

# **Gordon Institute of Business Science**

University of Pretoria

**In times of uncertainty, using self-awareness and strategic  
foresight to build trust.**

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A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration.

**7 November 2016**

## **Abstract**

The conventional method of gathering followers' perceptions of a leader is through a 360 degree survey. In times of uncertainty and with the rapid pace of change affecting businesses today, a leader does not have access to a 360 degree survey tool that would indicate whether their followers' perceive them to be trustworthy. Followers are not only employees, but partners or stakeholders. Surely, another method must exist in gathering real time information that would inform a leader of whether they are being perceived as trustworthy.

This qualitative research study used a semi-structured interview process to interview fourteen business leaders in South Africa. Exploring the possibility of using self-awareness with the applicability of strategic foresight as tools to gather real time feedback, and build trust to lead effectively in times of uncertainty.

The results of this study indicated that leaders do not prefer 360 degree feedback tools. The leaders prefer to use continuous conversations as a method to interact with followers, to gather real time feedback on whether followers perceiving them to be trustworthy. A new model introduces a process to help leaders and future leaders was then developed.

## **Keywords**

Building trust, uncertainty, self-awareness, strategic foresight, leadership

## Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work.

It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Student Name: Desigan Brentin Govender

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research Problem

## 1.1 Scope of the Research

Businesses today operate in environments that have regulatory, economic, social and political uncertainties (Maswanganyi, 2016, Morton & Blair, 2016, Pazvakavambwa, 2016). In such times of uncertainties, a leader should focus on uncovering the unknown within their environment and lead their business forward. They should move from the unknown into the known, since the known begins to build a level of certainty. Increasing the level of certainty would enable the leader to be more decisive in their actions. Navigating through times of uncertainty requires trust, a crucial component of having followers work towards a common goal (Agote, Aramburu & Lines, 2016; Grover, Hasel, Manville & Serrano-Archimi, 2014; Parris & Peachey, 2013). For leaders to become aware of the trust they have with followers, it's crucial for them to be able to cognitively process if they are being perceived as trustworthy (Sendajaya, Pekerti, Ha'rtel, Hirst & Butarbutar, 2016).

The intriguing question that is explored in this research is (during the rapid pace of change), how have leaders enabled themselves to build trust in followers while forming their decisions? To answer this question, this research study aims to understand how leaders are able to use their cognitive abilities of self-awareness. By further exploring how leaders navigate through times of uncertainty through gathering information from followers to enable themselves to be effective. Finally, this research study aims to understand how leaders' can use strategic foresight to make their decisions. Leading to forming their strategy. This research will attempt to guide future leaders on the use of self-awareness to apply strategic foresight to build trust and lead effectively in times of uncertainty. Figure 1 illustrates the direction of this research study

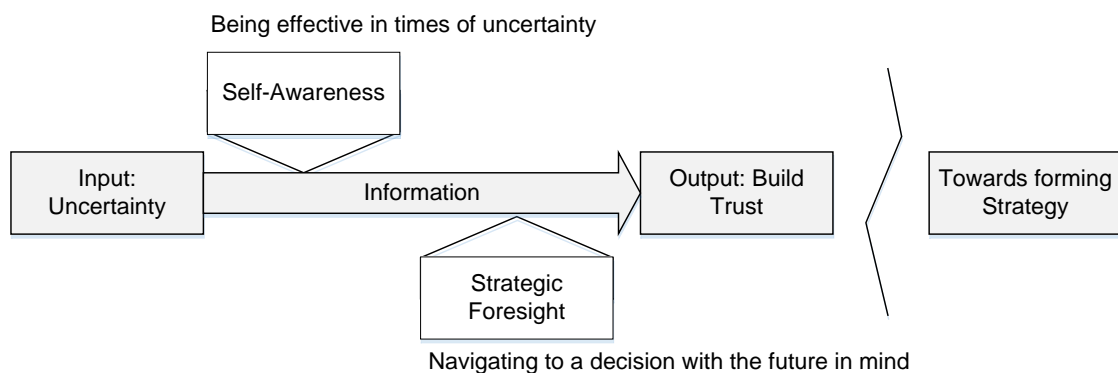


Figure 1: Illustrates a graphical view for the intentions of this research.

Self-awareness and strategic foresight are evolving literature topics, for clarity, a brief explanation of these concepts are described below (1.1.1 & 1.1.2). These concepts are further explained and discussed in the literature review in Chapter 2.

### **1.1.1 Self-awareness**

Self-awareness has been described as an important factor for leadership success (Sturm, Taylor, Atwater & Braddy, 2014) showing its influence on decision making and its influence on others. Great leaders who understand their environments (Goleman, 1998) are able facilitate discussions by navigating through emotional hurdles to make sense of what is happening around them. Although this a challenge, it is actually common sense that is forgotten in times of uncertainty and high pressure situations (Romanowska, Larsson, & Theorell, 2014). The evolvement of self-other feedback by Taylor (2010) and later followed by Braddy, Gooty, Fleenor and Yammarino (2014) and then even later by Hansbrough, Lord and Schyns (2015) found that real time self-other feedback provides immense value in leadership development.

### **1.1.2 Applying Strategic Foresight**

The positioning of strategic foresight induces conversational activity; creating room for leaders to interpret their environment (Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013) and re-configure challenges into productive outcomes (Sarpong, Bi and Amankwah-Amoah, 2016).

Strategic foresight is a process that involves people and their experiences through the process of indicating weak signals (Maertins, 2016) whilst gathering feedback. The movement from strategic planning to strategic foresight is a step forward in the field of strategy and leadership (Maertins, 2016; Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013). The nuances of this movement is bringing strategic foresight before strategic planning, when formulating strategy (or decisions), whilst being aware of the environment.

## **1.2 Motivation for the Research**

Firstly, today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the popular methods of sourcing feedback on trust is through the use of multi-source rating tools (surveys and assessments). Significant research has been done in this area by gathering feedback on trust. Over time two views have developed. Hansbrough et al. (2015) lean towards the levels of accuracy (which could be distorted by bias clouding previous positive or negative engagements) and how it is associated with a followers rating of a leader. Hence this remains a significant challenge on gathering feedback for leadership development.

The second view leads towards relevancy and timing where Braddy et al. (2014) have argued that feedback will be inconsistent between intervals of providing feedback due to the influence of recent events. Daher (2015) indicates research by Daniel Goleman, (a Physiologist and Science Journalist) that our brains go through an emotional reaction before applying logic when providing feedback or responses.

Although multi-source rating tools are perhaps a great tool for feedback, it eludes to judgements being based on historical information. Interpreting follower's feedback as the events unfold (Hansbrough et al, 2015) should encourage sense making and articulation of the information received (Lawrence, 2015) upon making decisions for the future. The timing of self-other feedback (through surveys and assessments) may not be relevant or accessible (Braddy et al., 2014; Hasbrough et al., 2015) during times of uncertainty.

Without relying on formal feedback from followers, how do leaders navigate in these situations by forming decisions with minimal impact but increasing benefit? This research study seeks to provide an understanding of using real time feedback through the use of a leader's self-awareness with the application of strategic foresight.

Secondly, the pace of change attributes to many difficulties which leads to challenges to gather formal feedback between cycles. Leaders make decisions in the moment, and it goes without saying that accessibility to formal feedback may/or not be available or granted in all situations. Below are some of the effects where uncertainty prevails and where trust could play a crucial role in creating a positive outcome.

### **1.2.1 Towards Leaders in Business**

In the business world today, leaders are confronted with many decisions that need to be made within familiar or unfamiliar situations. Daher (2015) recognized that "The complexity and magnitude of globalization are changing the behaviours of global leaders, for what once worked no longer does" (p. 173). Leaders who make incorrect decisions based on information they have (Daher, 2015) or are self-serving and do not serve others (Sendajaya et al., 2016) or have poor relationships with follower to execute decisions (Agote et al., 2016) may not achieve the outcome they intend. In all situations this would negatively affect the performance of business and society.

### **1.2.2 Towards the future of our markets**

The World Economic Forum (2016) has found that "no country has ever achieved economic prosperity without urbanising" (p. 3) and emphasized that the route to urbanisation would bring numerous challenges. The route that needs to be followed requires rethinking around optimising economic, social and environmental conditions.

The World Economic Forum (2016) further explains that their ideology lies in the hand of the private sector; by creating business opportunities from the challenges faced in reaching this type of goal of urbanization. This will allow access to bigger markets and allows businesses to benefit from the economies of scale trading concepts. To work through these challenges appropriate foresight and relevant decisions would be required.

### **1.2.3 Towards the future of our Industries**

Chibaya (2016) expressed thoughts on the South African retail sector which is becoming claustrophobic with 2000 shopping malls covering 23 million squares meters. Over the year's South African business have ventured across borders to search for new markets with great difficulty. Chibaya (2016) indicates that the reasons for business failures are due to not formulating strategy or business decisions; that would have enabled them to adapt to "...a range of unfamiliar conditions and problems" (para. 10) within their new economic environment. To curb the challenges within the industry, businesses must revisit the value they offer to environments in which they exist.

### **1.2.4 Towards the future of Political and Environmental Issues**

Gordhan (2015) delivered a speech and cited that after 21 years of democracy we face the same six challengers as before. Of the six mentioned, the three challenges are relevant to future thinking which is dependent on trust as cited below (para 7);

*"Our cities continue to face the enormous challenges of service delivery, while keeping pace with an increasing demand placed on them mainly as a result of rising urbanisation, with metro municipalities' growing twice as fast as other smaller cities and towns."*

*"In some instances, the cities have tended to focus on the needs of their existing populations and struggled to anticipate and prepare for growth."*

*"The increase in urban poor means a continuous challenge of balancing the provision of social infrastructure versus economic infrastructure that will support inclusive and sustainable economic growth."*

The points above refer to a reactive reflection point of view; on the effect of not being able to curb the complexity or uncertainty of our challenges, nor being able to consistently evolve with the cycles of changes that leaders encounter or will continue to encounter. From a business perspective, trade-offs will continually exist between decision A and decision B in a moment in time. The effects of these decisions could be

to the detriment of followers, to businesses and society at large. In summary, the above points reflect the pressures on businesses, but more specifically how the leaders are surrounded by complex, uncertain and challenging environments.

“Combining insufficient self-awareness with power might have devastating consequences” (Romanowska et al., 2014). This also confirms that leaders face complex and challenging environments that are not clearly understood; or rather that they have a false sense of reality. Their lack of awareness could cloud their judgement and result in poor social and economic future outcomes and possible career derailment (Braddy et al., 2014) for themselves.

### **1.3 Purpose of the Research**

To summarise, it is said that change leads to uncertainty (Cullen, Edwards, Casper & Gue, 2014) and that there are barriers to overcome (Palazzo, Krings, and Hoffrage, 2012; Lawrence, 2015; Sarala and Vaara, 2010; Tenzer et al., 2014), and that followers perceive lack of trust in times of uncertainty (Grover et al., 2014). Furthermore departing from Lewin’s view that leaders need to have an understanding of themselves during change (Burnes, 2009). It therefore makes sense for leaders to have complete awareness of their abilities, emotions and their influence to make stronger decisions that will yield positive outcomes. To identify how, is the purpose of this research.

Since change is cyclical, with each cycle presenting new challenges to grow to new levels it is noted that the field of leadership is vast and constantly evolving with the uncertainty of needs to be dealt with. The results of the research study will add a new perspective to the literature within the leadership and strategy space, by enriching our understanding of how leaders enable themselves (self-awareness) to build trust and gather appropriate information (strategic foresight) in times of uncertainty.

#### **1.3.1 Existing Research**

Research on self-awareness covers a broad spectrum of self. Effective leaders, through introspection and reflection, can observe how others perceive them and how their actions and behaviours have impact on others (Showry & Manasa, 2014). They are aware of the emotions within their environments (Agote et al., 2016). The theory of self-awareness indicates that leaders who are in tuned with how others perceive them are far more effective at assessing themselves and their behaviour (Caldwell, 2009).

Various leadership styles have been researched and provide insight, however, Lawrence (2015) provided evidence that in a 2009 survey of 74% employees found that “...leaders never, rarely, or only sometimes are effective in implementing change” (p.

234). This field of theory has continually generated responses and debates; on the positive and negatives of its existence.

Encompassing the concepts of strategic foresight provides a view to a way of knowing the unknown, commonly referred to as identifying and interpreting opportunities by researchers (Rohrbeck & Schwarz., 2013; Sarpong & Maclean, 2016; Vecchiato, 2015). Since change is not linear (Lawrence, 2015), and comes in many forms, it cannot be controlled, nor can it conform to states of stability. Change exists on a continuum and waiting for the invisible hand to appear, as referred to by Adam Smith (Oslington, 2012), may not be our best option. The evolvement of a leader in changing circumstances places emphasis for a leader to adapt.

It is evident that there is a link between self-awareness and strategic foresight, for where self-awareness refers to being aware of your surroundings and strategic foresight referring to being aware of weak signals.

### **1.3.2 Research Objectives**

The first objective of the research is to determine how self-awareness influences a leader's decision making process.

The second objective is to determine how a leader perceives their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty.

The third objective is to determine how leaders have enabled themselves to engage with followers' perceptions and further prepare themselves for times of uncertainty.

The fourth objective is to determine how leaders form relationships (with trust) to gather information when forming strategy.

### **1.3.3 Research Delimitations**

The delimitations indicate the shortcomings and constraints which define the scope of this research study. This research focuses on the engagement of leaders with followers in times of uncertainty and interviewing leaders within South Africa. The research study is limited to Gauteng for accessibility; within time constraints of conducting this research. The scope was limited to leaders in South Africa due to the uncertainty conditions each industries faces. Although the selected leaders are from different industries; the views of leadership from an academic view is largely similar. The similarities of their discussions are the ley learning points and that their decisions have been made in line with relevant strategy. Referring to chapter 4 will provide more in-depth information.



#### **1.3.4 Research limitations**

This qualitative research study used interviews as the primary method of data collection. There were three limitations. Firstly, the data collected represents data for a moment in time (cross sectional study) and not gathered over period of time (using a longitudinal study) due to time constraints of the research study, therefore unable to collect or analyse leader involvement in building trust with their followers. Secondly, leaders were asked to reflect on a moment of uncertainty that may be induced by personal biases. Thirdly, due to time constraints and the structure of the research study it was not possible to validate the accuracy of the leader's comments with their followers. Although these limitations existed, the data collected from leaders and their engagement with followers is the focus. Therefore, the researcher does not believe that this would be a threat to the research findings, especially given the exploratory nature of this study. For more information on the limitations and assumptions made, refer to Chapter 4 section 9.

#### **1.3.5 Research Approach**

To investigate the research question theory was drawn from three literature streams. The first was literature on the theory of self-awareness, the second was literature of styles of leadership, and the third was literature on the concept of strategic foresight. Thereafter followed a qualitative research study where 14 leaders were interviewed. They all conduct business in South Africa and have made decisions in times of uncertainty. Their insights are categorised in Chapter 5 and later discussed in Chapter 6.

This research is not aimed at producing a grand theory that will solve all challenges that leaders face, but to offer a new perspective on building trust using a leader's self-awareness and the applicability of strategic foresight when forming strategy; namely pulling together information, through insights and perspectives from followers to make a decision in times of uncertainty.

Chapter 2 will discuss the themes of self-awareness, unpacking awareness, perception, sense-making and the thinking of strategic foresight, while illustrating the involvement of the theories and concepts. Chapter 3 will go a level deeper into the purpose of this research study and discuss the thought process behind the research questions and the objectives associated with it. Chapter 4 will provide insight into how the research was planned, the research journey that was followed, leading up to finalising the results. Chapter 5 will provide the results, which will unpack the insights gained from the fourteen interviews with leaders. Chapter 6 will provide a discussion of the findings unpacking the interpretations, and providing comparisons with academic theory. Thereafter, the



research is concluded with Chapter 7 where the Trust formation model to manage uncertainty will be discussed and shown how to apply.

Finally, this research study will support any leader, engaging with followers during times of uncertainty, who has a view of producing a productive outcome and improving the lives of others.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

### 2.1 Introduction

Following on from Chapter 1, the purpose of this research study is to enrich our understanding of how a leader, in times of uncertainty, is able build trust that will enable themselves (self-awareness) to gather the appropriate information (strategic foresight) to form (or execute) their decision. Although strategy has many parts (discussed within this chapter) it is not the intended focus of this research but provides the backdrop for when decisions will be made.

This literature review provides a theoretical base to understand current research and how the concepts about what it means to be an effective leader have evolved over the years. More importantly the literature review describes how leaders enable themselves (self-awareness) to build trust and gather appropriate information (strategic foresight) in times of uncertainty.

The literature review begins by discussing the importance of trust, and further follows the literature journey as shown in Figure 2 of reviewing the concepts in relation to building trust.

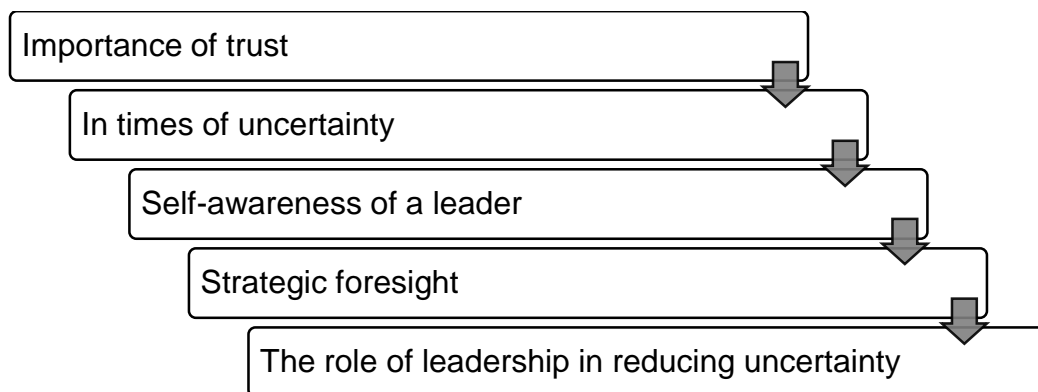


Figure 2: Unfolding the Literature review

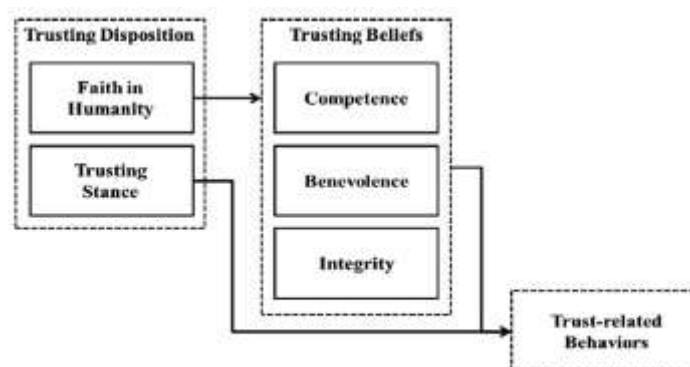
## 2.2 The importance of trust

Earning someone’s trust should be a proud moment. Leaders lead followers (encompassing people, employees, customer, suppliers etc.) to achieve success; and followers are the most important part of the organization (Parris & Peachey, 2013). However, leaders and followers believe they can read each other and can judge whether they should trust a person or not. In this case we focus on the leader. As argued by Eckel and Wilson (2004) people vary in their cognitive abilities to make an accurate judgement on trust, but rather judgements of trust are made on the conditional elements of what they perceive.

### 2.2.1 Defining trust

Before elaborating on the importance of trust, let us take a step back and understand the definition of trust, when it was revised in the late nineties, “Trust is the psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions of another....” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998, p. 395). Shadowing this formal definition of trust, it would seem that if trust was a tangible object it could be likened to the motor oil that allows the parts of an engine to move without any friction, and propelling the car to go in the intended direction.

To unpack trust in its simplistic form, this would be an individual making a judgement of whether to trust or not to trust. Equally, there would be two likely scenarios. The first being a person’s individual attitude which is influenced by his\her moral or religious beliefs or viewing of external appearances, whilst the second scenario is based on past behavioural experiences (Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). Yu, Saleem and Gonzalez (2014) added that judgement for trust is not only about external (physical) appearance but also internal cognitive abilities of competence, benevolence and integrity – adopting their definition from the trust model conceived by McKnight and Chervany (shown in Figure 3) in 2002.



Model adapted from McKnight and Chervany (2002); some components from original model are not included.

Figure 3: Trust model (Yu et al., 2014)

This is in line with the purpose of this research study, which is to assess trust in real time and to establish how that departs from a solid relationship. Mcknight, Cummings and Chervany (1998) put it bluntly when they say that trust should be developed upon the first interaction between a leader and follower.

### 2.2.2 Followers perceiving trust

Followers will follow the information they perceive to form a guide on how they choose to follow a leader (Taylor, 2010). Followers will perceive the trustworthiness of a leader in the present moment and will form an understanding of how a leader will portray their trust and whether their interests would be harmed (Agote et al., 2016). The perceptions of followers are created by patterns of a series of dialogues (Lawrence, 2015). Followers observe leaders' behaviours and personality traits. By being coherent in the delivery of communication, trust builds between leaders and followers.

Trust can be perceived by followers through levels of competence, concern, openness, and reliability (Rousseau et al., 1998; Yu et al., 2014), which influence the level of trust that can be associated. A once off interaction induces an outcome of risk on whether to trust or not (McKnight et al., 1998), whereas on-going interaction of trust is an earned activity (Yu et al., 2014). However, once trust is violated at the beginning of the interaction it is seemingly more detrimental to the leader-follower relationship than if it occurred later. The recovery of trust in this instance becomes a lot harder (Grover et al., 2014) and requires effort from the leader to restore. Figure 4, illustrates the combination of the three phases of trust (Rousseau et al., 1998) with that of restoring trust (Grover et al., 2014) after trust declines.

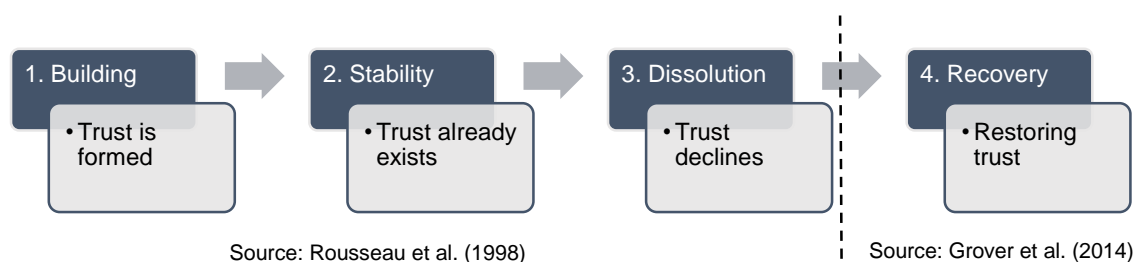


Figure 4: Formation of trust (combining the models from Rousseau et al. (1998) and Grover et al. (2014))

From a macroeconomic perspective, the world is largely about people (followers). World markets, entrepreneurs, governments, businesses and many other category types that would describe business activity, are largely made up of people in a group setting. Baek and Jung (2015) stressed that social (interpersonal) trust influences group (institutional) trust. Drawing on one of the cognitive components from the trust model by McKnight and Chervany, and formation of trust by Rousseau et al. (1998) and Grover et al. (2014); it

is a simple matter because leaders have the ability to build trust or to destroy trust. It is their awareness of their actions that could shift the perceptions they create with followers. Leaders who express their trustworthiness (Agote et al., 2016); are cognisant of their followers and are less likely to threaten the important values held by followers. This would be the ideal state.

## **2.3 In times of uncertainty**

The use of the concept, uncertainty in this research provides the context in which this research study takes place. The concept of uncertainty is diverse and broad but it is the focal point of this research. The focus is placed on business activity through the cycle of change. Since change is not linear but cyclical (Lawrence, 2015) and with change in economic activity of ups (peaks) and downs (troughs) (Bloom, 2014), leaders look towards formulating strategy to counter such uncertainties.

### **2.3.1 Defining uncertainty**

Bloom (2014) cited a definition of uncertainty from 1921 by Frank Knight as "...uncertainty is peoples' inability to forecast the likelihood of events happening" (p. 154). Consistent with this definition is that every journey that a leader transcends on, at some point or another, a leader will face certain decisions in order to move forward. When facing decisions filled with uncertainty, there is a level of risk that is attached to it, in order to uncover the unknowable (Huang & Pearce, 2015). A clique that would be synonymous with this view point, is that when the chips are thrown up into the air no one would exactly know where each chip would fall, or which chip would be first to fall, or what sequence each chip would fall in.

The underlying logic of uncertainty is that there is a gap between the knowledge that is known and what is unknown (Hilemersson & Jansson, 2012). Drawing on the iceberg concept; where a portion of the iceberg is visible (known) to human eye but the portion of the iceberg that lies beneath the ocean is hidden (unknown, presenting the uncertainty of how one needs to navigate with the iceberg in sight. Whilst Huang and Pearce (2015) drew a definition of uncertainty towards risk, where risk is known but cannot be quantified or where the risk cannot be known. A few years earlier, McKelvie, Haynie and Gustavsson (2011); Hilemersson and Jansson (2012) contrasted uncertainty to be that of three aspects (Milliken, 1978): firstly - the state; the inability to assign probabilities to the likelihood of future events, secondly - the effect; a lack of information about cause and effect relationships; and thirdly - the response; an inability to predict what the outcome of a decision might be. Hilemersson and Jansson (2012) viewed uncertainty is

a “lack of relevant experience for future acts rather than lack of information in making a decision on a future actions” (p. 98). Cullen et al. (2014) expressed that uncertainty will be experienced from the moment information is ambiguous and or unclear during change, and change will create uncertainty. Therefore change alone needs context, and followers will have a need for predictability to ease the uncertainty that exists to make them feel comfortable (Kacmar, Andrews, Harris & Tepper, 2013). Equally, uncertainty can be that of extreme crisis inducing dimensions that exemplify the situation and searches for a leader to adapt for survival (Hannah, Uih-Bien, Avolio & Cavarreta, 2009), or to prosper in uncertainty requires a different skills sets as opposed to managing the situation (Bussey, 2013). Hannah et al. (2009) placed emphasis on these dimensions. Figure 5 illustrates the need for leaders to adapt.

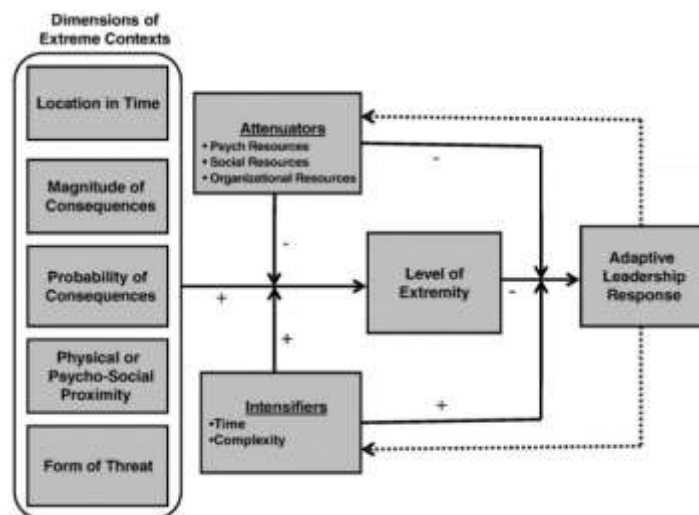


Figure 5: Typology of extreme contexts Hannah et al., (2009)

In summary, uncertainty is a broad concept but largely it is about information that is not known for leaders and followers. Using Cullen et al.’s (2014) definition of uncertainty becomes the central point for this research, where change creates uncertainty. In times of uncertainty followers will look toward leaders for the sense of structure and direction, whereas leaders look towards followers for information.

### 2.3.2 Understanding the barriers within uncertainty

As a leader ventures through the uncertainty of uncovering information, it would not be plain sailing through uncharted waters, but rather leading through barriers that need to be overcome. Change is contextual and creates uncertainty as found by researchers, Sarala and Vaara (2010) who outlined cultural factors which have an influence (positive or negative) on the transfer of knowledge of acquisitions across borders. Palazzo et al. (2012) referred to a leader being unaware of their own or follower’s unethical behaviour by disengaging on the morality of the situation. Tenzer et al. (2014) confirmed that

diversity of language creates a disconnect between people who appear insecure, feel threatened, show weakness and have no self-confidence. Lawrence (2015) found that when leaders do not seek or understand other perspectives this could also lead to loss of performance.

The process of understanding the barriers of uncertainty revolves around managing the unknown and navigating around those challenges. A way to reduce uncertainty where change exists is by gathering information and building up knowledge leading to insights on what is happening (Hilemersson & Jansson, 2012). With reference to Kurt Lewin's change theory (earlier scholar of change) of a three-phase approach (i.e. unfreezing --- > changing ---> refreezing) the foundation to handle change for many years has been provided. Burnes (2009) discussed Lewin's approach to change which was less about the change itself but rather about individuals learning about themselves.

It can be concluded that change leads to uncertainty (Cullen et al., 2014) and that there are barriers to overcome (Palazzo et al., 2012; Lawrence, 2015; Sarala and Vaara, 2010; Tenzer et al., 2014), and followers will perceive a lack of trust in times of uncertainty (Grover et al., 2014). With reference to Lewin's view (Burnes, 2009), it is very important that a leader understand themselves and to how they are perceived. This is the focus of this research study.

## **2.4 Self-Awareness**

Following on from Lewin's view point of understanding oneself during change (Burnes, 2009). Self-awareness theory has been formulated over many years through research; resulting in a lens to makes sense of what is to be human and a leader. This section of the literature review introduces the theory of self-awareness and how the thinking of self-awareness has evolved.

### **2.4.1 Defining self-awareness**

This theory of self-awareness goes back to as early as 1902, when Tawney (1902) explained that feelings are inescapable but often overlooked where situations unfold emotions which cloud judgement about being objective and not being able to reflect on the given surroundings. Later, Robert A. Wicklund and Shelley Duval cited in Ickes, Wicklund and Ferris (1973) indicated that self-awareness is about consciousness; directed to one's self (object) or away from one's self (subjects) towards its environment. The definition by Robert A. Wicklund and Shelley Duval implies and helps provide a view point that a leader is the object of focus for self-introspection whilst being the subject for perception from its surroundings.

Many definitions of self-awareness have followed since, indicating that high level of self-awareness allows leaders to have a deep understanding of themselves, what their emotions are and what will push the boundaries of their values and beliefs (Caldwell, 2009, Goleman, 1998; Suri & Prasad, 2011). Self-awareness has been grouped as a soft skill (social) taking second place behind hard skills (technical), where hard skills were previously seen as the motivation for success (Marques, 2013). Whilst self-awareness is a fundamental component of emotion intelligence; Goleman, Whetten and Cameron purported that self-awareness is critical to a leader's ability to communicate and build relationships of trust with others (as cited in Caldwell, 2009). There is also the competency view in which behaviours are required and influence how to engage with others (Segon & Booth, 2015). Another view is based on character flaws leading towards dark side tendencies (Harms, Spain & Hannah, 2011) (discussed further in 2.4.5.) This view states that an assessment of how they view themselves is consciously made. These leaders need to internalise their style of leadership on how they influence others (Sturm et al., 2014). Acceptance over what one excels at and where self-development is needed can facilitate a guiding light during time of uncertainty.

Subsequently, researchers have extended the view that is also incorporates evaluating one's self with how others perceive their influence (Gill, Ramsey, & Leberman, 2015; Romanowska et al., 2014). Caldwell (2009) supported this view by saying; "Self-awareness includes the degree to which we are sensitive to how we are perceived by others" (p. 395). Taylor (2010) reviewed two components of self-awareness, understanding one's self and understanding how one is perceived by others. By understanding the latter Taylor (2010) suggests leaders will be able to anticipate and predict (without needing a formal measurement) what others perceive them to be. Caldwell (2009) offered a stronger perspective (on perceiving others) to be that of reflecting on what is happening in the moment and responding accordingly. The identity theory model (Figure 6) by Burke (as cited by Caldwell, 2009) provides a good visual appearance of a leader being placed at the centre of the environment, in this case in times of uncertainty.

The theory of the identity process control system, defined by Burke (Caldwell, 2009) display the identity process control indicating four parts in the direction of an output. Burke defines a person as part of the identity theory. This can be likened to a leader and the challenges a leader faces with uncertainty. Providing the case to build trust.



Figure 6 indicates Burke's identity theory model.

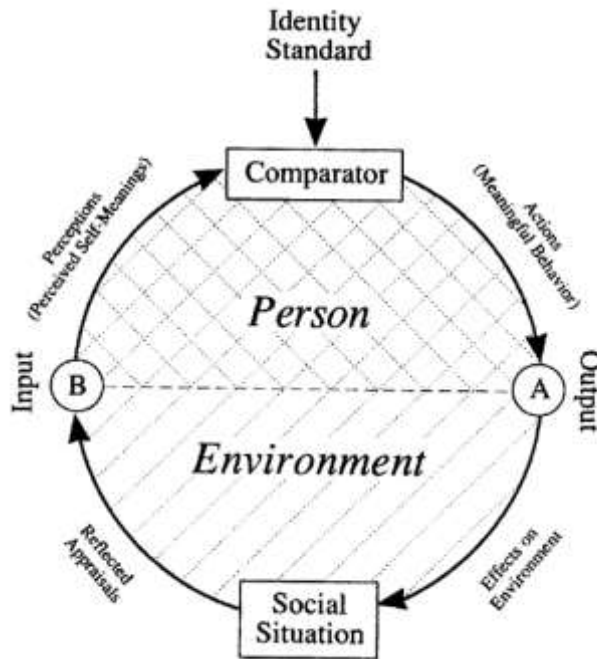


Figure 6: Identity process control system (Caldwell, 2009)

After closely reviewing the identity process control system and the identity theory model, for its purpose; the identity process control system can be further adapted to understand the process of the leader (person) in times of uncertainty (environment) and the trust that can be formed. Figure 7 shows an adapted version of the identity process control system and the four self-awareness phases to makes sense of the uncertainty.

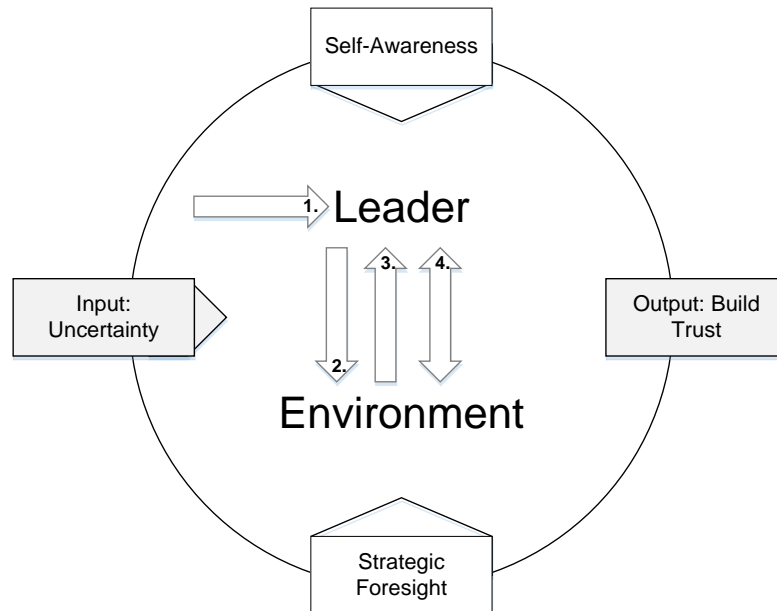


Figure 7: Building the Trust formation model (Self-Adapted)

Figure 7 indicates that the leader (in the position of the person) will undergo at some point four evaluation phases of;

- (1) Understanding one's self through introspection,
- (2) Understanding others (followers) through empathy, and
- (3) Understanding how others (followers) perceives them through feedback and reflection.
- (4) Having alignment between self and others (followers) ratings.

Discussions on the above points are elaborated on below;

#### 2.4.2 Understanding one's self

The journey begins through introspection, a state of mind that forces leaders to think about how they emotionally behave and act in certain situations (Showry & Manasa., 2014). Ashford, Johnson and Sluss (as cited in Caldwell, 2009) stated that one's identity defines one's self-worth to others and to one self. To visualise a new future for followers, leaders need to look inward and study one's self and find their core beliefs and values. Furthermore, by a leader having a firm understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses (Showry & Manasa, 2014; Suri & Prasad, 2011) they can assess whether to leverage on their strengths or acknowledge their weaknesses by accepting what they do not know, and decide to develop or acquire. Caldwell (2009) cited Fishben and Ajzen theory of reasoned action (Figure 8), that could help a leader to understand their beliefs and attitude ultimately forming their behaviours. Suri and Prasad (2011) states this clearly "As awareness improves, one begins to see inner motivating forces like what drives individuals, their passions and values, and how these affect their thoughts, feelings and actions and that of others" (p. 9).

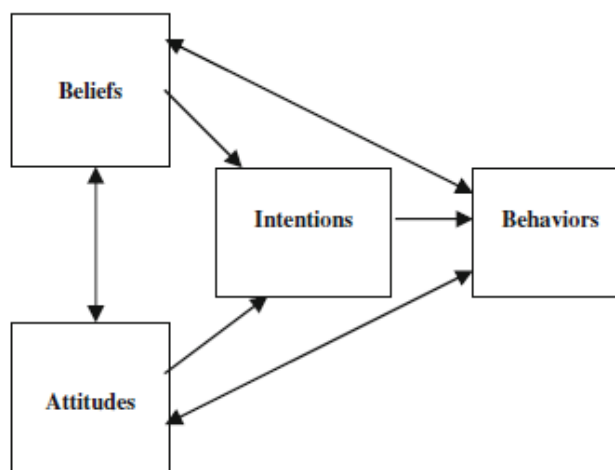


Figure 8: Theory of reasoned actions (Caldwell, 2009)

Leaders who have a firm grasp of their core beliefs can cognitively understand their values and what drives them to succeed. Ladkin (2008) expresses three components that simplify the process of introspection and this aligns with the context of this research.

<b>Component</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Mastery</b>	Having understanding of one's context and situation and understanding one self.
<b>Coherence</b>	Having congruence in ones thoughts and communications on purpose and direction
<b>Purpose</b>	Having cognition of serving the goal that will be in the best interest of followers.

*Table 1: Process of introspection (Ladkin, 2008)*

Ones understanding of one's self is achieved, the literature review moves on the importance of understanding others in times of uncertainty.

### 2.4.3 Understanding others

Empathy, a component of emotional intelligence, helps with diagnosing nonverbal cues to help a leader understand the links between follower emotions and behaviours (Holt & Marques, 2012). This closely aligns to sensing, a soft skill that can be learnt over time (Marques, 2013). Equally, a leader can use nonverbal cues to understand a follower's behaviour which can stimulate the growth of the leader-follower relationship to grow (Pryke, Lunic & Badi, 2015; Taylor, 2010).

Emotional intelligence, commonly known as EQ is based on a theory that has been investigated since the 1990's and has become prevalent in the workplace due to research which determined a strong link with business performance. By considering the theory of emotional intelligence, its relevance can be seen in the context of leaders who form teams, teams who form companies, companies who form partnerships. The common element between the individuals at these different levels are emotions (Khalili, 2012; Pryke et al., 2015).

In times of uncertainty, understanding emotions and actions is important; and the theory of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998) would appear to be a journey that leaders would venture on by following through on the different components of this theory to understand themselves. The following describes the components of this theory; (1) Self-awareness, describing the degree of understanding one's emotions and the impact that it has on themselves and on others. (2) Self-regulation, a process of internalising their emotions into constructive rational outcomes as opposed to reacting on impulse. (3) Motivation, the inner drive to achieve more than the status quo. (4) Empathy, being

mindful of others and their feelings and adapting to them. (5) Social skill, the ability to combine the above components to form relationships with individuals and situations to achieve the outcomes in mind.

Another definition of emotional intelligence by Mayer and Salovey (cited in Dabke, 2016; Farh, Seo & Tesluk, 2012) is having the leaders use their cognitive abilities to monitor themselves and others thinking and actions. The process Mayer and Salovey described is using their ability based model of four components to understand the given situation; (1) Reception and recognition of own and others emotions, (2) Using emotions to enhance reasoning, (3) Interpreting and analysing the emotions involved, and (4) manage emotions of one's self and in others that enhance emotional and intellectual growth. Consistent with the ability model is that by gathering information from followers reduces the uncertainty. Emotional intelligence can also be considered when dealing with gender and age differences (Kalili, 2012). Equally, Emotional Intelligence has been found useful in building relationships between leaders and followers (Pryke et al., 2015). Various researches infer (Dabke, 2016; Gill et al., 2015; Goleman, 2004; Khalili, 2012; Taylor, 2010) that emotional intelligence is linked to awareness and understanding of one's self. The components of emotional intelligence help leaders to work through their emotions whilst being cognisant of others emotions' and feelings (Goleman, 1998).

The emotional intelligence model by Goleman and the ability model by Mayer and Salovey have one aspect in common viz. of existing on a continuum (Farh et al., 2012). This continuum moves from perceiving emotions to regulating emotions. Largely regulating the emotions to a neutral base by cognitively changing the meaning of the situation and depending how well the situation is regulated, the attributed level of information will be provided (Parke, Seo & Shref, 2015). Leaders who are successful at this would be able to navigate emotionally filled contexts, experiences and interactions (Farh et al, 2012) with ease.

As always, there is a downside to the upside of heightened emotional intelligence that leads leaders to be successful at handling emotions and to regulate it towards an intended objective. The downside in this case refers to being highly competent on emotions but using abusing the intentions in an unethically manner (Segon & Booth, 2015).

#### **2.4.4 Understanding followers' perceptions and achieving alignment**

To understand how one is perceived by others, begins with reflection. Referring to (Figure 7) points 3 and 4 are discussed here. Showry and Manasa (2014) described reflection of one's self is learnt through others and cannot be learnt in isolation but

through social interaction with others; by being sensitive and interpreting the clues that others provide (Marques, 2013) that result in unspoken messages but are indicative of clear signs of the influence you have on them (Taylor, 2010). Leading onto self-reflection is only visible once the leader has cognitively made the agreement with one's self to receive how followers perceive them (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012; Ybarra, Kross & Sanchez-Burks, 2014). The process of recognising how followers perceive their leaders is only as valuable as the willingness to accept and internalise the information being received. Consequently, a large dependency on a leader's effectiveness involves being able to understand followers' perceptions of them to maximise their interaction with followers (Strum et al., 2014; Koning & Kleef, 2015).

Kenny and Depaulo (in their 1993 study - as cited in Strum et al., 2014) found that how individuals viewed themselves is how they believed others to view them. This would present challenges in leading others today. Taylor (2010) differs from Kenny and Depaulo's view points and asserts that leaders must be cognisant of the perception of followers to achieve greater levels of extrinsic appreciation from followers. This is now imbedded in the theory of self-awareness and referred to as self-other rating agreement (SOA) which represents the congruence between how leaders view themselves in comparison to how others perceive them (Brady et al., 2014).

The easiest and most simplistic method of perceiving others is to be one self in front of others. Drawing on behavioural integrity in which Simons (1999) and (later cited in Simons, Leroy, Collewaert & Masschelein, 2015; Dineen, Lewicki & Tomlinson, 2006) refer to being credible and congruent being their words and actions. Leroy, Palanski and Simons (2012) enforces to keep one's word and to not misrepresent themselves. In times of uncertainty followers look towards leaders for cues to reduce uncertainty and subsequent research have found leaders' behavioural integrity influences employee perceptions (positive or negative) of leaders' trustworthiness (Dineen et al., 2006; Leroy et al., 2012; Sendajaya et al., 2016). Social exchange theory provides a lens to interpret continuous application of behavioural integrity from the leader which would re-enforce the trustworthiness from the follower (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2015).

Referring back to the identity theory model (Caldwell, 2009) that has been adapted into building the Trust formation model (Figure 7), if the leader should be in alignment with followers (indicated by the environment) it would indicate heightened levels of behavioural integrity. The social exchange theory complements this research study on how leaders are enabling themselves to build trust with their followers through understanding situational behaviour (Hinkin and Schriesheim, 2015).

Coherent actions by leaders would aid in building trust in their followers. Agote et al. (2016) emphasises that trusted leaders influence followers positively.

#### 2.4.5 Consequences of not being aware

Being aware seems like common sense, however, not being aware seems likely and is commonly referred to as self-deception. In self-deception the importance of understanding one's own humanity and the reasoning to value the importance of building relationships diminish and people (followers) are seen as objects (Cadwell, 2009). Paulhus (cited in Harms et al., 2011) identified the "Dark Triad" of narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism based on supposedly dark traits of a leader which could lead to poor performance and ineffective leadership. These could imply consequences where followers have negative views or hostility towards a leader and could result in derailment of their objectives or even their careers (Braddy et al., 2014).

Being confident in one's abilities provides confidence to followers, but, it's the level of confidence that could suppress the recognition of what is happening around the leader Vourrauer and Ross (1999). Harms et al. (2011) indicated that high self-confidence could lead to being dismissive of negative information whilst low self-confidence could bring on defensiveness. Each delaying the abilities to adapt and respond in times of uncertainty.

#### 2.4.6 Dangers of being fully aware

The possibility of being fully aware of their actions, emotions and behaviours would occur if a leader is in full control of the situation and able to regulate their emotions for their own gain. The theory of emotional sincerity (Caza, Zhang, Wang & Bai, 2015) gives awareness to how leaders can control their display of emotion whilst differing from how they actually feel. The components of emotional sincerity comprises of, (1) Genuine – the actual emotion being felt, (2) Deep acting – immersing themselves to feel the emotion and then expressing it, (3) Surface acting – falsifying the desired emotion without wholeheartedly expressing it. Leaders who project their appearance for social approval will attempt to control the impression they make or worry on what followers may think of them (van Bommel, van Prooijen, Elffers & Van Lange, 2012), which unfolds the theory of public self-awareness.

Whilst Caza et al. (2015) cited that followers can recognise the level of sincerity that a leader is able to display and this will have a positive or negative effect on the leader follower relationship. Pryke et al. (2015) confirms that emotional intelligence aids in building good relationships between leaders and followers. Placing a large reference on

emotional sensitivity (of perceive others emotions) and emotional expressiveness (expressing their own emotions).

By understanding one's self in the context of self-awareness, a leader can deal with uncertainty by tackling impossible problems using cognitive and rational methods (Romanowska et al., 2014). Daher (2015) supports this view, that organisations need leaders who can adapt and work in ambiguous environments.

To summarise, by describing self-awareness in to the different phases provides a view of the different levels of interactions that extend the leaders awareness from self to others. Understanding these can lead to the effectiveness of the leader in times of uncertainty. Following from the review of self-awareness this will be the linkage towards strategic foresight, and the role of the different types of leaderships.

## 2.5 Strategic foresight

Strategic foresight is a theoretical concept that has shown great that has received much attention in the past 10 years. Numerous researchers have studied this concept to understand its relevance on future decision making, cultivating culture and extracting value from this process (Bussey, 2013; Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013; Sarpong & Maclean, 2016). Building trust can be achieved through a leaders self-awareness abilities of understanding oneself, others and having alignment with others. Trust with followers can also be earned through defining the way forward (Agote et al., 2016) to reduce the uncertainty (Cullen et al., 2014)

The introduction of strategic foresight in this research is of a directional view to navigate to a decision with the future in mind, in times of uncertainty. Bussey (2013) prophesizes that the journey to futures thinking is through an activity of strategic foresight (See Figure 9). Tibbs (1999) and later Conway (2010) describes it begins with self – the leader (shown in Figure 10).



Figure 9: Situatina Sense Makina (Bussey, 2013)



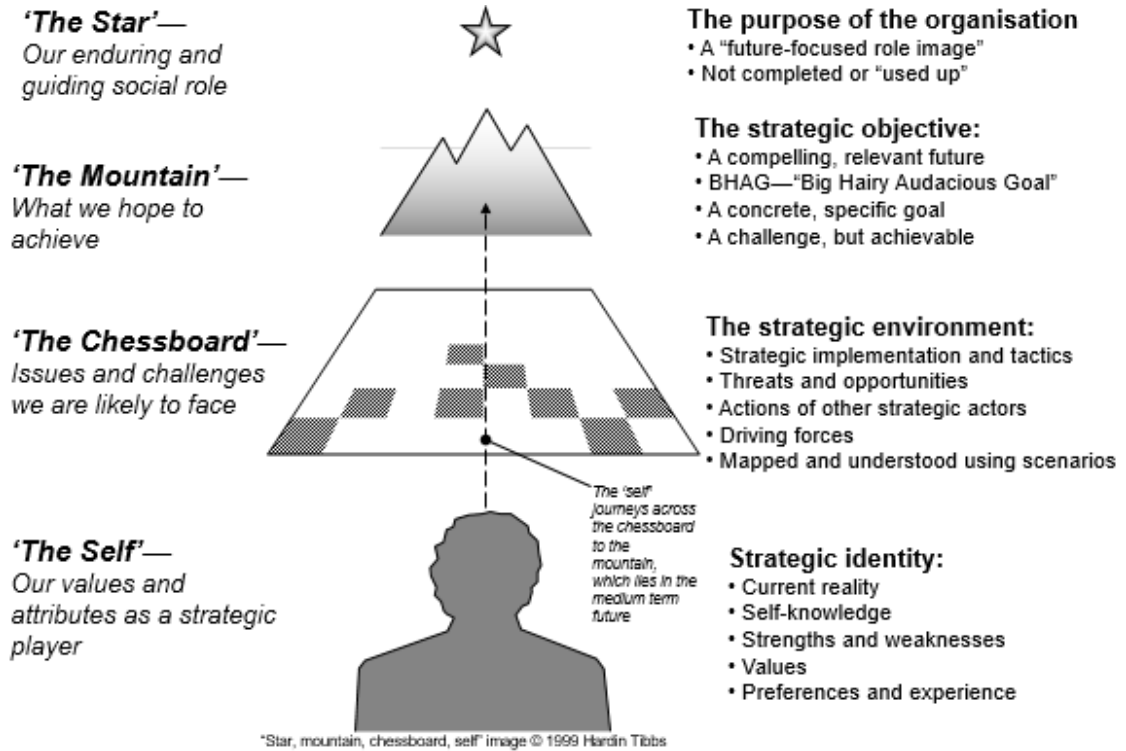


Figure 10: Star, Mountain, Chessboard and self-image (Tibbs, 1999)

The context of strategic foresight has developed from the evolution process of strategy to strategic management and from foresight to strategic foresight. This is briefly discussed briefly, before going into the details and application of strategic foresight.

### 2.5.1 From strategy to strategic management

The core of strategy is about formulating a plan that will allow one to achieve the desired end goal. Whilst strategy points to the direction and the undertaking of what has to be achieved, strategic management is the formation and execution on the strategy and remain largely a cognitive process (Sminia, 2009). Pulling into context for this research it is about managing those decisions that would not create uncertainty. Drawing on the 5P's Paradigm strategic system model by Pryor, Anderson, Toombs and Humphreys (2007) (shown in figure 11). Followers will perceive trust from leaders where decisions are coherent (Lawrence, 2015) and in line with purpose to be achieved and the principles that would not harm followers (Agote et al., 2016).

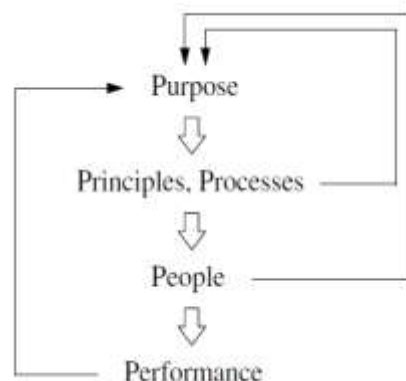


Figure 11: The 5P's Paradigm (Pryor et al., 2007)



### 2.5.2 From foresight to strategic foresight

Foresight is not about predicting the future but rather to have the ability to see through uncertainty by spot developments and trends; and to evaluate the different courses of action to shape the future (Sarpong & Maclean, 2016). The value of foresight could provide huge benefits if aligned to outcomes that are focused for the long term (Cunha, Clegg & Kamoche, 2012). However this is an individual view. Strategic foresight is an organization view of learning about the future using today's actions (Vecchiato, 2015). Evolving from the process of strategic foresight; is a collection process between a leader and a follower on gathering information and reducing uncertainty. Although one could argue that this information provided is the process of learning from hindsight (Nestler, Egloff, Kufner & Back, 2012), but its more about taking insight and applying future thinking through a reflective process of what the future might be. Ahloqvist and Kohl (2016) recommends foresight as a continuous activity with the process of forming strategic management.

### 2.5.3 Definition of strategic foresight

Igor Ansoff (as cited by Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013) claimed that strategic foresight is about identifying and scanning for changes that would appear as weak signals (problems). Strategic foresight becomes a process of seeing things differently from others; seeing alternatives that could generate multiple possibilities and inspire followers to achieve a new reality (Bussey, 2013). By scanning for changes within the environments leaders of organisation can reduce their blind spots, shows the need for self-awareness i.e. being aware of the problems they could potentially face during times of uncertainty. Strategic foresight is seen as a form of frequently conceptualising future orientated knowledge that could be used as leverage for future gain (Sarpong & Maclean, 2015) providing massive future value. The underlying concept of strategic foresight seems to be underpinned by social awareness and the need for creating value for humanity (Sarpong et al., 2016). Whilst strategic foresight is the process of gathering information, which normally is an activity associated with strategic planning – a process Rohrbeck and Schwarz (2013) argue that it is not inclusive of social or environment awareness but rather focused on the internal objectives of the company.

Elements of strategic foresight highlight that problems (uncertain contexts) do not exist within a vacuum but are interrelated to others. Adopting the thinking of strategic foresight is to reposition the logic of the uncertainty (Bussey, 2013, Cunha et al., 2012; Sarpong et al., 2016). It helps with being proactive. Responding to current contexts is about being reactive and not spotting potential vulnerabilities or blind spots leading to problems.

#### 2.5.4 Application of Strategic Foresight

Strategic foresight is a way of knowing the unknown. The formulation of knowing is through gathering of information from followers. Gasper (as cited in Sarpong et al., 2016) viewed that strategic foresight is a value creating activity and not just a theory. The word activity is interesting in this context and is synonymous with process, however, the word activity is the verb and action that induces strategic foresight. In this activity leaders and followers are rethinking the present and what the demands of the future will be and justify the decisions in line with organizational purpose. Ahlqvist and Kohl (2016) encourages us to have cognisance of strategic goals and organisation practices for they could form boundaries which limit thinking and the flow of knowledge. The challenge is to find the right balance to empower followers to think differently and have ownership of their ideas (Sarpong et al., 2016) within boundaries or to having a license to go over these boundaries.

To apply the process of strategic foresight involves complex system theorising and computing (if available) that adapts to real time information, which ends in a report. Since leaders do not have time to prepare volumes of information. We need leaders to make decisions about the future on what it is that influences the present without destroying the future, as opposed to predicting the future (Vecchiato, 2015). By initiating conversational activities which engage and foster creativity (Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013) with followers on the end points would create a space to push the boundaries with follower's beliefs and values (Bussey, 2013); to yield maximum value of what a new reality could be.

Since the process of strategic foresight (Sarpong et al., 2016) is facilitated through human behaviour, there is a strong focus on the cognitive processes of a leader to unfold the relations between the factors that shape the conditions of the uncertainty faced with followers. The inclusion of scenario provide a mental picture by inducing emotions to bring followers on board to define a future or a better way of reducing the uncertainty around them (Rohrbeck & Shwwarz, 2013). This discussion on the human component of strategic foresight is consistent with the reflection component of self-awareness.

Largely, strategic foresight becomes an emergent thinking process that should be built into the culture of an organisation, team or groups of followers. Mckelvey and Boisot (as cited in Sarpong et al., 2016) suggested that it could be used as an everyday activity.

## 2.6 The role of leadership in reducing uncertainty

In times of uncertainty many situational factors are involved. More in particular as shown in Figure 10 (Tibbs, 1999) places emphasis on the leader to induce strategic foresight, to reduce uncertainty which begins with the leader (Burnes, 2009). The identity model places the focus on the leader in times of uncertainty (Caldwell, 2009) for introspection and reflection, and a leader needs to adapt (Hannah et al., 2009) to conditions of the uncertainty. The reliance on the leader intensifies. Evolving leadership theory with different styles of leadership referring to handling of uncertainty and helping leaders understand their impact of their actions and behaviours has on others is of major importance (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Effective leaders transcend themselves (Goleman, 1998; Deichmann & Stam, 2015; Daher, 2015) from emotional consciousness, to contrasting transformational leadership embedding transactional leadership qualities, and leading across borders creating enabling and motivational environments by first understanding their followers.

### 2.6.1 Leadership styles

This section of the literature review explores the different styles of leadership and how these styles of leadership act as enablers for leaders during times of uncertainty. More specifically, how these styles manage follower and create trust in times of uncertainty are discussed.

Firstly, authentic leadership has a strong link with self-awareness of “knowing they self”; is motivated from within, is consistent with the values and beliefs which enables leaders to manifest growth for humanity (Sendjaya et al., 2016). Agote, et al. (2016) cited the definition of authentic leadership and translated it into four dimensions (1) Balanced Processing, (2) Internalised moral perspective, (3) Relational transparency and (4) Self-awareness. Incorporating these four dimensions, in contrast to an autocratic leader, would create an environment where positive emotions energize the participation of followers to contribute to reducing of uncertainty (Agote et al., 2016). Showry and Manasa (2014) expressed self-awareness under the traits of authentic leaders who are mindful of their ability of self and of the environment they operate in. Sendjaya et al. (2016) postulates that authentic leadership provides the link between moral reasoning and the moral action of carrying out the decision. The moral outcome influences how followers would perceive the leader.

Secondly, ethical leadership is described as being consistent within appropriate norms which are visible through a leader’s actions and relationships they form, whereas the effect of not being ethical increases self-interest activities and negative emotions leading

to uncertainty of followers (Kacmar et al., 2013). Being and conducting oneself as ethical stems from one's moral identity beginning with critical self-awareness on what would be right and wrong (Skubinn & Herzog, 2016). To Ashley et al. (2012) and Ybarra et al. (2014) point out that introspection is needed before reflection of ethical belief can be recognised, which could be used to motivate ethical conduct in self and others (Skubinn & Herzog, 2016).

Thirdly, servant leadership is a style of leadership which focuses on meeting the needs of followers (Lynch & Friedman, 2015) and creating a better tomorrow (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Whilst the belief of servant leadership is based on the love for people, there is close alignment to religious beliefs where Parris and Peachey (2013) suggest would conflict with contexts dealing with diverse religious backgrounds.

Fourthly, benevolent leadership, is the act of leading followers by encouraging and initiating positive change with the aim of achieving a common good for humanity (Karakas, Sarigollu & Manisaligil, 2013). Embracing the insights of benevolent leadership leads to deeper awareness of their purpose and the contribution they could add. Providing hope, empowering and asking appreciative questions creates positive environments and influences followers positively (Karakas et al., 2013). This indicates strong links to the trust model shown in Figure 3.

Fifthly, charismatic leadership described by Sosik, Chun, Zhu (2014) which is most effective in times of uncertainty as the leader becomes tuned-in with the environment and is able to relate to followers. Depending on the type of approach (serving others or self-serving), a leader's charisma could positively influence followers, if followers are able to recognise the way forward towards a collective goal (Sosik et al., 2014). Followers would perceive charismatic leaders as a saviour, someone that they can trust and believe in. However, conditional on the direction, followers would perceive the charismatic leader as destructive (using means to and end) should the collective goal be overshadowed by the leader's personal gain (Sendjaya et al., 2016). Depending on the cognitive or confidence levels of the followers, they could be drawn into the narcissistic behaviour without them even knowing it – the outcome would then be a false sense of security.

Sendjaya et al. (2016) upon concluding their research found no relationship between moral reasoning and action with that of an authentic leader. To put differently, it would seem that this draws a fine line of moral awareness that can be crossed easily resulting in the leader being perceived as either authentic or unethical by followers. By being perceived as unethical this goes against the findings of Hartog and Belschak (2012); in

which ethical behaviour of a leader is perceived as positive and further engages followers to be more self-expressive.

By being true to one's actions (and in alignment with behavioural integrity theory), and consistently displaying one's self as true to followers, leaders organically create positive and coherent perceptions (Agote et al., 2016; Leroy et al., 2012), which establishes the performance of followers to be positively influenced. Leroy et al. (2012) and Lawrence (2015) warn that in times of uncertainty or volatile conditions, the reliance is on the leader to provide stability and pacify followers through constant dialogue. Leaders who are authentic, who recognise their actions and their behaviours and extend their awareness towards decisions that encompass moral reasoning, could increase their levels of effectiveness in times of uncertainty.

### 2.6.2 Leaders sense making abilities

Emotional intelligence, a cognitive process to sense emotions by facilitating the recognition of emotions of oneself and the followers around them. Ybarra et al. (2014) found in their research that emotional intelligence is useful, but it does not mean it will allow one to be effective in all environments, e.g. in times of uncertainty. Over and above the emotional intelligence and leadership styles, described, there are other sensing abilities that could lead towards recognising vulnerabilities, weaknesses and challenges in times of uncertainty. This following section reviews the constructs that could be used for sense making.

Environments consisting of different cultures to a leader would require the leader to adapt to followers of different backgrounds (Daher, 2015). To learn a leader needs to suppress their personal bias by being mindful of the different value systems each culture would have (Stewart, Wilson & Miles, 2014). Under the concept of urbanisation, various communities and business would need to coexist (World Economic Forum, 2016). Amongst the many followers, will be leaders that will encompass the notion of moral intelligence and share the belief of benefitting others as opposed to themselves. Sendjaya et al. (2016) in their research defined moral reasoning as "those individual cognitive processes involved in determining what is right or wrong in a given situation" (p. 125). This empowers leaders to view ambiguous situations from multiple moral and social angles, while recognising their own moral values, guiding them to evaluate their process of making decisions that are transparent and are in the interests of others. Coupling behavioural integrity with moral reasoning could amplify positive emotions in building trust with followers, which could ensure that the right thing is always done.

By interacting with different cultures Stewart et al. (2014) suggest learning of "...how to act and how to interpret the action of others" (p. 118) while Daher (2015) suggests developing the right behavioural responses through social interaction. Daher (2015) defined social interaction as the orientation and emotional connection to others forming by relationships. Recognizing these cultural changes requires reflection from the leader and suggests that for this level of learning to occur; "know they self" and "knowing how others perceive you" become highly relevant. To put it differently, an opportunity to indicate willingness to learn and be a part of what followers' values are and to reach common ground is needed. The addition of context broadens the facilitation of emotional intelligence (Ybarra et al., 2014).

Contextual intelligence, another is cognitive process of understanding the limits of one's knowledge, and being able to adapt the knowledge required to manage the current context (Khanna, 2015) of uncertainty. In this context of uncertainty leaders are able to sense information (Boyle, Stankov, Martin, Petrides, Eysenck & Ortet, 2016) with the ability to see reason, form an understanding of what the vulnerabilities, weaknesses or challenges are and provide solutions for them. Or alternatively, sense information that is aligned to previous knowledge. By taking a more personal view of followers in times of uncertainty would be the visibility of nonverbal cues, i.e. facial expressions and body language movements (Frauendorfer, Schmid Mast, Nguyen & Gatica-Perez, 2014).

Sense making seems to play a role in a leader assessing his\her environment; from understanding the context, to the moral views and actions, to the cultural diversity, to the abilities to reason and having visibility on nonverbal cues. All these concepts are information driven constructs that could enable a leader to makes sense of the uncertainty in which s\he would find themselves in.

## **2.7 Summary**

The literature review indicates that the importance of trust from followers is underpinned by how they trust (Baek & Jung, 2015). The discussion of uncertainty indicated that the levels of trust between followers and leaders will decrease. During these times of uncertainty, leaders will have access to different leadership styles; and irrespective of the leadership traits, a leader is there to lead others. Each situation calls for the appropriate leadership style. Equally, leaders could adapt to tailor their approach to that of their followers, if they are cognitively aware of follower perceptions and of what is required for the situation. It is noted that followers will interpret the information they perceive; forming their attitudes towards the situation of uncertainty and choosing how they will follow their leaders (Cullen et al., 2014; Taylor 2010). Lack of transparency will



see followers perceive higher levels of uncertainty. A leader-follower relationship is similar to a buyer-seller concept, where an agreement to trade a belief is being substituted for a product or service but still needs to be delivered / received. The nature of authentic leaders builds trust with followers through being supportive and transparent in times of uncertainty (Agote et al., 2016).

Lewin's model indicates that the change begins with oneself (Burnes, 2009). Whilst in times of uncertainty, and considering the fast pace of change which becomes another variable that a leader needs to consider, while assessing his/her levels of self-awareness. The leader needs to become cognitively aware of themselves and the influence they have on followers, aiding in mobilising followers to aspire to achieve a common goal. Although strategy was discussed, this is not the focal point but part forms part of the backdrop for decisions to be made. For decisions to be made, information is largely important (once established information is provided). It is the aligning of decisions that ensures that a strategy will be successful. Strategy is a process that structures and guides organisations often formulated by leaders and executed by followers. In times of uncertainty, the strategy is only as good as the leaders and followers that are driving it. It is the leader's self-awareness that enables a leader to reflect, acknowledge and accept the information from the various sources (e.g. human behaviour, environment, trends etc.)

To be concerned about making sense of conditions that constantly change and constantly reflecting on the changing environment would be a method of countering the vulnerability of the uncertainty (Bussey, 2013). A natural progression is from the moment of uncertainty to using sense making to unravelling the details forming context, and navigating by using strategic foresight. This is a process that helps with understanding complex and uncertain environments, which includes the introduction of moral and humanity belief in strategic foresight. Creating a space for enquiry and learning and seeing the world through others instead of oneself, but with the intention of creating a better future based on what is happening today.

## Chapter 3: Research Questions

The literature included building trust in times of uncertainty. The literature showed that by combining self-awareness and strategic foresight captures the influence of a leader in building trust with leaders.

This research study is aimed at exploring academic research together with the experiences of leaders to provide insights on how leaders have enabled themselves to build trust with followers when forming their decisions in times of uncertainty.

A qualitative approach was used to analyse the responses from the leaders on how they enable themselves through self-awareness, perceiving, sensing and then formulating their decisions. The qualitative results provide an integrated assessment and understanding of the research purpose.

Chapter 1 indicates the purpose of this study against the backdrop of uncertainty and is provided below, once more.

Literature showed that change leads to uncertainty (Cullen et al., 2014) and that there are barriers to overcome (Lawrence, 2015; Palazzo, et al., 2012; Sarala and Vaara, 2010; Tenzer et al., 2014), and followers perceive lack of trust in times of uncertainty (Grover et al., 2014), and that there is a departure from Lewin's view of leaders needing to understand themselves (Burnes, 2009) during change. It therefore makes sense for leaders to have complete awareness of their abilities, emotions and their influence to make stronger decisions that will yield positive future outcomes.

To answer the main question of this research study; how have leader enabled themselves to build trust with followers when forming their decisions in times of uncertainty? The questions to respondents will draw insight from leaders on how are they able to use their cognitive abilities of self-awareness with exploring the application of strategic foresight in their decision making. The approach of these questions is extract information through a reflective and enquiring process (Agee, 2009).

The research questions have been composed using the self-adapted Trust formation process model that has been derived in Chapter 2.4.1 (refer to Figure 7). Figure 7 is built from Figure 1 that provides emphasis on the direction of this research study.



Research Objective 1:

**How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process during uncertainty?**

This research objective was aimed at understanding how self-awareness of a leader could add value in their decision making process in times of uncertainty

Research Objective 2:

**How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?**

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders are able to perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty.

Research Objective 3:

**How have leaders enabled themselves to engage with followers perceptions and further prepare themselves during times of uncertainty?**

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders have enabled themselves through recognising what their follower's perceptions (feedback) of them are.

Research Objective 4:

**How do leaders form relationships (with trust) to gather information when forming their decisions to formulate their strategy?**

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders form relationships to gather information whilst forming their decisions. Acknowledging that their decisions are a part of a series of decisions that will formulate their strategy, of achieving the intended objective.

## Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Design

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design of how this research study was structured to answer the central research question of how leaders have enabled themselves to build trust with followers when forming their decisions in times of uncertainty. The research design (shown in Figure 12) reveals the different research layers that underpinned this research study. The details, decisions and assumption made for the chosen research methodology is discussed in this chapter. This chapter also includes an overview of the population and unit of analysis, a description of the sample size, a description of how the questionnaire was designed, and how data was collected and analysed.

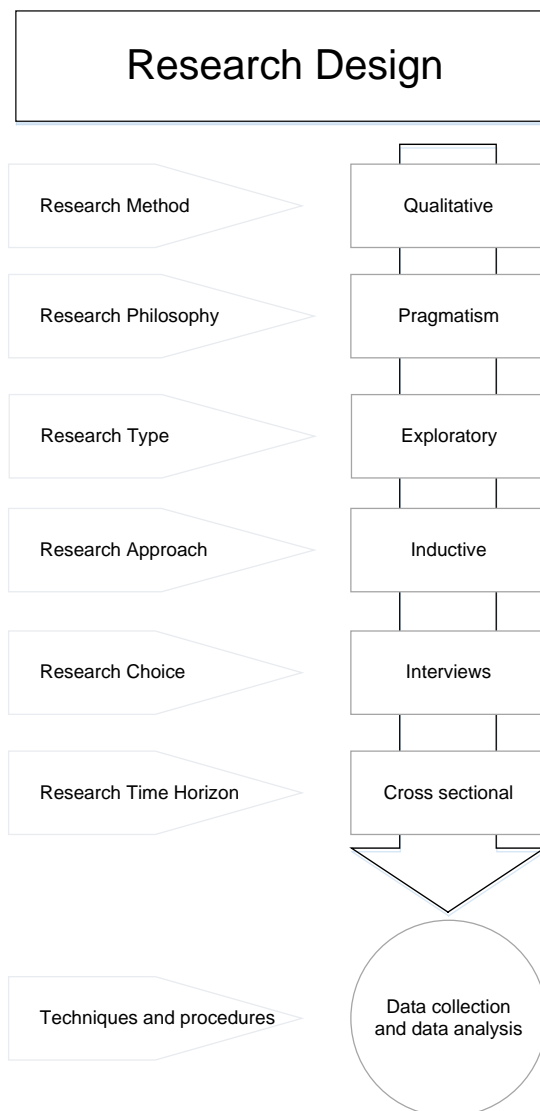


Figure 12: Research design for collecting data

## 4.2 Research Methodology

Inspiration was drawn from Gill et al. (2015) who proposed and developed a systems approach that was linked to sourcing information using existing theory as a foundation to draw from experiences that could add to the body of knowledge of what it means to be an effective leader, today. With the understanding that each situation a leaders face is different in context, Crouch and Mackenzie (2006) highlights “in order fully to understand that reality, we need to take into account its social context” (p. 485). Whilst, having received volumes of information after being transcribed into text was large, the aim of the information gathering process was to simplify the complex process of filtering of common themes. Recognising that the information is closely aligning to how the leaders have adapted to change and how they have formed their decisions.

The research followed a qualitative approach through a pragmatic lens of what was possible. Based on the literature review (Chapter 2) and the purpose (Chapter 3) that has been highlighted; an inductive approach was found to be suitable due to the nature of exploring and capturing experiences from leaders (Paley, 2010), whilst acknowledging that change is cyclical and what it means to be an effective leader is constantly evolving. Hence, there is a focus on interviewing leaders to be the primary source of information, drawing support from Vourrauer and Ross (1999) “Individuals possess a wealth of self-knowledge based on their past behaviors and their inner thoughts, feelings, goals, and intentions” (p. 416) and Paley (2010) “attitude measurement involves the attribution of belief” (p. 113). The analysing of themes from the data based on exploratory research principles.

The use of semi-structured interviews was used to meet with leaders one on one. The semi-structured interviews were structured to be conversational through a guiding interview questionnaire, unfolding key themes and questions probing for information (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). The semi-structured interview approach provided a face to face meeting that allowed the intangibles (style, tone, actions, wording, and environment) of the meeting to be noted, that a quantitative approach would not have provided.

The design of the questions was aimed at gathering information based on an exploratory study, with the aim of learning new insights on the key themes that could emerge from the leaders that are interviewed. With each interview adding information to the research, the conceptual idea of exploratory research theory provide a continual framework to evolve the questioning process, which is adapted from insights gained through out observations during the interview.

It was acknowledged that interviews would be regarded as the best source of information for a qualitative research study, and it was also taken into account that certain constraints from the leader will come into play whilst the interview took place, e.g. certain bias's being formed, the need to project a certain level of knowledge, not feeling comfortable in sharing personal experiences or not familiar with the theory of strategic foresight. For limitations see Chapter 4.9.

### **4.3 Population**

The population has been defined as all leaders conducting business in South Africa. The population as substantiated by Saunders and Lewis (2012) is a complete set of members from which the sample will be drawn from. Conducting business is defined as, a meetings between leaders and followers to make a decisions on a certain outcome. Followers, as described in Chapter 2 (2.2) is a collective of employees, customers, suppliers and peers. The exact number of leaders that makes up this population was not established and was deemed unknown for the duration of this research study. This decision was taken due to time constraints of concluding the research study.

No restriction has been placed on the type of leader that will be interviewed, nor the type of organisation, nor race, nor gender, nor age or based on any other conceived exclusions. A leader is meant to be agnostic across industries, as set out in the literature review (Chapter 2.6), and a leader forms a relationship with others based on influence with the intention of reaching a shared outcome (Agote et al., 2016). To this end, although the population would consists of leaders (the focus is not necessarily on the leaders and their status levels but rather on the experiences they share). Put differently, the leaders are individual who lead through others. The sample has been conceptualises as "cases" with unique experiences that have been framed by various circumstances of their experience that have allowed them to engage with their environment (Crouch & Mackenzie, 2006). To conclude, the sample of the population that was interviewed were leaders conducting business in South Africa and who lead through followers.

### **4.4 Sampling Method and Size**

In line with a qualitative research methodology the sampling methodology of non-probability sampling, was used without being able to establish a full list of the population (Saunders and Lewis, 2012). This sampling method was further suited for a qualitative research design of gathering insights, as opposed to providing statistical information. According to Baker and Edward (2012); Crouch and Mackenzie (2006), a small number of participants (between 12 and 20 participants) are needed for an inductive and

exploratory type of research study; however, this does not indicate an absolute. Drawing on Baker and Edwards' (2012) suggestion that 14 participants could gain a perspective of rich information for the interview, this became the plausible target. For the planning portion of the research the sample was defined to a list of 20 leaders; catering for availability and accessibility constraints during the four-week period, which was allocated for research interviews. The selection of the participants followed the purposive sampling method, which aligned with small sample groups under the qualitative research approach. This method allowed the researcher to select leaders to participate in the research. The rationale was to interview leaders across industries dealing with uncertainty, aiming for diversity.

#### 4.5 Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is focused on the leader. The leaders interviewed in this study ranged from individual contributors and team leaders (responsible for teams) to middle management (functional and business unit managers) to executive management (Directors and Managing Directors). The key aspect of this unit of analysis is to provide a diversity of insights that could be gathered on how a leader has adapted to conditions of uncertainty. Table 2 below provides an overview of the leaders interviewed and the industries in which they operate.

Leader	Industry
1	Customer Service Support
2	Automotive
3	Professional & Consulting Services
4	Business IT Services
5	Apparel & Fashion
6	Retail Marketing Solutions
7	Travel
8	Social Media Marketing
9	Information Technology and Services
10	Oil & Energy
11	Education & Schooling
12	Human Resources
13	Automotive Insurance
14	Personal Insurance

*Table 2: The diverse list of industries the leaders belong to.*

## 4.6 Method of Collecting Data

### 4.6.1 Introduction

Collection of data under a qualitative research method design is based on responses that are belief orientated through a network of sentences (Paley, 2010). The process of collecting the data went through different stages (described below) of building the guiding questionnaire to be used for the semi-structured interviews.

### 4.6.2 Guiding Interview Questionnaire – Design

Paley (2010) provided direction and some warning that although qualitative research studies through semi-structured interviews “deals with phenomena – meaning and experience” (p. 112) but it “cannot possibly be measured” (p.112) holistically. In view of Paley’s point, this research study should be conducted through observation whilst the leader is in a moment of uncertainty and should be followed through a process of evaluating the leader on how they make their decisions. Acknowledging the constraints of this research together with the leaders’ accessibility and availability, this was not possible.

For this reason, a standardized questionnaire was drafted based on the principles by Saunders and Lewis (2012) to guide the interview process and reduce research bias (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008). This acknowledges that the actual observations of a leader in times of uncertainty cannot take place. The questionnaire was structured in such a way to build a context of their leadership style, what uncertainty, trust and foresight meant to them.

The next step in developing the questionnaire was to formulate questions that would answer each of the research objectives leading to the central question of this research study. As per Chapter 3, the first research objective was on the leader’s self-awareness using introspection on strengths and weaknesses, their awareness abilities, real time improvements (feedback) and appreciation for the unknown. The questions for the second research objective was on reflection to uncover formation of trust and sensing. The questions for the third research objective were related to perceptions and sensing to uncover the alignment of the perceptions of followers and their ability to manage the uncertainty based on such perceptions (in real time). The questions for to the fourth research objective were based on strategic foresight and that of strategy.

In summary, the questionnaire contained a list of questions in the format of, (1) opening questions to build context on the leader being interviewed (interviewee), (2) open format questions supported by theory – allowing the interviewee to share their experiences, (3)

closed format questions supported by theory – allowing the researcher to narrow down the experience shared.

#### 4.6.3 Guiding Interview Questionnaire – Pilot Testing

The questionnaire went through three pilot tests to tweak the questions being asked to ensure validity and to ensure that a maximum response could be attained. Of the three pilots, the first interview was informal whilst the second and third were formal. The first interview (informal) was not planned and was spontaneous after meeting a close friend who just returned from China. At the time literature on sensing was to be added to Chapter 2, i.e. cultural intelligence was being researched. Seeing this as an opportunity to test my new found understanding of cultural intelligence, I soon realised that the theory I was so proud of, was not relevant. At this stage, the guiding questionnaire was not available and no recording or transcribing could take place. However, while reflecting on this experience, the theory of self-awareness, strategic foresight, cultural intelligence etc. had to be omitted from my guiding questions and reworded in layman's terms without losing the meaning originally intended. This interview did not yield any data that could contribute to the study. However, it was a test of self-learning from this experience which contributed to the development of the guiding questionnaire.

The first pilot interview (formal) was conducted using the revised guiding interview questionnaire, after terminology and word phrasing had been tweaked. The first interview was a leader from the Customer service support industry, known as leader 1. The opening questions formed the right context in the mind of the interviewee, recalling a time of uncertainty. The interviewee was calm and engaged. The interview lasted 96 minutes with manual transcription and no voice recording. Research objective 3 question 2 required some tweaking and needed to be simplified. The lesson learnt from this experience was that the interviewer had to be better prepared without fumbling with writing, listening and speaking all at once. It was also realised that audio recordings of the interviews were a pivotal component of gathering exact responses for the analysis.

Reflecting on the first pilot interview (formal) the need for context was very important, since the interviewee's had to reflect on past experiences to draw on hindsight to provide insight about their foresight. Indicating the power of reflection and what it means to reflect.

The second pilot interview (formal), conducted using the revised guiding interview questionnaire (after amending question 2 under research objective 3) – see Appendix 3 – and lessons from the first pilot interview (formal). The second interview was with a leader from the automotive industry and a fellow GIBS MBA cohort member. The

interview context was created once more with the opening questions, where the interviewee recalled a time of uncertainty. The questioning process went smoothly and countered any bias or any perceived expectations by the interviewee through re-enforcing the questions and relating to previous responses within the context of recollecting the uncertainty.

The first and second formal pilot interviews were invited via email and were provided with a participation consent form. On the day on the interview, the participant consent form was signed by the participant.

#### 4.6.4 Guiding Interview Questionnaire – Execution

Data was collected through interviews which took place over a five week period. Interviews were scheduled via emails with an attached copy of the participant consent form requesting participation and availability to conduct the interview. Once confirmation was received, interview invites confirming date, time and location were sent out. On the day of the interview, the participant consent form was signed by the participant.

All interviews were conducted using English as the preferred language. Interviews took place in a closed meeting room, which was suitable for good quality audio recordings. The interviews were scheduled between 60 – 90 minutes, creating time for “breaking the ice” and get the energy levels of the interviewee to the point that were appropriate to begin the interview, to reduce participant error. The 20 odd minutes before the formal interview allowed for conversational activity to calm the interviewee, and to some degree to create a safe space to engage with the interview. The interviews ranged from 36 to 78 minutes (shown in Table 3).

After the interviews were conducted the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim in the recorded language of English.



Table 3 provides an overview of where the interview took place and the length of the interview.

Leader	Industry	Location	Time Frame
1	Customer Service Support	Their office	96 minutes
2	Automotive Retail	Their office	68 minutes
3	Professional & Consulting Services	Their office	78 minutes
4	Business IT Services	Their office	75 minutes
5	Apparel & Fashion	GIBS	61 minutes
6	Retail Marketing Solutions	Their office	59 minutes
7	Travel	GIBS	36 minutes
8	Social Media Marketing	Their office	58 minutes
9	Information Technology and Services	Their office	56 minutes
10	Oil & Energy	GIBS	38 minutes
11	Education & Schooling	Their office	43 minutes
12	Household Furniture Manufacturer	GIBS	55 minutes
13	Automotive Insurance	Their office	67 minutes
14	Personal Insurance	Their office	67 minutes

*Table 3: List of Leaders Interview, Location & Time frame*

Meeting on campus at GIBS was chosen as an alternative to accommodate leaders availability and avoiding any logistical issues of traffic during the agreed times.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

The structured interviews from the 14 purposively selective leaders provided conversational qualitative data covering an average of 61 minutes. The large volume of verbal data received from the interviews needed to be prepared in a format for qualitative data analysis (Saunders & Lewis, 2012) using text. Therefore, all interviews (except the first pilot interview) were recorded in audio format using an electronic device. Permissions from the participants was obtained prior to the interview and confirmed once more during the interview. The interview guide guided the interviews and encouraged the leaders to reflect on their experiences to provide information.

Once each interview was concluded, the audio recording of the interview was upload onto a cloud storage for safe keeping. The first interview was transcribed using key points mentioned by the first participant. Interviews with participants 2 to 14 were then transcribed verbatim from audio (non-text) to text. This was later imported as a document into ATLAS.ti, a program that assists with qualitative research analysis. In line with the participant consent form, anonymity was maintained, and each interview transcription

was referred to as leader 1, leader 2 and so forth, tagging the conversation between interviewer and respondent.

To make sense of the volumes of conversational data that was collected an approach to categorizing the data into meaningful codes and phrases became a necessity, to decipher the transcriptions. The intention of the codes and phrases were that of finding key themes. The approach to analyse the data was through inductive reasoning. The literature review provides a firm base on the theory thus far and development of the Self-Awareness process system. To some degree deductive reasoning was incorporated into the analysis phase of what is known as forming the major themes (i.e. Self-Awareness, Sensing, Follower perceptions and Strategic Foresight). The interview guiding questionnaire was structured on the Trust formation process model (Figure 7).

For the inductive reasoning process, all transcriptions were imported into ATLAS.ti. Each research objective and its related questions where leaders commented were read and analysed for common themes, before moving onto the next research objective. Being overwhelmed by the many features within ATLAS.ti, the basics of coding, which was most useful, was used to track and navigate between each transcription. As each research objective and subsequent questions were read, key themes were tracked using Microsoft Excel. This was an iterative process of going back and forth until the final codes where compiled. The list of codes can be viewed in Appendix 5.

#### 4.8 Research Quality, Reliability and Validity

Earlier in this chapter, the research study was structured to reflect on leaders' experiences to gain insight into the answer to the central research question of how leaders have enabled themselves to build trust with followers when forming their decisions in times of uncertainty. Having approached this research study systematically with focus of consistency, Sinkovics et al., (2008) provided guidance on how to ensure trustworthiness from a qualitative study.

The factors that were managed to ensure that the validity of the findings would be trustworthy are shown in Table 3 and based on the published work of Hignett (2014); Saunders and Lewis (2012) and Sinkovices et al. (2008).

Validity Factor	Decision take to increase validity
<b>Construct Bias</b>	Developed guiding questionnaire based on existing theory using open ended questions.  Diversity of sample would reveal diversity in responses.  Interviews recorded and transcribed.

<b>Method Bias</b>	The sample group were of the same language and from South Africa.
<b>Stimulus Bias</b>	Allowed participants to create own context and linked questions to their context to minimise misinterpretation of misunderstanding.
<b>Equivalence</b>	Problem definition stage – topic would represent the minimum requirements to be compared across national or cultural borders.  Data collection stage – all interviews were conducted with face to face interviews in similar settings.  Data analysis stage – all interviews were analysed using a systematic and standardised coding base.
<b>Internal validity</b>	Pilot interviews
<b>External validity</b>	Leaders were selected from different industries with two attributes in common. I.e. followers and dealing with uncertainty. Therefore, allowing for the findings to be transferable.

*Table 4: Validity Factors*

Furthermore, to increase validity and reliability to ensure transferability, a data triangulation technique was employed. This entailed aligning literature and with the primary research interviews with leaders.

The reliability factors (Table 4) that were managed to ensure findings would be consistent and dependable (Hignett, 2014; Saunders and Lewis, 2012; Sinkovics et al., 2008).

<b>Reliability Factors</b>	<b>Decision take to increase reliability</b>
Participant error	Since interview were based at leader's accessibility and availability, opening and general discussion took place before actual interview. This allowed the interviewee to pace themselves and engage in conversation in a safe space.
Participant bias	The pilot exercise verified the questionnaire. The questions designed within the questionnaire covered four different themes but had similar questions. Therefore allowing the interviewer visibility of inconsistent answers. Where inconsistency was found confirmation of previous answer was provided to the interviewee to confirm.
Researcher error	For this research there was one research interviewer. Interviews were spaced out with not more than two a day. Remained cognisant of being consistent in handling the interview based on guidelines set out.
Researcher bias	Ensured non-verbal messages were not provided within the interviewed and maintained active listening to what was being said.  Analysis was kept to the four themes.

*Table 5: Reliability Factors*

#### **4.9 Research Limitations and Assumptions**

This qualitative research study had three limitations. Firstly, time was a constraint in planning and executing of this research study. Hence a longitudinal study was not possible to ensure congruence of findings, and it remains a cross-sectional study. Secondly, leaders were asked to reflect on a moment. Therefore, it was not possible to observe leaders' abilities to build trust in moments of uncertainty – a longitudinal study in the future would be able to address this concern. Thirdly, it was not possible to validate the accuracy of the leaders' comments with their followers, for further data triangulation. Although these limitations existed, the researcher does not believe that this would be a threat to the research findings due to the exploratory nature of this study.

Based on accessibility, availability and purposively selected, a sample of leaders within South Africa were interviewed. Four assumptions were made. Firstly, leaders who participated in the sample are successful. Secondly, work in the space of uncertainty and have led followers out of uncertainty. Thirdly, leaders who participated have made decisions in times of uncertainty in alignment with their relevant strategy. Fourthly, leaders may not have provided sufficient information due to uncertainty, misunderstanding, or lack of experience or would not have wanted to reveal negative information that would perceive them differently.

#### **4.10 Ethical Considerations**

This study received ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Gordon's Institute of Business Studies (GIBS). Appendix 1 displays a copy of the ethical clearance certificate.

Ethics is vital to trustworthiness (Saunders and Lewis, 2012; Sinkovices et al., 2008) of this research. All participants were invited to participate and only after they agreed to participate did the interviews take place. The participant consent forms (Appendix 2) were signed by the participant only capturing their signature and maintaining their anonymity. All participants could withdraw from the interview at any time. Data analysis were kept confidential as referred to as leaders.

This study was formed with the intent to contribute to the body of knowledge of being an effective leader. The insights gained from the participants (interviewee's) are viewed as points of learning. This study was not intended to harm or devalue any of the participant's contributions or discredit the participants negatively.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

The research methodology provided a framework to conduct this research from design to collection and to analysis. Emphasis has been placed on reliability, validity and generalisability to ensure that this research study can be replicated in the future. More specifically it was ensured that the approach was not harmful, and that objectivity in pursuit of information was maintained so that it would provide value. The use of interviews provided rich data which unfolded into insights, which are found in Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: Results

### 5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research results from the interview data addressing the research objectives described in Chapter 3; and using the research methodology outlined in Chapter 4. In this chapter the researcher focusses on the results encompassing key themes and results.

The layout of this chapter provides a view of the sample that was interviewed; and will then unfold into describing the research objectives with its sub questions, which is followed by comments from the interviewees. Thereafter key themes and results for each research objective are listed.

### 5.2 Description of Sample

The unit of analysis is focused on the leader. The population was defined as all leaders conducting business in South Africa. Conducting business is defined as, meetings between leaders and followers to make decisions on a certain outcome. The sample of the population that was interviewed were leaders conducting business in South Africa and who lead through followers.

### 5.3 Description of Participants

Fourteen interviews were conducted (twelve interviews, including two pilot interviews) over a five-week period. All interviewees were leaders across industries dealing with uncertainty. Table 6 provides an overview of the leaders and their industry, where the interview took place and the length of the interview.

Recalling from Chapter 4 (4.3); no restriction was placed on the type of leader that was interviewed, nor the type of organisation, nor race, nor gender, nor age or based on any other conceived exclusions. As per Chapter 4 (4.9) three of the four assumptions were accepted as the criteria for participation. Firstly, leaders that would participate in the sample are successful. Second, work in the space of uncertainty and have led followers through uncertain times. Thirdly, they have made decisions in times of uncertainty aligned with their relevant strategy.

Referring to table 6 indicates a diverse interview sample with leaders holding positions between middle management and executive level positions.



<b>Leader</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Industry</b>
1	Product Specialist Manager	Customer Service Support
2	General Manager	Automotive Retail
3	CEO	Professional & Consulting Services
4	CEO	Business IT Services
5	Founder	Apparel & Fashion
6	Business Unit Manager	Retail Marketing Solutions
7	Director	Travel
8	Managing Director	Social Media Marketing
9	Sales Director	Information Technology and Services
10	Head of Strategy	Oil & Energy
11	Principal	Education & Schooling
12	General Manager	Household Furniture Manufacturer
13	Head of Market Development	Automotive Insurance
14	Digital Manager	Personal Insurance

*Table 6: Leader Interview List*

## 5.4 Results

### 5.4.1 Research Objective 1

#### **How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process during uncertainty?**

To answer this research objective four research questions were put forward to the leaders. The aim of these questions was to draw the leader to introspection and reflection on their cognitive abilities as a leader, but more specifically to understand their level of self-awareness when sourcing for information.

#### 5.4.1.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

This research question sought to gather thoughts from the leader on how they understand of their strengths and weaknesses in times of uncertainty. Knowing that each moment of uncertainty will introduce many variables and moving those variables from an unknown to a known state requires a leader to have a firm view of themselves. It was noted that all fourteen leaders expressed that understanding their strengths and weaknesses are very important to them when dealing with uncertainty. Below are the comments the leaders have expressed highlighting the need for introspection;

- "...it is important to know what your strengths are, very important." Leader 3
- "I think it's very important. If you fail to acknowledge your blind spots you are going to go into battle with those blind spots and chances of getting wounded are very, very high..." Leader 10
- "In times of uncertainty it is crucial that I know what my strengths are and what my weaknesses are..." Leader 12
- "Understanding of your strengths and weaknesses is a critical element to leadership..." Leader 13
- "I think for a leader to have that kind of awareness about their strengths and weaknesses requires a lot of humility and a lot of time being spent in your own head, unpacking these things for yourself." Leader 14

Further to this, each leader mentioned having acceptance of ones abilities by the following comments.

- "...have the ability to be at peace with it, develop all the weak points where it can be developed..." Leader 4



- “And through understanding your strengths you can understand what role you need to play in getting to a specific outcome.” Leader 6
- “Because if I am weak in an area I find someone who is strong in that area...” Leader 7
- “A good leader always make sure that there are people around him that are better than him.” Leader 8

#### 5.4.1.2 Developing their abilities to be aware others

This question sought to understand how the leaders could develop their abilities to be aware of others. The comments from the leaders are categorized into three categories. The first category referred to eight leaders referring to an ability they have had developed over time;

- “In order for me to recognise emotions in other people, I don’t always get it right immediately, but with employees you learn as you go along, you become aware of the type of person they are, what their interests are, what can upset them, what type of personality they have, what their level of self-awareness is like” Leader 4
- “...almost like exercising a muscle, you are always reflecting, you are always analysing, you are always discussing, so you are practising emotional analysis on a weekly basis...” Leader 5
- “...something that happens over time” Leader 13

The second category referred to a natural ability from three leaders;

- “I am self-aware because the issues that are most personal are most universal.” Leader 7
- “I think that my personality naturally just is very perceptive.” Leader 8
- “...part of it comes naturally. I don’t necessarily have to think about being sensitive to the next person.” Leader 12

The third category referred to three leaders that suggested they are still developing their ability through observations from certain and current circumstances. Although this is like the first group who suggested that they have developed the abilities over time, this group differed slightly in the sense that they continue to develop. Their comments;

- “You have got to observe, you have got to ask them, don’t assume that they are going to tell you, you have got to ask them some of these difficult questions. And you have got to almost have that conversation with them... Take a different approach. So it is one big experiment...” Leader 3
- “..you learn through observation, you learn through intervention, like training that says, in a situation like this you always, you can’t ignore yourself as an individual, you always need to look inwards as well, then look outwards as well” Leader 6
- “Well I think I’m still developing in that, but I realize I’ve always been a do it yourself type of person... I was sort of forced to start building my staff members on knowing the differences and being able to balance the two. I’m still having issues with that because I totally don’t understand the emotional side of things on a more professional setting, but with teachers it’s very different because the way they interact with kids is very emotional, instead of professional, so they rely a lot on their emotional side and I had to tap into that for them to be able to do their jobs properly.” Leader 11

#### 5.4.1.3 Improving their approach

This question sought to gain perspective on how the leaders could improve their approach in leading people in the moment, as opposed to relying on formal rating scales such as 360-degree feedback surveys to improve the way they converse with followers. The leaders’ comments provided two views, one on self-reflection (ten leaders) and the other on empathy (four leaders).

Leaders’ comments on self-reflection made use of real time information as opposed to hindsight information, the split being seven versus two.

- “It happens in a formal and informal manner. I can tell you from a formal perspective if they can put some time aside and have one on one talks. It opens up with getting a general sense of their sentiment and then it’s an opportunity for them to vent anything that they feel is difficult of good and at the same time I ask for critique about myself. Sort of touch points to get an idea of where I’m standing in their life, their reality.” Leader 2

- "...it is really important, the philosophy that I buy into is that you are led by peace. So I make sure that that decision or that guidance is in line with my peace, will I be able to live with myself after this." Leader 7
- "So I think you have just got to read the current situation and based on that you can get a bit of a dipstick, not the full picture, but a dipstick of where you are at in terms of leading." Leader 8
- "For me, instead of looking at a staff member as this staff member did not listen to me, I would look at it as in I would self-reflect and look at it as in what better way could I have used to get him to understand, or to get her to understand... Yes real time feedbacks, constant self-reflection..." Leader 11

The four Leaders who have expressed empathy led towards tough empathy, not only creating understanding but driving hard in pulling the conversation in the intended direction. These were their comments;

- "I need to understand where is this person's mind at, and if it is missing I need to ask those questions." Leader 3
- "I find that once you manage people, that you manage a team of people, it encourages an environment of transparency and honesty and when people come to you with mistakes that they have done, a serious problem, the way that you reprimand or you deal with it ensures that in future when they get into a situation that they find to be difficult as well." Leader 6
- "I get the feedback real time, I am not going to wait till the six monthly review or till the end of the year to give them feedback. If I give it to them now they know their weaknesses, they can strengthen it very quickly, they can change it very easily before it becomes an issue for the organisation or for themselves. And I really then judge them on whether they have been able to remediate. And the same with suppliers. I have the hard conversations, but I am also willing to take the hard conversations." Leader 10

However, Leader 5 indicate that varying between empathy and self-reflection either in real time or reflecting in hindsight is highly possible and key traits of a leader. An interesting outlier from the rest of the leaders.

- "I think it is very important to have good relationships with your suppliers, but in my instance, and I have to be real here and not all airy fairy, as long as you are paying your money and you are getting the goods you don't have

to be the greatest person alive, but you need to adhere to the basic codes of business and responsibilities.” Leader 5

- “So instead of filling out a form we have a discussion. And to me those discussions, they happen about once every six or seven weeks, depending on how busy we are, and we reflect.” Leader 5

To conclude this question on identifying how leaders improve their approach when conversing with followers would be the result of employing self-reflection and empathy in the moment that the uncertainty is taking place. The real-time feedback becomes a priority and will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

#### 5.4.1.4 Appreciating the unknown

This research question was asked to enquire how leaders have come to accept that they do not know and search for information from others. This question was posed to thirteen of the fourteen leaders. There were eight leaders that have developed their acceptance of not knowing the answers and developing the ability to engage with followers to gather information they require. These were their comments.

- “What I have been able to do rather well is know the things that I don’t like to do and bring in highly competent people to do those things for me, under my direction and guidance.” Leader 3
- “...as you move become more senior and you wait on the detail, you realise that you are dependent on the people around you for the information gathering that those knowledge workers for understanding it, and then empowering them...” Leader 10
- “I mean there are points in life where you have to make a decision in terms of where you are at, what’s going on, what’s happening at that point in time. But I think the fundamental is that you have to understand, from my perspective anyway, that this – we have always just got to assume that you don’t know something.” Leader 13

There are five leaders who acknowledged that they needed to accept that they may not have all the information and need to rely on others. They are in the process of developing their ability to engage with followers, since they have reflected that it is a hard process trying to curb their inherent need of wanting to know everything. These were their comments.

- “One of my strengths and weaknesses, if you can put it like that, I am very proud, so it is difficult for me to accept and I have learnt to be more acceptive and more responsive to certain negative feedback as well. I don’t necessarily handle it that well, but I have learnt to deal with it and cope with it and process it first before responding, before reacting.” Leader 4
- “...I find that I am not the only one that has answers and I am actually learning to appreciate the views and the knowledge that other people have...” Leader 6
- “I have to take a step to learn whatever I don’t know as well so that there wouldn’t be a next time.” Leader 11

#### 5.4.1.5 Conclusion: Research Question 1

The results revealed that self-awareness; when unfolded into strength and weakness of a leader through introspection, a process that the leaders go through to understand themselves, has a strong influence in understanding the role they need to play in times of uncertainty. Whilst their ability to recognise emotions and actions of followers is a process that could be developed over time. Seems to be an innate ability to managing uncertainty. There are some outliers that believe that recognising other emotions and actions are a natural talent, and differed to those leader who believe it’s an ability that’s constantly need to be tweaked due to observation.

Improving one’s approach in times of uncertainty has a split view between self-reflection to adapt and empathy to understand others but is regulated to the intended direction. There is a common theme of recognising feedback in times of uncertainty which is largely similar but has inherent differences between self-regulation and empathy. This will be discussed in Chapter 6. Not knowing what they do not know appears to be a tough task for leaders, but in the end the leaders said that there is need to rely on followers as they are on the ground close to what is happening.

It appears that the leader’s self-awareness has an influence on the leader’s decision making process during the time of uncertainty.

## 5.4.2 Research Objective 2

### **How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?**

To answer this research objective, three research questions were put forward to the leaders. The aim of these questions was to encourage the leaders to introspection and reflection on their cognitive abilities as a leader on how they are able to perceive what is happening and make sense of how to move forward with the uncertainty.

#### 5.4.2.1 Getting to the crux of the information needed.

This question sought to gather key learning from leaders on how they can calm followers, sift through the noise and get to the crux of the information they need. Although the leaders varied in their responses, transparency emerged from eleven leaders who believed in creating environments that allowed followers to feel at ease, be open and honest about the relevance of the objective they need to achieve.

Comments from leaders emerging towards being transparent about their intentions when sifting through the noise in time of uncertainty said the following;

- “In my opinion, play open cards with your guys but there’s always certain bits of information from a company perspective that you not allowed to divulge. But, I find that if you have constant communication and focus it from an optimistic point of view, you able to calm the guys. If you closed up and not talking with your guys, the rumour mill starts and people start developing their own ideas.” Leader 2
- “You have to bring that in and sometimes it is not important to count them, by the way, it is literally what is the task at hand, I need to have an answer that must equal 100 by the time we finish this thing.” Leader 3
- “So for example, a customer would phone in and he would say this is absolutely pathetic, this is what happened. And immediately I would respond and say, John, I fully agree, it is pathetic, it is unacceptable completely, and immediately it shifts.” Leader 4
- “...the kind of challenges we face, what I am trying to do is to develop a good core idea as to where I think a direction should be, and in developing that core idea it has been a lot of consultations with a lot of people, trying to get as many varied views as possible.” Leader 14

The other three leaders suggested learning that were complete outliers to this question. Their responses were;

- “Having patience.” Leader 1
- “I take full responsibility, personally.” Leader 8
- “So there’s been times in the business where the numbers make sense and my gut says, no.” Leader 12

With the understanding that the sample was that of a diverse group; these outliers provide some differentiation on how leaders can calm followers during times of uncertainty. Whilst transparency seems to be the common theme, these outliers appear to create trust, as well, with followers in gathering the information needed.

### **Describing how the conversation is handled**

Eight of the leaders described listening as part of their process (action) when sifting through the noise, after creating an environment that is transparent. A few of the leader’s comments were;

- “Understand concerns, make them feel heard. It is about listening.” Leader 1
- “What I also find is that then you get solutions from other people as well, so it is not just solutions from me, but you open it up as a team and by opening it up as a team you are coming up with solutions as a team.” Leader 6
- “Because most of the time people want someone to hear them out... Whereas with leadership I want them to understand... then break it down for them and show them why I’m taking this certain strength or the certain position to it.” Leader 11

Six of the leaders described directing as their process (action) to sift through the noise, after creating an environment that is transparent. A few of the leaders’ comments were;

- “I sometimes will be quite patient, especially with a client who is rambling on and going on, but keep directing them back to what we want to achieve.” Leader 3
- “...so it is almost to say, listen guys, this is not even a social agenda, it is about the company. This is our strategic objective as a company, these are the steps we said we would follow to achieve that objective, and now I need answers specific to this.” Leader 7

- “This is what we are going to do to make sure it doesn’t happen again from our side” Leader 8

### **Describing how they control the conversation**

After creating a transparent environment, seven of the leaders believe that is best to remove emotion from the conversation. A few of their comments;

- “So what I wanted to do was try and remove emotion out of it by firstly...”  
Leader 4
- “I take the emotion out, which is why I said I love to see people grow etc. but then I come back quite hard, and I can, because it is not personal, it is about the company.” Leader 7
- “So it’s about teaching them how to take people on a journey and then you ask those questions about okay, let’s start...” Leader 10

After creating a transparent environment, seven of the leaders believe that is best to rationalise the situation to get everyone on to the same page. A few of their comments;

- “So you have to realise that you are in a noisy environment in order to say, hey, let’s take a step back, how much of this is fundamentally going to influence the direction that we are moving in, and how much of it is fluff, at the most.” Leader 13
- “I have been pushing back really hard to our senior management... some of our strategic directional decisions. So where do we believe as a company our future growth paths lie, and we’ve gotten it down to one or two key things, one of them being, customer.” Leader 14

To conclude the leaders’ comments indicate that by creating an environment by being transparent about the objective has been most helpful for them. There are two groups of leaders in terms of how they handle the conversation between listening and directing. It would seem neither one is more important than the other. Therefore, it could be situational. Thereafter they control the discussion either by removing emotion or rationalising the situation. Table 7 summarises the leaders’ comments.





Leader	Context of Situation described	How they sifting through the noise	How they handle the conversation	How they control the conversation
Leader 1	In General discussions with followers	By having patience	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 2	Not being able to reveal confidential company information	By being transparent	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 3	Meeting client expectations that has not being met	By being transparent	Directing	Rationalising the situation
Leader 4	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 5	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 6	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Listening	Rationalising the situation
Leader 7	Business meetings	By being transparent	Directing	Removing emotion
Leader 8	Customer deliverable gone wrong	By being accountable	Directing	Rationalising the situation
Leader 9	Conducting a sale	By being transparent	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 10	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Listening	Removing emotion
Leader 11	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Listening	Rationalising the situation
Leader 12	Financial Reports not making sense	By using intuition	Directing	Rationalising the situation
Leader 13	In General discussions with followers	By being transparent	Directing	Rationalising the situation
Leader 14	Strategic Directional Decisions	By being transparent	Directing	Rationalising the situation

*Table 7: Summarising Leaders comments on their key learnings to calming followers in times of uncertainty – Research objective 2*

#### 5.4.2.2 Making sense of the environment

This question was aimed at identifying how leaders could sense of their environment during times of uncertainty, whilst their environment includes followers, external market conditions, tangible and intangible sentiments etc. The question was then followed up with what clues leaders use to pay attention to when engaging with followers. The results from this question provide varied explanations but largely centred on conversations and then unfolded into verbal and non-verbal communication. Since there is a lot of information to analyse, the leaders' comments are displayed (Figure 13) to provide meaning to the sub heading under which it falls and thereafter it is summarised into tables containing the categorisation and key themes.

Only leader 11 was the exception. This leader focused on observations of the internal school environment. Once sense was made, the observation then became a

conversation. Whilst this exception differs from the rest of the leaders, this would be relevant to the context of Leader 11's operating environment, this is where teachers are practically observed to enhance performance.

During conversations with followers, leaders viewed verbal (spoken), non-verbal (not spoken), and human behaviour (physical actions) or non-human behaviour (non-human actions) signals of great interest to them (only leader 8 & 9 were unclear, therefore could not be added). It was sensed that there was more information that is not being conveyed but needs to be understood. The comments from the leaders are listed as per the flow diagram to illustrate the leader comments (Figure 13) and how their themes link up.

Figure 13 indicates the flow of communication (and not causality with the arrows) and illustrates results from 12 of the 14 leaders (excluding leaders 8 & 9).

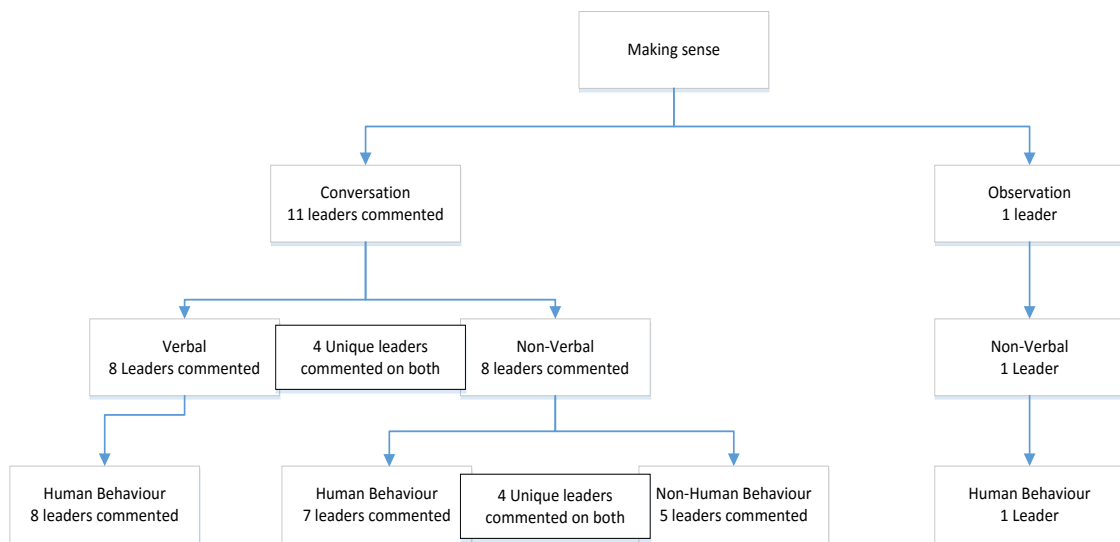


Figure 13: Making Sense through verbal and non-verbal messages

From the leaders comments it appears that conversations with followers would be a valuable enabler for a leader. These conversations seem to help a leader make sense of what is happening during times of uncertainty, which can lead to understanding. These are their comments on conversation;

- "Once you have this communication, the open ended questions allows for free dialogue to take place and there is other nuances that come through the conversation and you able to probe." Leader 2
- "There was a time, not that long ago, that I didn't know a whole lot about block chain, but I knew it was going to be something, I know. It was actually probably piqued when Willie Lingum[?] spoke about it at the Tedex[?] last year. I thought okay, this guy is smart, he is quite successful in Silicon

Valley, he is making his next venture all about this, nothing else, there is something there, right?” Leader 3

- “I think one thing that we do very, very actively is, we love talking to people. So communication with people in our industry, people in other industries, people that work in the industries we work in. Communication is very important, we like to probe – well I specifically like to probe around how things are going, what the challenges are...” Leader 4
- “...what are people speaking about, what are people thinking about, where is the train of thought going.” Leader 6
- “You know, being conscious of what’s being published in the media, technology trends, following certain people on certain social media environments helps.” Leader 10

### **Verbal and Human behaviour feedback signals**

These were the leader’s comments;

- “Ok, so I listen to the kind of language that is being spoken. The language for me turns into a sentiment, is it very negatively, is it looking at the pessimistic side of thing or always optimistic.” Leader 2
- “How people say things, what words they use.” Leader 3
- “So they change the distribution channel of communication, or the communication medium. And it just makes them feel more comfortable. It is easier to say, no via an email than it is to say, no in person.” Leader 4
- “And if the reaction is elation where you say, geez, I never expected us to be this at this point in time, so the sales figures are not as bad as what you think they are, that is a different type of reaction, it is a different type of tone, yes, it is a different type of tone and that will give me a different view.” Leader 6
- “...but be clear in your strategy and that way you get to determine how much of the noise in the market is really telling you maybe you should fast track this or actually you should stop.” Leader 10

## Non-verbal and human behaviour feedback signals

These were the leader's comments;

- "I listen to what people are saying. Body language for me is a key point. Dress code, I look at hygiene factors. These are sort of indicators to give me an idea who am, from a regional manager perspective, what are we dealing with. So, yeah, I think those are the sort of clues (from the top of my head) that spring to mind. Its sentiment, its body language, its hygiene factor." Leader 2
- "That is one, when they are too quiet for too long, when I don't see them, I don't see their names featuring in things they should be involved in. Those are clues to the fact that we have a problem with engagement. So engagement is a very good clue." Leader 3
- When I walk into the office and I see, for example, there is usually a buzz in the office, when you have got a team of people working it is very, very easy for you to pick up on the energy and to understand where they are at... Specifically when you deal with certain individuals you can see something is wrong just by body language, you can see in terms of performance, you can pick up that if something isn't going according to the normal trend with the specific person, you know that something else is wrong, you observe that and it is a clue to a bigger problem. And obviously that depends or that affects the way you engage with them." Leader 4
- "So for me I think it is very difficult to look for human clues face to face, but online we are looking for stuff like that with customers. How many people have responded to our ad words, pixel tracking, hashtag tracking, how many comments do we get, how many likes do we get? When we do something online and we have purchases later we link back to what post, what post triggered those purchases?" Leader 5
- "The clues that I am looking for will be, firstly do you understand that there is a problem and are aligned with it? Are you disappointed in it or do you see it as a – are you disappointed with what I am presenting to you currently, and the disappointment will also tell me whether you are either willing to help with regards to it or whether you..." Leader 6
- "...people yap all the time. The yappers are easy to understand, but it's the non-yappers, it's the non-said things that are more important." Leader 12

## **Non-verbal and non-human behaviour feedback signals**

These were the leader's comments;

- "I would look at the plants, or do they have plants. If they do I like it. I look out for, background music and I also look for plants and if they are being taken care of. Obviously I look at the presentation, the aesthetics of the dealer because I need to put myself in a customer's shoes and see what does the customer feel when they walk in. If I see a dead plant, if you cannot look after a plant, how will look you look after me. That to me is crucial. Music creates an ambience and it's for me, look it's a contentious issue, but it's for it's critical to have a vibe going in. Vibe is crucial. Customer needs to build trust and unfortunately we live in a materialistic society, you are judge very quickly on your appearance and if I'm prepare to fork out some money to buy a vehicle from you, I need to feel that I got your trust you and that going to be loyal to me... It's talking about the customer experience, you know, walking in. Dirty vs clean." Leader 2
- "...for me always analysing our data is very, very important. Especially with being in the fashion industry, you are always looking to the external market in terms of trends, things like that, and in the internal market you are always looking at, for me, our biggest equity, our biggest commodity, which is our brand." Leader 5

### **5.4.2.3 Conclusion: Research Question 2**

By consolidating the leaders' comments in Tables 8,9,10, their comments are contrasted providing an overview. It appears that similar meanings from the leaders' comments emerge, eluding to conversations being the pivotal turning point in a leader's ability to sense weak points, vulnerabilities or opportunities from discussions with followers. Table 8 displays verbal communication from followers, categorised as human behaviour and a key takeout of their comments.

Equally, nonverbal communication within conversation (shown in table 9) suggests that leaders view unspoken (non-verbal) behavioural activities as a visible sensing cue to make sense of uncertainty. The non-verbal feedback appears to be a factor on how leaders view weak points, vulnerabilities or opportunities, as a means to move forward to engage followers to obtain information.



Leader	Industry	Method	Communication	Behaviour	Their explanations
2	Automotive Retail	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers language phrasing i.e. negative or positive
3	Professional & Consulting Services	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	The words that followers use.
4	Business IT Services	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers changing in method of communication
6	Retail Marketing Solutions	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	The tone followers use in comparison to the actual context
7	Travel	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers need keep quite as more questions are asked to clarify.
10	Oil & Energy	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Anticipated noise from follower is not being heard
12	Household Furniture Manufacturer	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers not completing sentences.
13	Automotive Insurance	Conversation	Verbal	Human behaviour	Gaining perspective on what is happening versus what is not happening with the correct followers

Table 8: Summarising Verbal and Human Behaviour comments – for Research Objective 2

Leader	Industry	Method	Communication	Behaviour	Their explanations
1	Customer Service Support	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	Follower's body language to discussions.
2	Automotive Retail	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers hygiene and dress code
3	Professional & Consulting Services	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	Followers are quiet and becoming invisible.
5	Apparel & Fashion	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	What followers are saying and the words they use on the online platform.
6	Retail Marketing Solutions	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	Follower's attitude to the gravity of the context being dealt with.
11	Education & Schooling	Observation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	How followers are conducting themselves in line with standards.
12	Household Furniture Manufacturer	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	Follower's body language and their silence.
14	Personal Insurance	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Human behaviour	When influential followers stop speaking or making decisions and then disengage.

Table 9: Summarising Non-Verbal and Human Behaviour comments – for Research Objective 2

Leader	Industry	Method	Communication	Behaviour	Their explanations
2	Automotive Retail	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Non-human behaviour	Tidiness and up keeping of offices, plants and the ambience for customers.
3	Professional & Consulting Services	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Non-human behaviour	Follower's names not listed on communications.
4	Business IT Services	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Non-human behaviour	Followers changing method of communication
5	Apparel & Fashion	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Non-human behaviour	Following follower's patterns as they click through our website. The data analytics.
6	Retail Marketing Solutions	Conversation	Non – Verbal	Non-human behaviour	Data analytics reporting performance on key areas.

*Table 10: Summarising Non-Verbal and Non-Human Behaviour comments – for Research Objective 2*

Another view by leaders is that of non-verbal cues not represented by human behaviour (Table 10) but rather that of its external environment. Although one could argue that the external environment is made up of followers (people), the leaders viewed these environment signals as a form of a non-verbal feedback which help them make sense of the uncertainty.

To conclude, verbal and non-verbal communication would be weighted equally by leaders. However nonverbal communication seems to be more prominent than verbal communication as seen by the leader's explanations and the importance of what it signifies to them.

### 5.4.3 Research Objective 3

#### **How leaders have enabled themselves to engage with followers' perceptions and further prepare themselves during times of uncertainty?**

To answer this research objective, three research questions were put forward to the 14 leaders. The aim of these questions was to draw the leader to introspection and reflection (using their cognitive abilities as a leader) on how they have been able to adapt to real time feedback (sensing) received from their followers during conversational activity. The comments from the leaders are categorized into four categories (importance, reflection, enabler, and formulating).

#### 5.4.3.1 Importance of followers perceptions of them (feedback)

This question sought to understand how the leaders could develop their abilities from being aware of others. The first category referred to the importance and reflection of understanding how their followers perceive them. All fourteen leaders commented that it is important to understand how their followers perceive them. What was interesting to note was their reaction to the question. Nine of the fourteen leaders commented without a second delay, whereas six of the nine leaders used words such as "important", "absolutely", "extremely" and "massively". The remaining five of the fourteen leaders took a few seconds to respond. Two of the five leaders then referred to it being a situational condition for this to be relevant. Once again the comments from the leaders are varied, but similar themes towards understanding the self appears. These are the comments the leaders expressed;

- "If you don't understand how people perceive you, you won't understand how to perceive people either. So self-awareness is – there is maybe more to the self, not just towards yourself, it is towards other people as well." Leader 4
- "Ego gets in the way sometimes, because you feel powerful, you feel you are building something that is bigger than you, and sometimes you can get very carried away with what you think is right. But your followers always will have, employees, whatever, will always have skills that you don't have. They will always have insights that you don't have. And their analysis of you sometimes will be incorrect, because we all perceive things in our own way, but I think again it is about consistency." Leader 5
- "Because ultimately it is about trust, and if they don't trust you it will be difficult for them to follow you..." Leader 7



- "...when you are inside the bottle you can't see the label." Leader 8
- "...there's a certain way they'll act towards you and you will not have access to all the information needed to make a decision, they'll only give you what they want you to see." Leader 11

This question concludes that it is important for leaders to understand how their followers perceive them.

#### 5.4.3.2 Adapting to followers feedback.

This question sought to understand how leaders can use the perceptions gained from their followers; in turn enabling them to navigate through uncertain engagements with followers. Largely this question was posed under the context of adapting in real time, when conversing with followers. The question was categorised into two terms, a reflection and an enabler. Reflection refers to what they had learnt (displayed in Table 11). Enabler refers to how they have enabled themselves to adapt to conversations with followers (Displayed in Table 11). These are the comments shared by the leaders;

- "...sometimes helps me reasserts and justify the, my point of view." Leader 2
- "I have picked up is that because of my passion I have got energy, but because of my passion people tend to trust and I have learnt to use the trust to motivate, to engage, to build a relationship with followers on an individual and on a group basis, as a collective as well." Leader 4
- "In an environment where you have created an open relationship and you don't have that subservient culture with your employees, what's nice is that people have the strength to tell you that this is wrong, I don't agree with you and these are my reasons for not agreeing with you. And I love that because then there is true challenge without any fear that you will get reprimanded for that challenge. And it is when you reap the rewards of building a culture like that." Leader 6
- "...it's very important to be in touch with the people. I had a very humbling experience and my car broke down, I still had to show up at the office, and then I used public transport to get to the office. It was the most humbling thing ever. I did not realise that I had not been in a taxi for years and it was the most humbling thing because then as I sat in this – and I – the more I hated this experience the more I thought this is what the girls are going through every day, every day and then I'm sitting there arrogantly, it doesn't

matter how they walk into this door they must show up, they must show up, they must be in touch.” Leader 11

From this question, leaders reflecting on followers’ perceptions of themselves allows introspection and allows them to address their strengths and weaknesses. All fourteen leaders have found that they have benefited from their followers’ perceptions; their followers’ insight have enabled them to be more effective. To conclude this question, it is beneficial for leaders to reflect and enable themselves through the use of followers’ perceptions.

#### 5.4.3.3 Formulating their approach

This question sought to understand how leaders could formulate their approach to uncertain situations, with the aim of producing a productive outcome. Their comments indicate that their recognition of followers’ perceptions have enabled them prepare themselves for future conversations. Formulating their approach to manage uncertainty is the next step. The comments shown below are from the leaders who described how they have formulated their approach;

- “You got to let them say what they need to say but then you sort of absorb it and you acknowledge it and you say alright. Let’s acknowledge what is really going on. This is the reality and there is certain things aren’t going to change because they are out of our control. Let’s look at the small things, on what we can change, small incremental wins and use to help go in the right direction.” Leader 2
- “I want them to feel that they are in a safe environment... I just need to know that they are willing to get on the bus with me. They don’t know where we are going yet but they have got full confidence and they know that they can trust me and I won’t crash the bus, and I will take it to the right spot.” Leader 4
- “I know where I am going, clear about that, and you have got to get people on that. Because, for instance if you are working on a strategy and you need a data point you have got to go and get that analyst to give it to you or get it for you, or build that, and they are probably busy with 10 other things at the same time.” Leader 10
- “So building prior relationships with your staff members and obviously always drawing the line between personal and professional, and sort of being hard on work, but in being a person to them as well.” Leader 11

With formulating their approach being the next step, the common theme that emerged from the ten leaders focus on the moment and objective that needs to be achieved. The other four leaders presented responses that were outliers, which cannot be dismissed but rather viewed as complementary actions. These were their comments;

- "...more I asked them deeper questions in line with, like what made you reach that conclusion, why would you, and they are willing to answer that and they don't push back, I know that the trust is building." Leader 7
- "So for one thing I sleep better because I feel like my energy is channelled in a very different way than how it used to be, just frantically feeling like I am running around and shouting and trying to explain something to people that is so simple and why don't you understand it when in actual fact I spent all of my day thinking about these really complex subjects and for other people I need to give them the space and the time to also unpack it and own it and make it something that they can really grasp before I get them to buy-in." Leader 14

#### 5.4.3.4 Conclusion: Research Objective 3

The findings for research objective three indicate it is important for a leader to understand the perceptions followers have of them. It becomes a source of information that can help them to learn and enable themselves for future conversations. Finally focusing on the moment and objective that is needed will allow the leaders to gather the information they require. Table 11 summarises the leaders' comments illustrating the different lessons learnt (through reflection) and how they have enabled themselves to be effective. Thereafter the common theme is drawn on how they continue to formulate their approach to handle uncertainty, by focusing on the moment and the objective needed.



Leader	Importance	What have they learnt from followers perceptions	How followers perception have enabled them	Formulating their approach
1	Massively Important	Building self-confidence	Lead with freedom	Recognising the need for multiple hats to be worn.
2	Important	Recognising the Aha moments	Allow for clarification and validation	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
3	Very Important	Talking is needed to understand	Test ideas through conversation	Building points of reference and taking followers along for the journey
4	Absolutely Important	Passion can draws followers in	Driving passion to get buy in	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
5	Very Important	Perception is created by the leader	Allowing feedback to be received	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
6	Important	Followers reactions will vary based on situations	Building a safe environment	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
7	Important	Followers want to be heard	Questioning for understanding	Reaching a point of being comfortable with the information at hand.
8	Important	Helps me engage with them	Showing that they care	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
9	Very Important	Realised followers different needs	Know where I stand with them	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
10	Important	Recognising others	To acknowledge & Reward others for participation	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
11	Extremely important	Encourage others over telling others what to do	Understanding the underlying issue	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
12	Important	We all not the same	See followers differently	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
13	Important	Accepting the ability to unlearn	Changing direction for the right reasons and not for perception	Focusing on the moment and the objective needed
14	Important	Followers reactions will vary based on situations	Having the willingness to engage	Creating space to unpack to gather buy in

Table 11: Summarising leader's comments on follower's perception of them – for Research Objective 3

#### 5.4.4 Research Objective 4

##### **How do leaders form relationships with trust, to gather information when forming strategy?**

To answer this research objective, four research questions were put forward to the leaders. The aim of these questions was to draw the leader to introspection and reflection on their cognitive abilities (as a leader) on how they form relationships to gather the information to form their strategy. As mentioned before, strategy provides the backdrop and not the entire focus of this research study. The information gathered from this question will present results to sourcing information within the formation of strategy during the information gathering stage. It was assumed that each leader has made a decision that would have been in line with their relevant strategy. (Refer to Chapter 4.8 for more information on assumptions). The four questions were structured around the gathering of their central beliefs, where they source their information, their intent on strategy and how they solicit trust.

##### 5.4.4.1 Central Beliefs

This question searched for information on what would be the leaders' central beliefs when forming their strategic objectives. These would be their non-negotiables that would make the strategic objectives meaningful and worth achieving. All fourteen leaders provided responses that varied and were distinct from each other. The key central beliefs that emerged from seven of the fourteen leaders are centred on culture, ethics, values and morals (displayed in Table 12). Whilst the other seven leaders' comments are diverse and no central theme can be drawn, their comments cannot be dismissed. The comments expressed by the leaders are as follows;

- "...my central belief is to always ask the question of this outcome. Is this outcome beneficial for both? I'm very much a comprising kind of a person, so give or take here and there. But really I always have this outlook of do unto others as you would want onto you. And I think it's very open, but whatever your action is, what will be the reaction going forward." Leader 2
- "Well I think that for us non-negotiables is the kind of culture you want to build as a business, because we are a people business, we are not a – people are our assets, we don't buy stock and then sell it." Leader 8
- "Because if you are going to take a differentiation to market and you put all the marketing behind it and you put all the steam ahead, and then when the customer gets there this product just breaks because of something you

have missed downstream, it destroys all the values, it is hard to come back from that. So I think it is important to first understand what it is...” Leader 10

- “Information is key... Experience is always the best teacher so you need information on what has happened before, or what is happening currently, and then the tricky part is how do you see the future looking? You never have information for the future, but you have information – well now as an MBA student I know you can work it out – corporate finance, you can work out what tomorrow, or next year will look like apparently.” Leader 12
- “For me it has always kind of come down to, let’s call it ethics or values, and some instances in my previous life where I have decided to leave a company was around I can agree on the goals of where we want to go, but I can’t align myself with the stuff that is non-negotiable, necessarily. And I think those are the things that we often don’t document and its institutional memory and it’s the culture – it is in the fibre of our being and we don’t know why it is the way it is but it just is.” Leader 14

The follow up question was how the leaders viewed forming relationships with relevant stakeholders as an aid to their central beliefs. The theme that emerges from eight of the fourteen leaders’ comments were centred on having a shared interest. Three leaders expressed that building relationships for the long term is also necessary. Leaders 9 & 13 provided comments that were unclear on whether incorporating stakeholders when forming strategic objectives added value, therefore the results are based on 12 leaders (See table 12). The comments expressed by the leaders are;

- “Ok, relationship building is exceptionally key with the.” Leader 2
- “Networking is important, people understanding your perspective, appreciating the role you are going to play, appreciating your relevance.” Leader 3
- “I think one of the things that is very important is obviously their perception of me, they need to be able to know that they respect you, they have seen who you are, you have got a track record, and you have built rapport with them.” Leader 4
- “Your stakeholders are the guys that will either benefit or contribute to your strategy.” Leader 7

- “Unless everyone is on the same page you will not achieve them. So it doesn’t matter whether you’re talking about your external customers, you as a team, or the people below you in the company, unless everyone’s aligned to the business or to the strategy you won’t achieve it.” Leader 12

#### 5.4.4.2 Information Sources

This question was aimed at the types of information sources that the leader find useful (i.e. stats, reports, trends) when formulating their strategy. Four emerging themes appear. Three themes (from the 12 leaders) revolve around trends supported by data and is either tangible, or through conversations, or holds no emotions, or has sentiments attached to it or learning from others. What this suggests is that trends alone provide interest but require validation. The validation is based on current conversations where timing plays a massive role on the importance of the information source. Some of the comments expressed by the leaders are;

- “It comes from the cold hard facts, so you would delve into industry reports. You would touch base with your competitors. Talking with your members of staff, direct reports. They also have their ears to the ground. I also make an effort to keep my ear very close to the ground. A lot of this informal chatter that goes in the organization. So it’s definitely a mixture of both, if would want to say which has more weight. They sort of exclusive of each other. You industry report, gives you the cold hard facts but listening to your customers and employees, your team and those industry gathering helps you formulate which direction you should be going.” Leader 2
- “So sources, right now, I think I follow trends, I don’t dive too much into reports, but for example I have people downstairs in research who just send me the weekly snapshot of what Gartner[?] have said and what Ovum have said and what our competitors are saying, etc.” Leader 3
- “The customer is thinking always about the now, because the customer’s job isn’t to trend forecast for you, which is your job. So the customer is thinking, oh, I love this product now, this is so cool, this is an amazing idea, and they are supposed to have the fun, you are supposed to do the work.” Leader 5

To conclude, the main theme is sourcing information that is trend related and is supported by data.

#### 5.4.4.3 Intent of Strategy

This question aimed at gathering the leaders' perspective on strategy and uncovered the intent of strategy for the future of their company and their followers. The common theme by all 14 leaders was that strategy provides direction. However, each leader then used a specific word to describe the intent, ranging from vision, motivational, relevance, alignment, measurement, adaptability and structure (Refer to Table 12). These are some of the comments from the leaders;

- "With strategy there is direction. Plan that you want to achieve underpinned by the vision." Leader 1
- "Strategy brings alignment, strategy brings clarity in terms of working for the common good, strategy tells you where you are going, what you want to achieve and how you are going to achieve..." Leader 6
- "I would say, the majority is our clients. It is the businesses we serve. It is mostly, what are the needs at the moment in our clients, and it might be something we didn't know before, so investigating for instance media buying." Leader 8
- "But for me strategic intent has to be part of the fibre of what you are doing and where you are going." Leader 13

The common theme is strategy provides direction of what needs to be achieved and what the next steps will be.

#### 5.4.4.4 Building Trust

The question sought to answer how the leaders solicited trust to gather the appropriate information that is needed for them to make a decision or in relation to their strategy. The comments provided by the leaders were diverse in explanation however "building relationships" with followers was the pivotal themes that emerged. Leader 10 was the only exception in not providing a clear response. The 13 leaders elaborated on how they form their relationships providing a glimpse of what is important to them (see Table 12). It is evident that each leader has different leadership styles and work in different industries but common to them to is building trust which emerges from building relationships. The comments from the leaders on building trust through building relationships are;

- "By being unbiased and rational, honest and open. Be transparent." Leader 1



- "...it is important for me to first deliver results and show someone that they can trust me, and you do that through actions." Leader 4
- "Again this is my personal lesson that I have learnt about trusting, the only way you get trust is to give trust... So I think if you want the appropriate information you have to give the appropriate information to get that information.' Leader 5
- "I think if you lead from the front and you are the kind of leader that people would want to be, I think they would naturally respect you. And I think respect kind of breeds trust. If people don't respect you they won't trust you." Leader 8
- "So for me the creation of relationships as a base is of quite an importance in order to create and solicit trust in an environment. It is of the utmost importance when you enter an environment first to ascertain who – what is the landscape, who can you trust and who can't you." Leader 13
- "But what's worked for me is to see my area of expertise, my department, my world as open source completely. So I don't guard it close to my heart, because I have actually found that the more I open it up and share it with people the more people trust me that I have got either their or the company's best intention at heart, which is ultimately why I am here. And I think the moment people find that trust it helps a helluva lot." Leader 14

Table 12 summaries the leader's comments for research objective 4.

Leader	Central Beliefs	Stakeholder Relationship	Information Sources	Intent of Strategy	Building Trust   How
1	Underpinned by others	Shared interest	Trends supported by data and tangible driven	Direction & Vision	Building relationships   By being open, honest and transparent
2	Outcome beneficial to both	Shared interest and building relationships	Trends supported by data and conversations	Direction & Motivational	Building relationships   By engaging on a social level
3	Must be achievable and relevant	Acceptance	Trends supported by data and sentiment driven	Direction & Relevance	Building relationships   By choosing who to trust over soliciting trust
4	Truthful, respectful, trust and integrity	Shared interest and building relationships	Trends supported by data, hard cold facts not emotions	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   by delivering results first to encourage trust
5	Financial, moral and creative	Alignment of values	Trends supported by data, hard cold facts not emotions	Direction & Motivational	Building relationships   By trusting others first
6	What success look like following a process (structure)	Shared interest	Conversation driven	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   By being open, honest and transparent
7	Why are we doing this	Shared interest	Trends supported by data and conversations	Direction & Measurement	Building relationships   By knowing your network and showing that you care
8	Culture	Shared interest	Conversation driven	Direction & Adaptability	Building relationships   By being respectful of others
9	Balancing between signals from the market and people, and having a long term view	No response	Trends supported by data and sentiment driven	Direction & Structure	Building relationships   By empowering followers
10	Understanding what is required	Shared interest and building relationships	Trends supported by data and sentiment driven	Direction & Structure	No response
11	Alignment to policies and rules of the organization	Participation	Trends supported by data and conversations	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   By being humane
12	Information	Shared interest	Trends supported by data and learning from others	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   By recognising where followers are in their personal journeys
13	Fit with culture, values and morals	No response	Trends supported by data and sentiment driven	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   By recognising where followers are in their personal journeys
14	Ethics and values	Shared interest	Trends supported by data and learning from others	Direction & Alignment	Building relationships   By being open, honest and transparent

Table 12: Summarising leader's comments on strategy – for Research Objective 4

#### 5.4.4.5 Evidence of Strategic Foresight

As mentioned in Chapter 4 points 4.6.2 to 4.6.4 Strategic Foresight is a term used within the strategy field but is not widely recognised nor is the meaning fully understood. The questions related to research objective 4 were asked in the perspective of strategic foresight. Four of the fourteen leaders provided explicit evidence that they employ strategic foresight in their sourcing of information, without knowing that this is called strategic foresight. The comments from the following leaders are as follows:

- “We employ a lot of scenario planning as well in conjunction with the strategic planning, because we are in the tech environment it is very fast moving.” Leader 4
- “I also do a lot of reading outside about technology, so 3D printing, things like that that might not be relevant to us now, but might be relevant to us in four years... You know for me strategy is actually so much fun because scenario planning is very exciting, and I think in a strategy space there is a lot of freedom to be creative, not only obviously in the traditional sense of designing, but also with rollout.” Leader 5
- “...when you make decisions you can reference them back to the strategy and the principles you put in place, and also because in order for people to follow you they need to buy into something and they need some structure.” Leader 9
- “We are always thinking about what next, where are we going to, how are we going to get there, how are we going to evolve, how we are going to move in that direction, how are we going to move our markets in that direction, what is the next step, what is the next big thing?” Leader 13

## 5.5 Conclusion of results

The results from the four research objectives listed in Chapter 3 have generated interesting results that are in line with the literature review on self-awareness, strategic foresight, trust, and uncertainty and leadership styles. In addition, some new perspectives have emerged from the leaders (who work in different industries) when handling uncertainty by using self-awareness and strategic foresight to build trust. Chapter 6 will discuss these results in more detail.

## Chapter 6: Discussion of Results

In this chapter the results from Chapter 5 are discussed using the literature review on self-awareness, strategic foresight and leadership styles to provide an interpretation of the results. Chapter 5 represents results from the fourteen interviews conducted with South African business leaders. The interviews were led using a guiding interview questionnaire prepared by using the literature review process. The purpose of this research study was to explore how a leader can build trust by enabling themselves (self-awareness) whilst gathering the appropriate information (strategic foresight) in times of uncertainty.

The four research objectives from Chapter 3 will be discussed here.

1. How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process during uncertainty?
2. How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?
3. How have leaders enabled themselves to engage with followers' perceptions and further prepare themselves during times of uncertainty?
4. How do leaders form relationships (with trust) to gather information when forming strategy?

## 6.1 Research Objective 1

### How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process during uncertainty?

This research objective was aimed at understanding how self-awareness of a leader could add value in their decision-making process in times of uncertainty. In Lewin's view a leader needs understand themselves during change (Burnes, 2009). Considering overcoming uncertainty will introduce change. According to Bussey (2013), a leader can prosper in uncertainty by using a different set of skills that are relevant to the situation as opposed to purely managing the situation. Understanding that self-awareness is a broad concept the exploration of leaders' experiences were divided into four sub questions (Figure 14).

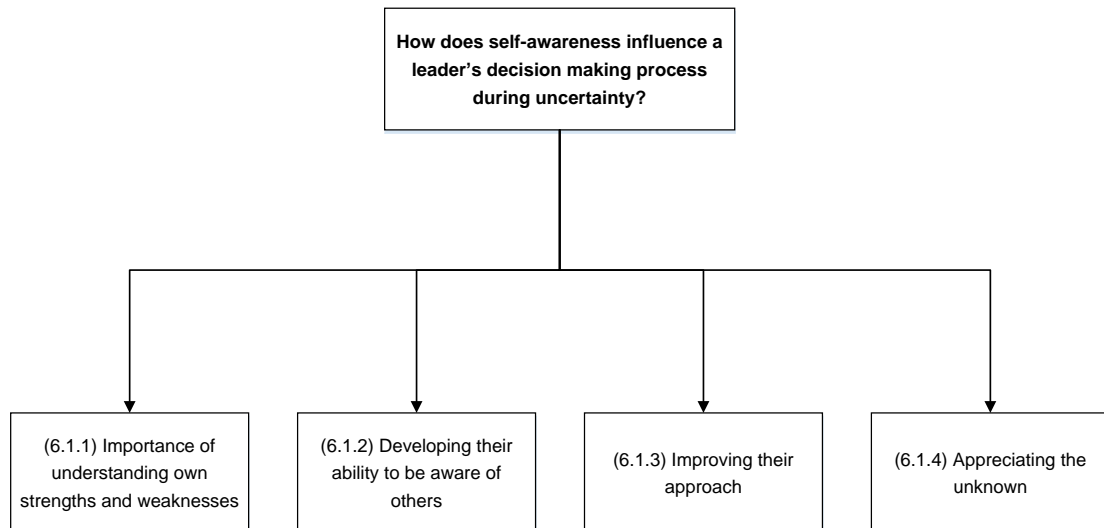


Figure 14: Research Objective 1 – Themes from sub questions

#### 6.1.1 Importance of understanding own strengths and weaknesses

The intent of this research question (Question 1.1 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from leaders, who interact with uncertainty. Finding out whether understanding their strengths and weaknesses have helped them lead during times of uncertainty.

From a literature point of view, leaders that have a firm grasp of their strengths and weaknesses can assess the areas that their strengths are appropriate for, or recognise the area in which they need to acquire or develop (Showry & Manasa, 2014; Suri & Prasad, 2011). Furthermore, leaders that achieve a high level of self-awareness by

having a deep understanding of their abilities can push the boundaries of their values and beliefs (Caldwell, 2009; Goleman, 1998; Suri & Prasad, 2011).

After analysing the results in Chapter 5 for this question (as per 5.4.1.1.) there was consensus from all fourteen leaders who stressed the importance to understand ones strengths and weaknesses in times of uncertainty.

This result is supported by Segon and Booth (2015) who emphasise the importance of self-awareness in leaders when assessing their areas of competence (strengths) and when identifying development needs (weaknesses).

Leader 7 expressed an example of understanding their strengths and weaknesses by the following comment; “I think you should understand them, absolutely, and that is how you then build your circle of trust or your circle of advisors, if you will, whether personal or business wise. Because if I am weak in an area I find someone who is strong in that area, who will be my sounding board in that area. And I have developed a network of people like that, and it is incredibly important.”

#### **6.1.2 Developing their ability to be aware of others**

The intent of this research question (Question 1.2 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from leaders, on how they have developed their ability of being aware of others emotions and actions.

Largely, developing the ability to be aware of others emotions and actions is a soft skill that can be learnt over time (Marques, 2013). Incorporating the ability model by Mayer and Salovey i.e. describing the process of being aware of others’ emotions and actions (cited in Farh et al., 2012) that once developed a leader is able to regulate the emotions and actions in such situations. This would allow leaders to consciously assess how they lead others and to internalise their style of leadership (Sturm et al., 2014).

The results from this question are shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.1.2) which indicates a varying view. Three different groups emerged. The first group had eight leaders (of the fourteen leaders interviewed) who described that they have learnt to be aware of others over time. Whilst the second group of three leaders mentioned that it is a skill that is still developing. The emotional intelligence model by Goleman (1998) and the ability-based model of emotional intelligence by Mayer and Salovey (cited in Farh et al., 2012) says that awareness of others does occur over time. Further supported by Marques (2013) it is a skill that can be learnt.

The leaders expressed that their awareness (of other emotions and actions) was triggered off by certain experiences in their working career. Lawrence (2015); Showry

and Manasa (2014) support this view stating that the journey begins through introspection of experiences, a state of mind that forces leaders to think about how they emotionally behave and act in certain situations and it alerts the leaders to be aware of others.

The third group of leaders expressed that being aware of others is a natural ability and that they have been using this ability ever since.

### 6.1.3 Improving their approach

The intent of this research question (Question 1.3 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from leaders, on how they continually improve themselves when communicating with followers in times of uncertainty. This question is crucial in the sense that the emotional intelligence model and ability based model describe that awareness of others occurs on a continuum i.e. never ending.

Constant introspection and reflection is needed by leaders to consciously be aware of their actions and behaviours towards themselves and others. Taylor (2010) indicates that the greater the focus is on self the greater the desire to be consistent and allow self-evaluation to occur. Suri and Prasad (2011) motivates that once “awareness improves, one begins to see inner motivating forces like what drives individuals, their passions and values, and how these affect their thoughts, feelings and actions and that of others” (p. 9).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.1.3) revealed two groups who talked about how they improve themselves. Out of the fourteen leaders only three leaders mentioned that they have used 360-degree feedback surveys. However, the inherent message received from the leaders is that this is not their preferred method of improving themselves. This has relevance for the reason this research was undertaken. Leader 5 was the only leader that provided an explanation of why 360-degree feedback was not valuable to them. The first group of nine leaders suggested that they rely on self-reflection with real time assessment, whilst two of the nine leaders rely on reflection in hindsight.

Ybarra et al. (2014) support the view of real time self-reflection. In this scenario leaders are perceivers, reaching a point of consciousness of being able to self-reflect and can immediately grasp the meaning of others’ acts.

The nine leaders in this process of self-reflection referred to a position of where it is acceptable. For example, leader 7 mentioned they need to feel at peace; and if not at peace then something is wrong. This would speak to the theory of reasoned action

(Figure 7), whereby a leader will self-reflect on the basis of his beliefs and values that will form his intention on how he will move forward in such situations (Caldwell, 2009).

The second group of four leaders expressed a different view of how to improve themselves to be aware of others. Their view extended towards the use of empathy (understanding others), but was more inclined to tough empathy. For example, leader 5 expressed the following comment “And I think it is very important to have good relationships with your suppliers, but in my instance, and I have to be real here and not all airy fairy, as long as you are paying your money and you are getting the goods you don’t have to be the greatest person alive, but you need to adhere to the basic codes of business and responsibilities.” According to Goffee and Jones (2000) this referred to giving followers what they need as opposed to what they want and having the necessary respect for the relationship. This describes acknowledging others but pulling the conversation in the right direction that speaks to the needs of the situations. Ladkin (2008) also supports this view in advising that when leaders have a grasp of their purpose in serving the goal, they will have the best interest of their followers in mind.

Based on the frequency analysis, self-reflection with real time assessment provides immense value towards becoming an effective leader in times of uncertainty.

#### **6.1.4 Appreciating the unknown**

The intent of this research question (Question 1.4 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from leaders, on how they have developed themselves to appreciate what they do not know and seek help from others. This question was phrased in the context of the leader understanding their strengths and weaknesses; and thereafter probing on how able they were to complement their weaknesses or blind spots or development areas.

When facing decisions filled with uncertainty, the unknowable needs to be uncovered (Huang & Pearce, 2015). The underlying logic of uncertainty is that there is a gap between the knowledge that is known and what is unknown (Hilemersson & Jansson, 2012). Lawrence (2015) found that when leaders do not seek or understand other perspectives this could also lead to loss of performance.

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.1.3) featured two groups. The first group of seven leaders accepted that they did not know or will not ever know as much as they need to know. The inherent sentiment received from these leaders was that it is acceptable not to know. Leader 10 provided a comment highlighting “...as you move become more senior and you wait on the detail, you realise that you are



dependent on the people around you for the information gathering that those knowledge workers for understanding it, and then empowering them...” To this end, Crossman and Doshi (2015) support this view stating that not knowing is a loss of self and self-control but with the intention of being open to multiple perspectives. To some extent this appears to be like the chicken and egg analogy. For you to know, you first need to not know.

The other five leaders acknowledged that they do not know but want to know. These leaders are still in the developing stages of this cycle to be comfortable with not knowing. These leaders appear to be afraid of not knowing. Crossman and Doshi (2015) warns that this could be the case of subordinates expecting them to know or that they are in denial to maintain their reputation. Acknowledging that it is ok not to know.

#### **6.1.5 Research Objective 1 Conclusion**

Lewin’s view point of understanding oneself during change (Burnes, 2009) seems pivotal. This research has verified that a leader should understand their strengths and weaknesses in times of uncertainty. As a leader improves his level of self-awareness his capability to monitor his own and others’ emotions and actions, increase the ability to adapt and lead effectively (Showry & Manasa, 2014). Confirming Hilemersson and Jansson (2012) suggestion that uncertainty is to do with the lack of relevant experience nevertheless information can be gained through engagement with followers. A leader will cycle between unknown and known each time uncertainty prevails; his ability to recognise the unknown and to seek help from others would increase the effectiveness of the leader.

This research objective indicates alignment with academic literature, in that self-awareness would have a positive influence on a leader’s decision making process.

## 6.2 Research Objective 2

### How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders can perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty. To answer this objective three questions were asked. However, questions two and three were consolidated into one during the analysis of the results (see Figure 15). The relevance of this objectives refers to the literature review of Sarala and Vaara (2010) where they outlined that cultural factors has an influence (positive or negative) in times of uncertainty. Palazzo et al. (2012) suggest that should a leader be unaware of their own or their follower's unethical behaviour, this could be devastating to the outcome. Tenzer et al. (2014) confirmed diversity of language creates a disconnect between people appearing insecure, feeling threatened, showing weakness and having no self-confidence. Lawrence (2015) found that when leaders do not seek or understand other perspectives this could also lead to loss of performance.

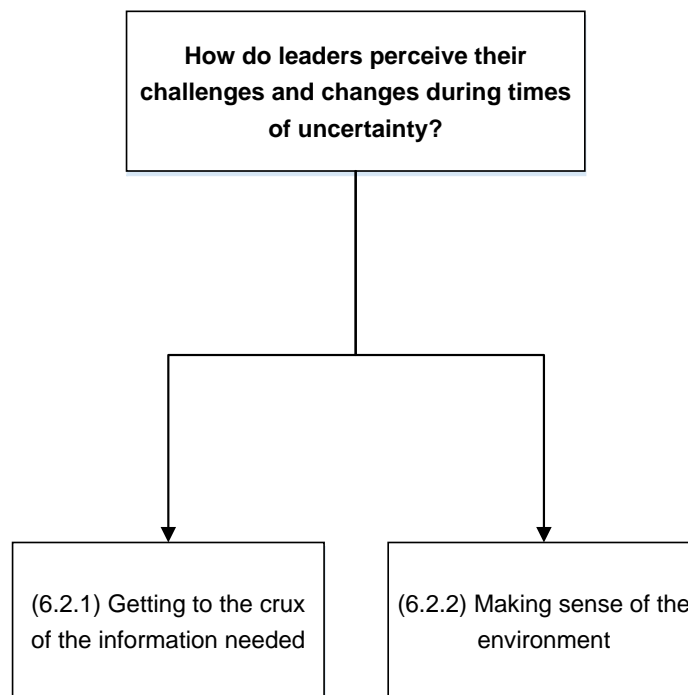


Figure 15: Research Objective 2 – Themes from sub questions

### 6.2.1 Getting to the crux of the information needed

The intent of this research question (Question 2.1 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from leaders, on how they have being able to calm followers that enabled them to sift through the noise and get to the crux of the information that is needed. This question was phrased in the context of uncertainty where the leader reflected on a given scenario (indicated in table 7).

As mentioned earlier uncertainty has many variables. The type of uncertainty differs in context from a situation that is misunderstood or has an extreme crisis. Either way a leader needs to adapt. This process beings with making sense of the uncertainty (Hannah et al., 2009). The commonality of the followers at these different levels are emotions (Khalili, 2012; Pryke et al., 2015).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.2.1) featured three different themes, discussed below.

#### (1) Sifting through the noise.

Eleven of the fourteen leaders believe that being transparent about their intentions allow them to create an environment that is calm and safe. It encourages followers to be at ease and to share information.

Agote et al. (2016) support this view since authentic leaders would create an environment where positive emotions are energized and the participation of followers are used to reduce the uncertainty. Showry and Manasa (2014) also confirm that self-awareness is introduced under the traits of an authentic leader, whereby they are mindful of their ability of self and the level of influence they have in the environment they find themselves in.

#### (2) Handling the conversation.

Under this theme, two approaches appear whereby eight leaders believe in listening to what is being said by followers and then acting.

Dabke (2016) and Holt and Marques (2016) support this view of listening and links this to the empathy component of the emotional intelligence model by Goleman (1998). In this view they state that a leader values the input of his followers. However, Dabke (2016) likens this activity of listening to a role of transformational leadership. Parris and Peachey (2013) suggest that listening is a pivotal trait of servant leadership. Both leadership styles encourage follower participation, easing the uncertainty experienced by followers.

The other group of six leaders prefer to take the lead on these conversations and direct the followers.

Epitropaki and Martin (2013) offer a harsh view of leaders who hold a power advantage and who would draw in followers into the direction that is needed. However, in terms of transformational leadership Dabke (2016) and Epitropaki and Martin (2013) suggest that the leader is a focal point and followers will look to them to make sense of uncertainty. The impression that was received from the leaders was in the sense of directing followers to the intended goal, which largely describes transformational leadership.

### (3) Controlling the conversation.

Here there were two groups where half believed in removing emotion whereas the other group preferred to rationalise the situation. The researcher finds that both views are complementary and successive in their approach.

The emotional intelligence model has a component for self-regulation, a process of internalising the emotions into constructive rational outcomes as opposed to reacting on impulse (Goleman, 1998). The challenge after either removing emotion or rationalising the situation is finding the right balance to empower followers to think differently and have ownership of their ideas (Sarpong et al., 2016). However, Sendjaya et al. (2016) suggest that an authentic leader is able to induce moral reasoning and rationalisation in the given environment. The moral reasoning and outcome influence how followers would perceive the leader. Unfortunately, not enough information was provided from the leaders to verify this suggestion on moral reasoning.

## 6.2.2 Making sense of the environment

The intent of this research question (Question 2.2 & 2.3 – Appendix 3) was aimed at gathering thoughts from the leaders on how they make sense of an environment they find themselves in. This question was phrased in the context of uncertainty where the leader reflected on a given scenario (indicated in Table 7).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.2.2) indicated a huge focus on verbal and non-verbal cues from followers ranging from human and non-human behaviour in time of uncertainty. Although the view is split between verbal (seven leaders) and non-verbal (seven leaders) human behaviour, the sentiment from the leaders is that verbal and non-verbal are complementary to each other and allow them to regulate the situation as indicated in 6.2.1 in controlling the conversation. Tables 8 provides examples of tone and speech verbal signals. Table 9 provides examples of

body language and gestures as non-verbal signals. For this research study, human behaviour is defined as the source from where a verbal and non-verbal signal is being sent from i.e. a human being. Non-human behaviour is defined as a tangible source that is not a human being. Examples provided in Table 10 are plants and other visual items.

Holt and Marques (2012); purport that empathy is a component of the emotional intelligence model, which helps with recognising and diagnosing verbal and nonverbal cues to help a leader understand the links between follower emotions and behaviours. Dabke, (2016); Farh, et al. (2012) further support this view of empathy within the use of the ability-based model. As a leader moves through the stages of recognising, reasoning, interpreting and enhancing it is a process of reducing uncertainty.

What seems evident is that through conversational activity leaders can pick up signals. By choosing to interact directly with followers and not solely rely on third party information they allow themselves to be immersed in the environment with followers. Rohrbeck and Schwarz (2013) confirms that these types of interactions foster creativity with followers by enabling leaders to push the boundaries with follower's beliefs and values (Bussey, 2013). With the empathy component, they can recognise verbal and non-verbal signals from their followers by regulating the interaction to achieve maximum value of what a new reality could be.

The five leaders who reflected on non-verbal and non-human behaviour within the environment, mentioned that these signal cues informed them that something is not right and needs attention. For example leader 2 mentioned the tangible item of a plant; if the plant is not receiving the appropriate care imagine what care the customer would receive or perceive. These non-verbal and non-human behaviour signal cues seem to indicate a whole host of information that is very valuable to these five leaders.

### **6.2.3 Research Objective 2 Conclusion**

The leaders perceive that their challenges and potential changes which affect their environment and followers is through conversational activity. From the interview with leaders there is an abundant amount of information sources, but they have found that the relevance of the information sources should be validated with what is happening on the ground and what followers are saying. Leader 9's comment of the market is about followers and Leader 1's comment of followers is that they want to be heard. Creating the environment for a conversation to take place is key. Thereafter, it is important to note what followers are experiencing. In this case the central focus from the leaders

were placed on the followers' emotions and actions, recognised by verbal and non-verbal signal cues from human and non-human behavioural sources.

### 6.3 Research Objective 3

#### How have leaders enabled themselves to engage with followers perceptions and further prepare themselves during times of uncertainty?

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders have enabled themselves through recognising what their followers' perceptions (feedback) of them are i.e. being trustworthy. McKnight et al. (1998) stated that trust should be developed upon the first interaction between a leader and followers. This question was framed on the relevance of this statement. Considering that there will always be a possibility that trust is not being formed on the first interaction, the answer to this objective was asked by posing three questions. The first question was on establishing the importance of followers' perceptions, followed by questions two and three which were based on the leader's incorporation of the followers' feedback (see Figure 16).

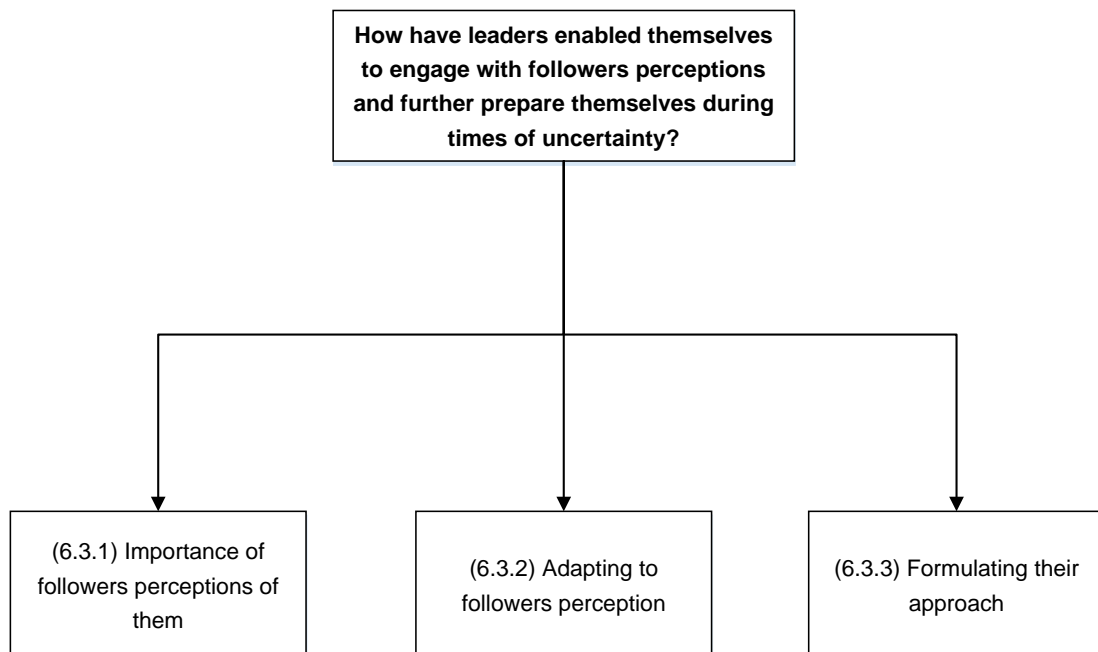


Figure 16: Research Objective 3 – Themes from sub questions

#### 6.3.1 Importance of followers' perceptions of them

The intent of this research question (Question 3.1 – Appendix 3) was to gather information about the thinking of leaders about the importance of their followers' perceptions of them.

The common focus of Grover et al. (2014); McKnight et al. (1998); Rousseau et al. (1998); and Yu et al. (2014) is the view that leaders have the ability to build trust or destroy trust.

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.3.1) indicated that all fourteen leaders find it important to have a good understanding of how followers perceive them. This view by the leaders is further supported by Koning and Kleef (2015); Strum et al. (2014) where a large dependency of a leaders' effectiveness involves being able to understand followers' perceptions of them, to maximise their interaction with followers. This view also aligns with Taylor's (2010) point that leaders must be cognisant of the perception of followers to achieve greater levels of extrinsic appreciation from followers.

### 6.3.2 Adapting to followers feedback

The intent of this research question (Question 3.2 – Appendix 3) was to gather the thoughts from leaders on how they have adapted to the feedback received from followers.

Accepting followers' feedback is through a self-reflection process. Ashley and Reiter-Palmon (2012); Ybarra et al. (2014) indicated in their research studies that self-reflection is only visible once the leader has cognitively made the agreement with himself to receive how followers perceive him. Signal cues from followers can be sent in abundance but if the leader is not aware of these signal cues, this would not be helpful to them.

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.3.1) had two themes emerging.

#### (1) Lesson learnt from follower's perceptions

All fourteen leaders stated that reflecting on followers' perceptions has had a positive effect on their cognitive abilities and has aided in their development as a leader. When leaders raise their self-reflection it leads to confirming the assumption made in Chapter 4 that the leaders interviewed are all self-aware.

#### (2) Enabled themselves through these lessons

By incorporating these lessons learnt through a self-reflection process the leaders could form specific processes to counter such situations, i.e. finding that different situations required a different version of themselves.

Hannah et al. (2009) provides support for leaders to learn from their environments and to adapt to a given situation. Showry and Manasa (2014) described that reflection of one's self is learnt through others and cannot be learnt in isolation but through social

interaction with others; by being sensitive and interpreting the clues that others provide (Marques, 2013) but it would be indicative of the influence a leader has on their followers' (Taylor, 2010).

### 6.3.3 Formulating their approach

The intent of this research question (Question 3.3 – Appendix 3) was to gather thoughts from leaders on how they formulated their approach where information is unknown and a productive outcome is required.

Agote et al. (2016) emphasise that trusted leaders can influence followers positively through the means of coherent actions. Simons (1999); Simons et al. (2015) describe the concept, behavioural integrity, as recognising that the words a leader uses is congruent with the actions that follow.

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.3.1) had one major theme that emerged from ten leaders. This theme centred on focusing on the moment and achieving the objective needed. The other themes on which comments were made cannot be discarded as they spoke about the relevance of their actions in the environment in which they find themselves; and the appropriate action that is needed. By focusing on the moment leaders can determine the relevance of a given situation and ask the right questions and listen accordingly. Caldwell (2009); Taylor (2010) provides support this view that the leader could continue assessing himself and others by means of anticipating and predicting the next set of actions in handling followers' emotions and actions. A strong sense of behavioural integrity appeared in the leaders' responses as this is one of the ways to continually earn trust from their followers. However, the researcher argues moral and ethical intelligence will also need to feature within the behavioural integrity construct to ensuring conversation and actions are conducted using moral and ethical processes.

The objective that would need to be achieved is the necessary outcome. By creating certainty and empowering followers to achieve a certain result has a positive influence on the trust earned by a leader (Cullen et al., 2014). However, the comment received from the leaders is that followers' perception should not be used as a method to define who they are as they would end up changing their focus each time. Followers' perceptions of them should rather be used as a gauge to manage and lead the conversation in the intended direction.



### 6.3.4 Research Objective 3 Conclusion

Followers' perceptions of a leader have been confirmed as an important source of feedback through reflection to enable them to improve their approach when leading followers in times of uncertainty.

## 6.4 Research Objective 4

### How do leaders form relationships with trust, to gather information when forming strategy?

This research objective was aimed at understanding how leaders form relationships to gather information whilst forming their strategy. Acknowledging that strategy is a series of decisions formed in congruence to achieve the intended objective, it is argued that a big part of making a decision or a series of decisions is largely due to the accessibility of information from followers, as indicated in Figure 11, where people (followers) have a role to play in the purpose of strategy (Pryor et al., 2007). To answer this objective four questions were asked as leading questions in support of strategic foresight (referring to Chapter 4) and displayed in Figure 17.

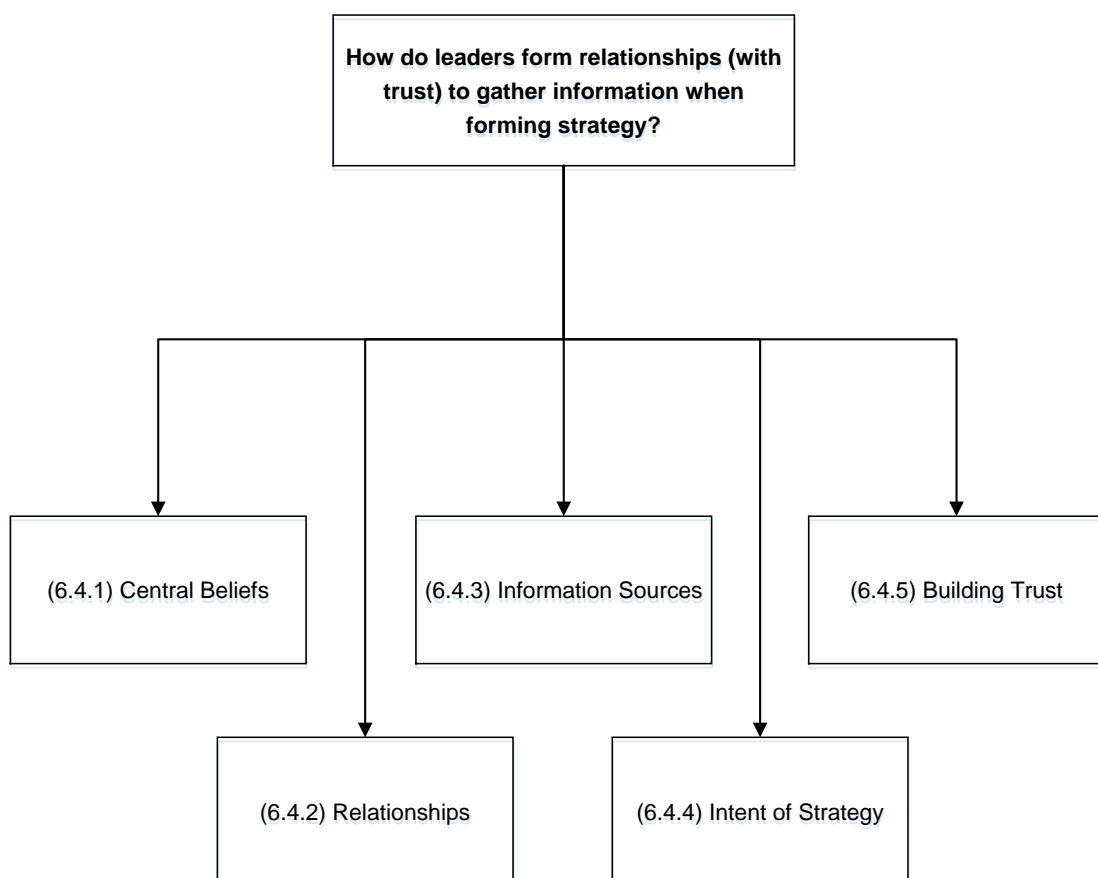


Figure 17: Research Objective 4 – Themes from sub questions

#### 6.4.1 Central Beliefs

The intent of this research question (Question 4.1 – Appendix 3) was aimed at understanding leaders' central beliefs when forming strategic objectives. Firstly this question was based on the authentic, servant and benevolent leadership principals of serving the best interest of followers (Agote et al., 2016; Karakas et al., 2013; Lynch & Friedman, 2015; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Secondly, it was based on the strategic foresight theory, which is a process of seeing things differently to others, seeing alternatives that could generate multiple possibilities and aspire followers to achieve a new reality (Bussey, 2013).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.4.1) provided two themes which referred to central beliefs and relationships.

##### (1) Central beliefs

Central beliefs refer to the non-negotiable attributes on which a leader bases his strategic objectives. The common finding from the leaders' responses was that of having moral, ethical and cultural attributes within their strategic objectives. Recognising that their strategic objectives depend on their followers buying into the new reality, the sentiment from the leaders indicated that conversations should be morally realistic with the aim of following ethical practises to achieve the desired objectives.

##### (2) Relationships

Nine leaders commented that shared interests with followers are a priority; and that followers should be brought into the decision-making process for or within forming their strategic objectives. This is seen as an opportunity for them to touch base with followers in attaining their buy-in and perspectives that would be needed. This interaction validates research objective two from the perspectives of reflecting on followers' reactions and perceptions during the conversation on the strategic objectives.

As suggested in the literature review Chapter 2 (2.6.2) Sendjaya et al. (2016) provide support for the central beliefs and relationship themes by defining moral reasoning as a process to identify right from wrong in uncertain situations. Moral reasoning empowers leaders to view these uncertain situations from multiple moral, ethical and social angles. Boyle et al. (2016) confirm that where leaders can sense disparities during these interactions with followers they would see reason which would be guided by their own moral values. This empowers leaders to be transparent in their decision-making for the interests of others. Sarpong et al. (2016) suggest that these types of

interactions could lead to nurturing strategic foresight through the organisation of relationships.

#### **6.4.2 Information sources**

The intent of this research question (Question 4.2 – Appendix 3) to confirm which type of information sources leaders prefer, while forming their strategic objectives. This research question is further aimed at elaborating on the results from Question 4.1 (Appendix 3) and findings indicated in Chapter 6 (6.4.1).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.4.2) provided one theme which referred to trends. Leader 6 and 9 referred to this as their main source of information for strategy in engaging in conversation with others. Acknowledging that these two leaders are from the Marketing (Retail & Digital) industry, this finding could reflect their approach to sourcing information from current conversations, as opposed to reports that indicate hindsight information. The interesting theme is trends which are supported by data that is sentiment driven. Leaders 3, 5, 9, 10 and 13 operate in industries where customer needs change rapidly forcing them to understand and adapt in line with customer behaviours or emotions. Leader 4 is the outlier, where it seems that in the Business IT Services industry dependency on emotional sentiments is not needed due to evolving technology.

Referring to literature in Chapter 2 (2.5.2), Sarpong and Maclean (2016) state that the ability to see through uncertainty is through the use of trends that could shape the future. Igor Ansoff (as cited in Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013) referred to these trends as weak signals or opportunities. Reviewing the sentiments from the leaders, strategic foresight, in their minds, is about the future based on current decisions they make. This is supported by Vecchiato (2015) who maintains that learning about the future through today's actions leads to the reduction of uncertainty for where change exists. The process of gathering information and building up knowledge leading to insights on what is happening (Hilemersson & Jansson, 2012) is of great benefit as an information source from followers.

#### **6.4.3 Intent of strategy**

The intent of this research question (Question 4.3 – Appendix 3) was to confirm leaders' views on strategy and how it relates to their company and followers. In the literature review in Chapter 2 (2.5.1) Sminia (2009) states that strategy leads to setting a direction for all to follow; and this remains mainly a cognitive process led by the leader.

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.4.3) provided support for Sminia's (2009) comment on strategy, where all 14 leaders' comments lead directly to direction. However, each leader then described their associated reason for direction, resulting in a varied view (See Table 12). This indicates that strategy is viewed differently in situational contexts underpinned by the constraints of the industry in which the leaders find themselves. For example, Leader 3 mentioned "Relevance" since being in the Professional and Consultancy service industry implementing technologies. Leader 8 is in the Digital Marketing Industry, therefore needs to adapt to changing customer behaviour. Leaders 4, 6, 11, 12, 13 and 14 are from industries involving legacy and innovative new products and solutions highlighting the need for constant alignment for followers to achieve the intended outcome.

Further to supporting this view on direction and with relevance to this research study, Agote et al. (2016); Cullen et al. (2014) state that trust can also be earned through defining the way forward and becoming a means to reducing the uncertainty with followers.

#### 6.4.4 Building Trust

The intent of this research question (Question 4.4 – Appendix 3) was to confirm how the leaders solicit trust in gathering the appropriate information from followers and make a decision. Adopting the stance from the literature review in Chapter 2 (2.2.1), followers will perceive the trustworthiness of a leader in the present moment and will form an understanding of how a leader will portray their trust and whether their interests would be harmed (Agote et al., 2016). Lawrence (2015) stresses that followers' perceptions are created by patterns of a series of dialogs where they will observe leaders' behaviours and personality traits. It is understood that coherence in the delivery of communication builds trust between leaders and followers; and this will form a guide on how followers will follow a leader (Taylor, 2010).

The results from this question shown in Chapter 5 (5.4.4.4) show that thirteen leaders have emphasised that building trust is through building relationships with followers. Referring to Table 12 for the granularity on how they build trust with followers, it is evident that each leader has a different leadership style and means of working with followers to earn the trust of their followers.

Referring to the literature review (2.2.1, 2.4.4, 2.5.4 and 2.6.2) Daher (2015) indicates that environments consist of different cultures which require leaders to adapt through social interaction creating an emotional connection with followers. Through the lens of the social exchange theory (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 2015) and the behavioural integrity

construct (Dineen et al., 2006; Simons, 1999; Simons et al., 2015), followers' perceptions will be re-enforced by the trustworthiness of actions and behaviours from the leader. Stewart et al. (2014) indicates that suppressing one's personal bias by being mindful of the different value systems each culture would help form relationships on common ground. Further supported by Sarpong et al. (2016) who maintain that creating spaces of social interaction to build relationship with followers will unfold the factors that shape the conditions of uncertainty with followers, and will create value driven conversations.

#### **6.4.5 Research Objective 4 Conclusion**

The purpose of research objective 4 was to gather information on the applicability of strategic foresight, with the understanding that strategic foresight is a relatively unused term amongst business leaders. However, the responses from the leaders confirm that they practice the activities of strategic foresight, particularly drawing on the human element. The themes mentioned are in line with the literature review which shows that by having strategic objectives formed on moral, ethical and cultural grounds help build relationships with followers to source their information.

Will be discussed further in chapter 7.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the main theoretical and research findings of this study. It includes a model that will assist leaders in managing uncertainty and build trust. Thereafter recommendations for leaders are provided. Finally, the limitations are considered and reflected with suggestions for future research.

The purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, offering a new perspective of guiding future leaders of building trust by using the combination of self-awareness and strategic foresight in gathering real time feedback and contribute to academic literature. Secondly, to gain understanding on how leaders navigate through times of uncertainty by gathering feedback (on trustworthiness) from followers to enable themselves to be effective. Thirdly, by introducing a new model of how a leader should navigate through uncertainty to build trust and make effective decisions. Leading to forming their strategy.

### 7.2 Principle finding

The research study was motivated by the use of real time feedback over the conventional 360 degree feedback tools.

This study indicates that 360 degree feedback was not the preferred method of gathering feedback on trust, despite its value to leadership development. This study revealed that continuous conversation is the main method of gathering feedback of trust and building trust with followers. Acknowledging that uncertainty requires context and each environment will be different with diverse variables influencing how followers react. The results from Chapter 6 upon consolidation of the four research objectives provides the foundation to build the Trust formation model for uncertainty (refer to Figure 18). The findings will be discussed using the approach of the model.

#### 7.2.1 Understanding one's self

This research study found that leaders in business today believe in Kurt Lewin's perspective of leaders having a firm understanding of themselves (Burnes, 2009) and this is achieved with self-awareness.

As leaders begin their career in business, their ability of self-awareness to recognize their and others emotions and actions is not their central focus. Through experiences with followers, leaders begin to realize their own actions and behaviour and the effect

it has on followers. The realization thus begins with acceptance. This research study confirms that once a leader has accepted their values, strengths and weaknesses, it would have a positive influence of their decision making. These findings are consistent with and confirms academic literature that self-awareness begins with acceptance (Ashley & Reiter-Palmon, 2012), introspection and reflection on personal experiences (Showry and Manasa, 2014), it's a skill that can be developed over time (Marques, 2013), and once developed the leader will be able to regulate the emotions and actions in such environments (Farh et al., 2012), and that it ok not to have all the answers (Crossman and Doshi, 2015) and engage with followers.

### **7.2.2 Making sense of the uncertainty**

This research study found that uncertainty needs context. Gaining context is through engaging with followers and listening to verbal and nonverbal messages, which will enable the leader to interpret the levels of emotions, actions and behaviours that exist in the environment. Going as far as using these messages as signals to differentiate between human behaviour and non-human behaviour to draw meaning of the given context.

Thereafter creating an environment that encourages followers to feel at ease and share information. However, a process is required of sifting through the noise, then handling the conversation and finally controlling the conversation. Leading towards summarizing what is needed to create certainty and trust.

This finding is consistent with the academic literature on listening and interpreting emotions (Dabke, 2016; Goleman, 1998; Holt & Marques, 2012; Parris and Peachey, 2013) and thereafter regulating the emotions, actions and behaviours (Farh et al., 2012; Goleman 1998; Parke et al., 2015) through controlling the conversation. Also consistent with the academic literature on managing change through uncertainty (Lawrence, 2015) in creating time and space for followers to engage.

### **7.2.3 Understanding followers' perceptions within the environment**

This research study indicated the importance of understanding followers' perceptions within the environment. For a leader to be effective, a leader must be able to self-reflect on the emotions, actions and behaviours of followers in relation to what is expected. The variation between the expected and unexpected would indicate the level of effectiveness the leader has on their followers (inspired by leader 10). This would be an example of identifying in real time that something is wrong.

This finding is consistent with and confirms academic research by Koning and Kleef (2015); Strum et al. (2014); Taylor 2010 on how the leader views themselves in comparison to how their followers view them. The use of self-reflection would help a leader to adapt, by learning what is required and adopting the appropriate leadership style, i.e. authentic, servant, etc. (Caldwell, 2009; Taylor 2010) for the given environment. By setting a direction that would positively appeal to followers, this would create certainty (Kacmar et al., 2013; Sminia, 2009).

This research study also highlighted the importance of leading through coherent actions. Cognisant of Grover et al. (2014); McKnight et al. (1998) warning that it is easy to earn their trust initially as opposed to restoring trust after it has been diminished. Leading with words that complement actions (Simons 1999; Simons et al., 2015) that are moral and ethical (Agote et al., 2016; Sendjaya et al., 2016) creates a trustworthy perception in the minds of followers.

#### **7.2.4 Reaching alignment**

This research study found that building trust is through building relationships with followers. With strategic foresight not being a familiar term, but the attributes of strategic foresight were found within the study. Strategic foresight helps with defining the way forward, creating new reality, the possibilities of what can be achieved in the interest of serving followers (Sarpong et al., (2016). The creativity and collaboration that strategic foresight induces creates shared interest with followers. The information that would appear through this type of engagement, having attained shared interest, would lead from hindsight to insight (Hilemersson & Jansson, 2012) and identifying trends (Rohrbeck & Schwarz, 2013). Seemingly, there is a large dependency on self-awareness to exist before the engagement of strategic foresight to be effective. The alignment of leaders and followers leads to creating certainty and becomes value adding activity for business.

#### **7.2.5 Conclusion of findings**

The findings of this research study contribute a new perspective on building trust using current literature on self-awareness, strategic foresight and leadership. The research study provides the foundation for the Trust Formation Model to manage uncertainty, which is underpinned by self-awareness and strategic foresight.



### 7.3 Trust Formation Model: to manage uncertainty

Trust formation model to manage uncertainty: underpinned by self-awareness and strategic foresight using continuous conversation. This model has evolved from Figure 1, the literature review of chapter 2 and Figure 7, and the results from chapter 6.

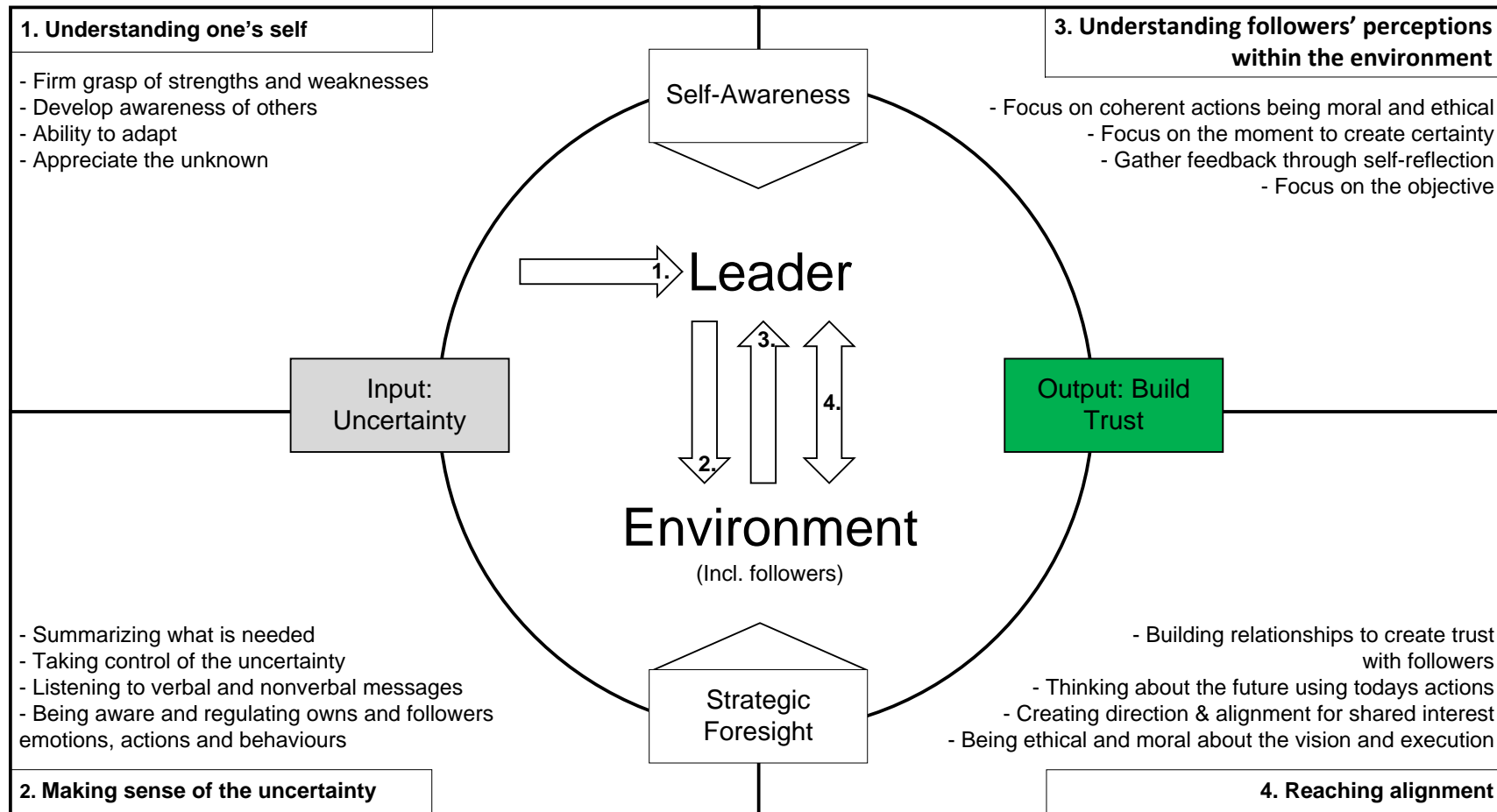


Figure 18: Trust Formation Model to manage uncertainty

## **7.4 Application of the Model**

The application of the model consist of four steps (refer to Figure 18). The objective of the model is to build trust indicated by the green block. The arrows indicate the direction in which the leader would begin the process. First with self, then looking towards the environment, then receiving followers' perceptions and reaching a point of alignment.

### **Step 1: Understanding one's self**

It begins with the leader in understanding themselves. The use of introspection to understand their values (ethics and morals) and level of strength that they can contribute and further alleviate the given situation. Use of their weakness to either leverage the situation, (showing signs of being human) or apply themselves to learn and enhance their weaknesses or encouraging a follower who has the appropriate strength to lead.

### **Step 2: Understanding their environment**

Once the leader has a clear understanding of themselves and how they would contribute, the next step is to gain understanding on how their followers are reacting to the given situation of uncertainty i.e. emotional and physical actions. The use of emotional intelligence, more specifically the use of empathy to appreciate and gain an understanding of the context their followers are dealing with.

### **Step 3: Understanding followers' perceptions within the environment**

This is an essential step for leaders to self-reflect how followers perceiving them as trustworthy. Through the use of self-reflection, understanding the signals and information followers' offer, learn what is needed to meet the objective and create certainty. Leading with coherent moral and ethical words and actions that translates into certainty for followers to interpret. Once followers have certainty, they will feel at ease and will feel comfortable to achieve the desired objective set out by the leader.

### **Step 4: Reaching alignment with followers**

By reaching this step a leader will be establish alignment with followers. Drawing attention to creating a direction that is aligned for shared interest. The vision and execution are underpinned by ethical and moral principles. Behavioural integrity in comparison to the ability-based model by Mayer and Salovey (as cited in Dabke, Farh et al., 2012) the alignment between leaders and followers' would also exist on a

continuum. This would require the relationship between leaders and followers to be maintained over time, to ensure trust is not diminished.

The application of the Trust formation model for managing uncertainty provides an overview on how to approach an environment that is uncertain. The model is provided in view of literature and the findings from interviews with leaders, therefore, built on the reflection of leaders and confirmation of existing theory. The applicability and success of this model have not been tested and exists with limitations (refer to Chapter 4.9 and Chapter 7.6).

## **7.5 Recommendations for Leaders and decision makers**

The execution of strategy is delivered through earning followers trust. Leaders have the privilege of creating decisions that followers need to execute. The research study offers the recommendation to leaders to become self-aware of their abilities, words and their actions. Create decisions that have the future in mind by creating a new reality or an outcome that would benefit followers positively. Noting that it takes time for leader's to evolve their self-awareness abilities.

With rapid change, evolving uncertainty in business, time does not afford leaders to learn costly mistakes. Leading to career derailment (Braddy et al., 2014). There is no such thing as a perfect decision. Trade-offs or shortcomings will exist. Leaders who make incorrect decisions based on information they have (Daher, 2015) or are self-serving and do not serve others (Sendajaya et al., 2016) or have poor relationships with follower will that will execute the decisions (Agote et al., 2016).

Forming relationships with followers and building their trust will yield in a better source of information, when it's combined with their shared interest on moral and ethical grounds. Since followers form their perceptions based on leaders' behaviours. Incorporating the trust formation model will act as a guide to manage uncertainty and positively influencing followers.

## **7.6 Recommendations for future research**

This research study makes interesting contributions to the three literature streams, i.e. theory of self-awareness, leadership and strategic foresight. It is important to note that the limitations of the research should be taken into account when interpreting the results and conclusions. Firstly, using reflection as the base construct to gather information through a cross-sectional study, memory and personal bias may have contributed to the results. To replicate this research for further findings or validations, a longitudinal approach would help in curbing this limitation and would provide a deeper

understanding of the trust formation model. Secondly, using a research study method to measure observations between followers and leaders in the context of uncertainty. This provides an opportunity to understand the real time effect of leaders adapting to the current emotions and actions of followers and how followers adapt to their leaders. This research study found that leaders expressed that their awareness (of other emotions and actions) was triggered off by certain experiences in their working career. An opportunity would exist in tracking down how early on in a leaders' working career did they realize there were not self-aware and what may have triggers this realization. These suggestions for future research may find substantial information that could enable future leaders coming into the work force and contribute to their development.

## **7.7 Summary**

Building trust in times of uncertainty by using self-awareness and strategic foresight, as tools, can enable a leader to be effective. Even when followers may not see the full picture, the certainty created by the leader in conjunction with direction will calm followers. For example, a leader recognizing that they may see a future that would benefit their followers, however followers may not share the same view of their leader. Hence the principle finding of this research to alleviate such differentiated views through the use of continuous conversation, allowing the leader to interact with followers' perceptions, adapt their approach and messages, and bringing followers along to create a new reality or a better outcome.

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## Appendix 1: Email Confirmation of Ethics Clearance

Dear Mr Desigan Brentin Govender

Protocol Number: Temp2016-01383

Title: **The influence of a leader's self-awareness during strategic foresight formation**

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been APPROVED.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

Kind Regards,

Adele Bekker

### Notification and Allowance of Research Title Change.

On 21 October 2016 at 14:23, Adele Bekker <[bekkera@gibs.co.za](mailto:bekkera@gibs.co.za)> wrote:

Dear Brentin

Thank you for checking in on this – you do not need to re-submit to ethics as this is not a significant change – as your method and questions have not changed – it is simply a refinement of the title.

We will make a note of this title change

Kind Regards

Adele

**Adele Bekker**

*Senior Manager: Career Services and MBA Projects*  
The University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science

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Physical address: 26 Melville Road, Illovo, Johannesburg

**From:** Brentin Govender [<mailto:14457662@mygibs.co.za>]

**Sent:** Friday, October 21, 2016 2:14 PM

**To:** Adele Bekker

**Subject:** Fwd: GIBS Ethics Notification

Hi Adele

Hope you well.. need your help.

I would like to find out if i change my title of my integrated research report would this have any bearing on my ethic's approval. I have reviewed the green pages and have not found anything that suggest that it would. But would like to make sure.

Previous Title.

"The influence of a leader's self-awareness during strategic foresight formation."

Final Title

"In times of uncertainty, using self-awareness and strategic foresight to build trust."

My research questions and methodology has not changed at all. The final topic speaks directly to what my research study is about and complements the questionnaire and methodology that has been carried out.

Thank you

Brentin



## Appendix 2: Participant consent form

### Participant Consent Letter

Thank you for participating in my MBA research titled “The influence of a leader’s self-awareness during strategic foresight formation.” As part of my research I will be asking voluntary participants a series of questions to gain greater understanding regarding this topic.

The interview is estimated to take between 60-90 minutes to complete, and will be voice recorded for transcribing and further analysis. You can elect to exit from the interview at any time as your participation is entirely voluntary. Exiting the interview will not incur in any form of penalty. All data from the interview will be kept confidential.

Herewith are my details as well as that of my supervisor, should you have any questions or concerns.

Supervisor: Andre Vermaak

Phone: 083 308 0235

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Researcher: Desigan Brentin Govender

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Participant Signature

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Date



## Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire

### General Questions

These questions were used to begin the conversation and allow the leaders to settle their thoughts before beginning the actual interview process. With the aim of reducing participant bias.

1. How would you describe your style of leadership?
2. What does uncertainty mean to you?
3. Could you explain your belief on trust and the importance on what you need to accomplish daily?
4. What does foresight mean to you?

### Research Question 1: How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process?

Discussion questions to help answer research question 1;

- 1.1. What are your thoughts on a leader understanding their strengths and weaknesses, especially in times of handling uncertainty?
- 1.2. Would you be able to explain, how have you developed your ability to be aware of others emotions and actions?
- 1.3. Which form of information do you find beneficial that enables you to improve your approach when conversing with followers in time of uncertainty? To elaborate, research has shown 360 feedback has an influence on leadership development but referred to as hindsight
- 1.4. From your experience of being a leader, how have you developed yourself to appreciate what you don't know and that you need to seek help in others?

### Research Question 2: How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?

Discussion questions to help answer research question 2;

- 2.1. What has been the key learnings (from your experience as leader) to be able to calm followers that enable you to sift through the noise and get to the crux of the information you need?

- 2.2. How have you being able make sense of your environment (market, human behaviour etc.) amongst times of uncertainty?
- 2.3. What clues (either human behaviour or environmental conditions) do you pay attention to when engaging with followers?

**Research Question 3: How do leaders enable themselves to overcome future challenges and changes in times of uncertainty?**

Discussion questions to help answer research question 3;

- 3.1. Do you think it's important for leaders to understand how their followers perceive them?
- 3.2. Would you be able to reflect on how your follower's perceptions have enabled your abilities to navigate through engagements with followers?
- 3.3. How have you formulate your approach to situations that are uncertain or the information is not known, with the aim of producing a productive outcome?

**Research Question 4: How do leaders form relationships with trust, to gather information when forming their decisions to formulate their strategy?**

Discussion questions to help answer research question 4;

- 4.1. What are your central beliefs when forming strategic objectives? How does forming relationship with relevant stakeholder's aid in this process?
- 4.2. What type of information sources do you find useful (i.e. stats, reports, trends) to formulate your strategy from?
- 4.3. What are your thoughts on strategy and its intent for the future of your company and its followers?
- 4.4. How would you solicit trust to gather the appropriate information that is needed for you to make a decision?

## Appendix 4: Consistency Matrix

Research Objective	Literature Review	Data Collection Tool	Analysis
<b>Research Objective 1</b>			
How does self-awareness influence a leader's decision making process during uncertainty?	Caldwell (2009) Dabke (2016) Gill, Ramsey and Leberman (2015) Ladkin (2008) Lawrence (2015) Marques (2013) Romanowska, Larsson, & Theorell (2014) Showry & Manasa (2014) Sturm, Taylor, Atwater and Braddy (2014)	Semi-Structured Interview (Using guided interview questionnaire)	Content Analysis Frequent Analysis
<b>Research Objective 2</b>			
How do leaders perceive their challenges and changes during times of uncertainty?	Boyle, Stankov, Martin, Petrides, Eysenck & Ortet, 2016 Frauendorfer, Schmid Mast, Nguyen & Gatica-Perez, 2014 McKelvie, Haynie and Gustavsson (2011) Milliken (1987) Pryke, Lunic and Badi (2015) Sendjaya, Pekerti, Härtel, Hirst, and Butarbutar (2016) Stewart, Wilson and Miles (2014) Ybarra, Kross & Sanchez-Burks (2014)	Semi-Structured Interview (Using guided interview questionnaire)	Content Analysis Frequent Analysis

<b>Research Objective 3</b>			
How leaders have enabled themselves to engage with followers perceptions and prepare themselves during times of uncertainty?	<p>Agote, Arumburu &amp; Lines (2016)</p> <p>Daher (2015)</p> <p>Dineen, Lewicki &amp; Tomlinson (2006)</p> <p>Hansbrough, Lord and Schyns (2015)</p> <p>Sendjaya, Pekerti, Härtel, Hirst, and Butarbutar (2016)</p> <p>Skubinn and Herzog (2016)</p>	Semi-Structured Interview (Using guided interview questionnaire)	<p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Frequent Analysis</p>
<b>Research Objective 4</b>			
How do leaders form relationships (with trust) to gather information when forming their decisions to formulate their strategy?	<p>Ahloqvist and Kohl (2016)</p> <p>Burnes (2009)</p> <p>Bussey (2013)</p> <p>Cunha, Clegg and Kamoche (2012)</p> <p>Hilmersson and Jansson (2012)</p> <p>Nestler, Egloff, Kufnera and Back (2012)</p> <p>Rohrbeck &amp; Schwarz (2013)</p> <p>Sarpong and Maclean (2016)</p> <p>Vecchiato (2015)</p>	Semi-Structured Interview (Using guided interview questionnaire)	<p>Evaluating through emotional, moral &amp; cultural intelligence and behaviour integrity, authentic behaviour styles.</p> <p>Content Analysis</p> <p>Frequent Analysis</p>

## Appendix 5: Analysis Codes

Research Objective	Major Theme	Research Question	Codes for Analysis
<b>Research Objective 1</b>	Self-Awareness	Strengths and Weaknesses	Importance
		Developing their abilities to be aware others	Journey Developed over time Natural Developing
		Improving their approach	Self-reflect Tough empathy Real time Hindsight
		Appreciating the unknown	Acceptance Acknowledge Still developing Comfortable with not knowing
<b>Research Objective 2</b>	Sensing	Getting to the crux of the information needed	By having Patience By being transparent By using intuition By being accountable Listening Directing Removing emotion Rationalising the situation
		Making Sense of the environment	Conversation Verbal and human behaviour Non-verbal and human behaviour Non-verbal and non-human behaviour
<b>Research Objective 3</b>	Perception	Importance of followers perceptions of them	Massively Important Very Important Extremely Important Absolutely Important Important



Research Objective	Major Theme	Research Question	Codes for Analysis
		Adapting to followers feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building self-confidence</li> <li>Lead with freedom</li> <li>Recognising the Aha moments</li> <li>Allow for clarification and validation</li> <li>Talking is needed to understand</li> <li>Test ideas through conversation</li> <li>Passion can draws followers in</li> <li>Driving passion to get buy in</li> <li>Perception is created by the leader</li> <li>Allowing feedback to be received</li> <li>Followers reactions will vary based on situations</li> <li>Building a safe environment</li> <li>Followers want to be heard</li> <li>Questioning for understanding</li> <li>Helps me engage with them</li> <li>Showing that they care</li> <li>Recognising others</li> <li>To acknowledge &amp; Reward others for participation</li> <li>Encourage others over telling others what to do</li> <li>Understanding the underlying issue</li> <li>We all not the same</li> <li>See followers differently</li> <li>Accepting the ability to unlearn</li> <li>Changing direction for the right reasons and not for perception</li> <li>Followers reactions will vary based on situations</li> <li>Having the willingness to engage</li> </ul>
		Formulating their approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognising the need for multiple hats to be worn.</li> <li>Focusing on the moment and the objective needed</li> <li>Reaching a point of being comfortable with the information at hand.</li> <li>Creating space to unpack to gather buy in</li> </ul>
<b>Research Objective 4</b>	Strategic Foresight	Central Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Underpinned by others</li> <li>Outcome beneficial to both</li> <li>Must be achievable and relevant</li> <li>Truthful, respectful, trust and integrity</li> <li>Financial, moral and creative</li> <li>What success look like following a process (structure)</li> <li>Why are we doing this</li> <li>Culture</li> <li>Balancing between signals from the market and people, and having a long term view</li> <li>Understanding what is required</li> <li>Alignment to policies and rules of the organization</li> <li>Information</li> <li>Fit with culture, values and morals</li> <li>Ethics and values</li> </ul>



Research Objective	Major Theme	Research Question	Codes for Analysis
		Relationships	Shared interest Shared interest and building relationships Acceptance Alignment of values No response Participation
		information sources	Trends supported by data and tangible driven Trends supported by data and conversations Trends supported by data and sentiment driven Trends supported by data, hard cold facts not emotions Conversation driven Trends supported by data and learning from others
		Intent of strategy	Direction & Vision Direction & Motivational Direction & Relevance Direction & Alignment Direction & Measurement Direction & Adaptability Direction & Structure
		Building Trust	Building relationships   By being open, honest and transparent Building relationships   By engaging on a social level Building relationships   By choosing who to trust over soliciting trust Building relationships   by delivering results first to encourage trust Building relationships   By trusting others first Building relationships   By knowing your network and showing that you care Building relationships   By being respectful of others Building relationships   By empowering followers No response Building relationships   By being humane Building relationships   By recognising where followers are in their personal journeys



## Appendix 6: TURNITIN Report

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