loneliness of entrepreneurship, and work-life balance.**

Brooke: *Working seven days a week can kill my personal life. I feel the long hours and the extensive demands of the business. They affect me. I have no life outside of my business now. Everything I do is centred around the business and I want to change that. Doing it all alone is not easy.* **Codes: loneliness of entrepreneurship and work-life balance.**

Brandon: *From my side, my lack of experience in running a business has resulted in my making some big mistakes. I am so afraid of messing it all up. So afraid of failing.* **Codes: lack of experience and fear of failure.**

The data analysis and subsequent emergence of codes in this theme were aligned with the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework of the study (Ferreira *et al.*, 2017; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2017; Prospero *et al.*, 2020; Wiid & Cant, 2021). The aforementioned literature posited that personal skills can either be a contributory or detrimental factor toward the success of SMEs.

The findings of the present study conveyed that selected personal skills were detrimental to participants. Personal skills such as ineffective communication skills, poor support structures, the fear of failure, and the lack of business experience, negatively impacted participants' ventures. The findings of this study support the hypothesis put forward by Denton (2020) that entrepreneurial and personal development competencies must be inculcated in entrepreneurs. Moreover, the findings were synchronous with the endorsement by Abdul (2020) that indecisiveness and fear can be a hindrance for entrepreneurs. The findings suggest that leadership ability must be developed for entrepreneurs to be self-assured in their decisions (Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a).

The researcher identified that personal challenges were linked to poor time management skills. Therefore, mentoring can provide the necessary resources and

knowledge to enable entrepreneurs to overcome their personal challenges (Assenova, 2020). Networking structures can be encouraged to promote the exchange of knowledge amongst SMEs through collaborative efforts and networking. This will alleviate the fear and accompanying loneliness of entrepreneurship.

4.5.1.1.7 Setup challenges

Specific codes which emerged from the setup challenges category are presented in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14: Setup challenges

Setup challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Limited setup knowledge and legislative requirements	22 (73%)	<i>Awareness of legislative procedures/requirements.</i>
Labour issues	22 (73%)	<i>Labour legislation awareness.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants recognised that the lack of knowledge about legislative requirements, pertaining to launching a business in South Africa, served as a barrier to entrepreneurship. There was general misunderstanding and confusion concerning the forms of enterprise available in South Africa, the formation requirements, the advantages and disadvantages of each form of enterprise, and the statutory start-up registration requirements. Participants lacked the confidence to process the online business registration, as a self-service facility, using the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission (CIPC) agency platform.

Most participants who were employers acknowledged not having a broad basic understanding of employment laws and labour-related matters in South Africa. Some participants acknowledged that the process of recruitment, the application of minimum labour rates, as well as contractual obligations, were the foremost reasons they did not seek to increase the human resource function. Assistance pertaining to labour legislation issues was often sought from other entrepreneurs in a similar situation. This sometimes resulted in the circulation of misinformation. Despite the presence of online self-help material, time constraints did not warrant the pursuit of information by participants.

The following verbatim response from a participant reflected the codes derived:

Kimberley: *I knew nothing about registration of a business, or taxes and business banking. I thought I would use my personal bank account for the business but was advised against it. Once the business started, the problems started. I had to hire staff and I did not know much about that side either. It was all a learning experience for me. Minimum rates to pay and other laws to follow. It was daunting.* **Codes: limited setup knowledge and legislative requirements, and labour issues.**

The findings of this study were congruent with the findings of Muogbo and Chuka (2019), who advocated that statutory entrepreneurial knowledge, together with human resource knowledge, served as enablers of successful entrepreneurial ventures. This study's findings also supported the contrary, implying that the lack of statutory knowledge served as an impediment. The present study's findings strengthened research which posited legislative issues to be a contributory factor to the failure of emerging entrepreneurship (Nikolic *et al.*, 2019). This study's findings confirmed that legislative protocols, processes and responsibilities served as entrepreneurial barriers (Ayandibu & Houghton, 2017; Nikolic *et al.*, 2019; Struwig *et al.*, 2019). Mentoring can address the access to information on legislative matters, consequently bridging and eradicating the entrepreneurial knowledge gap.

4.5.1.1.8 Competitor challenges

A single code emerged in this category, as illustrated in Table 4.15. However, it caused concern amongst many entrepreneurs.

Table 4.15: Competitor challenges

Competitor challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Competition across multiple platforms	22 (73%)	<i>Competitive strategy focus.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Entrepreneurs responded to increased business competition with trepidation. Because of the offline-online omnichannel nature of business platforms, and the decision by other SMEs to migrate to online platforms during the pandemic, competitors increased in number and platform.

Participants suggested that online platforms, coupled with social media advertising, led to competitors replicating their business models. Competitors were seen as enticing customers with the promise of improved quality, lower pricing strategies, and enhanced value. Comparative pricing by customers, due to the omnichannel nature of marketing adopted by competitors, caused pressure on SMEs to offer more attractive pricing. This resulted in lower profit margins and continuous pressure to outperform competitors.

The following verbatim response from a participant reflected the code derived:

Sadie: *Competition is getting fierce. First, it was competitors just knowing my business. When we moved to online sales, they watched and competed there. When we moved to social media, they competed there too. It gets more competitive for us. I would expect to see a strategy for me to deal with my competitors. I am very concerned about how to react to competition. It bothers me because the future of my business depends on how I react to competition everywhere.* **Code: competition across multiple platforms.**

The data analysed in the present study confirmed the postulation of Alford and Page (2015), which suggested that emerging technology presents a challenge for SMEs from a marketing perspective. In addition, participants indicated that they were ill-equipped to find novel strategies to outperform their competitors, implying a deficiency in strategic knowledge. The consensus amongst participants was that the pandemic resulted in greater competition across all platforms. This was exacerbated by non-entrepreneurs opting to migrate to entrepreneurship during the pandemic, due to financial loss or loss of employment.

The findings affirm that the immediate ecosystem, which includes competitors, should be considered from a strategic perspective. An inability to do so can result in entrepreneurial failure, as reviewed in the conceptual framework of Chapter 2 (Arasti *et al.*, 2014). This endorses the literature by Bushe (2019) that an absence of environmental market analysis can hinder entrepreneurial endeavour. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to be skilled on addressing competitor-related issues in their ventures.

4.5.1.1.9 Inventory challenges

Inventory challenges which emerged from the data analysis are presented in Table 4.16.

Table 4.16: Inventory challenges

Inventory challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Management of inventory	16 (53%)	<i>Inventory management methods.</i>
Poor product quality	15 (50%)	<i>Quality management.</i>
Cheap imports	14 (47%)	<i>Improved sourcing.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants identified the management of inventory as a challenge in their SMEs. Inventory management incorporated the procurement, quality, pricing, recording and selling of inventory. Participant responses implied a link between inventory management and employee management. In many instances, the lack of inventory management was linked to the lack of employee training. Participants acknowledged that the lack of implementation of inventory management systems, either manually or electronically, added to SME inventory management problems. Participants further acknowledged that the absence of proper inventory management systems facilitated the theft of inventory, principally by employees.

Another code that emerged was the issue of poor product quality, directly linked to the cheap importing of inventory. To curtail costs, SMEs engaged in lower priced inventory. However, the inferior product quality was considered a weakness, thus leading to reduced turnover.

A verbatim response from a participant encapsulated the codes derived:

Melanie: *I need to find improved ways of stock control, and how to track stock more frequently. My business also needs to improve on stock quality. Cheap is not always the best. I learnt that lesson. The quality of lower cost stock is not the best, especially the cheap imported stock I made the mistake of trading in.* **Codes: management of inventory, poor product quality, and cheap imports.**

The findings of the study affirmed the findings from the reviewed literature emphasising the significance of proper inventory management, which leads to the

value proposition and value delivery of the SME (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Olaoye, 2016; Ramdani *et al.*, 2019). The findings of this study were in support of research by Bushe (2019), who advocated that SMEs suffer from a lack of operational systems as support structures. However, the data analysed in this study suggested a link between the lack of managerial capability and the lack of control, in areas such as human resource and inventory management. In addition, participant responses alluded to a need for enhanced knowledge in areas such as inventory management, product pricing, and product quality.

4.5.1.1.10 **Supply chain challenges**

Table 4.17 presents the codes that emerged from the supply chain challenges category.

Table 4.17: Supply chain challenges

Supply chain challenge code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to address the inclusive challenges
Supplier delays	15 (50%)	<i>Focus on supply chain activities and enhanced negotiation. Effective supplier sourcing.</i>
Supplier pricing	14 (47%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

The findings of the study emphasised the importance of the role of supply chain knowledge in SMEs. Most participants acknowledged a lack of understanding of the supply chain negotiation process, pointing to a link between supply chain challenges and entrepreneurial communication challenges. Furthermore, responses from participants implied that supplier delays and product pricing caused delays in their ventures, corroborating the finding that the SME ecosystem has a diverse impact on business operations (Msomi & Olarewaju, 2021). Therefore, an inability to manage the ecosystem can cause crisis (Appiah *et al.*, 2018).

In addition, participants cited their concerns regarding the pandemic and its impact on supplier delays and increased supplier pricing. Participants echoed their concerns over the inability to fulfil customer promises due to circumstances that were beyond their control.

A verbatim response from a participant reflected the codes derived:

Pamela: *Managing my relationship with suppliers is something I need to work on. Finding the right suppliers and then work on getting them to deliver when I need them to. Also, arranging good deals where the prices do not fluctuate each day.* **Codes: supplier delays and supplier pricing.**

The findings of this study established that entrepreneurs were often overwhelmed by supply chain activities, such as the selection of suitable suppliers, negotiation, timely delivery of inventory, and communication with suppliers. A study in a South African context established that supply chain management activities need to be prioritised by SMEs (Loury-Okoumba & Mafini, 2021). Collaborative interaction efforts can improve the process and quality of inventory sourced (Loury-Okoumba & Mafini, 2021). The present study's findings are congruent with the latter study.

In addition, the findings established that the immediate SME ecosystem must be efficiently managed to optimise operations (Appiah *et al.*, 2018). Thus, mentoring can provide the pertinent knowledge to entrepreneurs to enable them to develop supply chain efficiencies.

This section addressed the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship. The next section presents the stimulants of entrepreneurship as recognised by the participants of the study.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship

This theme comprises several sub-sections that narrate the factors that stimulate entrepreneurial activity. The theme is associated with the first research question. The stimulants of entrepreneurship can contribute to the mentoring model by emphasising the positive aspects for entrepreneurial competency development.

4.5.2.1 Mentoring support for factors that stimulate and promote emerging entrepreneurial ventures

The completion of coding analysis resulted in the researcher identifying six categories in this section.

4.5.2.1.1 Personal factors

The five codes which emerged from this category are presented in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Personal factors

Personal factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulants
Family support structures	18 (60%)	<i>Focus on work-life balance.</i>
Owner involvement	18 (60%)	<i>Collaborative networking.</i>
Relationship building	17 (57%)	<i>Mindset motivation.</i>
Self-motivation and attitude	17 (57%)	<i>Focus on entrepreneur personal development.</i>
Previous experience	15 (50%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

A verbatim response from a participant reflected the codes derived for this category:

Ingrid: *Being passionate about what you do is a key area of making a success of what you do. Having a supportive family helps. Never leave a new business or business relationships to be managed by employees. I learnt that lesson early on in my business. Get involved in managing your own business. What helped me to do that was my previous experience. I was fortunate in that respect. Another important thing is I never give up no matter how difficult it gets. I try to stay positive. Codes: family support structures, owner involvement, relationship building, self-motivation and attitude, and previous experience.*

Participants acknowledged the importance of personal factors that enabled them to continue with their business ventures. These factors included constant family support from their immediate support structures, and the direct involvement of the entrepreneur in the business, enabling the creation of a positive connection with customers and suppliers. Previous experience gained in the respective field, from prior work-related experience, was deemed advantageous. Participants prioritised family support structures over previous experience factors because they deemed their immediate support structures to positively influence the outcome and longevity of their ventures. Family support was considered vital to the entrepreneurial process, the entrepreneurial mindset and effective decision-making. Participants suggested that whilst experience is relatively easy to acquire on an individual level, family support is not. Therefore, family support was prioritised over other factors. Participants attributed

the ability to build strong relationships with stakeholders, such as employees, customers and suppliers, as a stimulant in their ventures. Self-motivation, coupled with a positive mindset/attitude, enabled participants to regularly overcome challenges.

Participants confirmed that the various lockdown levels implemented during the pandemic, together with a bleak business outlook, took a toll on their mental health. The crucial role of family support was emphasised. The researcher noted a relationship between the personal stimulants and those identified as inhibitors of entrepreneurship. There was a distinct overlap between the two, suggesting that positive personal factors can stimulate ventures instead of hinder SMEs.

The findings of this study were congruent with the literature reviewed, which emphasised a positive personal outlook for entrepreneurial success (Justino, 2015). The findings of the present study also link to the findings of Ndovela and Chinyamurindi (2021), who postulated a positive correlation between personal factors, such as motivation and attitude, and entrepreneurial intent. The findings of the current study emphasised the need for enhanced post-pandemic entrepreneurial mindset mentoring. The latter would promote the adoption of a positive mindset to recover from varying challenges experienced during the pandemic.

4.5.2.1.2 Financial factors

Participants accentuated that financial factors played a key role in decision-making and business sustainability. The codes that emerged from this category are presented in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19: Financial factors

Financial factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulants
Cash sales only	14 (47%)	<i>Financial literacy.</i>
Controlled expenditure	13 (43%)	<i>Budgeting.</i>
Low-cost setup	13 (43%)	<i>Cost control.</i>
Low home-office overheads	13 (43%)	<i>Cash flow control.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

The financial factors that promoted SME activity included sales on a cash basis, to avert cash flow challenges, coupled with controlled expenditure which was accelerated by the pandemic. The ability to launch low-cost start-up businesses and maintain low overheads, by operating from home-based offices, was positively recognised by participants. Various participants acknowledged that the pandemic encouraged the migration of operations to home offices, resulting in lower overall overheads. The findings of the study further indicated that entrepreneurs were keen to explore the permanency of remote work arrangements, where possible. However, concerns were also raised over whether the adoption of remote work arrangements will adversely impact SMEs. Participants voiced their concerns over how clients and other stakeholders would react to home-based arrangements.

A verbatim response from a participant encapsulated selected codes derived for this category:

Sadie: *We only work on a cash basis. It helps us pay our suppliers and bills on time. We sell good quality products at reasonable prices. This helps us to grow. My business did not require too much capital to begin with. I was able to move to my home temporarily during COVID-19 to keep costs low, but I could not work from home permanently. I find a formal office arrangement works better.* **Codes: cash sales only, low-cost setup, and low home-office overheads.**

Despite the literature advocating that financial challenges serve as inhibitors of entrepreneurship (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019), the findings of the current study reflected that low-cost operations, curtailed expenses, and financial control can contribute toward the promotion of entrepreneurial activity. The results of the current study affirmed the findings of Maziriri and Chivandi (2020), suggesting that financial acumen contributes to prudent financial decisions to the benefit of SMEs. However, the need to further accelerate the financial literacy level of entrepreneurs is a key driver of entrepreneurship (Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020). Hence, mentoring should be tailored toward addressing the financial literacy levels of emerging entrepreneurs.

4.5.2.1.3 Customer factors

Participants emphasised that customer-related factors contributed to the success of their ventures. The codes for this category are presented in Table 4.20.

Table 4.20: Customer factors

Customer factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulants
Response to customer feedback	14 (47%)	<i>Effective communication.</i>
Customer loyalty	13 (43%)	<i>Relationship marketing.</i>
Multiple sales platforms	13 (43%)	<i>Omnichannel marketing.</i>
Social media exposure	13 (43%)	<i>Social media marketing.</i>

(Source: Researcher's own)

The findings of the study elucidated that social media exposure, and the adoption of new technologies, proved difficult for participants who were not technologically inclined. Based on participant demographics, the researcher noted that most participants aged over 55 years were reluctant to adopt multiple online platforms, citing time, resource and technological skill constraints as hindrances. However, SMEs that did successfully adopt social media platforms as sales promotion instruments, using multiple platforms such as traditional sales channels, online sales, e-commerce and social media channels, recorded an increase in turnover.

Additionally, online platforms facilitated quick turnaround response times for SMEs to address customer concerns, leading to higher customer satisfaction and subsequent increased customer loyalty. Irrespective of whether participants operated online or offline businesses, there was unanimity concerning customer response rates and loyalty. Participants acknowledged that short turnaround times for customer queries led to an increase in customer loyalty. Hence, customer feedback was prioritised over the other factors.

A verbatim response from a participant reflected the codes derived in this category:

Sarah: *I take note of customer comments. If customers are ignored, they ignore your business in the future. My online presence makes it easier to answer my customers. Social media has worked for me. It makes communication easier. I can also advertise my business on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at once.* **Codes: response to customer feedback, customer loyalty, multiple sales platforms, and social media exposure.**

The findings of this study were concordant with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, which proposed that SMEs should accelerate technology adoption to improve customer relationships and overall business performance (Alford & Page, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2017). This study's findings confirmed that participants recognised the need for the immediate adoption of multiple technology platforms, citing the competitive advantage of doing so.

Despite customer-related factors promoting entrepreneurship, participants acknowledged that their inability to adopt the correct strategy for omnichannel marketing and sales necessitated enhancement. This implied the scope of omnichannel marketing and sales techniques as possible areas for inclusion in the proposed mentoring model.

4.5.2.1.4 Product factors

Table 4.21 presents the product factor codes that emerged from this category.

Table 4.21: Product factors

Product factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulants
Reasonable pricing	14 (47%)	<i>Pricing strategy.</i> <i>Product quality focus.</i> <i>Disruption practices within the entrepreneurial space.</i>
Product knowledge	14 (47%)	
Product quality	13 (43%)	
Product variation	12 (40%)	
Digital low-cost product	7 (23%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

The consensus amongst participants was that positive product-related factors contributed to an increase in turnover. These factors included low-cost digital product creation and distribution, reasonable pricing strategy, product variation offerings, superior product quality and excellent product knowledge. Whilst the extant literature review did not prioritise product-related factors as a contributory factor to entrepreneurial success, the findings of this study confirmed that emerging SME entrepreneurs considered product offering to be a key contributor to entrepreneurial sustainability.

A verbatim response from a participant reflected selected codes in this category:

Michael: *It helps that the staff, even though inexperienced, have a wealth of knowledge about the products we sell. We keep our prices competitive and change the combination of products we market. All of that helps.* **Codes: reasonable pricing, product knowledge, and product variation.**

Moreover, product offering emerged as an important factor due to the competitive nature of the retail industry during the pandemic, combined with omnichannel marketing adoption. Recent literature advocates that product-related factors play a significant role in entrepreneurial sustainability (Juliana *et al.*, 2021). The research implied the focus on innovative practices, creativity and disruption within the entrepreneurial space (Juliana *et al.*, 2021).

The results of the present study endorsed the importance of product-related innovation and disruption. Although only a minority of participants disrupted their business disciplines through the introduction of low-cost digital products, they concurred that there were extensive benefits for their respective ventures. The remaining participants deemed it necessary to develop their knowledge of innovation and disruption.

4.5.2.1.5 Relationship factors

Participants echoed their opinions about the significance of relationship-building with various stakeholders. Table 4.22 presents the codes in this category.

Table 4.22: Relationship factors

Relationship factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulants
Loyal employees	6 (20%)	<i>Employee training and skills development.</i>
Networking with others	6 (20%)	
Outsourcing of functions	6 (20%)	<i>Relationship-building and networking.</i>
Supplier support	5 (17%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

The importance of stable relationships with employees, customers, suppliers, and outsourced providers, as well as maximising on networking opportunities, was emphasised by most entrepreneurs. Participants cited relationship-building as a key

component of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, SME problems pertaining to inventory issues were usually resolved timeously through the reliability of suppliers, often due to relationship-building. Participants suggested that networking events, usually with other entrepreneurs, enabled them to maximise marketing opportunities for their businesses. The relationship endeavours were transferred to digital platforms during the pandemic. However, most entrepreneurs did not find the latter to be as effective as in-person meetings.

A response from a participant reflected selected codes in this category:

Sophia: *I make sure that I look after my staff so that they give their best effort too. They keep my business alive. I make a note of meeting other business owners to share ideas. I learnt a lot in that way. The one lesson other business owners taught me is not to do it all alone. I now contract the work that we cannot do by ourselves to other small businesses.* **Codes: loyal employees, networking with others, and outsourcing of functions.**

The findings of this study were accordant with literature which hypothesises the positive correlation between relationship-building and entrepreneurial accomplishment (Huan, 2016). Additionally, this study’s findings were in support of the view that accentuated the social nature of entrepreneurship (Rao, 2014; Cho, 2015; Park *et al.*, 2017). However, the findings reflected that further mentoring should be provided to entrepreneurs to enable them to adapt to digital platforms and online networking.

4.5.2.1.6 Professionalism in entrepreneurship

The adoption of professional practices within entrepreneurship was cited as a causative factor for entrepreneurship. Participants acknowledged the need to embrace professionalism in their ventures, due to the uncertain nature of the external environment and the competitive nature of entrepreneurship. The codes which emerged from this category are presented in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23: Professionalism in entrepreneurship

Professionalism factor code	Grounding frequency	Mentoring support to augment the stimulant
Innovative practices	6 (20%)	<i>Innovation and disruption.</i>
Professionalism	6 (20%)	

Reputation	6 (20%)	<i>Focus on professionalism and service excellence. Reputation management.</i>
Service excellence	5 (17%)	

(Source: Researcher's own)

Professionalism was deemed to incorporate the following aspects by participants: (1) quick turnaround times and customer responsiveness, (2) dealing with employees, customers, and suppliers in a competent manner, (3) ensuring that commitments were met, and (4) ensuring that service delivery corresponded to what was promised. Participants linked professionalism to building a good reputation. Thus, professionalism was described as the key driver for reputation-building. Innovative practices, introduced as a part of the product stimulants, was linked to professionalism. Participants acknowledged the need to introduce innovation in a professional manner to ensure an effortless transition for customers and employees.

Service excellence was described by participants as the combination of professionalism and a good reputation. Therefore, many entrepreneurs believed that entrepreneurial success necessitated an adherence to professional values. The data analysis in the study showed an association between service excellence and innovation.

A response from a participant reflected selected codes derived in this category:

Maria: The main reason I succeed is because of the reputation I built. I try to be as professional as possible with my customers and suppliers. My staff and I know the importance of serving our customers in the best way we can. The reputation we built is because of the service we offer. Customers value that. Codes: professionalism, reputation, and service excellence.

The findings of the present study were congruent with the findings of the literature reviewed (Chan *et al.*, 2012; Romme, 2016; Palazzeschi *et al.*, 2018). The authors cited the significance of invigorating professionalism within the scope of entrepreneurship. The participants in this study supported the high entrepreneurship, leadership, and professionalism (HELP) paradigm suggested by Palazzeschi *et al.* (2018). However, the need to further educate emerging entrepreneurs on issues of modernisation and innovation, in order to accelerate expansion, was noted (Juliana *et*

al., 2021). The present study recognised the need to build the professional competencies of participants.

The two themes discussed in this section explored the inhibitors and stimulants of emerging entrepreneurship. The themes were aligned to the first research question. The second research question is presented in the following section with its corresponding themes.

4.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 2

What support, in the form of business competencies, is needed by retail entrepreneurs through mentoring, to strengthen their ability to manage their ventures effectively?

To enable the researcher to answer this research question, the research instrument comprised questions pertinent to the skills, competencies and aptitudes sought by emerging entrepreneurs. During participant interviews and subsequent coding, it became apparent that contemporary entrepreneurship necessitates a variety of skills. A single theme emerged from the data analysis, namely, mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship.

4.6.1 Theme 3: Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship

Theme 3 comprises a discourse of the focal areas outlined by entrepreneurs for developing their business competencies.

4.6.1.1 *Mentoring areas to develop and strengthen business competencies for emerging entrepreneurs*

Four code categories, with their respective codes, which emanated from this theme are presented in Table 4.24.

Participants provided responses based on their experiences in their ventures. Hence, some responses were provided as knowledge areas which should have been acquired at the outset, or knowledge areas which require further development through mentoring. The discussion that follows includes an exploration of how mentoring can support the business competencies sought.

The researcher sub-divided the entrepreneurial competencies into four categories, namely, competencies required prior to and during the initial stage of the business, planning competencies required to ensure a smooth transition to entrepreneurship, operational knowledge required for efficiently running a business, and personal competencies.

The researcher noted a linkage between the challenges and stimulants of entrepreneurship, and the competencies sought. In many instances, the challenges which were considered weaknesses, were the competencies which entrepreneurs acknowledged they needed from a mentoring perspective.

Table 4.24 summarises the categories and codes per category. The grounding frequency per code is included. A discussion of each category follows the table.

Table 4.24: Competencies for emerging entrepreneurs

Competency category	Code	Grounding frequency
Start-up and regulatory knowledge	• Business registration information	28 (93%)
	• Tax information	28 (93%)
	• Funding options and access to finance	27 (90%)
	• Labour information (legal)	25 (83%)
Planning competencies	• Business strategy for growth planning	29 (97%)
	• Goal setting	28 (93%)
	• Time management	28 (93%)
	• Business plan awareness	28 (93%)
Operational competencies	• Marketing (with emphasis on branding, sales techniques and social media management)	29 (97%)
	• Financial management	28 (93%)
	• Inventory management	27 (90%)
	• Quality management	27 (90%)
	• Information technology	27 (90%)
	• Records management	26 (87%)
	• Human resources (with emphasis on recruitment, training and delegation)	26 (87%)
	• Supply chain management	25 (83%)

Competency category	Code	Grounding frequency
Personal competencies	• Communication skills	28 (93%)
	• Leadership development	27 (90%)
	• Personal branding	27 (90%)
	• Professionalism	27 (90%)
	• Customer service skills	26 (87%)
	• Ethical business practices	26 (87%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

Selected verbatim excerpts from participant interviews are provided to support the development of the codes presented in this section. The corresponding codes which emerged from the excerpts are provided as examples. Thereafter, the four competency categories are expounded.

Samantha: *I need help on the financial aspects of the business. Just knowing how to understand what is going on in my business. Marketing is another part I need to improve. I need to also learn how to be a good leader to my employees. I do not think they see a leader in me yet. And yes, my time management must improve.*
Codes: planning competencies (time management), operational competencies (financial management and marketing), and personal competencies (leadership development).

Michael: *How to run a successful business, the different departments and getting it to work as an organised unit, as a whole. I must improve my own communication and customer skills. I am not good at that. I need to learn how to grow my business more importantly.*
Codes: planning competencies (business strategy for growth planning), operational competencies (all codes), and personal competencies (communication skills and customer service skills).

Natalie: *I intend to register my business soon. I need help in that department. There is so much to learn. Then, there is the tax part to get sorted. Also, to draw up contracts for my employees who are keen to work permanently.*
Codes: start-up and regulatory knowledge (business registration information, labour information, and tax information).

Hannah: *I think that my business needs help, or I need help, with branding it the right way. I try, and much of what we have done so far has worked, but I want to create a more professional look for my business. Everything needs to be more*

professional. Codes: operational competencies (marketing) and personal competencies (personal branding and professionalism).

4.6.1.2 Start-up and regulatory knowledge

Despite the business registration process in South Africa migrating to online platforms, numerous participants did not feel confident with respect to using the self-service CIPC portal. In the case of formal businesses, the registration process was outsourced, triggering dissatisfaction amongst some entrepreneurs. Most entrepreneurs were uncertain about the various forms of enterprise which can be registered. Furthermore, participants did not understand fundamental legislative issues pertinent to both business and labour. This included the registration requirements for VAT, the compilation of employment contracts, and labour-related statutory requirements, such as UIF and PAYE. Participants were unaware, and in some instances ill-informed, concerning the different public funding options and access to finance available to emerging SMEs in South Africa. Therefore, poor decisions were made at the outset, placing strain on participants. Additionally, participants were forthright about bureaucratic registration procedures that made the start of the entrepreneurial journey problematic.

The need for government to play a greater role in making access to funding available, and advocating various financing options for SMEs, is vital (Anwana, 2019). The findings from the present study were coherent with the conclusions derived by Anwana (2019), indicating that most SMEs are subsidised by entrepreneurs in their personal capacities. The results from this study, in support of the literature by Cheng and Humphreys (2016), confirmed that statutory procedures resulted in entrepreneurial challenges. Therefore, the focal areas which emerged from this study, necessitating entrepreneurial mentoring, included start-up procedures, legislative knowledge pertinent to entrepreneurship, basic labour information, and funding options available for emerging entrepreneurs.

4.6.1.3 Planning competencies

Despite awareness concerning the basics of a business plan, participants conceded that they did not possess the specific knowledge, technical ability and self-confidence, to compile their own plans. A few participants acknowledged that they outsourced the

work. However, many plans were not compiled to their satisfaction. Participants understood the value of a well-compiled business plan, principally for the submission of procedural information, but lacked the understanding to self-compose their plans.

Participants acknowledged that time management posed a challenge for their endeavours, due to multitasking and extended after-hours work. Although goal setting was prioritised by participants, they conceded that they failed in their execution of operational goal setting. Thus, poor time management proved to be an overall challenge. Long-term strategic planning was not a priority for most participants. Based on their responses, participants conceded that they struggled with strategy development and strategy execution during the growth phase of their ventures, because they did not prioritise strategic planning.

The findings of the present study were consistent with the literature reviewed, which states that internal planning poses a risk for emerging entrepreneurs and should be further developed, with emphasis on strategy development (Wirtz *et al.*, 2016; Ferreira *et al.*, 2017; Bvuma & Marnewick, 2021). Based on participant responses in this study, it is recognised that entrepreneurs should be mentored in the following facets: goal setting, business planning, time management practices and strategic planning.

4.6.1.4 Operational competencies

Participants acknowledged that they lacked the practical operational knowledge of the following functional and related aspects of managing a business: (1) marketing knowledge, with specific emphasis on branding, sales techniques and social media management, (2) financial management knowledge, (3) inventory management systems, (4) quality management systems, (5) information technology knowledge, (6) records management, (7) the application of human resource principles, with emphasis on recruitment, training and delegation, and (8) supply chain management knowledge.

From a financial management position, selected participants lacked the knowledge to successfully implement accounting systems, to make informed decisions concerning accounting software or cloud-based systems, to comprehend financial results, and to generate budgets or adequate cashflow systems. Participants acknowledged being overwhelmed by the holistic financial function of the business. The issue of inventory management systems was linked to financial management. Although some

participants were able to execute inventory management systems efficiently, most participants opted to use computerised spreadsheets to maintain inventory systems. They deemed this as inefficient compared to specialised software, since it resulted in a lack of real-time information availability. Moreover, participants who used online sales platforms or e-commerce sites acknowledged the need to integrate these systems into their inventory procedures.

Quality management was identified as a restrictive factor. Participants indicated their customers were concerned about the poor quality of inventory sourced in some instances. Through insights from participants, the researcher noted that effective supply chain management principles were lacking. Participants did not assess their suppliers adequately, nor did they negotiate the best pricing and quality. This could be attributed to poor record maintenance. Additionally, participants recognised that record-keeping was considered an ancillary function. However, they only realised the significance of good electronic records management systems, such as accounting, inventory and stakeholder-related records, when it was too late to retrieve valuable historical information.

The marketing, human resource, and information technology functions were prioritised by participants as functional areas to improve. Branding, social media presence growth, and the implementation of correct sales techniques, were marketing areas participants preferred to expand their knowledge on. Participants outlined that the human resource function needed further development in the areas of recruitment, training, and delegating. They acknowledged that they lacked the insight to recruit the most suitable employees, to provide the applicable training required, and to delegate work effectively.

This study's findings paralleled the literature of various authors cited in the literature review section (Lima & Baudier, 2017; Mamabolo *et al.*, 2017; Ramdani *et al.*, 2019). The authors emphasised the traditional functions of business, such as business management, financial management, human resource management and marketing management, all of which contribute to the value proposition. However, the findings of the present study introduced new perspectives to the recommendations of these authors, namely, information technology as a focal function for entrepreneurs, social media management, operational branding, and technology-based records

management systems. Additionally, the urgency of SME digital adoption was recognised. Hence, mentoring should focus on the development of the core functional aspects with a contemporary technology-based underpinning.

4.6.1.5 Personal competencies

Participant responses demarcated the following personal competencies that needed development: communication skills, leadership development, personal branding, professionalism, customer service skills and ethical business practices. Participants acknowledged that their customer service skills, such as communication techniques (with emphasis on written communication), short turnaround times and face-to-face customer interaction, needed further development. Participants conceded they did not emphasise customer service skills at the outset, to the detriment of turnover and profitability. Therefore, enhanced verbal and written communication, combined with customer service skills, needed advancement.

Leadership development, together with the practice of ethical business, was cited as a personal competency development preference. Ethical business practices were described by participants as the execution of principled business practices and the implementation of green economy principles. Moreover, professionalism and personal branding were given preference as development areas. Communication ability, leadership development and ethical practices, converged with personal branding requirements based on participant responses.

The findings of the present study were coherent with the literature reviewed (Justino, 2015; Hattingh *et al.*, 2018a; Palazzeschi *et al.*, 2018; Bushe, 2019). Although the aforesaid authors emphasised competencies, such as leadership ability, communication skills and professionalism in entrepreneurship, the present study proposed a new combination of personal competencies sought by emerging entrepreneurs.

The competency factors discussed in this section enabled the researcher to answer the second research question. A discussion of the third research question and the corresponding themes follows.

4.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 3

How will mentoring contribute to entrepreneurial success?

The research instrument probed the elements of mentoring which, according to participant responses, can contribute to entrepreneurial success. The responses subsequently emerged as themes from the data analysis to enable the researcher to answer the research question. The following five themes were identified by the researcher:

1. Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring.
2. Mentor role in entrepreneurial success.
3. Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success.
4. Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success.
5. Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success.

The themes associated with research question 3 are presented in the following sections.

4.7.1 Theme 4: Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring

Theme 4 discusses how entrepreneurs envisaged the future of their ventures. It deals with issues of establishing a vision and the accomplishment of the vision.

4.7.1.1 Entrepreneurial vision establishment and vision accomplishment through mentoring

Two categories emerged from this theme, namely, the establishment of the vision of entrepreneurs, and how entrepreneurs envisaged accomplishing their vision using mentoring as an intervention.

4.7.1.1.1 Establishment of the entrepreneurial vision

Participants were invited to share the future vision they envisaged for their SMEs. The mutual codes which emerged from this category are presented in Table 4.25. The

responses indicated commonality amongst most entrepreneurs concerning the business vision. The grounding frequency per code is reflected in the second column.

Table 4.25: Establishment of the entrepreneurial vision

Establishment of the entrepreneurial vision code	Grounding frequency
Growth and expansion	30 (100%)
Employment creation	29 (97%)
Increase market share	29 (97%)
Increase profitability	29 (97%)
Product enhancement and innovation	27 (90%)
Expand online platform presence	27 (90%)
Systems and processes	25 (83%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

The codes which emerged from this category reflected the aspirations of entrepreneurs. Participants expressed a keen aspiration for venture growth, prioritising both physical expansion and market expansion. Linked to this aspiration, participants reflected a strong interest in contributing toward the economy by creating employment opportunities to recruit new employees in the future. To increase employment, participants acknowledged the need to increase profitability by increasing market share. However, growth strategies were clearly lacking. This was noted by the researcher during the interviews and the analysis of the data.

Innovation was recognised as a key contributor to long-term vision. Participants cited their readiness to explore innovative methods and mechanisms that would enable them to disrupt the market in their respective businesses. Participants suggested this could take the form of product enhancements or drastic market disruption. However, the data analysis reflected that participants lacked the insight into strategic disruption despite their willingness to embrace it.

Additionally, participants expressed their aspirations to adopt effective systems and processes in their ventures, to promote efficiency and productivity. A common aspiration shared by participants was to expand their online presence, ranging from social media platforms to digital presence in the form of websites.

A verbatim excerpt from an interview reflects selected codes which were created:

Olivia: *I cannot continue as a small business. I need to grow my business. But I think it needs to be online growth. I foresee hiring more people when I grow. Most importantly, I need to find ways to increase my profits. COVID-19 has affected profits. I need to make up for the losses.* **Codes: growth and expansion, employment creation, increase profitability, and expand online platform presence.**

The findings of the present study were concordant with the findings of Malgas and Zondi (2020), reviewed in the literature section of the study, reiterating the need to adapt entrepreneurial models to changing circumstances. Furthermore, the findings of this study reinforced the need for SMEs to be amenable to change prompted by external or internal environmental factors (Muogbo & Chuka, 2019).

The findings of the present study validated the need to model a business for adaptability. Therefore, the focal mentoring areas identified for development, based on participant responses, were growth, employment creation, increase in market share and profitability, innovation, expansion of online business platforms and the creation of efficient systems.

4.7.1.1.2 Entrepreneurial vision accomplishment through mentoring

After probing the aspirations of entrepreneurs, participants were requested to share how they planned to accomplish the entrepreneurial vision. The codes which emerged from this category are presented in Table 4.26.

Table 4.26: Entrepreneurial vision accomplishment through mentoring

Entrepreneurial vision accomplishment code	Grounding frequency
Self-development (through mentoring or formal training)	30 (100%)
Strategic focus and planning	29 (97%)
Employee development	24 (80%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

The need for self-development was emphasised by all participants. Participants deemed there is a direct correlation between self-development and vision accomplishment. After responding to previous questions included in the research instrument, concerning the challenges and promoters of entrepreneurship,

participants defined self-development as an endeavour to seek assistance to become progressive. They deemed the means for self-development to be mentoring or formal training. The responses indicated that formal training encompassed enrolling for a formal course, such as a diploma or degree programme. However, most entrepreneurs identified the foremost preference for development as mentoring.

Participants conveyed their willingness to develop their employees, after self-development and mentoring, to empower them for effectiveness. The focus on strategic planning, with a view to realigning the current operationalised business model, was another technique that participants listed for the accomplishment of the entrepreneurial vision.

A verbatim excerpt from an interview encapsulated selected codes derived:

Bella: *I need to do some type of formal management training. So, a mentor, together with formal training, well that would put me in a more prepared position to grow my business for the next five years. I know I need to equip my staff with more skills for the future.* **Codes: self-development (through mentoring or formal training), and employee development.**

The results from the data analysis correlated with literature which highlighted the pivotal involvement of mentoring in emerging entrepreneurship (Mallaby *et al.*, 2017; Abuya, 2019). Moreover, the results of this study were aligned with the views of authors who encouraged entrepreneurial mentoring as a means of skill transfer for SME sustainability (Bawuah *et al.*, 2006; Zhang, 2014; Assenova, 2019; Radebe, 2019). The present study's findings reaffirmed the postulation, by Malgas and Zondi (2020), that entrepreneurial mentoring should facilitate the process of realigning post-pandemic business models.

4.7.2 Theme 5: Mentor role in entrepreneurial success

Theme 5 is associated with the perceived role of the mentor, from an entrepreneurial perspective, in the success of the SME venture.

4.7.2.1 *Role of the mentor in entrepreneurial success*

Participants provided their contribution with respect to the perceived and preferred role of the mentor in the entrepreneurship process. Two categories emerged from this theme. The categories and their respective codes are presented in Table 4.27.

Table 4.27: Mentor role in entrepreneurial success

Mentor role category	Code	Grounding frequency
Advisory role	• Guiding and advising	30 (100%)
	• Goal setting	29 (97%)
	• Time management	29 (97%)
	• Personal development	29 (97%)
	• Feedback	29 (97%)
Consulting role	• Business development	29 (97%)
	• Operational knowledge	28 (93%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

The two categories which emerged from this theme implied that participants envisaged the dual roles of the mentor to be advisory and consulting in nature. From the perspective of an advisor, participants specified that the mentor would be someone who would guide them as far as their ventures were concerned and advise them concerning areas of business sustainability. Participants indicated they anticipated the mentor to facilitate the goal setting process by enabling proper time management techniques. Participants expected that a mentor would hold them accountable for their goals by means of feedback, positive critical analysis and constant mentor-mentee monitoring.

From a business consulting viewpoint, the role of the mentor was perceived to be that of a business development consultant, who would guide participants concerning the functional areas within business and provide SMEs with strategic growth techniques. It became evident that potential mentees placed a high degree of emphasis on the knowledge and experience of mentors. Participants perceived the mentor to impart knowledge pertinent to the operational aspects of a business, ranging from inventory management, financial management, marketing management and supply chain management.

A verbatim excerpt from an interview with a participant reflects the codes derived:

Mia: *I would imagine, a mentor helps with giving guidance on advertising, marketing, and growth of the business when it takes off. I also think that the mentor would help me improve myself. I mean, a mentor would point out and help me to work on my weaknesses.* **Codes: advisory role (guiding and advising, and personal development) and consulting role (business development).**

The findings of the present study were coherent with the literature reviewed which implied the crucial role of the mentor (Rankhumise, 2015; Irby *et al.*, 2018; Kunaka & Moos, 2019). Additionally, the present study's results were in support of the generic mentor role concerning personal development (Chebii, 2017; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018).

However, despite the lack of consensus amongst researchers with respect to the perceived role of the mentor in entrepreneurship, the findings of this study affirmed the definition of mentoring as being advisory in nature (Haggard *et al.*, 2011; Cohen *et al.*, 2019). This study's findings introduced a new notion of mentoring, which was perceived to be a consulting role, in addition to being advisory in nature.

4.7.3 Theme 6: Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success

Theme 6 provides an overview of the mentor attributes which entrepreneurs considered imperative in a potential mentor.

4.7.3.1 Entrepreneurial mentor attributes

Two principal categories emerged from the data analysis for the attribute preferences which participants identified for potential mentors. The codes were grouped into the personal and business attribute categories (Table 4.28).

Table 4.28: Entrepreneurial mentor attributes

Entrepreneurial mentor attribute category	Code	Grounding frequency
Personal attributes	• Approachable	30 (100%)
	• Committed	30 (100%)
	• Communication capability	29 (97%)

Entrepreneurial mentor attribute category	Code	Grounding frequency
	• Experience level	29 (97%)
	• Maturity and age	28 (93%)
	• Patience	27 (90%)
	• Personality	27 (90%)
	• Qualification	27 (90%)
	• Relationship	26 (87%)
	• Professionalism and conduct	25 (83%)
	• Trust	25 (83%)
	• Gender preference	11 (37%)
Business attributes	• Affordability	30 (100%)
	• Availability	28 (93%)
	• Business knowledge	28 (93%)
	• Results driven	28 (93%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants were candid concerning the attributes they sought in potential mentors, since many participants believed that mentoring should be adopted as a long-term option to improve business performance. Entrepreneurs indicated a preference for a mutually compatible and patient personality they could easily work with. Participants specified that a committed and approachable mentor, whom they could communicate with unreservedly, would be their ideal choice. Above-average communication, in the form of written and verbal skills, was specifically cited by participants. Participants linked communication skills to professionalism and conduct, implying that a high level of professional conduct equated to responsiveness in communication.

However, participants were divided over the qualification levels of the mentor. Some participants opted for mentors who possessed any formal qualification at any level, whilst most participants stipulated their willingness to work with a mentor who possessed a business-related degree, or the Master of Business Administration (MBA) qualification. Most participants identified a preference for mentors with high levels of prior experience. This attribute was stipulated as non-negotiable.

Several participants opted for mentors who were mature in their outlook. The researcher noted a link between experience and maturity. Most participants indicated that they preferred working with a mentor who was older than themselves, suggesting that seniority was preferred.

The prevalence of gender bias was identified by the researcher. Selected female participants opted for mentors who were women. This preference was elucidated by suggesting that communication would be more effective with someone of the same gender. Male participants were unbiased with respect to gender. Participants expected a mutually trusting relationship to develop with the mentor. Trust was cited as crucial. Participants voiced their concerns about confiding in mentors regarding confidential information about their ventures.

As part of the attributes sought in prospective mentors, participants identified business-related attributes, such as availability, affordability, sound business knowledge, and results-driven individuals, as characteristic preferences. Linked to the development of relationships with mentors, participants preferred to be mentored by a mentor who is both easily accessible on a regular basis and affordable, since the focus would be on the development of a long-term relationship. Sound business knowledge was linked to high levels of experience and qualification level. In addition, participants cited results-driven mentors as crucial to their ventures. They associated results-driven mentors with accountability.

Selected verbatim participant responses included the following:

Anita: *If the price is too high, then I know I will not use the service of the mentor at all. I want affordable advice. Code: business attributes (affordability).*

Brooke: *I would appreciate someone who takes a sincere interest in wanting to help me grow and points out what I can improve. We must be comfortable with each other. Code: personal attributes (committed and relationship).*

Sadie: *I think a lady would make a better mentor. She will understand the fashion industry better and understand my problems better. I would be comfortable with a female mentor personally. Code: personal attributes (gender preference).*

Nicole: *I think a mentor must be someone who knows the workings of a business in general. If the mentor understands the hair industry, that is great, but general business knowledge is a must. Code: business attributes (business knowledge).*

The findings of the data analysis aligned with the literature reviewed, which identified the traits sought in mentors, such as business skills, communication ability and personality traits (Straus *et al.*, 2013; Van der Sijde & Weijmans, 2013; Nottingham *et al.*, 2017; O’Connell, 2017; Rolfe, 2017; Pennanen *et al.*, 2018). However, these traits were generic mentor traits. This study presented a new set of attributes sought by potential entrepreneurial mentees, such as age diversity, gender bias, qualification level preferences and affordability factors.

4.7.4 Theme 7: Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success

Theme 7 outlines the variables pertinent to the mentoring relationship preferences, mentoring type, and mentor pricing.

4.7.4.1 Entrepreneurial mentoring preference variables

The emergent categories and codes from this theme are presented in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29: Entrepreneurial mentoring preference variables

Entrepreneurial mentoring preference variable category	Code	Grounding frequency
Relationship preferences	• Formality and contractual agreement	28 (93%)
	• Long-term mentoring	25 (83%)
	• Short-term mentoring	5 (17%)
Mentoring type preferences	• Private mentoring	29 (97%)
	• Group mentoring	28 (93%)
	• Online mentoring	5 (17%)
Pricing preferences	• Cost of mentoring	29 (97%)
Public incubator mentoring	• Attitude	27 (90%)
	• Increased awareness	26 (87%)

(Source: Researcher’s own)

Categories which emerged from this theme were derived from participant responses to their preferences for mentoring. The first category, preferences for mentoring relationships, found participants divided between mentoring as a short-term relationship and a long-term relationship. Most participants preferred mentoring to be a long-term relationship that could enable SMEs to navigate in a progressive direction

with the aid of a mentor. Participants again emphasised the importance of mentor-mentee personality compatibility. The issue of compatibility was deemed a catalyst for a long-term relationship. Most participants who opted for a long-term mentoring relationship indicated they preferred the relationship to be formal and bound by contractual agreement. Participants indicated that a formal agreement would result in greater commitment to the mentoring relationship for both parties. Moreover, a formal agreement would facilitate accountability by setting expectations at the outset. However, a factor that would determine the long-term nature of the relationship would be the mentor's pricing structure, which is linked to the pricing preferences category.

The second category, namely, mentoring type preferences, examined participants' preferences for the mode in which mentoring would be most effective. The first preference, owing to privacy and confidentiality reasons, was for private individual mentoring. Participants were open to group mentoring. However, this was considered a networking opportunity more than a mentoring option. Participants were keen to network with other entrepreneurs under the supervision of the mentor. The least preferred preference type, based on grounding frequency, was for online mentoring. Participants displayed a low preference for online platforms, implying that online mentoring would not be effective and would result in overall loss of focus.

The third code category, namely pricing, was a determinant of participants' mentoring relationship choice. Participants acknowledged that an affordable mentor would encourage them to continue the relationship on a long-term basis. However, if the relationship did not prove cost-effective, albeit effective, participants would reconsider the relationship.

For the fourth code category, the researcher explored the knowledge that participants possessed about public mentoring incubators. Most participants were unaware of public incubators available in their regions. Participants were unaware that public incubators offered a cost-effective solution for mentoring. However, participants were sceptical about using the services of public mentoring incubator facilities. Participants likened these to ineffective state-run services, which were described as unproductive, slow and futile.

Verbatim excerpts from selected interviews with participants included the following:

Harvey: *It should be a long-term relationship. If not, then I would see the mentor as an optional service provider for whom I have little trust. Private mentoring will work best for me. I prefer undivided attention. Apart from that, I do not think I would be comfortable sharing my business information in a group situation for mentoring.*
Codes: relationship preferences (long-term mentoring), and mentoring type preferences (private mentoring).

Brooke: *A formal long-term one would work best. Just as my client relations are important to me, I would expect my mentor to see me in the same manner.* **Codes: relationship preferences (long-term mentoring and formality).**

Heather: *I would prefer a proper mentoring agreement between myself and my business mentor. I do not think informal mentoring is really an option. A mentor I can afford is very important to me.* **Codes: relationship preferences (formality and contractual agreement) and pricing preferences (cost of mentoring).**

The findings of the present study were consonant with the findings of Dawson (2014) and Garringer *et al.* (2015), who emphasised that a mentoring agreement should consider the mentor-mentee association, the level of formality, the period of mentoring, compensation for the mentor and the mentoring policies. The findings of this study enhanced the existing body of knowledge with respect to mentoring preferences. A new perspective was introduced in the form of mentee pricing preferences.

Furthermore, the present study introduced new insights into the scepticism concerning generic public incubation services, albeit a willingness from a minority of entrepreneurs to be made aware of these services, and a low preference for online platforms as a mentoring development tool. These are options which can be presented by mentors to potential entrepreneurial mentees.

4.7.5 Theme 8: Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success

Theme 8 describes the potential impact of mentoring from participants' perspectives. It expounds how participants envisage mentors will influence them in a personal and business capacity.

4.7.5.1 *Impact of entrepreneurial mentoring*

The research instrument examined how entrepreneurial mentoring can contribute to entrepreneurial success. The categories that emerged from this theme are presented in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30: Impact of entrepreneurial mentoring

Entrepreneurial mentoring impact category	Code	Grounding frequency
Business impact	• Business growth	30 (100%)
	• Customer growth	29 (97%)
	• Business performance (profitability and results)	29 (97%)
	• Systems and structure	24 (80%)
Personal impact	• Personal development	28 (93%)
	• Professionalism	27 (90%)
	• Self-confidence	27 (90%)

(Source: Researcher's own)

Participants envisaged mentoring to impact two focal areas, namely, business, and personal development. Whilst many codes emerged, the key codes derived from the business impact category were established as the impact on business growth, customer growth, business performance, and systems and structure. Participants acknowledged the lack of implementation of systems, structure and processes in their existing ventures. Despite the presence of limited systems, the shared preference was for the implementation of enhanced systems. Participants cited that an independent, external view from a mentor's perspective may provide SMEs with discerning or agile work options.

Growth from a business and customer perspective was anticipated by participants. Business growth was defined as an enhanced presence, either physically or digitally. Therefore, the implementation of a strategy under the supervision of the mentor would provide impetus for business growth. Customer growth was defined by participants as an increase in market share and subsequent turnover. This would be the result of new strategies, together with the incorporation of new business platforms, both offline and online. Business and customer growth would contribute to improved performance,

such as increased revenue, controlled expenditure, and higher profitability. Mentoring was deemed by participants as the solution to their overall business challenges.

On a personal level, participants envisioned mentoring to impact their development through skill transfer, the acquisition of new business knowledge, and an augmented approach to managing a business. Therefore, new knowledge would contribute to high levels of professionalism, improved morale and high levels of self-confidence. Participants acknowledged that an experienced mentor would promote self-confidence in decision-making and reduce self-doubt.

Verbatim excerpts from interviews with participants included the following:

Susan: *I expect guidance with growth and the different techniques I can use to take my business forward.* **Code: business impact (business growth).**

Melanie: *I expect to see myself as an improved manager using new ideas and new skills. I hope to see myself grow personally. I also expect to make decisions without doubting myself.* **Codes: personal impact (personal development and self-confidence).**

Heather: *I do expect to see things starting to run more smoothly, I mean bringing some order into the business. If I use a mentor, above all, I expect to see higher profits.* **Codes: business impact (systems and structure, and business performance in the form of profitability and results).**

The findings of the present study affirmed the findings of the literature reviewed, which identified that mentoring could enhance output, efficiency, effectiveness, the quality of work, and motivation levels (Ehrich *et al.*, 2011; Rankhumise, 2015; Brinkley & Le Roux, 2018; Kunaka & Moos, 2019). However, new elements concerning the impact of mentoring were derived from the findings of this study. This included an emphasis on the personal impact of mentoring on the entrepreneur, from a perspective of personal development and professionalism.

Part A of this chapter presented the first three research questions and the eight themes which were aligned to the research questions.

The next part of the chapter integrates the eight themes, their respective categories and codes, and presents the proposed model to operationalise entrepreneurial

mentoring. This encompasses phase three of the grounded theory data analysis process, namely, the application of theoretical integration for model development.

PART B: PROPOSED MENTORING MODEL

The final secondary research question for the study is contained within the main research question. Therefore, the researcher concurrently answered both research questions in this section.

4.8 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION AND RESEARCH QUESTION 4

The main research question is:

What entrepreneurial elements are required to establish a contemporary operational mentoring model, for the development of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs based in KwaZulu-Natal, in a post-pandemic setting?

The final secondary research question 4 is:

What elements are required to propose an operational mentoring model to develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting?

The study's findings were intensely grounded in the data from which codes, categories, and themes were extracted. Therefore, the proposed model was developed after analysing the findings of the study during advanced coding. Despite the grounding significance of some variables and codes over others, the development of the model did not apply grounding significance as a priority, implying that a model constitutes variables or elements, not necessarily in order of grounding significance.

The researcher recognised a profound need amongst emerging entrepreneurs for a mentoring model that incorporated business practicality, mentor attributes and the pivotal functions of a business.

Although a preliminary literature review was conducted to conceptualise mentoring within the entrepreneurial landscape, the review did not govern the elements of the emerging model, since a grounded theory model uses the data collected as its foundation.

Nonetheless, with the adoption of an integrative approach (outlined in Chapter 2), a commonality with elements of extant models was recognised and incorporated. Advanced coding was used for conceptual theoretical integration, culminating in the final model.

To enable the researcher to extrapolate the variables for the proposed model, it was necessary to summarise the main findings of the data analysed.

The eight core themes which were grounded in the data analysis were:

1. Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship.
2. Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship.
3. Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship.
4. Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring.
5. Mentor role in entrepreneurial success.
6. Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success.
7. Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success.
8. Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success.

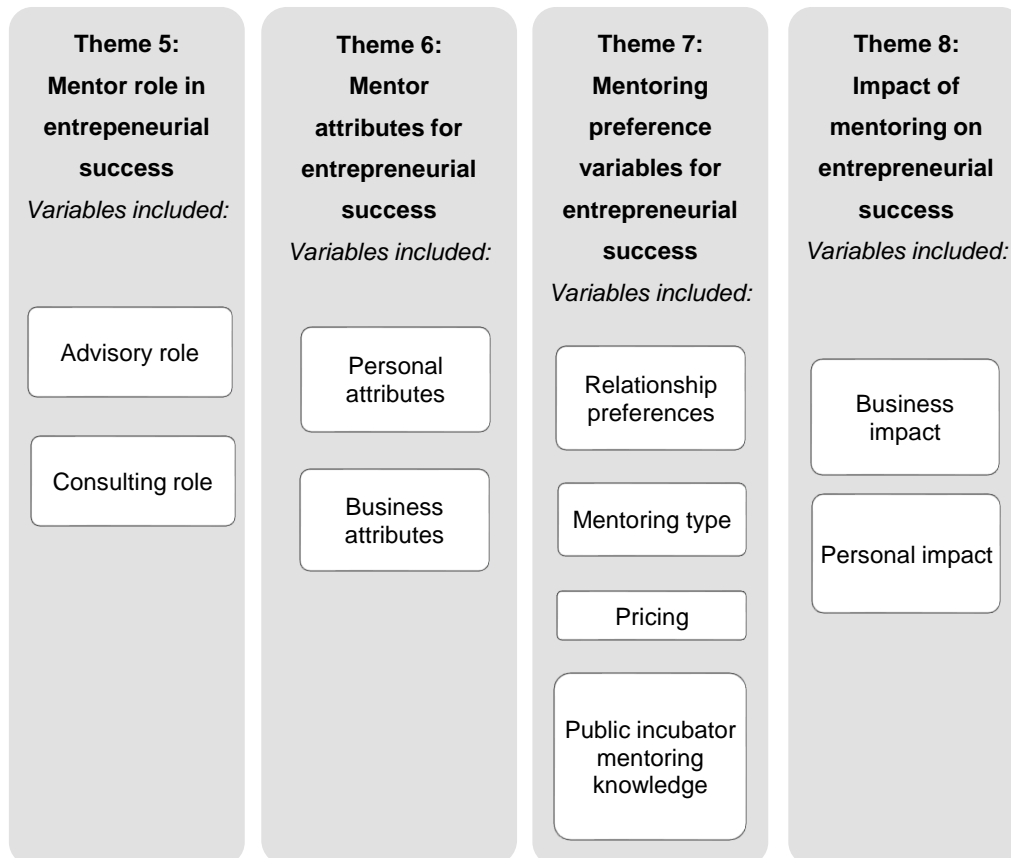
Using a holistic approach with the aid of memos, the researcher determined from the data analysis, and a preliminary literature review, that the two fundamental aspects of the model would be the mentoring component and the entrepreneurial/business component. Therefore, using the process of data reduction, conceptualisation and theoretical integration, supported by the data collected during interviews, the researcher split the eight themes into two main components.

The two components comprised the mentoring process, which is the overarching process, and the business/entrepreneurial elements, comprising the life cycle and variables, which appear within the overarching mentoring process. Memoing was extensively used by the researcher to integrate the findings of the study with the literature reviewed.

4.8.1 Mentoring themes and preliminary variables

Themes five to eight were classified as part of the mentoring process component of the proposed model.

The mentoring variables which emerged from the themes are depicted in Figure 4.8.



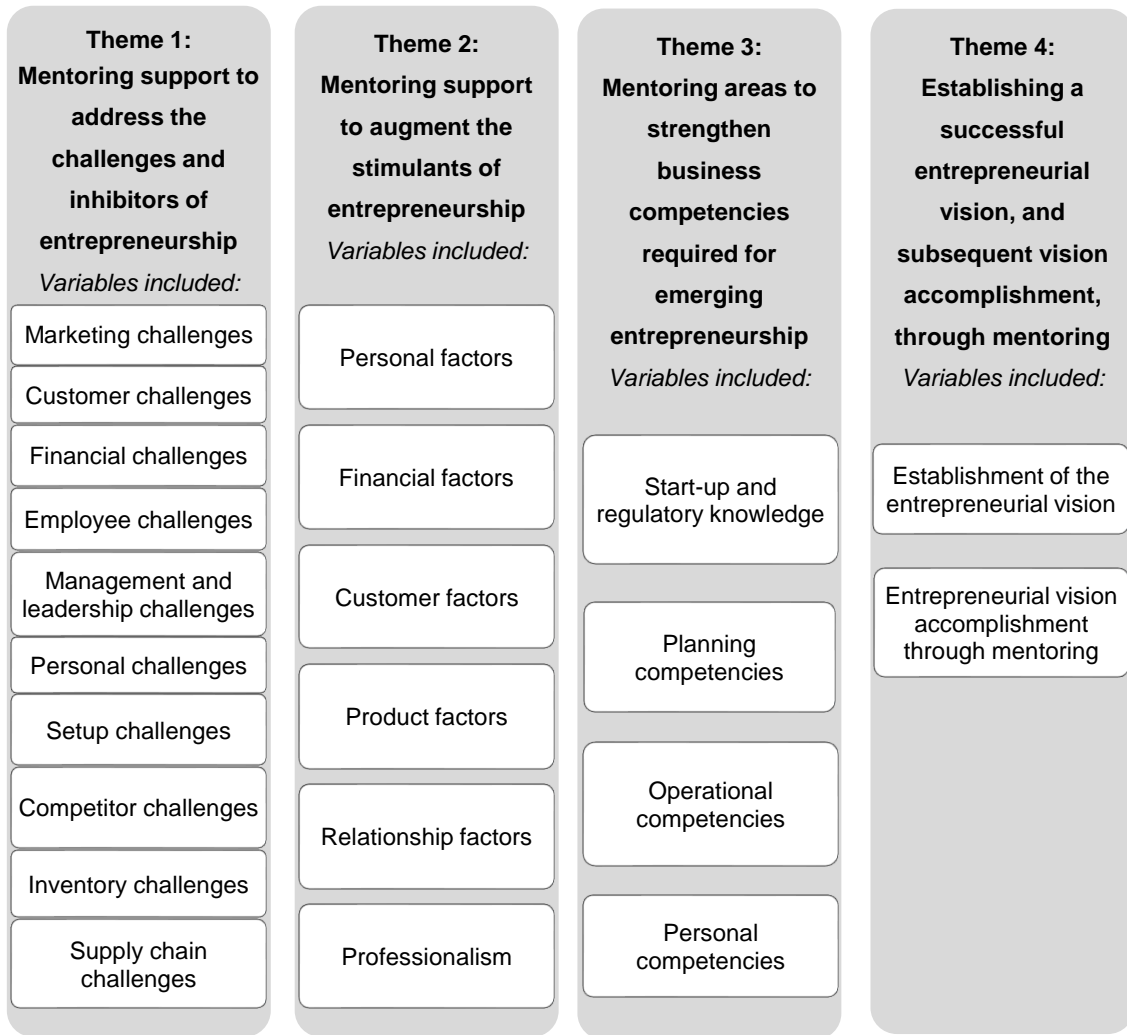
(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.8: Mentoring themes and preliminary variables

4.8.2 Business themes and preliminary variables

The business variables which emerged from themes one to four are depicted in Figure 4.9.

The variables were categorised as part of the business or entrepreneurial component.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.9: Business (entrepreneurial) themes and preliminary variables

Despite the split of the variables into the mentoring and business components, the final model assimilated all components into a single model to achieve the study objectives.

4.8.3 Rationale for the new model development using theoretical integration

The literature review section of the study (Chapter 2) identified that one of the methods in which model development and operationalisation is accomplished is through the application of the systems approach (Bakker & Shepherd, 2017; Peric *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, the mentoring models appraised in Chapter 2 used the process-driven systems approach, with the models comprising phases or stages. Moreover, entrepreneurship was defined as a process comprising four conventional phases in its life cycle, namely, the introduction phase, the growth phase, the maturity phase, and

the decline phase (Davidsson, 2015; Hisrich *et al.*, 2017; Cantner *et al.*, 2021). The GEM entrepreneurship phases described in Chapter 2 emphasised two of the aforementioned stages specifically for emerging entrepreneurship (Ionescu-Somers & Tarnawa, 2020). Therefore, nascent entrepreneurial development should focus on the introduction and growth phases (Jablonski & Jablonski, 2016). The focus may change in the maturity and decline phases, dependent on the business status. The proposed model in this study mapped the mentoring variables to the first two stages of the entrepreneurial life cycle, namely, the introduction and growth stages.

The researcher used the systems approach to develop the new model. A system is defined as a multifaceted, interlinked arrangement of elements that offers an interactive combined effect or synergy (Alarcon-Bernal, Aceves-Garcia & Fuentes-Zenon, 2019). Consequently, it is advisable to use the systems approach for the development of a model, by employing a rational approach to convert elements into an entirety (Alarcon-Bernal *et al.*, 2019). The rudimentary segments of a system include inputs, elements (sub-structures, mechanisms or processes), and outputs (Subiyakto & Ahlan, 2014; Weissenberger-Eibl, Almeida & Seus, 2019).

In the context of this study, the mentoring theme component of the model was developed as the holistic system or model, comprising mentoring inputs, the process of operationalising mentoring, and mentoring outputs. The entrepreneurial life cycle was incorporated within the mentoring process element of the system model, with focus on the introduction and growth phases. A sample memo is included to reflect the researcher's thought perspective (Figure 4.10).

<i>Inputs – analysis phase</i>	<i>Process – implementation/ operationalisation phase?</i>	<i>Outputs – completion phase</i>
<i>What are the inputs from the mentor for the mentee?</i>	<i>How can these link to the phases of entrepreneurship?</i>	<i>What is the final outcome?</i>
<i>Mentor inputs?</i>	<i>Vision first.</i>	
<i>Mentee inputs?</i>	<i>Competencies fit here.</i>	

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.10: Sample memo of researcher thought perspective

The next section presents the proposed mentoring model for the study.

4.9 PRESENTATION OF THE NEW MODEL: EMERGING ENTREPRENEUR MENTORING (EEM) MODEL

The mentoring component of the proposed model identified the key variables for the mentoring process, incorporating the business elements within the process. The researcher compared codes, categories, and themes, and removed elements that intersected using data reduction. Evolving variables were presented in a logical manner for imminent entrepreneurial mentoring. Another sample memo (Figure 4.11) is included to depict the thought process involved.

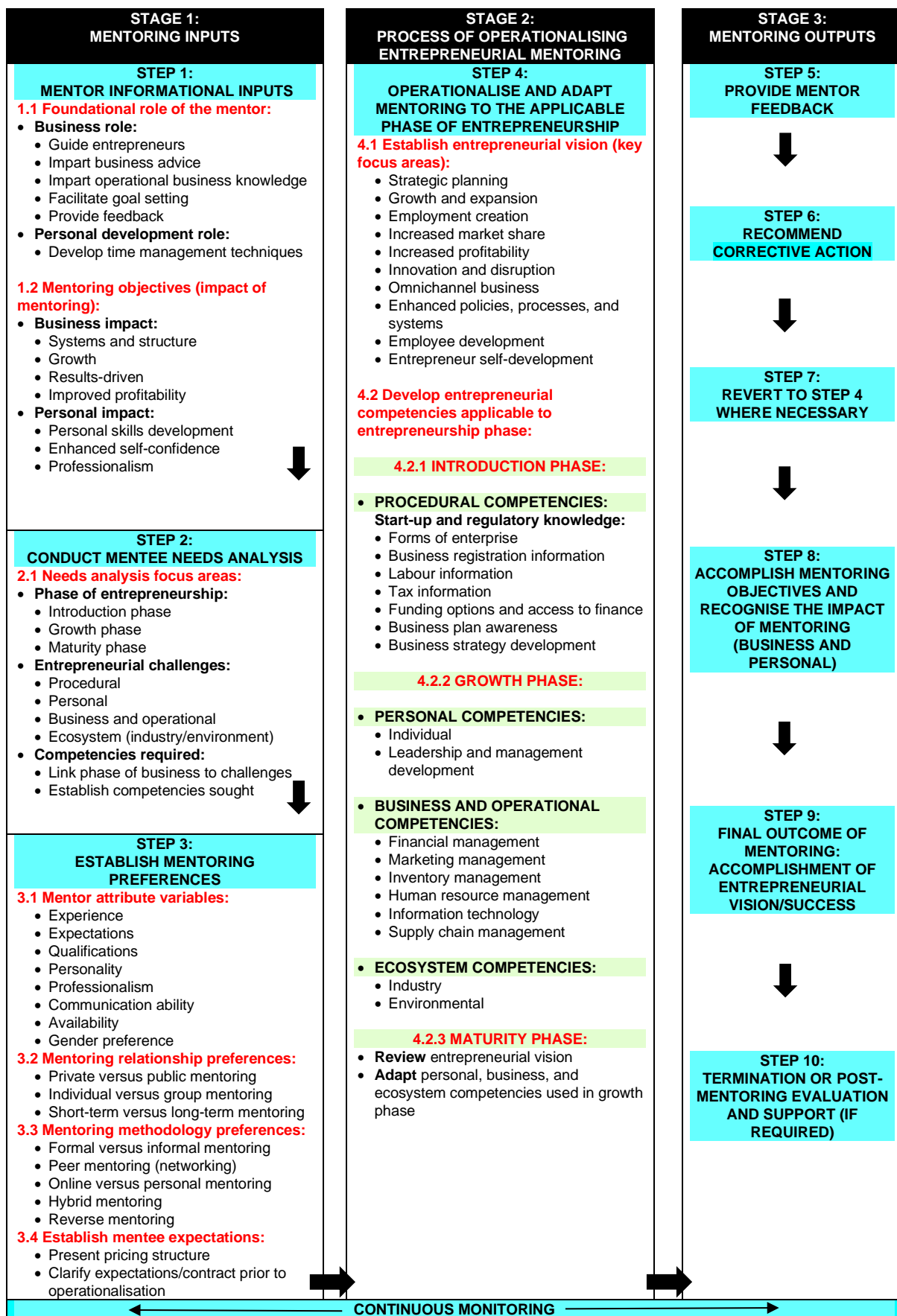
<i>Mentee inputs:</i>	<i>Possible competency categories</i>
<i>Needs assessment (these link to the challenges)</i>	<i>(link these to the review done):</i>
<i>Stage of business – life cycle</i>	<i>Behavioural/personal</i>
<i>Challenges – how can these be addressed?</i>	<i>Procedural</i>
<i>Competencies sought</i>	<i>Organisational/business</i>
<i>Preferences</i>	<i>Technical (industry)</i>
<i>Mentor attributes</i>	<i>Environmental (ecosystem)</i>
<i>Mentoring relationship</i>	
<i>Mentoring methodology</i>	
<i>Pricing structure</i>	

(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.11: Sample memo created by researcher

The process of data analysis, advanced coding, and theoretical integration culminated in the proposed model, named the **Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (EEM) Model**. The model is presented as a broad **three-stage system model**, comprising mentoring **inputs**, the **process** of operationalising mentoring, and mentoring **outputs**.

The model is presented in Figure 4.12, followed by a discussion of the model, and an addendum table which lists the focal competency areas for entrepreneurial development.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 4.12: Proposed model named Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (EEM) Model

The proposed model demonstrates the key areas of the entrepreneurial mentoring process, depicted in **three stages: (1) mentoring inputs, (2) the process of operationalising entrepreneurial mentoring and (3) mentoring outputs**. The **three stages are sub-divided into 10 steps**. A recommended action across all stages and steps is the continuous monitoring of mentees, through formal or informal communication and collaboration. Continuous monitoring will avoid mentee isolation and ensure mentor accessibility for the mentee.

The content presented in the model was principally derived from participant responses. However, an integrative method was adopted during advanced coding to conceptualise the model, combined with elements of the literature reviewed. Thus, the researcher noted that the themes extracted from the current study reflected selected commonality with the literature reviewed in the conceptual and theoretical frameworks, from Chapter 2 of the study. Therefore, the proposed model incorporated selected elements of the literature reviewed, as outlined in Table 4.31.

Table 4.31: Theoretical integration comparison of the proposed model

Aspects of commonality with Chapter 2 Part A (Conceptual framework)	
Literature reviewed	Commonality elements with proposed model
DOLETA pyramid model	Management and personal effectiveness competencies (Ennis, 2008)
Competence executive coaching model	Stages such as contracting and implementation (Koortzen & Oosthuizen, 2010)
GROW model	Mentor-mentee objectives (Brown & Grant, 2010)
ADDIE model	Stages such as analysis and evaluation (Widyastuti, 2019)
Gestalt theory	The coaching relationship (Cox <i>et al.</i> , 2010)
Entrepreneurship life cycle	Stages such as the introduction and growth stages (Cantner <i>et al.</i> , 2021)
Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity	Distinct phases of Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity (Ionescu-Somers & Tarnawa, 2020)
Mentoring model variables	Mentor-mentee traits (Nottingham <i>et al.</i> , 2017)
Skill set for entrepreneurs	Functional aspects of a business, such as marketing, human resources and financial management (Cooney, 2012; Olaoye, 2016)

Aspects of commonality with Chapter 2 Part B (Theoretical framework)	
Literature reviewed	Commonality elements with proposed model
Mentoring model components	Objectives, roles, associations, matching and monitoring (Dawson, 2014)
Business model elements	Elements such as value offering, marketing, personal elements, competitive strategy, resources, relationships, human capital, key partnerships and channels (Morris <i>et al.</i> , 2005; Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Ramdani <i>et al.</i> , 2019)

(Source: Researcher's own)

The unique aspects of the proposed model include the following:

- The model was developed using the grounded theory methodology to understand the contemporary requirements of emerging entrepreneurs.
- The model was developed for entrepreneurs amidst a pandemic, within the South African entrepreneurial landscape, with a view to building resilience for ventures in a post-pandemic setting.
- The model combines the processes of mentoring and entrepreneurship, and aligns mentoring to the respective emerging entrepreneurship phases.

The model suggests that the implementation of mentoring within a South African context must align with changing environmental conditions, implying that entrepreneurial mentoring requirements have evolved. It was evident through interviews and the grounded theory application that the entrepreneurial environment needs adaptive mentoring.

4.9.1 Discussion of the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (EEM) Model

Entrepreneurial mentoring is presented as a three-stage process. A synopsis of the three stages, comprising 10 steps, is provided below.

STAGE 1: MENTORING INPUTS

Prior to the start of any mentoring relationship, it is crucial for the mentor and prospective mentee (entrepreneur) to meet. Mentor and mentee inputs are included to clarify needs and set expectations for the operationalisation of mentoring. **Three focal areas** should be ascertained, clarified and finalised during stage 1.

- **STEP 1: MENTOR INFORMATIONAL INPUTS**

The mentor should provide information to the prospective mentee on the following aspects.

1.1 Foundational role of the mentor. The mentor should outline the dual foundational role of the mentor, namely, to provide and impart business advice, and to contribute to the personal development of entrepreneurs by focusing on time management for effective goal setting.

1.2 Mentoring objectives (impact of mentoring). The mentor should create awareness on the potential impact of mentoring so that informed decisions can be made by the mentee. The potential impact comprises the business impact, such as growth and improved profitability, and the personal impact, such as skills enhancement and improved self-confidence. These may be presented to the mentee as the objectives of mentoring.

- **STEP 2: CONDUCT MENTEE NEEDS ANALYSIS**

2.1 Needs analysis focus areas. For the mentoring relationship to be effective, the mentor should conduct a needs analysis of the mentee's entrepreneurial mentoring requirements. This step is divided into three parts, namely:

- **Phase of entrepreneurship.** The mentor should ascertain whether the business is in the introduction, growth or maturity phase of the entrepreneurial life cycle. This should be done to align competency development to the relevant business phase.
- **Entrepreneurial challenges.** The mentor should investigate the challenges experienced by the entrepreneur so that the operationalisation of mentoring can be optimally implemented. Based on the data analysis and high-level coding, challenges have been grouped into the following categories:
 - *Procedural:* challenges which relate to start-up and statutory requirements.
 - *Personal:* challenges which relate to individual behavioural aspects that need development.

- *Business and operational*: challenges which relate to the functional and operational aspects of the business.
 - *Ecosystem (industry/environment)*: challenges which relate to the organisational ecosystem, specifically the industry in which the SME operates and the competitive environment.
 - **Competencies required.** Once the life cycle phase has been established and the challenges recognised, the mentor can link the phase to the respective challenges to establish the competencies sought. The challenge categories are directly linked to the competency categories created in the model.
- **STEP 3: ESTABLISH MENTORING PREFERENCES**

The mentor can identify the mentoring predispositions of the mentee by using the following guidelines.

3.1 Mentor attribute variables. Variables can be used by the mentor to understand the preferences of the potential mentee concerning the desired mentor attributes. The mentor should present mentor-related attribute information to the prospective mentee. Attribute variables include:

- Experience
- Expectations
- Qualifications
- Personality
- Professionalism
- Communication ability
- Availability
- Gender preference

3.2 Mentoring relationship preferences. The mentor should present options available for the mentoring relationship. These options include:

- Private versus public mentoring
- Individual versus group mentoring
- Short-term versus long-term mentoring

3.3 Mentoring methodology preferences. The mentor should present options available for the mentoring methodology. These options may include:

- Formal versus informal mentoring
- Peer mentoring, which can be facilitated through entrepreneurial networking
- Online versus personal mentoring
- Hybrid mentoring, in the form of a blended methodology
- Reverse mentoring, in the case where a mentee opts to be mentored by a mentor who possesses less experience

3.4 Establish mentee expectations. Once the mentee needs and preferences have been established, the mentor should do the following before the operationalisation process:

- Present the mentoring pricing structure to the mentee and formalise the relationship where necessary.
- Clarify mentor and mentee expectations prior to the operationalisation process to avoid potential discontentment. Both parties should establish the possibility of a future contractual working relationship, based on compatibility in areas such as roles, attributes and mentoring impact, to proceed to stage two.

STAGE 2: THE PROCESS OF OPERATIONALISING ENTREPRENEURIAL MENTORING

This stage comprises a single step to operationalise and align mentoring according to the entrepreneurial life cycle. The emphasis is on the introduction and growth phases applicable to emerging entrepreneurs. The researcher incorporated the maturity phase into the model, albeit not the focus of the study, to propose that vision and competency development may need modification where necessary. Stage 2 comprises two focal areas, namely, establishing the entrepreneurial vision, and developing entrepreneurial competencies.

• STEP 4: OPERATIONALISE AND ADAPT MENTORING TO THE APPLICABLE PHASE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP

4.1 Establish entrepreneurial vision (key focus areas). This step is characterised by ascertaining the future aspirations of mentees.

Entrepreneurial vision may encompass strategic planning, growth, employment creation, increase in market share and profitability, innovation and disruption, the move to omnichannel business platforms, improving processes and systems, employee development, and entrepreneurial self-development.

4.2 Develop entrepreneurial competencies applicable to entrepreneurship phase.

This focal area is characterised by aligning the development of competencies dependent on the SME entrepreneurship phase.

4.2.1 Introduction phase: procedural competencies.

Start-up knowledge and regulatory competencies include providing guidance on the forms of enterprise, business registration information, labour and tax guidance, creating awareness of business planning, the role of the business plan and strategy development.

4.2.2 Growth phase: personal competencies, business and operational competencies, and ecosystem competencies.

Table 4.32 provides a comprehensive list of the competencies which fall under each competency focus area listed in the model. These are specific competencies that mentors should emphasise during mentoring.

The competency focus areas are sub-divided as follows:

- **Personal competencies**, comprising individual, leadership and management development competencies.
- **Business and operational competencies**, comprising financial, marketing, inventory, human resource, information technology and supply chain management competencies.
- **Ecosystem competencies**, comprising industry knowledge and environmental awareness.

Table 4.32: Addendum for step 4 - detailed personal, business and operational, and ecosystem competencies for entrepreneurial mentoring

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES:		
<i>Individual competencies</i>		<i>Leadership and management development</i>
Communication skills. Entrepreneurial networking skills. Owner involvement in the business. Personal branding. Work-life balance. Mindset motivation to develop confidence.		Adoption of ethical business practices. Business reputation management. Embracing professionalism. Service excellence offering.
BUSINESS AND OPERATIONAL COMPETENCIES		
<i>Financial management focus areas</i>	<i>Marketing management focus areas</i>	<i>Inventory management focus areas</i>
Financial literacy, terminology, and funding information awareness. Budgeting techniques. Cash flow management (and payment methods). Cost control implementation.	Marketing plan development to increase market share. Business branding principles. Conventional and online sales methods/techniques. Social media marketing. Omnichannel marketing. Customer service, trust-building interaction, and relationship marketing. Competitive strategy implementation.	Product quality principles. Pricing structure and strategy. Quality management. Inventory control systems.
<i>Human resource management focus areas</i>	<i>Information technology focus areas</i>	<i>Supply chain management focus areas</i>
Recruitment skills. Training (job-related and customer service skills). Delegating. Developing loyalty and commitment.	Electronic records management. Omnichannel business presence. Adoption of accounting systems.	Sourcing skills. Supplier negotiation and pricing. Outsourcing knowledge. Relationship-building.
ECOSYSTEM COMPETENCIES		
<i>Industry knowledge</i>		<i>Environmental awareness</i>
Industry-specific knowledge and awareness. Supplier, customer and competitor intelligence.		Awareness of the impact of the economic, political, statutory and social environment on the SME.

(Source: Researcher's own)

4.2.3 Maturity phase: review and adapt

Although the maturity phase is not the focus of emerging entrepreneurial mentoring, mentors can **review** the entrepreneurial vision and **adapt** the personal, business and ecosystem competencies used in the growth phase, where applicable, once the business has reached the maturity phase.

STAGE 3: MENTORING OUTPUTS

This stage is characterised by six steps in which mentors hold entrepreneurs accountable for the accomplishment of their business and personal development goals.

- **STEP 5: PROVIDE MENTOR FEEDBACK**

Mentors should hold frequent progress monitoring meetings with entrepreneurs to ensure that they are actively following a plan of action. Feedback should be provided to mentees in a constructive manner.

- **STEP 6: RECOMMEND CORRECTIVE ACTION**

Corrective action should be recommended to mentees in situations where entrepreneurs made poor decisions or where they deem it necessary. Entrepreneurs may need comprehensive or concise guidance.

- **STEP 7: REVERT TO STEP 4 WHERE NECESSARY**

This step is a cyclical process where mentors can constantly revive the strategies, progress, and competency development of entrepreneurs, dependent on the SME life cycle phase.

- **STEP 8: ACCOMPLISH MENTORING OBJECTIVES AND RECOGNISE THE IMPACT OF MENTORING (BUSINESS AND PERSONAL)**

The business and personal impact objectives (in step 1) can be assessed by recognising the impact of mentoring from a business and personal perspective.

- **STEP 9: FINAL OUTCOME OF MENTORING: ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL VISION/SUCCESS**

Prior to the termination of the mentoring process, mentors and mentees can evaluate the accomplishment of the entrepreneurial vision as a collaborative

process. The final outcome of mentoring should be the successful accomplishment of the entrepreneurial vision.

- **STEP 10: TERMINATION OR POST-MENTORING EVALUATION AND SUPPORT (IF REQUIRED)**

Once the objectives have been measured and attained, the vision accomplished, and successful competency development is acknowledged by entrepreneurs, the mentoring process can be terminated. Alternately, post-mentoring evaluation and support can be provided to entrepreneurs, if needed.

This section presented the proposed mentoring model. The next section provides a comparative analysis of the proposed model to other models appraised in Chapter 2 of the study.

4.9.2 Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model comparison

Eight mentoring models and theories were critically examined in the literature review chapter of the study. The BMC model was appraised in the theoretical framework section.

The comparative Table 4.33 provides the differences between the models reviewed and the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model, by outlining how the proposed model contributes to the existing body of knowledge with respect to mentoring models and theories.

Table 4.33 lists each model or theory reviewed in Chapter 2. The second and third columns specify whether the reviewed model or theory has a mentoring or business focus component. The last column establishes how the proposed model differs or comparatively adds to the body of knowledge.

Additionally, Chapter 5 discusses the contribution of this study to the body of knowledge.

Table 4.33: Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model comparison

Model/theory from Chapter 2	Mentoring component	Business component	How the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model differs or adds to the body of knowledge per model/theory
DOLETA competency pyramid model		X	Proposed model is inclusive of both the mentoring and emerging entrepreneurship processes. Proposed model introduces SME start-up and regulatory information. New competencies include supply chain knowledge, information technology, inventory management and human resources components.
Competence executive coaching model	X		Proposed model is stage and process specific. Proposed model addresses entrepreneurial content.
PRACTICE coaching model	X		Stage and process specific. Addresses entrepreneurial content.
GROW coaching model	X		Stage and process specific. Addresses entrepreneurial content.
Kram's mentoring model	X		Addresses entrepreneurial content.
ADDIE model	X		Addresses entrepreneurial content.
Integral theory of business coaching	X		Stage and process specific. Addresses entrepreneurial content.
Gestalt theory	X		Stage and process specific. Addresses entrepreneurial content.
Business Model Canvas (BMC)		X	The proposed model identifies a new set of competency variables specific to emerging entrepreneurs. The proposed model introduces new SME start-up and regulatory information. The new model is aligned with the emerging entrepreneurial life cycle phases.

(Source: Researcher's own)

It is evident that the proposed model is unique to existing models and theories reviewed. Thus, the proposed model affords a contemporary mentoring solution to emerging SMEs, to enable SMEs to adapt to changing economic conditions.

4.9.3 Presentation of the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model to business forum members

As a method of ensuring research rigour, and validating the proposed model's effectiveness and impact, the researcher presented the new model to a group of business forum members, comprising three business coaches and three entrepreneurs, all of whom requested to remain anonymous. The researcher is a member of a regional business forum, based in KwaZulu-Natal, and arranged for a presentation with members who agreed to apportion their time for a presentation.

A synopsis of the new model was provided in the following manner: the research objectives were described, the research methodology was explained, the data collection process was explained, and the outcomes of the research study presented. The culmination of the model was discoursed. The presentation, using Microsoft PowerPoint as a visual aid, was conducted as an hour-long presentation at a meeting venue in Durban.

Feedback was requested from both business coaches and entrepreneurs. Business coaches described the model as pragmatic, informative, adaptive, invigorating, and imperative to contemporary entrepreneurial development. Business coaches were keen to practically adopt the model in their own settings and apply the competency techniques to their SME clients.

Entrepreneurs described the model as encouraging, empowering, and appropriate to SMEs in a post-pandemic environment. Furthermore, an entrepreneur who described his business as entering the maturity phase, requested further information on how he could adapt selected practices listed in the model to his business situation.

There was no negative feedback. The reaction may be described as fundamentally optimistic and encouraging.

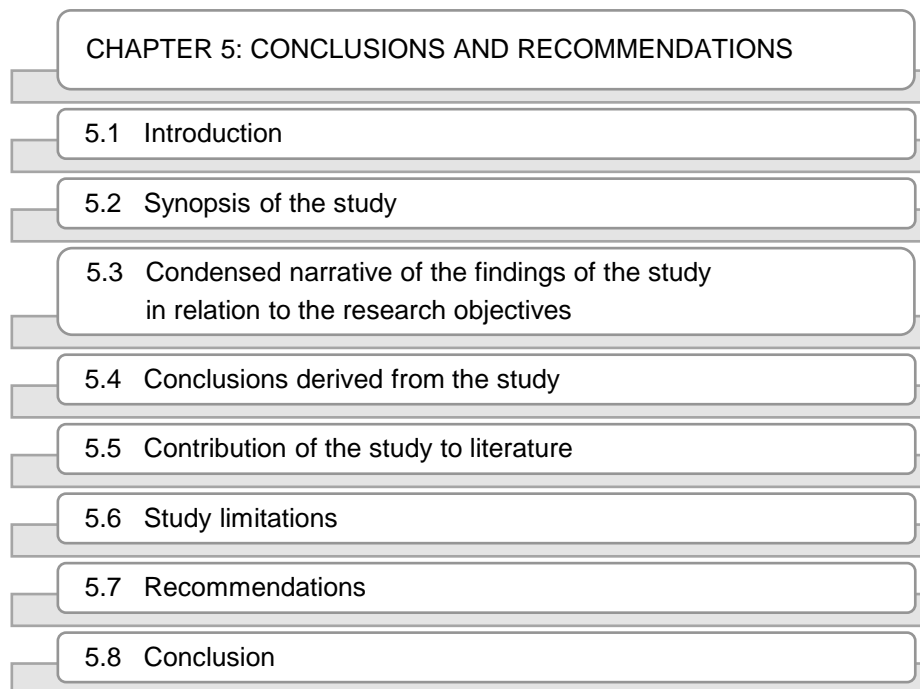
4.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented a detailed analysis of the research findings. Interview data were examined, coded and classified into respective themes. The themes were structured and presented to align with each of the research questions. The findings section of the chapter was divided into Part A and Part B. Part A presented the findings and interpretations, together with a comparison of theory examined in the literature review. Part B consolidated the themes which emerged from the data, and re-arranged the themes, categories and codes, to present a new model termed the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (EEM) Model. The proposed new model was presented in graphic and narrative format. A comparison was presented of the emergent model to other models reviewed, to evaluate how the proposed model contributes to the body of knowledge with respect to mentoring models. The final chapter provides a synopsis of the study, the conclusions derived, the contribution of the study to literature and the recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter of the study. The chapter begins by presenting a synopsis of the study. A condensed narrative of the findings is presented in relation to the research objectives. Conclusions derived from the study are presented. Furthermore, the chapter identifies the contribution of the study to the existing body of knowledge and includes a discussion of the study limitations. Recommendations resulting from the study are presented. Figure 5.1 provides a graphical depiction of the framework of Chapter 5.



(Source: Researcher's own)

Figure 5.1: Structure of the conclusions and recommendations chapter

5.2 SYNOPSIS OF THE STUDY

At the outset of the study, the objective was to present a conceptual model to operationalise entrepreneurial mentoring, for emerging retail SMEs, in a post-pandemic setting. The study was nested within the interpretivist paradigm, using a qualitative case study approach, combined with grounded theory which served as the overarching research strategy. The study sought to understand the challenges experienced by emerging entrepreneurs from both the formal and informal retail

sectors, and accordingly explore their mentoring needs. Grounded theory techniques were applied to enable the researcher to propose a model based on unique entrepreneurial experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 emerging entrepreneurs based in KwaZulu-Natal. The sample was purposively selected to meet specific criteria, as outlined in the research methodology chapter of the study. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and uploaded onto ATLAS.ti, to enable the researcher to begin the process of coding. Open and axial coding were applied until themes were extracted to align with the research questions. Thereafter, using advanced coding and theoretical integration, a proposed mentoring model named the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring (EEM) Model, was conceived.

5.3 CONDENSED NARRATIVE OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective outlined at the start of the study was to establish a post-pandemic contemporary operational entrepreneurial mentoring model. The purpose of the model was to augment the knowledge and skills of emerging retail SME entrepreneurs, by exploring the factors which impede and stimulate entrepreneurial endeavour, with a view to filling a void that prevailing mentoring practices lack. To accomplish the main objective, a set of secondary objectives was created. The approach adopted for the study was to develop themes per research question to achieve the research aim. A total of eight themes emerged, each of which was aligned to a specific research objective. The findings are presented in the next section, aligned to each of the objectives.

5.3.1 Research objective 1

To explore how mentoring support can address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs for the progression of emerging retail SMEs

Two themes were aligned to research objective 1:

Theme 1: Mentoring support to address the challenges and inhibitors of entrepreneurship

Theme 2: Mentoring support to augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship

Research objective 1 was aligned to the first research question. Generic entrepreneurial challenges experienced by emerging entrepreneurs were explored in the literature review chapter of the study. Collectively, the challenges identified in the preliminary literature review extended from individual aspects, such as a lack of leadership and inadequate business acumen, to organisational aspects, such as cash flow challenges and competition (Huang & Knight, 2017). The literature review concluded that management aptitude, education level, people management, resource absence and an overall lack of planning, contributed to entrepreneurial failure. The findings from the present study suggested ten categories of challenges which applied to SMEs, grounded purely in the data collected, that mentoring support can alleviate (Table 5.1):

Table 5.1: Challenges of entrepreneurship

Marketing challenges	Personal challenges
Customer challenges	Inventory challenges
Financial challenges	Supply chain challenges
Employee challenges	Setup challenges
Management and leadership challenges	Competitor challenges

(Source: Researcher's own)

Whilst a few of the factors listed in Table 5.1 intersected with factors discussed in the literature review section, this study introduced new facets to old challenges. This included the extent to which online platforms impact SMEs, combined with setup challenges which are often overlooked yet cause strain to emerging entrepreneurs. Other challenges included the extent to which competition on social media platforms impact emerging SMEs, personal challenges which were compounded during the pandemic, and the endeavour and associated trials of SMEs in respect of adopting omnichannel business models for sustainability.

The findings of the study confirmed that mentoring support is necessary to address the challenges experienced by SMEs. Mentoring support was proposed in the form of strategy adoption, relationship marketing, omnichannel brand presence, financial literacy mentoring, employee development focus, communication, time management skills, planning and entrepreneurial mindset motivation.

To further explore how mentoring can address the difficulties experienced by SMEs, the researcher delved into what emerging entrepreneurs perceived as stimulants of entrepreneurship. This was done to identify the success factors, and qualify inclusion of these, as focal mentoring areas in the proposed model. Hence, the second theme emerged, namely, how mentoring support can augment the stimulants of entrepreneurship. Six categories emerged from this theme (Table 5.2):

Table 5.2: Stimulants of entrepreneurship

Personal factors
Financial factors
Customer factors
Product factors
Relationship factors
Professionalism in entrepreneurship

(Source: Researcher's own)

The researcher noted that a connection existed between the challenges theme and the stimulants of entrepreneurship theme. This included personal areas, inventory-related factors, relationships in business, leadership and professionalism. Therefore, during the development of the model, shared areas were merged for inclusion in the proposed model. The factors which were coherent with the literature reviewed included leadership, business skills, professionalism and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Despite an intersection with factors evaluated in the literature review, new sub-areas emerged from this study under the main factor headings. Personal factors introduced new pivotal elements, such as the need for entrepreneurial mindset motivation mentoring. Financial factors proposed a new post-pandemic work design, with entrepreneurs opting to consider remote work arrangements to reduce overheads. Therefore, despite financial challenges conventionally demarcated as an impediment, this study established that controlled financial factors can be regarded as stimulants of entrepreneurship. For control to be exercised, financial literacy is crucial. Professionalism in entrepreneurship was regarded by entrepreneurs as a combination of service excellence, responsiveness, reputation-building, and the ability to remain adaptive and innovative. Themes one and two emphasised the need to develop entrepreneurs on a personal level and a business basis.

5.3.2 Research objective 2

To determine the business competencies required by emerging entrepreneurs, to strengthen their ability to effectively manage their ventures, through mentoring support

A single theme was aligned to research objective 2:

Theme 3: Mentoring areas to strengthen business competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship

Upon completion of the data analysis, the researcher identified the competencies that emerging entrepreneurs sought for inclusion in the mentoring model. A total of four categories emerged from this theme, as reflected in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Competencies required for emerging entrepreneurship

Start-up and regulatory knowledge
Planning competencies
Operational competencies
Personal competencies

(Source: Researcher's own)

Entrepreneurs outlined the aptitudes and skills they required to be mentored on to improve their effectiveness. After an appraisal of the data codes, four categories emerged. Relationships between the categories were identified, based on the different operational phases in a business. From an emerging entrepreneurship perspective, the competencies which needed to be addressed through mentoring were categorised as: (1) start-up and regulatory knowledge, encompassing registration and regulatory information, (2) planning competencies, incorporating goal setting and strategy development, (3) operational competencies, linked to the various functional aspects of a business, and (4) development of personal competencies, such as entrepreneurial communication, personal branding, leadership and ethical business practices.

The literature review identified areas which entrepreneurial development should focus on, concerning the core business areas identified in the Business Model Canvas (BMC), according to Osterwalder and Pigneur (2010). The present study introduced new categories and codes specific to emerging entrepreneurs in a South African context, inclusive of regulatory information and personal competencies. Furthermore,

whilst the competency characteristics listed in the BMC identified generic competencies, the categories applicable to this study were developed in a manner that would facilitate mentoring as a process.

5.3.3 Research objective 3

To determine how mentoring will contribute to entrepreneurial success

Five themes were aligned to research objective 3:

Theme 4: Establishing a successful entrepreneurial vision, and subsequent vision accomplishment, through mentoring

Theme 5: Mentor role in entrepreneurial success

Theme 6: Mentor attributes for entrepreneurial success

Theme 7: Mentoring preference variables for entrepreneurial success

Theme 8: Impact of mentoring on entrepreneurial success

The aim of this research objective was to identify the mentoring preferences of entrepreneurs which would contribute to entrepreneurial success. Therefore, the research instrument probed areas such as the future vision of emerging entrepreneurs, the envisaged role and attributes of the prospective mentor, the relationship preferences which prospective mentees sought in the mentoring association, and the anticipated impact that mentees expected from the mentoring relationship. Research objective 3 sought to pursue the holistic mentoring elements for inclusion in the model. The foundation of the combined themes encompassed the following pivotal facets:

1. Entrepreneurial aspirations were identified for the future SME vision. Aspirations encompassed the implementation of growth strategies, increase in profitability, and the implementation of structured systems and processes. Additionally, entrepreneurs described how they intended to accomplish their respective aspirations and vision, in the form of self-development (with a focus on mentoring), employee development, and enhanced planning.
2. The role of the mentor was recognised in contemporary entrepreneurship. Emerging entrepreneurs envisioned the mentor to assume a multidimensional role, in an advisory/personal development capacity and in a business consulting capacity.

3. The preferred attributes of the mentor were presented as stipulated by entrepreneurs. Attributes included personal attributes such as personality, experience and qualifications, and business attributes such as availability and affordability.
4. Entrepreneurial preferences pertinent to the nature of the mentoring relationship were presented. Relationship preferences included a preference for long-term contractual mentoring in a private capacity, as opposed to a public capacity, with an attractive long-term pricing structure.
5. A discussion of how entrepreneurs envisaged mentoring to impact their success, both on a business and personal level, was presented. The impact incorporated the business impact, in the form of growth and enhanced profitability, and the personal impact, such as personal advancement and heightened self-confidence levels.

The findings of the study introduced new areas to the mentoring process in comparison to extant mentoring models outlined in Chapter 2 of the study. Furthermore, the findings reflected a new set of preferences for mentoring, such as mentor qualifications, the specific role of the mentor in entrepreneurial mentoring, and the anticipated impact of mentoring on entrepreneurship.

A summary of eight themes which emerged from the study has been presented. The findings that aligned with the fourth research objective, which encapsulated the main research objective, were presented concurrently with the main objective.

5.3.4 Research objective 4

To propose an operational mentoring model that will develop and support emerging entrepreneurs in a post-pandemic setting

To accomplish the fourth research objective, the researcher combined the findings of the eight themes which were grounded in the data collected. Relationships were identified, and subsequent data reduction was applied, combined with theoretical integration. Thus, a unique model which incorporated the mentoring process with entrepreneurial competency development was proposed. Moreover, the model aligned mentoring with the entrepreneurial life cycle phases applicable to emerging entrepreneurship. The proposed mentoring model, named the Emerging Entrepreneur

Mentoring (EEM) Model, was presented in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.12). The model applied the systems approach comprising three stages, namely, inputs, processes, and outputs, presented in ten steps. The model addressed the mentoring input requirements of entrepreneurs, whilst incorporating elements of entrepreneurial competency development which mentoring should accentuate for post-pandemic success.

The first stage of the proposed model, namely, mentoring inputs, emphasises the establishment of a working relationship between the mentor and the entrepreneur (in the form of mentoring inputs), to ensure a smooth transition to mentoring. This stage accentuates the role of the mentor, the identification of the mentoring objectives, conducting a needs analysis relative to the entrepreneurial phase, identifying mentee preferences, and clarifying expectations prior to the operationalisation of the mentoring process.

The second stage focuses on operationalising mentoring through the recognition and development of an entrepreneurial vision. To realise the entrepreneurial vision, subsequent mentoring would shift attention to competency development. Furthermore, the second stage was aligned to the phases of the entrepreneurial life cycle, to ensure optimal mentoring benefit for entrepreneurs, dependent on the stage of the emerging venture.

The third stage focuses on mentoring outputs, in the form of mentor feedback and the recommendation of corrective action for optimal results. Thus, the findings of the present study culminated in the proposed model to operationalise entrepreneurial mentoring.

5.4 CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

This study delivered an insight into the state of emerging entrepreneurial readiness in KwaZulu-Natal. The findings revealed that emerging entrepreneurs endured a series of difficulties during the early stage of the entrepreneurial journey, implying and solidifying the need for mentoring to enable entrepreneurs to develop aptitudes to grow their ventures. The study further revealed that the pandemic resulted in a set of unique challenges for emerging entrepreneurs. For instance, SMEs were impelled to embrace multichannel platforms, migrate to social media marketing platforms, and adapt their

business models to the new normal. Therefore, the present study recognised that mentoring could provide support to SMEs to develop adaptability and resilience.

The mentoring requisites specified by entrepreneurs included a unique combination of access to knowledge at the initial stages, planning, strategising, integral business competencies, and personal entrepreneurial development. Furthermore, the findings of the study confirmed that the proposed mentoring model must be adapted to unique situations in each individual SME. The mentoring component of the model reflected that entrepreneurs have specific preferences concerning their expectations. The study established that mentoring interventions are necessary in most entrepreneurial ventures.

The findings revealed that the general sentiment amongst SMEs is one of optimism, despite the unique challenges experienced during the pandemic. However, there is an imperative need for personal and business development. Entrepreneurs' opinions of the study revealed a sense of invigorated optimism in growing their businesses and in seeking mentoring support. A further inference drawn from the study was that SMEs recognised the need for personal and business support through mentoring interventions. It is conclusive that emerging SMEs make a significant contribution to the economy. Since SME entrepreneurs are determined to create employment, they are eager to receive the benefits of mentoring. Emerging entrepreneurs displayed a desire to be proficient, to improve their business acumen and to succeed, provided they have access to the correct information and interventions.

5.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO LITERATURE

Based on the findings, the present study enhances the prevailing body of literature in the following manner:

- **Contribution of an innovative model which merges two facets, with an overarching mentoring process, combined with the entrepreneurship process phases applicable to emerging SMEs**

This study culminated in a contemporary and innovative entrepreneurial mentoring model. The study contributes to mentoring and entrepreneurial literature through the proposition of a new post-pandemic model to operationalise entrepreneurial mentoring. The study addresses the problems experienced by emerging SMEs, by

affording entrepreneurs an opportunity to be mentored using innovative practices, applicable to a post-pandemic business environment.

Furthermore, extant models have focused on either the mentoring process or the entrepreneurship process. However, this model proposes a model which addresses both fields with the novel focus on post-pandemic competencies. In addition, the model addresses the different phases of the entrepreneurship life cycle and the mentoring competency development focus areas aligned to the life cycle phases.

- **New insights into existing business models**

The study offers new insights into business models, such as the Business Model Canvas (BMC), by offering a new combination of entrepreneurial competency focal points. Consequently, the present study augments existing business models.

- **Addressing the void in existing mentoring models**

The study addresses the void which prevails in other generic mentoring models, by offering a unique combination of entrepreneurial factors combined with contemporary mentoring practices. This was addressed in Chapter 4 of the study.

- **Establishing new mentoring variables**

The findings of the study introduced new variables, such as mentor qualifications sought by entrepreneurs, mentor attribute preferences, and new entrepreneurial benefits sought from mentoring.

- **Early-stage entrepreneurial challenges and post-pandemic mentoring needs**

The study determined the challenges experienced by early-stage entrepreneurs during the pandemic. Thus, the study offered a contemporary set of competencies required to enable SMEs to adapt to a changing post-pandemic climate.

- **Methodological contribution**

A qualitative grounded theory approach, based on a retail case study, was adopted to propose a post-pandemic mentoring model. The model was grounded primarily in the data collected. Since there is a paucity of entrepreneurial mentoring models which are based on grounded theory methodology, this study makes a methodological contribution to knowledge.

- **Offering a practical solution to a contemporary problem**

A practical mentor-ready model is available for implementation, by entrepreneurial and business mentors, to enhance entrepreneurial agility and adaptability. Thus, the model contributes toward encouraging economic activity and employment creation in a developing nation. The proposed model is available for implementation by business mentors, business development forums, private and public business incubators, business accelerators, and funding organisations that incorporate entrepreneurial development.

5.6 STUDY LIMITATIONS

The limitations identified in the study included the following:

- Time allocated to the study: Since the study was a cross-sectional analysis, it did not ascertain the long-term impact and effectiveness of the proposed model. Moreover, in relation to longitudinal studies, more time spent with participants may disclose findings that this study may have overlooked.
- Resource (cost) limitations: The study was limited by the availability of funds. Travel and accommodation costs, to other geographical areas, constrained access to the sample to a provincial level.
- Sampling resource constraints:
 - Sample size: A sample size of 30 SME entrepreneurs was used. Therefore, this study may not apply in instances of generalisation across the broader SME population.
 - Sample accessibility: Data collection occurred in one province in South Africa. The experiences of entrepreneurs in other provinces may differ. Future research can be conducted across various provinces in South Africa.
 - Sample sector: The sample population was selected from the retail sector. Therefore, the mentoring model may not apply to other business sectors. Other sectors may require the development of different competencies.
 - Participant perspectives: Because the study adopted a qualitative approach, participants may not have been wholly insightful when expressing their opinions and providing input pertinent to their experiences.

5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section addresses the recommendations arising from the study and the recommendations for further research.

5.7.1 Recommendations arising from the study

It became evident during the data collection and analysis of the study that entrepreneurs face many challenges. Therefore, the following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

- **Emerging entrepreneurs:** Prospective and emerging entrepreneurs should enlist the services of a mentor at the start of the entrepreneurial journey. The mentor can guide and advise entrepreneurs, facilitate business skill transfer, and enable entrepreneurs to navigate the nascent stage. Entrepreneurs should network with other entrepreneurs on a regular basis to facilitate the exchange of early-stage information. SME entrepreneurs should focus on leadership and employee development early in the venture journey. There should also be a focus on the development of digital skills for SMEs to capitalise on the benefits of technology.
- **Mentors:** Mentors should adopt a phased approach to mentoring by ensuring that they identify the needs of individual SMEs and customise the competencies imparted to individual scenarios. Mentors should emphasise entrepreneurial competency development for entrepreneurial post-pandemic advancement and resilience-building.
- **Short programme training providers:** Providers of digital marketing programmes can extend their programmes to cover SME marketing programmes, which should incorporate online branding and online business development.
- **Public SME incubators:** Public incubators should initiate an information drive to create awareness of their products and services. The present study reflected there is limited knowledge, and limited access to information amongst emerging entrepreneurs, concerning public incubation services.

- **CIPC:** The CIPC website should initiate access to an information repository, inclusive of informational guides, which provides prospective and emerging entrepreneurs with the necessary regulatory information to launch their ventures.
- **DTI:** The DTI, through SEDA, should focus on an awareness drive amongst emerging entrepreneurs, thus creating awareness of public mentoring facilities and public financing options available to SMEs.
- **South African government:** The South African government, in conjunction with the Department of Small Business Development, should promote access to information through workshops hosted for emerging SMEs. This will promote knowledge about public funding and incentives available. In addition, the South African government should reduce barriers to economic entry for SMEs.

5.7.2 Recommendations for further research

Because this study was a cross-sectional study, a longitudinal approach should be adopted in the future to determine the long-term impact of the pandemic on SME performance and recovery. The present study adopted a qualitative grounded theory approach. For a more generalised approach, an alternate methodology can be applied in the future, with a larger sample size, to generalise across the broader population.

The study was conducted on entrepreneurs in the retail sector. Future research can focus on other sectors and industries. The present study was confined to one geographical region/province in South Africa. There may be alternate considerations in the future that can impact the proposed model in alternate settings which were not recognised in diverse geographical regions. Hence, this can constrain the outcomes of the study for adoption in alternate geographical areas. Therefore, future studies should investigate the research problem in other geographical regions, both in South Africa and on the African continent.

The model was intended as a conceptualised operational model. Further research would be required to measure the effectiveness of the model on emerging SMEs, after the model has been implemented over a period of time. The recommendation in grounded theory is to remove model testing once the final conceptual model has been developed. The rationale for this recommendation is that grounded theory is intended

to create an open model that can be supplemented by future grounded theory studies. Thus, new models in the future can incorporate model testing into model development.

Further research can examine the challenges experienced by SMEs at other stages of the business life cycle, such as in the case of established businesses. Consequently, new mentoring models can be developed for different life stages of SMEs. Entrepreneurs recognised the need to disrupt their respective fields. Therefore, future research can focus on the development of entrepreneurial disruption models. Furthermore, future studies can focus on creating sustainable business and mentoring models for SMEs in relation to varying business circumstances.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This section provides the concluding recapitulation of the study. To address the contemporary entrepreneurial challenges experienced by SMEs and the challenges exacerbated by the global pandemic, this study recognised the need to develop a contemporary post-pandemic entrepreneurial mentoring model. Gaps in the extant literature alluded to limited research in phase-based entrepreneurial mentoring, competency focal areas for emerging SMEs, grounded theory methodological gaps, and model development for a post-pandemic setting. The purpose of this study was to develop a model to build entrepreneurial competencies in a dynamic, evolving business climate; hence, contributing to SME resilience and sustainability.

The research objectives created in Chapter 1 were aligned to the research problem and research purpose. Consequently, research objectives were created to: (1) explore how mentoring support can address the challenges experienced by entrepreneurs, (2) determine the business competencies required by emerging entrepreneurs, (3) determine how mentoring will contribute to entrepreneurial success, and (4) propose an operational mentoring model.

The scope of mentoring and entrepreneurship was explored within the literature review section in Chapter 2. The entrepreneurship process was evaluated with an emphasis on the life cycle and phases. The mentoring process was examined, coupled with a review of six mentoring models and two theories. The models and theories were explored to identify inclusion areas into the new model. Notwithstanding an appraisal of extant literature, the application of the grounded theory methodology concentrated

on model development, based primarily on the data gathered, and the successive integration of literature into the development of new theory.

The study applied a qualitative grounded theory strategy, explicated in Chapter 3, using the case of emerging entrepreneurs based in KwaZulu-Natal for data gathering purposes. Data were gathered from 30 emerging entrepreneurs in phases using semi-structured interviews. Coherent with the grounded theory approach, data analysis combined qualitative and grounded theory analysis by ensuring that data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently. Initial, intermediate, and advanced coding in the form of a literature integration, were applied.

The findings in Chapter 4 of the study recognised an imperative need for emerging entrepreneurial competency development, implying that mentoring is an integral part of emerging entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial challenges and stimulants addressed the competencies for inclusion in the mentoring model. Competencies which were uniquely categorised in this study included start-up and regulatory knowledge, planning competencies, operational competencies and personal competencies. Competency development was aligned to the phase-based entrepreneurial stages. The findings of the study contributed to the development of a three-stage 10-step mentoring model called the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model. The findings established that mentoring orientation is fundamental to entrepreneurial success.

Despite recognising the limitations of the study, such as time, resource and sampling limitations, the study contributed to the body of knowledge by developing a pragmatic mentoring model for application in a post-pandemic setting. Furthermore, the study made a methodological contribution to literature through the implementation of the qualitative grounded theory case study methodology.

Consistent with the findings of the study, the recommendations which were concluded from the study included:

- Emerging entrepreneurs should leverage the competency-related benefits of entrepreneurial mentoring to steer their new ventures toward adaptability.
- Mentoring should be implemented as a phased approach.
- Digital marketing programmes should incorporate SME digital marketing content.

- Public incubators, the CIPC, DTI, and the South African government, should drive information and awareness amongst emerging entrepreneurs.

Finally, recommendations for further research included: the adoption of studies using a longitudinal approach, the implementation of an alternate methodology with a wider sample size, concentration on diverse sectors and industries, and implementing the study in diverse settings and diverse geographical areas. Additional recommendations included measuring the impact of the Emerging Entrepreneur Mentoring Model, and integrating testing into model development, to measure the impact of the proposed model in the future.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA DEPARTMENT APPLIED MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE (DAM-RERC)

Date: 29 August 2019

Dear Ms Fathima Ebrahim

ERC Reference # :
2019_CEMS_DAM_008
Name: Fathima Ebrahim
Student #: 8417245

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
August 2019 to August 2022**

Researcher(s): Fathima Ebrahim
082 485 5454 / 8417245@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Supervisor (s): Dr Shamila Singh
082 379 1908/ shamila.singh@mancosa.co.za

Prof C van Zyl
082 668 1968 / vzylc@unisa.ac.za

Working title of research:
A mentoring model for emerging SMEs in Durban: A grounded theory approach

Qualification: PhD Business Management (Entrepreneurship)

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Unisa DAM Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for three years.

*The **low risk application** was **reviewed** by the DAM Ethics Review Committee in August 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision was approved on the 29th of August 2019.*

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



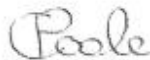
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2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the DAM Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data require additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (08/2022). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.


Note:

*The reference number **2019_CEMS_DAM_008** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Mrs C Poole
Chair of DAM-RERC
E-mail: damrerc@unisa.ac.za
Tel: (012) 433-4668



Prof M Mogale
Executive Dean: CEMS
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URERC 25.04.17 - Decision template (V2) - Approve

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APPENDIX B: RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Interview questions for research participants:

1. Describe whether your business operates in the formal or informal sector and describe the core focal area of your business.
2. How would you describe your overall experience as an entrepreneur, from a perspective of managing your business?
3. Explicate the factors that have obstructed growth and success in your business.
4. Explicate the factors that have contributed toward stimulating growth and success in your business.
5. Describe your understanding of the role of a business mentor.
6. What skills do you consider yourself to be lacking, from the standpoint of managing your business?
7. What characteristics would you look for in a potential mentor?
8. How would you prefer the transfer of skills to be provided to you via mentoring? (Examples: Online, face-to-face, or group mentoring).
9. What type of content, and pivotal expanses, would you like included in a mentoring programme?
10. If you were exposed to a mentoring programme, what benefits do you believe mentoring would offer to improve business sustainability?
11. What process would you prefer a mentoring programme to follow?
12. In hindsight, how would the use of a business mentor have impacted the overall management and performance of your business?
13. Describe the type of mentoring you would prefer (private mentoring or public mentoring)?
14. What is the strategic vision for your business?
15. Describe how you anticipate accomplishing your business vision (with or without a mentor)?

APPENDIX C: CERTIFICATE FOR THE EXTERNAL REVIEW OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Inspireck: Integrated Achievement

Carlien Kahl | PhD, Research Psychologist PS 0126020 |
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TO:
Fathima Ebrahim
Durban North
Durban
4051

DATE: 15 August 2022

RE: EXTERNAL REVIEW OF METHODS AND RESULTS FOR PHD THESIS

Dear Fathima,

I am Dr Carlien Kahl (BSc, BSc Hon, MSc, PhD), an independent, registered research psychologist (PS0126020). I completed my doctoral research on resilience, transitions, facilitating and enabling adjustment across contexts through multi-level, systemic understandings, for which I earned a Golden Key award for academic excellence. I collaborate with institutional and private researchers to conduct quality qualitative research with integrity. Being one of four senior accredited ATLAS.ti trainers in South Africa and an avid reader and methodologist, I provide specialist consultations and training for strategic research development and facilitate collaborative research across various disciplines in humanities, health, social, economic, and management sciences.

I assessed and reviewed the methodology and results for the current study to ensure rigour and trustworthiness. Quality reviews on methods and results include two distinct aspects: considering the methodology and how it was applied and interrogating the results sections to consider to which extent the researcher applied the methodology coherently. As such, I examined your methodology section, the example of analysis conducted in ATLAS.ti and your chapter delineating your results and integrative discussion.

The external review of how the data were presented illustrated that you integrated the analysis from coding into categories into emergent themes supported throughout the chapter using coding tables and quotation excerpts from the original analysis. The quotation examples illustrate that the coding process closely aligned with the participants' authentic expressions and integration with extant literature, suggesting that the analysis was conducted in line with the methodological procedures for grounded theory analysis. As evidenced from the review, you systematically built the mentoring model that is coherent with the chosen methodology.

The final write-up and presentation of the methodology, views and opinions expressed in the research are those of the candidate under supervision for her doctoral studies.

With gratitude,

Dr Carlien Kahl



*Kindness is a language
that the deaf can hear
and the blind can see*
- Mark Twain



REG NUMBER 2017/066648/07

APPENDIX D: CERTIFICATE FROM THE EDITOR

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to confirm that editing and proofreading was done for:

FATHIMA EBRAHIM

Doctor of Philosophy
Management Studies (Entrepreneurship)
University of South Africa

**A MODEL TO OPERATIONALISE ENTREPRENEURIAL MENTORING:
A STUDY OF EMERGING SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES
IN KWAZULU-NATAL**



Cilla Dowse
02 November 2022

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APPENDIX E: TURNITIN CERTIFICATE

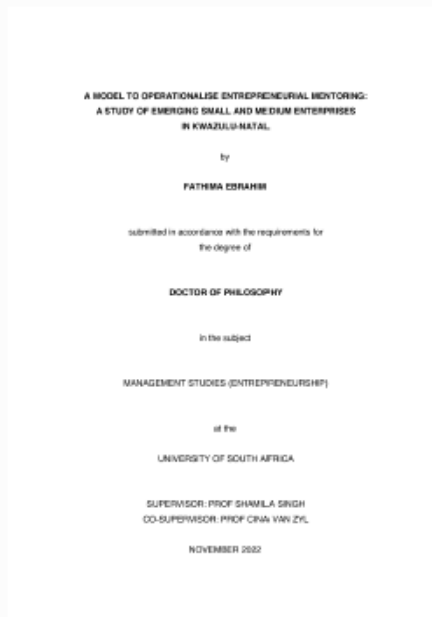


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