RELATIONSHIP BUYING: A NEW PARADIGM IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING

By

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DECLARATION

I, Myles Edward Wakeham, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

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ABSTRACT

The recent COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent invasion of Ukraine by Russia, has demonstrated to the world the volatile and fragile nature of the global supply chain and how important its effective management is for the various economies of the world to survive and prosper. Supply chain management (SCM) refers to the handling of the entire production flow of goods and services, from the sourcing of a vendor, until the offering is in the hands of the final customer. SCM consists of three key business activities, namely, business processes, general management (the overseeing of the management functional areas), and even more importantly, logistics and its thirteen activities, of which procurement is the most relevant. The reason for the latter assertion is that as without the solicitation of inputs (material, components and so on), need-satisfying business and consumer goods and services cannot be produced.

Organisations require a vast array of inputs to convert into offerings that are required by their customers, and the selection of the most appropriate vendors plays a vital role in satisfying the needs of business customer and consumers. As inputs vary considerably in terms of quality, price, and availability, it is crucial for the buying organisation to find suitable suppliers to satisfy their ever-changing requirements.

This research study was undertaken to determine the key vendor selection criteria. Most people think that price and product quality represent the predominant selection standards, but the problem relates to what is a fair price for a good and what signifies good quality, because like beauty, it is in the eyes of the beholder?

The objectives of the research and the eight hypotheses relating thereto, are concerned with determining the key vendor assessment criteria and whether there was a relationship between the criteria. For example, does service quality have a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding customer expectations? An integral part of the study was the development of a conceptual model of the supplier preference factors (constructs), which linked each hypothesis and determined the relationship with one another.

The research population comprised of small, medium, and large-sized organisations, within a myriad of business types and sectors. As there is no comprehensive list of organisations, a quantitative approach was used to garner the requisite data, the researcher over-estimated the

number of businesses in South Africa, and, used Rayosoft's sample size calculator to compute the required sample size, which was calculated on the basis of a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5% and a response distribution of 50%, so a sample size measuring 385 respondents was needed. The researcher managed to secure the support of 445 respondents. A comprehensive questionnaire was designed, pilot-tested, and then distributed via numerous methodologies (2 100 questionnaires in number). On receipt of the completed questionnaires, the questionnaires were meticulously reviewed in order to certify that they were comprehensive and accurate prior to being numbered, coded, captured, and analysed by means of SPSS (version 25) software. Simple descriptive statistical techniques were applied to ascertain means, standard deviations, and frequencies in order to provide a simple overview of the findings. Thereafter, generalised liner modelling and structural equation modelling were utilising to determine the more complex relationships demographic and personal data and suppliers' preference constructs.

The research study revealed that service quality had a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations, and service quality had a significant favourable effect on environmental sustainability. Access to personnel and exceeding expectations was found to have a significant positive effect on culture, EE and AA, and environmental sustainability had a significant favourable influence on personal relationships. Personal relationships and gifts have a significant positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management, and culture, EE and AA had a significant positive effect on BEE status. Relationships with salespeople and management have a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople, and finally, BEE status had a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople.

KEYWORDS

Supply chain management; relationships; logistics; procurement; vendor selection criteria; demand management; Black Economic Empowerment (BEE); Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE); business-to-business (B2B); business to consumer (B2C); demand management; management functional areas; total cost of ownership (TCO); just-in-time (JIT); product lifecycle; quality; reliability; service level agreement; stakeholders; sourcing; transparency; value chain; and waste.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the following people:

- My son Ashley and daughter Caryn, who are collectively the sunshine of my life.
- My grandsons Taylor and Joshua, who sadly live in Christchurch, which makes it impossible for me to spend quality time with them. I sincerely hope that they learn that education is a lifelong journey and not a short-term endeavour. Secondly, that age is not measured in wrinkles but experience.
- My brother Carl, who is my bedrock, and an honour to call my brother.
- My late mother Thora, father Norman, and brother Anthony, and late wife Susan who have passed away but whose collective memory I cherish every day.
- My late father-in-law Gordon, mother-in-law Stella and Lottie Newman, my friend and mother-in-law, who tiredly fed me with coffee and tea throughout the day and night when I first embarked on this journey.
- Lastly, my first wife Anne, friends, and family members from far and wide, who have made my life the exciting and pleasurable experience it has been since I first set my feet on Mother Earth.

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TERMS AND CONCEPTS

This section provides explanatory notes for terminology included in the study.

Terms and concepts	Explanation
Acquisition cost	An acquisition cost, also referred to as the initial cost of a good or service (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Affirmative action	Is the practice or policy of favouring individuals belonging to disadvantaged groups or groups subject to discrimination (Venter & Levy, 2012).
Benchmark	A benchmark is a point of reference by which something can be assessed and measured (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Black Economic Empowerment	Black Economic Empowerment is a policy of the South African government which aims to facilitate broader participation in the economy by Black people. It is a form of affirmative action with an objective to redress inequalities created by apartheid (Venter & Levy, 2012).
Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) is a government policy to advance economic transformation and enhance the economic participation of Black people (African, Coloured, Indian and people of Asian decent people who are South African citizens (Venter & Levy, 2012).
Business-to-business (B2B)	Refers to commerce between two businesses rather than to commerce between a business and an individual consumer (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Business-to-customers (B2C)	The term business-to-consumer (B2C) refers to the process of selling products and services directly between a business and consumers who are the end-users of its products or services (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Business culture	Business culture refers to the set of behavioural and procedural norms which includes its policies, procedures, ethics, values, employee

behaviours and attitudes, goals, and code of conduct.

Capability	A capability refers to the ability to achieve a desired outcome/effect under specified standards and conditions (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Capacity (business)	Business capacity is a measure of the amount of work that can be accomplished by a business within a fixed amount of time (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Closed loop	A closed loop system is a system that facilitates a continuous flow of material after it has been sold e.g., recycled cool drink bottles (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).
Competitive advantage	Refers to factors that allow a company to produce goods or services better or more cheaply than its rivals (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Correlation	In statistics, correlation or dependence is any statistical relationship, whether causal or not, between two random variables or bivariate data (Quinlan, 2011).
Culture	Culture is a term which encompasses the social behaviour, institutions, and norms found in human societies, as well as the knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits of the individuals in these groups. Culture is often originated from or attributed to a specific region or location (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Customer acquisition and retention	The process of getting and keeping customers (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Customer service	Customer service is the support a firm offers its customers; both before and after they buy and use the company's offerings (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).
Data	Data is raw information that has requires been translated into a form that is efficient for movement or processing.
Demand forecasting	Demand forecasting is the process of using predictive analysis of historical data to estimate and predict customers' future demand for a product or service (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).

Demand management Demand management is a planning methodology to manage demand and supply (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).

Empirical research Empirical research is based on observed and measured phenomena and derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory or belief (Quinlan, 2011).

Employment equity (EE) EE is the principle of giving job opportunities or advantages to people who have traditionally been treated unfairly because of their race, sex, physical differences, etc. (Venter & Levy, 2012).

Ethics Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematising, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behaviour (Erasmus et al., 2017).

Exceeding expectations Exceeding expectations means doing what you were supposed to do and doing much more than what was expected of you. Meeting expectations is the minimum acceptable level of performance, but exceeding expectations is surpassing the set minimum level of performance or standards (Erasmus et al., 2017).

Goals A goal is a long-term objective or target that someone or some organisation is trying to reach or achieve (Erasmus et al., 2017).

Hypothesis A hypothesis is a testable statement about the relationship between two or more variables or a proposed explanation for some observed phenomenon (Quinlan, 2011).

Inventory management Inventory management tracks inventory from purchase to the sale of goods. The practice identifies and responds to trends to ensure there's always enough stock to fulfil customer orders and proper warning of a shortage (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Just-in-time (JIT) JIT is an inventory management method in which goods are received from suppliers only as they are needed. The main objective of this method is to reduce inventory holding costs and increase inventory turnover (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Lead time Lead time refers to the time interval between the start and completion of a certain task. It is most often used in supply chain circles and is an important measure for all product-based businesses (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).

Literature review A literature review is a comprehensive summary of previous research on a topic. The literature review surveys scholarly articles, books, and other sources relevant to a particular area of research (Quinlan, 2011).

Logistics Logistics refers to the process of coordinating and moving resources from one location to a desired destination (Pienaar & Vogt, 2012).

Materials handling Materials handling refers to the movement of raw goods from their native site to the point of use in manufacturing, their subsequent manipulation in production processes, and the transfer of finished products from factories and their distribution to users or sales outlets (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Materials management Materials management refers to the management of inventories and production requirements for planning and control to ensure materials are available as required to meet production schedules. This material planning includes managing logistics, stock levels, materials quality, cost and more (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Objectives Refers to an aim, goal, or end of action (Erasmus et al., 2017).

Packaging Packaging is the process of enclosing or protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Parts (spare) A spare part is an interchangeable part that is kept in an inventory and used for the repair or refurbishment of defective equipment/units (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

Problem statement A problem statement is an explanation in research that describes the issue that is in need of study. Having a problem statement allows the reader to quickly understand the purpose and intent of the research (Quinlan, 2011).

Procurement Procurement involves every activity involved in obtaining the goods and services a company needs to support its daily operations, including sourcing, negotiating terms, purchasing items, receiving, and inspecting goods as necessary and keeping records of all the steps in

	the process (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Product lifecycle	A product life cycle consists of four stages: introduction, growth, maturity, and decline until it eventually reaches its demise (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Production capacity	Production capacity is the maximum product output a company can produce using its available resources over a specified amount of time (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Quality	The degree of excellence of something (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Relationship in business	Business relations refer to the connections that exist between all entities that engage in commerce (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Reliability	Reliability is defined as the probability that a product, system, or service will perform its intended function adequately for a specified period of time (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Research boundaries	Refers to the boundaries the researcher sets in terms of study duration, population size and type of participants, etc. (Quinlan, 2011).
Reverse logistics	Reverse logistics refers to movement of goods from customers back to the sellers or manufacturers (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).
Risk management	Risk management is the identification, evaluation, and prioritisation of risks followed by a coordinated effort to monitor, minimise, or negate it (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).
Selection criteria	Selection criteria represent the key qualifications, training, abilities, knowledge, personal attributes, skills and experience a firm/vendor has (vendor) in order to service the needs of its customer (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Service level agreement (SLA)	A service-level agreement (SLA) sets the expectations between the service provider and the customer and describes the products or services to be delivered, the single point of contact for end-user problems, and the metrics by which the effectiveness of the process is monitored and approved (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).

Social responsibility	Social responsibility is an ethical theory in which individuals are accountable for fulfilling their civic duty, and the actions of an individual must benefit the whole of society (Venter & Levy, 2012).
Stakeholder	A stakeholder is a party that has an interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business. The primary stakeholders in a typical corporation are its investors, employees, customers, and suppliers (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Stockout	A stockout, or out-of-stock event is an event that causes inventory to be exhausted. Stockouts are the opposite of overstocks, where too much inventory is retained (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Supplier/vendor	A supplier is a person, company, or organization that sells or supplies something such as goods or equipment to customers (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Supply chain management (SCM)	SCM refers to the management of the flow of goods, data, and finances related to a product or service, from the procurement of raw materials to the delivery of the product at its final destination (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Total cost of ownership (TCO)	Refers to the overall cost of a product or service throughout its life cycle. This calculation method takes into account both direct and indirect costs (Hugo & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2014).
Value-add	Value-add is a term that refers to unique features or improvements added to a product or service to increase its desirability and monetary value to consumers (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Value chain	The term value chain refers to the various business activities and processes involved in creating a product or performing a service (Erasmus et al., 2017).
Warehousing	Warehousing is the process of storing physical inventory for sale or distribution (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).
Waste	Waste is a product or substance which is no longer suited for its intended use (Ramgovind & Engelbrecht, 2021).

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one introduces the background of the research study and the reason the researcher decided to select the topic. It discusses the relevance of the study and contains the key problem statement and sub-statements, which form the cornerstone of the research project. It also highlights the purposes and objectives of the research study, the research questions pertaining thereto, and the research hypotheses, as well as covers the theoretical framework/model on which the study was constructed. The chapter then briefly examines the rationale for the research population, the sample, which was drawn, the methodology that was used to solicit the required research data, and, how such data were assimilated, and analysed. Finally, it provides a short summary of the key attributes of the chapters that follow.

1.2 Background of the research study

Walters and Rainbird (2012) posit that new rules must be formulated and implemented for the newly emerged economy. They assert that the new economy has changed management's attitudes towards business because markets have become globalised, technology has become all-embracing, and relationships with suppliers, competitors, and customers are undergoing continuous change. Walters and Rainbird (2012) suggest that new business models have and will continue to emerge to replace existing ones and that a competitive advantage is based upon managing processes that facilitate rapid and flexible responses to market change in which new capabilities are based upon developing unique relationships with partners such as suppliers, customers and employees, shareholders, government and often competitors. Su et al. (2021) suggest that as a result of technology advancement, well-defined pedagogical changes have impelled firms to either abandon or refine existing business models as such models can become outdated over time. This is underscored by Rachinger et al. (2019), who postulate that digitalisation and advancement in technology (e.g., Artificial Intelligence) has influenced business model innovation, hence the reason businesses need to readdress their way of conducting business. Schiavi and Behr (2018) and Nunes and Russo (2019) concur that emerging technologies and technological advancement have created a business model gap that needs to be filled for businesses to survive.

Tortato et al. (2022) propound that 2020 brought a new global crisis in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic. They advance the need for new business models as organisations are facing present-day difficulties that require fresh and innovative solutions to reboot the economies of the world. Bidmead and Marshall (2020), Gregurec et al. (2021), and Stalmachova et al. (2022) propose that the new norm, in the wake of COVID-19 and everchanging technology, will continue to impact businesses and disperse workers; allow them to work remotely; facilitate a bottoms- up leadership approach through employee empowerment; engender deeper, closer and mutually-rewarding relationships, collaboration and integration within the supply chain; further the use of technology and automation; encourage and reward innovation; build agility, lean (waste-reduction) and cost-reduction strategies into business models; and, finally rely on a more proactive and forward-thinking risk management philosophy and implementation. Bidmead and Marshall (2020), Gregurec et al. (2021), and Stalmachova et al. (2022) further postulate that remote video consultations and meetings are here to stay and that even new marketing models need to be created to ensure that the personal touch of inter-organisational relationships are not replaced by that which are automated and impersonal.

Normann (2001) discusses a new strategic logic, which proposes that managers should be good at mobilising, managing, and using resources, rather than at acquiring and owning them. In terms of Normann's assertion, Lansiti and Levien (2004) suggest that business strategy is becoming the art of managing assets that one often does not own and that the extensive networked nature of the business environment has triggered an important change in the design of business operations and in the role of managers. Chen et al. (2012) suggests that as a result of the agency problem in business (owners do not necessarily run their businesses; managers do), more business decisions are made without the instructions of the business owner. With the above in mind, to what extent has the role of the organisation's procurement officer/professional morphed, and how are organisations adapting to the requisites of such a new economy, considering that procurement is an important logistics activity, which is used to acquire materials, services, and components for them to be transformed into finished goods and services and to run the business smoothly and effectively?

The researcher is an academic and supervised a student who was completing a study on establishing whether manufacturers in Cape Town had well-articulated procurement strategies. It was during this study that the researcher discovered that many of the organisations that participated in the aforementioned study, namely the respondents who comprised the research study's sample, did not have any guiding principles which are associated with the procurement of goods and services in their respective organisations, other than procurement policies and procedures. This meant that if the sample was representative of organisations in South Africa, then not all firms have formal and well-articulated procurement strategies. This research study investigates this phenomenon, as well as other buying-organisation-specific nuances.

The above was further magnified by the fact that the aforementioned research study established that most purchasing decisions that are made by organisational procurers were based primarily on price and pre-and post-sales service, and that many other parameters evidently did not play a relevant role in the decision-making process. This is reinforced by Saxton (2006) who posits that traditionally procurement/purchasing is about negotiating and undercutting a wide range of suppliers on price and service levels. In other words, procurers are more concerned with the acquisition price of a good rather than its total cost of ownership (TCO). Al Alawi and Bradley (2013) reveal that TCO is the total cost to buy something plus the aggregate cost of operating the good over its useful lifetime and includes costs such as installation, maintenance, energy, training, upgrades, and disposal costs. Naturally, all these costs should be considered when determining the actual cost of the good over its lifespan.

Although TCO is not a new concept, oftentimes it is not considered by procurement employees when purchasing goods and when comparing tenders. Bhutta and Haq (2002) argue that TCO has introduced supplier selection problems as it requires procurement professionals to have the ability to compute the TCO, which can be difficult as it can contain many components and oftentimes hidden costs. Thus, they maintain that firms must consider multiple criteria in their attempts to distinguish between items offered by potential suppliers. Palmer et al. (2018), Rodaet al. (2020), and Baek et al. (2021) postulate that providing TCO information on attribute weights in purchasing, assures better decision-making and a TCO model will support manufacturing asset lifecycle management.

Although there have been numerous studies undertaken about TCO, Degraeve et al. (2000), Ellram (2002), Morssinkhof et al. (2011), Palmer et al. (2018), Rodaet al. (2020), and Baek et al. (2021) to cite a few, all ask the same pertinent question, "…what is the total of TCO?" They suggest that not all 'costs' are adequately covered, hence the need for further research in this regard.

As a result of these findings and what has been asserted by Saxton (2006), the researcher decided to investigate the following statements that are listed below. The key rationale for this approach was that salespeople could use such information to better appease the needs of their customers. In other words, the study considers the following key matters:

- The bases on which business-to-business (B2B) procurement takes place in South Africa, particularly in small, medium, and large organisations; and
- The bases on which vendors are selected by such organisations in South Africa.

1.3 Rationale and relevance of the research study

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Pass-notes Handbook (2016) disclose that all organisations, whether they are private or public companies, community service institutions, or government bodies and departments, require goods and services to satisfy the needs and demands of their internal and external customers. Whether these goods are in the form of raw material, semi-completed and finished goods, parts and components, machinery and equipment, or whether they are generic day-to-day business services such as repairs, installations, transportation, or professional services (accounting, legal or business consultancy); all organisations require such offerings in order to create need-satisfying products and services for their customers, which is primarily done to benefit their shareholders and other stakeholders who are associated with their respective institutions. This notion is supported by Mensah and Tuo (2013), Changalima et al. (2020), and Cragg and Chraibi (2020) who state that procurement is the strategic activity that allows firms to obtain inputs such as materials and services, so that need-satisfying outputs may be generated for customer consumption and use.

Organisations that operate in the primary industry (mining, fishing, forestry, and so on) purchase goods and services to extract gold, fish, wood etc. from natural sources for the secondary industry (manufacturers), which in turn, purchase raw materials, components, spare parts, consumables goods and services to use in the transformation process where these inputs are converted into finished goods. Frequently, these organisations make political contributions to carry favour and win government contracts, and the primary industry concentration is positively related to default in terms of payment (Cruwys et al., 2021).

Participants in the tertiary industry such as retailers and wholesalers require goods and services to resell to their respective customers, namely the consumers and customers who procure their vitals and other requirements from them. Service organisations (also from the tertiary industry) such as hospitals, hotels, insurance companies and banks procure goods and services to satisfy the needs of their patients, guests, and clients, while institutions such as government departments, regional and local authorities, universities, and colleges and even charities and churches, need goods and services to perform the various activities that are needed by their customers, students, beneficiaries, and parishioners, respectively. The tertiary industry’s key advantage is that it does not always impact negatively on the environment (Muhammad et al., 2022).

Organisations that operate in the quaternary industry (the new knowledge-based industry such as those that are involved in information technology) purchase goods and services to produce computers, cellular telephones, and tablets and to provide the requisite services to their customers. Finally, Benson and Dundis (2003) express the view that consumers also need goods and services to satisfy their ever-changing physiological, security, social, ego, and self-actualisation needs.

Every year billions of Rands are spent by people, organisations, and institutions in South Africa on an expansive array of goods and services, and organisations and consumers will continue to procure goods and services as the economy starts to regrow over time; post the COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the researcher believes that should the study be successful in unearthing the criteria on which buying decisions are made in the B2B environment, particularly in terms of vendor selection, that such information could benefit the suppliers of products and services and their salespeople in such a setting. The researcher also believes that the research would benefit the organisational buyer, as forming enduring relationships with appropriate key supply partners should have a mutually beneficial payback for all parties within the supply chain. In addition, buying ‘right’ from the ‘right’ supplier, could represent substantial savings in cost and time for the organisation concerned, which, could directly and indirectly benefit the consumer, because ultimately the price and quality of offerings are often affected by the procurement decision (Saxton, 2006).

Many people are under the impression that B2B procurement is a scientific and calculating endeavour, which is based on strict analytical parameters and not on relationships. However, Hawkins et al. (1989) argue that it is “not a cold, distant, super-efficient, and economically rational process where computers rather than humans could easily and perhaps preferably fulfil the function, but rather as human as individual and household consumer behaviour.” Van Weele (2003) and Van Welle and Van Raai (2014) adduce that social, psychological, and emotional factors affect B2B purchasing decisions and that these characteristics of buyer decision-making have earned scant interest from academics and researchers up to now. If this is a truism, then the researcher believes that by addressing and investigating the social, psychological, psychographic, and emotional areas of B2B buyer behaviour, further information regarding such behaviour could enhance the body of knowledge pertaining to supply chain management (SCM), of which procurement is an important logistics activity. The above assertion by van Weele is supported by Candi and Kahn (2016), who suggest that the three benefits facilitated by procurement in a B2B context (functional, social, and emotional) are important although each type of benefit shows a different pattern of relationship with customer satisfaction. Functional benefits of the aforementioned researchers are found to be positively related to customer satisfaction, while emotional and social benefits exhibit non-linear relationships (Hallikas et al., 2013). According to these researchers, emotional benefits have a diminishing effect on customer satisfaction as they increase and that social benefits plateau after a threshold point. The question regarding the impact of emotional and social overtures in sales to B2B buyers and their relationship with vendor selection, therefore, remains an enigma and it is trusted that this study has sufficiently proven that emotion and regular social contact with organisational procurement personnel play a significant role in the vendor selection process albeit not as much as the functional attributes of the offering that is been sold.

1.4 Problem statement and research questions

Mouton (2001), Bell and Waters (2018), and Wilson (2021) propose that the first phase of any research project involves transforming an interesting idea and concept into a feasible, and researchable research problem, which should be void of ambiguity and should clearly spell out the object of the study”. Aaker et al. (2003) support this view by suggesting that identifying and defining a problem or opportunity is a vital first step in the research process. Welman et al. (2006) suggest that to define a problem correctly, the researcher must know the answers to the following questions: “What is the problem (the identification and source of a problem)?” and “What is the best way to solve the problem?” These questions will identify the problem, as well as the reasons for the problem, its derivation, why the problem has occurred, how it can be rectified, and who will be the best party to resolve it.

Many sales professionals argue that people buy from people (relationship-oriented) and not from organisations, which contrasts with the beliefs of production-oriented organisations that contend that products or services sell themselves (Lamb et al., 2010; Samuel & Wirapraja, 2011). Chuckwu and Tom (2020) argue that relationships sell the product and not necessarily the other way around. Hence, the question that is ever-present on a supplier's mind is "…what motivates a buying organisation to select a particular vendor, product, service, or brand when such an offering or service is needed by the organisation?" Secondly, does this hold true for all buying organisation sizes, types, and business sectors, or do small, medium, and large organisations and different organisational types and sectors have their own unique selection parameters? These questions represented the bedrock on which this study was based, because understanding what motivates various organisational buyers to select a vendor should provide the researcher with the required data to formulate an appropriate model applicable thereto.

Secondary research, which was conducted by the researcher, revealed that scant investigation has been undertaken in unearthing the answer to the last questions, hence the reason this study was taken on. Therefore, the intention of this research (key research problem) was to establish whether business characteristics, demographics and experience, procurement strategies, policies, and procedures, are important selection criteria so that a new supplier preference model may be created.

Olorunniwo and Jolayemi's (2014) study on vendor selection criteria revealed that literature on supplier selection is extensive, comprising of both empirical studies and prescriptive studies of how suppliers should be selected. However, they assert that there is lack of clarity over what exactly constitutes effective supplier selection and the appropriate criteria to use in different situations. Consequently, they suggest that number of supplier selection criteria that have been identified and used in literature far exceeds fifty (50), although the general themes of quality, delivery, price, and service have consistently emerged as the most common set of criteria for most organisations. However, other 'sub-selection criteria' such as the demographics of the vendor's salesperson, his or her education level and so have enjoyed virtually no attention from researchers (Olorunniwo & Jolayemi, 2014).

Sonmez (2006) avows that in the secondary research that he conducted (147 journal articles on vendor selection in accredited journals), he found that several papers addressed the use or preferences towards different sets of decision criteria by individual buyers' demographic differences. For example, the differences in the gender of buyers influenced the selection of vendors and that other factor such as age, the number of years spent in the job, educational background, experience, and ethnic background also affects the choice of the decision maker and that decision criteria used for supplier selection was different depending on the size of a buyer organisation. Sonmez (2006) research uncovered that large companies use a different set of criteria and a formal approach when selecting suppliers, compared to small and medium sized enterprises. Once again, the major gap in research on vendor selection criteria from a demographic perspective lies not in the demographic profile of the buyer, but rather that of the vendor's salespeople. Paulssen and Birk (2007) concur with Sonmez's findings by asserting that the results shown, from their research, that the satisfaction–retention link is moderated by demographic characteristics of the decision maker in a buying centre, and attributes of the purchasing company and the manufacturer. Once again, the study revealed the lack of research pertaining to the demographics of the salesperson representing the vendor (as a selection criterion). The above criteria however are an important part of the research study that was undertaken by this researcher.

Belonax (2013) subscribes that the success of business-to-business (B2B) relationships between sales representatives and buyers depends on many factors such as the credibility (trust and expertise) of the sales representative and the reputation of the vendor may significantly affect variables related to this relationship. Little research, however, has been undertaken to determine whether the importance of the purchase decision affects buyer perceptions of the trust and expertise components of credibility (Belonax, 2013).

Thiruchelvam et al. (2011), Vasina (2014), Cengiza et al. (2017), and Frej et al. (2017) declare that most multidisciplinary selection strategies reflect variables pertaining to buying organisations and their procurement officers and very little research has been conducted in terms of the demographics of vendors' salespeople; save the non-demographic behavioural parameters of the attitude and responsiveness of sales professionals. Therefore, secondary research has indicated that there exists a gap in such knowledge.

To determine the aforementioned points, the researcher believed that instead of being prescriptive (that is looking at the problem from a seller's point of view) this study would rather try to establish the above-mentioned selection characteristics from buyers who procure goods and services on behalf of their respective organisations.

As the buying process in a corporate context is mainly based on the extended buyer decision-making model, and is, therefore, concerned with a prolonged decision-making and negotiating procedure and not on habitual or impulse buying (as is often the case in consumer buying behaviour), the researcher believed that it would be beneficial to know the determinants that motivate corporate buyers when they select a particular vendor, and the vendor's respective brand, salesperson, product or service. This could benefit all of those who are concerned with B2B marketing and procurement. Moreover, the information could assist these players to strategize more effectively to gain a competitive advantage over those organisations that compete against them for the corporate buyer's custom and Rand spend. Hence, the key research questions are as follows:

- What influence do business characteristics have on supplier preference?
- What influence do demographic and experience factors have on supplier preference?
- What influence do procurement strategies, policies and procedures have on supplier preference?
- What are the associations of a new supplier preference model in terms of the preference of suppliers' salespeople, Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, employment equity (EE) and affirmative action (AA); personal relationships, the provision of gifts; access to management and exceeding expectations?

The reason these questions are relevant, is because by understanding on what bases organisational buyers select their vendors, sales organisations (vendors) can better align their services to satisfy the needs of their customers. It was hoped at the onset of the study that answers to the above-mentioned questions would provide the researcher with sufficient information to make accurate inferences about the procurement criteria in various size and types of organisations in South Africa. The researcher maintains that the study has achieved this objective and has uncovered answers to questions that have not previously been posed aggregately in a South African context in terms of a doctoral research study. This will be evidenced in chapters four and five of this study.

1.5 Research objectives

The general purpose of this research study was to analyse the bases on which organisations select their suppliers. The focus of the research, however, was, as indicated above, to find answers to the above research questions, as the researcher wished to use data that were garnered from the study to assist suppliers and their salespeople to better understand the needs and wants of their customers so that their needs will be more effectively satisfied. Such vendors and their salespeople will hence be able to better align their marketing efforts to enjoy increased success in appeasing the needs of their customers. Other research questions concentrated on uncovering a myriad of additional and related research data so that the researcher could use the findings to test whether other variables also play a part in the vendor selection process (please refer Appendix 1 that provides more details via the questionnaire used in this study).

A literate search of the main academic databases revealed that at the time of the commencement of this research study, the topic had not been investigated in South Africa in terms of all the above variables; especially the matter of BEE, AA, and E. Therefore, it was hoped that once the data were collected, interpreted, analysed, and published by means of a doctoral thesis, the thesis will reinforce the body of knowledge pertaining to procurement, in general, and vendor selection.

Hence, the study has the following objectives:

- To establish the influence of business characteristics (i.e., industry type, business classification, size of business, locale of business, status of business, basis of procurement and decision level) have an influence on supplier preference (i.e., regarding the preference of suppliers' salespeople; BEE status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, EE, and AA; personal relationships and gifts; and access and exceeding expectations).
- To ascertain the influence of demographic and experience factors (i.e., gender, population group, age, language, procurement experience, education level, employment level) have a significant influence on supplier preference.
- To determine the influence of procurement strategies, policies and procedures have a significant influence on supplier preference.
- To develop a new supplier preference model to determine the associations between the preference of suppliers' salespeople, BEE status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, EE, and AA; personal relationships and gifts; and access and exceeding expectations.

1.6 Research hypotheses

To focus on the aforementioned research questions and objectives, it was decided to formulate several hypotheses. Welman et al. (2006), Gasparyan et al. (2019), and Lund (2021) state that a hypothesis is a tentative assumption or preliminary statement about a relationship between two or more things, which needs to be examined. Cooper and Emory (1995) differentiate between a proposition and a hypothesis, where the former is described as "…a statement about concepts that may be judged as true or false if it refers to observable phenomena". When a proposition is formulated for empirical testing, they suggest that it is a hypothesis. Several hypotheses were proposed and tested in this study.

Abdolshah (2013), Mishra et al. (2019), Taherdoost, and Brard (2019), and Zygiaris et al. (2022) submit that quality products and services are the main criteria for supplier evaluation and selection. Researchers suggest that good service quality offered to customers generates customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty for the service provider (Franceshini & Rafele, 2000; Davis & Mentzer, 2006; Baki et al., 2009). It makes sense therefore, that the provision of service excellence will assist organisations to have good relations with customers and their employees, such outstanding service will help to ensure access to personnel, centres of influence and senior management. Hence, it is hypothesised that:

> *H1*. Service quality has a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations in the new supplier preference model.

Service quality can have a significant impact on environmental sustainability, besides service quality being a positive influence on access to B2B customer personnel and to exceed customer expectations. For a buying organisation (a B2B customer) to offer sustainable offerings, the inputs facilitated from their suppliers and their suppliers' vendors, need to be sustainable. Miller et al. (2020) reveal in an article on sustainability in the Harvard Business School online publication, organisations need to examine the broader environmental, political, and social landscape in which they operate, including the role of government, investors, suppliers, and customers. To do this, organisations need to have a sustainable business strategy, which should include the triple bottom line, namely profit, people and planet. Miller et al. (2020) argues that the general goal of a sustainable business strategy is to have a positive impact on the environment, society, or both, while also benefiting stakeholders and shareholders. Wang et al.

(2021) propose that by working closer with suppliers, a firm can lessen their environment and social impact and position themselves for strong growth and sustainability in supply chains. The above is supported by Bonn and Fisher (2011), who proclaim that the matter of sustainability has become a strategic issue for any company in today's uncertain times, and that often it is the missing link in corporate strategy. Researchers advocate that businesses and their management functional areas have been pressurised at local, regional, and global level, to integrate sustainability, which includes economic, social, and environmental concerns, into every decision that is made to continue to improve the firm's competitive advantages (D'Souza et al., 2020; Jakharet al., 2020; Tundys, 2022). This starts at sourcing suppliers and their inputs, then the employment of sustainable production processes through to the delivery of final products and services to the end user of the offering. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

> *H2*. Service quality has a significant favourable effect on environmental sustainability in the new supplier preference model.

There are many definitions of organisational culture. Trice and Beyer (1993), Willcoxson and Millett (2000), and Cacciattolo (2014) proclaim that an organisational culture may be described as a set of beliefs, principles, norms, and ways of behaving that collectively give organisations distinctive characters. Like national cultures, organisational cultures form and are then transformed over time. Kumar and Reinartz (2012) argued that B2B marketing is a form of relationship marketing where a company on the supplier side relates to another company on the consumer side. Therefore, does access to a B2B customer's employees and the provision of superior service from the vendor's salespeople 'rub off' positively on a buying organisation's culture from a marketing perspective? Secondly, does the culture of one organisation influence the culture of another? Previous studies (Cartwright & Cooper, 1993; Pothukuchi et al., 2002; Weber & Camerer, 2003; Janićijević, 2013; Ahmed & Shafiq, 2014) have found that culture dissimilarity between organisations results in lower productivity, financial performance, and relationship satisfaction. A dissimilarity of cultures and cultural fit can be, for example, the result of merger and acquisitions and joint ventures. However, Hartnell et al. (2016) show that when only two firms are involved, often cultural similarity is a strong predictor of positive outcomes. Thus, it is the view of the researcher that a cultural fit between two organisations, the provision of superior service, the forging of strong mutually rewarding relationships, and free access to a buying organisation's employees can have a positive and significant effect on the culture of an organisational customer.

The purpose of the EE Act, No. 55 of 1998, is to achieve fairness in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination and implementing AA measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated employees. It is the view of the researcher that access to buying organisations' employees by vendors who practice employee-centric EE and who exceed customer expectations will have a positive influence on the customer. The rationale for his assertion is that if the supplier adopts EE-centrism as a policy and treats its employees with the dignity that they deserve, there should be a positive spill over when vendor marketing employees communicate with the buying organisation personnel. In other words, if the vendor has a culture rich in EE, it should, through the behaviour of the vendor's salespeople and personnel have a positive impact on the buying organisation (South Africa, 2021).

AA is a set of procedures designed to negate unlawful and unfair discrimination among applicants for employment and education, treat the results of such prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination to take place in the future. AA means taking steps to increase the representation of minorities, women, and the disabled, in areas of employment, education, and culture from which they have been historically excluded. As this leads to preferential selection, as in the case of South Africa (race, ethnicity, and gender), such AA policy generates unhappiness for those who feel that they are now being discriminated against. It must be noted however that as a result of the systems of apartheid, the majority of South Africans were discriminated against (people of colour), unlike in the USA, where minorities were adversely treated (South Africa, 2021).

In terms of AA, the researcher feels that like culture and EE above, if vendors practice AA in their workplace by employing previously disadvantaged operational employees and salespeople and use them to access buying firms' personnel (and exceed their expectations), both organisations will benefit there from. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

> *H3*. Access to personnel and exceeding expectations has a significant positive effect on culture, EE, and AA in the new supplier preference model.

Luthra et al. (2017) declare that environmental sustainability refers to the responsibility of conserving natural resources and protecting global ecosystems to support the health and well-being, of people throughout the world; presently and in the future. Sustainability is often explained as meeting the needs and wants of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs in terms of the acquisition, and use of natural resources. It has three main pillars, namely, people, planet, and profit (social, environmental, and economic). Unlike AA and EE, there is currently no enforceable legislation to pressure firms to adopt sustainability although this could change in the future if organisations ignore 'people' and the 'planet' (environment) in their pursuit to increase their bottom lines. Villena and Gioia (2020) found that in recent years an increasing number of multinational corporations (MNCs) have committed themselves to working with suppliers that adhere to social and environmental standards. The aforementioned researchers also proclaim that organisations should work towards creating a more sustainable supply chain. Even in a South African context, a retailer like Woolworths has become fixated on the environmental sustainability of their suppliers for them, as an enterprise, to become more environmentally friendly. Typically, these MNCs expect their first-tier suppliers (wholesalers) to comply with those exacting standards, and they ask that those suppliers in turn ask for compliance from their suppliers (producers, farmers, etc.), who ideally ask the same from their suppliers. The goal is to create a cascade of sustainable practices that flow smoothly throughout the supply network and to achieve this they must establish long-term sustainability goals. Villena and Gioia (2020) further opine that organisations require first-tier suppliers to set their own long-term sustainability goals; that they include lower-tier suppliers in the overall sustainability strategy and that they task a specific employee to extend the firm's sustainability program to first-and-lower-tier suppliers.

So, with the above in mind, should both institutions (buyer and seller) practice environmental sustainability for their mutual benefit and the benefit of their stakeholders, closer relationships will be forged as a result of such compliance. In other words, in this instance, environmental sustainability will have a significant and beneficial influence on relationships. This opinion is supported by Freeman and Chen (2015) and Luthra et al. (2017) advocate that firms should look at green supplier selection criteria. Luthra et al. (2017) voice that due to increased customer knowledge and ecological pressures from markets and various stakeholders, it is important for firms to form strong relationships with supply chain members who green-up. Alikhani (2019) avouches that supplier selection is a multi-faceted strategic decision and that there is little research that considers factors such as sustainability and risk management simultaneously, and that such risk can be diminished by mutually beneficial relationships. Finally, Guarnieri, and Trojan (2019) insist that selection decisions should be based upon social, ethical and environment criteria. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

H4. Environmental sustainability has a significant favourable influence on personal relationships in the new supplier preference model.

The function of personal relationships in supply chains, particularly between vendors and buyer institutions, has received much interest in recent years, mainly because of the advantages stemming from both strong and mutually rewarding associations, even though the benefits from such relationships could be different (Nyaga et al., 2010). Gligor and Autry (2012) express the view that little research has addressed the role of non-work-focused personal relationships (i.e., friendships) formed between employees of supply chain partner firms, and specifically how such relationships impact business. Gligor and Holcomb's (2013) research found that personal relationships influence behaviour within a supply-chain context. Business relationships are normally based on rules, procedures, and service level agreements (SLAs) between buying and selling organisations and other supply chain partners. Sometimes formal business relationships restrict the required flexibility that is needed to facilitate free-flowing communication between parties to respond and survive in today's dynamic business world (Gligor & Holcomb, 2013).

Personal relationships developed between parties who are mutually connected through business and have a collaborative relationship with one another can develop into interdependence between them (Adobor 2006; Mocke, Niemann & Kotzé 2016). The advantages of personal relationships between buying and selling firms and their employees include more effective communication, knowledge of each entity's business processes and offerings, improved problem solving, reduced costs, increased end-customer centrism, increased efficiency, reduced price volatility and sensitivity, continuous operational improvements, sharing of processes and systems, mutual trust, and respect and so on (Roy et al., 2017). Previous studies have researched the role of relationships from a B2B perspective (Marasco, 2008), although many studies have focused on operational, financial, and structural matters, without assigning much attention to the relational effects (Theron et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2022).

Personal relationships between people, as asserted above, create interdependence between them, particularly between organisational buyers and the salespeople who call on them to conduct business. Close connections between such people are usually based on common interests and an ongoing degree of business dealings with each other (Gable & Reis, 2010;

Gligor & Holcomb, 2013). Personal relationships tend to enhance communication and business knowledge, which lead to improved performance levels between the buyers and suppliers of logistics services (Spekman & Carraway, 2006). Personal relationships can oftentimes be separated from other business-specified relationships because many results in personal relationships outside of a work environment. (Adobor 2006; Gligor & Holcomb, 2013). There are two primary reasons why personal relationships form. Firstly, the formation of personal relationships improves the overall professional interests of the two parties, and, secondly, personal relationships create friendships that can be enduring in nature (Gable & Reis, 2010).

Personal relationships are influenced by three dimensions that facilitate trust and information exchange between members. These dimensions include personal affection, personal communication, and personal credibility (Khodyakov, 2007). Firstly, personal affection reflects individual feelings, sentiments and emotions that enable closeness between individuals. Secondly, personal communication allows members to share information to create mutual understanding and closeness. Thirdly, personal credibility refers to the level of trust, confidence, and reliability individuals have between one another (Khodyakov, 2007). Therefore, from the above, it can be noted that personal relationships that have been formed between the vendor and its customer can have a significant positive influence on relationships with salespeople and the management of the two supply chain partners.

Sternquist and Chen (2006), and Gunduz and Önder (2013) express that the issue of gifts is a controversial matter, and many managers and business owners argue that gifts are never free and are of irreversible benefit to the giver. In other words, there could be an underlying strategy in the provision of gifts to increase customer spending in favour of the giver. While giving gifts is normally a simple, voluntary, and kind gesture, it often creates an obligation to reciprocate. In business, customers and particularly consumers repay gifts with their loyalty to the gift giver, brand, and the organisation. This means the value of a corporate gift lies in reinforcing and maintaining the relationship over time rather than in the economic efficiency of the gift itself.

Gifts are often provided in a B2B context as a method to develop and maintain the relationship between suppliers and their business customers, yet, at the same time, giving and receiving gifts is cited as one of the most ethically problematic issues in purchasing (or supply management) and sales (Kitson & Campbell, 1996; Cooper et al., 1997; Gneezy et al., 2019). The provision of gifts can also be seen as a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest exists if a gift could lead to the recipient sacrificing the interests of his or her employer to personally gain at the expense of the employer (Trevino & Nelson, 1999; Fisher, 2007; DesJardins & McCall, 2014). From a relationship marketing perspective, another anomaly is created as relationship marketing which is characterised by mutual trust, friendship, collaboration, and a commitment, to the provision of long-term benefits for both the seller and the buyer (Grönroos, 2000; Fisher, 2007). The aforementioned authors further assert that if the giving and receiving a gift, results in a conflict of interest, then the relationship that has developed between the two businesses can be undermined. However, if the gift does not have great Rand value and is given based on forging relationships between the buying and selling company with the full knowledge and permission of management, then the provision of a gift can have a positive impact on the relationship between the supplier's salesperson and the recipient (Yakovlev & Demidova, 2012). The following is therefore hypothesised:

> *H5*. Personal relationships and gifts have a significant positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management in the new supplier preference model.

As asserted before, the primary purpose of BEE is to address the legacy of apartheid and promote the economic participation of previously disadvantaged people in the South African economy. Therefore, to practice BEE, suppliers need to have a culture of employee development, believe in EE as a method to cure the curse of apartheid and the job discrimination that accompanied it in favour of White people and be steadfast in terms of AA (Turner & Pratkanis, 1994). By actively improving employment, educational, and other opportunities for members of groups that have been subjected to discrimination will assist in closing the divide between the haves and have-nots. This includes not discriminating in the workplace based on race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, and age (Joubert & Martins, 2013; Wrench, 2016). Therefore, if the supplier is acknowledged to be a BEE-accredited supplier, such a supplier should have an embedded culture that reflects its commitment to BEE. Likewise, the EE Act (the law that promotes equity in the workplace), is designed to ensure that all employees receive equal opportunities and that employees are treated amicably by their employers (Laher, 2007). The law was formulated to negate the unfair treatment and any form of discrimination of employees irrespective of race, creed, or religion (De Freitas, 2012). Suppliers who practice EE should reflect, by their acceptance and practice of EE that they have embraced BEE, which as posited above is to promote the economic engagement of all South Africans and particularly those who were previously discriminated against. Finally, firms that practice AA (also known as “positive discrimination) help minorities and disadvantaged people and groups by employing them as a priority and assisting them to find housing and gain admission to universities and colleges. All the aforementioned will have a positive effect of the BEE status of the supplier, which could be an important selection criterion for many purchasing firms including large enterprises and government bodies. In terms of the above, the following hypothesis was proposed:

> *H6*. Culture, EE, and AA has a significant positive effect on BEE status in the new supplier preference model.

The cementing of close marketing relationships is paramount to the challenges of the new millennium business environment (Ndubisi & Nataraajan, 2016). The aforementioned authors go on to assert that forging strong and long-lasting relationships with suppliers, distributors, and manufacturers can ensure, for the buying firm, a timely stable and sufficient flow of quality products at competitive prices and by practicing the same tactic, service providers will be able to ensure greater coverage and brand awareness but also the needs of internal and external customers may be better appeased. This viewpoint is supported by Mpinganjira et al. (2017), Barrane et al. (2018), and Anabila (2019) who collectively suggest that relationships play an important role on the selection and supporting of suppliers and their sales staff.

It is a well-accepted fact that the primary goal of a salesperson is to originate and thereafter increase sales. Other important roles (besides performing the sales process) are to prospect for new customers, retain existing ones, keep, and maintain records, provide presale and aftersales service, promptly solve customer queries and problems, manage time effectively, and as importantly implement relationship management to win sales and receive continued support from customers. Salespeople should therefore develop trust through frequent contact, keeping promises and commitments and quickly react to customer queries and service deficiencies.

As the interface between the selling organisation and the B2B and business to consumer (B2C), salespeople need to see their relationship with their customers as relationship and not transactionally focused. In other words, their goal should be to focus beyond sales transactions and rather develop beneficial relationships with their customers, over the long term so that there is a win-win for all the entities involved in the relationship. To do so, salespeople need to formulate and maintain strong relationships with customer procurers, management and staff and use such association to influence the aforementioned customer employees to motivate them to continuously support the vendor and its salesperson. In other words, to use such affinity to create interest and desire to garner enduring support (Xesha et al., 2014; Hibbler-Britt & Sussan, 2015; Agbenyegah, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis was suggested:

> *H7*. Relationship with salespeople and management has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model.

As asserted before in this chapter, the BEE status of a supplier is important, particularly when the customer happens to be a large national and international organisation and particularly (Kleynhans & Kruger, 2014; Horwitz & Jain, 2011). Basically, BEE is a racially inclusive initiative by the South African government to redress and rectify the inequalities brought during apartheid. This program seeks to offer Africans, which is Black, Asian, and Coloured citizens of South Africa, equal opportunities accorded to White citizens, as AA.

BEE, according to Shava (2016), is a unification programme that was launched by the South African government to reform and remedy the inequalities of separate development (apartheid). BEE motivates businesses to integrate previously disadvantaged people such as Black, Coloured and Asian individuals in the workspace. It was also implemented to support Black businesses, educate, train, develop and upskill the previously disadvantaged, mentor them, and give back to poor communities in South Africa. To achieve this, businesses are awarded points which they can claim on their BBBEE certificate. This certificate is used in compliance with government spend regulations. Businesses with a good level BBBEE rating stand a better chance of being awarded government contracts.

The Department of Trade and Industries (DTI) (2013) report that being BEE compliant, businesses stand to benefit in the following ways:

- They will be able to offer services to government and large corporates if they have a high BEE score.
- It facilitates attractive tax benefits.
- They stand to get more business, especially from government entities and large corporate businesses.

In terms of the DTI (2021), the BEE level/ratings are summarised as follows:

- “At BEE Level 1 the BEE points are 100 thereby giving a preferential procurement of 135%. This means the buyer can claim, as BEE procurement ‘spend,’ recognition for 135% of every Rand spent on the vendor’s services.
- At BEE Level 2, the BEE points are between 85 to 99.99, which means the buyer can claim as procurement spend 125% of every Rand spent on the vendor’s services.
- At BEE Level 3 the BEE points are 75 to 84.99, which translates into the buyer claiming a procurement spend of 110%.
- At BEE Level 4 the BEE points are 65 to 74.99., which means the vendor is 100% compliant and the buying firm can claim 100% of every Rand spent with the vendor
- At BEE Level 5 the BEE points are between 55 to 64.99 and the procurement claim is 80% of the money spent with the vendor.
- At BEE Level 6 the BEE points are between 45 and 54.99 providing the buying firm with only 60% recognition for total spend with the Level 6 supplier.
- At BEE Level 7 the BEE points are between 40 and 44.99 and the buying firm will only be awarded 50% recognition for supporting such vendor.
- At BEE Level 8 the BEE points are between 30 and 39.99 and the buying firm will only receive 10% recognition if it supports a Level 8 supplier.
- At BEE Level 9 the BEE points are below 30 and the vendor is therefore not compliant, and the buying firm will receive no procurement recognition.”

As can be seen above, the higher the vendor’s BEE rating, the more likely it will receive support from large organisations, government departments, and firms that insist that their suppliers are BEE compliant (Tangri & Southall, 2008; Podges, 2010). Therefore, the following hypothesis was considered:

> H8. BEE status has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers’ salespeople in the new supplier preference model.

In relation to the above, the conceptual model of the supplier preference factors (constructs) that will be tested is illustrated in Figure 1.1 below.

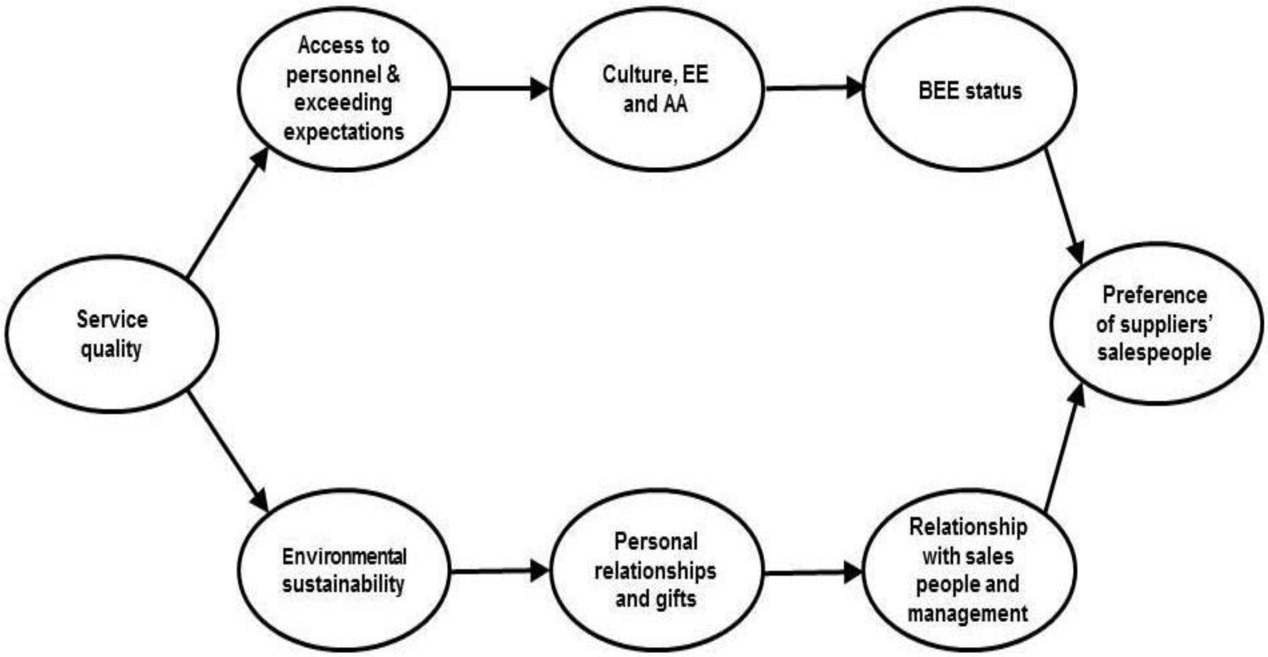

Figure 1.1: Conceptual model of the supplier preference factors (constructs)

1.7 Theoretical basis

JAMK University of Applied Sciences (2019) affirm that the theoretical basis of research is founded upon the theory concerning the topic under research and if a theoretical basis for the topic cannot be established then the background of the topic should be described. The theoretical bases of the study are therefore based upon the topic of procurement in general and vendor selection criteria.

Trafford and Leshem (2008) indicate that the research context of a doctorate study should include identifying and uncovering a gap in knowledge, developing research questions, performing fieldwork, answering the research questions, and, finally, contributing to the gap of knowledge. Miles (2017) suggests that there are seven research gaps, namely an evidence gap, a knowledge gap, a practical knowledge gap, a methodology gap, an empirical gap, a theoretical gap, and a population gap. In terms of this study a theoretical gap has been identified. The theoretical gap is the type of gap that deals with the gaps in theory with the prior research. For example, if one phenomenon is being explained through various theoretical models, like a methodological gap conflict, there might be a theoretical conflict. Researchers and scholars could examine whether one of those theories is superior in terms of the gap in the prior research. Theoretical gaps are a common occurrence in examining prior research on a phenomenon (Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015).

In this study, the theoretical bases focused on a number of key issues that are associated with procurement and the bases, on which procurement decisions are made in a South African B2B context, as mentioned previously. It is this Whereas in the past, much emphasis was placed on B2B marketing with regards to the vendor's function within the relationship (between the supplier and buyer), very little research has been undertaken to establish all the bases on which organisations in South Africa, select their vendors. gap of knowledge that the researcher wished to explore and fill by contributing to the body of understanding pertaining to procurement and SCM (Adebanjo et al., 2013).

Although a number of authors and researchers have published an extensive range of textbooks, theses, and articles, which deal with generic reasons why organisations buy products and services and on what basis they select vendors, little research has been conducted in South Africa to determine how many organisations, for example, take cultural nuances into account when selecting suppliers, adhering to procurement legislation such as BEE and BBBEE, South African Government legislation like EE and AA, and 'gentlemen's agreements' such as green and sustainable procurement.

There has also been little research conducted on a macro scale, on how many organisations in South Africa (other than in Government procurement circles) have formal procurement strategies, policies, and procedures, and the attributes of such strategies, policies, and procedures (Laryea, 2019; Nyemba & Mbohwa, 2017). Equally little has been researched in South Africa about the extent to which psychographics and internal and personal influences affect the B2B selection process. Normally organisations target customer psychographics from a segmentation perspective, but virtually nothing about a business (in terms of corporate culture) and the psychographics of the company buyer.

Van Weele (1994) asserts that the variables that affect the buying decision are mainly concerned with complexity of product and the commercial uncertainty of an offering, whereas Hakansson et al. (1979) postulate that organisational procurement is an interactive process which can be viewed from a social exchange perspective. Ford (1980) argues that the crucial element of industrial buying is considering the market as a network of relationships between organisations and that marketing policy should not only employ a strategy of broad market segmentation but should also work to maintain and increase a portfolio of strong relationships with organisations.

Although Hakansson et al. (1979), Ford (1980), and van Weele (1994) have somewhat conflicting opinions, it is accurate to suggest that more emphasis has been placed on the initial price of an offering than other important parameters such as TCO, relationships and buyer-supplier cooperation and coordination. According to procurement subject experts Hugo et al. (2006) and Lundberg and Marklund (2018), most organisations have the following procurement objectives, namely:

- To assure an ongoing and steady flow of materials and services for the buying organisation so that need- offering services and products may be created to meet customer demand;
- To ensure continuity of supply to maintain effective relationships with the various sources of supply;
- To buy cost-efficiently, profitably, and wisely;
- To maintain sound relationships with other functional areas within the organisational (for example marketing, operations, and finance);
- To maintain an optimum balance of inventory to satisfy both internal and external stakeholders; and
- To ensure a high standard of quality with regards to the products and services that is procured and manufactured.

The above authors, however, do not explain how these objectives can be realised and to what degree these objectives can be controlled (that is the setting of standards, the measurement thereof against output and the correction of deviations). For example, one of the key procurement objectives, as recognised by the aforementioned authors, is "…to buy cost-efficiently, profitably and wisely." What does this statement mean? Does it mean that the procurer must solicit the cheapest price at the expense of quality and, if so, how shall this price and quality be measured? In addition to the above, should the price be compared to that of competitor offerings (an unscientific competitive/parity pricing strategy), as discussed by Hutchings (1995), or is one referring in this instance to the lifetime cost of ownership? Finally, to what point must one take the price of the article into account against the income stream that a good (say a machine) generates over its lifetime, not forgetting to discount the income stream in the process to obtain the net present value (Gallo, 2014).

The researcher believes that to fully comprehend the nature of the organisational procurer; one should attempt to 'get into' the procurer's mind. To do so effectively, one would have to perform extensive research not from a supplier's point of view but rather from an organisational buyer's perspective; hence, the reason he wished to undertake this study. As a result of the above, the theoretical framework consists mainly of secondary data pertaining to the impact that culture, legislation (AA, EE, and BEE), sustainability, interpersonal relationships, service quality, access to management, and the exceeding of expectations of the organisational buyer and his or her employer have on the selection and employment of suppliers.

Numerous textbooks and academic articles were perused, cited, and referenced during the conclusion of this study. Several discussions were also undertaken during the research project to obtain hands-on information about the subject of vendor selection from procurement specialists, financial experts, and chief executive officers from a variety of organisations and institutions. Emphasis was placed on obtaining a strong theoretical foundation so that comparisons could be made between what has already been published, and what has emerged from this research study. As this study confines itself to a South African procurement context, the researcher has tried to use South African literature, publications, people, and other sources to uncover the data that were needed to complete this doctoral thesis.

1.8 Research design and methodology

Aaker et al. (2003) define a research design as the "…detailed blueprint used to guide a research study towards its objectives". Welman et al. (2006) conversely refer to a research design as the "…plan according to which we obtain research participants and collect information from them". Hussey and Hussey (1997), Creswell (2003), Salkind (2010), and Akhtar (2016) refer to a research design as that which integrates the methodological components of 'doctorateness', and together guide and focus the research study. Trafford and Leshem (2008:90) echo this opinion by stating that the design allows one to connect research questions to the data and collection process. The above definitions are concurred by Sileyew (2019) who suggests that a research design is intended to provide a framework for a research study. With the above definitions in mind, the researcher maintains that Aaker's (2003) definition is a more appropriate and accurate explanation.

As the research study was mainly quantitative in nature, a survey research design was selected to act as the study's blueprint (this is expanded upon in chapter three of this study). Although the solicitation of views, opinions, feelings, and attitudes are normally the domain of qualitative research, the fact that the researcher used ranking scales to obtain the requisite research data and to analyse it, places the research in a quantitative paradigm. A few controlled individual depth-interviews, emailed questionnaires, the use of various procurement-related organisations' data bases, the opinions of attendees of conferences, and the distribution of questionnaires to procurement professionals were used to obtain the required data. This is also further discussed in chapter three of this study.

To solicit the required data, a structured questionnaire was designed to act as the means to garner the requisite primary data. A copy of a fully completed questionnaire may be found in appendix one at the end of the study. Once the questionnaire was designed, it was pilot tested with mature university students to determine the user-friendliness and comprehensiveness of the document and when this was completed and the requisite alterations were performed (suggestions by those who assisted with the pilot testing), it was then emailed and distributed to the various respondents who comprised the research sample. This also included procurement professionals who attended seminars and conferences where the researcher presented. Five structured individual depth interviews were also conducted on a face-to-face basis with targeted respondents by using the questionnaire as a template to solicit the required data.

As the quality and quantity of the responses were important, care was taken when selecting the sampling method, which was used to reduce the population of large, medium, and small-sized organisations to a subset that would be manageable, and that would hopefully be representative of the views, opinions, attitudes, and feelings of the entire research study population. Because there are literally hundreds of thousands of businesses in the South African landscape that operate in a myriad of industries, it was impossible for the researcher to identify and communicate with each one of them. Therefore, the study divided the organisations into three different sizes (clusters), namely large international and nationally represented organisations; medium-sized, regionally represented organisations and, finally, small micro enterprises such as professional practices, sole proprietorships, partnerships, close corporations, and small proprietary limited companies. The information and parameters for each group are further elaborated upon in the second chapter of this research study.

Since the researcher had time, financial and other constraints, he decided to solicit the support of Smart Procurement, PURCO, the Institute of Purchasing and Supply South Africa, the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, local conferences, mature students at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology and other like institutions to obtain their membership lists to act as the sample frame from which the sample was selected. Because the researcher was not fully in control of the selection process (i.e., the aforementioned organisations and individuals to obtain data), hybrid sampling method was employed; that is, a combination of non-probabilistic sampling methods (convenience, quota, and judgmental sampling methods) and probabilistic sampling (stratified sampling of the three organisational sizes) to identify his research participants. The participants consisted of organisations from a wide variety of industries such as the primary industry (farmers, fishing organisations and mining houses), secondary industry (engineering, manufacturing and production), the tertiary industry (banks, investment organisations, life assurance and short term insurance companies and educational institutions, and so on) and the quaternary industry, which is a relatively new type of knowledge industry that is concerned with technological research, design and development, and includes information technology, computers, communication services, research and development, product design, financial planning, knowledge-based services, the media, and pharmaceuticals.

The researcher also communicated with people who are involved in professional associations and institutes to obtain input from non-profit organisations that are involved in procurement (Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport South Africa and the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply South Africa), as well as purchasing organisations such as PURCO and Smart Procurement. The methodology to select the research population and its associated sample size is discussed in chapter three of the study and includes the rationale for selecting a 95% confidence level and a 5% confidence interval.

As stated above, once the research respondents were identified and after the research questionnaire was designed and piloted, it was then electronically transmitted and distributed to the research participants for completion (as previously suggested, refer to appendix one to view the research questionnaire). The data applicable thereto, as well as the depth interviews were then collated, inspected, coded, edited for errors, and then documented for the final data file.

Welman et al. (2006) suggest that prior to collecting research data one should select an appropriate statistical procedure to analyse such data. Hence it was decided to use quantitative statistical analysis, as suggested by Mouton (2005), to analyse the data. To interpret the data that were collected, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and Amos were utilised. The package allowed the researcher to cross tabulate data, which were relevant to him as he wanted to combine various research elements to see if correlation existed amongst some of the variables. Typical techniques such as tabulations and statistical graphics were utilised to illustrate the findings.

Once conclusions were arrived at, several recommendations were made by the researcher in the hope that it would assist vendor organisations and their salespeople to better understand the needs of small, medium, and large organisations so that they could take advantage of opportunities that were uncovered during the research exercise.

1.9 Ethical considerations

The Ethics Institute of South Africa (EthicSA), as cited in Wiid and Diggines (2010) specify that ethics is the discipline and systematic endeavour of critical reflection on the nature of morality and to understand the values and principles informing correct, good, and fair individual conduct and collective practices in institutions, as well as the good of society. Conduct and practices conforming to these standards are judged to be ethical; conversely those that do not, are judged to be unethical. Holland and Albrecht (2013) and Lock and Seele (2015) postulate that ethics are moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conducting of an activity. Ethic approval was sought and granted by the university’s business faculty ethics committee prior to the commencement of the fieldwork.

When conducting research, engaging in ethical practices is a requisite and all researchers should consider the ethical implications of their actions. This is an important philosophy, as unethical behaviour would affect the credibility of the research, impact negatively on the research respondents, and could impact on the accuracy of the research findings. With this in mind, the researcher ensured, when conducting face-to-face interviews particularly, that the respondents were:

- Well-informed in terms of the objectives of the research.

- Told that their input would be confidential.
- Not deceived in any way. For example, when a recording device was used permission was sought prior to its use.
- Only interviewed at a time and place that was convenient for them.
- Told in advance the expected duration of the interview.
- Informed that they could discontinue the interview if they felt that the data required were of proprietary or sensitive nature.
- Assured that irrespective of the mode of data collection, their identity would be considered proprietary information.

In essence, the researcher entered each interview expecting honest answers from the various respondents. To achieve this goal, the researcher, therefore, treated every interviewee with the respect, the required ethical behaviour and consideration that they deserved.

1.10 Research boundaries

Cochran-Smith and Donnell (2012) explain that research boundaries are the delimitations of a study and are the factors and variables that are not to be included in the investigation. In other words, they are the boundaries the researcher sets in terms of study duration, population size and type of participants, and oftentimes they can be blurred if they are not delimitated correctly.
As previously stated in this chapter, the purpose and key objective of this research study was to establish why industrial buyers behave in a particular manner when selecting suppliers. A secondary objective, as has already been explained, was to create a new vendor preference model for salespeople who call on buying organisations, so that they can better service the needs of such organisations. Although the researcher believes that B2B buyers experience similar decision-making processes when contemplating the procurement of products and services and when appointing suppliers, the study does not suggest in any way that they all behave in identical manners when making procurement decisions. The research and proposed vendor evaluation model must, therefore, not be seen as a cure-all, but rather as an aid to understand the bases on which suppliers are selected by various organisational sizes and types, so that their needs may be satisfied more effectively.

Secondly, the study is limited to the corporate environment and not the consumer market. Consumers buy products for a variety of reasons. They buy to satisfy their personal needs and the needs of their loved ones and friends. Oftentimes the motives for buying are based on issues such as security, sentiment, pleasure, prestige, convenience, money and novelty and they often buy for reasons that seem to be illogical. This study refers to consumer behaviour primarily to differentiate it from industrial buying so that the differences may be highlighted for the benefit of those who do not fully understand consumer buying behaviour and its relationship to B2B procurement.

Finally, the research was concerned with industrial buyer behaviour in small, medium, and large-sized organisations within a variety of industries and sectors. This means that any organisation or business entity that falls outside of parameters, which are associated with such organisations, were excluded from the study (for example, small family business that are operated from homes and spaza shops in the townships, were not included).

Although industrial buyers may be consumers of some of the products that they purchase on behalf of their employers, this research study concentrated primarily on investigating how industrial buyers behave as decision makers in the industrial/commercial buying process and particularly about the procurement of raw material, components, parts, physical assets (equipment, information technology, and so forth), consumables and services. The term industrial buyer is a generic term, which is used in B2B buying and, therefore, includes the buying behaviour of all the types of organisations in various industries and sectors that were highlighted at the beginning of this chapter.

1.11 Chapter outline

The following represents a brief summary of the key attributes, which are found in the various chapters of this research study:

Chapter two (literature review) contains the secondary data pertaining to the research study, which were obtained from a variety of sources e.g., textbooks and accredited international academic journals. This information was used in later chapters to see whether there is any correlation between the data that were previously published, and what were obtained during the research project. In essence, chapter two forms the foundation on which the study was erected as it includes in-depth information that was generated by previously conducted research and publication.

Chapter three consists of the research methodology, and includes the aims of the research, the nature of the research, the research population and sample size, the research design, data collection methods, and the methods of analysis that were used to interpret the data that were collected.

Chapter four contains analysis of all the research data that were collected. The data are expressed in the form of various tables that display both the number and percentages of cases for each observed value of the various variables. This chapter includes cross-tabulations and structural equation modelling.

Chapter five elaborates and summarises the various findings that were uncovered in chapter four. It compares what has been discovered during the study with data that were derived from secondary research; which outlined what has been previously published in textbooks, accredited journals, and other sources. Finally, the researcher compares such findings to the aforementioned literature to either see whether new gaps of knowledge have been exposed or whether a correlation exists between what the researcher has discovered and what has previously been published by other academics.

Chapter six discusses the conclusions that were made during the research study and the researcher's recommendations pertaining to such conclusions. The limitations of the study, provides self-criticism in terms of the researcher's research output, and, finally, is used to make recommendations regarding further research pertaining to the key research topic and sub-topics.

1.12 Summary

Chapter one introduced the thesis (research study) and included a background of the study, the rationale for undertaking the subject, the problem statement, the purpose, focus, and objectives of the study. This was followed by the research hypothesis, the theoretical framework, the research design, and methodology, as well as the ethical considerations of the study. The chapter concluded by discussing the research boundaries, and, finally, it introduced a brief outline of the content of the rest of the chapters. The literature review is discussed in chapter two, which follows this chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two introduces the researcher's literature vision and strategy and discusses the importance of having sound literature on which to build a research study. It also briefly covers the thirteen logistics activities, which includes procurement, and which is the core activity associated with this study.

After a short explanation on the importance of conducting an effective literature search as an integral part of the research study, the chapter leads to defining logistics and lists the various logistics activities. It then covers the subject of procurement, which, as asserted above, is essentially the core subject matter of this research study. It explores the procurement process, the relevance of procurement from an organisational perspective, and what has led to the strategic importance of procurement as an integral part of the logistics functional area.

The chapter also briefly discusses the key differences between consumer behaviour and industrial buying behaviour and considers, amongst other issues, the various types of industrial purchasing, the industrial buying decision making process, and how the advent of professional and centralised procurement has impacted the way in which organisations make purchasing decisions. It also explores issues such as procurement legislation, procurement strategies, procurement policies, procurement procedures and the formation of strategic partnerships between the buyer and the supplier organisations. It then explains the researcher's definition of small, medium, and large businesses in terms of this research study.

The elements of the conceptual framework, which in essence is the backbone of the study, is then discussed and the chapter concludes by providing a summary of the key points that were discussed in the chapter. Also contained in the conclusion of the chapter is the introduction to Chapter Three, which is concerned with the research methodologies that were used to solicit the primary data that were required to successfully conclude the research study, and its dissemination and interpretation. This leads to the researcher's discussion on literature and the influences of theoretical perspectives.

2.2 Definition of logistics and related activities

To fully comprehend procurement, one must understand the relationship between procurement and logistics. Vogt et al. (2003) indicates that the term logistics is derived from the Greek word *logistikos*, which, when translated into English, means skilled in calculations. The above-mentioned authors further assert that in a modern context logistics includes customer service, demand forecasting, inventory management, logistics communication, materials handling, order processing, packaging, parts and service support, plant, and warehouse site location and format, warehousing and storage, traffic and transport management, reverse logistics and procurement. This leads to the important logistics activity of procurement.

2.3 Procurement

Stock and Lambert (2001) and Dyakova (2020) suggest that many organisations spend up to 46% of their revenue on materials and services, which they obtain from outside sources. Shander et al. (2010) however suggests that 41% of total costs are attributed to materials plus fixed and variable labour costs). Bell and Stukhart (1987) and Ghaemi and Nematollahi (2012) agree that materials constitute a high portion of total costs, but that depends on the industry type e.g., service or manufacturing (Ates et al., 2018). They also posit that the quantum of spend ultimately impacts on the firm’s pricing strategy. Xiao et al. (2015) concur and suggest that a firm makes its pricing and sourcing decisions in response to cost evolution, which can change when one least expects it to change.

The process of acquiring such goods and services to ensure the operating effectiveness of a firm’s manufacturing and logistics processes, is known as procurement (Morledge et al., 2021). This function includes the identification of suppliers, their assessment and selection, the determination of the form in which the material should be acquired; the timing of the purchases; price determination; quality control; and the performing of vendor audits to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of the vendors that supply the firm with its requirements (Baily et al., 2008).

From the above, it can be seen that logistics is, as suggested by Bowerson et al. (1983) and Stock and Lambert (2001), a single logic to guide the process of planning, finance allocation and control, and solicitation of human resources committed to distribution, manufacturing support, and purchasing operations. In other words, logistics is part of the supply chain process that plans, implements, and controls the efficient, effective flow and storage of goods, services, and related information from the point-of-origin to the point-of-consumption to meet customer requirements. Ceniga and Sukalova (2011) and Harrison et al. (2019) posit that a key determinant of business performance is the role of the logistics function and if a firm can enhance its thirteen logistics activities, it can create a competitive advantage.

Therefore, for an organisation to perform optimally, all the aforementioned activities (thirteen in total) must be managed in such a way so that the needs of all the firm's various stakeholders may be realised. Procurement plays an important role in terms of satisfying these stakeholder requirements, as it triggers the manufacturing process by providing raw material and other inputs, which are then converted, via the transformation process, into finished goods and services. The nature and objectives of procurement are now discussed.

2.3.1 Nature and basic objectives of procurement

Hassan et al. (2020) and Hugo et al. (2020) mention that the concept of a purchasing function can be described as activities, which include the following:

- Determining the exact requirements of a firm in terms of the most economic quantities and quality;
- Providing an uninterrupted flow of materials, supplies and services that are required to operate the organisation;
- Maintaining quality standards and standardising where possible, the items that are purchased to maintain the organisation's competitive position;
- The continuous search for suitable suppliers;
- Negotiating with and selecting and evaluating suppliers in terms of prices, payment terms and other relevant conditions;
- Placing orders and the following up on such orders;
- Sourcing purchase requirements at the lowest possible price without compromising quality and at the lowest possible cost to the firm (ordering costs);
- Maintaining good relationships with suppliers and internal departments;
- Receiving and inspecting incoming goods that have been purchased;
- Holding and controlling the inventory of a business and keeping inventory investment and loss to a minimum;

- Designing and implementing systems and procedures to support purchasing transactions administratively;
- Salvaging materials and disposing of excess stock;
- Waste management; and
- Performing purchase research to improve purchase efficiency.

The researcher asserts that procurement management refers to the planning, organising, directing, implementing, coordinating, and controlling of various purchasing activities, as depicted above, to satisfy internal and external customer requirements and all the other stakeholders that are involved in the equation (suppliers, retailers, wholesalers, shareholders, and members of the public at large). This coincides with van Weele's (2002) definition that purchasing management refers to all activities which are required to manage supplier relationships and is focused on formulating, structuring, and constantly improving purchasing processes within an organisational and between the organisational and its suppliers to satisfy stakeholder requirements. Purchasing is, therefore, a boundary-spanning activity that links manufacturing and an external supply network (Tan, 2001) and can, if utilised correctly, provide a key opportunity to realise a competitive advantage. This is supported by Bäckstrand et al. (2019), Renukappa et al. (2015), and Alabdali et al. (2022) who suggest that a competitive advantage leads to a healthy profit which begins with the top line. The sustainable health of a business, therefore, depends on recurring top-line top line revenue and growth.

Hugo et al. (2001), Kristensen et al. (2021), and Anin et al. (2022) propose that the objectives of procurement in private and public sector organisations are to ensure the efficient running of an enterprise, to buy goods and services of the required quality competitively and at the lowest possible price to get maximum value for money, to keep inventory losses and investment in inventory to a minimum, to continually find and develop alternative sources of supply, to ensure a sound and lasting relationship with suppliers; to achieve healthy cooperation and coordination with other departments of the firm and to set policy, procedures and systems that will ensure that the administrative cost of purchasing are kept to a minimum. This research study has been undertaken to confirm generic buying motives and to uncover other organisational procurement nuances. Most importantly, the study also wished to establish the parameters on which vendor selection takes place. The purchasing process is covered below.

2.3.2 The procurement function

As stated previously in this chapter, the purchasing function includes several activities such as determining the specifications of goods and services that need to be purchased; selecting the most reliable and suitable suppliers; negotiating the best possible deal for the organisation; placing, monitoring, and expediting orders, and evaluating vendor post-sale service.

Although organisations paid scant attention to purchasing as a strategic business function activity during the 1950s, and 1960s, it was during the 1970s that they started to show increasing awareness of the relevance of the purchasing function in both the private and public sectors and especially now when procurement has become technology-driven (van Weele, 2001; Allal-Chérif, 2021). The key reason for this was that as customers demanded increased quality, and quality became a strategic weapon that organisations could use to increase sales. Secondly, the business environment became more complex and competitive, and as a result these organisations began to look at reducing costs to make more profit for their shareholders and/or to reduce prices for their customers. This led to the increasing importance of the purchasing function within the firm with the following representing the primary contributors for such a shift in importance (Hugo et al., 2001):

- The exponential increase in service providers and their offerings which made vendor selection an art, more than a procurement activity;
- The rapid increase in the cost of materials, which necessitated proactive purchasing strategic planning;
- The increase in competition, which resulted in organisations becoming more cost focused;
- The threat of shortages of scare materials at affordable prices as a result of international competition, war, pandemics, which resulted in organisations seeking alternative sources of supply;
- The threat of currency fluctuations, particularly in a South Africa context which necessitated the need for firms to choose the correct foreign supplier, the most cost-effective method of payment and the most appropriate currency to transact with;
- The threat of supply risks such as strikes, boycotts, war, and pandemics;
- The technological revolution which reduced the lifecycle of products, and which required firms to take shorter lifecycles and quicker product obsolescence into account;

- The increased demand for quality and the introduction of ISOS, TQM, Six Sigma and other quality tools and philosophies. This has pressurised organisations to ensure the procurement of quality raw material, components, and spare parts;
- Increasing product development costs, which forced firms to find raw material substitutes and increased product functionality; and
- The increasing rise in inventory costs, which pushed firms to ensure that they did not carry too much or too little inventory.

The above market characteristics contributed to the importance of procurement and gave insight into the fact that effective procurement could be used as a tool to increase the competitive nature of the firm, and ultimately the profitability of the enterprise. The contribution of the purchasing function to the overall success of the organisation is highlighted in the following section.

Besides attempting to reduce prices wherever possible, the purchasing function also contributes to the success of the organisation in other ways. Van Weele (2002) reveals that the following represent the contributions of the purchasing function on an organisation's performance:

- By analytically assessing vendors, the organisation can use the expertise of the vendor and its suppliers to better align products and services towards the unique needs of the organisation's customers;
- The purchasing function has had to endeavour to minimise the cost of quality. Here firms are concerned not only with minimising the direct cost of quality, but also with the indirect cost of inferior quality (reduced sales, profits and brand equity and increased reverse logistics);
- The purchasing function has contributed to cost-price reduction by reducing product variety through standardisation, which leads to less dependency on certain suppliers, the reduced carrying of stock and better use of competitive bidding;
- Von Hippel (1978) stresses that product innovation often arises from collaboration between suppliers and buyers. Purchasing, therefore, oftentimes contributes to the design of products, thereby reducing research and development (R&D) costs and the time that it takes to get products to the market;
- Although the Japanese consider safety stock to be a waste and an indication that an organisation does not understand customer demand, the West views safety stock as a form of insurance against stockouts. By better managing inventory levels in accordance

with customer demand, huge savings can be made by the purchasing function, thereby increasing the organisation’s profitability;

- By adopting a flexible manufacturing system, an organisational can become more responsive to customer needs, thereby creating a differential advantage for the firm, which could result in increased sales and profits. Purchasing plays an important role in terms of such flexibility; and
- By fostering purchasing synergy throughout the organisations, business unit managers can be made responsible for procurement in their respective business units, thereby making such managers accountable for their own decisions and accompanied expenditure. Hence business unit managers become responsible for revenue, as well as the costs to generate such revenue (material costs, costs of services and so forth).

The above-mentioned points reveal the importance of the procurement function for the organisation. However, as procurement operates in a dynamic environment, the following points discuss the new developments in procurement as a result of changes in the micro, market, and macro environments.

2.3.3 New developments in procurement

There is an adage, which is used in logistics management that states that one Rand saved equals one Rand profit. This contrasts with an increase in sales, since a one Rand increase in sales, does not necessarily increase profits by an equal amount (oftentimes the profit on sales is less than 10% because of the cost of sales). As many companies are confronted with diminishing growth because of increased competition, high interest rates, the current recession, high fuel prices (to name but a few), and COVID-19, an increase in turnover is usually accompanied by increased costs. In order not to pass on the ills of such cost increase to the consumer, organisations have been forced to re-examine their expenses to protect their bottom line and to secure the survival of their firms. Furthermore, because of competitive pressure to reduce prices, many firms have sought ways to diminish costs to maintain their targeted profit percentage for the benefit of their shareholders. This has resulted in the power being shifted from sellers to buyers; hence the advent of the term a ‘buyers’ market’ (Siemieniako & Mitręga, 2018; Siemieniako & Mitręga, 2019). Increasing pressure on sales, prices and margins has resulted in increased pressure on direct materials-related costs, and as purchasing prices of materials often determine the level of selling prices, organisations are constantly looking out for opportunities to keep both purchasing costs and selling prices as low as possible. Naturally, the assessment of vendors and their employment play important roles in this regard.

As a result of the aforementioned discourse, the procurement and supply strategies of industrial companies have undergone major changes. Some of the changes include procurement becoming a strategic activity (Wincel 2003; Cragg & Chraibi, 2020). The use of centralised buying to enjoy economies of scale, the integration of the procurement function within other areas in the firm and the supply chain by means of electronic funds transfer, and enterprise resources planning (Pagell, 2004).

In addition to the above changes, the question of whether to make or buy, reciprocity between buyers and sellers, just-in-time (JIT) delivery expectation from customers and finally environmental issues and particularly green (sustainable) are forcing procurement professionals to micro-manage the procurement function and particularly vendor selection. Procurement strategy matters are now explored.

2.3.4 Procurement strategy issues

Presently, procurement strategies are more a part of a business's success than ever before because most manufacturers spend the bulk of their money on supplies that are necessary to keep the business operative. As a result of these changes, companies must establish best practices that can guide their purchasing decisions. It is important to have a strategy that vets appropriate vendors and to get them on board as important supply chain partners.

Goldman and Schmalz (2005), van Weele (2005), Voas (2015), and Décary-Hétu and Quessy-Doré (2017) state that vendors need to be vetted based upon various criteria such as service quality, price, and financial stability. The above authors assert that before evaluating any best practices, businesses should control their cost drivers, which are all the factors that determine the total cost of a business process (product design trade-offs, facility, equipment and process technology costs, costs associated with the location of the facility relative to the proximity to the customer, and costs that differentiate a well-run facility to a poorly managed one). Once businesses have identified these drivers (van Weele, 2005), they can then take action to lower these costs whenever and wherever possible by means of effective cost management and especially efficient procurement. Therefore, the selection of effective and efficient suppliers has a huge impact on costs, and particularly TCO. Once the cost driver elements have been identified, action can be taken to improve the situation, which commences with the building and maintenance of long-term supplier relationships.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (2014) disclose that a procurement strategy can take a number of formats, but the strategy should achieve the following key objectives:

- To find and take advantage of as many types of cost-saving and cost-avoidance opportunities as possible;
- To negotiate savings with existing suppliers;
- To achieve cost savings by leveraging existing supplier relationships without straining such relationships;
- To diligently manage costs;
- To ensure product and service quality;
- To create or improve a commodity classification system that optimally supports sourcing and savings initiatives; and
- To track the progress of one's sourcing strategy.

The above should lead to a number of interlinked procurement-oriented strategies which could include:

- A sourcing and supplier selection strategy
- A supplier relationship strategy
- A purchasing research and planning strategy
- Cost reduction strategy
- A quality strategy
- A buying strategy, which could include a forward buying strategy and a JIT purchasing strategy
- An e-procurement strategy
- An outsourcing strategy
- A supplier evaluation strategy

Whatever strategies that are formulated, they must be effectively implemented and controlled so that procurement goals may be met as cost-effectively and as customer-centrically as possible. Finally, the strategic role of purchasing is to perform sourcing-related activities in such a way that it supports the overall objectives of the firm (Cammish & Keough, 1991; Chen et al., 2004;

de Hemmer Gudme, 2017). Procurement can play an important role in contributing to the success of the organisational by increasing profits as a result of astute procurement, by gaining important knowledge and information about new technologies, materials, and market conditions, by identifying new and better suppliers, and by supporting other strategic functional areas within the business (Sitar, 2012). An important aspect of this research study was to determine whether organisations have well-defined procurement strategies that are coordinated with the organisation’s overall generic strategies. The next section discusses issues, which relate to procurement policies and procedures and the importance of having such policies and procedures from a procurement point of view.

2.3.5 Procurement policy and procedure issues

Besides having a procurement strategy, a firm should also have well-articulated and published procurement policies and procedures for employees and as well as supply chain partners. Essentially, policies and procedures are a set of documents that describe an organisation's policies for operation and the procedures that are necessary to fulfil the policies. A policy is, therefore, a broad statement, whereas a procedure is an activity that is used to fulfil such a policy (Hoekman & Taş, 2020). Pooe et al. (2015) postulate that procurement policies in a South African context could include issues such as vendor selection, lead times, payment terms, quality assurance, legislation (BEE and AA), vendor service assessment, and a host of other related matters (Dlamini, 2013).

Procurement procedures would naturally be created and implemented to ensure that the policies are complied with (Bolton, 2016). Part of the procurement policy could certainly contain targets, which relate to green procurement. Another important consideration was whether all forms of organisational types have well-publicised and well-articulated procurement policies and procedures. The following section discusses the subject of vendor selection criteria in the context of the preference model as illustrated in chapter one.

2.4 Elements of supplier preference model

As indicated above the elements of the aforementioned model are culture, AA, and BEE.

2.4.1 Customer relationships and relationship management

Saad et al. (2022) state that relationship management is a strategy in which an organisation develops and maintains an ongoing level of engagement with its customers, and supply chain business partners. Amofah and Ijaz (2005) and Palmatier et al. (2006) assert that the main objective of relationship management is to engender relationship quality (RQ). Palmatier further posits that in both business practice and academic research, RQ has gained considerable attention and many contributions to contemporary knowledge are derived by challenging the RQ between buyers and suppliers and other supply chain partners in a supply chain context. The quality of the relationships formed among business partners in supply chains is a vital factor for business success, as firms strive to develop a sustainable competitive advantage. Nyaga and Whipple (2011) assert that value creation is derived, in part, by leveraging relationships among supply chain members as individual businesses no longer compete as stand-alone entities. In other words, companies do not compete against one another; their supply chains do.

Accordingly, inter-firm relationships in a supply chain refer to all types of vertical relationships between organisations involved in the upstream and downstream flows, which are the buyer–seller business relationships in the supply chain. So, from a relationship perspective what is a supply chain? Chen and Paulraj (2004) suggest that a supply chain is a network of interdependent relationships that are developed and fostered through strategic collaboration with the goal of deriving mutual benefits. Based on the social nature of a relationship, many researchers (Athanasopoulou, 2009) considered trust, commitment, and satisfaction as the three established dimensions of RQ. In addition, cooperation and collaboration, effective communication, relationship-specific assets and adaptation, long-term orientation, dependence, and power, have also been considered inter-firm RQ dimensions (Sue et al., 2008; Cater & Cater, 2010; Obadia & Vida, 2011; Nyaga et al., 2013; Jiang et al., 2018).

In terms of the above, for meaningful business relationships to be forged and to be taken advantage of, sales organisation should focus on the provision of being relationship-oriented (Hanson & Henkel, 2020; Høgevold et al., 2020; Kamann & Kővári, 2021). This is echoed by Dash et al. (2018) who report that manufacturing organisations are using the power of supplier relationship for their survival in a high volatile marketplace.

Finally, Pothal et al. (2020) state that supplier relationship management relates to the inclusion of the correct innovation, procedures, assets, and instruments expected to adjust manufacturing/service organisations with their suppliers to make more grounded and increasingly steadfast connections. Many organisations are focusing their concentration only on sales and profit and miss the importance of their vital relationship with suppliers, who are a strategic partner in their business. Unlike B2C business transactions and behaviour have had wide exposure to research whereas little has been done regarding the psychographics of B2B procurement. This is supported by Hakansson et al. (1979) who postulate that organisational procurement is an interactional process that can be studied from a social exchange perspective". Ford (1980), however, argues that the crucial element of industrial buying is viewing the market as a network of relationships between organisations, and that it deserves more attention from a research point of view. B2B vendors should therefore concentrate on using relationship marketing to develop long-term relationships with their customers (Gummesson, 2017).

When assessing a market opportunity, most marketers begin with profiling their potential customers based on objectively determined variables, which are called demographics. Demographics to usually refer to personal factors such as age, gender, race, age, nationality, income, family life- cycle stage and occupation (Dibb et al., 1994; Gagnon, 2021). A simplistic explanation would include who they are, where they are, what they do, and their scope. A second profiling approach is by way of psychographics, which goes beyond demographics to examine how customers think, why they think it, and, most importantly, what they will do as a result. Psychographics, therefore, refer to personality, buying motives and lifestyle. Etzel et al. (2001) and Wells (2011) refer to segmentation based on how people think, feel, and behave."

Demographic segmentation is important because it defines the scope of the opportunity, including potential lifetime value. Psychographic segmentation is also important because innate things such as names and buildings do not buy products and services; people do. Articulated differently, demographic segmentation can quantify the short-term and potential long-term sales opportunity, even down to the individual customer. But it is up to psychographic segmentation to connect what the marketer must sell what the customer wants to buy.

Although psychographic segmentation is used extensively in B2C marketing, the question is: does such segmentation also apply to B2B marketing? Within the marketing field there has always existed a perceived commonality between B2B and B2C markets. This is a general perception in the theory of marketing. The aspects that differ between B2B markets and B2C markets, and B2B communication are the influences, buyer decision processes, and buyer-seller relationships (Coviello & Brodie, 2001; Rėklaitis & Pilelienė, 2019). It is said that B2B markets must be handled differently than B2C markets because of their uniqueness owing to a derived demand, long purchase cycles, and a market structure that is shifting and fragmented (Lilien, 1987; Kolis & Jirinova, 2013).

A distinction is made on B2B marketing by concentrating on the attributes of product complexity, and buying process complexity (Webster, 1978; Averchenko, 2017.). This is also supported by Håkansson and Snehota (1995) and Safari and Albaum (2019) who claim that B2B marketing is driven by relationships, which should be considered different to those in B2C markets. This is supposedly owing to a continuity, complexity, symmetry, and informality of the relationship (Coviello & Brodie, 2001). Although, the question stands: is there in fact a difference between B2B and B2C markets, and why do firms need to separate the marketing approaches towards the two? Are previous recognised differences between B2C and B2B marketing practices merely a historical artifact rather than a current reality (Coviello et al., 2002)? It is trusted that this research study has unveiled the answer to this mystery, particularly as people work for buying organisations and therefore be influenced by internal and external influences.

2.4.2 Relationship with supplier salespeople and management

An important aspect of customer service in a B2B context is that business- to-business sales roles are changing and evolving quickly into the management of relationships between the buying and the selling firm (Davies & Ryals, 2010). The quality of the service that suppliers' sales employees provide therefore is extremely important and this only occurs when employees, and especially salespeople are fully engaged with their customers. Salespeople who are engaged and connected to their customers are employees who provide superior customer service, value, and a unique customer experience, which translates into customers who are prepared to support the salespeople, their management team, and the selling organisations. (Subramanian, 2018). This is notion supported by Allen and Grisaffe (2001), Bowden (2009), Cadwaller et al. (2010), Kumar et al. (2010), López-Sánchez et al. (2010), van Doorn et al. (2010), Verhoef et al. (2010), Hollebek (2011), and van Doorn (2011), all of whom assert that customer engagement by supplier salespeople is an important requisite for relationship building, service excellence, and continued customer support. Zolkiewski et al. (2017) and Sharma and Dass (2021) concur with this assertion by stating that relationship formed between the supplier and its customer over the long-term is important, and that building a strategy to increase supplier engagement is the most important job of B2C and B2B marketers as it helps salespeople to connect with customer staff on a personal basis.

2.4.3 Environment sustainability

Tucker (1998) states that attempts have been made to explain green procurement as a concept in a myriad of publications and in a fast-growing body of literature. Most of the literature concentrates on the preparedness of organisations to implement green procurement (Lamming & Hampson, 1996; Holt & Kockelbergh, 2003), and ways to increase the green content of goods and services. The issue, according to the aforementioned authors of the various derivatives of colour, for example, green (meaning completely eco-oriented) and not-so-green (occasional compliance), has also been vigorously debated.

The procurement of goods and services has, in the past, been based on three key issues, namely price, product quality and service. Price is involved in the equation because by an organisation charging, as much as the market will bear, it will enjoy profit maximisation, whereas the quality of a product or material will directly impact on the ability to sell the offering. Green or sustainable procurement, as it is otherwise known, broadens this framework to include the triple baseline of external concerns (the 3 Ps), with which the procuring organisational must comply. These considerations are as follows:

2.4.4 Planet, people, and profit

Here the concern is how man and business create an enduring balance between the 3Ps so that society and the environment can benefit.

2.4.4.1 The environment or planet issues

Thanks to ex-USA Vice President Al Gore and Sir David Attenborough, the subject of global warming has become a hotly debated issue by governments throughout the world. Even those who had a ‘profit-now-and-lets-worry-about-pollution-later’ attitude have made remarkable and historic about-turns and are now supporting initiatives to reduce greenhouse emissions so that noxious gasses can eventually be reduced to acceptable levels. Procurement plays an important role in protecting the environment and the planet from potential destruction by ensuring that what is bought now will not negatively impact on the environment now and later (Appolloni et al., 2014). For example, an organisation can buy products that are protected by biodegradable packaging and also by buying products that can be disposed of without any damage to the environment. As consumers' needs are seldom fully satisfied (as one need is satisfied another need appears), there is an increasing consensus that humanity places excessive demands on available and limited resources through unsustainable and ever-increasing consumption patterns. Therefore, greenhouse gasses are increasing with the resultant melting of icebergs and the associated rising of sea levels.

The procurement business function facilitates an important opportunity for firms to integrate environmental aspects into all processes and all units in an organisation, which will allow an organisation to reduce the environmental impact that is caused by business operations. Procurement, therefore, has the potential to be a stronger change agent than any other organisational functional area. (Appolloni et al., 2014). As procurement progresses towards a greener approach, it contains the potential for integrating environmental aspects into a company's decision-making; Green Procurement (GP) allows management to cope with their environmental responsibilities as far as the impact on the whole supply chain is concerned (Ho et al., 2010). Although the ultimate green procurement is the avoidance of non-green purchases altogether, one has to be realistic that from a B2B business point of view it would be almost impossible to do. To support sustainable development, an organisation should develop and publish a sustainable development procurement manual, which should include strategies, guidelines, and procedures so that when the need arises for a particular good, such publication may be referred to help the procurer make better sustainable procurement decisions and become a participant in environmentally responsible purchasing (Ruparathna & Hewage, 2015; Pacheco-Blanco & Bastante-Ceca, 2016).

2.4.4.2 Social and people issues

Sustainable procurement is also used to address issues of social class such as equality, and diversity targets (Senam & Mohd Zaini, 2013). Examples include providing employment, addressing the needs of women, the previously disadvantaged, children, the elderly, the disabled, those with non- heterosexual orientation and those with different political, cultural, and religious beliefs. It is also concerned with providing adults who lack basic skills and education with opportunities to grow and to become meaningful contributors towards society. In a South African context, socially sustainable procurement is sometimes amalgamated with economic issues such as BEE, AA, and EE.

2.4.4.3 Economic and profit issues

Siminică et al. (2020) advance that the creation of sustainable markets is essential for long-term growth while sustainable development requirements innovation to be nurtured and fostered. Sustainable procurement can favour fair trade or ethical practice and allow extra investment to channel towards developing countries like those in Africa (Dinu, 2020). On a microeconomic level, sustainable procurement offers the chance for economic redistribution. Targets might include the creation of jobs and wealth and assistance for small and/or BEE aligned (Black-owned) businesses.

As shown above, green, or sustainable procurement is used as a quality barometer of three main issues, namely planet, people, and profits, all of which one would want to attain and maintain over an enduring period. Sustainable procurement refers to activities that optimise the potential to reduce and minimise the use of renewable energy and raw materials through miniaturisation and recycling, on the one hand, and the use of renewable energy on the other hand (Walker et al., 2012; Ruparathna & Hewage, 2015; Zaidi et al., 2019). In essence, sustainable procurement is about the respect for fundamental human rights and progress in the economy as a whole (Martin-Ortega & O'Brien, 2019).

To be a green procurer, green alternatives should be made available by suppliers of goods and services. This would require the innovation of green offerings as described by Mowery and Rosenberg (1979), Dosi (1982), Kamann and Nijkamp (1991), Camagni (1991), Nelson and Winter (1977), Khan et al. (2021), and Ellström and Carlborg (2022). These authors posit that there are three types of innovation, namely, process innovation (including the organisation), product innovation and application innovation. They further suggest that the same offering may be produced in different ways by means of process innovation with similar applications in the same market; that an unchanged product produced the same way may find new application (a new market) and that a new/different product can be applied in the same way, in the same market, produced in the same way but employing new and different inputs (eco-friendly raw materials for example). Hence raw material would come from a supplier, and the origin of the innovation would emanate from such a supplier (Pavitt, 1984). Therefore, Sheehy and Jacobs (2021) indicate that scanning existing suppliers for eco-friendly inputs and techniques should lead to new innovations and will have a positive impact on the environmental position of the organisation, and thereby contribute towards an improvement in the general ecology.

Because of all the above, Kamann (2004), Schiederig et al. (2015), and Takalo and Tooranloo (2021) explain that green innovation refers to a change in attitude and behaviour leading to a more sustainable need satisfaction. Robinson and Faris (1967) and Reguia (2014) contend that a large percentage of the total cost of a product is determined at its development and design stage, and one can safely hypothesise that at least a large portion of the total environmental lifecycle impact is determined when needs are identified and when products are designed to satisfy these needs. Therefore, when considering fulfilling human and organisational needs, organisations should consider how these needs may best be satisfied by considering the triple "P" perspective (planet, people, and profit). However, as a result of the latter P (profit), the world is plagued by global warming, pollution, the destruction of the ozone layer, rising sea levels, natural disasters and worst of all, the decimation of certain of the world's wildlife into extinction.

In today's sustainable economic world, the rational thought should be the costs of life cycle, and resources or supply chain process. However, supply chains need to possess the ability to manage waste, and the agility to achieve environmental and social performance as quickly and effectively as possible. In a study on green supply chain agility (GSCA) by Fernando and Saththasivam (2016), it was found that organisations who practice GSCA can improve environmental and social performance, thereby reducing waste and improving the ecology. Effective vendor selection and green procurement management can assist in this regard.

Based on the above, environmentally responsible, or green procurement is centred around the selection and procurement of products and services that minimise the adverse impact on the environment. It requires an organisation to assess the environmental consequences of a product at all the stages of its lifecycle prior to making a procurement decision. This means considering the ecological and other costs of securing raw materials, converting such material into finished goods, transporting such raw material work-in-process, storing, and handling such offerings, and then using and disposing of the product or service.

Liu et al. (2020) propose that green procurement is rooted in the principle of pollution prevention, which strives to reduce or limit risks to human and animal health and the environment. It means evaluating purchases based on a variety of criteria, which range from the necessity of the purchase in the first place, to other like options that are available and its eventual disposal (Blome et al., 2014). Although there is no specific guideline, various sustainability criteria could be incorporated within the existing framework of procurement. Specification is the most feasible way of addressing sustainability followed by pre-qualification, contract performance clause, contract award criteria, demand analysis and negotiation (Rahman & Islam, 2017). The setting and obeyance of such specifications and other interventions however Biswal et al. (2017) note that it is not easy tasks because, for example, the necessity of an ongoing power supply can result in increased socio- environmental hazards such as global warming, acid rain, scarcity of drinking water, reduced crop production, and a stressful work environment (Ciumara & Lupu, 2020). Therefore, sustainable SCM implementation and control are complex activities owing to its dependence on various factors such as the increased demand for products, fleet mobility costs and associated pollution (noise included), global supply networks and as importantly the world's addiction and reliance on fossil fuels (Beske et al., 2014).

Consumers, customers, intermediaries, investors, shareholders, and regulatory bodies are increasingly demanding that organisations behave in an environmentally responsible and good corporate citizen manner. Practicing green procurement demonstrates an organisation's commitment towards minimising the environmental consequences of its activities. In so doing, buying green usually involves purchasing products that are easy to recycle, last longer than traditional products or create less waste. Money is, therefore, saved on waste disposal. In addition, green products generally require fewer resources to manufacture and operate, particularly if economy of scale is used. This means that additional savings can be made on energy, water, fuel, and other natural resources (De Melo & Vijil, 2016). Moreover, green products generally involve fewer toxic or hazardous materials, which reduce associated expenses such as permit fees, toxic material handling charges and staff training.

So, how can organisations go about engendering a more favourable attitude towards green procurement within their firms? The answer lies in formulating a green procurement strategy which requires total organisational support, continuous self-evaluation, the setting of green goals, implementing such a green procurement strategy, and finally controlling it (Agyepong & Nhamo, 2017).

2.4.5 Dimensions of effective service

Several factors represent the various attributes of superior service.

2.4.5.1 Service quality

Service quality (SQ), as a concept, is a 'marriage' between perceived expectations (E) of a service by a customer and the perceived performance (P) by a supplier, which brings to bear the equation SQ=P-E (Lewis & Booms, 1983). Oliver et al. (1994) indicate that the concept of service quality has its origins in the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. Therefore, a business that offers high service quality will meet or exceed customer expectations whilst remaining cost effectively competitive. This suggests that improved service quality can increase revenue, profitability, and long-term economic competitiveness and this can be achieved by rapidly identifying problems, establishing quantitative service performance measures, measuring customer satisfaction and other performance outcomes, and as importantly, improving operational processes.

Service quality is the facilitation of achieving superior customer service and customers experience such service at every customer touchpoint (service encounter). As a result, customers establish service expectations from good or bad past experiences, word of mouth and marketing communications (Parasuraman et al., 1991). Usually, customers compare perceived service with expected service, and if the former falls short of the latter then customers become disappointed. The measurement of customer service depends on the conformity of the expected benefit with the perceived result. This in turns depends upon the customer's expectation in terms of service, they might receive and the service provider's ability to provide the expected service. In other words, the focus is on delighting customers through the generation of superior service that exceeds expectations (Oh & Kim, 2017).

Hossain and Leo (2009), Muyeed (2012), and Ali (2018) put forward that service quality is an important component of a customer's perception of the total offering and will be the dominant parameter in evaluating customer expectation and satisfaction/dissatisfaction. In a modern society where oftentimes, products are clones of one another, the quality of service could be even more relevant than the features of the product. As a result, many organisations differentiate their offerings by means of facilitating superior service. Customers judge their quality of service on their perception of the expected outcome and an example of this could be a couple visiting a restaurant and not only measuring the experience by the quality of the food they are offered but also by the attitude of the waitrons, the cleanliness of the eatery and even the way they were welcomed when entering the facility. Parasurman et al. (1988) collectively designed the SERQUAL model and mentioned that customers consider five dimensions when assessing service quality.

2.4.5.2 Reliability

This dimension refers to the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. When service delivery fails the first time, a service provider may get a second chance to provide the same service in the phase called “Recovery” (Parasururman et al., 1988; Yarimoglu, 2014) The expectations of the customer are usually higher during the recovery phase than before because of the initial failure. Thus, the service provider is likely to come under greater scrutiny, thereby increasing the possibility of customer dissatisfaction. The reliability dimension, which ensures timely delivery time after time, helps the service provider to meet the customer expectations fully at the lowest level of service expectation. As an important dimension of service quality, the reliability of a supplier is of paramount importance to the customer because the latter might require the inputs timeously for production to take place. For example. the late delivery of building materials and equipment could result in the final delivery of a completed building to be delayed, at the expense of the final customer.

2.4.5.3 Responsiveness

Parasururman et al. (1988) and El Saghier (2015) propound that this dimension refers to the willingness of an organisation’s employees like their salespeople and transportation staff to help customers and to provide them with prompt and accurate service. The second aspect of responsiveness is speedy response to a customer request. When response is delayed customers usually loses interest. Many sales representatives promise to call a customer back but do not do so. As a result, the customer draws his or her own conclusion about the quality of service he or she is likely to receive in the future. The salespeople and procurement professions of the supplier need to deliver reliable and responsive service to win and retain the support of their customers.

2.4.5.4 Assurance

Parasururman et al. (1988) and Fatima et al. (2019) suggest that this dimension is defined as the ability of an organisation and its employees to inspire trust and confidence in service delivery. It refers to the display of courtesy and knowledge of the service firm's employees to the customer and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in the customer toward the company/supplier. This dimension is important from a supplier's point of view as the knowledge and courtesy of salespeople can have a huge impact on the lifecycle of the relationship between the supplier and a customer.

2.4.5.5 Empathy

Parasururman et al. (1988) and Ramya (2019) posit that this dimension refers to the caring, individualised attention the service firm provides each customer. When for example, the vendor's salespeople put themselves in the shoes of the customer, they may see the customer's viewpoint better. When customers feel that the salespeople and employees of the vendor is trying to see their viewpoint, the relationship between the two entities may be better forged.

2.4.5.6 Tangibles

Parasururman et al. (1988) and Tešić (2020) claim that this dimension refers to physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of a service firm's employees and it is well known that tangibles provide the customer proof of the quality of service. Therefore, the supplier's salespeople and employees should ensure that they are dressed and groomed in such a way, that they engender confidence in the supplier's salespeople.

The above dimensions represent how consumers and organisations' employees such as company procurement professionals organise information about service quality and are relevant in numerous forms of services such as banking, restaurants, insurance, telephone services, and automobile repairs. In conclusion, the delivery of service quality can increase customer support, boost sales, reduce costs, enhance profits, and as importantly, assist in the cementing of long-term and mutually beneficial relationships between the selling and buying organisations

2.5 Access to supplier personnel and increased expectations

It is said that buying, like selling, is a communication skill, and, for effective communication to take place in both contexts, access to personnel from both the buyer and the seller is required. This is important as the supplier needs to communicate to the buying firm when the offering will be delivered so that the buyer may take receipt thereof and pay for it.

La Londe and Zinzer (1976) reveal three element in a sales transaction, namely, pre-transactional elements (the component that establishes an enabling environment conducive to superior customer service), transactional elements (making the product available to the customer, facilitating order convenience, ensuring a user-friendly order cycle, physical delivery by means of employing the most appropriate transport, the expediting of shipment the ordered goods and reverse logistics if required) and post-sales elements which includes the spectrum of services that are required to support the offering post-delivery.

To be involved in the pre-transactional, transactional, and post-sales elements, the buying firm (customer) needs to have access to a variety of supplier personnel other than the salesperson who calls on it (Rizzi, 2022). Initially, when a need for an offering emerges, the customer normally engages with supplier staff to ensure that the product or service is available for procurement. Secondly, the customer is also involved in the order cycle to ensure that the formal order has been generated and lodged by the procurement department for final delivery. During the lead time (from the time the good is ordered until it has been received and paid for), the customer will need to expedite the order so that the goods will arrive when and where they are destined. Finally, the customer needs access to the supplier's personnel (employees and management) to quality-assure the goods that have arrived and to ensure that queries and complaints are handled effectively by the supplier. This could also include the settlement of claims, the activity needed to substitute incorrect orders, replace damaged goods, and finally, order spare parts if they are required. Client involvement with the successful transaction of orders is of vital importance to both the supplier and customer whether the needs of the customer are satisfied not, most customers expect service that is if the highest level and that can exceed expectation (Lawrence, 2022). The latter author asserts that problems are found and addressed early if the client is fully involved in the transaction and relationship. Lawrence (2022) further mentions that alienating the client could expose both the firm and the client in a negative way.

2.6 Labour legislation and Black Economic Empowerment

As a result of apartheid, legislation and agreements that were put into place to protect the interest of all South African, and especially those who were disadvantaged because of the practice of separate development. The following represent the key procurement law that still exists today:

Tshishonga (2019) maintains that prior to South Africa achieving democracy in 1994, the then government of the country (Nationalist Party) excluded African, Indian, and Coloured people from meaningful participation in the country's economy, and as a result poverty, social problems and personal suffering increased, which in turn culminated in the implementation of international exclusion boycotts against South Africa by most developed countries. The advent of such boycotts (trade, political and sport) had a profoundly adverse effect on the economy, and in many instances hurt the people that were the original victims of apartheid (MacLean, 2014).

To entrench both gender and racial equality and to promote economic growth and political stability, the South African government decided to implement BEE which is not a synonym for AA (although EE forms part of it), nor is it aimed at depriving White people of their wealth. BEE is simply a growth strategy, which targets the South African economy's weakest point which, according to DTI, is inequality.

Hundermark (2013) postulated that the DTI mention that on the 6 January 2004, the South African Government passed into law the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Act, No. 53, 2003, and thereafter the final BEE Codes of Good Practice, which became operational on 9 February 2007 (the day on which it was published in the Government Gazette., No.29617). Although the Government does not penalise organisations that are not BEE compliant, procurement managers and buyers are expected to conduct business with organisations that are compliant, as such compliance improves their own BEE scorecard in terms of Preferential Procurement Element provisions.

Dlamini (2014) suggested that BEE focuses on historically disadvantaged people, and particularly Black people, women, the youth, and the disabled, the ill and rural communities. It is driven by legislation and regulation, and an integral part of the BEE Act of 2004 is the balanced scorecard, which measures companies' empowerment progress in four areas. These areas are:

- Direct empowerment through ownership and control of enterprises and assets;
- Management at senior level;
- Human resource development and EE; and
- Indirect empowerment through preferential procurement; enterprise development and corporate social investment.

Economics and Portocarero (2013) opine that the BEE Codes of Good Practice and the codes are binding on all state bodies and public companies, and the government is required to apply them when making economic decisions on:

- Procurement;
- Licensing and concessions;
- Public-private partnerships; and
- The sale of state-owned assets or businesses.

Private companies must apply the codes if they want to conduct business with any government enterprise or organ of state. Organisations are also encouraged to apply the codes in their dealings with one another, since preferential procurement will affect most private companies throughout the supply chain.

So how does this impact on procurement outside of government tenders? The explanation below and the various tables below explain the ramifications of BEE and BBBEE.

- Company A: Government gives preference to firms with a good BBBEE rating. Therefore, Company A is under pressure to maintain its BBBEE rating.
- Company B: For Company A to maintain its BBBEE rating it must buy from firms that are BBBEE compliant. Therefore, Company A must ensure the Company B is BBBEE compliant.
- Company C: Even though company C does not do business with government it too must maintain its BBBEE compliance otherwise it will not be able to supply Company B.

It may be noted from the explanation above, that although organisations are not forced to become BEE compliant, if they wish to conduct business with government and large enterprises or alternatively organisations that conduct business with government and large listed institutions, they too must have an adequate BEE score/rating to grow their respective businesses. The example in Table 2.1 best illustrates this point.

Table 2.1: BEE scorecard

BBBEE Status	BBBEE Scorecard Rating	BBBEE Recognition level
Level 1	At least 100 points	135%
Level 2	At least 85 points but less than 100	125%
Level 3	At least 75 points but less than 85	110%
Level 4	At least 65 points but less than 75	100%
Level 5	At; least 55 points but less than 65	80%
Level 6	At least 45 points but less than 55	60%
Level 7	**At least 40 points but less than 45**	**50%**
Level 8	At least 30 points but less than 40	10%
Not compliant	Less than 30 points	0%

Source: Stebbing (2008)

As shown above, if a company scores 42 points on the generic scoreboard (see shaded area in the table) it is a Level 7 contributor. Stebbing (2008) stipulates that for every one Rand that a client spends, the client can consider fifty cents (50c per Rand) as preferential procurement. Therefore, by making a R500 000 purchase from their supplier will entitle the purchasing company to count R250 000 as preferential procurement. Table 2.2 provides an illustration of the level of compliancy in terms of the BEE scorecard rating and recognition level, per Rand spent on goods.

Table 2.2: BEE scorecard rating and recognition level per Rand spent

BBBEE Status	BBBEE Scorecard Rating	Recognition level per every rand spent
Level 1	At least 100 points	R1.35
Level 2	At least 85 points but less than 100	R1.25
Level 3	At least 75 points but less than 85	R1.10
Level 4	At least 65 points but less than 75	R1.00
Level 5	At least 55 points but less than 65	R0.80
Level 6	At least 45 points but less than 55	R0.60
Level 7	**At least 40 points but less than 45**	**R0.50**
Level 8	At least 30 points but less than 40	R0.10
Not compliant	Less than 30 points	R0.00

Source: Stebbing (2008)

Table 2.2 explains that if one was to procure only from Level 8 companies, then one's effective preferential procurement would be 10% (10c in the Rand). Conversely, if one's total eligible procurement was R50 000 and one purchased R25 000 from a Level 1 company, and R25 000 from a Level 8 company, the calculation would be as follows (refer to Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Percentage of preferential procurement

Amount	Supplier Level	Recognition level
R25 000	1	1,35 x R25 000 = R33 750
R25 000	8	0.10 x R25 000 = R2 500
Total= R50 000		R36 250

Source: Stebbing (2008)

From Table 2.3 it may be noted that the percentage of preferential procurement: equates to 72.5% (R36 250/R50 000 X 100 = 72.5%). As the firm has achieved 72.5%, they have exceeded the total procurement target of 70%, but will only obtain 15 points on the procurement scorecard (see Table 2.4). The company now needs to establish the size of their generic scorecard suppliers, qualifying small enterprise (QSE), or exempt micro enterprise. When calculating preferential procurement, the following should be undertaken:

- Add all expenses that an organisation incurs;
- Deduct expenses that are excluded from the organisation's preferential procurement calculation;
- Separate each supplier into generic scorecard suppliers, QSEs and exempt micro enterprises;
- Categorise those suppliers by the percentage that they contribute to total procurement spend;
- Insist on a score from each supplier;
- Identify the level on which the supplier operates by taking their score and comparing it to the levels of compliancy in the table above; and
- Calculate the organisation's preferential procurement score. This reflects the score of all the suppliers who supply the organisation.

In terms of the above, it must be remembered that exempt micro enterprises automatically qualify as Level 4 contributors, and that suppliers that do not provide a scorecard are zero rated. As a rule, if a company is 51% Black owned (this is subject to a few qualifications), then they move up a level (for example if they are a Level 6, you can calculate them as a Level 5). One should then calculate what percentage generic scorecard suppliers, QSEs and exempt micro enterprises contribute to your total spend. Once this is done one has to produce a final scorecard. Table 2.4 shows the ultimate target for Preferential Procurement for the Generic Scorecard.

Table 2.4: Target for preferential procurement for the generic scorecard

Indirect empowerment – preferential procurement (Code 500)	**Total points - 20**	**Recognition level per every rand spent**
Description	**Weighting points**	**Compliance targets**
BEE Preferential spend from Broad-based suppliers as a percentage of total measured procurement spend	15	70%
As above	4	15%
As above	1	5%

Source: Stebbing (2008)

It may be noted in Table 2.4 that BEE will play an important role in future, as it becomes further embedded into the South African procurement landscape and will, therefore, act as an even more important consideration when selecting vendors. Organisations that wish to conduct direct or indirect business with government departments and large public companies, must, therefore, ensure that they become and remain BEE compliant. They must also ensure that their suppliers are likewise compliant. In the next section the generic criteria, which organisations use to select their suppliers are discussed. Thereafter, more expansive selection criteria are considered, which form the basis on which the research study questionnaire was formatted in conjunction with the objectives of the study. In the next section, generic vendor selection criteria are discussed.

2.7 Preference of supplier salespeople

Once a relationship has been forged with a particular set of vendors, the buying firm should assess and evaluate the set of vendor's respective performance levels on a regular basis against hopefully pre-set and pre-agreed upon levels of service. The question, however, is how many organisations perform regular formal appraisals on their vendors? Suppliers can have a significant bearing on the success of an organisation and a business can introduce several problems by using inefficient or poorly selected suppliers. Problems such as inferior quality goods, ineffective delivery service and poor service levels can all impact the procuring company in varying degrees. For most organisations effective sourcing is a key task, and this is achieved by implementation of an approved supplier list, which is linked with an effective appraisal system (Kalkanci & Plambeck, 2020).

Ghadimi et al. (2017) voice that the rationale of an approved supplier list is that the list comprises suppliers that have been approved by passing some form of assessment. The approved suppliers list, therefore, acts as a control measure to ensure that when procuring goods or services, only suitable suppliers, are used (Sarkar & Mohapatra, 2006). Kalkanci and Plambeck (2019) propose that supplier evaluation, therefore, acts as the initial stage in identifying organisations with suitable controls and capacity that can supply the desired products or services to the procuring firm. Whilst there is no standard evaluation method, there are several areas that should be considered. These include the technical soundness of the supplier, the supplier's managerial competence, the supplier's resources, and the adequacy thereof, the supplier's financial stability, the supplier's competitiveness in terms of product quality, price and service delivery, the reliability of the supplier, the supplier's attitude towards the environment and his or her ethical standing, and legislative and quality issues such as BBBEE, TQM and ISOS accreditation (Genovese et al., 2010). As none of the above are necessarily of equal importance, each factor should be weighted according to their importance to the procuring company.

While supplier evaluation should be regarded as a critical process, it is not without problems. Evaluation can be resource-intensive and can create a bottleneck between the supplier and buyer. This is especially true where evaluation data is difficult to obtain. Obura et al. (2021) recommend that because for most organisational appraisal is a continuous process and should be part of an integrated supplier management process, that these organisations should have an intermittent appraisal process to ensure that once a supplier is added to the approved supplier list, its performance against the appraisal criteria is maintained. Supplier appraisal is one activity, which supply chain teams undertake that can have a real bottom line financial impact. Get it incorrect, and the business can find itself aligned with improper suppliers, ineffective goods, and impractical delivery schedules. Get it correct, and the organisation can be positioned with suppliers who are focused and tuned into the needs of the business.

As stated above, cost, quality, and delivery, sometimes referred to as the trinity of supplier evaluation form the basis on which vendors are selected and appraised (Hugo et al., 2006 & Vírseda-Gallego, 2011). However, the following can also be included in the above-mentioned assessment criteria: systems such as operational planning and control; e-commerce; value engineering; SCM; and motivation. Although vendor assessment and appraisal is a research subject on its own, this research study was primarily concerned with establishing whether organisations perform supplier appraisals and on what bases these appraisals impact on vendor selection, particularly in terms of organisational type and size. The findings derived from this part of the research may be found in chapter four of the study. The research now moves to how legislation impacts on procurement.

2.8 Generic vendor selection criteria

Much has been written about what motivates organisations to select a particular supplier. Knod and Schonberger (2001) state that the following represent generic supplier selection criteria:

- Overall financial health of the prospective supplier;
- The price of the product;
- Knowledge and competency of the sales force;
- Access to key personnel;
- Supplier design and development capabilities;
- Compatibility and standardisation of design protocols;
- Speed of supplier design and development processes particularly for custom-designed technology;
- Product and service quality;
- Flexibility and quick response times;
- Supplier reputation and trust; and
- Compatibility of information system components.

Although the aforementioned criteria are rather comprehensive, the following authors have uncovered other major vendor selection criteria/variables. The variables and respective authors are as follows:

- Past experience with the vendor, sizing specifications, completeness of last order, reliable delivery and return policy (Arbuthnot et al., 1993; Thiruchelvam & Tookey, 2011)
- Past experience with vendor, vendor return policy, reliable delivery, completeness of past orders, margin/makeup, reputation of vendor and minimum order requirements of the vendor (Arbuthnot et al., 1993; Richards, 2017).
- Unsold merchandise returns, stable sales force, complaints handling, new product availability, good reputation, product variety, no minimum order size, convenient delivery quantities, promotional advice, ease of ordering, trained salespeople, credit terms, promotional allowances, quantity discounts, cooperative advertising, list prices that permit adequate margins and overall promotional support (Brown & Purwar, 1980; Kumar et al., 2020).
- Prices, merchandise offered, vendor cooperation, promotional merchandise policies, distribution policies, specials, suitability, and availability of merchandise offered, shipping and inventory maintenance, size of orders, timeliness of delivery, profitability, potential mark-ups, pre-ticketing of merchandise and markdowns (Diamond & Pintel, 1997; Lee, 2009).

- Promotional assistance, profit, return policy, minimum order, technical assistance, recommendations of others, personal judgment, new product availability, marketing expertise, services provided, packaging, extensive product variety, reorder availability, financial condition of vendor, reputation of vendor, credit and finance, past experience with vendor, merchandise availability and suitability, product quality, distribution policy, fair prices, delivery reliability, novelty or innovative approach (Fiorito, 1990; Tsai et al., 2012).
- Good delivery, past experience with vendor, steady source of supply, product quality and fair prices (Francis & Brown, 1985; Schiele 2012).
- Quality, price, timeliness of delivery, warranty policy and service (Heinritz et al., 1991; Chen et al., 2014).
- Brand name and image, production abilities, price/mark-up, quality, fit, manufacturer's reputation, and cooperation (Hirschman, 1981; Tsai et al., 2022).
- Manufacturer's reputation, reputation of product, anticipated margin, estimated customer demand, reliability, and rapidity of delivery (Hirschman & Mazursky, 1982; Schätzle & Jacob, 2019).
- Merchandise quality, promotion, delivery, service, and price (Brata et al., 2017).
- Merchandise desirability, promotional aids, vendor reputation for reliability, deliveries, vendor distribution practices and bargaining position on prices and terms (National Retail Merchants Association, 2014).
- Profitability, margins, allowances, advertising support, product assortment, consumer evaluation, supplier reputation, services, reliability, competitiveness considerations, distributions factors, sales presentation, and tactical considerations (Nilsson & Host, 1987; Lambert & Burduroglu, 2000).
- Regularly maintained quality standards and fair and honest in dealings (Bevilacqua et al., 2006).
- Negotiations, reputation, price and promotion/selling history, mark-up, delivery, reputation, quality, service, country of origin and merchandise fissionability (Wagner et al., 1989; Dulmin & Mininno, 2003).
- Gross margin, supplier reputation, advertising support, potential sales volume, intuition, previous experience with vendor and previous product sales success (Woodside & Wilson 1985; Chen, 2011).

More recently researchers and authors such as Omurca (2013), Sultana et al. (2016), Stević (2017), and Noshad and Awasthi (2018) advocate that besides the comprehensive list of criteria, other parameters such as relationships, mutual-dependence, marriage of ERP technology, profitability of the vendor’s offering, proximity of the vendor’s plant, and the vendor’s use of procurement technology all play important role in terms of vendor appointment and support.

As this research study was concerned with uncovering as many pertinent vendor selection criteria as possible, the following criteria were investigated to uncover both generic and non-generic vendor selection criteria:

- Pricing-related parameters, which include the initial price of the offering and other issues such as the TCO, payback period, return on investment, net present value, internal rate of return, and other pricing issues such as cost base pricing, cost plus pricing, market-based pricing, competitive bidding, target- profit pricing, pricing based on perceived value, competitor parity pricing, tender-based pricing, discounts, and payment terms and bargaining position on prices and terms (Watjatrakul, 2014; Van Winter & Liebrenz-Himes, 2015).
- Toloo and Ertay (2014) declare that service quality parameters include the level of pre- and post-purchase service, ease of ordering, service, lead time management (time from ordering the good to its delivery to the buying organisational), reliable and timely delivery flexibility of the supplier in terms of buyer company requests, completeness of orders, and quick response times, minimum and maximum orders, technical support, past experience with the vendor, and warrantee policy.
- Achabou and Dekhili (2013) state that important selection criteria include product, brand, and related parameters, which include, non-variability of product quality (quality that meets customer expectations first time and all of the time), suitability of products in relation to the buying firm’s target market, product availability, product range, product depth, economies of scale, product functionality, product adaptability in terms of other applications, product reputation, sales-ability of the offering, brand name, brand image and brand equity and country of origin of product.
- Financial issues, including the financial stability of the supplier, cost structures, margins and mark-up, credit terms, discounts, and promotional allowances (retailers), and the profit potential of the offering are significant vendor selection criteria (Changalima et al., 2020).
- Taherdoost and Brard (2019) argue that the status of supplier, which includes reputation of the supplier, the size of the supplier and the location spread of the supplier (regional, national, and international) is an important vendor selection criterion.
- Marketing issues such as knowledge and capability of the salesperson, the stability of the sales force, promotional advice, and support advertising (retailers), estimated

customer demand, and salient selection criteria especially in terms of green procurement (Konys, 2019).

- Govindan et al. (2015) opine that besides price, R&D issues such as design, development and manufacturing capabilities, standardisation and compatibility of offerings, quickness of response times in terms of design and development for timely "get to market," technical ability, production capacity, and manufacturer cooperation from a production perspective are relevant selection criteria.
- Other related issues, including the preparedness of the supplier to carry inventory for the buyer, the relationship (friendship) between the salesperson and the buyer, reciprocity between the selling organisation and the buying organisation, proximity to the supplier, personal judgment, central buying, and professional buying on the selection process are key criteria on which to select vendors (Yarimoglu, 2014).
- Multiple selection criteria such as compliance issues in terms of product, process and quality standards and philosophies (for example ISOS 9000, Six Sigma, benchmarking, TQM); legislative compliance, cultural and ethical factors (BBBEE, green procurement, supplier's reputation concerning human rights, resource policies, safety, environment protection and supplier policies in terms of such compliance issues and policies pertaining to other matters related to the business) are, as believed by Ng (2008) essential selection criterion.
- Hajar (2016) advances that demographic and personal parameters such as race, gender, age, educational levels, status within the organisation and other related situations/issues impact on vendor selection.

Findings with regard to the above criteria are discussed in chapters four and five of this research study.

2.9 Classification of industrial products and industrial markets

Although there are thousands upon thousands of industrial products and services in the marketplace, industrial offerings, as suggested by Fontana and Nepomuceno (2017), fall into various main categories, and suggest that a multi-criteria decision model to perform products classification is used in such classification. These categories include:

- Raw materials (wood, steel, vegetables and so forth), which are used in the transformation process;
- Parts and spares (finished products that are needed for final assembly);
- Auxiliary equipment (used in the transformation process, for example, drills, and bits);

- Plants and major equipment (capital goods, for example, computers, buildings, multifunctional devices, and printers);
- Supplies (paper, detergents, tea, etc.); and
- Business and professional services (accounting, legal services, business consulting and events management).

Lehmann, and O'shaughnessy (1974) attest that unlike consumer-oriented purchasing, where the product that has been purchased is used for personal or household consumption, the demand for most B2B products is referred to as a ‘derived demand’, as organisations primarily buy products to convert them into end-user offerings (Zhang & Alston, 2018). Thus, the demand for a particular raw material, semi-completed or completed product, is derived from the demand for a particular product from internal and mostly external sources. For example, the amount of steel that a motorcar manufacturer needs per annum to produce vehicles, depends on the number of motorcars that are demanded by the end-user (consumers and firms) during a particular period of time. Because demand is derived, industrial marketers must carefully monitor demand patterns and changes in product preferences. Accurate forecasting plays an important role in this regard.

When demand for industrial products is inelastic it means that irrespective of whether the price of a particular product increases or decreases, the demand will roughly stay the same (Rezapour et al., 2011). For example, if the price of a component in a mainframe computer that sells for R800 000 increases from R20 to R25, the demand for such computers will not necessarily decrease, even though the component has increased in cost by 25%. From a marketing point of view, there are three factors to consider regarding the inelasticity of industrial demand (Mohr & Fourie, 2004). They are as follows:

- The position of the entire industry in contrast to that of the organisation;
- The time that has elapsed during the lifespan of the industrial product; and
- The relative importance of a specific product in the cost of the finished good.

Therefore, the greater the importance of the product, the greater the product is valued from a senior management point of view. The following section discusses the type of sale that is involved in B2B marketing, and the level of impact of such purchase on the buying firm.

2.10 Factors that affect buying behaviour

2.10.1 B2B buying behaviour

Blem (2001) asserts that selling to industrial buyers differs from selling to individual consumers about both the buying motives and the way in which the buying task is carried out. Blem (2001) further states that industrial buyers have one thing in common, namely "…they want satisfaction from their purchases even though oftentimes the product that has been purchased has been bought to be used by other persons or departments within the organisation".

Saunders (1997) suggests that the purpose of industrial purchasing (and its link in the supply chain) is to provide the interface between customers and suppliers to plan, obtain, store, and distribute, as necessary, supplies of materials, goods, and services to enable the organisation to satisfy its internal and external customers. Saunders (1997) enhances his definition by including the following major functions:

- "…To contribute to the formulation, communication and implementation of policies, strategies, and plan
- To contribute towards, to establish and to improve purchase related systems
- To establish a database of purchasing and to store information
- To establish and develop sources of supply
- To acquire supplies
- To provide goods and services for internal and external customers through movement via stores, distribution, and transport
- To monitor and control the purchasing, supply, storage, distribution, and transport chain
- To contribute to effective working."

The above definitions show that industrial marketing can be defined as the marketing of goods and services by an individual or an organisation to other individuals or organisations for purposes other than for personal consumption. B2B products include those that are used in the manufacture of other offerings, which become part of other products, which aid the normal operations of an organisation, or that are required for resale without any substantial change in form.

Like consumer behaviour and its associated buyer behaviour process, industrial behaviour also has its own buying behaviour process. To comprehend the complex nature of the process, a framework for the analysis of its phases must be made clear. A definition of the buying process could be as Wind and Thomas (1980:242) postulate "…from the time at which an organisational need arises for a product or service, to the purchase decision and its subsequent evaluation, a complex myriad of activities can take place." It is thus a process which involves separate steps, stages, and or phases.

2.10.2 Other factors

Hutt and Speh (2007), Alejandro et al. (2011), and Chavan et al. (2020) found the factors that affect the industrial buying process, which include the following:

- Buying situation: Whether it is a new task buy, a straight buy or modified re-buy. A new task buy originates from a need, which did not exist before. This buying situation is the most complex and the most difficult of the three, since there is little or no relevant experience, which can be drawn upon in terms of alternative solutions and to search for alternative suppliers. More people, therefore, tend to be involved in new task buying and sellers, therefore, must be more informative and professional to close sales in this regard. A straight buy takes place when a repetitive or a continual need is dealt with on a routine basis. It is thus a routine, low-involvement purchase with minimal information needs and with very little consideration for alternatives. A good example of a straight buy (also known as a straight re-buy) is the procurement of photocopy paper. A modified re-buy is normally less critical and less time consuming than a new buy. In a modified re-buy a customer's desire to change something in the original good or service. The change could be as little as colour change through to an organisation wishing to purchase a more powerful mainframe computer. Because the two parties are familiar with each other and credibility has already been established, the seller can concentrate on the specifics of the modification;
- Personal factors: Buyer's personality, perceived role set, motivation and so forth;
- Interpersonal factors: Different roles existing in a buying centre (users, buyers, influencers, deciders, and gatekeepers);
- Organisational factors: Task, structure, technology, and people;
- Inter-organisational factors: Task orientated objective, price, services, quality, and assurance of supply; and
- Environmental factors: Physical, technological, economic, political, legal, and cultural.

Although there is commonality between industrial and consumer buying, different methods and activities are used when making a B2B purchase. These differences are, in the opinion of Matthijssens and Rijcke (1982) and Klimecka-Tatar (2018):

- Where product selection in a consumer context mainly hedges on product functionality and price, in a B2B situation other issues are important, namely, the description of the offering, its technical specifications and attributes, product quality in relation to price, size and weight, product compatibility, standardisation and other related factors
- Inspection as certain products must be inspected before they are bought. These are usually expensive in nature and could be of strategic value to the organisation that is buying it. Oftentimes consumers buy products from catalogues and, therefore, do not physically inspect the product;
- Sampling, which involves taking a sample of a particular product and then testing/assessing it to see if it has any relevance in terms of the organisation's needs? Consumers seldom take samples before purchasing an item; and
- Negotiation, which is present when the buyer negotiates with the seller. In many cases the buyer negotiates with the seller on a base price and oftentimes the negotiations are based on a contract that has been established between the buying organisation and the seller. In most consumer purchases little negotiation takes place. Oftentimes people buy products without even speaking to the salesperson.

It may be noted from the aforementioned that buying methods and activities differ in terms of consumer and organisation procurement (Pawłowski & Pastuszak, 2016). The following section explores the key differences between industrial and consumer behaviour.

2.11 Business and consumer buyer behaviour

Van Weele (2003), Grewal et al. (2015), Lilien (2016), and Steward et al. (2019) contend that there appears to be major differences between consumer marketing on the one hand, and industrial or B2B marketing on the other. Industrial marketers deal with large companies, governmental organisations and institutions that require their product to feed, support and maintain their primary processes (transformation process) and their supporting processes. Consumer marketers face individuals who require immediate satisfaction of their needs. Therefore, overt buying behaviour in the business market differs significantly from consumer buying behaviour in many ways. This is a result of key differences in the products that are purchased, the markets and their various idiosyncrasies and buyer and seller relationships. The differences are shown in the Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: Main differences between industrial and consumer markets

Aspects	Industrial (business) market	Consumer market
Buying objective	Mainly to enable production	Personal need satisfaction
Buying motive	Mainly rational	Also, emotional
Purchasing function	Professional buying (mainly men)	Consumers, mainly women
Decision making	Many persons with much discussion	Often impulsive without consulting others
Characteristics	Intense negotiation interaction	Often with little negotiation or interaction
Product and market knowledge	Extensive	Limited
Order size	Often large	Mostly small
Demand	Derived demand and may fluctuate strongly	Autonomous demand and may fluctuate
Price elasticity	Rather inelastic	Rather elastic
Number of customers	Mostly limited	Very large
Spread of customers	Sometimes large geographic	Large geographic spread
Branding	Identified by corporate brand	Identified by individual brand
Buying power	High in that the buyer has a strong influence over price, product design and other dimensions	Little and therefore has no direct influence of price and design
Channel length	Short	Long as it includes wholesalers, retailers, etc.
Contractual penalties	Yes	No
Demand for service	Extremely high	High
Dependability of supply	Very highly valued	Highly valued
Direct purchase	Yes	Increasing as a result of the Internet
Length of negotiation period	Almost always extensive	Usually, short
Length of product lifecycle	Short	Longer
Reciprocity agreements	Sometimes	No
Supplier loyalty	Often low	High

Source: Adapted from Matthijssens and Rijcke (1982)

It may be noted from Table 2.5 that there are considerable differences in buyer behaviour between consumers and industrial buyers. A major difference between consumers and industrial buyers is the relationship that they have with the seller, the interaction between the two parties, and the mutual interdependency between buyer and seller.

Unlike the consumer sector, B2B markets are characterised by long lasting relationships between the buying and selling parties. Consequently, B2B marketers must regard a market as a network of relationships. Their marketing strategies should be aimed at extending, investing in, and continuously maintaining these networks. Therefore, B2B marketing and professional purchasing require the active management of relationships within complex organisation networks (van Weele, 2003:29-30). The purchasing behaviour of industrial buyers is discussed below.

2.11.1 Purchase behaviour of industrial buyers

Noordewier et al. (1990), Leonidou (2005), and Hutt and Speh (2007) assert that there are factors that influence the purchase behaviour of industrial buyers. Some do not have a dramatic influence on buyer behaviour, while others affect purchase behaviour in a major way. The factors, according to Hutt and Spech (2007), are as follows:

- Environment factors such as the physical environment (from where the organisation obtains its limited resources), the technical environment (the better the technology the better the benefits that may be derived from such technology), the economic environment (interest rates, inflation, exchange rates, the price of fuel and so on), the legal and political environment (laws of the land and political harmony or strife), the cultural environment (particularly the culture within the organisational and that of its customers), the competitive environment (what your competitors are doing in the market place) and the international environment (local and offshore customer demands).
- Organisational factors such as: technological expertise and to what extent the organisation relies on its suppliers to provide such expertise); organisational goals and objectives (if the organisation's key goal is to reduce costs, then a seller of an expensive machine would have to have a strong argument in order to convince an organisational buyer to purchase his equipment); organisational philosophy (if an organisation has a long-term view of the market, then product quality might supersede the importance of product price): internal politics (if the internal politics is strong then one must be sure that the person that one is speaking to has the power to make a particular purchasing decision), and organisational structure (if the structure is based on organisational functions then the purchasing might be done at functional level, for example, HR, finance, marketing, etc.).
- Interpersonal factors, as many people could be playing various roles in the buying process. These include the initiators (the person who first suggests making the

purchase), the influencers (people who influence the buying decision), and the gatekeepers (those who regulate the flow of information, the deciders (those who have the formal power to select a product and a particular vendor), the purchasers (those who negotiate the purchase) and the user (the user of the product).

- Individual factors, which translate into the personal characteristics of the individual who makes the purchase or those people who are involved in the purchase centre. This could include the person’s income, position, education level, experience, age personality and underwriting level (the level up to which the person is allowed to buy). This could influence the product, which is purchased, the buying situation and whether the purchase is a new task, modified buy or straight re-buy.

The concept of purchasing traditionally encompasses the process of buying (Gelderman and Van Weele, 2003). Sjoerdsma and Van Weele (2015) put forward that purchasing is the activity of: obtaining from external sources all goods, services, capabilities, and knowledge which are necessary for running, maintaining, and managing the company’s primary and support activities at the most favourable conditions”. Steward et al. (2019) opine that the B2B buying process is evolving as technology becomes more widely used.

2.11.2 Purchase decision-making process

Ćorić et al. (2017) postulate that the typology of buying situations explains that the degree of uncertainty and risk that buyers deal with strongly depend on the type of purchasing situation. This is reflected in the way that the decision-making process evolves. The higher the sum of money involved in the transaction and the higher the technical complexity, the higher the perceived risk will be, and the more departments and persons will become involved in the decision-making. The involvement of these persons, as well as their role will vary in each step of the purchasing process model. They are sometimes referred to as the decision-making unit (DMU) (Webster & Wind, 1972; van der Valk et al., 2005). Considering the complex nature of many purchasing decisions, it is essential that the decision-making process should be well organised. Many problems with supply and suppliers are caused by a lack of organisation within the DMU (van Weele, 2003). In the section that follows, the issues of cost reduction and technological innovation are considered.

2.11.3 Purchase, cost reduction and technological innovation

Van Weele (2003), Kalaitz et al. (2019), and Singh et al. (2020) suggest that efficient procurement leads to cost savings and the improvement of the organisation's overall competitive position in the marketplace. van Weele (2003) report that these cost savings occur as a result of the standardisation of product, the reduction of inventory, product and process innovation, improved product quality (reduction in returns and repairs), effective production lead times and increased flexibility of down- scaling and the up-scaling of products." Often these savings turn out to be more substantial than direct savings (as a result of efficiencies and effectiveness). Mantrala and Albers (2022) propound that additional cost savings can be enjoyed with the use of the Internet and e-procurement. For these savings to accumulate, better integration and cooperation should exist between functional departments within the organisation. Hence, many organisations are confronted with diminishing growth opportunities but require increased turnover and an increase in market share; firms have come to realise that such growth can only be realised at the expense of the competition. As a result, organisations have experienced decreased margins owing to lower selling prices, which have caused the power to shift from the seller to the buyer.

Secondly, as the pressure to increase sales becomes greater, so too will the costs of goods that are sold increase, which could influence the co-ordination of purchasing requirements; integration of purchasing in logistics; reciprocity agreements; total quality control and JIT production; e-procurement; and environmental issues. Managing the purchasing and supply function requires a thorough understanding of the purchasing processes that take place within the organisational (van Weele, 2003). All the above have led to the emergence of professional procurement, which is discussed below.

2.11.4 Buying decision influence variables

Van Weele (2003) suggests that the ideas of Webster and Wind (1972) should be adopted when making buying decisions. The authors distinguish between task and non-task variables. Task variables are the responsibilities and competencies that are assigned to the persons who make decisions. Non-task variables are related to the individual's personality like risk averseness or the handling of conflict (individual factors). These variables are not only identified on the level of the individual but also on that of the organisation e.g., organisational factors (for example, cultural aspects with buying procedures in an informal environment), and the level of the company in its environment (for example, imposing ISO standards on suppliers, green procurement, etc.). These factors form an important aspect of the research study, as the researcher wishes to determine how psychological, social, organisational, and environmental factors and nuances affect the buying process. Preuss and Walker (2011) claim that from an environmental perspective, sustainable procurement is hampered by a combination of individual factors; organisational factors; small group adaptation processes; adaptation processes within the organisation; and external adaptation processes between organisations.

Sheth (1973) shares this perspective and provides an understanding of the large differences, which exist between organisations in the field of organisational buying behaviour. Van Weele (2003) and Pandey and Mookerjee (2018) state the importance of social, psychological, and emotional factors, which affect purchasing decisions and suggests that it cannot be overstated. Furthermore, he states, as was previously stated in Chapter One, that these aspects of purchasing decision making (psychographics) have gained little interest from researchers up to now.

2.12 The emergence of professional purchasing

Bacon and Pugh (2004) and Chang et al. (2011) suggest that after the end of the Second World War, the rapid growth of national markets led to the development of global markets, which resulted in companies encountering fierce external competition, which demanded improved quality of products and more competitive pricing. To counter this, according to the aforementioned authors, the demands were met in the following ways:
By improving quality, reducing costs, and streamlining manufacturing and other operations;

- By reducing the costs of raw materials, goods, and services and by encouraging suppliers to reduce their prices
- By using SCM techniques to drive costs and waste down throughout the supply chain;
- By 'professionalizing' the procurement function. By moving from a support function to a management function, procurement has become an area, which is 'manned' by highly skilled and educated professionals.

Van Weele (2003) and Taherdoost and Brard (2019) witness that to comprehend the procurement process, one would need to understand the reasons why organisations buy and then comprehend the variables that impact on the buying process. Van Weele further posits that additional data, which pertain to these variables are the "…complexity of the organisational needs; the complexity of the offering; the price of the product, the degree of risk in relation to such price, the strategic value of the offering as seen by management; whether the offering is new or whether this is a repurchase; the role of the purchasing department in the actual purchase and the role of functional areas in the purchase process". Kennedy and Deeter-Schmelz (2001) maintain that with increasing online purchasing activities, the future role of the sales force in B2B marketing is uncertain, hence the reason why it is important for organisations to not only know what they are purchasing but from who they or buying, as the vital link between the organisations (salespeople) could be replaced by remote salespeople. This is concurred by Ulaga and Kohli (2018) who submit that the role of a traditional salesperson will morph into a solutions salesperson that will focus on reducing uncertainty and fostering adaptiveness.

2.12.1 Types of procurement decisions

Lehman and O'Shaughnessy (1974) and Inman (2009) suggest that there are several characteristics that dictate the type of decision that is used when making a purchase. The various decision types are as follows:

- Decisions that apply to routine products (day-to-day products require little decision making)
- Decisions pertaining to complex problems that would require user training (machinery, computers, and other forms of technology)
- Decisions that relate to products whose technical functioning are uncertain (technical decisions that could require specialised technical input and expertise)
- Decisions, which concern products that can result in internal problems.

As more adaptation is required, more functional disciplines could be involved in the decision-making process which in turn might make the process more complex. Fisher (1970) indicates two aspects that determine the decision-making process, namely product complexity and commercial uncertainty. Fisher's typology of buying decisions is summarised in Table 2.6 and Table 2.7.

Table 2.6: Fisher's topography of buying decisions (product complexity/uncertainty)

Low product uncertainty and complexity	**High product uncertainty and complexity**
Standard	Customised product
Technically simple	Complex technology
Existing product	New product
Repeat purchase	First-time purchase
Easy to install	Difficult to install
No or little after sales service required	Requires close after sales service

Source: Fisher (1970)

It may be noted from Table 2.6 that when there is low product uncertainty and complexity, there will be less management intervention in the purchasing process.

2.12.2 Commercial uncertainty

The level of commercial uncertainty will determine how much management intervention and involvement there will be during the decision-making process. Naturally, there will be greater management involvement if the product is complex and if there is high product commercial uncertainty. Table 2.7 examines the aspect of commercial uncertainty.

Table 2.7: Typography of buying decisions (commercial uncertainty)

Low commercial uncertainty	**High commercial uncertainty**
Limited investment	High investment
Small order size	Large order size
Short term impact and small impact on financial results	Long-term impact and extensive impact on financial results
No organisational adaptation required	Extensive organisational adaptation required

Source: Fisher (1970)

It may be seen in Table 2.7 that the lower the level of commercial uncertainty and the less complex the process, the less management involvement there will be in the purchasing process, whereas the reverse applies when there is high commercial uncertainty. In such case there will be greater management involvement in making a procurement decision. This leads to the discussion on centralised buying.

2.13 Centralised buying

2.13.1 Benefits derived therefrom

Centralised buying refers to the centralization of all buying decisions and activities into one central buying office or division. Many organisations, large and small, pursue centralised buying in the hope of achieving the following benefits (Hutt & Speh, 2007):

- Economies of scale;
- Purchasing expertise, which leads to specialisation;
- Administrative efficiencies;
- Volume discounts; and
- Optimal use of resources and process efficiencies.

2.13.2 Centralised buying disadvantages

Moore (2007) submits that centralised buying brings with it disadvantages such as missed local opportunities, the loss of local knowledge and the loss of control over supplier performance. As a result, organisational conflicts often occur owing to a difference in functional area and subunit goals, inter-department preference and finally the lack of department and divisional inclusion. The cost of some purchases on a corporate contract may be higher than what a decentralised unit can attain in a local setting (say at branch level) and the same could apply to the quality of the good or component. As a result, the benefits of centralization are highly dependent on economies of scale, which is the primary reason for central buying in the first place.

Although the disadvantages of centralised buying seem to outweigh the advantages, many organisations are utilising centralised buying, which naturally impacts on local branch procurement and its relationship with local suppliers (Banerjee, 2011). This is further exacerbated by the fact that often organisations buy on a central basis but expect their branch offices to sell the organisation’s offerings in an area where they do not support local industry and commerce (Fattahi et al., 2015). This could have a negative impact on the relationship between the local branch office and its clients in the area. The next matter that is discussed is the issue of the variables that impact on the buying decision.

2.14 Purchase approaches

2.14.1 The approach of Hakansson, Johansson, Wootz and Ford

The first of three of the above-mentioned authors, namely Hakansson et al. (1982) describe the interaction process between buyers and sellers in terms of the following characteristics, namely, the number of times that the parties make contact, the properties of object of exchange that is the product, the degree in which the process is formalised (records/rules/regulations); and characteristics of parties involved.

These elements form the basis of the transaction process in terms of physical exchange. The interaction process can also be studied from a social exchange perspective, as in which way does the process take place, how do organisations achieve a particular interaction and under what conditions can this social process evolve? The time aspect of interaction will increase once the parties will get to know one another and develop mutual trust and build a relationship.

The third aspect is that of mutual adaptation. The interaction allows for a clear understanding of positioning and is expressed by the adjustment of the supplier's organisation to the client's organisation becoming strategic partners by optimally limiting activities to those that fit the suppliers marketing policy and production system and the customer's requirements. The supplier can further attempt to change the customer's preferences and perceptions by reducing transaction and market uncertainty. These types of uncertainty will determine the buyer-seller relationship over time and the supplier is, therefore, well advised to limit himself as much as possible to interactions that do not fit his and his customer's needs optimally.

Ford (1980) emphasises that the core to inter-organisational success lies in the relationships between organisations. He further asserts that vendors should attempt to forge long-standing relationships with their industrial customers. The view is that mutual dependency increases between the parties as the permanence of the relationship increases. The relationship also acts as a barrier of entry against the vendor's competitors. Ford suggests that relationships develop in three stages: firstly, it begins with first contact, and then it develops into a closer relationship and, lastly, the relationship becomes institutionalised. The vendor's account manager must, therefore, attempt to build customer relationships that are long in duration and mutually rewarding. The network approach is now examined.

2.14.2 The network approach in relation to purchase and supply

The network approach goes beyond the interaction approach. Authors who support this approach, namely Harkanson (1982) and Wynstra (1988) are convinced that the dyadic relationship between supplier, a manufacturer and a retailer is not only influenced by the characteristics of the product but also by the relationship between organisations and organisations that are part of the supplier network (Blesa, 2003; Svensson, 2004; Ross et al., 2006; Bigne & Roseira.et al., 2010; Ku et al., 2022). Harkanson (1982) and Wynstra (1988) further propose that effective purchasing and effective management of supplier relationships require a thorough understanding of cost structures and the balance of power in the entire buyer-supplier network. Based on shared information, both supplier and seller can develop an understanding of cost drivers and opportunities for cost reduction and improvement of business processes. As both organisations experience this process over a period of time, relationships could become more intensive and co-operative, and as a result, it could lead to better supply chain integration. This could lead to mutually beneficial relationships between both the buying or organisation and its vendors, which in turn could lead to an effective buyer-supplier relationship

2.15 Purchase relationship factors

2.15.1 Buyer-supplier relationship

Ukalkar (2000) and Terpend et al. (2008) conjecture that buyer-supplier relationships are becoming a more important determinant of competitive ability and deserve more attention than they oftentimes receive. Ukalkar (2000) continues by suggesting that building partnerships with suppliers is becoming an explicit part of the procurement strategy, for both small and large organisations.

Strategic partnerships are the most valuable yet difficult types of relationships, as the partners have a broad understanding of each other's needs and visions and share important common values. For such a relationship to survive, there must be a high level of mutual trust with open information sharing, transparency, and the concern for mutual well-being. Deming (1981), the American consultant and statistician (1900 – 1993), said business should "…not be appointed on the terms of price alone since it not only interferes with the actual decision- making but also impairs continuous improvement". He continues by claiming that the result of long-term relationships translates into better than better quality, and lower costs." Therefore, there should be a move from a traditional buyer-supplier relationship to that of a strategic partnership, the former of which is fraught with:

- Having no long-term procurement strategy;
- Having no consequential commitment from suppliers;
- Erratic order and delivery schedules;
- Administrative delays;
- Poor communication between engineering, production, procurement and so forth and between the organisation and its suppliers;
- Putting one supplier up against another; and
- The lack of a cross-functional approach.

Ukalkar (2000) suggests that when forming strategic partnerships, there are ten critical successful factors in such a partnership. They are as follows:

- There has to be a positive attitude from the onset about the partnership and that such partnership requires an open-minded managerial approach with a clear strategic evaluation of the long-term and short-term advantages sought and transfers offered. The acid test is whether both parties' needs are being satisfied or no.
- There has to be commitment from both entities to make the partnership work.
- There has to be mutual trust, and unless this happens, the depth of conviction will fall away, and the adversarial relationship will return.
- There has to be effective two-way communication as the inability or unwillingness to listen to each other's ideas and needs will affect the magnitude of the relationship.
- Coordination in the partnership is essential, as without coordination the relationship cannot work and will result in a loss of money, time, and people.
- Motivation is what makes the supplier do something that adds value and what makes him or her do that 'little bit extra.' Therefore, the seller (vendor) and the buyer should be motivated to make the relationship work so that there is a win-win for all the parties involved in the equation.

- Expecting a partnership to work perfectly all the time is unrealistic. Conflicts occur and the way in which such conflicts are managed dictates the success or failure of the enterprise. For a partnership to work, therefore, it must not be bogged down by adversarial relationships, distrust, and conflict.
- Participation in partnership is the extent to which buyer and seller (supplier) are jointly engaged in planning and goal setting. Therefore, when one partner's actions or inaction influence the ability of the other the need for participation increases. Participation, therefore, facilitates mutual activity to realise a joint vision.
- For the partnership to work, culture should change and be managed. A positive cultural change that seeks to satisfy the needs of all the people involved in the relationship should be instilled so that the partnership can blossom.
- There should be continuous improvement so that the relationship between the vendor and the buyer can be used to obtain a competitive advantage for both parties in the marketplace.

If all the above factors can be addressed a numbered benefits can be enjoyed, which are displayed in Table 2.8.

Table 2.8: Benefits and risks of a strategic partnership

Benefit for the supplier	**Benefit for the buyer**
Effective R&D to satisfy the partner's needs more effectively	Improved quality and lower costs
Better capacity planning	Reduced assembly and buying costs
Price and production stability	Ideas for new products and product extension from the vendor
Customer satisfaction	Reduced time to market
Risk to the supplier	**Risks to the buyer**
Pressure to improve	Increased dependence on the supplier
Decreased autonomy	Need for cultural changeless supplier Competition
Increased speed and pressure to Perform	Risk of information sharing

Source: Author (2022)

It may be noted from Table 2.8 that the advantages outweigh the disadvantages when it comes to forming strategic partnerships with one's suppliers. However, when establishing this form of relationship, it is important to set clear priorities and goals, spell out mutual expectations, instil a culture of mutual trust through transparency and communication, see problems as mutual opportunities, focus on common dominators, and finally help each other to achieve mutual goals.

From a buyer’s point of view, the buyer should be sensitive to the supplier’s goals and create a clear vision and strategy for the partnership. The buyers should also keep the supplier up to date about market and internal matters and, as importantly get to know the supplier well before entering partnerships. Finally, the buyer should establish an SLA so that the supplier can be measured against agreed-upon performance criteria and also be taken to terms, should the supplier not fulfil its obligations to the buying firm (Cousins et al., 2008; Sillanpää et al., 2015).

When selecting a supplier to be a partner, the buying firm must endeavour to ensure that the supplier firm has a compatible value system and culture (Yik et al., 2012). The buying firm must also ensure that the supplier can contribute to the organisation’s success and that it has the same vision and commitment in terms of quality. From a relationship-longevity point of view, the buyer must also ensure that the suppler is financially strong, has a sound technical base, has a reputation for fair dealings and quality service, and can deploy resources to meet future challenges. As timely and reliable delivery is important to the buying firm, it must endeavour to ensure that the supplier has the required skills to provide quality products and services and that the supplier is willing to take full responsibility for their actions and for the actions of their employees. The buying firm must also ensure that the supplier has the same commitment as the buying firm when it comes to satisfying customer needs so that a win-win can be enjoyed by both parties. It must also instil a good working relationship from top management and down to floor level, which ensures that the supplier understands the buying organisation’s objectives and vision and is able to continuously improve in core areas to realise its vision.

When setting up the partnership relationship, the buying firm should appreciate and understand the need for the partnership relationship and its importance from a strategic point of view. It must define the requirements that are being sought in terms of appointing key suppliers (for example capacity, technical know-how and so on), prepare partnership contracts, and SLAs so that each party understands its obligations to one another and, finally, the buying firm must perform regular supplier analyses in terms of supplier performance in relation to the service standards that have been mutually agreed upon. It must be remembered that it is up to the buying firm to originate the partnership relationship and therefore, it should be selective with whom it forms strategic relationships, as an incorrect supply partner could harm the business and the buying firm's relationship with its customers. This is supported by Lambert and Knemeyer (2004) argue that partnerships are only justified if they stand to yield better results than the two firms could achieve on their own.

2.15.2 Summary of buying motives

It may be noted from the aforementioned points that most researchers believe that the forging of mutually beneficial relationships foster a better atmosphere in which both the vendor and the buying organisation can conduct their business. The question, however, is how one can go about this, as oftentimes the needs of sellers and buyers are fraught with conflicts of interest. For example, on the one hand the buying organisation may desire high levels of product and service quality, non-variability of quality, reliability, flexibility, communication, access to senior organisational officials and, most importantly, low prices. Conversely, the supplier understands that the higher he or she pushes product quality, service quality, organisational flexibility, and communication, the greater such efforts will impact on his or her costs. To accommodate the increase in cost, he or she would have to charge more for the offering so that these costs may be met in some way. Hence, the seller can easily price themselves out of the market. So where does the mythical right price lie so that the needs of both parties can be satisfied?

Many researchers have expounded on the advantages of forging long-term relationships with a few instead of many suppliers. Although the researcher agrees with these sentiments, on what basis are such vendors being selected?

Yes, it is imperative for vendors to climb the ladder of the buyer-supplier loyalty ladder from being a mere a supplier to a firm that is recognised as a preferred and even a sole supplier, but how does one achieve such status? This can only be achieved when the seller provides cost-effective and high-quality responsive and reliable service.

The next question should also be answered. Does it mean that there are generic buying motives for all forms of businesses? In other words, would a small/micro business base its buying decision on the same basis as a large financial institution such as a leading and internationally based life insurer? Are there similarities in terms of such motives, or are small firms different to medium-sized firms and their larger competitors? Although one could make pre-research assertions that there could be some similarities, the researcher maintains that the answer to this question can only be derived from research. Finally, are buying motives industry-specific or do all organisations, irrespective of the industries that they are involved in, behave in a similar way? It is understandable that every organisation may have different needs and, therefore, require different products or services. The question, however, that should be answered is do they share similar motives in terms of vendor selection? It is hoped that the findings of this research study will bring greater clarity to this perplexing problem. To further understand the situation, it is important to see how the various organisation types have been classified. This is discussed in the following section.

2.16 Procurement and the value chain

To better understand the activities through which a firm develops a competitive advantage and creates shareholder value, it is useful, according to Porter (1985), to separate the business system into a series of value-generating activities referred to as the value chain. In his 1985 book Competitive Advantage, Porter introduced a generic value chain model that comprises a sequence of activities, which is found to be common to a wide range of firms. Porter identified primary and support activities, as shown in the diagram depicted below.

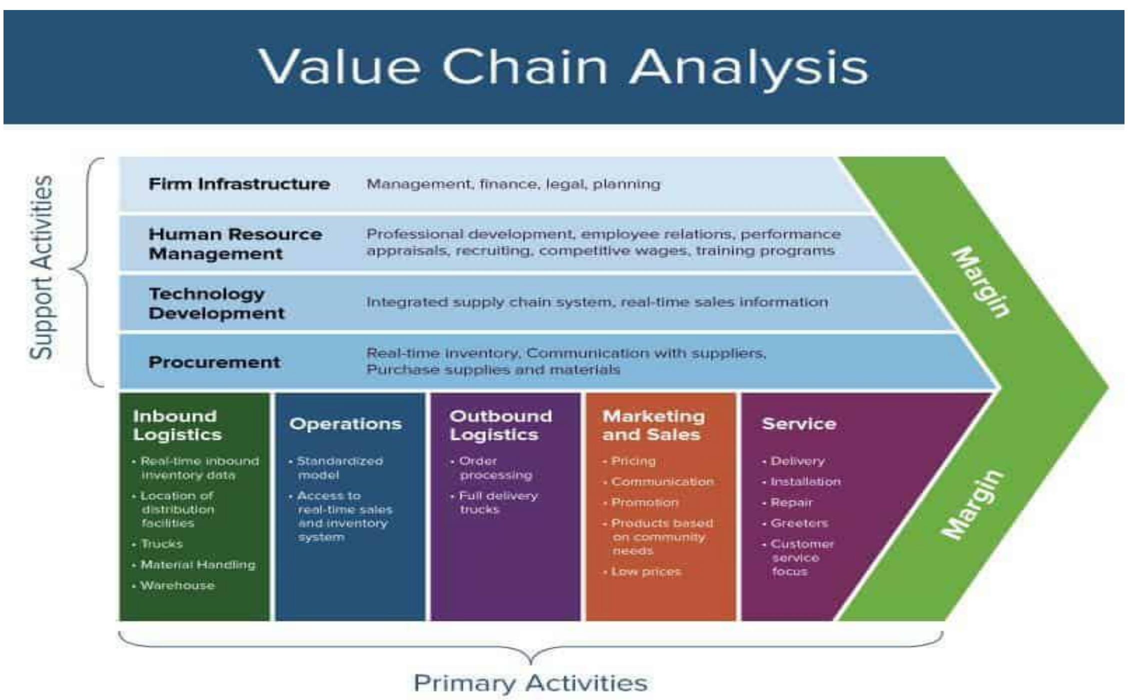

Figure 2.1: Porter's Generic Value Chain Model
Source: Smartsheet (2017)

The goal of these activities is to offer the customer a level of value that exceeds the cost of the activities, thereby resulting in a profit margin. The primary value chain activities are (Koc & Bozdag, 2017):

- Inbound logistics activities such as receiving and warehousing material, parts and components and distributing of these to manufacturing/operations when they are required;
- Operations, which is the process of transforming inputs into finished products and services;
- Outbound logistics, which includes warehousing and distribution of finished goods
- Marketing and sales, which is concerned with the identification of customer needs and the generation of sales; and
- Services, which involves the support of customers once products and services have been sold to them.

These primary activities, as per Kumar and Rajeev (2016), are supported by:

- The infrastructure of the firm, organisational structure, control systems and company culture;
- Human resources management such as employee recruiting, hiring, training, development, and compensation;
- Technology development, which comprises of technologies to support value-adding activities; and
- Procurement, which are purchase inputs such as materials, supplies and equipment.

The firm's margin or profit then depends on its effectiveness in performing these activities efficiently so that the amount that the customer is willing to pay for the products exceeds the cost of the activities in the value chain. It is in these activities that a firm has an opportunity to generate superior value. A competitive advantage may be achieved by reconfiguring the value chain to provide lower costs or better differentiation (Koc & Boztag, 2017).

The value chain model is a useful analysis tool to define a firm's core competencies and activities in which it can pursue a competitive advantage (Nicovich et al., 2007). The activities include creating a cost advantage by better understanding costs and squeezing them out of the value-adding activities, and differentiation by focusing on those activities associated with core competencies and capabilities to perform them better than the competitors (Simatupang et al., 2017).

The question that arises when one examines the aforementioned organisation functions is whether the model is as still appropriate today as it was in 1985 because for example financial management was not included in the original model (Rocchi & Ferrero-Muñoz, 2014). The researcher believes that procurement has morphed from buying (a transactional activity) to purchasing, to procurement and, finally, to strategic sourcing: the latter which is an activity that can best be placed under the banner of inbound logistics. In other words, the researcher claims that it is not a support function, but rather a value- add function that can reduce costs, increase sales (the production of quality products through quality procurement), increase profitability, reduce lead and manufacturing times, improve product design and as importantly is quicker. Hofbauer (2018) shares this view and suggest that the evolution of procurement’s tasks derives the relevance of procurement for value creation based on statistical data.

Basheka and Mugabira (2008) indicate that as global marketing becomes more common place, and as products, processes and organisations become more complex and integrated, procurement, will be seen as a value-add primary activity that is essential for the longevity of an organisation that wishes to stay profitable in the long term. The fact too that as legislation (BBBEE and green procurement) and supplier development becomes more entrenched in business, so too will procurement (strategic sourcing) be viewed as an organisational functional area outside of the logistics environment, and more relevantly as an important part of the financial functional area of a business (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019). The former researchers (Kakwezi & Nyeko, 2019) suggest that procurement efficiency and procurement effectiveness of the purchasing function are measures of procurement performance as well as that of organisational performance. This is already evidenced in the USA, where Chief Procurement Officers/Directors is represented on the board of large multi-national enterprises.

2.17 Size of business in the context of the research study

As stated previously in this research study, the researcher wished to establish the procurement criteria for small, medium, and large organisations. du Toit et al. (2007) identify qualitative criteria such as the number of employees, sales volume, the value of assets and the size of the firm's market share are the four main quantitative criteria that define the size of a business.

2.17.1 Small (micro) sized businesses

Ogonu and Okejim (2018), opine that in the National Small Business Act 26 of 2003, micro-businesses in different sectors (from manufacturing to the retail sector) are defined as businesses with five or fewer employees and a turnover of R100 000. Very small businesses employ between one and twenty employees and small businesses employ twenty-one to fifty employees. The upper limit for turnover in a small business range from R1 million in the agricultural sector to R13 million in the catering industry. Accommodation and other trade sector players, as well as the manufacturing sector generate more turnover with the wholesale trade sector enjoying a turnover of approximately R32 million. Examples of small business include restaurants, small retail outlets, small manufacturing concerns, and so forth.

2.17.2 Medium-sized businesses

du Toit et al. (2007) specify that medium-sized businesses usually employ up to two hundred people (one hundred in the agricultural sector) and the maximum turnover varies from R5 million (agriculture) to R51 million in the manufacturing sector and, finally, R64 million in the wholesale trade sector. A comprehensive definition of an SME (small to medium enterprise) is a firm that has fewer than two hundred employees, a turnover of less than R64 million, capital assets of less than R10 million, and direct management involvement by the owners of the business.

2.17.3 Large-sized businesses

Large-sized businesses have a turnover in excess of R64 million, more than two hundred employees and assets greater than R10 million (Ogonu & Okejim, 2018).

2.17.4 Summary of the size of businesses

In terms of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, the following data pertains to the various sizes of organisations:

- Survivalist, micro and very small (share of GDP approximately 24% and 39% of the labour force in South Africa);
- Small to medium enterprises that employ roughly twenty to two hundred and fifty employees and are responsible for thirty-two percent of the GDP in South Africa and twenty-seven percent of the labour force; and
- Large firms (more than two hundred and fifty employees) that are responsible for forty-four percent of the GDP and thirty-four percent of the labour force in South Africa.

As there are a number of variables in terms of the characteristics and attributes of various organisation sizes, this research study is based on the following organisational parameters as suggested by Ogonu and Okejim (2018):

- Small micro businesses, which are organisations that employ less than twenty employees, have a turnover of less than R1 million, operate on a local regional basis, have assets less than R2 million and are operated and managed by its owners.
- Medium businesses, which are organisations that have fewer than two hundred employees, but more than twenty, have an annual turnover of more than R1 million, but less than R64 million, have capital assets in excess of R2 million, but less than R10 million and, finally, have direct managerial involvement by its owners.
- Large businesses, which have a strong regional, national, and oftentimes an international footprint, employ more than two hundred employees, have an annual turnover of more than R64 million, have capital assets greater than R10 million and are operated by a professional management team. These organisations would be involved in a variety of industries and include public companies, quasi-governmental organisations, and government (local and national) departments.

Although the above definitions might conflict with the definitions proposed by other authors and researchers on the subject, the author believes that, for the purpose of this research study, the above-mentioned definitions suffice in terms of the objectives of the study. This leads to the conceptual framework, which relates to the study.

2.18 Strategic sourcing and procurement

Saxton (2006) discloses that strategic sourcing is the process or activity of determining long-term supply requirements, finding sources to fulfil organisational needs, negotiating the purchase agreements, and managing the supplier's performance; focuses on developing the most effective relationship with the right suppliers, to ensure that the right price is paid and that lifetime product costs are minimised. It also assesses whether services or processes would provide better value if they were outsourced to specialist organisations (Apte et al., 2011). The strategic sourcing process as proposed by Saxton (2006) is as follows:

- Map and measure how the current procurement and sourcing strategy works (if there is one).
- Use the 80/20% Parerto rule to identify key products and services and their suppliers.
- Explore the potential of a strategic relationship with existing and potential partners. This widening of the net may be critical as some existing suppliers may be appropriate under the current rules but inferior in terms of a strategic sourcing relationship.
- Collectively, determine the terms of long-term relationship agreements with the suppliers selected as partners with enduring benefits in mind. Ensure that the total utility from each supplier improves the competitive nature of the supply chain.
- Determine the mutuality of benefits for all.
- Identify risks in the relationship to proactively manage them and ensure continuity and stability.
- Build alternative supplier contingency plans if there are risk factors beyond the party's control.
- Set up the communication and processes that will make the strategic partnership, integration, and the requisite collaboration work.

Of the aforementioned eight points, one that seems to be neglected the most is point six, which is the issue of risk in a procurement environment. To reduce potential risks and its impact in terms of organisational performance and reputational, risk must be managed. Contract management is a form of risk management, since it is designed to minimise loss or damage, which arises from contract non-performance and mismanagement.

Contact risk, according to the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) (2013) may be defined as risk in a contract or commercial relationship (raised by the contract itself or in the relationship), and risk to a contract or commercial relationship (factors impacting on the contract or relationship which may jeopardise effective or efficient performance). There are a number of risks that an organisation can be exposed to in terms of a commercial undertaking; a brief description thereof may be seen in Table 2.9.

Table 2.9: Various risk types

Risk	**Description**
Supply risk	Arising from supplier failure, supply failure, the length and complexity of the supply chain.
Compliance risk	Exposure to noncompliance or illegal activity by the organisation and supply partners.
Reputational risk	Exposure to unethical, socially irresponsible, or environmentally damaging activity by the organisation and its partners in the supply chain.
Economic or financial risk	Risk of economic loss as a result of poor investment, or financial loss as a result of poor financial management, loss of sales, cost blow-outs, economic factors, and unscrupulous behaviour in the buying area (theft, etc.).
Market risk	Rising commodity costs, resource scarcity, and pace of technological change.
Environmental risk	Risk of costs escalating as a result of changes in the external environment.
Operational risk	Risk of operational failure, quality defects, health and safety incidents, transport failure and equipment breakdowns.

Source: CIPS (2017)

As can be noted from Table 2.9, unethical buyer behaviour such as nepotism, corruption, ‘lubrication,’ and bribery are associated with supply, compliance, reputational, financial, and operational risks, which could lead to the good name of the organisation being tarnished and is experiencing financial loss (profits and sales), whilst not meeting compliance requirements. For the aforementioned risks to be reduced or even negated, an organisation requires an effective risk management strategy, which is linked to a well-articulated risk management vision and profile. However, oftentimes the reputation of an organisation is irreparably damaged by unscrupulous behaviour by people in senior management positions, and particularly in the procurement environment, where temptation often leads to acts of nepotism and ‘back-scratching.’ This leads to the subject of ethnicity, in general, and in procurement.

2.19 Ethics in procurement in the public and private sectors

As can be noted in the research questionnaire (refer to appendix one), two questions were asked regarding vendor selection criteria in terms of the expectation of gifts, free trips, and entertainment. Because of the nature of the activity of procurement and the environment in which it is engaged, there is huge opportunity for organisational buyers to be exposed to 'under-the-counter' temptations of bribery, nepotism, and corruption. This has been evidenced by numerous incidents that have been exposed in the media throughout the world, and particularly in South Africa regarding corruption, nepotism, and bribery. In a South African context, a number of procurement-related irregularities have taken place, which has scarred the reputation of the country, procurement in the public sector, and buying in the private sector. Some of the local purchasing-oriented misdemeanours include 'Travelgate' (collusion, corruption in the form of kickbacks and nepotism), alleged maladministration and corruption in terms of leased accommodation for government departments, The South African Arms Deal, ex-Police Chief and ex-President of Interpol, Jackie Selebi's corruption charges, President Jacob Zuma's Nkandla private residence, and associated corruption charges that have been levelled against him, 'Guptagate' (the Gupta wedding saga), Bheki Cele's dodgy building lease transaction in Pretoria (R500 million), the Cape Town Soccer Stadium scandal, and Dina Pule's nepotism charge (CIPS, 2013). The list has virtually no end, as there seems to be an almost endless trail of corruption, financial fraud, and nepotism of epic proportion.

With the above in mind (particularly regarding procurement issues), in a PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Global Economic Survey, Strydom (2014) uncovered: "…that a total of 59% of South African respondents who participated in the survey indicated that they had experienced procurement fraud, compared with the global figure of 29%. PwC director Louis Strydom described as 'mind-boggling' the loss South Africa suffered owing to economic crime. Of the 134 surveyed South African respondents, four reported losing more than R1-billion each through fraud."

Strydom (2014) mentioned that "…in terms of financial losses below R1-million, South Africa ranks lower than global averages, but for losses between R10-million and R1-billion and above, South Africa ranks the highest; and that globally governments accounted for 46% of procurement fraud, followed by energy, utilities and mining (43%) and engineering and construction (42%)”. As far as Strydom (2014) is concerned, in South Africa “…vendor selection was the most targeted, and that many projects meant to assist poor people failed because of the misappropriation of funds". Strydom (2014) further asserted that "…procurement fraud cannot happen if there are no internal players and that to deal with economic crimes there must be a focus on management and if “…management does not advocate against such practices, we cannot beat it".

Strydom (2014) went on to state that fraud-risk management was the most effective means of detection, and that South African companies were ahead of their global counterparts in this area.” Strydom (2014) also suggested that 20% of companies do not undertake risk assessments, with 18% of culprits only receiving warnings, while 9% of companies do nothing against perpetrators”. Strydom (2014) went on to assert that it is encouraging that more South African companies (82%) than their global counterparts (49%) turn to law-enforcement agents to deal with (internal) culprits”. Strydom (2014) further stated that “…externally, 63% of culprits in South Africa were turned over to the police, versus 61% globally and that as much as 77% of South African respondents reported experiencing asset misappropriation (69% globally), and 52% bribery and corruption (27% globally)”. Lastly, Strydom (2014) attested that Africa and Eastern Europe reported the highest prevalence of bribery and corruption (39%), followed by the Middle East (35%), Asia Pacific (30%), Latin America (25%), North America (14%), and finally Western Europe (12%)”.

In addition to the above, The Institute of Accountability’s director Paul Hoffman, estimated that corruption has cost South Africa R700-billion over the last 20 years and that through the government's tendering system, R30- billion is stolen annually through corruption (2014). In addition, Hoffman (2014) said that corruption would continue until the government developed the political will to appoint an effective, independent anti-corruption entity.” He further professed that “…currently we pursue a multi-agency approach; the problem with this in relation to corruption is that too many falls through the cracks, with no specific agency having the necessary clout to take on corruption in high places.” "The Hawks are not as effective as the Scorpions; they don't have the clout" (Hoffman, 2014).

Hence from an ethical point of view, procurement in South Africa seems to be plagued by a level of fraud and related crimes that is almost impossible to counter unless the government develops the political determination to rid the ills of such crimes by appointing an entity that will have the required authority, resources, and infrastructure to do so. However, top government officials have been embroiled in controversy, as can be seen in the examples listed above and below. With the proverbial tree rotting from the top, where does this lead to in terms of procurement as a profession and not an occupation? It is the researcher asserts that the answer lies in inculcating a culture of business ethics at school and university level, metering out punishment that will deter criminal activity in the procurement environment, considering better ways for whistle-blowers to expose culprits and not become victims of their respective honesty and, finally, by providing financial and other incentives for procurement professionals who behave ethically in all the activities with which they are involved.

On the 20th of May 2014, a press release was published by James Selfe, the Chairperson of the Democratic Alliance Federal Executive (2014), which stated that President Jacob Zuma's nominations for his new government demonstrated that the ANC is not serious about fighting corruption. Selfe (2014) expands that the return of problem premiers such as Free State Premier, Ace Magashule (implicated in transgressions and deviations from the legislative framework which governs transverse contracts, the unexplained R140 million that was spent on the provincial website, and the aforementioned Gupta wedding saga), Northern Cape Premier, Sylvia Lucas (blatant violation of the Executive Code of Ethics, the use of her official credit card to purchase R53 000 of groceries within her first 10 weeks of office), and Mpumalanga Premier, David Mabuza (spending of R5 million of public funds on motor vehicles for his own utilisation and the unauthorised expenditure of funds, which increased from R1.3 million in the 2011/2012 fiscal year to R136 million a year later spelling out what has been deemed as "…a total wasteful expenditure in the province spending of R369 million). All these persons have been lining their pockets and concealing the truth, as opposed to providing adequate leadership, honouring their electoral promises and, above all, facilitating the requisite services and opportunities of the people who reside in their provinces.

Therefore, with the obvious lack of the ANC's resolve to solve the problems of bribery, corruption, and nepotism, how can this almost unceasing quandary be disentangled? The researcher believes that it will not be an easy task, especially the challenge of nepotism because of its close relationship to ethnicity. Ethnicity is one of the most difficult concepts to grasp, and one of the most essential to understand Africa. David Lamb argues in his book, *The Africans* (1984) that African leaders deplore ethnocentrism and refer to it as the cancer that threatens to devour the fabric of the nation. He continued by suggesting that "…almost every African politician, practices it, most African presidents are more ethnic chiefs than national statesmen, and it remains perhaps the most potent force in day-to-day African life and is a factor in political struggles and the distribution of resources."

Lamb (2010), Sarpong and Maclean (2015), and Zeze (2015) indicate that ethnicity and particularly nepotism in Africa often determines who gets jobs, who gets the order/tender from a buying organisation, who gets promoted, who gets accepted at a university; because by its very definition ethnicity implies sharing among members of the extended family, making sure that your own are looked after first. To give a job to a fellow ethnic member is not nepotism, it is an obligation. The same applies to business as not to support 'your own' is a sin worse than usury and is frowned upon by family members and even employees at large. As far as African leaders are concerned, for political leaders to choose their closest advisers and a bodyguard from the ranks of their own ethnic groups is not patronage, it is a good common sense. It ensures security, continuity, and authority." The same could apply to organisational buyers who are probably give business to vendors who comprise members of their extended family, for example, Xhosas, Zulus, Jews, and Muslims.

2.20 The study's conceptual framework

May (1993) suggests that theory informs thinking which in turn assists in making research decisions and a sense of the world around us. Therefore, by linking theory and research, may help one to create and develop a theory regarding certain phenomena that previously had no satisfactory explanation, or to argue against or counter theories and models that were widely accepted before. Smyth (2004), Lesham and Trafford (2007), and Varpio et al. (2020) put forward that a theoretical framework articulates the logic of why researchers are using a particular theory in a particular circumstance and way.

Whatever research approach one adopts, it is important that one must be certain to use the appropriate theory to make sense of the topic prior to conducting an investigation. Theory, therefore, plays an important role in how one envisages the topic…that is one's model (paradigm). It is from this epitome that one develops one's own conceptual framework, or as described by Miles and Huberman (1984), "…the current version of the researcher's map of the territory being investigated."

Weaver-Hart (1988), Page and Wong (2000), and Potschin-Young et al. (2018) suggest that a conceptual framework is a structure for organising and supporting concepts and ideas, and is therefore, a mechanism for systematically arranging abstractions; sometimes original and other times new and revolutionary and serves to act as a theoretical overview of one's proposed research and its order. These concepts or ideas resonate the thoughts of Kuhn (1962) and Krauss (2005) who argue that "…the acquisition of a paradigm of a more mystical type of research permits a sign of maturity of any given scientific field." Paradigms, therefore, display certain similar dimensional roles and characteristics, which one makes explicit in how one writes about the aspect that one is researching.

With the above in mind, is the researcher positive that the literature review leads to the conceptual framework of the study and is representative of the research design that was selected.

2.21 Summary

This chapter, as stated previously, formed the foundation on which this research study was based and, therefore, the subjects contained in this chapter are linked to the objectives of the study. This means that the questions, which are contained in the research questionnaire are also connected thereto and were purposely formatted around the objectives so that the responses to the various questions could be used to make assertions that are representative of small, medium, and large firms in South Africa that procure goods and services to either convert into completed goods and services or to be consumed in its pursuance thereof. Hence, there is an indelible connection between the conceptual framework, the research design, and the research methodology.

It may be noted from the information reflected above, that organisations base their purchasing decisions on numerous factors. They procure mainly as a result of derived demand, are different to consumers in terms of the buying behaviour and tend to spend more time in the decision-making process when products are expensive, complex and are new (new task buying). As the study is concerned with buying behaviour in three organisational types (from a size perspective), such organisational types were discussed with particular reference to how they were broken down in terms of size. The next chapter presents a discussion of the research methodologies that were used to solicit the required data.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter revisits the purpose and objectives of the research study, as well as the methodology that was used to obtain the research study's primary data. It also discusses the population of the study, and how the samples were drawn from the populations of three targeted organisational groups within the research, namely large, medium, and small-sized organisations so that accurate inferences can be made in terms of such organisations and their respective buying behaviours. It further focuses on the research design, the process that was used to collect the research data and the validity and reliability of such data. It concludes by introducing chapter four of the study.

3.2 The research problem, purpose, and objectives of the research study

Welman and Kruger (2002) state that the purpose of research is threefold, namely:

- "To describe how things are, that is, to define the nature of the study object;
- To explain why things are the way they are; and
- To predict phenomena with the aim of using the information for a particular purpose."

Welman et al. (2005), Newman and Covrig (2013), and Craig and Snook (2014) propose that the purpose of research is to define, explain and consequently predict and even modify or control human behaviour, its organisations, products and/or events.

The problem, which gave rise to this research study, is the issue of procurement in an industrial environment. In other words, on what bases are procurement decisions made in a B2B situation in terms of vendor selection in particular and product and brand selection, in general? As indicated quite extensively in chapters one and two, no business can operate in isolation. Whether businesses are 'for profit' or otherwise, they cannot exist without procuring raw material, machinery, office equipment, consumables, and services. Fishermen need bait and angling equipment to catch their fish, motorcar manufactures need raw materials, parts, components and services to be converted into completed vehicles, retailers such as Woolworths and Shoprite-Checkers need goods and services to sell in order to satisfy the needs of their customers, and even non-profit organisations such as the SPCA and the Animal Welfare Society need food, medication and other essentials to support the needs of the animals that are in their care.

Where once strong relationships between the buying organisation and the supplier helped the latter party to influence the former, in a modern business context such relationships seem to have become less important at the expense of lower prices, enforced government legislation, and the much-prostituted term ‘service quality’ (considering that service quality is essentially in the eye of the beholder). A good example of this was that in the past, it was not uncommon for organisations to employ sport celebrities such as Springbok rugby players and cricketers to sell their wares. It was believed at the time that these centres of influence would, by means of using their fame, form friendships with organisational buyers and influence them to support the firm that the sportsperson represented (O’Brien et al., 2011). In a modern competitive business context however, does this strategy still work or has emphasis been placed on recruiting people with industry knowledge and expertise, rather than people who have represented their country in a particular sport? This has become even more relevant as procurement has moved from a support function to a strategic activity that should be deemed to be a vital value-add primary function.

The purpose of this research study was to establish the bases on which buying decisions are made by organisational procurement officers in large, medium, and small-sized businesses so that the appropriate marketing strategies may be formulated and implemented by suppliers to solicit maximum future support from these targeted customer groups. The secondary purpose of the study was to establish whether there exists a correlation between the various organisational groups in terms of buying behaviour and particularly buying motives with regard to vendor selection.

Webster and Wind (1972) and Chevan (2018) define as the process by which organisations uncover a need for goods and services and identify, assess (evaluate), and select among alternative vendors and brands. Therefore, by determining the reasons why organisations select one supplier over another, it was hoped that the study would provide the researcher with sufficient insight into understanding the phenomenon of vendor selection in the three business classes, which relate to this study. It was further hoped that such findings would increase the general level of understanding of the complexity of B2B procurement so that the body of knowledge in respect of business procurement may be improved upon.

The research objectives of this study, as discussed in chapter one were:

- To establish the influence of business characteristics (i.e., industry type, business classification, size of business, locale of business, status of business, basis of procurement and decision level) on supplier preference (i.e., regarding the preference of suppliers' salespeople; BEE status; service quality, relationship, environment sustainability, culture, EE, AA, personal relationships and gifts, and access and exceeding expectations).
- To ascertain the influence of demographic and experience factors (i.e., gender, population group, age, language, procurement experience, education level, employment level) on supplier preference.
- To determine the influence of procurement strategies, policies, and procedures on supplier preference.
- To develop a new supplier preference model to determine the associations between the preference of suppliers' salespeople, BEE status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, EE, and AA; personal relationships and gifts; and access and exceeding expectations.

With these objectives in mind, the following represents the key descriptive hypothesis that was tested during the research study (hypotheses were also tested as stated in chapter one): "There is no relationship between the size of an organisation and the selection criteria, which are used by such organisations to appoint vendors from which to purchase goods and services."

It was hoped at the onset of the research study that once the study was completed; it would provide answers to the research questions and adequately test the above-mentioned hypothesis. The answer to these issues may be found in chapter six of the study. The next section discusses the research design and approach.

3.3 Research design and approach

Welman et al. (2006) and Akhtar (2016) describe research design as the plan according to which one obtains research participants (subjects) and collects information from them.

Jankowicz (1995), however, suggests that research design is the "…deliberately planned, arrangement of conditions for analysis and collection of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy of procedure". Mouton's (2001) definition is closely aligned to that of Jankowicz above; since he asserts that it is the section in the study that addresses the type of study that is tackled to provide acceptable answers to the research design or question. From the researcher's point of view Mouton's definition is the most appropriate as it addresses the type of study that is undertaken and is concerned with providing acceptable answers to research questions as opposed to Welman et al. (2006) definition, which is rather limited (in the opinion of researcher), as it is more concerned with collecting information rather than seeking the best methodology to obtain research problem-solving answers.

Churchill et al. (2005) and Wahyuni (2012) purport that there are three types of research design, namely, an exploratory research design, a descriptive research design, and a causal research design (experiments). The research undertaken in this study is categorised as an empirical study. Empiricism denotes "observations and propositions based upon sense, experience and or derived from such experience by methods of inductive logic, including mathematics and statistics" (Cooper & Emory, 1995; Samii, 2016). The nature of this study, therefore, conforms to the above as it is exploratory and descriptive in nature, and is concerned with uncovering ideas and insights and determining relationships between various variables (the latter will be seen later in this chapter, and particularly in chapters five and six).

It is well known that empiricists attempt to describe, explain, and predict through observations. This research study is concerned with empiricism as it is concerned with the design of procedures to collect factual information about hypothesised relationships that can be used to decide if a particular image of a problem is correct (Cooper & Emory, 1995).

An empirical study involves using both primary and secondary data. Jankowicz (2013) suggests that data are primary if such data have been collected in terms of "…one's own way of thinking and logic and analysed by one to make a point which relates to and is relevant to one's debate". He further suggests that data are secondary if they come to you with "…someone else's rationale and assumptions about what is important; that is, if they carry the possible risk of constraining your own freedom to interpret findings because of the author's emphasis or selectivity." Chisnall (1999) show that primary data is the data that have been collected for the first time by using a number of techniques and tools including questionnaires. Conversely, Gates and McDaniel (2004), and Atici et al. (2013) classify primary data as new data that are gathered to help solve the problem under investigation and that secondary data are data that have been previously gathered".

Welman et al. (2005), Stahl (2007), and Adam (2014) intimate that there are two main approaches to research, namely an anti- positivist approach and a positivist approach. The anti-positivists argue that it is unsuitable to pursue strict scientific methods when collecting and analysing data, which relates to human behaviour and believe that the natural-scientific approach of the positivists is not appropriate to study human behaviour. Conversely, they argue that a positivist approach holds that research must be limited to what can be seen, observed, and measured objectively and, which should exist independently of the feelings and opinions of individuals. From the above it can be noted that anti-positive research is mainly based on the qualitative paradigm, whereas positive research is quantitatively oriented

Although both qualitative data (views, opinions, attitudes, and feelings) and quantitative primary data were gathered (numerically represented data, and in this instance ranking scales), in essence, this research study is mainly quantitative in nature and, therefore, assumes the positivist approach.

Jankowicz (2000) defines qualitative data as "…a set of techniques, which takes peoples' experiences and verbal expressions seriously, while checking their value, meaningfulness and applicability when generalizing conclusions". Kumar et al. (2018) and Welman et al. (2006) state that the basic assumption behind qualitative methods is that it is an individual's organisation of a relatively unstructured stimulus, how people think and feel about a particular problem, which coincides with Dibb et al. (1994) who suggest that qualitative research deals with subjective opinions and value judgments not amenable to statistical analysis and quantification (Starman, 2013).

Conversely, Jankowicz (1995) posits that quantitative analysis involves a set of techniques in which the frequencies of occurrences of responses are counted. Simply put, the quantitative approach refers to studies where the findings are measured in numbers, which is echoed by Welman et al. (2005). As a mainly quantitative approach (some academics and authors refer to this as a strategy), was used to solicit attitudes, opinions, views, and feelings mainly by means of a ranking scale, a positivist quantitative paradigm was used. Therefore, by virtue of the approach or strategy, key research questions were posed to attempt to obtain the respondents' assessment of various questions, which were ranked in order of personal preference or importance. Mouton (2005) suggests that research problems are usually formulated to address real-life problems. Mouton (1996) also states that there are three 'worlds or frames and contexts', and suggests that there exists a three-world framework of which the following are the key attributes:

- World One, which is the world of everyday life and lay knowledge
- World Two, which is the world of science and scientific knowledge
- World Three, which is the world of meta-science.

This research study is concerned with the World Two approach in terms of Mouton's framework, as it involves the solicitation of data to increase 'the scientific knowledge' of a particular subject matter. It is also framed upon a research process that includes a problem statement, a hypothesis, a research design, a methodology to solicit data, and conclusions regarding the findings that were uncovered the research study. As the foundation of the research study was based on a combination of primary and secondary data (both numeric and textual), was empirical in nature, and a reasonable amount of control would be exercised during the research process, it was decided to adopt a survey design. The key characteristics of such a design, according to Mouton (2001), are reflected in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Key characteristics/attribute of a survey research design

Attribute	Comments
Definition/ Description	Studies that are usually quantitative in nature, and which provide a broad overview of a representative sample of a large population.
Design classification	Empirical, with a main emphasis on primary data and medium control.
Key research Questions	Exploratory, descriptive (as in attitudinal surveys) and causal.
Mode of Reasoning	Surveys can either be theory-driven or aim to test hypotheses or are much more inductive than deductive.
Sampling	Probabilistic in the majority of cases, although non-probabilistic (convenience or quota sampling is often used).
Source of Data	Structured questionnaires (electronic, mail, and telephone) and interviews.
Analysis	Descriptive and inferential statistics and in analysis, the use of tabulations, correlations, regression analysis and statistical graphs.
Strengths	Potential to generalise if appropriate sampling design had been implemented, high measure of reliability if proper questionnaire construction, and high construct validity if proper controls were implemented.
Limitations	Lack of insider perspective, which could lead to a surface-level analysis.
Main sources of error	Sampling error, questionnaire error, high refusal rate, high non-response, interviewer effects, respondent effects, fieldwork error, data capturing error, inappropriate selection of statistical techniques.

Source: Mouton (2001)

3.4 Data collection methodology

Data for this research study were gathered by means of a combination of limited focused individual depth interviews (that were conducted with procurement officers and industry professionals in specifically targeted organisations and institutes, and in various city centres by means of the research questionnaire), and questionnaires (structured), which were distributed via email to procurement specialists in a host of organisations throughout South Africa. Mature students distributed the questionnaires to their respective employers and the questionnaires were distributed by the researcher when he attended two conferences. These organisations are situated in all the main city centres and are involved in a variety of industries. They naturally also differed in terms of size.

As stated previously, the key reason mainly quantitative data were sought was to establish how the various respondents ranked a number of questions in terms of importance to them, and their attitude towards the various statements/questions. Aaker et al. (2003) state that an attitude is a mental state, which is used by people to structure the way that they understand and think about their environment and guide the that way they respond to it. There is a general acceptance that an attitude has three components, namely, a cognitive component, an affective component and an action or intention component. Each component provides different insight into a person’s attitude. As respondent attitudes (especially cognitive and affective components) were gauged in terms of various matters pertaining to the subject that was researched (reasons for vendor selection), each attitude had to be measured and scaled accordingly to quantify the importance or unimportance of each statement or question. Aaker et al. (2003) and Pathak et al. (2013) explain measurement as a process of allotting numbers or other symbols to attributes of the object of interest according to specified rules. According to the aforementioned authors, for a measurement process to be a standardised process of assignment, two attributes are required, namely, there must be one-to-one correspondence between the symbol, and the characteristics in the object that is being measured and secondly the rules of assignment must be unchanged over a period of time, as well as the objects that are measured.

Scaling is the process of “…creating a continuum on which objects are located according to the amount of the measured characteristics they possess” (Aaker et al., 2003). Wiid and Diggines (2009) and Quinlin et al. (2011) suggest that scaling is widely used in attitude measurement research. For example, Kumar and Day (2003) put forward that an object with male or female characteristics is assigned a number, for example 1 (female) and the object with the opposite characteristic (male) is assigned another number, for example 2. This scale, according to the aforementioned authors, "…meets the requirements of the measurement process in that the assignment is one to one and it is invariant with respect to time and object."

Aaker et al. (2003) indicate that measurement and scaling are basic tools, which are used in many marketing research exercises. As this research study is marketing-oriented, measurement and scaling were used as a tool to rate the inputs that were provided by the various respondents. As a result, it was decided to use interval scaling.

Aaker et al. (2003), in an interval scale the numbers that are used to rank the objects also represent equal increments of the attribute being measured. This means that differences can be compared. Therefore, the difference between say 2 and 3 is the same as between 3 and 4 but is only half the difference between 2 and 4. It may also be also noted from Table 3.3 above that the typical application for an interval scale is attitude measurement. In essence, this study is concerned with attitude, which comprises knowledge, feelings, views, and opinions (cognitive and affective component of attitude) of certain objects that have been measured and scaled. Hence, to measure and rank such attitudes, an attitude scale (Likert or otherwise) should be used along with other appropriate scaling techniques.

The summated or Likert scale, which was introduced by Likert is at present the most popular type of scale that is used in the social sciences (Kidder & Judd, 1986). Welman et al. (2005) disclose that its popularity stems from the fact that it is easier to compile than any other attitude scale, and it is unlike other scales (Guttmand, 1967), while the Likert scale may be used for multidimensional attitudes. A summated attitude scale consists of a number of statements about an attitudinal object and in respect of each statement subjects must agree or disagree with the content. For instance, Table 3.2 provides an example of a five-point attitude scale (Likert); the like of which has been used throughout the research study (please also see the copy of the questionnaire that is included in the appendices section, which is located at the end of this doctoral thesis). Note, however, that in some instances other forms of questioning such as closed questions were used during the study.

Table 3.2: Important criteria for vendor selection

Situation	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagre e**	**Neither agree, nor disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongl y agree**
Lowest initial price is the main criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Best-of-class service	1	2	3	4	5
Financial stability of vendor	1	2	3	4	5
Proximity to supplier	1	2	3	4	5

Source: Author (2022)

It may be noted from Table 3.2 above that each statement has been ranked (from 1 to 5). An attitude scale "…should contain approximately the same number of positively and negatively formulated items to counteract the acquiescent response style" (Welman et al., 2005). Therefore, according to the aforementioned authors, positive and negative items are regarded as being equal in terms of attitudinal intensity. In other words, a score of 5 for one positive item is interpreted as being as positive a score of 5 as for any other positive item. This can be better explained by looking at Table 3.2 above. If the four statements above receive a rating of 5 per statement, then the total score would be 20 (4 x 5 = 20), which would indicate that low initial prices, best-of-class service, financial stability of the vendor and proximity to the supplier are important criteria in terms of vendor selection. Conversely, if the score was 4 (4 x 1 = 4), then these parameters might be unimportant in terms of vendor selection. A score of say 12, for example, could be obtained in different ways and they would all be expected to reflect the same attitudinal intensity.

Questionnaires come in many shapes and sizes, depending on the information that is required, the targeted group and the survey method that is used. Nel et al. (2008) and Kašćelan et al. (2021) advance that all questionnaires are designed to achieve important and relevant goals. They are to maximise the relevance and accuracy of the collected data, participation and cooperation from the targeted respondents and the facilitation of the collection and analysis of the data. The researcher placed much emphasis on the following:

- Making the questionnaire as concise as possible without compromising the accuracy and quality of the collected data;
- Ensuring definitive answers by making sure that the questions were definitive;
- Keeping the content of the questionnaire as simple as possible. Where seemingly complicated issues needed to be answered, for example TCO, an explanation of the concept was given to assist with its understanding thereof;

- Avoiding leading questions;
- Providing sufficient information so that the respondents could participate without having to refer to others;
- Avoiding questions that might embarrass or belittle the respondent;
- Providing a question flow that was logical and well sequenced; and
- Using scaled questions and other formats such as multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions, where applicable.

Much effort was placed on relating all the questions to the objectives of the research study. In other words, the questions that were posed in the questionnaire were relevant to the research study and its objectives. Once the questionnaire was in a final state of completion it was tested by asking two organisational procurers who were tasked to complete it within a particular timeframe. All the suggested alterations that were made by these participants were then implemented, and finally the researcher asked a junior buying clerk to complete the questionnaire to test its simplicity, flow, and overall user-friendliness. A small number of changes were made, and the final questionnaire was then forwarded via the various methods of data collection that were already discussed in this chapter, to the various respondents for completion. The choice of structured questionnaires was based on three parameters, namely, to reduce the time needed to complete the questionnaire, the complex nature of some of the content of the questionnaire and, finally, the need for a steady flow from one question to another (ease of completion), as some of the questions were interrelated. Refer to appendix one for a full overview of the questionnaire that was developed and used by this study.

Table 3.3: Supplier preference constructs

Constructs	Supplier preference constructs adapted from:
Preference of suppliers' salespeople	Bhutta and Huq (2002), Gencer and Gurpinar (2007), Jafarnejad and Salimi (2013), Shen and Yu (2013)
BEE status	South Africa (2004), Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2011), Badenhorst-Weiss (2012), Boschoff (2012), Bogopo (2013),
Service quality	Franceshini and Rafele (2000), Davis and Mentzer (2006), Baki et al. (2009), Shirouyehzad et al. (2011);
Relationship with salespeople and management	Bendapudi and Leone (2002), Evanschitzky et al. (2012), Xesha et al. (2014),
Environmental sustainability	Lee et al. (2009), Bonn and Fisher (2011)
Culture, EE, and AA	Turner and Pratkanis (1994), South Africa (1998), South Africa (2004), Leonard and Grobler (2006), Horwitz and Jain (2011)
Personal relationships and gifts	Adobor (2006), Sternquist and Chen (2006), Marasco (2008), Gligor and Holcomb (2013), Gunduz and Önder (2013)
Access to personnel and exceeding expectations	Ang and Buttle (2009), Xesha et al. (2014), Hibbler-Britt and Sussan (2015)

As discussed above, in-depth individual interviews were also conducted. Aaker et al. (2003), Legard et al. (2003), and Mears (2012) suggest that such a methodology/technique provides the opportunity to explore the subject matter comprehensively, as face-to-face interviews allow the researcher to ‘read’ the respondents’ body language and feedback and to obtain clarity if there are any areas of uncertainty during the interview. The questionnaire was used as a template during these interviews, which were semi-structured.

3.5 Research population and sample

Chisnall (1986), Mugo (2002), and Alvi (2016) state that sampling is an important marketing research tool, which is concerned with collecting, analysing and interpreting data. They argue that a sample is drawn from a population, which is the group of people that form the subject of the study. That the sample is a microcosm of the population from which it is drawn and must therefore be representative of the population so that valid conclusions may be drawn and that a sampling frame (e.g., a list of students who attend a class) is used to identify and draw the sample.

Sudman and Blair (1998) stresses that before one selects a sample one must have a clear idea of the population that is studied. They go on to suggest that two questions must be answered in defining a population for sampling purposes, namely:

- What are the population units?
- What are the population boundaries?

As far as population units are concerned, they refer to the entities that are studied and traditionally comprise of individuals, households, companies, factories and so forth but this depends on what is studied. In terms of this research study, the population units are represented by small, medium, and large businesses in South Africa. Conversely, population boundaries are the conditions that separate those who are of interest to a research project from those who are not (Sudman & Blair, 1998; Schmidt et al., 2022). The aforementioned authors suggest that the following four criteria should act as a guide in the setting of population boundaries:

- “…A boundary should clearly separate subjects who are of interest and those who are not;

- That these boundaries should be expressed in operational terms so that data collectors can tell who should be measured and who should not;
- That the boundaries should be easy to implement; and
- Finally, population boundaries should be set with an eye towards cost-effectiveness of research."

As stated previously in this research study, the research study's population or universe consists of all large, medium, and small-sized organisations that operate in South Africa. The population boundaries that were set are as follows:

- Small micro businesses, which are organisations that employ less than twenty employees, have a turnover of less than R1 million, operate on a local regional basis, have assets less than R2 million and are operated and managed by its owners.
- Small to medium businesses, which are organisations that have fewer than two hundred employees but more than twenty, have an annual turnover of more than R1 million, but less than R64 million, have capital assets more than R2 million, but less than R10 million and, finally, have direct managerial involvement by its owners.
- Large businesses, which have a strong regional, national, and oftentimes an international footprint, employ more than two hundred employees, have an annual turnover of more than R64 million, have capital assets greater than R10 million, and are operated by a professional management team. These organisations would be involved in a variety of industries and include public companies, quasi-governmental organisations, and government (local and national) departments.

After defining the population, a frame of the population must be obtained before sampling can begin. A frame is a list or system that identifies every member of the population so that a sample can be drawn without the necessity of physically contacting every member of the population (Sudman & Blair, 1998). To create a frame of the population of businesses in South Africa, one would have to obtain a list of all public companies that are in the country (one could do this by obtaining a list of such organisations from the Registrar of Companies), a list of all private companies and close corporations (such a list can also be obtained from the registrar). However, it is an impossible task to obtain such a list when it comes to obtaining a register of all businesses in South Africa, especially small businesses, partnerships, and sole proprietorships. The reason for this is that sole proprietors and partnerships do not have to register with the Registrar of Companies. What further exacerbated the problem was that many private companies and close corporations, which are reflected on the registrar's 'list' of companies and close corporations, are shelf companies and close corporations, which are therefore, non-operational. Added to this is the threat of duplication as some businesses own other businesses (holding companies and so forth).

Sudman and Blair (1998) state that if the size of a population is unknown, the size must be estimated and often sampling must be done without a list of the population. They go on to suggest (1998) that sampling without a list is done from 'counting frames' in the following manner:

- "…The size of the population is estimated
- A sample of numbers between 1 and n, where n is the population size, is selected; and
- The population is counted, and data are gathered from the appropriately numbered members." It must be noted, however, that counting frames are subject to the same problems as lists (omissions, ineligibility, duplication, and clustering). They further suggest that to solve the main problem of omission (which the researcher is mainly concerned with) is to "…simply estimate the population size on the high side." Aaker et al. (2003) attest to this by suggesting that if no list for a specialised population exists, a convenient list must be drawn up.

As there is no list of all small, medium, and large businesses in South Africa, and because the size of the population cannot be accurately enumerated, it was decided, as suggested by Sudman and Blair (1998), to estimate such a population (number of firms) to be 'on the high side'. The methodology is discussed in the following section of this research study. Webb (2002) reveal that there are various stages in the sampling process. Table 3.4 details the main characteristics of such process.

Table 3.4: Stages in the sampling process

Stage 1: Define the population	Establish the element from which the research is required, the unit, which provides access to the element, the geographic demarcation of the sample and the amount of time needed to sample.
Stage 2: Define a frame for the population	Establish the boundaries of the research population. Each element should be included once, and none should be excluded; it should cover the whole population; the information should be accurate, and the frame should be convenient to use.
Stage 3: Select a sampling unit	This is the entity, which holds the elements of the sample population so that the information may be extracted.
Stage 4: Choose a sampling method	In probability samples are selected randomly. In non-probability samples, specific elements are selected in a non-random manner for convenience's sake.
Stage 5: Decide on the size of the sample	Establish how large the sample drawn from the population should be so that a valid analysis of subgroups of the population is possible.

Stage 6: Define the sampling plan	This is the decision on the method as to how the maximum and most relevant information is going to be selected with a minimal possibility of error.
Stage 7: Select the sample	The process of selecting the sample.

Source: Webb, 2002

Table 3.4 shows that there is a strict sequence in which the process follows. The researcher has followed this sequence to ensure that his sample is as representative as possible of the attitudes and feelings of the population under research. This is in accordance with Gates and McDaniel (2004), who assert that it is imperative that the research sample typifies the entire research population as closely as possible. They go on to state that this is not easy when drawing a relatively small sample from a large population.

Chisnall (1986) and Pride and Ferrell (2000) propose that a sample occurs when a number of sampling units (fewer than the aggregate) is drawn from a population and examined in some detail. Pride and Ferrell (2000) suggest that sampling (the act of creating a sample) is the process of selecting representative units from a total population. Lamb et al. (2004) assert that a sample is a subset that is selected from a larger population, while Janowicz (2000), Cooper and Emory (1995), and Sudman and Blair (1998) hold similar views.

It is commonly known that if a population is large, it is almost impossible for researchers to collect all the information that they need about everyone in a particular population; that is the total group in which they are interested. Researchers, therefore, draw a sample from such a population, and how well this sample represents the total population determines the success or failure of the research project. Results from a sample that is not representative will, therefore, not generate a true picture of the views, feelings, opinions, and attitudes of the entire population (Perreault et al., 2015).

Hence, from a sampling point of view, does size count? Kotler and Keller (2006) indicate that large samples give more reliable results than smaller samples. However, they argue that it is not necessary to sample the entire targeted population or even a substantial portion to achieve reliable results. According to the aforementioned authors, samples of less than one percent of a population can often provide good reliability with a credible sampling procedure. Etzel et al. (2007) assert that a common question concerning sampling is: how large should a sample be?

They go on to suggest that with random sampling methods a "…sample must be large enough to be truly representative of the universe and that the size will depend on the diverse characteristics within the universe." However, in the case of non-random sampling, they argue that as the objective is not to make generalisations, researchers can select any size sample with which the researcher is comfortable with. The researcher does not hold this view to be true in all situations, as he maintains that research is based on generating generalizations and inferences with the hope that such generalisations and inferences accurately represent those of the population under study.

As this research study is concerned with researching mainly the attitudes of procurers in large, medium, and small organisations in a variety of industries that are operated and managed by literally thousands of management teams, it was believed that the quality and the quantity of the responses were of critical importance to the success of the research study. In other words, the researcher did not want to compromise the quality of the research by using a small sample.

As attitudes were sought and not a copious amount of quantitative data to prove scientific fact, it was decided to use a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques (a combination of convenience, quota, and judgmental sampling). The key difference between probability sampling and non-probability sampling is that the former relies on chance, whereas the latter is selected based on judgement or convenience.

Aaker et al. (2003) and Sedgwick (2013) adduce that convenience sampling is a method that facilitates quick and inexpensive data collection, while Webb (2002) suggests that convenience sampling is described as a form of non- probability sampling, which is conducted for its convenience. The convenience sampling procedure is simple, since it relies on contacting sampling units that are convenient. As the researcher was given the permission to use the member lists of a number of organisations (Proudly South African, The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport and the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply South Africa and others), such access provided the required convenience, as the researcher did not have to identify and locate the respondents.

Quota sampling was also used. Quota sampling is judgmental sampling with the constraint that the sample includes a minimum number from each specified subgroup of the population (Aaker et al., 2003). Therefore, the 384 respondents (the determination of the sample size to be discussed later in this chapter, although at this juncture it would be prudent to mention that the support of 445 respondents was obtained) were divided by three so that hopefully 128 respondents would originate from small businesses, 128 from medium-sized businesses, and the last 128 from large-sized businesses (see below how the size of the sample was determined). It must, however, be noted at this juncture that as mature students were used to obtain research data from their employers and other businesses, and as the researcher used two conferences to increase the research participation, the sampling could be considered hybrid in nature, as the researcher was not aware of the organisation that would participate in the research project. However, there is no hiding the fact that in these two circumstances there was an element of convenience sampling.

Judgmental sampling occurs when a researcher selects sample members to conform to some criteria (Cooper & Emory, 1995; Curtis, 2011). Sudman and Blair (1998) suggest that the logic of judgmental sampling is that expert judgment and the researcher's past experience can ensure a representative sample. As the researcher wanted to obtain opinions, views, and attitudes from procurers in a variety of industries (finance, education, government departments and so forth), and as he is involved in education and business consultancy, he used judgmental sampling to determine who he interviewed in terms of the individual depth-interviews that he conducted. Therefore, besides selecting the organisations with whom he wished to conduct interviews, he emailed two thousand questionnaires in the hope that the required minimum of three hundred and eighty-four respondents would respond from the population frames that were used. It was trusted that the combination of interviews and emailed questionnaires would be representative of the views, attitudes, feelings, and opinions of the entire population, which is the three subgroups within the population of businesses in South Africa.

As the population size was not known to the researcher, it was decided to base the sample size on the flowing parameters (Raosoft, 2010):

- A 95% confidence level. The confidence level tells one how sure one can be. It is expressed as a percentage and represents how often the true percentage of the population who would pick an answer lies within the confidence interval. The 95% confidence level means one can be 95% certain; the 99% confidence level means one can be 99% certain. Most researchers use the 95% confidence level.

- A 5% confidence interval. The confidence interval is the plus-or-minus figure usually reported in newspaper or television opinion poll results. For example, if one uses a confidence interval of 4, and 47% percent of one's sample picks an answer one can be reasonably confident that if one had asked the question of the entire relevant population, between 43% (47-4) and 51% (47+4) would have picked that answer. Therefore, a 5% interval, in terms of the above example, would translate into 42% (47 – 5) to 52% (47 +5) scenario.
- A 50% given accuracy level (response distribution). Accuracy also depends on the percentage of one's sample that picks a particular answer. If 99% of one's sample said "Yes" and 1% said "No," the chances of error are remote, irrespective of the sample size. However, if the percentages are 51% and 49%, the chances of error are much greater. It is easier to be sure of extreme answers than of middle-of-the-road ones. When determining the sample size needed for a given level of accuracy, one must use the worst- case percentage (50%). One should also use this percentage if one wants to determine a general level of accuracy for a sample.

Therefore, irrespective of whether there are two hundred thousand or fifty million businesses in South Africa (basically one business per citizen), the size of the sample based upon the aforementioned parameters would be as follows:

- Based on a population of businesses in South Africa of 200 000 = 383 respondents
- Based on a population of 50 million = 384 respondents.

It was, therefore, decided to select 384 respondents based on a combination of convenience, quota, and judgmental sampling, and also in terms of 'exaggerating' the size of the population for sampling purposes. This translated into obtaining responses from 128 small, 128 medium and 128 large-sized firms of the businesses in South Africa.

As the researcher wished to interview thirty procurers in each organisation type, he decided to utilise individual structured depth interviews, but allowing for, as described by Gelman et al.

(1995), in their model of qualitative interviewing, the participation of the interviewer and the importance of giving the interviewee voice. As the researcher wished to create a relaxed atmosphere at the time that the interviews took place, the interviews were conducted within a semi-formal structured paradigm with the use of the questionnaire as the interview template. This allowed a free flow of communication under limited control conditions.

Each interview was documented by utilising a comprehensively constructed questionnaire, which was formulated to maximise the collection of data and for ease of analysis. The semi-formal-to-formal nature of the interviews was used to obtain the required information as quickly as possible, and also to relax the respondent so that he or she would be more receptive to the questions and topic under discussion. Ambiguous and misleading questions were avoided, and the researcher ensured that all the respondents were put at ease and clearly understood the questions before they were asked to answer them. The interviewees were encouraged to participate and to provide as much information as possible with regard to the questions that were posed to them if there was a need to do so. Only when a question was fully answered did the researcher move to the next question. A tape recorder was also used by the researcher during the various interviews. Naturally, the researcher obtained permission from the respondents to use such a device. A qualitative approach seeks to discover how people understand the situation or issue that one is investigating, and how that understanding guides one's actions (Jankowicz, 1995). This form of data collection was used since the issues that were covered in the interview had been determined in advance, as well as the sample of people who needed to be contacted (Jankowicz, 1995).

3.6 Data analysis

Mouton (2001) and Nassaji (2015) reveal that analysis involves breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends, and relationships. The aim of analysis is to understand the different elements of the data that were collected through an inspection of the relationships between concepts or variables, and to determine whether there are any trends or patterns that can be identified or isolated in the data.

The data that was collected was captured, coded, and analysed by cross tabulating the results and performing statistical techniques using statistical software known as SPSS (version 25). The reason for the selection of SPSS (version 25) was to help identify trends among data sets and to compare such data. All completed surveys were thoroughly inspected to see whether they were correctly and completely completed and those that were not discarded. The questionnaire, which included ranking and Likert scale-type questions, were structured to assist the researcher to avoid having respondents select a single column throughout the Likert and ranking scales. The Likert and ranking scale statements were manipulated using SPSS, prior to that Cronbach's Alpha (α) statistical technique was used to ascertain the reliability of the customer responses from the scales. Descriptive statistical measures (means, frequencies, and standard deviations) were also used to describe the findings, and structural equation modelling via the standardised Beta coefficients analysis was used to ascertain the strength of the relationship between variables via Amos (version 23). This study also used a generalised linear model (GLM) analysis, whereas the Wald's Chi-square test and the post ad hoc Bonferroni pairwise comparisons were used to ascertain if there was a significant difference between the variables within the abovementioned variables. Refer to chapter four for a full overview of the statistical analysis.

During the depth interviews, the data were naturally collected when the interviews took place. Although the researcher was tempted to analyse the data as it emerged, the researcher purposely waited for all the emailed questionnaires to arrive before beginning the analysis. Once the questionnaires were received in totality, they were then placed together with the depth interview responses and then collated, inspected, coded, edited for errors, and then documented for the final data file. It is important to note that the research questionnaire was used in the depth interviews and emailed data collection techniques. Validity and reliability are discussed next.

3.7 Validity, reliability, and practicality of measurement

King (1979) suggests that validity refers to the ability of a test to measure what it purports to measure), reliability the consistency of measurement, and practicality the ease of administration and interpretation. Webb (2002) quotes that "…there is an asymmetrical relationship between reliability and validity; as a valid measurement is always reliable; a reliable measurement may not be valid". Cooper and Emory (1995) confirm that there are three criteria to evaluate a measurement tool:

- Validity, which refers to the extent to which a test measures exactly what needs to be measured
- Reliability, which is concerned with the accuracy and precision of a measurement procedure
- Practicality, which refers to issues such as economy, convenience, and interpretability."

Considering the above, the researcher endeavoured to do to ensure convergent and discriminant validity, which is analysed in chapter four. From a reliability point of view, the researcher made sure that data that was obtained during the study and its measurement were as reliable, which was assessed in chapter four via Cronbach's α and composite reliability (CR) measures. From a practical perspective, the researcher tried to work within time, financial and other constraints so that data collection was as inexpensive as possible, that the data collection and analysis process was easy to administer, and that the interpretation methodology resulted in uncomplicated interpretability.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher focused on describing and applying the methodological theories to the current study. The literature examined the research objectives, the research hypotheses and conceptual research model that was used to determine the vendor selection criteria that buying organisations use to determine the suitability of contracting with targeted suppliers. The literature then focused on the paradigmatic approach followed for this study (positivist approach). The research design was also described, which was exploratory and descriptive in nature since this study observed and described the behaviour of the research population without influencing it in any way, uncovered ideas and insights, determining relationships between various variables, and establishing the frequency with which something occurs. The chapter also described the research population and the sampling methodology used to select a sample that was representative of the research population, where a hybrid non-probability sampling technique was used (a combination of both snowballing and convenient sampling) as well as probability sampling. This study adopted a quantitative data approach where a questionnaire was adopted to collect the primary data. The data analysis techniques and statistical techniques used to valid the results were also discussed in this chapter. Finally, the aspects of validity, reliability and practicality were discussed. The following chapter presents the results and findings of the research study, which are linked primarily to the research objectives and the research hypothesis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 of this research study, the researcher explained the research population, how the research sample size was computed, the type of questions that were posed, the research design, the methods of how the research questionnaires was distributed, how the questions would be collected and analysed, and finally, what tools would be used to analyse the research data.

As stated previously, the research study was quantitative in nature and as a result careful care was taken to analyse the data. The sample size required the researcher to obtain 384 respondents in order for the findings to be representative of the views and opinions of the research population. Instead of soliciting the support of 384 respondents, the researcher managed to obtain 445, which exceeded the researcher's target.

The aim of this chapter was to write and explain the findings of the research project. It must be noted that each question that was posed in the research questionnaire was deigned to coincide with the research objectives and to provide appropriate data so that the eight hypotheses may be tested. In essence the key objective of the study, as explained before, was to determine the various selection criteria that are used by buying organisations to appoint suppliers.

Finally, the research questionnaire is enclosed at the end of the thesis, should it be required to be examined.

4.2 Descriptive statistics of demographic and personal

Table 4.1 details the various descriptive statistics associated with the study ranging from the type of industries that the various respondent worked for to whether the organisations that were involved in the study had well-articulated procurement strategies, policies, and procedures. A summary of the key findings may be found under Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Descriptive statistics of demographic and personal data

Demographic and personal data		**Frequency**	**%**
Industry type	Primary	29	6.5
	Secondary	85	19.1
	Tertiary	289	64.9
	Quaternary	42	9.4
Business classification	Sole proprietor	52	11.7
	Partnership	25	5.6
	Close corporation	76	17.1
	Private limited company	127	28.5
	Public company	56	12.6
	Government or quasi-government organisation (e.g., municipality)	74	16.6
	Not-for profit organisation	35	7.9
Size of business	A small sized business	140	31.5
	A medium-sized business	141	31.7
	A large-sized business	164	36.9
Locale of business	Local organisation	196	44.0
	Nationally represented organisation	147	33.0
	International organisation	102	22.9
Status of business	Local office or local branch office	190	42.7
	Regional office	64	14.4
	Head office	167	37.5
	Local international branch office	24	5.4
Basis of procurement	Centralised purchasing	348	78.2
	Decentralised purchasing	97	21.8
Gender	Male	274	61.6
	Female	171	38.4
Population group	Black	150	33.7
	White	145	32.6
	Indian	25	5.6
	Asian	6	1.3
	Coloured	119	26.7
Age (years)	20 and under	3	0.7
	21 to 30	143	32.1
	31 to 40	167	37.5
	41 to 50	61	13.7
	51 to 60	53	11.9
	61 to 65	10	2.2
	66 and older	8	1.8
Language	Zulu	23	5.2
	Xhosa	56	12.6
	English	271	60.9

	Afrikaans	60	13.5
	Sotho	5	1.1
	Tswana	3	0.7
	Pedi	1	0.2
	Swazi	1	0.2
	Venda	3	0.7
	Other	22	4.9
Procurement experience	5 years and less	158	35.5
	6 to 10 years	119	26.7
	11 to 20 years	97	21.8
	21 to 30 years	44	9.9
	31 to 40 years	24	5.4
	41 years and over	3	0.7
Education level	Under grade 12	29	6.5
	Grade 12	86	19.3
	A certificate (up to one year in duration)	61	13.7
	A national diploma or a provider diploma.	132	29.7
	A degree	75	16.9
	An honours qualification	25	5.6
	A master's degree	32	7.2
	A PhD or Doctorate qualification (DTech)	5	1.1
Employment level	Buyer/procurer	159	35.7
	Senior buyer/procurement officer	52	11.7
	Manager: buyer/procurement	103	23.1
	Accountant	27	6.1
	Finance manager	22	4.9
	CEO or MD	14	3.1
	Business owner	68	15.3
Decision level	R50 000 or less	211	47.4
	R50 001 to R100 000	70	15.7
	R100 001 to R25 000	28	6.3
	R250 001 to R500 000	50	11.2
	R500 001 to R750 000	11	2.5
	R750 001 to R1 million.	18	4.0
	Above R1 million	57	12.8
Procurement strategies	Yes	308	69.2
	No	137	30.8
Procurement policies	Yes	307	69.0
	No	138	31.0
Procurement procedures	Yes	324	72.8
	No	121	27.2

4.2.1 Business characteristics

Table 4.1 shows that from an industry-type perspective, 64.9% were involved in the tertiary industry (services such as education, banks, retailers, hairdressers, etc.). The balance of respondents worked in the secondary, quaternary, and primary industries. In terms of business classification, it may be noted that 28.5% of the respondents worked for private limited companies. In relation to organisation size, small and medium sized organisations were almost identical in number, but large organisations represented 36.9% of the total organisations that participated in the survey. Table 4.1 also reflected that from a locale point of view, 44% of the respondents worked at local level whereas from a status perspective, 42.8% worked at local or branch offices. From a procurement viewpoint, the table indicated that procurement was mainly conducted on a centralised basis (78.2%). Finally, 44.7% of the respondents were limited to procure goods up to the value of R50 000 without having to refer the transaction to higher levels of management for approval.

4.2.2 Demographics and experience

Table 4.1 reflected that male respondents were in the majority (61.6%), and that from a race point of view, 33.7% of the respondents were Black. In addition, 67.4% of the research participants were people of colour which indicates that an AA perspective, the situation has improved substantially since 1994. Of the 445 respondents, 37.5% were between the age of 31 to 40 years and that by far the majority of the respondents (60.9%) had English as their home language. From a procurement experience standpoint, 35.5% of the respondents had 5 years or less experience and that 29.7% had the equivalent of a national diploma or a provider diploma with regards to education. Most of the respondents (35.7%) were employed as company buyers and/or procurement officers.

4.2.3 Procurement strategies, policies, and procedures

Of the 445 organisations that participated in the research study, 69.2% had formal procurement strategies, 69.0% had formal procurement policies, and finally, 72.8% had procurement procedures.

4.3 Supplier preference predispositions

4.3.1 Preference of suppliers' salespeople

Eight Likert scale questions were utilised to consider the preference of suppliers' salespeople construct, in terms of demographics and experience, by computing the weighted average. Here the question that was posed sought to establish whether the suppliers' salespeople were important selection criteria.

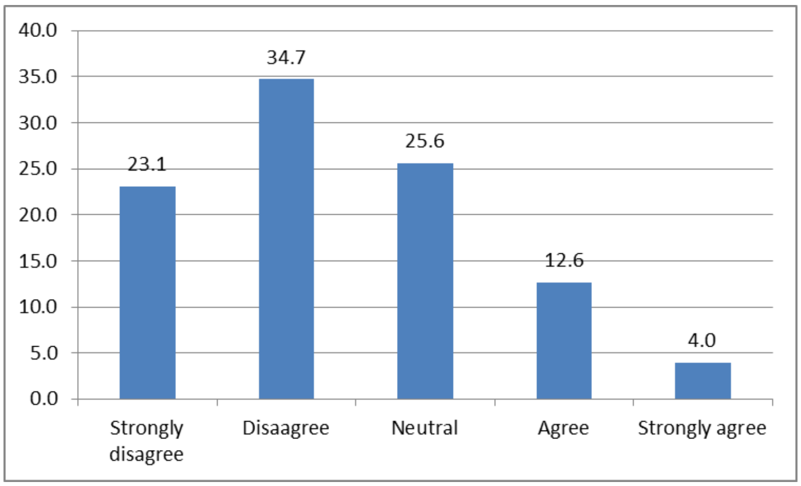

Figure 4.1: Preference of suppliers' salespeople frequency

A majority of respondents (57.7%) disagreed (strongly disagreed and disagreed) regarding preference of suppliers' salespeople versus 16.6% who agreed (strongly agreed and agreed). In other words, the majority of respondents did not believe that the supplier's salespeople were an important selection criterion.

4.3.2 BEE status

Three Likert scale questions were utilised to establish the BEE status construct by computing the weighted average. This construct is of importance to BEE as a selection criterion. The reason for asking this question in the survey was to uncover whether the respondents' thought BEE was an important vendor selection criterion for their particular organisations. Although adherence to BEE is not enforced by law, government departments and medium to large organisations are encouraged to support BEE, especially if they wish to secure government tenders.

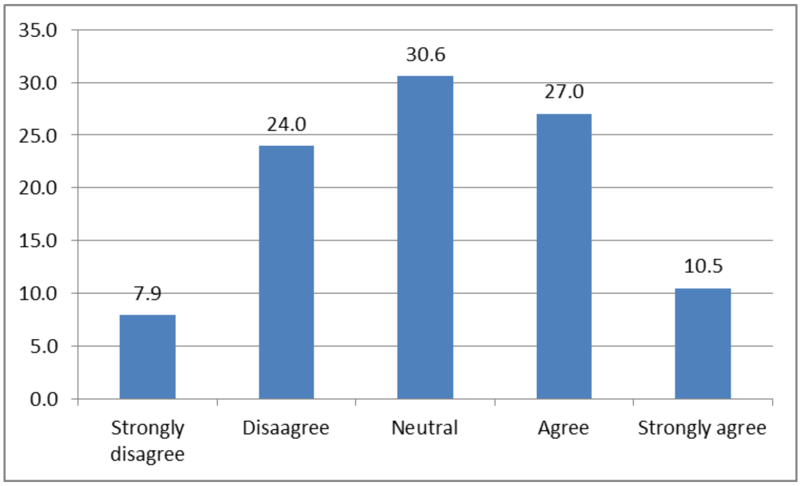

Figure 4.2: BEE status frequency

A greater percentage of respondents (37.5%) agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) that BEE was an important selection factor in comparison 31.9%) who disagreed (strongly disagreed and disagreed).

4.3.3 Service quality

Three Likert scale questions were utilised to establish the service quality construct by computing the weighted average. The rationale for asking this question was to determine whether the quality of service that is generated by the suppliers play an important role in the vendor selection process. Much has been written about the significance of service quality and its relationship to the longevity and value of customer support.

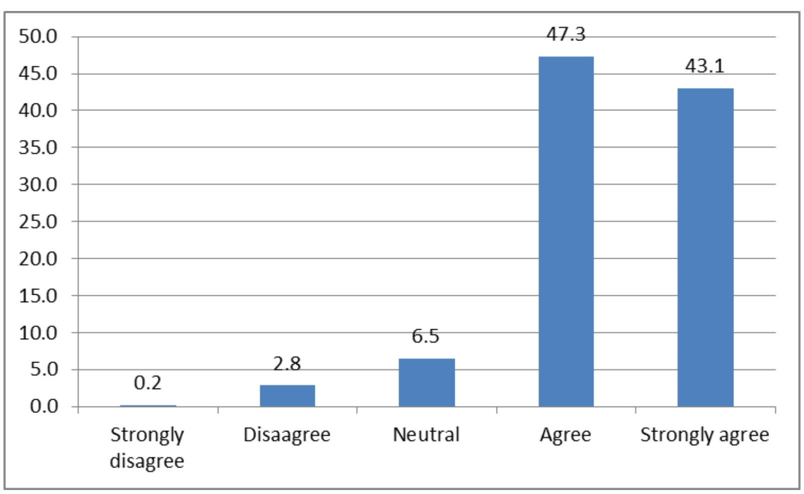

Figure 4.3: Service quality frequency

As can be espied, 90.4% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) that service quality is an important vendor selection criterion, whereas the balance, 3.0%, disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed) that service quality was an important selection consideration.

4.3.4 Relationship with salespeople and management

Three Likert scale questions were utilised to establish the relationship of the salespeople with the buyer's management construct by computing the weighted average. The reason for asking this question was to unearth whether the relationship the vendor's salespeople have with members of the buying organisation's management team is an important selection characteristic. It is the belief of many suppliers that a supplier can develop a marketing edge by encouraging their salespeople to form strong personal bonds with the customer's managers.

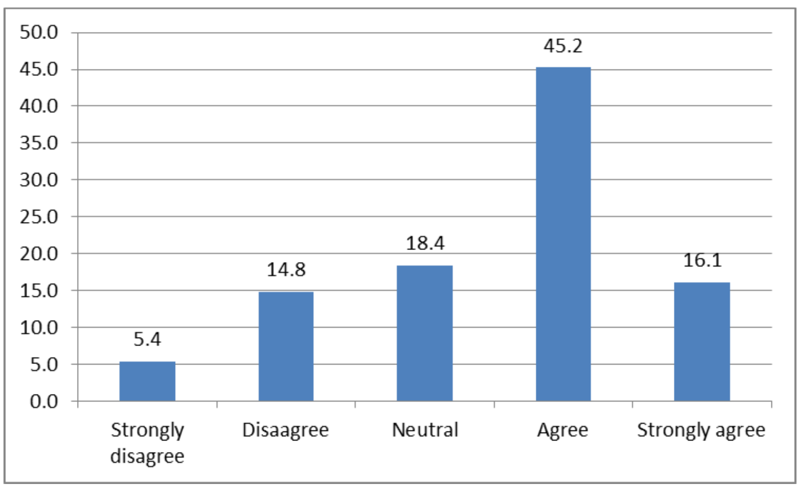

Figure 4.4: Relationship with salespeople and management frequency

As can be seen in Figure 4.4, 61.3% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed or agreed) the relationship between the vendor's salesperson and the buying organisation's management team is an important vendor selection criterion, whereas 20.2% disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed) that it was important.

4.3.5 Environmental sustainability

Three Likert scale questions were utilised to establish the environmental sustainability construct by computing the weighted average. The purpose of asking this question was to establish whether the environmental sustainability philosophy and practice of the supplier is an important selection attribute. As a result of deforestation, increasing pollution, exponential waste, etc., many organisations are practicing the triple Ps (profit, people, and planet) when making business decisions.

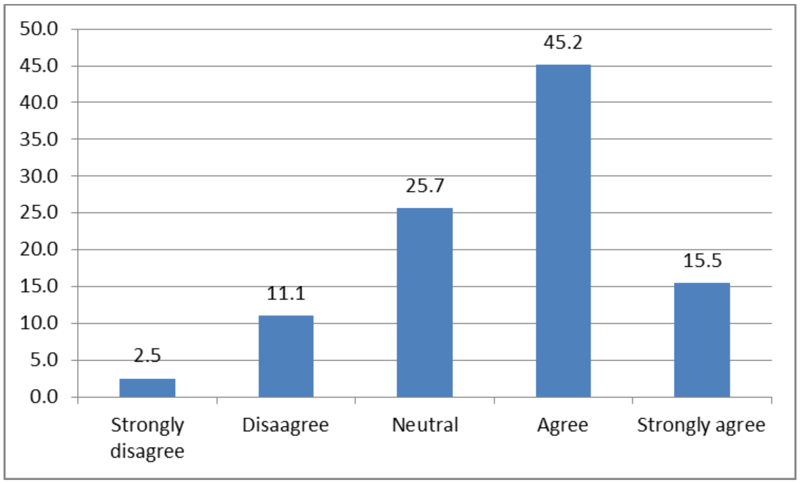

Figure 4.5: Environmental sustainability frequency

Figure 4.5 infers that 60.7% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) that the environmental sustainability of the vendor is an important selection benchmark whereas 13.6% disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed)

4.3.6 Culture, EE, and AA

Four Likert scale questions were utilised to establish business culture, EE, and AA construct by computing the weighted average. The rationale for asking this question was to uncover the relevance of the supplier’s attitude towards a positive business culture and to determine whether EE and AA are notable selection criteria when considering supporting vendors. Since the abolition of apartheid and separate development, organisations are encouraged to practice AA and EE so that the injustices of the past may be eradicated.

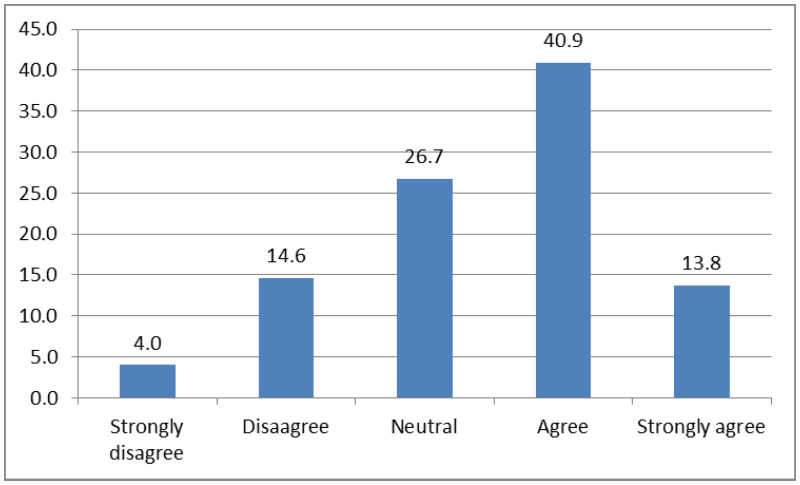

Figure 4.6: Culture, EE, and AA frequency

The above figure shows that 54.7% of respondents agree (strongly agrees and agrees) that the culture of the supplier and its practice of EE and AA are important vendor selection attributes whereas 18.6% disagreed (disagree and strongly disagree).

4.3.7 Personal relationships and gifts

Three Likert scale questions were utilised to establish personal relationships and gifts construct by computing the weighted average. The purpose of asking this question was to find out whether the personal relationship between the vendor and the buying organisation's buyers, as well as the giving of gifts, play a role in the vendor selection process. In recent years South Africa, and particularly in government circles, nepotism, corruption, fraud, and unethical procurement have plagued the reputation of procurement. This question was therefore posed to establish whether personal relationships and free gifts by vendor organisations are considered when deciding on what vendor to support or not.

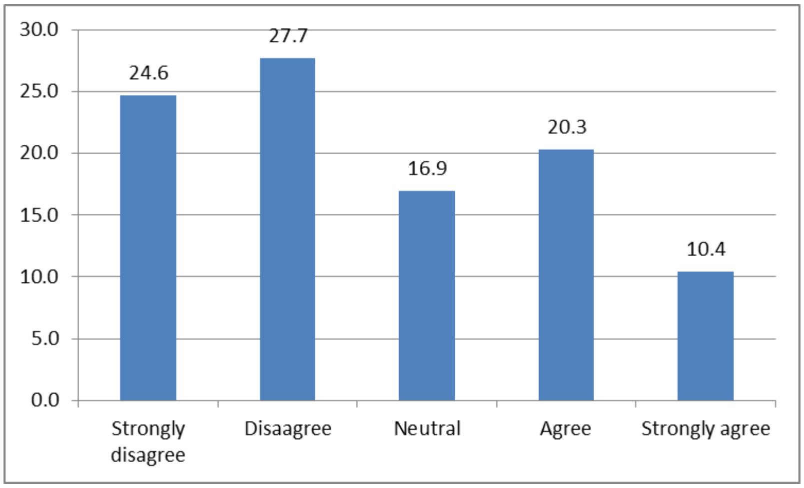

Figure 4.7: Personal relationships and gifts frequency

In Figure 4.7 above, it can be noted that 30.7% of the respondents agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) the personal relationship between the vendor and the buying organisation's buyers, as well as the giving of gifts, play a role in the vendor selection process, whereas 61.3% disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed)

4.3.8 Access to personnel and exceeding expectations

Two Likert scale questions were utilised to establish to determine access to personnel and exceeding expectations construct by computing the weighted average. The rationale for posing this question was to determine whether access to supply personnel and service that exceeds buying company expectations are important selection criteria. Nowadays, with automated messaging, social distancing, and an emphasis by many organisations to alienate buyers from salespeople for fear of nepotism etc., face-to-face access to key personnel has proven to be difficult over time. Rising customer expectations of service excellence has also made service provision difficult, particularly as most of communication with customers are conducted via the telephone, email, and video conferencing. Irrespective of the above, buying organisations expect to have free access to junior and senior personnel and expect vendor service to be of superior quality.

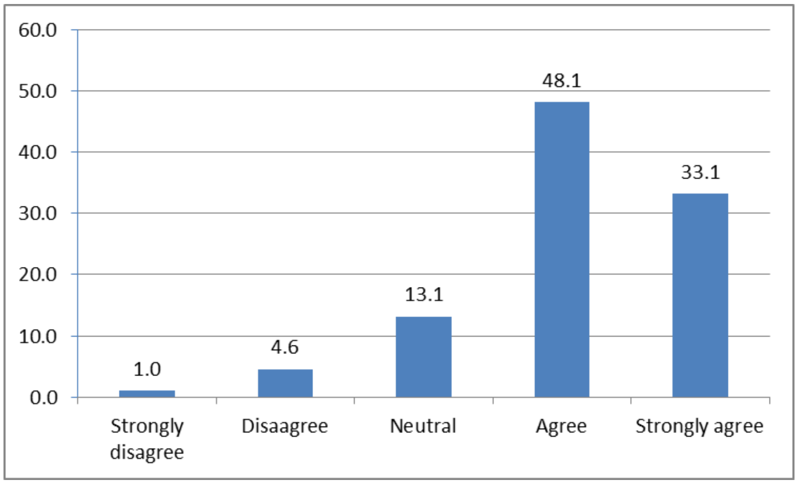

Figure 4.8: Access to personnel and exceeding expectations frequency

As can be noted in the figure, 81.2% of respondents agreed (strongly agreed and agreed) that access to personnel and the provision of service that exceeds expectations to be important and that 5.6% disagreed (disagreed and strongly disagreed) that both were important vendor selection criteria.

4.4 Importance supplier pricing, section criteria and relationships

Pricing a product or service is an important activity as it dictates the level of sales, profits, and the longevity of the offering in the marketplace. When one considers price, especially in a B2B business environment, one must look beyond the acquisition cost and rather consider the TCO. The price of an offering includes fixed, variable, and semi-variable costs plus the organisation's expected margin. The lower one can reduce costs without compromising on quality, the more profit one can make from the sale of the product or service. Naturally one can reduce the price if one can diminish costs, which will be to the benefit of the ultimate consumer.

4.4.1 Importance of procurement pricing parameters

As mentioned above there is a great divide between the acquisition cost of a good (price one pays for it) and the TCO. Known as the *Price Iceberg*, the initial or acquisition price of an offering can only represent the 'tip of the iceberg' (originated from the sinking of the Titanic), whereas TCO includes costs such as maintenance, running costs, disposal costs, etc. (see Table 4.2. below).

Table 4.2: Importance of procurement pricing parameters

	M	SD
Initial acquisition cost (price) of the item	4.17	1.223
The cost of maintenance and service	3.94	1.278
Cost of spare parts and components	3.67	1.420
Buy-back terms	3.19	1.440
Running costs (energy, petrol/diesel)	3.74	1.362
Disposal costs (end-of-life management cost)	3.27	1.400
Finance (credit) terms	3.58	1.450
Installation costs	3.68	1.372
Opportunity cost of capital	3.62	1.366
Discounts	3.75	1.363
Net present value/IRR	3.55	1.398
Return on investment (ROI)	3.81	1.458
Payback period	3.59	1.430
Total cost of ownership	3.76	1.408
Exchange rate for imported goods	3.63	1.474
Importation costs e.g., tariffs, etc.	3.57	1.477
Training costs to operate the good/machine	3.55	1.448

As can be observed in Table 4.2 above, the respondents viewed the acquisition costs of the goods (the initial purchase price) to be the most important pricing parameter (mean of 4.17), whereas the disposal costs were seen to be the least relevant.

4.4.2 Importance of generic vendor selection criteria

There are several textbooks (Hugo et al., 2011; Erasmus et al., 2016) and articles (Kar & Pani, 2014; Omaret al., 2021) that have been published about generic vendor selection criteria in a B2C transactions through to B2B criteria, which are more business specific. These criteria range from those that are service oriented to those that are related to the importance of brand name as a relevant preference characteristic. Table 4.3 below outlines the responses to some of the questions that were posed.

Table 4.3: Importance of generic vendor selection criteria

	M	SD
Reliability of service	4.63	0.710
Ease and completeness of orders	4.36	0.839
Lead time management (orders, queries)	4.33	0.866
Quickness of response times in terms of design and development for timely “get to market”	4.29	0.937

Flexibility of the supplier in terms of buyer company requests	4.24	0.824
Willingness of the supplier to carry inventory for the buyer	3.96	1.121
Non-variability of product quality (quality that meets customer expectation first time and all of the time)	4.30	0.981
Technical ability and support	4.23	0.919
Past experience with vendor	4.00	1.006
Warrantee policy	4.07	0.997
Brand name including brand image and the equity of the brand	3.75	1.105
Suitability of products in relation to the buying firm's target market	4.09	1.068
Product range and depth	3.92	1.057
Product functionality and adaptability in terms of other applications	4.00	1.065
Financial stability of the supplier	4.08	0.972
Production capacity of the supplier	4.07	0.989
Profitability of the offering to the buying company	4.02	1.128
Knowledge/capability of salespeople	4.22	0.895
Standardisation and compatibility of the offering	3.93	1.079

As can be observed in Table 4.3 above, the reliability of service was the most important selection parameter (mean of 4.63); followed by the ease and completion of orders (mean 4.33).

4.4.3 Importance of supplier relationships

In the past the relationship between the buying organisation and the vendor has been perceived to be distant at best and often adversarial. A more modern approach is the understanding that the supplier is an important stakeholder in the supply chain and therefore the buying firm and the seller (vendor) enjoy interdependence on one another. In Table 4.4 below, are the responses to the various questions that were posed in this regard.

Table 4.4: Importance of supplier relationships

	M	SD
Our organisation is most likely to support vendors that have a strategic partnership with our organisation	3.92	1.112
Our organisation prefers to conduct business with vendors that have reciprocity agreements and compensation obligations with us	3.59	1.178
We see our relationship with vendors as a long-term partnership	4.13	1.057
We expect the relationship with our vendors to be mutually rewarding	4.10	1.034
We are concerned with the profitability of our vendors and therefore, do not expect them to engage with our organisation without making a fair profit	3.47	1.207
We value our relationship with our suppliers, as without them we do not have a business	4.05	1.119
As a buying organisation we expect our suppliers to have well-articulated and	4.12	1.114

formulated supply strategies based on service excellence		
As a buying firm we expect our suppliers to have well-articulated and formulated supply policies and procedures that are based upon service excellence	4.04	1.151
Most often vendors are selected prior to request for proposal	3.32	1.274
Often vendors are played up against one another in order to maximise preferential pricing	3.40	1.336
The standardization of equipment, goods and brands is important when making procurement decisions	3.86	1.075
The procurement officer is expected to draw up functional technical and maintenance specifications when assessing a purchasing requirement	3.64	1.216
Our firm prefers to use a few suppliers than having numerous vendors calling on us	3.57	1.258
Our organisation has a comprehensive post-purchase evaluation process	3.35	1.270
The post purchase evaluation (whether positive or negative) impacts greatly on the future relationship between our firm and the supplier	3.59	1.226

In Table 4.4 above it may be seen that the buying firm views the development of long-term relationships (mean of 4.13) as being an important selection alternative. This coincides with the modern view of buying organisations forging long and mutually rewarding relationships with their respective suppliers. To achieve this both organisations should benefit from the relationship, hence the view that there should be mutual benefit for both the supplier and the buyer (mean of 4.10), and that the seller (supplier) should have a strategy in place to ensure such relationship (mean of 4.12).

4.5 Factor analysis

The principal component analysis (PCA) was performed to empirically evaluate suppliers' preference constructs regarding reliability and validity via SPSS and Amos. The sampling adequacy was assessed via the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, which yielded a good value of 0.806. The correlation matrix factorability was considered through the Bartlett's Sphericity Test, which ascertained that the different Likert scale correlations were sufficient enough, since it the test was significant at $p < 0.001$ (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2010).

4.5.1 Eigenvalues and scree plot

The PCA was employed to determine the number of factors via the eigenvalues and the variance explained.

Table 4.5: Total variance explained and eigenvalues

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	5.440	18.759	18.759	5.440
2	4.039	13.929	32.688	4.039
3	3.176	10.951	43.639	3.176
4	2.226	7.676	51.315	2.226
5	1.620	5.586	56.901	1.620
6	1.472	5.077	61.978	1.472
7	1.062	3.661	65.639	1.062
8	1.016	3.503	69.142	1.016
9	0.938	3.235	72.377	
10	0.742	2.559	74.936	
11	0.729	2.513	77.450	
12	0.635	2.191	79.641	
13	0.613	2.114	81.755	
14	0.551	1.898	83.653	
15	0.499	1.720	85.373	
16	0.446	1.538	86.911	
17	0.442	1.523	88.435	
18	0.395	1.364	89.798	
19	0.367	1.266	91.064	
20	0.344	1.186	92.250	
21	0.326	1.124	93.374	
22	0.301	1.037	94.411	
23	0.280	0.967	95.377	
24	0.270	0.932	96.310	
25	0.253	0.873	97.183	
26	0.247	0.851	98.034	
27	0.216	0.746	98.780	
28	0.186	0.642	99.422	
29	0.168	0.578	100.000	

The PCA generated eight components (factors) with eigenvalues of greater than one. The explained variance for the eight factors was 5.440%, 4.039%, 3.176%, 2.226%, 1.620%, 1.472%, 1.062% and 1.016% respectively. The total sum of factors explained 69.142% of the variance, which is indicative of high correlation in the exploratory factor analysis (refer to Table 4.5).

4.5.2 Scree plot

The scree plot was employed to assess which factors should be retained owing to the PCA.

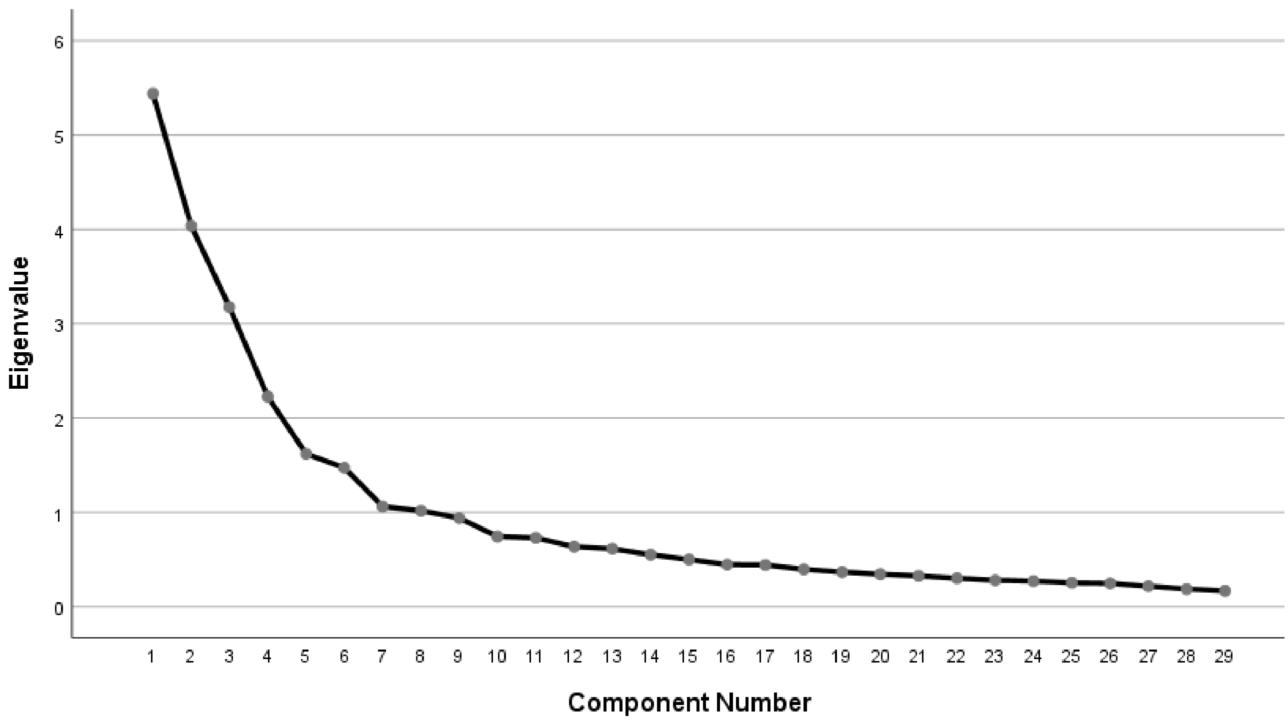

Figure 4.9: Scree plot

The scree plot shows an inflection point between factors 9 and 10; but only factors with an eigenvalue of greater than 1 prior to the inflection point should be kept (Field, 2009), so the first eight factors were retained (refer to Figure 4.9).

4.5.3 Pattern matrix (factor loadings)

Field (2009) asserted that factor loadings (in the pattern matrix), which are than 0.5 should be kept. The pattern matrix shows eight factors, which comprise of two or more Likert scale items, and factor loadings of more than 0.5, so these were kept (refer to Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: Pattern matrix

Likert scale items	**Component**							
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
I prefer to support a supplier's salesperson that is of the same gender as I.	0.668	0.064	-0.110	0.156	0.082	-0.178	-0.170	0.228
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson if he or she	0.790	0.101	0.040	0.203	0.132	-0.125	-0.161	-0.021

is of the same race as I.								
I prefer supporting a vendor's salesperson that is roughly my age.	0.800	0.055	0.133	0.205	-0.070	0.039	-0.150	-0.080
I am strongly influenced to support a vendor's salesperson that speaks to me in my mother tongue (my home language).	0.699	-0.148	0.291	-0.042	-0.041	0.027	0.041	-0.179
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has approximately the same number of years of experience as I.	0.802	-0.009	-0.012	0.088	0.016	0.018	-0.072	0.001
I prefer the vendor's salesperson to be as educated and as qualified as I.	0.791	0.074	-0.077	-0.190	-0.016	-0.011	0.146	0.033
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has a similar status in his or her organisation as I.	0.741	-0.087	-0.182	-0.143	0.036	0.088	0.122	0.018
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has the same decision-making latitude as I have.	0.637	-0.063	-0.176	-0.255	-0.074	0.131	0.286	0.107
I try to support salespeople with whom I have a personal relationship with outside of the work environment.	0.141	0.010	0.151	0.742	-0.038	0.043	0.160	-0.276
Being regularly entertained by supplier personnel acts as a motivator to support such supplier.	-0.030	-0.017	-0.137	0.832	-0.036	0.136	0.133	0.128
The occasional gift, a free trip overseas or a business lunch can often influence me to support a particular salesperson or supplier.	-0.026	-0.071	-0.131	0.834	0.052	0.028	0.125	0.101
Having a good relationship with supplier personnel other than its salespeople is a strong motivator when selecting and supporting such a supplier.	0.053	0.028	-0.024	0.234	-0.114	0.009	0.649	0.038
Regular communication from a supplier's sales management team and other senior personnel influences whether I support the supplier or not.	-0.033	-0.006	0.019	0.091	0.035	0.047	0.764	-0.016
Regular constructive visits from sales personnel increase the likelihood of me placing business with the salesperson and his or her employer. Please place an X in the appropriate row.	-0.095	0.093	0.077	0.176	0.144	-0.258	0.783	0.069
A supplier's BEE status is always taken into account before our firm supports such supplier.	0.039	0.836	0.103	-0.213	0.047	0.002	0.079	-0.076
The higher the supplier's BEE rating the greater the chance of the supplier getting orders and support from my organisation.	-0.018	0.919	-0.050	-0.030	-0.022	-0.045	-0.039	0.009
The BEE ratings of my suppliers' suppliers are also taken into account before we as a firm support such an organisation/supplier.	0.008	0.902	0.063	0.117	-0.111	0.024	0.064	-0.088
A supplier with a good track record regarding health, safety and environmental issues is more likely to get our support as opposed to one that does not have such a record.	0.006	-0.088	0.064	-0.034	0.697	0.235	0.092	-0.245
An organisation that markets 'green' environmental-friendly offerings have a better chance of doing business with our firm than one that does not offer such offerings.	0.004	0.012	-0.007	-0.028	0.888	-0.052	0.054	0.007
An organisation that markets products that can be easily disposed of at the end of their lifecycles (bio-degradable products for example) is more likely to be selected as a vendor than one that does not market such products.	0.060	-0.060	0.030	0.042	0.827	-0.047	-0.052	0.129
A vending organisation that exercises Employment Equity principles at the workplace is most likely to gain the support of our firm than one that does not.	-0.024	0.239	-0.056	-0.130	0.171	0.568	0.042	0.044
A supplier that exercises Affirmative Action has a better chance of winning the support of my firm that one than does not.	-0.087	0.184	-0.151	0.197	0.140	0.621	-0.161	0.036
The reputation of the vendor regarding the way it treats its employees is an important selection criterion.	0.078	0.239	0.072	0.077	-0.090	0.579	-0.021	0.150
The culture of the supplier is an important consideration when selecting a vendor.	-0.008	-0.243	0.130	0.096	-0.044	0.872	-0.064	-0.017
The quality of the supplier's total service package is also an important consideration when appointing a vendor (e.g., installation, product maintenance, delivery, etc.).	-0.019	0.031	0.825	-0.078	0.046	0.060	-0.017	0.116

A supplier's quick response time to customer queries plays an important role in appointing a supplier.	-0.028	0.005	0.864	-0.036	0.005	0.023	0.010	0.130
Supplier flexibility (ability to meet changing customer needs and environments) also plays an important role when selecting vendors.	0.004	0.068	0.798	-0.054	0.009	0.014	0.062	0.099
Quick and easy access to key personnel is an important vendor selection criterion.	0.014	-0.094	0.146	-0.014	-0.088	0.113	0.074	0.806
Suppliers that meet or exceed our expectations become preferential suppliers and therefore receive our support subject to their prices being reasonable.	0.012	-0.040	0.210	0.037	0.064	-0.015	0.004	0.800

4.5.4 Reliability and validity

Reliability was assessed by Cronbach's α and CR. Reliability values of over 0.8 are indicative of robust reliability, whereas values between 0.6 and 0.8 are suggestive that reliability is acceptable (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). Cronbach's α values ranged from 0.677 to 0.881, and the CR values ranged from 0.748 to 0.916 thereby reflecting robust and acceptable reliability (refer to Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Supplier preference exploratory factor analysis (factor loadings, AVE, CR and Cronbach's Alpha)

Antecedents / constructs	**Factor loadings**	**AVE**	**CR**	**Cronbach's α**
Preference of suppliers' salespeople				
I prefer to support a supplier's salesperson that is of the same gender as I.	0.668	0.553	0.908	0.881
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson if he or she is of the same race as I.	0.790			
I prefer supporting a vendor's salesperson that is roughly my age.	0.800			
I am strongly influenced to support a vendor's salesperson that speaks to me in my mother tongue (my home language).	0.699			
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has approximately the same number of years of experience as I.	0.802			
I prefer the vendor's salesperson to be as educated and as qualified as I.	0.791			
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has a similar status in his or her organisation as I.	0.741			
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has the same decision-making latitude as I have.	0.637			
BEE status				
A supplier's BEE status is always taken into account before our firm supports such supplier.	0.836	0.786	0.916	0.859
The higher the supplier's BEE rating the greater the chance of the supplier getting orders and support from my organisation.	0.919			
The BEE ratings of my suppliers' suppliers are also taken into account before we as a firm support such an organisation/supplier.	0.902			
Service quality				
The quality of the supplier's total service package is also an important consideration when appointing a vendor (e.g., installation, product maintenance, delivery, etc.).	0.825	0.688	0.869	0.861
A supplier's quick response time to customer queries plays an important role in appointing a supplier.	0.864			
Supplier flexibility (ability to meet changing customer needs and environments) also plays an important role when selecting vendors.	0.798			

Relationship with salespeople and management				
Having a good relationship with supplier personnel other than its salespeople is a strong motivator when selecting and supporting such a supplier.	0.649	0.539	0.777	0.677
Regular communication from a supplier's sales management team and other senior personnel influences whether I support the supplier or not.	0.764			
Regular constructive visits from sales personnel increase the likelihood of me placing business with the salesperson and his or her employer.	0.783			
Environmental sustainability				
A supplier with a good track record regarding health, safety and environmental issues is more likely to get our support as opposed to one that does not have such a record.	0.697	0.653	0.848	0.761
An organisation that markets 'green' environmental-friendly offerings have a better chance of doing business with our firm than one that does not offer such offerings.	0.888			
An organisation that markets products that can be easily disposed of at the end of their lifecycles (bio-degradable products for example) is more likely to be selected as a vendor than one that does not market such products.	0.827			
Culture, EE, and AA				
The reputation of the vendor regarding the way it treats its employees is an important selection criterion.	0.579	0.494	0.748	0.716
The culture of the supplier is an important consideration when selecting a vendor.	0.872			
A vending organisation that exercises Employment Equity principles at the workplace is most likely to gain the support of our firm than one that does not.	0.568			
A supplier that exercises Affirmative Action has a better chance of winning the support of my firm that one than does not.	0.621			
Personal relationships and gifts				
I try to support salespeople with whom I have a personal relationship with outside of the work environment.	0.742	0646	0.845	0.823
Being regularly entertained by supplier personnel acts as a motivator to support such supplier.	0.832			
The occasional gift, a free trip overseas or a business lunch can often influence me to support a particular salesperson or supplier.	0.834			
Access to personnel and exceeding expectations				
Quick and easy access to key personnel is an important vendor selection criterion.	0.806	0.644	0.784	0.785
Suppliers that meet or exceed our expectations become preferential suppliers and therefore receive our support subject to their prices being reasonable.	0.800			

Convergent validity was evaluated via factor loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The factor loadings of the suppliers' preference constructs ranged from 0.568 – 0.919, and AVE ranged from 0.494 – 0.786, which were all greater than 0.5 (except for the Culture, EE, and AA AVE value, which was slightly under 0.5, but all of the corresponding factors loading values were greater than 0.5) (refer to Table 4.7) and surpassed the threshold level of 0.5, which is suggestive of convergent validity (Bagozzi et al., 1998).

Table 4.8: Component correlation matrix

Preference of suppliers' salespeople	**0.743**							
BEE status	0.005	**0.886**						
Service quality	-0.015	-0.037	**0.830**					
Relationship with salespeople and management	0.244	-0.078	0.067	**0.804**				
Environmental sustainability	0.028	0.290	0.119	0.089	**0.808**			
Culture, EE, and AA	0.109	0.346	0.001	-0.058	0.414	**0.703**		
Personal relationships and gifts	0.242	-0.125	0.089	0.093	0.111	0.250	**0.734**	
Access to personnel and exceeding expectations	0.060	0.088	0.216	0.081	0.150	0.144	0.249	**0.803**

Discriminant validity was evaluated by calculating the square root AVE of each construct, which must be greater than the constructs' correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:39-50). The square root of AVE of each construct for the suppliers' preference constructs all exceeded the correlation values (refer to Table 4.8).

4.6 Supplier preference constructs

The Wald Chi-Square test showed that there was a significant difference for all eight of the supplier preference constructs at $p < 0.001$ (refer to Table 4.9). It must be noted that that higher means is indicative of higher levels of agreement. Therefore, for example service quality (mean of 4.30) indicated higher levels of consensus.

Table 4.9: Supplier preference constructs (mean, SD & *p*)

Attitude construct	**Mean**	**SD**	***p***
Preference of suppliers' salespeople	2.40	0.793	0.001*
BEE status	3.08	0.982	0.001*
Service quality	4.30	0.649	0.001*
Relationship with salespeople and management	3.52	0.847	0.001*
Environmental sustainability	3.60	0.787	0.001*
Culture, EE, and AA	3.46	0.750	0.001*

Personal relationships and gifts	2.64	1.139	0.001*
Access to personnel and exceeding expectations	4.08	0.775	0.001*

* Wald Chi-Square test showed a significant difference at $p < 0.001$

4.7 Influence of demographic and personal data on suppliers' preference

Wald's Chi-Square and the *Bonferroni correction* pairwise post hoc tests were utilised to ascertain if there were significant differences between the respondents' demographic and personal data, which either had a positive or negative on the suppliers' preference constructs.

Table 4.10: Influence of demographic and personal data on suppliers' preference constructs

	Preference of suppliers' salespeople	BEE status	Service quality	Relationship with salespeople and managemen t	Environment sustainabilit y	Culture, EE, and AA	Personal relationship and gifts	Access and exceeding expectations
Industry type	0.019**	0.833	0.388	0.030**	0.117	0.775	0.376	0.150
Classification	0.048**	0.000*	0.002**	0.056	0.812	0.001*	0.000*	0.022**
Size	0.008**	0.733	0.041**	0.001*	0.447	0.045**	0.135	0.166
Locale	0.361	0.063	0.732	0.398	0.014**	0.805	0.064	0.389
Status	0.577	0.007**	0.000*	0.001*	0.000*	0.015*	0.046**	0.056
Basis	0.225	0.420	0.900	0.007**	0.966	0.582	0.089	0.294
Gender	0.136	0.294	0.003**	0.710	0.445	0.318	0.806	0.011**
Pop. group	0.085	0.010**	0.106	0.000*	0.000*	0.127	0.015**	0.084
Age	0.961	0.117	0.054	0.060	0.471	0.022**	0.062	0.440
Language	0.722	0.042*	0.000*	0.011**	0.003**	0.284	0.706	0.104
Experience	0.019**	0.118	0.510	0.261	0.414	0.143	0.383	0.409
Education	0.024**	0.006**	0.001*	0.006**	0.187	0.113	0.015**	0.105
Employ. level	0.416	0.714	0.002**	0.000*	0.137	0.350	0.000*	0.000*
Decision level	0.029**	0.720	0.002**	0.006**	0.043**	0.260	0.003**	0.000*
Strategy	0.915	0.301	0.006**	0.267	0.104	0.241	0.081	0.621
Policy	0.763	0.691	0.140	0.087	0.021**	0.437	0.024**	0.269
Procedures	0.721	0.070	0.324	0.991	0.892	0.008**	0.101	0.899

** Wald Chi-Square test showed a significant difference at $p < 0.05$
* Wald Chi-Square test showed a significant difference at $p < 0.001$

Table 4.10 shows the *tests of model effects* in terms of Wald Chi-Square tests, which is based on the *Bonferroni correction* pairwise post hoc tests regarding the influence of demographic and personal data on the eight suppliers' preference constructs, and showed significant differences between the following variables:

4.7.1 Industry type

Preference of suppliers' salespeople ($p < 0.05$): Tertiary industry respondents (M = 2.56, SE = 0.206) exhibited less positive preference of suppliers' salespeople sentiment than quaternary respondents (M = 2.97, SE = 0.217).

Personal relationship and gifts ($p < 0.05$): Secondary industry respondents (M = 2.18, SE = 0.255) showed less favourable personal relationship and gifts predisposition than quaternary respondents (M = 2.70, SE = 0.262).

4.7.2 Business classification

Preference of suppliers' salespeople (p < 0.05): Private limited company respondents (M = 2.93, SE = 0.214) displayed more favourable preference of suppliers' salespeople perceptions than public company respondents (M = 2.56, SE = 0.235).

BEE status (p < 0.001): Sole proprietor respondents (M = 3.29, SE = 0.270) displayed less positive BEE status sentiments than close corporation (M = 2.55, SE = 0.236), private limited company (M = 2.56, SE = 0.230), government or quasi-government organisation (M = 2.13, SE = 0.246), and not-for profit organisation (M = 2.26, SE = 0.260) respondents. Additionally, government or quasi-government organisation respondents (M = 2.13, SE = 0.246) exhibited more favourable predispositions than partnership (M = 2.86, SE = 0.280) and public company (M = 2.86, SE = 0.253) respondents.

Service quality (p < 0.05): Sole proprietor (M = 1.41, SE = 0.194) and partnerships (M = 1.42, SE = 0.202) respondents displayed more favourable service quality perceptions than public company (M = 1.98, SE = 0.182) and government or quasi-government organisation (M = 1.94, SE = 0.178) respondents.

Culture, EE, and AA ($p < 0.001$): Partnership (M = 4.21, SE = 0.237); Private Limited company (M = 4.22, SE= 0.19479); Public Company (M = 4.21, SE = 0.214); and Government or quasi-Government Organisation (e.g., Municipality) (M = 4.36, SE = 0.209) showed more favourable Culture, EE, and AA perceptions than Sole Proprietors (M = 3.55, SE = 0.228).

Relationship with salespeople and management ($p < 0.001$): Partnerships (M = 3.73, SE = 0.252) displayed more positive personal relationships and gifts sentiments than public company (M = 2.99, SE = 0.228); government or quasi-government organisation (M = 3.06, SE = 0.222); and not-for profit organisation (M = 2.91, SE = 0.235).

Access and exceeding expectations ($p < 0.05$): Private Limited company (M = 4.13, SE = 0.202) exhibited greater positive access and exceeding expectations sentiment in comparison to Public Company (M = 3.73, SE = 0.222).

4.7.3 Size of business

Preference of suppliers' salespeople (p < 0.05): Small sized business respondents (M = 2.95, SE = 0.221) showed more favourable preference of suppliers' salespeople predisposition than large-sized business respondents (M = 2.48, SE = 0.213).

Service quality (*p* < 0.05): Large-sized businesses (M = 4.43, SE = 0.165) showed more favourable preference of service quality predisposition than small-sized businesses (M = 4.15, SE = 0.172).

Personal relationship and gifts (*p* < 0.05): Small-sized businesses (M = 2.75, SE = 0.267) showed more favourable preference of personal relationships and gifting predisposition than medium-sized businesses (M =2.37, SE = 0.248), and large-sized businesses (M = 2.07, SE = 0.257).

Culture, EE, and AA (*p* < 0.05): Small-sized businesses (M = 4.28, SE = 0.202) showed more favourable preference of culture, EE, and AA predisposition than large-sized businesses (M = 3.97, SE = 0.194).

Environment sustainability (*p* < 0.05): Local organisations (M = 3.86, SE = 0.208) showed a more favourable environment sustainability preference predisposition than nationally represented organisations (M = 3.50. SE = 0.203).

4.7.4 Status of business

BEE status (*p* < 0.05): Regional office (M = 3.70, SE = 0.236) showed a more favourable BEE status preference predisposition than head office (M = 3.32, SE = 0.223), local or branch office (M = 3.28, SE = 0.225) and local international branch office (M = 3.12, SE = 0.271).

Service quality (*p* < 0.001): Head office (M = 4.56, SE = 0.161) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than Local or branch office (M = 4.47, SE = 0.162), reginal office (M = 4.37, SE = 0.170) and local international branch office (M = 3.83, SE = 0.196).

Personal relationships and gifts (*p* < 0.001): Local international branch office (M = 2.93, SE = 0304) showed a more favourable personal relationship and gift preference predisposition than head office (M = 2.19, SE = 0.250) and regional office (M 2.08, SE = 0.264).

Environment sustainability (*p* < 0.001): Local international branch office (M = 4.05, SE = 0.247) showed a more favourable environment sustainability preference disposition than regional offices (M = 3.70, SE = 0.214), head office (M = 3.65, SE = 0.203), and local office or branch office (M = 3.33, SE = 0.204)

Culture, EE, and AA ($p < 0.05$): Local international branch office (M = 4.46, SE = 0.230) showed a more favourable culture, EE, and AA preference predisposition that Head office (M = 3.97, SE = 0.189), and Local office or branch office (M -= 3.90, SE = 0.190).
Relationship with salespeople and management ($p < 0.05$): Local international branch office (M 3.54, SE = 0.212) showed a more relationship with salespeople and management preference predisposition than regional office (M 3.04, SE = 0.212).

4.7.5 Basis of procurement

Relationship with salespeople and management ($p < 0.05$): Personal relationships and gifts ($p < 0.05$): Decentralised purchasing (M = 2.55, SE = 0.250) showed a more favourable personal relationship and gift preference disposition than centralised purchasing (M = 2.24, SE = 0.245).

4.7.6 Gender

Service quality ($p < 0.05$): Males (M = 4.40, SE = 0.158) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than females (M = 4.21, SE = 0.159).
Access and exceeding expectations ($p < 0.05$): Males (M = 4.18, SE = 0.192) showed a more favourable employee access and service quality (exceeding customer expectations) preference predisposition than females (M = 3.98, SE = 0.194).

4.7.7 Population group

Personal relationships and gifts ($p < 0.001$): Black respondents (M = 2.86, SE = 0.230) showed a more favourable personal relationship and gifting preference disposition than White (M = 2.30, SE = 0.240) and Coloured (M = 2.05, SE = 0.260) respondents.
Environment sustainability ($p < 0.001$): Black respondents (M = 3.89, SE = 0.189) showed a more environmental sustainability preference predisposition than White (M = 3.37, SE = 0.195) and Coloured (M = 3.37, SE = 0.211) respondents.
Relationship with salespeople and management ($p < 0.05$): White respondents (M = 3.63, SE = 0.193) showed a more relationship with salespeople and management preference predisposition than Asian (M = 2.73, SE = 0.357) respondents.

4.7.8 Age

Culture, EE, and AA ($p < 0.05$): Respondents under the age of 20 years (M 4.64, SE = 0.444) showed a more favourable culture, EE, and AA reference predisposition than people aged between 51 and 60 years (M = 3.68, SE = 0.200).

4.7.9 Language

BEE status ($p < 0.05$): Sotho speaking respondents (M = 3.69, SE = 0.400) showed a more favourable BEE status preference predisposition than those who spoke Venda (M = 2.70, SE = 0.524).

Service quality ($p < 0.001$): Venda speaking respondents (M = 4.72, SE = 0.378) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than English (M = 4.04, SE = 0.189) and Pedi speakers (M = 2.48, SE = 0.587).

Personal relationships and gifts ($p < 0.05$): Afrikaans respondents (M = 3.07, SE = 0220) showed more favourable service quality preference predisposition than Xhosa speakers (M = 2.39, SE = 0.240).

Environment sustainability (p < 0.05): English respondents (M = 3.87, SE = 0.157) showed a more favourable environment sustainability preference predisposition than Xhosa speakers (M = 3.41, SE = 0.195).

4.7.10 Procurement experience

Preference of suppliers' salespeople (p < 0.05): Procurement employees with 41+ years of experience and above (M = 3.88, SE = 0.506) displayed more favourable preference of suppliers' salespeople perceptions than procurement employees with 5 years or less (M = 2.43, SE = 0.199), 11 – 20 years (M = 2.31, SE = 0.193), and 21 – 30 years (M = 2.37, SE = 0.218) of experience.

4.7.11 Education

Preference of suppliers' salespeople (*p* < 0.05): Respondents with an honour's qualification (M = 2.98, SE = 0.250) showed a more favourable supplier salespeople preference predisposition than those who had a certificate up to one year or less (M = 2.48, SE = 0.209).

BEE status (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who had an honours qualification (M = 3.59, SE = 0.269) showed a more favourable BEE status preference predisposition than those who had a certificate (M = 3.08, SE = 0.224).

Service quality (*p* < 0.001): Respondents who had a PhD equivalent qualification (M = 4.77, SE = 0.307) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than those who had a under grade 12 qualification (M = 3.96, SE = 0.186).

Personal relationships and gifts (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who had an under grade 12 education (M= 2.86, SE = 0.290) showed a more favourable personal relationship and gifting preference predisposition than those who had a master's degree (M = 1.98, SE = 0.284).

Relationship with salespeople and management (*p* < 0.05): Respondents with a certificate up to one year in duration (M = 3.32, SE = 0.202) showed a more favourable relationship with salespeople and management preference disposition than those with a master's degree (M = 2.97, SE = 0.299).

4.7.12 Employment level

Service quality (*p* < 0.05): Business owners (M = 4.61, SE = 0.174) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than senior buyers/procurement officers (M = 4.20, SE = 0.178) and finance managers (M = 3.91, 0.209).

Personal relationships and gifts (*p* < 0.001): Accountants (M = 2.94, SE = 0.296) showed a more favourable personal relationships and gifts preference predisposition than business owners (M = 2.01, SE = 0.271) and finance managers (M = 2.00, SE = 0.325).

Relationship with salespeople and management (*p* < 0.001): CEOs and MDs (M = 4.02, SE = 0.291) showed a more favourable relationships with salespeople and management preference predisposition than buyers/procurers (M = 3.47, SE = 0.203) business owners (M = 3.15, SE = 0.218), senior buyer/procurement officer (M = 2.92, SE = 0.222) and finance managers (M = 2.73, SE = 0.261).

Access and exceeding expectations (*p* < 0.001): CEOs and MDs (M = 4.50, SE = 0.284) showed a more favourable access and exceeding expectations preference predisposition than business owners (M = 4.32, SE = 0.213), buyers/procurers (M = 4.16, SE = 0.198), manager buyer/procurement (M = 4.10, SE = 0.208) and senior buyer/procurement officer (M = 3.68, SE = 0.216).

4.7.13 Decision level

Preference of suppliers' salespeople (*p* < 0.05): Procurement officers with a procurement level of R250 000 to R500 000 showed a more favourable preference of supplier preference predisposition than those with a purchasing level of between R100 000 and R250 000 (M = 2.43, SE = 0.241).

Service quality (*p* < 0.05): Procurement officers with a purchase level of R500 000 or less (M = 4.54, SE = 0.164) showed a more favourable service quality preference predisposition than those who could purchase above R1 000 000 (M = 4.13, SE = 0.185).

Personal relationships and gifts (*p* < 0.05): Procurement officers with a purchase level between R250 001 to R500 000 (M = 2.80, SE = 0.262) showed a more favourable personal relationship and gits preference predisposition than those who could purchase between R50 001 and R100 000 (M = 2.62, SE = 0.2630 and R750 001 to R1 000 000 (M = 1.79, SE = 0.317).

Environment sustainability (*p* < 0.05): Procurement officers with a purchase level of between R250 001 and R500 000 (M = 4.01, SE = 0.213) showed a more favourable environment sustainability preference predisposition than those who could purchase between R500 001 and R750 000 (M = 3.60, SE = 0.305).

Relationship with salespeople and management (*p* < 0.05): Procurement officers with a purchase level of between R250 001 to R500 000 or less (M = 3.67, SE = 0.211) showed a more favourable relationship with salespeople and management preference predisposition than those who could purchase R50 000 and below (M = 3.40, SE = 0.205), between R50 001 to R100 000 (M = 3.40, SE = 0.211), and R500 001 to R750 000 (M = 2.52, SE = 0.303).

Access and exceeding expectations (*p* < 0.001): Procurement officers with a purchase level of R50 000 or less (M = 4.29, SE = 0.200) showed a more favourable access and exceeding expectations preference predisposition than those who could purchase between R50 001 to R100 000 (M = 4.23, SE = 0.206), R250 000 to R500 000 (M = 4.22, SE = 0.206) and R500 000 to R750 000 (M = 3.24, SE = 0.295).

4.7.14 Procurement strategy

Service quality (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who indicated a procurement strategy (M = 4.16, SE = 0.169) showed less favourable service quality predisposition than those that did not have a procurement strategy (M = 4.45, SE = 0.159).

4.7.15 Procurement policy

Environment sustainability (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who indicated a procurement policy (M = 3.86, SE = 0.204) exhibited more positive environment sustainability perceptions in comparison to those that did not have a procurement policy (M = 3.51, SE = 0.217).
Relationship with salespeople and management (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who indicated a procurement policy (M = 3.11, SE = 0.202) displayed less favourable relationship with salespeople and management sentiment compared to those that did not have a procurement policy (M = 3.45, SE = 0.215).

4.7.16 Procurement procedures

Culture, EE, and AA (*p* < 0.05): Respondents who indicated procurement procedures (M = 4.28, SE = 0.189) showed more favourable Culture, EE, and AA predisposition than those that did not have procurement procedures (M = 3.90, SE = 0.202).4.8 Structural equation model (SEM) analysis

4.8 Structural equation model (SEM) analysis

The SEM analysis regarding the goodness-of-fit measurement statistics resulted in an acceptable model fit: χ^2/df = 1.655, RMSEA = 0.038; NFI = 0.931; TLI = 0.955; CFI = 0.971; GFI = 0.937; and SRMR = 0.076. The common method bias test was used to assess the constrained common method factor (CMF) and unconstrained CMF models. The χ^2 test established that there was a significant different (p < 0.001) between the constrained and unconstrained CMF models. Hence, the unconstrained CMF model was adopted due to the shared variance. A Cook’s Distance test ascertained that there was no outlying variable response bias, so the full sample was utilised.

Table 4.11: Supplier preference constructs collinearity statistics

Supplier preference constructs	**Tolerance**	**VIF**
BEE status	0.795	1.259
Service quality	0.934	1.070
Relationship with salespeople and management	0.961	1.040
Environmental sustainability	0.772	1.295
Culture, EE, and AA	0.702	1.425
Personal relationships and gifts	0.830	1.205
Access to personnel and exceeding expectations	0.877	1.140

The SEM model independent variables were evaluated via a multi-collinearity test to establish if the supplier preference constructs were not excessively correlated. The supplier preference constructs tolerance ranged between 0.702 – 0.961 (greater than 0.1) and the variation inflation factors (VIF) ranged from 1.070 – 1.425 (less than 3), which is indicative that the constructs are too correlated. Refer to Table 4.11 for the construct collinearity statistics. The standardised beta (β) coefficients, variance, and significance (*p*) and of the SEM analysis are exhibited in Figure 4.10.

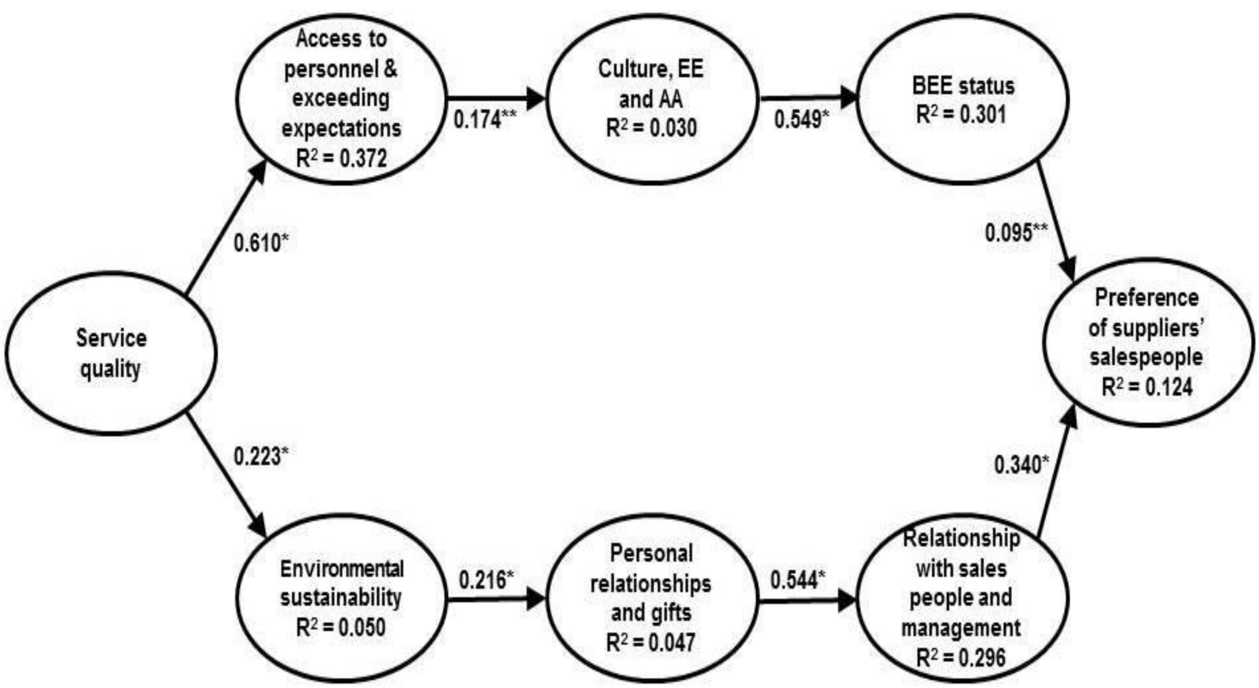

Figure 4.10: Supplier preference factors SEM analysis

*p < 0.001
**p < 0.05

The path coefficients reveal that service quality has a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations ($\beta = 0610$, $p < 0.001$) and environmental sustainability ($\beta = 0.223$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H1 and H2. The path coefficients show that access to personnel and exceeding expectations has a significant positive effect on culture, EE, and AA ($\beta = 0.174$, $p < 0.05$), and environmental sustainability has a significant favourable influence on personal relationships and gifts ($\beta = 0.216$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H3 and H4. The path coefficients reveal that personal relationships and gifts had a significant positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management ($\beta = 0.544$, $p < 0.001$), and that culture, EE and AA has a significant positive effect on BEE status ($\beta = 0.549$, $p < 0.001$), which supports H5 and H6. The path coefficients show that the relationship with salespeople and management ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < 0.001$) and BEE status ($\beta = 0.095$, $p < 0.001$) has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople, which supports H7 and H8. Additionally, the good variance (R^2) of the different supplier preference constructs was explained for access to personnel and exceeding expectations (37.2%); relationship with salespeople and management (29.6%); BEE status (30.1%); and preference of suppliers' salespeople (12.4%); whereas low variance (R^2) was explained for environmental sustainability (5%); personal relationships and gifts (4.7%); and culture, EE, and AA (3%).

4.9. Summary

Chapter four focused on reporting the empirical findings of the study. A description of each of the various characteristics and factors of this research are included in this chapter, which are related to the research hypotheses. The reliability and validity of the research measurement tool are also included in this chapter as was a factor analysis which was conducted for exploratory reasons to determine the factorability of the data, using statistical measures such as factor loadings, AVE, CR and Cronbach's Alpha. Subsequently, descriptive statistics were calculated on the research data set. The descriptive statistics included reporting on the mean, standard deviation, and standard error. Generalised liner modelling was used to assess the significant differences between the respondents' demographic and personal data, which either had a positive or negative on the suppliers' preference constructs. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the attitudinal scale hypothesised relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter five elaborates on the various findings that were revealed in chapter four. It then links and compares what has been discovered during the study with data that were derived from secondary research, which outlined what has been previously published in textbooks, accredited journals, and like sources. Finally, the researcher compares such findings by using a path analysis to see whether a correlation exists between the variables and hypotheses to develop a new supplier preference model. Supplier pricing, selection criteria and the importance of relationships are now discussed.

5.2. Supplier pricing, selection criteria, and relationships importance

5.2.1 Procurement pricing parameters importance

The price of a product or service can make or break an organisation if it is not computed correctly. Should the price for an offering be too low, it could be perceived by the potential buyer that it is of inferior quality. A low price can also lead to reduced profits and even bankruptcy. On the other hand, if the price is too high and the potential buyer sees little value for money in the offering, sales will diminish over time. The initial price of most goods consists of fixed, variable, and semi-variable costs plus the margin that the organisation incorporates in its price to ensure profitability. It is relevant to note that to achieve break-even point in unit and Rand terms, the firm needs to cover all its costs. Only then can a profit be enjoyed by the organisation for the benefit of the organisation’s longevity.

As asserted in chapter four, the research respondents viewed a good’s acquisition price to be the most important price selection parameter. Although this is normal in a B2C context (the average consumer does not fully understand the total cost of owning a good when deciding to purchase something), it would be foolhardy for an organisation to only take the initial price of an offering into consideration, as the total cost of the good over its lifecycle could be more expensive over time. For example, the initial (acquisition) cost of a good (say an office photocopy machine) could be low at the time of purchase, but when one includes the running cost thereof, it could be worthwhile over the medium to long term to procure a slightly more expensive photocopier because of its low running costs and its superior trade-in value, when it comes to the end of its lifecycle. Therefore, when assessing the price of a good in a B2B situation, it would be wise to consider the TCO, especially when procuring capital goods as it could likely include the acquisition price of the good, the opportunity cost of capital, cost of finance if applicable, maintenance costs, the cost of spare parts, running costs, disposal costs, installation costs, and training costs etcetera. When one examines Table 4.2, one can see that from a B2B perspective, TCO was not ranked by the various respondents as important as the initial price of a good. This does not come as a surprise to the researcher as in his experience as a university lecturer, most mature students who work in a logistics environment do not even know the components that comprise TCO and how to calculate it. This results in huge amounts of money being wasted because of unexpected post-purchase additional costs.

Jackson and Ostrom (1980), Cavinato (1992), Shield and Young (1991), Ellram and Siferd (1993), Ellram (1994), Ferrin and Plank (2002), Watjatrakul (2014), Van Winter and Liebrenz-Himes (2015) assert that the concepts of TCO, lifecycle costs, product life-long costs, and total costs are all related. This view is supported by Walterbusch et al. (2013) and Palmer et al. (2018). Ferrin and Plank (2002), posit that supply chain managers should adopt TCO (a long-term perspective) rather than conducting business solely on the acquisition price. This latter sentiment is echoed by Botes and van Vuuren (2005), Castro and Cepeda-Carrion (2011), Degraeve et al. (2012), and Christopher (2016), as TCO takes into account from a supplier selection perspective, all costs that the purchase and the subsequent use of a component entails in the entire value chain of the company. The TCO approach goes beyond the initial purchase price and studies all costs that occur during the entire lifecycle of the item in the organisation. This is an important viewpoint, because ignoring the TCO of a product could lead to an increase in costs and a reduction in revenue and profits, Christopher (2016) and Gattorna (2015) attest to this by declaring that price drives the quantum of revue and that all costs must be included when developing pricing strategies.

Although it must be remembered that TCO includes the initial price of the good, the study revealed that in the eyes of the respondents, the initial purchase price is a more significant factor as a vendor selection criterion than TCO. Known as the ‘Price Iceberg,’ the acquisition price is more visible than other ‘hidden’ costs, and much like the sad tale of the Titanic, the ignoring of such invisible costs could lead to the untimely ‘sinking’ of the organisation. This leads to generic vendor selection criteria.

5.2.2 Generic vendor selection criteria

As can be noted in Table 4.3, the reliability of service, in the opinion of the various respondents, was a significant selection parameter; followed by the ease and completion of orders. Cunningham (2019) propounds that of the following service-specific attributes, namely, perishability, inseparability, fluctuating demand, intangibility, and non-variability, the latter is most relevant in a B2B context. The rationale for this is simple. Buying organisations want reliable service that does not fluctuate over time, so that they, in turn, can service the needs of their customers when such service is needed. This is the reason supply organisations should ensure that service standards are religiously employed and achieved (service levels are usually set by means of an SLA) by employing the right people and training and rewarding them to be customer-centric, so that customer-focused service standards are generated to ensure long-term customer satisfaction.

Frei and McDaniel (2009) propose that a customer service orientation is related to an increase in sales. Therefore, the success of a service provider depends on the quality of the relationship it has with its customers (Panda, 2003), which determines customer satisfaction and loyalty (Lymperopoulos et al., 2006; Hill & Alexander, 2017). Research has shown that service quality influences organisational outcomes such as superior performance (Poretla & Thanassoulis, 2005; Flint et al., 2011), increased sales, reduced costs, and enhanced profit (Levesque & Mc. Dougal, 1996; Kish, 2003; Duncan & Elliot, 2002). It also has a marked impact on market share (Fisher, 2001), improving customer relations, enhancing corporate image, and promoting customer loyalty (Newman, 2001; Szymigin & Carrigan, 2001; Caruana, 2002; Ehigie, 2006). Furthermore, service quality and customer satisfaction were found to be related to customer loyalty through repurchase intentions (Levesque & McDougall, 1996; Newman, 2001; Caruana, 2002, Hill & Alexander, 2017).

From a service quality model point of view, the most popular model used for the evaluation of service quality is SERVQUAL, which was developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985 and 1988). The attributes of service excellence according to Parasuraman et al. (1985), were: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competency, courtesy, assurance, credibility, security, access, and understanding. Parasuraman et al. (1988) later reduced these ten dimensions into five by using factor analysis. Based on the five dimensions, a 22-item survey instrument for measuring service quality was developed. These five dimensions include tangibles (physical facilities, equipment and appearance of personnel), reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately), responsiveness (the willingness to help customers and provide accurate and prompt service), assurance (which includes competence, courtesy, credibility, security and the ability to inspire trust and confidence), and empathy (including access, communication, understanding the customer, caring and individualised attention that the firm provides to its customers). Although all of the above attributes are important, Johnson (2003) of the University of Michigan Business School and Lars Nilsson (2003) of Karlstad University opine in their article titled "The Importance of Reliability and Customization from Goods to Services," that although there is a substantial body of research on quality, disagreement remains as to the effect of reliability, or things going wrong, as opposed to customisation, or things going right on customer satisfaction with goods and services.

Service quality researchers argue that reliability is more important for services because of the nature of the facilitation of services as opposed to the production of tangible goods. Finally, from an SCM perspective, service is based on the perfect order, which is concerned with delivering the seven rights of logistics, namely, getting the right product, to the right place, to the right customer, at the right time, in the right quantities, in the right condition, and at the right price (Teoman, 2020). Without reliable service from a supplier, these rights will never be achieved. Therefore, the findings under this section of the research revealed that the respondents viewed the reliability of service as a significant service-oriented supplier selection criterion. The literature above attests to the research findings that the reliability of service is a profound supplier selection parameter.

5.2.3 Importance of supplier relationships

In Table 4.4, it may be seen that buying firms view the development of long-term relationships as a significant selection and business consideration. This coincides with the modern customer-centric approach in B2B business in that the cementing of long and mutually rewarding relationships between suppliers and their customers is good for business. In addition to the above, it may be observed in Table 4.4 that the respondents believed the relationship between the two entities should be mutually rewarding and be of such a nature that there is co-dependence on one another.

Wisner et al. (2016) suggest that to achieve corporate goals and objectives in a modern business environment, companies have come to the realisation that one of the best ways to do so is to build long-term relationships with suppliers. This sentiment is echoed by Charnes et al. (1985), Horsky and Nelson (1996), Christopher and Holweg (2011), Sillanpää et al. (2015), Monczka et al. (2016), and Aditjandra and Zunder (2018). Exploring the relationship between urban freight demand and the purchasing behaviour of a university. European Transport Research Review, 10(1):1-12. who concur that sound relationships between buying organisations and vendors are crucial and that buying organisations should consider using the selection process to appoint suppliers who are focused on forging mutually beneficial relationships with their customers. It is vital to rate vendors in terms of how they will assist to increase the buying firm’s revenue and profitability.

The findings of the research study and what has been published by the above-mentioned researchers coincide in that a good supplier relationship is a key method for organisations to increase their profits and revenue. Secondly, the vendor selection process should include a method to assess the long-term viability of the supplier as well as its commitment to the cementing of enduring future relationships that are built on trust, mutual respect, service excellence, and transparency.

5.3 Supplier preference constructs

5.3.1 Preference of suppliers’ salespeople

A significant majority of the respondents did not believe that the vendors’ salespeople were a relevant selection criterion. In other words, although salespeople provide an essential service and would be at the epicentre of forming long-term relationships with buying organisations, they were not accepted to be a meaningful selection criterion, in the opinion of the respondents who participated in the study (Dax et al., 2019). Gencer and Gurpinar (2007) and Durmić et al. (2020) report that supplier selection represents the initial step in the process of creating products and services and is a key factor for companies that want to be successful in today's stringent market conditions. Shen and Yu (2013) concur with this sentiment and posit that the effectiveness and efficiency of suppliers are two of the most important competencies that are needed in the supply chain for it to operate smoothly. In line with this, Jafarnejad and Salimi (2013), intimate that the success of the entire supply chain largely depends on supplier and supply-partner selection. This is echoed by Bhutta and Huq (2002) who maintain that the process of supplier selection is a principal factor that has a direct impact on the performance of an organisation.

5.3.2 BEE status

A greater percentage of respondents agreed that BEE was a significant selection factor in comparison to those who disagreed. The findings suggest, according to Andrews (2008), Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2011), Badenhorst-Weiss (2012), Boschoff (2012), Bogopo (2013), Shava (2016) and Forbes et al. (2019), that the key reason for BEE was to ensure advancement in economic transformation and to enhance the economic participation of Black people (African, Coloured, Indian, and Asian people who are South African citizens) in the South African economy. When the new Constitution was adopted, a provision was made that government tenders must take Black-owned entities into consideration. This has expanded beyond local and national government and now includes conducting business with medium to large organisations (Mafundu & Mafini, 2019; Nzo, 2020). This research study confirmed that organisations (particularly government institutions and large buying firms) consider the BEE status of suppliers when appointing them to supply them with goods and services. BEE is therefore a significant selection criterion. Importantly, the vendor's suppliers' (second-tier suppliers) and their suppliers' (third-tier suppliers) BEE status is also a salient consideration when appointing primary and secondary suppliers.

5.3.3 Service quality

A considerable number of suppliers claimed that service quality played a foremost role in the vendor selection process, and the continued support of such vendors. Shirouyehzad et al. (2011) posit that service quality refers to the ability of a supplier to effectively service the needs of one's customers in terms of their requirements and that it plays a significant role in the selection process and the retaining of the supplier's services. Hassan (2017) postulates that the purchasing function is a vital aspect of logistics management, and the main responsibility of this function is the selection of the most efficiently performing vendors and that several criteria are to be considered in evaluating vendors' relative efficiencies, of which price and product and service quality rates highly. Patel and Thakar (2021) propose that selecting vendors is one of the most important decision-making issues in the organisation because of its strategic nature and importance and that the selection of vendors, which involves multiple parameters and numerous conflicting objectives, can be described as the process of finding the right vendors at the right cost, at the right time, in the right quantities with the right quality. It may be noted that previous research and the content of many academic textbooks and publications in accredited journals highlight the germane nature of service quality in a B2B context. Xiao and Kumar (2021) suggest that there is a link between service quality and service experience and that quality service has a huge impact on the relationship between the supplier and the buyer. This research study confirms the significance of this selection criterion as very few of the respondents felt that it was of little significance. To differentiate themselves from competitors, organisations (suppliers) should maintain a high level of service generation so that they may enjoy mutually beneficial relationship longevity.

5.3.4 Relationship with salespeople and management

According to this research study, the forging of a relationship between the buying organisation's personnel and the vendor's salespeople and management represents a significant vendor selection criterion. It is natural in most situations that strong relationships bring people together for the benefit of both parties. Bendapudi and Leone (2002), Evanschitzky et al. (2012), Prajogo et al. (2017), and Tsai et al. (2019) advocate that forming relationships with customers, employees and their management represents an additional selection criterion for new sales representatives in the B2B supplier industry and the positive nature of the relationship between employees and customers is of great import. Kumar and Reinartz (2012) voice that CRM is not only an important tool in markets directed toward end consumers but also plays a major role in the B2B context. They further assert that a vendor can improve relationships with their customers by having a CRM strategy which will help to forge even greater cohesion and cooperation between the two parties. The research study concurs with the findings of previous researchers and publishers that the formation of relationships between the vendor's employees and that of their customers' staff and management team, is a significant selection criterion.

5.3.5 Environmental sustainability

The study revealed that the environmental sustainability of the vendor's philosophy, practices, and offerings is a significant vendor selection yardstick. As a result of pressure from the consumer and B2B customers, both locally and internationally, many organisations are now trying to improve their impacts on the ecology. Jabbour and Jabbour (2009) profess that the inclusion of environmental criteria in the supplier selection process is an important selection benchmark as correct vendor selection will have a positive impact on the environment. This view is supported by Lee et al. (2009), Luthra et al. (2017), and Jain and Singh (2020) who affirm that the identification of savvy sustainable suppliers is a key aspect of the supplier selection process. The findings of this research study, therefore, coincide with the views and opinions of the above-mentioned researchers and that of Nielsen et al. (2014), Gural et al. (2015), and Alikhani et al. (2019). The researcher, therefore, posits that the environmental friendliness, philosophy, practices, and offerings of suppliers are significant selection benchmarks.

5.3.6 Culture, EE, and AA

The findings of the research study revealed that the culture and practice of EE and AA by the vendor are significant vendor selection measures. The abolition of apartheid and separate development have pressurised organisations to adopt AA and EE and to convert the old nationalist prototype autocratic organisational culture, to one that is *Ubuntu* (humanity towards others) in nature. Leonard and Grobler (2006), Horwitz and Jain (2011), Jain et al. (2015), and Gopalakrishnan and Zhang (2017) put forward that the culture of a vendor can either have positive or negative impacts on the vendor's salespeople's attitudes towards their customers. The practice or non-practice of AA and EE by the supplier can either enhance the organisation's culture or have an adverse effect on it. It is therefore imperative for suppliers to practice EE and AA in their workplaces so that a culture of togetherness may be inculcated. This will have a positive impact on the relationship between the vendor and its customers. The findings of this research study concur with the views of the researchers and authors above, that by the supplier treating its employees and particularly its salespeople with dignity and respect, the results of such treatment will have beneficial ramifications on the selection of vendors by buying organisations and the cementing of long-term relationships with them,

5.3.7 Personal relationships and gifts

The findings of the research study revealed that personal relationships and gifting were not significant vendor selection parameters. Because of the widespread practice of nepotism, corruption, and fraud in South Africa, and particularly in government procurement, relationships that are too close between vendor employees and the buyer, and the giving of gifts, are not accepted, and in most instances are forbidden by large institutions and government institutions.

From a relationship point of view, Grewal et al. (2015), Pawłowski and Pastuszak (2016), and Paesbrugghe et al. (2018) suggest that although relationships between the seller and the buyer are important, one needs to differentiate between a working relationship, where the interests of the organisations are uppermost in the minds of the parties, and one which can be used by the seller to leverage an advantage over the buying firm. Vendor salespeople are trained to perform CRM so that strong and mutually beneficial relationships are cemented between the seller and the buyer. There is nothing wrong with this strategy as long as the relationship does not only benefit the vendor at the expense of the buying firm and other competing vendor organisations.

From a gifting perspective, Babb et al. (2016), Chen et al. (2017), and Chen et al. (2020) assert that there is a relationship between gifting and the expectation of reciprocity from the giver. The adage that there is ‘no such thing as a free lunch’ oftentimes rings true and it would be wise for buying organisations to have, as part of their procurement strategy, policies and procedures that handle gifting. This could be the total banning thereof, to the gifts having a maximum monetary attached to them. Although gifting and the forging of close personal relationships are frowned upon in many business sectors, it is difficult for suppliers to inculcate CRM without befriending their customers’ employees. The relationships should therefore be cemented on goodwill and not be seen as a methodology to influence customers and their employees to make business decisions that are not beneficial for both entities.

5.3.8 Access to personnel and exceeding expectations

Griffith and Lee (2016) disclose that the relationship between having access to customer personnel cannot be denied and that likewise its relationship with service excellence cannot be argued. This study revealed that there is a significant correlation between having access to buying organisations and their employees, and the provision of service that exceeds customer expectations. In an era that encourages ‘virtual’ contact between the buyer and the seller, vendors should encourage their employees, and particularly their service staff and salespeople to obtain as much access to a buying organisation's employees as possible, so that a personalised level of service may be generated; that not only meets their customers' expectations but exceeds them as well. Ang and Buttle (2009) state that vendors should formulate, implement, and control customer development strategies for exceeding expectations, so that customer expectations may be fulfilled. The findings of the research study, therefore, concur with the opinions that were expressed by the above-mentioned authors and researchers as only a small percentage of the respondents opined that both were not important vendor selection measures.

5.4 Demographic and personal data influences on suppliers' preference constructs

5.4.1 Industry/sector type

This research study investigated whether the type of industry/sector (e.g., primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary) pertaining to the buying organisation had an impact on the selection of vendors. In other words, would companies that are operating in the tertiary sector have different preference constructs than those in the primary sector, etc.? The findings of the research study uncovered that BEE status (and culture, EE, and AA) were significant in importance for all sector types.

Banshwar et al. (2018) affirm that the selection criterion for suppliers should be based on the sector of the supplier and the buyer and that this can be achieved through primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary frequency control. Oltean-Dumbrava et al. (2014) suggest that researched and industry-validated set of sustainability assessment criteria for industry sectors to rate individually all primary, secondary, tertiary, and quaternary social criteria. Blazevic and Spoljaric (2014) posit that the primary sector activities are the ones where an organisation or person adapts materials from nature (e.g., wood, fish, and so on) and adapts them for further processing and consumption. The secondary economical sector comprises the processing activities that convert the primary inputs into need-satisfying outputs. The tertiary activities are services, which can be defined as intangible, and undividable activities such as legal accounting and business consulting services and so on. The quaternary activities are specific services, which as a basic goal have the common welfare and not an individual personal gain as an objective. As each of these sectors has different needs, the selection of vendors and their respective offerings will mostly be sector based. For example, a farmer might employ a salesperson to sell his wares to a producer who in turn will have salespeople to market completed goods to retailers or wholesalers. In a South African context, where BEE, EE, AA, and culture are important selection criteria (especially government and large organisation procurement), such selection parameters are significant considerations for the various organisations that fall under the above-mentioned sector types. With the above in mind, the researcher opines that the primary and secondary research that has been conducted has indicated that the industry sector of the buyer has a significant influence on the selection of vendors and their offerings, particularly in terms of BEE, EE, AA, and cultural nuances.

5.4.2 Classification

Here the research study was focused on determining whether the industry classification e.g., private limited, sole proprietorships, partnerships, etc., of the customer (buyer) had different preference constructs than public enterprises and so on. The findings of the study revealed that environment sustainability was of significant relevance in terms of business classification. Eker and Eker (2019) claim that there is an interaction between environmental uncertainty, business strategy, and management control systems and that the classification of a business e.g., a public corporation, sole proprietorship, etc., will have their own business strategies, of which environmental sustainability should be an important element. Guarnieri and Trojan (2019) proclaim that a multi-criteria classification of vendors is important, and that sustainability is an important factor when used to select suppliers that meet the needs of a company. Kim and Thuc (2020), proposed that objective factors, including time, cost, safety, and profitability; and subjective factors, including quality, technical performance, functionality, productivity, satisfaction, and environmental sustainability are important factors when one wishes to develop and successfully run a business. Naturally, to do so, one will require the services of vendors who can provide such product/material and service inputs. The findings of the research study and that of the secondary research project, both indicate that there is significant relevance in terms of environmental sustainability and business classification.

5.4.3 Size

There are several organisational sizes ranging from micro enterprises, small family businesses to large international corporations. In this regard, one aim of the research study was to determine whether the size of the buying organisation had an influence on whom it will select to service its business needs. The study unveiled that BEE status was a significant criterion in relation to organisation size. Greyling's (2015) research on the adoption of BEE by small to medium-sized family-owned businesses indicated that such business owners rated the opportunities and advantages of BEE and BBBEE as low, which points to a disagreement towards BEE and BBBEE providing any opportunities and advantages. Maroufkhani et al. (2020) concur and postulate that the adoption of BEE in small and medium enterprises remains unclear. Özturk and Jarbandhan (2020) intimate that the adoption of BEE should focus firstly on small companies rather than big companies, but Govenden (2022) argues that large firms are actively transferring and selling equity in existing white-owned enterprises to Black people. There is little argument that the size of the firm impacts the support it has for appointing BEE as part of a procurement strategy. There seems to be a consensus that large corporations tend to be more BEE focused than smaller firms, and the rationale for this is that for them to win large government tenders, will be dependent on the level of BEE/BBBEE status of the organisation. Small organisations, and especially the owners of family-owned businesses, do not favour BEE for fear that would lose control and ownership should they take on BEE partners. The study therefore revealed that BEE status was a significant criterion in relation to organisation size.

5.4.4 Locale

Oftentimes organisations prefer to procure goods and services from local and national suppliers as opposed to them sourcing goods and services from international vendors. The research study revealed that from a locale perspective, service quality and culture, EE, and AA played a significant role when appointing vendors. The advantages of being close to suppliers are many, including more flexibility, local suppliers are more spontaneously reactive than suppliers who are farther away, the buying firm can have greater control, costs are reduced, there is more revenue as there are no long lead times, it is good for the local business community, and gives the buying firm a greater ability to launch products quickly into the market. If on the other hand, one uses offshore suppliers, the disadvantages include difficulties with logistics, regulations, customs and language, cultural differences, time zones, currency fluctuations, and long lead, times which could lead to lost business and revenue.

Ollinger et al. (2018) advance that important vendor selection criteria include the availability of promotions and discounts, vendor services, and vendor location. The reason for suggesting the latter criterion is that all things being equal, the closer the buying firm is to the seller, the better the service quality will be because queries can be handled quickly and with less disruption. Van Winter and Liebrenz-Himes (2015) suggest that the geographical location, financial position, and the credit rating of suppliers are relevant selection criteria. The geographic position also impacts positively on vendor service. The locale of the vendor also has an influence on culture, EE, and AA. If the supplier is in another country, one would have to take culture, language, tradition, and offshore law into account, whereas if the vendor is a local entity, then culture might not have an adverse effect. Local vendors (especially large ones) will probably be practicing EE and AA, so that too will impact positively on the relationships between the two parties. Therefore, locale has a significant association with service quality, culture, EE, and AA.

5.4.5 Status of the firm (e.g., local, regional, head office, or local international branch)

In this context, the status of the supplier and its suppliers (second and third-tier vendors), could play a relevant role in procurement, especially in terms of service delivery and lead times. The research revealed that in this regard, the preference of salespeople was a significant buying organisation's preference. As suggested above, the location of the supplier is an important selection criterion. Bennett and Klug (2012) debate that supplier proximity translates into better service and communication between the two parties. Pillai and Bindroo's (2020) research showed that supplier proximity improves speed to market new innovations and that greater heterogeneity among suppliers and buying firms, the bigger the need for closeness. Therefore, being close to vendor salespeople provides many advantages as the basis of business could be formed on the relationship between the buyer and the salesperson. The research revealed that the predisposition of salespeople in relation to the status of the firm was a significant buying organisation's preference.

5.4.6 Basis (centralised versus decentralised procurement)

The research study unearthed that the basis on which procurement takes place at a buying firm (i.e., centralised, or decentralised buying) is a significant buying organisation preference. There are many advantages to pursuing a centralised or a decentralised procurement strategy. The former includes the enjoyment of economies of scale, the standardisation of inputs and many others, and the latter, personalised and quick service plus the support of local businesses. The research study revealed that in relation to procurement basis, service quality, environment sustainability and, to a lesser extent, culture, EE, and AA were significant preferences in this regard.

Seidman and Atun (2017) advocate that centralised procurement can achieve direct cost savings, while SCM programmes can reduce stock outs and increase efficiency. Millington and Bhardwaj (2017) assert that the evidence suggests that centralised procurement improves service quality and motivates environmental sustainability as goods and services are procured at a central point for all the organisation's divisions. Halaskova et al. (2021) argue however, that the fiscal decentralisation of public services, improves quality and efficiency and could enhance environmental sustainability as decentralised procurement will result in lower transportation, which will have a positive impact on air, road, rail, and sea pollution plus damage to the road infrastructure. Irrespective of whether the procurement takes place via centralised or decentralised procurement, key considerations regarding procurement, are the provision of service quality from the vendor, the receipt of environmentally sustainable offerings, and the EE, AA, and the culture of the supplier. The EE and AA status of the vendor will ensure that the buyer is supporting a supplier who is employee-centric, which show significant buying-company selection criteria preferences, and that through a cultural fit, the facilitation of service will meet the expectations of the buyer/customer.

5.4.7 Gender

Of the 445 respondents, a significant majority were male procurement officials. If one performed this research study 20 years ago the difference favouring males might have been more. Little research has been conducted in South Africa regarding the gender of the vendor's salespeople being an important selection criterion. From a supplier preference constructs point of view, personal relationships and free gifts, and relationships with salespeople and their management team are significant selection criteria in this regard. The objective of this question was primarily to determine whether the gender of the supplier's salesperson was an important vendor selection criterion. A significant majority of respondents stated that the gender of the salesperson was not a significant vendor selection criterion, however those that asserted that it was posited that personal relationships, the receipt of free gifts and their relationship with vendor management and salespeople to be relevant selection parameters.

Swift and Gruben (2000) voice that as a result of more women entering the field of logistics, SCM and particularly procurement, gender could become an important selection criterion. Orser et al. (2021) suggest that female buyers search more actively and use more information sources than males and that gender could be an important selection criterion. However, they assert that this presumption could not be supported by their sample of buyers. Martin and Simmerman (2008) suggest that gender and race are not good selection criteria and should not be considered when assessing vendors. As can be seen from the findings under the research study and that which was obtained by means of secondary research, both showed that the forming of personal relationships between the vendor’s salespeople and the provision of gifts and the level of communication and the relationship between salespeople and management were closely related to the preference of vendor employee gender. It must be remembered however that only 16.4% of the respondents believed the gender of the supplier’s salespeople was important, thus gender, in this instance, is a significant vendor selection criterion in terms of personal relationships with vendor salespeople and their management team.

5.4.8 Population group

South Africa, in the main, has five population groups, namely, Black, White, Indian, Coloured and Asian citizens. This question was asked to determine whether the race (ethnicity) of the seller’s organisation’s salespeople was an important vendor selection criterion, and whether the buying firm had any preference constructs in terms of supplier salespeople, BEE status, service quality, personal relationships and free gifts, environment sustainability, culture, EE and AA, relationships with salespeople and managers and finally employee access and exceeding expectations. The research indicated that the race of the salesperson had no significant impact in relation to the above preference constructs. It may be noted that from a respondent point of view, 33.7% of the buyers were Black, 32.6% were White, 26.7% Coloured, 5.6% were Indian, and 1.5% Asian. The establishment of this finding indicated that race of the procurement officer had little or even no impact on the vendor selection process. Whereas in the past (during the years of apartheid), this could have played a significant role in the appointment of vendors e.g., the support of like-race vendor salespeople. However, in a post-apartheid business environment, the findings of this research study established that race plays no, or a miniscule role, in determining who the buyer supports.

5.4.9 Age

The age of salespeople has always been a heated debate, as consumers and organisational procurement officers are thought to believe that the older the salesperson is, the more astute and effective they are. From a respondent perspective, ta significant majority of the respondents were between the ages of 21 to 40 years and 41 to 60 years. Therefore, it would have been an interesting exercise to see whether the age of the buyer could influence the appointment of the seller's salespeople. As this was not part of the research project, there are no findings in this regard, but the subject could be food for thought for further research. The research study revealed that the age of the salesperson and the relationship he or she has with the buyer was a significant preference construct.

Spekman (1988) asserts that the demographic profiles (e.g., age, level of education, income) of the salespeople are deemed important during the vendor selection phase of the decision process. Hollenbeck et al. (2009) and Wang et al. (2005) suggest that there are more important things to consider than age. Preis (2003) and Gerlach et al. (2016) that the age difference between the salesperson and the buyer does not impact negatively on service quality and relationships quality. The findings of this research study indicated that there was a relationship between the age of the buyer and the level of relationship he or she has with the vendor's salespeople. Although the research study did not reveal what age group would be more likely to prefer forging personal relationships with vendor salespeople, the fact that age in this regard 'does count.' This aspect of B2B transactions could deserve further research. The researcher however believes that age and the relationship between the two parties would depend on what has been sold, and the interest of the seller and the buyer.

5.4.10 Language

South Africa has eleven official languages, so the question related to whether the home language of the seller could impact on the solicitation of the business from the buyer. The secondary rationale of the question was to determine whether the language of the buyer could have an influence whether the buyer should support salesperson or not. The primary research indicated that from a supplier preference construct, there was a significant relationship between language and the preference of supply salespeople and the relationship with the salespeople.

It is not an inaccurate assumption that South Africans are language sensitive, especially as there are eleven official languages. Makoe and McKinney (2014) posit that Black people can speak four or even more languages (their home tongue, another similar traditional Black language and English and Afrikaans). Although English is the universal language of business, most people prefer to be addressed in their own language. Sadly, a very small percentage of the White population group can speak a Black language (Shutts et al., 2011), and the argument has always been that if Black people are forced to learn to speak English and Afrikaans, that reciprocity by White, Coloured, Indian, and Asian people should be encouraged, even at school level.

Although in an international business context, the linguistic ability of the salesperson would be significant to market his or her offerings (Thaver & Wilcock, 2006; Van Winter & Liebrenz-Himes, 2015), from a South African research perspective, there is little research in this regard. The primary and secondary research has shown that there is a significant relationship between language and salespeople preference and relationships in an international environment. However, in his experience as a salesperson many years ago and as a buyer of goods and services, he is of the opinion language in a South African context is also important when it comes to conducting business. Addressing buyers in their home tongue (if one has the ability to do so) can pay huge dividends both in terms of business acquisition and personal relationships.

5.4.11 Experience

The experience of the vendor's salespeople, in the opinion of the researcher should be of primary importance in respect of vendor selection criteria. The research study unveiled that from a supplier preference construct point of view, service quality was a significant aspect in relation to the experience of the vendor. Kumar et al. (2009), and Shil (2009) put forward that vendor reliability, product quality and vendor experience are the top three vendor selection criteria. Shahroodi et al. (2012), and Cheng (2017) attest that reliability of supplier is the best supplier selection criterion, followed by quality of product, experience of the supplier, lead time, transportation ease and cost, and price of product. The finding above in both the primary and secondary research revealed that the experience of the buyer had a significant relationship with the expectation of service quality from the vendor. This finding is understandable in that the more one is experienced in a particular field (procurement being one of them), the greater the expectation of service quality there will be because of the elevated level of buyer experience and expertise.

5.4.12 Education

Often experience and education go ‘hand-in-hand.’ This question was posed, as asserted before, to determine whether the education level of the salesperson had a significant impact as a vendor selection criterion. The research study revealed that the education level of the salesperson, did not have a significant influence on the selection of the vendor and neither did the education level of the salesperson have a significant impact on the selection process. Hemaida and Schmits (2006) however opine that criteria that are considered the most important in vendor selection are price, delivery, quality, and vendor education (depending in what is being sold). This is echoed by Faisal and Raza (2016) as the IT industry requires IT-educated and highly technical salespeople, especially when the salespeople are servicing academic institutions and large international players. This study found (under both primary and secondary research) that the education level of the buyer does not have a significant influence on vendor selection criteria and supplier preference constructs. However, this will depend on the type of offering that is being vended and as importantly, the sophistication of the organisation the salesperson is selling to.

5.4.13 Employment level

The question pertaining to the employment level of the salesperson (e.g., salesperson, senior salesperson, account executive, and so on) was asked to determine whether, from a supplier preference construct perspective, it was an important selection criterion. In this regard (employment level of the salesperson) there was a relationship between employment level and BEE rating of the supplier. There is an array of positions and levels of employment in procurement ranging from a junior procurement officer to that of a procurement director (Jermsittiparsert et al., 2019). This question, as stated before, was asked to determine whether the employment level of the salespeople was an important vendor selection parameter. Evanschitzket al. (2012) claim that employee level of the salesperson is important as it can lead to quicker decision-making and the salesperson can use adaptive selling techniques because of the salesperson’s education and seniority. Harju (2010) concurs that the seniority and education of the salesperson can have a marked impact on the relationship between the two organisations. As can be noted above, primary, and secondary research indicated that was a meaningful relationship between the BEE rating of the supplier and the employment level of the sales professional. As BEE is an organisational policy, one assumes that the level of supplier’s

BEE status/rating, prior to appointment will be assessed at management level by the buying firm to gauge whether the supplier has sufficient points to qualify as a preferential supplier. This is true in public (government) procurement where purchasing is done at a highly substantial monetary level.

5.4.14 Decision level

Salespeople are expected to make decisions on behalf of their organisations, and the quantum of money involved in the sale could involve the level of the salesperson's position within the vendor firm (e.g., the salesperson may negotiate up R1 million for example). In terms of a supplier preference construct perspective, the BEE rating of the supplier was a significant factor. This finding coincides with that of employment level (discussed above), as usually the decision-level from a monetary perspective relates to the level of employment e.g., junior employees normally must refer large purchases to their superiors. Shyur and Shih's (2006) hybrid MCDM model for strategic vendor selection reveals that multiple criteria need to be carefully examined when appointing vendor salespeople and that many decision makers or experts base the appointment of vendors on parameters which should include the level of decision-making a salesperson can make (Dax et al., 2019). Katsikeas et al. (2004) argues that the level of a supplier salesperson allows him or her to make various purchasing decisions. From a BEE rating point of view, the higher the rating equates to greater exposure government tenders, which oftentimes can be substantial in value. Therefore, the more elevated the salesperson's level of employment is, the greater purchasing decisions power he or she may have. For example, large purchases by nationally represented organisations require the vendor to be BEE compliant. As junior salespeople are usually divorced from dealing with large buying firms (normally the domain of account executives) senior salespeople with decision-making capacities and capabilities will be required to conclude or negotiate transactions of such a magnitude. The relationship therefore between the decision-level of the vendor and BEE transactions are closely related.

5.4.15 Strategy

Many vendors and buying organisations do not have a formal and well-articulated procurement strategy, which was revealed by a significant majority respondents who inferred that their organisations did not have such strategy. The question was posed to establish the preference constructs of the buyer in terms of a procurement strategy and its relationship with the parameters listed below. The primary research study revealed that from a strategy point of view, the preference of the supplier's salespeople and access to procurement staff and managers as well as exceeding the expectations of the buyer were significant selection criteria. In other words, a procurement strategy of the buyer should take into consideration how effective the vendor's salespeople and management will meet and even exceed customer expectations so that once the procurement strategy has been formulated, implemented, and controlled, the procurement objectives of the buying firm will be realised. Mena et al. (2018) declared that a procurement strategy should drive value through the supply chain. Asif (2022) agrees with these sentiments and suggests that procurement strategies significantly influence supply chain. For any procurement strategy to realise its objectives vendor salespeople need to service the organisation's input needs. It must also have easy access to vendor management so that expectations ca be met and even exceeded.

5.4.16 Policy

A policy is broad statement; a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by an organisation. This question was asked to determine the number of respondent organisations that had well-articulated procurement policies and with regards to such policy, what would be a significant vendor selection criterion. The research revealed that preference of supplier salespeople and BEE status were of significance. BEE is a policy of the South African government which aims to generate a broader participation in the economy by people of colour (Black Coloured, Indian, and Asian citizens), especially to redress inequalities that were created by apartheid. It provides incentives such as preferential treatment in terms of government procurement to businesses which contribute to BEE according to several measurable criteria. To win any tender, the tenderer must be BEE compliant as well as its first and second-tier suppliers. This therefore requires the vendor to be directly BEE compliant and vicariously its salespeople as well (South Africa, 2019). Sibanda et al. (2020) posit that South African municipalities use supply chains to procure goods, services and works for the public good. When public entities procure, they insist that in terms of preferential procurement policy, business will only be conducted with compliant vendors. Therefore, to take advantage of lucrative government orders the vendor must conform to the policy of BEE.

5.4.17 Procedures

A procedure is a series of actions conducted in a certain order or manner and an established or official way of doing something. This question was asked to determine the number of respondent organisations that had well-articulated procurement procedures and with regards to such procedure, what would be a significant vendor selection criterion. The research revealed that preference of supplier salespeople, personal relationships, environment sustainability, and access to employees and management and exceeding expectations showed significance. Kakwezi and Nyeko (2019) propose that the effectiveness of the procurement processes and procedures impact positively on organisational performance. A vendor and its salespeople who adhere to buyer processes and procedures will enhance their relationship, have an impact on environmental sustainability by recommending and marketing green offering and with the development of personal relationships and access to vendor management, the expectations of the buying firm will be met and hopefully exceeded.

5.5 Supplier preference model associations

5.5.1 Service quality - access to personnel and exceeding expectations

The research study verified a significant positive relationship between service quality, exceeding customer expectations, and access to vendor personnel and exceeding expectations. One cannot facilitate service excellence (high-quality support) without the vendor having easy and open access to their customer’s personnel and management team. A good relationship between vendors and their customers is important for two reasons, namely, it ensures that the buying company gets the best products and services at the best possible price, and secondly, it builds trust, which can lead to more business from the customer. Vendors are expected to be accountable for quality products and services, have the production capacity and capabilities to satisfy the needs of their customers, have the requisite expertise to ensure that their offerings are appropriate for customers’ needs and target market, have a cultural fit with the customer, have ease of communication which requires access to customer personnel, and as importantly, must be ethically and legislatively compliant.

Customer expectations are a customer’s requirements and assumptions about a vendor, its product, brand, or service, and the level of vendor attention the customer needs to receive

throughout their association with the vendor’s products, services, and organisation. Exceeding customers' expectations (providing service in excess of what is expected) can inspire customers to increase their support, and customers who have high expectations about a vendor’s products or services, will not only become brand/vendor loyal but will pursue an enduring mutually-beneficial relationship, thereby helping to increase profits and attain or even exceed revenue objectives for both parties in the equation. Abdolshah (2013), Mishra et al. (2019), Taherdoost, and Brard (2019), and Zygiaris et al. (2022) submit that quality products and services are the main criteria for supplier evaluation and selection and posit that good service quality offered to customers generates customer satisfaction as well as customer loyalty to the service provider.
It makes sense, therefore, that the provision of service excellence (which exceeds expectation) will assist vendors to have good relations with customers and their employees, and that such outstanding service will help to ensure access to personnel, centres of influence, and senior management. These findings concur with the first hypothesis, which suggests that service quality has a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding their expectations in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.2 Service quality - environmental sustainability

The research study revealed a positive significant relationship between service quality and environmental sustainability in terms of vendor selection criteria. In a modern world such as today, consumers and B2B customers expect serviced quality but not at the expense of harming the environment. The aim of all firms should be on satisfying the needs of their customers, and the vendor offering sustainable inputs to its customers. This will go a long way to achieving the lofty goal of customer appeasement. It is simple to understand that sustainable (green) inputs (materials and components etc.) should translate into sustainable outputs. Organisations need to examine the wider political, environmental, and social perspectives in which they conduct business. This includes the role of government, investors, suppliers, and customers. To do this, organisations need to have sustainable business strategies, which should include the triple bottom line, namely, profit, people, and the planet. The goal of the strategy should be to protect the environment and the interests of the organisations’ various direct and indirect stakeholders over the long term.

D'Souza et al. (2020), Jakhar, et al. (2020), and Tundys (2022) postulate that management functions like marketing, operations, and logistics have become pressurised to include sustainability in every decision that is made and that if this is done, it will help to give the organisation a marketing edge. Wang et al. (2021) suggest that by working closer with suppliers, a buying organisation can lessen its environment and social impact and position itself for strong growth and sustainability in supply chains. Wang et al. (2021) propose that the matter of sustainability has become a strategic issue for any company in today's volatile times. Sustainability starts with sourcing appropriate suppliers and their green inputs, and through a sustainable production process, the outputs will likewise be sustainable. To achieve this, vendors need to market quality products (materials, components, parts, etc.) and services that are sustainable over the long term. The above coincides with the second hypothesis, which asserts that service quality has a significant favourable effect on environmental sustainability in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.3 Personnel and exceeding expectations - culture, EE, and AA

The research study ascertained a positive significant relationship between personnel and exceeding expectations and culture, EE, and AA. Organisational culture is a set of beliefs, principles, norms, and ways of behaving that collectively give organisations distinctive characters. Therefore, for organisations to perform well, there has to be some cultural fit. Hartnell et al. (2016) voice that when only two firms are involved, cultural similarity is a strong predictor of positive outcomes such as enhanced relationships and business. Thus, a cultural fit between the vendor and the customer, the provision of superior service and value, the forging of strong mutually rewarding relationships, and free access to a buying organisation's employees can have a positive and significant effect on the culture of vendor's customer and *vice versa*. By providing the aforementioned customer-centric services and activities, the vendor will facilitate personal service that should exceed customer expectations. As asserted before, the purpose of EE is to achieve workplace equity by promoting equal opportunity for all of an organisation's employees, irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. It is reasonable to assume that an EE-centric vendor, whose employees have access to a customer's employees, will, through their behaviour, have a positive influence on the customer and its staff. Jansen van Rensburg (2016) advocates in this regard that by developing EE and skills, the skills of employees will be strengthened, and the effectiveness of the business will increase. Diversity improves the organisation's culture, which should lead to more satisfied customers.

AA, in the opinion of Crosby et al. (2006), is a set of procedures designed to negate unlawful and unfair discrimination among applicants for employment and education, treat the results of prior discrimination, and prevent such discrimination to take place in the future. In terms of AA, the researcher feels that like culture and EE, if a vendor practices AA in its workplace by employing, for example, previously disadvantaged operational employees and salespeople, and uses them to access buying firms' personnel, and exceed their expectations, both organisations will benefit therefrom. Dass and Parker (2017) suggest that firms should encourage employees to view AA, not as a barrier, and should be made a part of all customer, vendor, and employee programs. Thus, it is the opinion of the researcher that afford a vendor who is EE and AA-oriented access to customer personnel and exceeding their expectations, it will have a significant positive impact on the customer's culture. Therefore, the findings coincide with the third hypothesis, which asserts that access to buyer personnel and exceeding their expectations, does have a significant positive effect on culture, EE, and AA in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.4 Environmental sustainability - personal relationships and gifts

This research study proved a significant relationship between environmental sustainability and personal relationships and gifts. Luthra et al. (2017) declare that environmental sustainability refers to the responsibility of conserving natural resources and protecting global ecosystems to support the health and well-being, of people throughout the world; now and in the future. Sustainability is explained as meeting the needs and wants of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs in terms of the acquisition, and use of natural resources. It has three main pillars, namely, people, planet, and profit (social, environmental, and economic pillars).

Unlike AA and EE, there is currently no strict and enforceable legislation to force firms to take on sustainability, although this could change in the future if organisations ignore 'People' and the 'Planet' (environment) in their pursuit to increase their bottom lines. Villena and Gioia (2020) found that in recent years an increasing number of multinational corporations (MNCs) have committed themselves to collaborating with suppliers that adhere to social and environmental standards. These researchers also proclaim that organisations should work towards creating a more sustainable supply chain. Even in a South African context, a retailer like Woolworths has become focused on the environmental sustainability of their suppliers in order for them, as an enterprise, to offer environment friendly offerings. Traditionally, these MNCs expect their first-tier suppliers (agents and wholesalers etc.) to comply with these exacting standards, and they expect that their suppliers in turn ask for compliance from their suppliers (producers, farmers etc.), who ideally ask the same from their vendors, and so on. The goal is to create a tier of sustainable practices that flow smoothly throughout the supply network, and to achieve this, they must establish long-term sustainability goals. Villena and Gioia (2020) further opine that organisations require first-tier suppliers to set their own long-term sustainability objectives and goals and that they include lower-tier suppliers in an overall sustainability/green strategy and that they task a specifically designated employee to manage the firm’s sustainability program to first-and-lower-tier suppliers.

So, with the above in mind, should both institutions (buyer and seller) practice environmental sustainability for their mutual benefit and the benefit of their stakeholders, closer relationships will be forged as a result of such compliance. In other words, and in this instance, environmental sustainability will have a significant and beneficial influence on relationships. This opinion is supported by Freeman and Chen (2015) and Luthra et al. (2017), who advocate that firms should look at green supplier selection criteria. Luthra et al. (2017) also indicate that due to increased customer knowledge and ecological pressures from markets and various stakeholders, it is important for firms to form strong relationships with supply chain members who are sustainability compliant. Alikhani (2019) vouches that supplier selection is a multi-faceted strategic decision and that there is little research that considers factors such as sustainability and risk management simultaneously, and that such risk can be diminished by mutually beneficial relationships. Finally, Guarnieri and Trojan (2019) insist that vendor selection decisions should be based upon social, ethical and environment criteria. Therefore, these findings coincide with the fourth hypothesis, which suggests that environmental sustainability has a significant favourable influence on personal relationships in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.5 Personal relationships and gifts - relationship with salespeople and management

This research study found a significant relationship between personal relationships and gifts and relationship with salespeople and management. Gligor and Holcomb (2013) posit that personal relationships influence behaviour within a supply-chain context and that business relationships are normally based on rules, procedures, and SLAs that are entered into between buying and selling firms and other supply chain partners. Adobor (2006) and Mocke et al. (2016) claim that personal relationships that have been developed between parties who are mutually connected through business and who have a collaborative relationship with one another, can develop into mutual interdependence. The advantages of personal relationships between buying and selling firms and their employees include more effective communication, knowledge of each entity's business processes and offerings, improved problem solving, reduced costs, increased end-customer centrism, increased efficiency, reduced price volatility and sensitivity, continuous operational improvements, sharing of processes and systems, mutual trust, and respect and so on (Roy et al., 2017). Previous studies have researched the role of relationships from a B2B perspective (Marasco, 2008), although several studies have focused on operational, financial, and structural matters, without assigning much attention to the relational effects (Theron et al., 2008; Sharma et al., 2022).

Spekman and Carrayway (2006) state that personal relationships tend to enhance communication and business knowledge, which leads to improved performance levels between the buyers and suppliers of logistics services. Personal relationships can oftentimes be separated from other business-specified relationships, because many result in personal relationships outside of a work environment (Adobor 2006; Gligor & Holcomb, 2013). There are two primary reasons according to Gable and Reis (2010) why personal relationships are formed. Firstly, the formation of personal relationships improves the overall professional interests of the two parties, and, secondly, personal relationships create friendships that can be enduring in nature. Personal relationships are influenced by three dimensions that facilitate trust and information exchange between members. These dimensions include personal affection, personal communication, and personal credibility (Khodyakov, 2007). Therefore, it can be noted from the above, that personal relationships, which have been formed between the vendor and its customer, can have a significant positive influence on relationships with salespeople and the management of the two supply chain partners.

Sternquist and Chen (2006) and Gunduz and Önder (2013) express that the issue of gifts is a controversial matter, and many managers and business owners argue that gifts are never free and are of irreversible benefit to the giver. Gifts are often provided in a B2B context as a method to develop and maintain the relationship between suppliers and their business customers, yet, at the same time, giving and receiving gifts is cited as one of the most ethically problematic issues in purchasing (or supply management) and sales (Kitson & Campbell, 1996; Cooper et al., 1997; Gneezy et al., 2019). From a relationship marketing perspective, another anomaly is created as relationship marketing which is characterised by mutual trust, friendship, collaboration, and commitment, to the provision of long-term benefits for both the seller and the buyer (Grönroos, 2000; Fisher, 2007). Although the giving of gifts may be seen as a controversial act, if the gift does not have great Rand value and is given on the basis of forging relationships between the buying and selling company with the full knowledge and permission of management, then the provision of a gift can have a positive impact on the relationship between the supplier’s salesperson and the recipient (Yakovlev & Demidova, 2012). The relationship between the vendor’s employees and that of the customer can be enhanced, as stated above, by the gifting of small and low value gifts.

This above discussion concurs with the fifth hypothesis, which suggests that personal relationships and gifts have a significant positive influence on relationships between vendor employees and the customer’s procurement staff. From a sustainability perspective, should the gift receiver (customer) be green procurement focused, and insist, where possible, that the vendor markets sustainable offerings, then the giver (vendor) should respond as such and focus on the provision of green products and services. This will enhance the relationship between the two entities.

5.5.6 Culture, EE, and AA - BEE status

This research study affirmed a significant relationship between culture, EE, and AA and BEE status. As asserted before, the primary purpose of BEE is to address the adverse legacy of apartheid and promote the economic participation of previously disadvantaged people in the South African economy. Therefore, to practice BEE, suppliers need to have a culture of employee development, believe in EE as a method to cure the curse of apartheid and the job discrimination that accompanied it in favour of White people, and be steadfast in terms of AA (Turner & Pratkanis, 1994). By actively improving employment, education, and other opportunities for members of groups that have been subjected to discrimination, will assist in closing the divide between the haves and have-nots. This includes not discriminating in the workplace based on race, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, and age (Joubert & Martins, 2013; Wrench, 2016). Therefore, if the supplier is acknowledged to be a BEE-accredited supplier, such a supplier should have an embedded culture that reflects its commitment to BEE. Likewise, the EE Act (the law that promotes equity in the workplace), is designed to ensure that all employees receive equal opportunities and that employees are treated amicably by their employers (Laher, 2007).

The law, as discussed above, was formulated to negate the unfair treatment and any form of discrimination of employees irrespective of race, creed, or religion (De Freitas, 2012). Suppliers who practice EE should reflect, by their acceptance and practice of EE that they have embraced BEE, which as posited above, is to promote the economic engagement of all South Africans and particularly those who were previously discriminated against, including females and the disabled. Finally, firms that practice AA (also known as "positive discrimination") help minorities and disadvantaged people and groups by employing them as a priority and assisting them to find housing and gain admission to universities and colleges. All the aforementioned will have a positive effect of the BEE status of the supplier, which could be an important selection criterion for many purchasing firms including large enterprises and government bodies. From a culture perspective, culture represents the customs, ideas, and social behaviour of a particular people or society. Business culture on the other hand refers to the set of behavioural and procedural norms that can be observed within an organisation, which includes its policies, procedures, ethics, values, employee behaviours and attitudes, goals, and code of conduct. EE, AA, and BEE are therefore part of organisational culture as it impacts on the behaviour values and attitudes of employees. Therefore, based on the above discussion and in relation with the sixth hypothesis, culture, EE, and AA have a significant positive effect on BEE status in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.7 Relationship with salespeople and management - preference of suppliers' salespeople

The research study confirmed a positive significant relationship between relationship with salespeople and management and preference of suppliers' salespeople. Ndubisi and Nataraajan (2016) suggest that the formation of close relationships is of paramount importance if a firm wishes to have enduring success in the modern complex and oftentimes, chaotic business environment. They further assert by creating strong and long-lasting relationships with suppliers, distributors, and manufacturers, such relationships can ensure, for the buying firm, an inflow of quality products and services at competitive prices and by practising the same tactic, service providers will be able to ensure greater coverage and brand awareness. By doing so the needs of internal (employees) and external customers (retailers, wholesalers, and consumers) may be better appeased. This viewpoint is supported by Mpinganjira et al. (2017), Barrane et al. (2018), and Anabila (2019), who collectively suggest that relationships play an important role on the selection and supporting of suppliers and their sales staff.

The key objectives of salespeople are to find customers by means of effective prospecting and then determining their needs and requirements, so that through the salesperson's offerings, the needs of these customers may be satisfied (Ndubisi & Nataraajan, 2016). The aforementioned authors go on to assert that forging strong and long-lasting relationships with suppliers, distributors, and manufacturers can ensure, for the buying firm, a timely stable and sufficient flow of quality products at competitive prices. By practising the same tactic, service providers will be able to ensure greater market coverage and brand awareness but also the needs of internal and external customers may be better appeased. Mpinganjira et al. (2017), Barrane et al. (2018) and Anabila (2019) concur that relationships play important roles in the selection process of appointing suppliers and their sales staff as well as the continued support of them.

Besides prospecting for new customers, servicing the needs of existing ones and selling them products and services, salespeople fulfil the following roles, namely, customer retention, the full administrative role of maintain records, providing aftersales services and implementing customer relationship management to win the continued support from existing customers. Salespeople should therefore develop trust through frequent contact, keeping promises and commitments and quickly react to customer queries and service deficiencies. This will have a positive influence on the buying organisation and its management team. In order enjoy continued customer support, salespeople need to formulate and maintain strong relationships with customer procurers, the buyer's management, and support staff. Xesha et al. (2014), Hibbler-Britt and Sussan (2015), and Agbenyegah (2019) state that the vendor should use such affinity to create interest and desire and to garner enduring support from the customer though relationship management, and regular communication with management. Therefore, the seventh hypothesis confirmed that a sound relationship with salespeople and management has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model.

5.5.8 BEE status - preference of suppliers' salespeople

The research study verified a positive significant relationship BEE status and preference of suppliers' salespeople. As asserted before in this chapter, the BEE status of a supplier is important, particularly when the customer happens to be a large national and international organisation and particularly a government institution (Horwitz & Jain, 2011; Kleynhans & Kruger, 2014). BEE is a racially inclusive initiative by the South African government to redress and rectify the inequalities brought during apartheid. This program seeks to offer Africans, who are Black, Indian, Coloured and Asian citizens of South Africa, equal opportunities accorded to White people, as AA. BEE, according to Shava (2016) is a unification programme that was launched by the South African government to reform and remedy the inequalities of separate development (apartheid). BEE motivates businesses to integrate previously disadvantaged people such as Black, Coloured, Indian, and Asian people in the workspace. It was also implemented to educate, train, develop and upskill previously disadvantaged people and to mentor them. To achieve this, businesses are awarded points, which they can claim on their BBBEE certificate. This certificate is used in compliance with government spend regulations. Businesses with a proficient level BBBEE rating stand a better chance of being awarded government contracts than those that do not. As a result of BEE, it is important for organisations to ensure that their BEE status is high as the higher the vendor's BEE rating, the more likely it will receive support from large organisations, government departments, and firms that insist that their suppliers are BEE/BBBEE compliant (Tangri, & Southall, 2008; Podges, 2010). In addition, it is very important that the salesforce be representative of the New South Africa, in that the salespeople reflect the requisite diversity. Therefore, the eighth hypothesis shows that BEE status has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model. If the vendor's salesforce is not representative then the BEE status will be window dressing and not a genuine endeavour by the vendor to have a salesforce that ignores employing women and other previously disadvantaged people (Chung et al., 2020).

5.6 Overall supplier preference model

To evaluate the relationship amongst the variables pertaining to the research hypotheses and develop a supplier preference model, path analysis was utilised. The results of the path analysis pertaining to the supplier preference model showed that the path coefficients reveal that service quality had a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations and environmental sustainability, which verified the first two hypotheses. The path coefficients showed that access to personnel and exceeding expectations had a significant positive effect on culture, EE and AA, and environmental sustainability had a significant favourable influence on personal relationships and gifts, which verified the third and fourth hypotheses. The path coefficients revealed that personal relationships and gifts had a significant positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management, and that culture, EE and AA has a significant positive effect on BEE status, which verified the fifth and sixth hypotheses. The path coefficients showed that the relationship with salespeople and management and BEE status had a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople, which verified the seventh and eighth hypotheses. Hence, the sum of the hypotheses resulted in the development of a supplier preference model, which is relevant to South African organisations. The aggregate of the eight hypotheses demonstrated a close linkage amongst the various variables under examination. For example, relationships feature as a core aspect of nearly all of the hypotheses. In other words, the relationship between the two parties is dependent on the attitudes and personal attributes/demographics of the vendor and buyer employees.

5.7 Summary

This chapter discussed the findings pertaining to the primary research study and how the various findings compared to what has been previously published in accredited international literature. The demographic and personal data influences on suppliers' preference constructs were discussed. A path analysis statistical method was used to analyse the variables pertaining to the study by establishing a causal relationship between variables. Structural equation modelling analysis was used by the researcher for testing the hypothesis. The analysis established that the variables supported all the hypotheses, which resulted in the development of a new supplier preference model.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research study was undertaken to unearth the vendor selection criteria that buying organisations assess to employ the services of suppliers. The identification of suppliers, the vetting thereof in terms of the 10 Cs as outlined previously the study and finally the appointment of appropriate suppliers, is an important logistics activity, as the wrong choice could lead to poor quality outputs, reduced sales, reduced profits, poor customer, and consumer service, and as importantly, irreparable reputational damage. Because of globalisation, the COVID-19 pandemic, and more recently, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the global supply chain has become more complex, resulting in uncertainty, increased risk, supply chain elongation, and a world-wide shortage of food, fuel, power, and much-needed medication. As asserted before in this research study, SCM is an amalgam of general management, business processes and logistics management. All three of these activities have to work in unison in order to provide the world with the goods and services that it requires in order for it to survive. Logistics, as previously posited, consists of thirteen activities of which procurement is a vital activity, as without the requisite inputs such as raw materials, components, and spare parts etc., need-satisfying goods and services cannot be produced. This chapter provides an overview of the final conclusions, recommendations, theoretical and practical implications, and the limitations and further study.

6.2 Research objective and hypotheses

This research study sought to investigate the following research objectives:

- To establish the influence of business characteristics (i.e., industry type, business classification, size of business, locale of business, status of business, basis of procurement and decision level) on supplier preference (i.e., regarding the preference of suppliers' salespeople; BEE status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, employment equity (EE) and affirmative action (AA); personal relationships and gifts; and access and exceeding expectations)

- To ascertain the influence of demographic and experience factors (i.e., gender, population group, age, language, procurement experience, education level, employment level) on supplier preference
- To determine the influence of procurement strategies, policies, and procedures on supplier preference
- To develop a new supplier preference model to determine the associations between the preference of suppliers' salespeople, BEE status; service quality; relationship; environment sustainability; culture, EE, and AA; personal relationships and gifts; and access and exceeding expectations.

As can be noted above, the research objectives contained several variables that needed to be investigated, and the development of a new supplier preference model represented the core of the study and the foundation thereof. The study, in relation to the aforementioned objectives, tested the following hypotheses:

- H1. Service quality has a significant positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations in the new supplier preference model
- H2. Service quality has a significant favourable effect on environmental sustainability in the new supplier preference model
- H3. Access to personnel and exceeding expectations has a significant positive effect on culture, EE, and AA in the new supplier preference model
- H4. Environmental sustainability has a significant favourable influence on personal relationships in the new supplier preference model
- H5. Personal relationships and gifts have a significant positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management in the new supplier preference model
- H6. Culture, EE, and AA has a significant positive effect on BEE status in the new supplier preference model
- H7. Relationship with salespeople and management has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model
- H8. BEE status has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model.

This chapter provides an all-inclusive overview in terms of the conclusions and recommendations that can be deduced from previous chapters of this study and the research objectives and most importantly, the research study's hypotheses.

6.3 Hypothesis and new supplier preference model conclusions and recommendations

6.3.1 Service quality's positive influence on access to personnel and exceeding expectations in the new supplier preference model

Much has been written about the importance of service quality in all business sectors, industry types and business classifications. In today's world of standardisation and mass production, oftentimes products and services are clones of other offerings. It is therefore difficult for organisations to differentiate products from one another, and if the customer sees no unique utility in the offering (no differential advantage), then the price of the good becomes a major purchasing consideration. Services on the other hand are difficult to duplicate because of their attributes, which are as follows (Cunningham, 2019):

- **Intangibility**. Although intangibility is a core aspect of a service, they are often not completely intangible. For all services, there are tangible elements are part of the service experience (e.g., food at a restaurant). The core service, however, is in all cases intangible
- **Inseparability**. Inseparability refers to the concept that services are facilitated and consumed simultaneously. Services cannot also be alienated from the service provider, unlike products that can be stored, sold, and consumed at a later stage
- **Variability**. Variability suggests that the quality of services can vary, depending on the firm that provides them. Because services are labour-intensive in nature, there are substantial differences in the quality of services that are provided by the service provider and its competitors
- **Perishability.** Perishability suggests that services cannot be inventoried and stored for later sale or use
- **User participation.** As asserted before, services are inseparable. Therefore, a service cannot be separated from the service provider or the person experiencing the service (the user)
- **Lack of ownership**. As asserted before, one experiences a service but does not own it. For example, is one flies from Cape Town to London, although one pays for the flight and the use of the facilities, once one arrives at the destination, "temporary ownership" expires.

Because of the unique characteristics of a service, and the importance of the human element that is involved in its delivery, service quality plays an important role in customer acquisition and retention.

Hence, in conclusion, this study proves that the level of service quality from the vendor has a significant positive influence on access to buyer/customer personnel and by doing so it can assist the vendor to meet and exceed customer expectations. Therefore, by the vendor providing service excellence, and has a reputation to facilitate service quality that is reliable and constantly high, it will not only win over new customers, but also retain them for a long period of time.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the vendor *develop, implement, and control* a service quality strategy that is focused on forging close, mutually beneficial, and enduring relationships with their customers and employees with the objective of exceeding customer expectation. An SLA will be beneficial in this regard to spell out the mutual obligations of both parties.

6.3.2 Service quality's favourable effect on environmental sustainability in the new supplier preference model

Thanks to the likes of organisations and environmental 'warriors' like Greenpeace, Vice President Al Gore and Sir Richard Attenborough, much worldwide attention has started to focus on the importance of environmental sustainability and the protection of the ecology. As a result of such intervention, consumerism and evidence of global warming, organisations (service providers and product manufacturers) have become more aware of the need to pursue the concept of the three Ps, namely product, people, and profit (as discussed previously in this research study). Besides service quality having a positive impact on business relationships and profits, it can also assist on protecting the environment.

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study has convincingly proved that service quality has a significant favourable effect on environmental sustainability in the new supplier preference model. The rationale for this assertion is that quality of service from a vendor can have a profound positive impact on environmental sustainability by the vendor doing the following (Villena & Gioia, 2020):

- Providing offerings to the customer that is environmentally friendly.
- Reduce packaging, especially those that are not recyclable.

- Creating a closed loop supply chain by offering fair prices on redundant machinery that has come to the end of their product lifecycles.
- Outsource transportation to a service provider that has more fuel-efficient transportation modes.
- Reduce deliveries by working on a JIT basis.

Hence, it is recommended once again that the vendor should be proactive in this regard by procuring eco-friendly offerings and packaging as sustainable inputs for the customer. Help instil a culture of sustainability in the customer's workplace by employing salespeople who are mindful of the importance of sustainability. The vendor should also formulate a waste management strategy which should be coordinated with the firm's procurement and SCM strategies. Lastly, the vendor should employ lean, green, and agile tactics to service the needs of its customers, thereby inculcating a culture of sustainability.

6.3.3 Access to personnel and exceeding expectations' positive effect on culture, EE, and AA in the new supplier preference model

Access to vendor personnel and *vice versa* plays an important part in the success for both the supplier and the customer. By having free access to procurement staff and management, the vendor can ensure that the required cohesion and integration can take place so that the needs of the customer may be appeased as well as that of the objectives of the vendor. It is also important that the customer has access to applicable vendor employees and managers, so that orders can be expedited, and any problems solved when they arise. By the customer having unhindered access to the vendor and its employees, service levels will be enhanced to the point that service meets and exceeds expectations. By the vendor also employing EE and AA in its working environment, and engendering a culture of EE, AA and internal motivation, such positive characteristics should rub off onto the employees of the customer, thereby forging a co-dependent relationship between the two entities.

Therefore, in conclusion, to achieve these goals both organisations require a relationship built upon transparency, mutual trust and co-dependence as stated above. Effective communication is also a prerequisite for such a coordinated relationship.

It is recommended that if the buyer has not adopted EE and AA, then the vendor should help it to do so. By having access to vendor personnel and allowing them to exceed expectations by means of effective, efficient, and employee-centric service, will assist both parties to achieve their goals. Once again this could be an inclusion in the SLA between the two firms.

6.3.4 Environmental sustainability's favourable influence on personal relationships in the new supplier preference model

Environmental sustainability is important because as humans we require energy, food, and resources for humanity to survive. The rapid growth in the world's population has resulted in a substantial increase in the demand for goods and services, which in turn has increased the need to produce more food, and products. As a result of this population explosion, there is an increase in the emission of greenhouse gas, deforestation and the unsustainable of energy. As a result of the above, resources are becoming depleted and the only way the humanity will survive is by employing responsible sustainable practices such as using clean energy such as solar power, electric motor vehicles, wind turbines, and by waste reduction and the payment of equitable wages. The environmental sustainability of the vendor can have a significant favourable influence on personal relationships with the customer if both entities see the value of adopting such practices. The vendor has a responsibility in this regard to ensure that its offerings are green and will not harm the environment or create unnecessary waste.

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study provided sufficient evidence to prove that the environmental sustainability of the vendor can influence the personal relationship it was with its customers. By working collectively and synergistically together, both firms can have a positive impact on the ecology.

It is recommended that the issue of environmental sustainability be addressed as part of the SLA between the parties. The SLA should underscore the significance of each party's contribution and obligation to the practice of environmental sustainability.

6.3.5 Personal relationships and gifts' positive influence on relationship with salespeople and management in the new supplier preference model

Although there is much controversy about the provision of gifts in a business environment, and particularly to procurement professionals, gifting is still seen by many as an expression of gratitude for business received and to forge stronger relationships between the buyer and the supplier. Personal relationships are naturally important as these relationships can enhance the cooperation between the two entities in the equation. Traditionally, one would only gift someone if there is a personal relationship between the two parties e.g., the salesperson and the procurement professional. The gift however must be of such a nature (in quantum or form), that it cannot be perceived to be a bribe. The occasional entertainment of the salesperson and his or her manager will also assist in improving the relationship between the two organisations as long as it is representative of the level of business or potential customer support

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study proved that personal relationships and gifts can have a marked positive impact on the relationship between the salesperson, the buyer and his or her manager as long as it is given and received in good faith and not at the expense of the buying firm.

It is recommended that the procurement official should therefore be encouraged to form a strong personal and working relationship with vendor salespeople, and where appropriate to receive gifts. The quantum and form of these gifts should however be dictated up front and there should be total transparency on the receipt of the present (the manager should know what the value of the gift is, preferably prior to it been given).

6.3.6 Culture, EE, and AA's positive effect on BEE status in the new supplier preference model

Culture is a term which includes the behaviour, norms and institutions that are found in society. It includes belief systems, legislation, knowledge, understanding customs, capabilities in individuals and groups. Culture can be organisational, regional, ethnical, and country-specific.
The culture, EE and AA of the supplier can have a marked impact on both the vendor and the buyer in terms of the adoption and practice of BEE. BEE is, as stated before, encourages businesses to integrate people of colour (Black, Coloured, Indian, and Asian individuals) in the workspace. EE refers to the use of hiring policies that encourage fair representation of members of minority groups, women, or other people who suffer discrimination, whereas AA involves sets of policies and practices within a government or organisations seeking to include particular groups based on their gender, race, sexuality, creed, or nationality and so on. As can be seen in the definitions above there is a common thread amongst culture, EE, and AA as they are all

people focused. Therefore, culture, the practice of EE and AA will have a positive influence on the adoption and practice of BEE.

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study verified that culture, EE, and AA has a significant positive effect on BEE status of both the supplier and the buying firm.

It is recommended that a culture or EE and AA be inculcated in the organisations so that they will support the adoption and practice of BEE.

6.3.7 Relationship with salespeople and management's favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model

The relationship between the supplier and the buyer's employees will determine the influence the vendor's salespeople will have over the customer's procurement officials and managers. If the relationship is of such a nature that it enhances strong and mutually rewarding bonds between the two companies, then the buyer and seller will benefit from such union.

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study indubitably proved that there is a significant favourable influence of preference of suppliers' salespeople if a sound relationship exists with vendor staff and management.

It is recommended that that the vendor's salespeople and management team form close and mutually rewarding relationships with its customers as such relationship will be of benefit to all the stakeholders who are involved with the organisations.

6.3.8 BEE status has a significant favourable influence on preference of suppliers' salespeople in the new supplier preference model

As asserted above, if an organisation wishes to conduct business with large organisations and government bodies in South Africa, it needs to be BEE compliant. Then higher the BEE rating (status), the greater the chance the vendor will have in participating in tenders and business transactions.

Therefore, in conclusion, the research study affirmed that BEE status has a significant influence on preference of the suppliers' salespeople. This is because many organisations are insisting that vendors become BEE compliant otherwise, they will be divorced from bidding for business.

It is recommended that if the vendor is not BEE complaint, that it should do so. The vendor's BEE rating also dictates the attractiveness it offers buyers and sellers, so to enhance its chance of bidding for or winning more orders, it should attempt to increase its rating. Those firms who are fully compliant should flaunt with it as a differential advantage over others who are not so inclined.

6.3.9 New supplier preference model

The new supplier preference model revealed that vendor selection is a multi-faceted activity that involves numerous nuances like legislation (EE, AA and BEE), culture, relationships, quality of service and product, the importance of protecting the environment through green procurement, the relevance of inter-organisational communication between salespeople, internal employees and management and as importantly how one can use the model to not only better appraise vendors prior to their selection, but also as a mechanism to doing ongoing assessment/appraisal. It therefore is a valuable tool not only for the buying firm but also the supplier who can use the model to set service and relationship standards.

6.4 Theoretical implications

A theoretical model is a framework that researchers create to structure a study process and plan how to approach a specific research inquiry. It can allow one to define the purpose of one's research and develop an informed perspective. This study was based upon determining vendor selection criteria and then testing eight hypotheses to see if there was a correlation between the various variables. It is the view that the new supplier preference model will definitely help organisations to better assess important selection parameters before they appoint vendors. It will therefore not only assist to appoint suitable candidates but to also retain those who meet the standards that are set by the buying firm. As importantly, it can also be used to set the parameters/conditions and terms of an SLA so that both parties can understand how the model can be used to meet their mutual requirements.

6.5 Managerial/practical implications

If one had to ask the average person in the street what SCM and logistics are prior to the outbreak and continuance of Covid-19, they would probably have said that both of these functions have something to do with warehousing and transportation. However, now that the pandemic has impacted adversely on all global economies, there is not a single day that goes by that the subject of SCM does not come up in the media and during conversations at the workplace or at home. There is a worldwide critical skill shortage of SCM professionals and as the new-normal evolves, there will be an even greater demand for effective, efficient, experienced, educated, astute and technology-savvy SCM professionals. The reason for this is that one of the world's greatest fallacies in business is that organisations compete against one another. This might have been the case 20 years ago, but in a modern era, it is the organisations' supply chains that are at war with one another.

There would be no need for a supply chain if it were not for marketing and procurement. Marketing creates the demand for offerings and procurement ensures that the right quality inputs arrive at the right price, place, condition, quantity, and time. Where once procurement was seen as a support activity in Michael Porter's value chain, today it is recognised as a primary business activity that provides value add which can be used as a weapon to create competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). As the global supply chain becomes more complex, elongated, the traditional business models pertaining to B2B procurement have become obsolete. Where a supply chain was seen in the past as a linear activity, in today highly competitive market, it is seen as a network of intertwined activities, much like a bowl of spaghetti.

The new supplier preference model has highlighted the importance of a number of issues that have been covered in great detail (relevant to the eight hypotheses that were tested). Firstly, gone are the days that price was the key vendor selection criterion. Instead, there are multiple of variables that have to be considered when appraising and selecting suppliers. The new supplier preference model will help buying organisations to improve the selection process and likewise, it will assist the vendor to understand what its customers want and need so that expectations for both parties can be exceeded.

6.6 Limitations and further study

The research however has opened a window of opportunity for further research. The study revealed that only seven out of ten of the respondents had well-articulated procurement strategies. This could be a topic as there seems to be the philosophy that procurement policies are more important than strategies. The research also highlighted that B2B procurement is not a cold affair as it was once perceived but one that is relationship-oriented and is a more personalised endeavour. Research into relationship-buying as opposed to relationship selling could also unearth helpful information. The aspect of the marriage between marketing and SCM could also be an interesting topic as can an investigation into the relationship between nepotism, gender, and culture.

6.7 Conclusion

The new supplier preference model has revealed that B2B procurement is more complex than B2C purchasing. Traditionally, B2C business is a transactional process where the key focus is on price. B2B procurement on the other hand, is relationship focused as the vendor's salesperson seeks to forge long and mutually rewarding relationship with the buying firms that they serve. The focus is on engendering a working relationship that is profitable for both entities over the medium to long term. Normally, suppliers and their customers enter into formal service level agreements, which spells out the mutual, legal, ethical, and operational obligations that they should have for one another. As a legally binding agreement, the contract is mainly concerned with financial and operational issues and is normally void of any strategy that engenders personal relationships between the parties.

The eight hypotheses that were tested during this study shows the union between the seller and the buyer on a macro scale, where relationship between the two parties are an essential catalyst for synergistic organisational growth and prosperity. The focus on acquisition costs alone results in a transactional relationship as referred to above, whereas the new supplier preference model engenders a mutually rewarding life-long relationship that is aimed at the facilitation of service that exceeds expectation for both parties, which is cemented on mutual trust and respect, irrespective of organisational culture. The model is also preoccupied on the treble bottom line (three Ps) i.e., making a profit for all but not at the expense of people and the planet, and finally it is designed to within the boundaries of legislation such as EE, AA, and BEE. It is the view of the researcher that the new supplier preference model will be of benefit for all the organisations that adopt it, which not only includes buying firms but also their suppliers.

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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC/PERSONAL DATA

QUESTION 1.
Please place an X next to the statement that most accurately describes the type of industry your firm is involved in. For example, if you are a buyer in a bank, please place an X next to the tertiary/services industry row (n the column on the right).

1	Primary industry (conversion of raw material into primary goods and the creation of raw materials for the secondary industry)	
2	Secondary industry (involves refining, construction, and manufacturing)	
3	Tertiary industry (also known as the service industry and deals with services and the distribution of finished goods)	
4	Quaternary industry (a relatively new type of knowledge industry that is concerned with technological research, design, and development)	

QUESTION 2.
Please indicate the classification of your organisation by placing an X next to the appropriate business classification. For example, if you work for a government institution, please place an X next to the Government or quasi-government row.

1	Sole proprietor.	
2	Partnership.	
3	Close corporation.	
4	Private limited company.	
5	Public company.	
6	Governmental or quasi-governmental organisation (for example a municipality).	
7	Not-for-profit organisation.	

QUESTION 3.
Please indicate the attributes that best describe the size of your organisation by reading the parameters below and by placing an X next to the appropriate organisation size. For example, if your business has the attributes of a small business, then please place an X next to the small business row.

1	A small-sized business: (has less than 20 employees, has an annual turnover of less than R1m, operates on a local basis and has capital assets less than R2m, and is operated and managed by its owners).	
2	A medium-sized business: (has less than 200 employees but more than twenty, has annual turnover of more than R1m, but less than R64m, and has capita; assets in excess of R2m, but less than R10m, and is probably managed by its owners).	
3	A large-sized business: (has a strong regional, national, and international footprint, employs more than 200 employees, has an annual turnover of more than R64m, has capital assets greater than R10m, and is managed by a professional management team).	

QUESTION 4.
Please indicate whether your organisation is a local, national, or international firm. If for example your business is international in stature, then please place an X next to the international organisation row.

1	Local organisation.	
2	Nationally represented organisation.	
3	International organisation.	

QUESTION 5.
Please indicate the status of the particular business. For example, if your firm is a local branch office, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	Local office or local branch office.	
2	Regional office.	
3	Head office.	
4	Local international branch office.	

QUESTION 6.
Please indicate whether your firm procures on a centralized or decentralized basis. If centralized, then please place an X next to the centralized purchasing row.

1	Centralized purchasing.	
2	Decentralized purchasing.	

SECTION B (Data pertaining to the respondent e.g., demographics etc.)

QUESTION 7.
Please indicate your gender. If you are a male, for example, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	Male.	
2	Female.	

QUESTION 8.
Please indicate what population group you belong to. If you are Black, for example, then please place an X next to the Black row.

1	Black.	
2	White.	
3	Indian.	
4	Asian.	
5	Coloured.	

QUESTION 9.
Please indicate the age group that you fall under. If, for example, you are 20 years old or less, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	20 and under.	
2	21 to 30.	
3	31 to 40.	
4	41 to 50.	
5	51 to 60.	
6	61 to 65.	
7	66 and older.	

QUESTION 10.
Please indicate your home language (the language that you mostly use at your place of residence). If your home language is Zulu, for example, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	Zulu.	

2	Xhosa.	
3	English.	
4	Afrikaans.	
5	Sotho.	
6	Ndebele.	
7	Tswana.	
8	Pedi.	
9	Swazi.	
10	Tsonga.	
11	Venda.	
12	Other.	

QUESTION 11.
Please indicate the number of years of experience that you have in procurement. If you have 6 to 10 years' experience, for example, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	5 years and less.	
2	6 to 10 years.	
3	11 to 20 years.	
4	21 to 30 years.	
5	31 to 40 years.	
6	41 years and over.	

QUESTION 12.
What is your highest qualification/education level? If you have a Grade 12, for example, then please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	Under Grade 12.	
2	Grade 12.	
3	A certificate (up to one year in duration).	
4	A national diploma or a provider diploma (e.g., an institute qualification).	
5	A degree.	
6	An honours qualification.	
7	A master's degree.	
8	A PhD or Doctorate qualification (e.g., D Tech).	

QUESTION 13.
Of the following, which best describes your occupation and/or level of management? Please indicate your level of management by placing an X next to the appropriate row.

1	Buyer/procurer.	
2	Senior buyer/procurement officer.	
3	Manager: Buyer/procurement.	
4	Accountant.	
5	Finance Manager.	
6	CEO or MD.	
7	Business owner.	

QUESTION 14.
What is the decision level (amount) that you are allowed to contract on behalf of your employer/business without having to refer to your immediate superior? Please place an X next to the appropriate row.

1	R50 000 or less.	
2	R50 001 to R100 000.	
3	R100 001 to R250 000.	
4	R250 001 to R500 000.	
5	R500 001 to R750 000.	
6	R750 001 to R1m.	
7	Above R1m.	

SECTION C: SUPPLIER PREFERENCE

QUESTION 15

Please place an X next to the row that represents the most appropriate response to the statement, viz. strongly disagree (SD), neither agree, nor disagree (NAD), agree (A), and strongly agree (SA).

	SD	D	NAD	A	SA
I prefer to support a supplier's salesperson that is of the same gender as I.					
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson if he or she is of the same race as I.					
I prefer supporting a vendor's salesperson that is roughly my age.					
I am strongly influenced to support a vendor's salesperson that speaks to me in my mother tongue (my home language).					
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has approximately the same number of years of experience as I.					
I prefer the vendor's salesperson to be as educated and as qualified as I.					
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has a similar status in his or her organisation as I.					
I prefer to support a vendor's salesperson that has the same decision-making latitude as I have.					
A supplier's BEE status is always taken into account before our firm supports such supplier.					
The higher the supplier's BEE rating the greater the chance of the supplier getting orders and support from my organisation.					
The BEE ratings of my suppliers' suppliers are also taken into account before we as a firm support such an organisation/supplier.					
The quality of the supplier's total service package is also an important consideration when appointing a vendor (e.g., installation, product maintenance, delivery etc.).					
A supplier's quick response time to customer queries plays an important role in appointing a supplier.					
Supplier flexibility (ability to meet changing customer needs and environments) also plays an important role when selecting vendors. .					
I try to support salespeople with whom I have a personal relationship with outside of the work environment.					
Being regularly entertained by supplier personnel acts as a motivator to support such supplier.					
The occasional gift, a free trip overseas or a business lunch can often influence me to support a particular salesperson or supplier.					
A supplier with a good track record regarding health, safety and environmental issues is more likely to get our support as opposed to one that does not have such a record.					

An organisation that markets 'green' environmental-friendly offerings have a better chance of doing business with our firm than one that does not offer such offerings.					
An organisation that markets products that can be easily disposed of at the end of their lifecycles (bio-degradable products for example) is more likely to be selected as a vendor than one that does not market such products.					
The reputation of the vendor regarding the way it treats its employees is an important selection criterion.					
The culture of the supplier is an important consideration when selecting a vendor.					
A vending organisation that exercises Employment Equity principles at the workplace is most likely to gain the support of our firm than one that does not.					
A supplier that exercises Affirmative Action has a better chance of winning the support of my firm that one than does not.					
Having a good relationship with supplier personnel other than its salespeople is a strong motivator when selecting and supporting such a supplier.					
Regular communication from a supplier's sales management team and other senior personnel influences whether I support the supplier or not.					
Regular constructive visits from sales personnel increase the likelihood of me placing business with the salesperson and his or her employer.					
Quick and easy access to key personnel is an important vendor selection criterion.					
Suppliers that meet or exceed our expectations become preferential suppliers and therefore receive our support subject to their prices being reasonable.					

SECTION D

QUESTION 16.

When the price of an offering is up for consideration, how important are the following criteria? Please rank the criteria listed below from 1 to 5, where 5 is most important and 1 the least important. Please respond to ALL the criteria. Please place an X in the appropriate row below, which best matches the pricing parameter with the most appropriate ranking criteria. For example, if you believe that the initial acquisition cost of an item is a most important selection criterion, then place an X in the block under column 5.

	Parameter	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	Initial acquisition cost (price) of the item.					
2	The cost of maintenance and service.					
3	Cost of spare parts and components.					
4	Buy-back terms.					
5	Running costs (energy, petrol/diesel)					
6	Disposal costs (end-of-life management cost).					
7	Finance (credit) terms.					
8	Installation costs.					
9	Opportunity cost of capital.					
10	Discounts.					
11	Net present value/IRR.					
12	Return on investment (ROI).					
13	Payback period.					

14	Total cost of ownership.					
15	Exchange rate for imported goods.					
16	Importation costs e.g., tariffs and so on.					
17	Training costs to operate the good/machine.					

QUESTION 17.
There are a number of generic vendor selection criteria. In your opinion how important are the following criteria? Please rank the criteria listed below from 1 to 5, where 5 is most important and 1 is the least important. Please respond to ALL the criteria. Please place an X in the appropriate blocks below that match your ranking of generic vendor selection criteria. For example, if reliability of service is a most important selection criterion, then place an X in column 5.

	Parameter	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	Reliability of service.					
2	Ease and completeness of orders.					
3	Lead time management (orders, queries).					
4	Quickness of response times in terms of design and development for timely “get to market".					
5	Flexibility of the supplier in terms of buyer company requests.					
6	Willingness of the supplier to carry inventory for the buyer.					
7	Non-variability of product quality (quality that meets customer expectation first time and all of the time).					
8	Technical ability and support.					
9	Past experience with vendor.					
10	Warrantee policy.					
11	Brand name including brand image and the equity of the brand.					
12	Suitability of products in relation to the buying firm’s target market.					
13	Product range and depth.					
14	Product functionality and adaptability in terms of other applications.					
15	Financial stability of the supplier.					
16	Production capacity of the supplier.					
17	Profitability of the offering to the buying company.					
18	Knowledge/capability of salespeople.					
19	Standardization and compatibility of the offering.					

QUESTION 18.
Please rank the following issues pertaining to the relationship that your organisation has or wishes to have with vendors. Where the criterion is most important, rank it as 5, whereas if it least important then rank it as a 1. Please respond to ALL the criteria. Please indicate your ranking by placing an X in the blocks below that reflects the weighting that you have given to the criteria concerned. For example, if you feel that your organisation most likely supports vendors that have strategic partnerships with your organisation, then rank it as a 5 and place an X in the appropriate block.

	Parameter	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1	Our organisation is most likely to support vendors that have a strategic partnership with our organisation.					
2	Our organisation prefers to conduct business with vendors that have reciprocity agreements and compensation obligations with us.					
3	We see our relationship with vendors as a long-term partnership.					
4	We expect the relationship with our vendors to be mutually rewarding.					
5	We are concerned with the profitability of our vendors and therefore, do not expect them to engage with our organisation without making a fair profit.					

6	We value our relationship with our suppliers, as without them we do not have a business.					
7	As a buying organisation we expect our suppliers to have well-articulated and formulated supply strategies based on service excellence.					
8	As a buying firm we expect our suppliers to have well-articulated and formulated supply policies and procedures that are based upon service excellence.					
9	Most often vendors are selected prior to request for proposal					
10	Often vendors are played up against one another in order to maximize preferential pricing.					
11	The standardization of equipment, goods and brands is important when making procurement decisions.					
12	The procurement officer is expected to draw up functional technical and maintenance specifications when assessing a purchasing requirement.					
13	Our firm prefers to use a few suppliers than having numerous vendors calling on us.					
14	Our organisation has a comprehensive post-purchase evaluation process.					
15	The post purchase evaluation (whether positive or negative) impacts greatly on the future relationship between our firm and the supplier.					

QUESTION 19.
Our organisation has a comprehensive and a well-articulated procurement strategy. Please place an X next to the appropriate row (either yes or no).

1	No	
2	Yes	

QUESTION 20.
Our organisation has a comprehensive and a well-articulated procurement policy. Please place an X next to the appropriate row (either yes or no).

1	No	
2	Yes	

QUESTION 21.
Our organisation has comprehensive and well-articulated procurement procedures. Please make an X next to the appropriate row (either yes or no)

1	No	
2	Yes	

QUESTION 22.
According to Michael Porter (1985), a value chain (VC) consists of primary activities such as inbound logistics, manufacturing/operations, outbound logistics, marketing and sales and customer service. Porter also suggests that the VC comprises of support activities such as HR, technology development, financial management, organisational structure, and procurement. He asserts that primary activities provide value-add, while support activities assist primary activities so that margins may be attained. In a modern context do you agree with Michael Porter that procurement is a support activity?

1	No	
2	Yes	

THANK YOU - END OF QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX 2: TURNITIN ORIGINALITY REPORT

Relationship buying: A new paradigm in business-to-business marketing

ORIGINALITY REPORT

17%	15%	5%	9%
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