

Strategic Agility in Facing Global Uncertainty: Literature Review and Practical Implications for Companies

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the development of the concept of strategic agility and its practical implications for companies in facing global uncertainty. Using the qualitative Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method based on the PRISMA protocol, the study collects and synthesizes indexed literature (Scopus/WoS) for the period 2015–2025. Key variables include strategic agility elements: strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity, and leadership unity. The results reveal that the integration of strategic agility with digital transformation, data-driven approaches, and ESG principles significantly increases business resilience in the VUCA+ era. Practical implications emphasize the need for dynamic capability development through ecosystem collaboration and structural adaptation

INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, the global business environment has faced unprecedented levels of uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic, technological disruption, geo-political conflicts, and global climate change have created an extremely dynamic and complex environment for global businesses across industries. This situation challenges companies not only to react to change, but to look ahead in anticipation and guidance of looming challenges. Here, the concept of strategic agility begins to become important as a firm's ability to keep up with swift and effective changes in the environment outside. Elali (2021) believes that strategic agility allows organizations to handle the unpredictability and complexity of the business world in an increasing measure of flexibility and innovation.

Strategic agility means the ability of a company to change direction quickly and relentlessly in response to unforeseen changes in the business environment (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Strategic agility has three important components that include strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity, and leadership unity (Doz & Kosonen, 2010). Evidence exists that companies that are strategically agile can survive and even thrive in volatile market conditions (Zámborský, 2021). This is because they can quickly identify opportunities, apply resources in a flexible way, and enjoy leadership alignment in strategic choices.

In the context of international markets, especially for companies from developing countries, strategic agility plays a key role in improving international performance. Based on research by Singh et al. (2021), Indian companies that can develop strategic agility through exploration and exploitation improve performance in demanding and dynamic foreign markets. Exploration allows companies to discover new opportunities and innovate, while exploitation allows for optimization of already existing resources to ensure operational efficiency.

Moreover, the research conducted by Zahoor et al. (2022) and Zahoor et al. (2024) also shed light on the relevance of strategic agility for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) when dealing with global issues. It has been discovered that strategic agility allows small and medium enterprises to respond more effectively through innovative social collaborations with a variety of stakeholders, hence resulting in considerable positive social change. This reveals that strategic agility is essential, not only to large corporations but to SMEs as well, in dealing with global uncertainties.

In Indonesia, the focus on implementing strategic agility has been a central concern for many firms when dealing with global uncertainties. Nurjaman (2022) indicated that Indonesian logistics service providers practicing strategic agility demonstrate improved performance during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rapid adaptation to changing business conditions ensures a competitive edge and enables these firms to satisfy emerging customer requirements. In addition, the research conducted by Setiawati et al. (2024) for PT Citilink Indonesia disclosed that the agility strategy adopted by the company, which includes the formation of the COVID-19 Task Force and the digitalization of services, significantly enhanced business resilience and competitiveness during the crisis.

Moreover, Pratiwi et al's (2024) study on MSMEs in South Lampung revealed that the application of an agility strategy aided in the improvement of production capacity and operational cost efficiency. These MSMEs were more adept to and proficient at meeting market requirements due to the adoption of straightforward technology and innovation in the production process. This validates the fact that strategic agility is relevant not just for large businesses, but is equally important for MSMEs that have to deal with fast changing market dynamics.

Furthermore, strategical agility aids in driving environmental innovation and therefore encourages sustainable development and plays a significant part when it comes to tackling the issue of sustainability within the ecosystem of environmental challenges for the surrounding area. Bouguerra et al. (2024) remarked that businesses who apply strategic agility practices have more capability navigating environmental sustainability constraints and enhance eco-innovation through collaboration with supply chain partners. Businesses strategically heighten their environmental sensitivity and resource flexibility which makes them more vulnerable to changes externally, consequently increasing the ability to drive innovations that support sustainable objectives.

Although the requirement for strategic agility has already been controversially discussed in the literature, little understanding exists of how companies are to develop and implement such a capability in the context of rising global uncertainty. Consequently, the aim of this study is to integrate existing literature on strategic agility and examine its implications in the real world for companies facing global uncertainty. By understanding what affects and what can be done regarding it, it is hoped that companies will be able to increase their adaptive capacity and achieve sustainable competitive advantage.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of strategic agility is gaining importance in an age of globalization. This term denotes an organization's capacity to respond rapidly, flexibly, and appropriately to change in order to maintain its competitiveness. In Zámorsk (2021), it is stated that strategic agility can be achieved through three key factors: strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity, and leadership unity. The sense of change, efficient resource allocation, and strategic decision-making are based on these three elements for companies. The key to long-term success in an unstable global market environment is to adapt quickly and deeply.

To combat global uncertainty, companies must develop strategies that are not solely reactive and proactive. In 2021, Elali's research highlighted the importance of strategic agility in aiding business continuity during crises like COVID-19. Rapidly adapting to market demands, digital technology, and business models is possible for agile companies. According to Zahoor et al. (2024), small and medium-sized companies in developing markets can overcome significant challenges through responsible and collaborative innovation, which is made possible by strategic agility and limited resources faced by external forces.

Achievement in the utilization of strategic agility in an organization relies greatly on a variety of factors that are internal. One of the most common is visionary and adaptive leadership. Syamsir et al. (2025) believed that agile leadership has the capacity to inspire organizations to move towards change collectively, as well as to create a working ecosystem that supports risk-taking and experimentation. On the other hand, an innovative-supportive organizational culture is also a main determinant of strategic agility. Ngandoh's (2024) study reveals that companies whose culture supports learning and flexibility are more prone to be more agile in their reaction to market turbulence. Moreover, technology assistance and digital transformation improve agility capability through the provision of accurate and real-time information systems, hence allowing management to make strategic decisions faster and more accurately (Alamsjah & Yunus, 2022).

Strategic agility is not only a practical theory, but can also be operationally achieved through a step-by-step process. Companies need to develop sensing capabilities to scan the external environment for changes, increase flexibility in resource allocation, and design organizations that allow for cross-functional collaboration. Zámorský (2021) emphasized that companies that can master strategic agility not only are able to survive, but even can turn crises into growth opportunities. Therefore, understanding and enabling strategic agility is extremely important in defining the resilience and competitive advantage of companies in the VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) world like today.

METHODOLOGY

1. Types and Approaches to Research

This study uses a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to identify, evaluate, and synthesize literature that relates to strategic agility in the face of global uncertainty. SLR methodology was used as it has the potential to provide a comprehensive overview of the development of strategic agility theories and practices in a variety of organizational contexts (Juneja et al., 2018).

2. Literature Search Protocol and Strategy

Literature searching was informed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol to ensure transparency and reproducibility in study selection. Literature was obtained from academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar, with the publication period between 2015 and 2025.

The keywords used in the search were: "strategic agility", "organizational agility", "VUCA", "global uncertainty", "dynamic capabilities", and "agile strategy". Boolean operators such as AND and OR were used to extend the search scope (Motwani & Katatria, 2024).

3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria for the literature selection are:

- a. Articles in refereed journals.
- b. Studies that deal with the concept, application, or effect of strategic agility in an organizational context.

- c. Written in English or Indonesian.
- d. Full-text articles.

Exclusion criteria include:

- a. Articles that are not relevant to the theme of strategic agility.
- b. Research that cannot be accessed in full text.
- c. Articles in the form of opinions, editorials, or non-scientific articles.

4. Data Selection and Analysis Process

The literature selection is performed systematically based on the PRISMA flow with four main phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. After the collection of pertinent literature, a thematic analysis of the article contents is performed to classify the findings based on prevailing themes, such as dynamic capabilities, strategic sensitivity, and resource flexibility.

In addition, the chosen papers are also examined based on the TCCM (Theory-Context-Characteristics-Methodology) method to determine gaps in research and possible theoretical and practical contributions (Umbara et al., 2023).

5. Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity and reliability of SLR findings, data triangulation was performed by cross-comparison of findings from various sources and analysis methods. The literature selection and analysis process was also performed independently by two researchers to minimize the risk

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Key Trends and Themes in Strategic Management (2015–2025)

Table 1. Summarizes the Four Main Themes That Dominate Strategic Management Discourse During the Period 2015–2025 Based on The Results of A Systematic Literature Review

Strategic Themes	Key Description	Supporting Resources
Digital Transformation & Strategic Agility	Technological changes drive the need for agile and adaptive organizations.	Elali (2021); Doz & Kosonen (2008); Zamborský (2021)
ESG and Sustainability	Focus on socio-environmental sustainability through ethical organizational governance	Bouguerra et al. (2024); Zahoor et al. (2024)
Dynamic Capabilities and Organizational Resilience	Organizational ability to innovate and survive amidst ongoing crises.	Zahoor et al. (2022); Singh et al. (2021)
Data-Driven Strategy and Artificial Intelligence	Strategic decision-making based on analytics and AI for high efficiency.	Alamsjah & Yunus (2022); Motwani & Katatria (2024)

The years 2015-2025 have heightened uncertainty on a global scale and escalated the pace with which digital technologies are adopted. This, in turn, creates the necessity of strategic agility, which refers to the capacity of an organization to adapt and change the direction of its strategies promptly and responsively. While digitalization does enable automation of processes, it also places greater demands on traditional organizational frameworks. Agile organizations, as noted by Elali (2021) and Zámbořský (2021), are those that possess the requisite competitive advantage and the ability to use flexible and integrated leadership systems for sensing market changes in a timely manner.

Amid increasing social scrutiny towards a company's ESG policy, one's responsibility is deemed as going beyond profit earning into the realms of social and ecological handling. With that in mind, Bouguerra et al. (2024) note that strategic agility actively promotes collaboration within the supply chain to enhance innovative tactics for achieving sustainability. Moreover, governance on the basis of ESG criteria serves as a key policy tool enhancing organizational legitimacy while helping cope with long-term exposures to global environmental and social threats.

At the same time, artificial intelligence and data analytic approaches are becoming the new drivers of modern strategic management. Organizations are starting to learn – what do you think comes next?

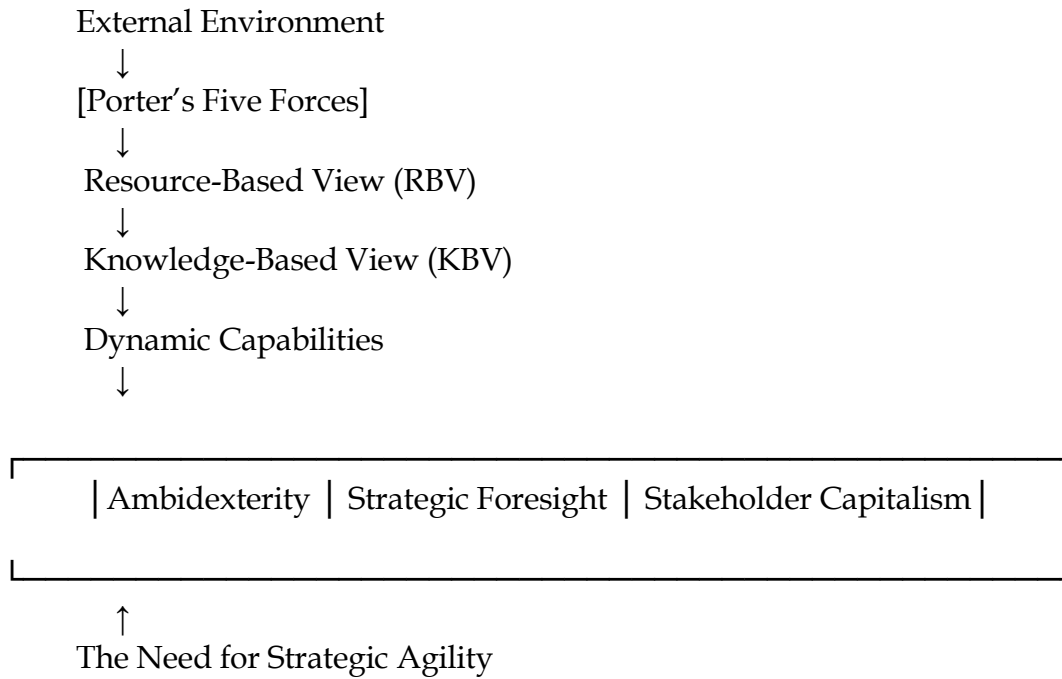
2. Evolution of Strategic Concepts and Theories

a. Development of RBV (Resource-Based View), KBV (Knowledge-Based View), and Dynamic Capabilities

Strategic theory has shifted over time, moving from a focus on the external environment to a greater emphasis on the internal strengths of an organization. The Resource-Based View (RBV) highlights that a competitive edge stems from internal resources that are not only rare but also tough to replicate and irreplaceable. Building on this, the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) underscores the significance of knowledge as a vital strategic asset for fostering innovation and ensuring long-term success. Adding to these perspectives, the Dynamic Capabilities theory provides a flexible viewpoint on how organizations can develop, integrate, and reshape their resources to adapt to swift changes in the environment.

b. New Approaches: Ambidexterity, Strategic Foresight, and Stakeholder Capitalism

As the world becomes more complex and uncertain, fresh strategic approaches are emerging. Ambidexterity refers to an organization's ability to explore new opportunities while also making the most of its existing capabilities. Strategic foresight allows organizations to look ahead by identifying trends and scenarios, enabling proactive decision-making grounded in long-term insights. At the same time, stakeholder capitalism expands the focus of companies from merely serving shareholders to considering all stakeholders. This approach prioritizes creating sustainable value through social justice, environmental responsibility, and inclusive governance.



The evolution of strategic theory shows a fascinating shift from a focus on stability to one that values flexibility and adaptability. The Resource-Based View (RBV) and Knowledge-Based View (KBV) highlight how crucial resources and knowledge are for gaining a competitive edge. However, in today's VUCA world—characterized by Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity—organizations need to develop more dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities theory acts as a bridge, connecting the resource-based approach with the necessity for ongoing adaptation. Yet, it's important to note that all three approaches tend to be reactive, responding to changes in the environment.

Emerging strategies like ambidexterity and strategic foresight provide a more proactive stance. Ambidexterity allows organizations to strike a balance between exploration and exploitation—two activities that were once thought to be in conflict. Meanwhile, strategic foresight equips companies with the tools to anticipate long-term shifts and craft suitable strategic responses. Additionally, stakeholder capitalism broadens a company's strategic goals to include not just profit-making, but also creating sustainable social and environmental impacts.

Bringing all these approaches together lays a solid foundation for developing strategic agility. In today's fast-paced world, organizations must be adept at picking up on signals of change (strategic sensitivity), allocating resources in a flexible manner (resource fluidity), and fostering alignment among leadership (leadership unity). Thus, grasping the evolution of strategic theory is not just an academic exercise; it's essential for equipping companies with a comprehensive and adaptive mindset.

3. Challenges and Strategic Implications in the VUCA+ Era

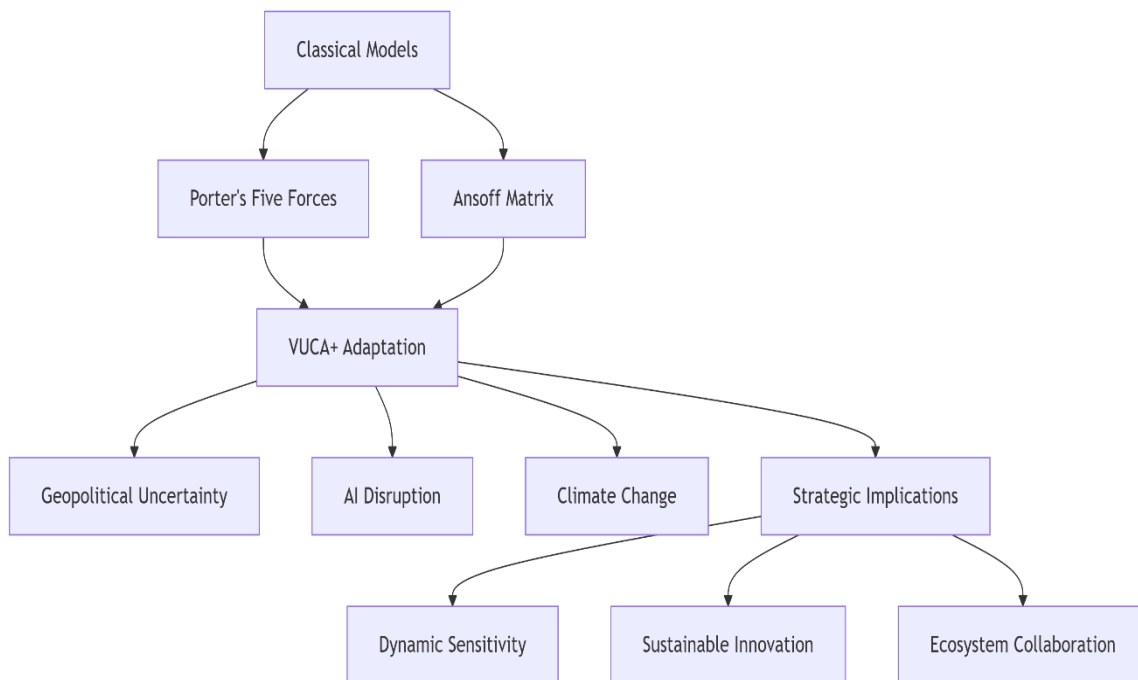


Figure 1. Challenges and Strategic Implications in the VUCA+ Era

The VUCA+ (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, Ambiguity) era brings with it three major challenges:

- Geopolitical uncertainty, like trade disputes and protectionist policies, is throwing a wrench into supply chains and limiting market access.
- The rise of AI is reshaping the competitive landscape, thanks to automation, predictive analytics, and data-driven innovations that are speeding up product life cycles.
- Climate change is pushing companies to transform their operations towards a greener economy, driven by regulatory demands and the growing preference for sustainable products among consumers.

According to Bouguerra et al. (2024), these three elements are interconnected, creating a feedback loop that heightens complexity. For instance, new environmental regulations stemming from climate change can be swayed by geopolitical decisions, while AI emerges as a vital tool to help manage these risks.

Classic strategy models like Porter's Five Forces and the Ansoff Matrix need a fresh look to tackle the challenges of VUCA+ dynamics. In Porter's model, the threat of new entrants is now coming from AI-driven startups—think fintech shaking up traditional banking. Meanwhile, the bargaining power of suppliers is shifting due to geopolitical disruptions in the supply chain, something Indonesian logistics companies have felt firsthand (Nurjaman, 2022). When it comes to the Ansoff Matrix, strategies for market penetration and diversification must take climate resilience into account. For instance, PT Citilink Indonesia (Setiawati et al., 2024) is incorporating climate risk analysis into its route expansion plans (market development), while Lampung MSMEs (Pratiwi et al., 2024) are embracing low-carbon technology for product development. This shift calls for strategic sensitivity

(Doz & Kosonen, 2010) to pick up on changes in real-time, moving away from the old static analytical methods.

In this VUCA+ era, organizations need to build three essential capabilities:

- **Dynamic Sensitivity:** Using AI for environmental scanning, like a machine learning-based dashboard for predicting geopolitical risks.
- **Sustainable Innovation:** Weaving ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles into the strategy portfolio, such as collaborating on green supply chains to cut down on carbon footprints (Bouguerra et al., 2024).
- **Ecosystem Collaboration:** Teaming up with various stakeholders – startups, government, and even competitors – to share risks. Research by Zahoor et al. (2024) shows that SMEs partnering with AI startups can boost their crisis resilience by as much as 40%. This evolution transforms the traditional linear model into a flexible framework that relies on real-time data and inclusive collaboration, like PT Citilink's use of digital twin simulations to create a sustainable route map.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights that having strategic agility is essential for companies aiming to not just survive but truly thrive amid global uncertainties. This capability allows organizations to swiftly, proactively, and creatively adapt to changes in their environment, relying on three key components: strategic sensitivity, resource fluidity, and leadership unity. The findings reveal that businesses – whether large corporations or small and medium enterprises (SMEs) – that exhibit high levels of strategic agility tend to be more resilient during crises, such as pandemics, technological upheavals, geopolitical tensions, and sustainability challenges. By merging strategic agility with digital transformation, data-driven strategies, and ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) principles, companies can significantly enhance their resilience and long-term competitiveness.

Strategic agility goes beyond just reacting; it's a forward-thinking framework that blends strategic awareness, operational flexibility, and a commitment to sustainability. In today's VUCA+ world, organizations that effectively embrace these three elements – backed by technology and collaborative ecosystems – will find ways to turn uncertainty into growth opportunities, ultimately creating lasting value for all their stakeholders.

FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that open up opportunities for future research development. First, the systematic literature review (SLR)-based study is qualitative in nature and has not empirically tested the strategic agility framework in a specific context, so the findings cannot be generalized widely. Second, the majority of the literature analyzed comes from the business context of developed countries, while its application to developing countries such as Indonesia – with unique institutional dynamics and resources – requires deeper adaptation. Third, the focus of the research on the service, logistics, and SME sectors leaves a gap for exploration for resource-intensive industries (such as mining, agriculture, or energy) that also face the challenges of global uncertainty.

To overcome these limitations, further research can be directed at several strategic agendas. Quantitative or qualitative empirical studies need to be conducted to test the effect of strategic agility on company performance in Indonesia, including an analysis of the role of moderator variables such as organizational culture and digital maturity. Exploration of specific contexts is also needed, for example examining the implementation of strategic agility in industries that are vulnerable to global turmoil (manufacturing, energy) or non-profit organizations. In addition, the development of an integrated model that accommodates the unique characteristics of emerging economies – such as local wisdom, collective MSME models, and VUCA+ challenges (green transition, geopolitical vulnerabilities) – can enrich the theoretical framework. Longitudinal research is also recommended to analyze the evolution of corporate agility capabilities during the ongoing crisis, in order to identify long-term adaptation patterns. Finally, the convergence of technology (AI/data analytics) and ESG principles in strengthening strategic resilience, especially in global supply chains, should be the focus of future research to address sustainability challenges. These steps are expected to not only deepen academic understanding but also provide more contextual practical guidance for organizations in dealing with evolving global complexities.

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