

**DIMENSIONS AND OUTCOMES OF BUYER-SELLER RELATIONSHIP  
INTENTIONS FOR CONCRETE PRODUCTS  
IN THE CONSTRUCTION ENVIRONMENT**



by

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## **DEDICATION**

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I would like to dedicate this thesis to the enduring love of my two kids “Rorisang Tshirelotso and Letlotlo Hlompho”, the loving memory of my late father Sehloho Benjamin and the tenacity of my loving mother and sister Moipone Rosinah and Tshepiso Martha.

This work is also dedicated to the second most used commodity on planet earth, CONCRETE.

## DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, the concept of relationship-marketing earned eminence in academia with associated implications for marketing strategy.

The aim of this study was to examine relationship intentions in the business-to-business (B2B) context from the concrete product environment within the construction industry of South Africa. Literature reviewed reveals that empirical studies for concrete product environment and the construction industry is limited, principally in South Africa, concerning the dimensions of relationship intentions. As deliberations on relationship-marketing intentions carry on maturing, there are imperative concerns yet to be clarified, one of which relates to customer's buying behaviour in relation to the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions. Given the increasing prominence of customer buying patterns in modern marketplaces, the study intends to empirically analyse the dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions, with reference to the civil and building concrete product users in a B2B setting within the South African construction industry. The civil and building engineering contractor segments were selected as research sites owing to their scope and size, which signify a productive market segment with prospects of influencing future behavioural intentions in the construction environment.

The study was underpinned by the relationship-marketing theory and social exchange theory, which clarified the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions of the civil and building constructs that underlie concrete products. As the study intended to determine the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions of civil and building contractors (customer) towards their concrete product manufacturer (supplier) organisations, a descriptive research method was chosen. The objective being to confirm and expand the dimensions of buyer-seller relationship intentions in the B2B industry context and to examine the explanatory power of the identified dimensions. The current study employed a quantitative research method that is entrenched in the post-positivist paradigm, which also underpins this study. Data were collected using probability sampling in the form of systematic random sampling. A sample size of 560 respondents returned fully completed questionnaires.

As the study was descriptive in nature, the reliability and validity of data were analysed, correlation analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) were performed. The exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis were also conducted to confirm and expand the factor structure of the relationship intention dimensions. Preceding the main study's data collection process, a pilot survey was undertaken to examine the correctness and accuracy of the questionnaire. The

data collected were examined with the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 25.0 and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 25.0. The preliminary data analysis included the procedure of coding and examining the distribution of scores. In addition, the normality test results revealed that data were normally distributed. To confirm the consistency of the measuring instrument and its items, the reliability and validity tests were carried out. The results of the consistency of measures demonstrated that the measuring instrument was reliable. The correlation analysis disclosed a weak relationship between expectations, involvement and feedback towards relationship quality, whereas a moderate association was revealed between forgiveness and trust towards relationship quality, while a strong association was discovered between fear of relationship loss, information sharing and flexibility towards relationship quality construct.

The suitability of the measurement and structural models were evaluated prior to testing the hypothesised relationships. The suggested relationships were verified by structural equation modelling (SEM). The hypotheses testing findings revealed that concrete product repurchase intentions by the study respondents were significantly and positively motivated by the supplier's relationship quality and commitment that leads to customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions. A framework of relationship marketing intentions for the concrete product environment of the South African construction industry was developed. It was anticipated that the proposed framework will contribute towards addressing the insufficiencies in the application of relationship marketing strategies. The empirical study results advocated that concrete product manufacturer-suppliers (CPM) must invest in methods of increasing their levels of relationship quality and commitment to maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty, which will lead to customer repurchase intentions. The study results revealed that unlike previous relationship intention studies that found five dimensions, this study proposed and found eight (involvement, expectations, forgiveness, feedback, fear of relationship loss, trust, flexibility and information sharing/exchange) dimensions of relationship intentions within the B2B concrete product environment. Furthermore, the study results revealed that customer satisfaction can be upheld by concentrating on relationship building strategies, which fuel customer loyalty and repurchase intentions by meeting or exceeding customer needs and requirements.

One of the study contributions is the investigation of the order of the dimensions of relationship intentions in a B2B context for the concrete product environment within the construction industry. Therefore, the study pens down both the theoretical and practical contributions to the relationship marketing literature. Paths for additional research is offered. The outcome of this study advanced

a framework of the dimensions of relationship intentions, which may possibly benefit future researchers.

Future studies must consider the application of a cohesive research model, which includes supplementary variables using a larger sample size utilising a longitudinal study with the purpose of increasing generalisability of the results.

**Key terms:** Civil and building engineering, concrete products, construction industry, contractors, relationship intentions, relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions

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## DESCRIPTION OF TERMS

**Concrete product** is a combined material comprising fine and coarse aggregate, water and often controlled amounts of entrained air, combined with cement paste to form concrete that hardens over time (Jahren & Sui 2017:2).

**Construction industry** refers to a comprehensive composition of sectors that augment value in the formation and conservation of permanent structures in the built environment (CIDB 2015:1-2).

**Civil and building engineering** is “a professional discipline that deals with the design, construction, and maintenance of the physical and naturally built environment, including public works such as roads, bridges, canals, dams, airports, sewerage systems, pipelines, structural components of buildings and railways” (CESA 2011:9).

**Contractor** “is any person or a juristic person under contract to a client to perform the works or part of it on a project, including a subcontractor under contract to such a contractor” (CESA 2011:9).

**Project** “refers to any total scheme envisaged by a client, including all the works and services concerned” (CESA 2011:9).

**Relationship intentions** denotes to customer’s intentions to form business relations with either product or service suppliers, through procuring goods and services from them (Kumar, Bohling & Ladder 2003:669). In forming such relationships, organisations are more inclined to customise their offerings by gaining better insight of their customer’s requirements (Nguyen & Mutum 2012:401).

**Relationship quality** denotes to customers’ perspective of the intensity of their association with a specific organisation (Agarwal, Singhal & Goel 2014:732; Qin, Zhao & Yi 2011:391). In a B2B undertaking relationship quality can be viewed as a determinant of the likelihood of a continued business rapport between buyers and sellers (Jiang, Shiu, Henneberg & Naude 2016:297).

**Cementitious products** refer to paste conforming with the South African National Standards (SANS) 50197-1 and adhesive extenders directly sold to users such as concrete and ready-mix product manufacturers (Muigai, Alexander & Moyo 2013:3).



**Commitment** refers to attitude displayed in an effort to stimulate improved purchase behaviour (Keiningham, Ball, Benoit, Bruce, Buoye, Dzenkowska, Nasr, Yi-Chun & Zaki 2017:152). Wang, Wu, Lin and Chen (2017:87) state that commitment is a psychological and affective attachment driven by experiences with a brand and various environmental forces.

**Satisfaction** is the customers' positive post-consumption assessment (Bolton & Christopher 2014:17). These could be properties of customers' judgement after an encounter with the organisation or its products which meet or exceed their expectations (Blackwell, Miniard & Enge 2006:42).

**Loyalty** "is a deeply held commitment to rebuy a product or services regardless of the situational influences that should lead to switching behaviour" (Babin & Harris 2018:255). Bateson and Hoffman (2011:383) defines loyalty as the behavioural response by customers, that is expressed over time with admiration or emotional attachment to a product or service provider.

**Repurchase intention** is the when customers decide to repurchase the same product, brand or service repetitively from the same supplier (Goh, Jiang, Hak & Tee 2016:993). According to Rajaobelina and Bergeron (2009:360), repurchase intention is customers' degree of perceptual conviction to repurchase a product or service from the same service provider.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Lately, a growing interest in relationship-marketing as a practice and research focus has been witnessed (Hoppner, Griffith & White 2015:64; Kruger & Mostert 2014:35; Dagger, David & Ng 2011:273; Parish & Holloway 2010:61). This interest has been spurred by the need to create sustainable competitive advantages in an increasingly globalised marketplace (Clark & Melancon 2013:138; Gupta & Sahu 2012:56). With the development of relational exchanges as a strategic imperative, marketers have realised the need for a paradigm shift from transaction-oriented business approach to a long-lasting relationship building strategy (Kruger & Mostert 2015:57; Lin 2013:205; Kruger & Mostert 2012:41; Delpont, Steyn & Mostert 2011:278).

Payne and Frow (2017:11) as well as Kotler and Armstrong (2010:16) mention that in practice, the relationship-marketing concept is premised on not only appealing to profitable customers, but to also preserve them based on mutually beneficial exchanges. In essence, building relational exchanges and interactions are central to the relationship-marketing philosophy (Kruger & Mostert 2014:58). However, the actual application of relational exchanges evades most businesses, because its value is often understated (Wei, Li, Burton & Haynes 2013:60). Other scholars like Kim, Kang and Johnson (2012:383) concur with this statement and echo that this happens due to the mistaken belief that the application of relationship-marketing concept can be useful to all customers. Fernandes and Proença (2013:46) explain the usefulness of relationship-marketing by arguing that its relevance differs across markets and customer profiles. This arises as only some customers are interested in relational marketing undertakings, while others interpret them as a wasteful exercise of resources (Parish & Holloway 2010:96). For this reason, Raciti, Ward and Dagger (2013:616) stress the need by organisations to review their marketing activities to allow only customers that are eager to participate in relationship building strategies.

The intellectual roots of relationship-marketing are found from the seminal work of MacNeil (1980:55), who discussed the impact of long-term legal contracts on exchange relationships. As a practice, relationship marketing was later popularised by Gummesson (1994:5) who developed the 30R framework of relationship marketing. In its earlier conceptualisation, relationship-marketing was primarily focused on promoting business to customer relationships (Bercovitz, Jap & Nickerson 2006:724). As the idea of relationship-marketing evolved, the importance of B2B associations was noted and amplified, thus providing a greater need to appreciate its value (Keller

& Lehmann 2006:740). Notwithstanding the importance of promoting B2B marketing, insufficient investigation has been conducted, especially in emerging markets within the B2B context (Bateson & Hoffman 2011:388; Martin, O'Neill, Hubbard & Palmer 2008:224). Against this background, of prime importance was to review the dimensions and outcomes of B2B relationship intentions in a concrete product environment within the South Africa construction industry.

## **1.2 CONTEXTUAL SETTING OF THE STUDY**

The study is located within South Africa's B2B concrete product environment in the construction industry. The Concrete Manufacturers Association (CMA) represents the concrete product environment in South Africa (Benton & McHenry 2010:12). Civil and building engineering contractors in South Africa are recorded by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB 2018a). The South African concrete product environment is one significant sector that impacts on the country's infrastructure expansion and economic growth (Khan 2008:279). The public sector accounts for almost 65 percent of concrete construction business, while the rest is accounted for by the private sector (CIDB 2018b).

The growth of concrete product and the construction industry in South Africa, is attributed to the government's Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative that is aimed at enhancing infrastructure restoration and development programmes (CIDB 2013), which can be ascribed to the industry's central role in job creation and infrastructure development (Ibrahim, Roy, Ahmed & Imtiaz 2010:232). Growth and sustenance of South Africa's construction industry is supported by projects in residential and industrial building assignments, which involves civil and building works that are primarily funded by government (Bbenkele & Madikiza 2016:95-96). Most of these projects are executed by specialist industry role players, who include property developers, architects, project managers, quantity surveyors, materials suppliers, electrical and mechanical engineers, as well as civil and general building engineering contractors (Benton & McHenry 2010:12).

In South Africa, concrete is the second most utilised construction material after water (Bbenkele & Madikiza 2016:95). This is aided by its qualities, which include ease of use, high compressive strength, durability, comparative low cost and its fitness to be moulded into any size and shape (Falade, Ukponu & Ugbaja 2017:734). The concrete product manufacturing process involves mixing sand, stone, cement and water in a reusable mould and curing it in a regulated place, which is then shipped to construction location for use (Polat 2010:85; Jaillon, Poon & Chiang 2009:239-240). The concrete product environment of South Africa is subjugated by a few large organisations, which partner with smaller organisations in joint venture working arrangements to execute projects (CIDB 2018a).

### 1.3 IDENTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH GAP AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The successful rollout of government and private sector infrastructure projects largely depends on the proper functioning of the construction materials sector (Bbenkele & Madikiza 2016:95-96). This is hardly the prevailing situation in South Africa's construction industry, which is epitomised by challenging relations that are skewed towards a few large organisations (Benton & McHenry 2010:14). As large organisations partner with small organisations in joint ventures in fulfilment of the black empowerment commitments, large organisations wield more power and tend to dictate terms and conditions of exchange (Bbenkele & Madikiza 2016:96). This has resulted in an estimated 40-70 percent let-down of joint venture business in the construction industry (Mba & Agumba 2017:267). In addition to the prevalence of asymmetrical relationships, communication within the concrete product environment and the construction industry is characterised as poor, which impacts negatively on project planning and rollout (CIDB 2018a; Larsson, Sundqvist & Emmitt 2006:554). Moreover, collusion is rife in the industry and limits potential entrants (Ratshisusu 2014:588-589; Competition Commission South Africa 2013).

The initial proposition of a five-factor model of relationship intentions (expectations, involvement, forgiveness, feedback and fear of relationship loss) by Kumar *et al.* (2003:668) was that relationship building intentions should be studied in B2B contexts. However, a limited number of studies particularly in South Africa have been carried out in B2B settings. Of importance to note is that to date, most previous relationship building intention studies carried out in South Africa were conducted in B2C settings. Examples include personal tax services (Mostert & Luttig 2018:79), retail clothing industry (Kuhn & Mostert 2018:206; 2016:16), wholesale and retail training industry (Pelser & Mostert 2016:29), banking industry (Spies & Mostert 2015:437), cell phone industry (Kruger, Mostert & de Beer 2015:608), cell phone network industry (Kruger & Mostert 2015:57), and banking and life-insurance industries (Delpont *et al.* 2011:277; Delpont 2009:5), as well as in the short-term insurance industry (Steyn, Mostert & De Jager 2008:139). Comparatively, very little research has explored long-term relationship building intentions in B2B contexts, more so in the construction industry. An examination of relationship marketing empirical studies in South Africa, shows that only Mentz (2014:12) conducted a relationship building intention study in a B2B context within the financial services industry. While relational exchange studies have been carried out in a variety of industries elsewhere from a B2B perspective, there is insufficient indication of its use in the South Africa context. In addition, the predictive power of Kumar *et al.*'s (2003) relationship intention dimensions particularly for relationship quality, which is a central construct in relationship marketing literature that plays a critical role in relationship marketing (Almomani 2019:109), has not been assessed. Moreover, the dimensions (trust,

satisfaction and commitment) and loyalty outcome of relationship quality has been widely studied (see Almomani 2019:112), but studies on the predictors of relationship quality are lacking. In trying to bridge this research gap, the study particularly investigates the qualifications of relational exchange partners' intention in a B2B setting. It's aim being to answer the research study: What are the dimensions and outcomes of B2B buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the South Africa construction industry?

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The contribution of this study lies in the need to determine elements that foster the effective practice of relationship-marketing strategies in South Africa's concrete product environment. The study's purpose is to contribute to relational marketing exchange literature by sharing empirical evidence on functions of partnering capabilities in South Africa's concrete product environment. It also counts on the argument that although relational exchanges and extant research has been conducted on B2B settings across a variety of industries, there is insufficient proof of its practice, particularly in the South African construction fraternity.

The study, therefore, measured the dimensions of relationship intention by focusing on national to multinational civil and building construction businesses to obtain a comprehensive outline of the industry dynamics, which can play a crucial role in forming long-term successful B2B relationships. Most importantly, the study is intended to provide guidelines on how to develop and sustain relational exchanges amongst the South African construction industry stakeholders. Furthermore, this study endeavoured to enhance the present B2B relationship marketing's body of knowledge through the concrete product environment.

#### **1.5 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW**

Most organisations spend considerable time, energy and resources trying to acquire new customers (Weinstein 2002:259). However, it is commonly believed that costs of attaining first time buyers are up to five times more compared to keeping the current customers (Lin 2013:204; Gilaninia, Almani, Pournaserani & Javad 2011:789; Athanasopoulou 2009:583; Jarrar & Neely 2002:283). In view of this, Bateson and Hoffman (2011:388-391) argue that instead of constantly trying to acquire new customers, organisations should focus on retaining existing customers as it could result in reduced operational and marketing costs, which translate into increased profitability. For this reason, Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2009:184) opine that the long-term proficiency of organisations to generate viable business advantages largely depends on how they utilise their resources to satisfy and retain profitable customers. Accordingly, Malhotra, Usley and Ndubisi

(2008:213) consider relationships as the bedrock of B2B marketing. Similarly, Roberts-Lombard, Mpinganjira and Svensson (2017:1) also note that competition has accentuated the importance of relational exchanges in B2B trade relations.

The fostering and nurturing of symbiotic relations amongst buyers and sellers accord both sets of relational rents that reduce operational risk (Segarra-Moliner, Moliner-Tena & Saez-Garcia 2013:198). Relationship marketing scholars Bateson and Hoffman (2011:391) caution that not all B2B relationships translate into competitive advantage. The literature revealed that several studies considered trust, commitment and satisfaction respectively, as significant designates of relationship quality (Rafiq, Fulford & Lu 2013:494; Skarmeas & Shabbir 2011:720; Vieira 2010:83; Yang, Wu & Wang 2010:155). To yield common benefits towards the relational partners, Segarra-Moliner *et al.* (2013:199) underscore the need for trust, commitment, communication, collaboration and joint planning. According to Han and Hyun (2015:21), once commercial relations are characterised by trust, an atmosphere of open and honest communication is created in which all parties involved share their relationship expectations. In other words, the desired or ideal levels of expectancy echo customers' confidence and desire (Nabi 2012:176), so much so that customers are not prepared to compromise a service standard to be mediocre or lower, which would be perceived as a tolerable expectation (Berndt & Tait 2012:46).

Bojel and Abu (2014:174) note that commitment development and the resultant relationship longevity often translate into sustainable competitive advantage. Moreover, Yu, Cadeaux and Song (2017:211-212) as well as Yu, Cadeaux and Song (2012:1203), argue that if organisations can address flexibility, which can be a critical skill that inspires organisations to serve customers with high quality performance, their outcomes in terms of relational norms would ignite functional-specific performances such as product quality and delivery speed. So, information sharing amongst the relational partners is also important as it is supposed to stimulate trust and satisfaction (Wickramasinghe & Weliwitigoda 2011:397-398; Ma & Agarwal 2007:43), which are the ingenious fundamentals of relationship quality (Lin 2013:204; Butcher & Sheehan 2010:37-38). When organisations share information with their customers, they become well versed around certain features of the relationship exchange, which translates into customer satisfaction (Tong & Crosno 2015:168).

Several researchers view customer satisfaction as a valuable instrument for enhancing organisational attractiveness and development of justifiable as well as mutually beneficial relationships (Gupta & Gupta 2012:223; Hanif, Hafeez & Riaz 2010:45). Ganiyu, Uche and Elizabeth (2012:14-15) agree and echo that satisfaction signifies customer's expectation levels

towards the organisation and when such expectations are met, this potentially results in positive repurchase intentions. However, Saleem and Raja (2014:706) caution that customer satisfaction on its own does not lead to envisaged outcomes or guarantee customer preservation as customer loyalty also adds to business goals. This is because in a B2B context, customers' perception of value significantly contributes to behavioural intentions such as loyalty (O'Cass & Ngo 2012:125; Flint, Blocker & Boutin 2011:219-220). Yu *et al.* (2012:1203) signify that lifelong effects of higher customer loyalty is to reduce the costs associated with continuous recruitment of new customers.

Although there is consensus on the benefits of relational marketing, certain challenges of retaining customers in the long term due to differences in relational preferences are noted (Payne & Frow 2013:5; Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans 2006:137). To address these challenges, Keller and Lehmann (2006:742) urge relationship-marketing practitioners to understand customers' relationship goals and continuously assess the returns on relationship marketing investment. Additionally, Kumar *et al.* (2003:669) stress the importance of assessing return on relational marketing activities from the buyer's standpoint and identify customers who wish to play a part in lasting relationships, including their relationship purposes.

The author further contends that by identifying customers who display high relationship intents, organisations can benefit from lifetime relationships with guaranteed revenue streams (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). It must be noted though that long-term customer relationships significantly depend on relationship quality. According to Henning-Thurau and Klee (1997:738), relationship quality denotes to the magnitude in which customers perceive their relationship to be consistent with their propensity to create customer value. When perceptions of relationship quality are high, satisfaction, trust, commitment and loyalty are enhanced (Lin 2013:204; Butcher & Sheehan 2010:35-36; Morgan & Hunt 1994:22).

## **1.6 UNDERPINNING THEORIES AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR THE STUDY**

This study is underpinned by the social-exchange theory (SET), relationship-marketing theory (RMT) and theory of reasoned action (TRA), premised on the belief that voluntary business transaction takes place amongst two or more associates. The SET has been widely employed in relationship marketing studies (Lioukas & Reuer 2015:1826; Tanskanen 2015:577; Shiao & Luo 2012:2431). Central to SET is the promotion of reciprocal relationships that create value to all participants (Homans 1958:597). To enhance mutually beneficial relationships, SET underscores the importance of engendering trust, commitment and satisfaction (Lioukas & Reuer 2015:1826). The SET also emphasises that relationships are likely to be sustained if the benefits outweigh the

cost (Liu, Min, Zhai & Smyth 2016:54). Consistent with its underlying principles, Sierra and McQuitty (2005:393) note that relationship quality is often evaluated on the basis of resultant benefits as well as the degree of satisfaction and trust.

RMT is a frame of reference that emphasises the value generated by engaging in repetitive business exchanges (Mende, Bolton & Bitner 2013:129; Theron & Terblanche 2010:384). The dominant objective of RMT is to compel organisations to shift from engaging in impersonal transactional marketing strategies, towards personalised long-lasting customer relationships (Rafiq *et al.* 2013:495). Although the RMT emphasises the importance of building customer-centric relationships (Voss, Tanner, Mohan, Lee & Kim 2019:1669; Lui, Wong & Liu 2009:1216), it also signifies the creation of lifetime value-enhancing relationships with other value chain stakeholders, such as the suppliers (Brodie 2017:22; Reichheld 1993:64). Corresponding with the SET proposition, RMT also subscribes to the SET view that fostering mutually beneficial relationships potentially results in increased profitability and improved competitiveness (Theron & Terblanche 2010:384; Krasnikov, Jayachandran & Kumar 2009:61).

The TRA is a theoretical assessment applied to clarify customers' activities (Delafrooz, Paim & Khatibi 2009:166). TRA advocates that attitude concerning procurement patterns and subjective norms are qualifications of demonstrated behaviour (Xiao 2019:3). Previous studies used TRA to differentiate relationships amongst customer's attitudes and their purchase intentions (Dennis, Jayawardhena, Papamatthaiou 2010:411). Along these lines, TRA is used to forecast and clear up variations of behaviour, relative to limited sets of constructs such as attitudes toward a behaviour, subjective norms, perceived behavioural controls, and behavioural intentions. To predict customers' repurchasing conduct, it is essential to measure their assertiveness for carrying out a specific behaviour (Myresten & Setterhall 2015:1).

The subjective norm feature measures the social effects on an individual's behaviour such as peer expectations. Therefore, by measuring perceptions of attitudes that impact customer buying behaviour using TRA, it is a realistic building block (Myresten & Setterhall 2015:1). In addition, TPB, being a cognitive model of human behaviour, assumes that customers are likely to behave in a specific way if they trust the supplier and the offering, as its prominent theory is to predict and clarify a person's logical behaviour (Ajzen 1991:181). These theories are deliberated on fully in chapter 5 section 5.2.

Following from the preliminary literature review, this study's research objective is presented.



## **1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

To address the study's research problem and examine the relationships amongst variables conceptualised in the framework provided in Chapter 5, the following research objectives were formulated:

### **1.7.1 Primary objective**

The primary objective was:

- to examine the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in B2B concrete product environments in Gauteng region of South Africa's construction industry.

### **1.7.2 Theoretical objectives**

The subsequent theoretical objectives were:

- to review the literature on dimensions of relationship intentions in B2B marketing environments;
- to conduct a literature review on relationship marketing theories;
- to provide a literature synthesis on benefits of relationship-marketing in B2B marketing environments;
- to evaluate literature on the challenges of implementing relational exchanges in B2B marketing environments; and
- to propose a theoretical framework that clarifies dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in B2B concrete product environments in the South Africa construction industry.

### **1.7.3 Empirical objectives**

The empirical objectives were:

- to confirm and expand Kumar *et al's* (2003) five-factor model of relationship intentions to eight dimensions.
- to examine civil and building contractors' perceptions of the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions;
- to determine the association between the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing and fear of relationship loss) of

relationship intentions on manufacturer-suppliers' relationship quality among civil and building contractors;

- to examine the impact of the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions on manufacturer-suppliers' relationship quality with civil and building contractors;
- to determine the association of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality on their level of relationship commitment;
- to examine the predictive relationships of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality towards their relationship commitment;
- to determine the association of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment towards their civil and building contractors' satisfaction;
- to examine the predictive relationships of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment towards civil and building contractor's satisfaction;
- to determine the association of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's satisfaction and their repurchase intentions;
- to examine the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and their repurchase intentions;
- to determine the association of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and loyalty towards their concrete product manufacturer-supplier;
- to establish the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and loyalty towards their concrete product manufacturer-supplier;
- to examine the association of civil and building contractors' loyalty and their repurchase intentions of concrete products; and
- to establish the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' loyalty and their repurchase intentions of concrete products.

The next section offers a conversation on the study's research methodology.

## **1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The succeeding sub-section outlines the process in which this study was conducted and highlight specific methods of empirical investigations applied to achieve the study's research objectives.

### **1.8.1 Research design**

Coetzee and Van Zyl (2014:4) as well as Wiid and Diggines (2009:53) elucidate research design to be a procedure undertaken with the aim of outlining detailed methods of data collection and analysis. From different methodological philosophies of positivist, interpretivist, realism and pragmatism, this study follows the positivist philosophy (Creswell 2014:146; Muijs 2011:4; Gratton & Jones 2010:23, 26). The post-positivism method was used as an extension of positivism. Consistent with the positivist research model, this study adopted a quantitative research design to emphasis scientific explanations that are nomothetic (Tewksbury 2009:38; Punch 2005:28).

Several research designs exist and normally researchers select from amongst three groupings depending on the objectives of the study. They comprise exploratory, descriptive or causal research designs (Hair, Celsi, Oritinau & Bush 2013:36; Polonsky & Waller 2011:94). Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:60) state that the aim of exploratory research is to examine an unknown condition with the intention of intensifying perceptions for further investigations. Causal research is frequently linked with experimental procedures, as interconnections can only be validated once an experimental control is utilised (Churchill, Brown & Suter 2010:117). This study took the shape of a descriptive research design using deductive methods to test the theory registering their implications (Walliman 2011:18-19). The motivation behind the choice of this approach was that it would be worthwhile to the study since interest was in increasing a broad view of logic (Feinberg, Kinnear & Taylor 2013:57; Collis & Hussey 2009:58).

### **1.8.2 Literature review**

The proposed study reviewed the existing literature on relational exchange marketing with focus on factors influencing long-term B2B relationship building intentions, that could lead to customer loyalty and long term repurchase intentions. The SET provided the hypothetical support for the argument. A widespread range of materials such as textbooks, journal articles, media reports, online records like Science Direct, IEEE Xplore, Emerald, ProQuest, EBSCOhost, and others were used, as it was required of the researcher to utilise up to date information that is relevant and truthful to support this study. Conference papers were also used as sources of information.

### **1.8.3 Empirical study**

Since this study was descriptive by nature, the survey method which most often is associated with quantitative findings (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2013:186), was deemed suitable to carry out the proposed study, as the objective was to assess and define relationships among constructs (Cresswell 2013:155; Hayes, Bonner & Douglas 2013:8). In addition, a quantitative research method was used as the responses can be tabulated quickly, which saves time (Choy 2014:101).

### **1.8.4 Sampling design**

The sampling design procedure requires that a certain number from the study respondents must be drawn to represent the entire population (Zikmund & Babin 2013:315). According to Cresswell (2013:152), the sampling design provides steps that need to be followed when selecting respondents for a given research study. The following are the sampling design procedures followed in this study:

#### **1.8.4.1 Target population**

Hair (2015:165) explains that a target population characterise of a group of units or the population from which the sample of a study is drawn. In other words, it is the total group of the population examined as stated in the research objectives (Ott & Rongnecker 2015:26). The study participants consisted of South African civil and building engineering construction organisations, that are registered with the CIDB operating in the Gauteng province. The respondent's availability was not an issue throughout the data collection phase, as they were easily accessible because the study took place during the peak period of construction activity. In total, there were 2 567 registered and active civil and building engineering contractors (CIDB 2016).

The procurement managers representing these groups ranking from Grade 1 to 9, following the CIDB grading scale, were included in the sample (CIDB 2016). The reason for considering all these grades is that, they all qualify and have the capacity to handle construction projects on their own at any given time. In addition, these organisations bought concrete products from various concrete product manufacturer-suppliers (CPM) who are also situated in the Gauteng province.

#### **1.8.4.2 Sampling frame**

Ott and Rongnecker (2015:26) with Feinberg et al. (2013:304), explain a sample frame as an inclusive list of possible essentials of the study population. The CIDB list of all registered civil and building contractors was used as a sample frame to draw the sample from.

### **1.8.4.3 Sampling technique**

Hair (2015:167) as well as Babbie and Maxfield (2014:222), clarify that probability sampling is a technique used to select the respondents, which this study used. The advantage of using this technique was that, the sample was drawn in such a manner that each element (respondent) of the study participants was accommodated, which would have an acknowledged zero chance of making it into the sample. A systematic random sampling technique was used. According to Alvi (2016:18) as well as Singh and Masuku (2014:5), when using this technique, the sample is randomly chosen and the first constituent of the population is selected, then succeeding units are chosen in a systematic way.

### **1.8.4.4 Sample size**

The sum of the participants incorporated in the study sample represents the sample size (Singh & Masuku 2014:6; Cresswell 2013:169). For this study, the sample size was established based on previous studies as a guide and considered the format of statistical analyses carried out for the study (Burns & Bush 2014:268). The preceding enquiries, which concentrated on relational exchange intentions, required between 120 and 605 participants as sample sizes (Kruger & Mostert 2015:57; Mentz 2014:1; Kruger & Mostert 2012:41). This study made use of structural equation modeling (SEM), which comprised more than six constructs and accordingly SEM requires at least 500 respondents as a sample size (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson 2014:576).

Consistent with SEM's requirements, the study sample size was also set at 600 respondents and deemed sufficient to conduct a study of this magnitude. The size of the sample was believed to be appropriately large, cost-effective and useful to yield accurate projections of the population values (Mooi & Sarstedt 2011:42; Wiid & Diggines 2009:210).

## **1.9 DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND PROCEDURES**

A self-administered structured questionnaire comprising questions and scales envisioned to collect data required to accomplish the objectives of the study was used (Burns & Bush 2014:229). Firstly, a pilot survey was assumed to validate the accuracy of the measuring instrument (Zikmund & Babin 2013:183). The measuring instrument used consisted of seven sections. Section A comprised demographic questions. Section B measured the dimensions of relationship intentions adapted from the scales used by Kumar et al. (2003:667-676), namely, (a) expectations, (b) involvement, (c) forgiveness, (d) feedback, (e) fear of relationship loss, including (f) trust scales adapted from Morgan and Hunt (1994:35), (g) flexibility scales proposed by Zhang, Vonderembse

and Lim (2003:173), and (h) information sharing proposed by Hsu, Kannan, Tan and Leong (2008:297).

Section C measured relationship quality adapted from the scales used by Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Faria and Wellington (2012:194) and Ndubisi (2007:98). Section D measured commitment adapted from the scales used by Dagger et al. (2011:280) as well as Morgan and Hunt (1994:22). Section E measured satisfaction adapted from the scales used by Homburg, Giering and Menon (2003:46) together with Yeung, Ramasamy, Chen and Paliwoda (2013:406). Section F and G measured relationship outcomes, namely, (a) loyalty adapted from the scales used by Dagger et al. (2011:280), and (b) repurchase intention, which were adapted from the scale used by Homburg et al. (2003:46). Items from Sections B, C, D, E, F and G measured responses on a five-point Likert scale of agreement with statements ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree was used.

A draft questionnaire was developed and verified (Wiid & Diggins 2009:181) and tested amongst 40 respondents as a pilot from the target population (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler 2011:74; Hair, Wolfinbarger, Ortinau & Bush 2008:171-172). This was done to validate that a combination of the study questions was comprehensible in order to ensure that the questionnaire was reliable and that all measures were error free and therefore produced reliable study results (Malhotra & Peterson 2006:307). After carrying out a preliminary study, the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument was verified through the analyses and interpretation of the data.

## **1.10 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

Bryman and Bell (2015:49) declare that honesty of the outcomes is dependent on the reliability and validity measures enforced in a study. The reliability is the degree to which the outcomes of the research study are consistent and repeatable (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2014:290). Cronbach alpha was also applied as the most common degree of reliability of the survey instrument (questionnaire) in relation to internal consistency (Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger & Yaprak 2009:98). Zikmund et al. (2013:306) posit that decent reliability is indicated by Cronbach's alpha values higher than 0.7 and values below 0.6 signify poor reliability. In addition, composite reliability was also tested to measure the internal reliability of the construct's subscales. The rule of thumb of CR is that 0.70 or greater reflects sufficient or adequate consistency (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson 2010:710). Validity is the extent to which differences in observed scale scores reflect true differences among objects on the characteristic being measured rather than systematic or random errors (LoBiondo-Wood & Haber 2014:293; Hair *et al.* 2013:215). Five most important

forms of validity: content, construct, convergent, discriminant as well as predictive validity identified by Malhotra (2010:320) were also examined in this study.

### **1.11 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

The Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS), version 25.0, was used for scrutiny. This process began with the preparation of data for editing and coding purposes (Zikmund & Babin 2013:352). The data were analysed using descriptive analysis to assess the data composition (Davis 2008:315). To determine the strength as well as the direction of the associations amongst the constructs, the Pearson's correlation co-efficient was computed.

According to Hatcher and O'Rourke (2014:43-44), it is important to conduct factor analysis to arrange data to be more controllable without losing critical information, thus, making it informal to examine theories. The exploratory factor analysis (EFA), as well as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were applied (Kinnear & Gray 2010:573), CFA was analysed to scrutinise the fundamentals of constructs making a set of answers (Costello & Osborne 2005:1). Subsequently, the Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) 25.0 version which fosters the overall method of data analysis recognised as structural equation modeling (SEM), well-known as an examination of causal modelling, was used to examine the study model (Arbuckle 2008:1).

### **1.12 ETHICAL ISSUES CONSIDERED**

The importance of putting safety measures in place to protect the welfare of the study participants cannot be exaggerated, as a vital drive of research ethics is also to cover scientific negligence and plagiarism (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter 2008:61). In addition, since investigations might present hazards to the respondents, it was imperative for the study to guarantee that the respondent's welfare was protected during the investigation process (Neuman 2016:265). The respondent's welfare embraced keeping to standards and ethical principles, which upholds respect for the independence of respondents, defending them from harm, privacy, well-versed consensus as well as voluntary involvement (Neuman 2016:265).

Another issue that was considered included the permission from the CIDB to use their register of contractors as a sample frame to draw the study sample. The permission to utilise the CIDB register of contractors as a sample frame was granted, willing selected civil and building contractor participants in the study came on board. Refer to Appendix A for a copy of an e-mail communication granting permission to the research to carry out the research study, using the CIDB register of contractors for the purpose of the study.

Oates, Kwiatkowski and Coulthard (2010:05) articulate the view that ethical matters allude to the moralities and procedures that provide transparency of the circumstances under which a research study is undertaken. According to Walliman (2011:43), two crucial attributes to ethics in research involves the values of the researcher for example; honesty and personal integrity including the way the researcher treats the respondents participating in the study. In other words, research ethics are accepted as legal principles that guide the research process (Clow & James 2014:246; Wiid & Diggines 2013:54).

The ethics approval for the study required the following:

- The respondents voluntarily took part in the study.
- The responses given by the study participants should be handled confidentially.
- The respondents' personal information was not qualified to any person,
- The questionnaire did not comprise the respondents' names,
- Professional proficiency in the data collection analysis was preserved, and
- Consent was attained from the respondents prior to data collection

A consent form for ethical clearance accompanied the questionnaire for this study. All ethical considerations were stringently observed during the questionnaire administration. Anonymity and confidentiality were conserved to guarantee that the study respondents could voluntarily partake and those who do not want to continue could without any form of duress, willingly stop at any time without any ramifications.

### **1.13 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION**

This study gives evidence on various aspects of the research study undertaken. The study comprised eight detail chapters, each with numerous sections and sub-sections. The subjects thereof are outlined as follows:

Chapter 2 presents an overview of concrete product environment and the South African construction industry. These were followed by discussions on the industry role players with especial emphasis of the study role players. The industry's economic contributions, types of relationships and challenges found within the industry conclude the discussions.



Chapter 3 discusses the emergence of the relationship-marketing concept by offering the various definitions of the concept as found in the literature. Differences between the traditional transactional marketing and relationship-marketing approach are discussed. Then, the relationship-marketing strategies, practices, benefits and costs, as well as the relational exchange success factors are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on relationship intention.

Chapter 4 is devoted to discussions on the study constructs starting with deliberations on independent variables, concluding the discussions with dependent variables representing relationship marketing constructs.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion on the conceptual model and theories underpinning this study as well as hypothesis development.

Chapter 6 provides a discussion on the research design of the study, following basic steps of the marketing research procedure. Finally, the methodology employed in the study is presented.

Chapter 7 gives the findings attained from the empirical research. The results from the statistical analyses of the data and the methodology used to interpret the data are also presented.

Chapter 8 outlines the decisions drawn from the study's empirical research results and commendations concerning the applicability of long-term B2B relationship intentions between the study role players. Consequently, relations among the primary and secondary study objectives are presented.

## **1.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter provided the introduction and background of this study's investigations documented in this study. In addition, it summarised the full dissertation by presenting the context of the study, and outlined the research problem and pronounced all the study objectives. Additionally, clarification of the motivation and significance of the study was provided. Initially, the chapter introduced and gave the background of the study. The study objectives, research problem, proposed hypotheses as well as the basis upon which this study is set were provided. The study's research design included a literature review, a description of the study participants and a depiction of the sample frame, sampling methods and the data collection instrument. Furthermore, the statistical analysis methods used for data analysis were succinctly emphasized. The chapter outline and a description of the study key terms were provided.

The following chapter give details on the industry in question by presenting an overview of the concrete product environment in the South African construction industry.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **OVERVIEW OF THE CONCRETE ENVIRONMENT**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The forgoing chapter introduced and presented the rationale behind the decision to pursue the study. The present chapter deliberates on the contextual background of this study, focusing on concrete product environment within the construction industry. It begins with a presentation on descriptions of the construction industry, then gives an outlook of the global construction business. Thereafter, the overview and importance of South Africa's construction industry is discussed. A presentation on the South African concrete product environment and a presentation on the study role players follows. The concerns and challenges confronting the construction industry stakeholders are presented, with deliberations on the prevailing construction business relationships found in the industry, which concludes the discussions.

#### **2.2 THE DEFINITION OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The construction industry is one of the first industries that human kind industrialised and remains to shape people's lives in special ways (WEF 2015:11). With a wide range of projects executed with various necessities, particularly on a global scale, the construction industry is so diverse and hard to define (De Valence 2019:742). The construction industry is characterised by heterogeneous groups with different cultures, expectations and motives with great opportunities (Sebone & Barry 2009:185). The principal intent of this industry is to produce and deliver services to end users of infrastructure construction developments through their physical lifecycle (Mabelo & Sunjka 2017:41; WEF 2015:11; Ofori & Toor 2012:1-2).

Any description of the construction industry needs to incorporate the entire material production life cycle, beginning with the extraction of raw materials to final product development. Numerous definitions of the industry have been advocated by numerous researchers and institutions, which all explain the process of bringing into being the built environment (Olanrewaju & Abdul-Aziz 2015:9; Hindle 1997:158). The diverse nature of construction owing to its size, fragmentation, geographic and product-type dispersion, reliance on labour force, materials and equipment, capital assets and legislation makes it more challenging to define and to study quantitatively (Vrijhoef & Koskela 2005:13; Moavenzadeh & Rossow 1976:8).

Eccles (1981:1) referred to the construction industry as "the erection, maintenance, and repair of immobile structures, the demolition of existing structures, and land development". "A narrow

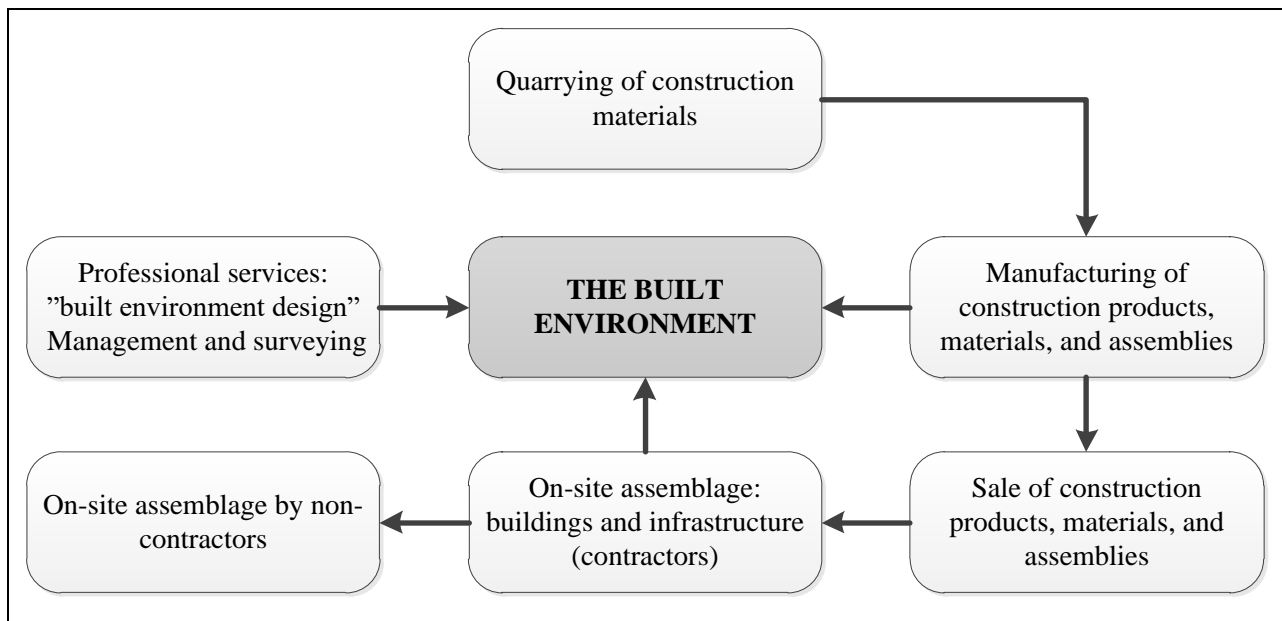
definition of the construction industry includes only those firms undertaking on-site activity” (Ive & Gruneberg 2000:9), while a comprehensive definition comprises various organisations from other sectors involved in the formation of the construction environment. Consequently, Cox and Thompson (1997:128) referred to the construction industry as “inherently a site-specific and project-based activity”. Following Ive and Gruneberg (2000:4) likewise defined the wider industry as “the supply chain for construction materials, products and assemblies, and professional services such as management, architecture, engineering design and surveying”, while the narrow industry is an on-site application described as a business productivity within national accounts.

Foulkes and Ruddock (2007:5) provide two forms of definitions as: (i) the construction industry “consists solely of an on-site assembly of structures including repair work, which encompasses site preparation, construction of buildings and infrastructure, building installation and building completion”; and (ii) a supply sequence of construction activities involving interrelated products, comprising the mining of resources and the engineering of finished goods. The distinctive position of the industry is one termed “construction” and that “industry” is formed by various sectors being non-residential buildings, residential buildings and engineering construction (Gruneberg 2019:43). Doli (2013:224) alludes that in general, this industry is mainly accountable for the organising, designing, planning, building, preserving and ultimately the demolition of structures.

It can be noticed from the preceding discussion that there is a variety of “construction industry” descriptions viewed in different contexts across dissimilar studies (De Valence 2019:743). However, the most commonly used framework in South Africa for defining what constitute the construction industry is found in the Construction Industry Development Act No. 38 of 2000 as well as from Section 33 of the CIDB Act, which subsequent definition also applies for this study:

*Construction industry refers to a comprehensive composition of sectors that augment value in the formation besides conservation of permanent properties in the built environment (CIDB 2015:1).*

Generally, the construction industry is divided into civil and building engineering segments, which embrace what is labelled the built environment (CIDB 2015:2). Figure 2.1 demonstrates the various constituents of the built environment.



**Figure 2.1: Constituents of the built environment**

**Source: Pearce (2003)**

With reference to Figure 2.1, a life cycle process that starts with raw materials extraction at the quarrying stage, followed by on-site assembly of components, that includes site preparation, assembling of structures and other infrastructure developments, ends with the sale and management of interrelated activities that are reliant on each other.

The above-mentioned definitions of the construction industry tie in closely with firstly; the excavation of raw materials and the production of supplementary products; and secondly; the assembling and manufacturing by skilled professionals of final products. Raw materials are converted into ingredients used by qualified labourers to produce a final product and the sale of products to the customers at the end. The CIDB (2016) interprets the construction industry as a comprehensive conception with far-reaching effects that enhances worth of immobile properties within the built environment. This concludes the discussion on the meaning of the construction industry.

The next section deliberates on the prominence of the global construction industry.

### **2.3 THE GLOBAL CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

This is one of the biggest industries across the world, with a global gross domestic product (GDP) contribution of around 13 percent (Valente, Sibai & Sambucci 2019:1). The estimated growth rate during the 2018 to 2023 period is set at 4.2 percent, spurred by current and future residential, non-residential and mega infrastructure development projects (Business Wire 2018; Timetric 2016).

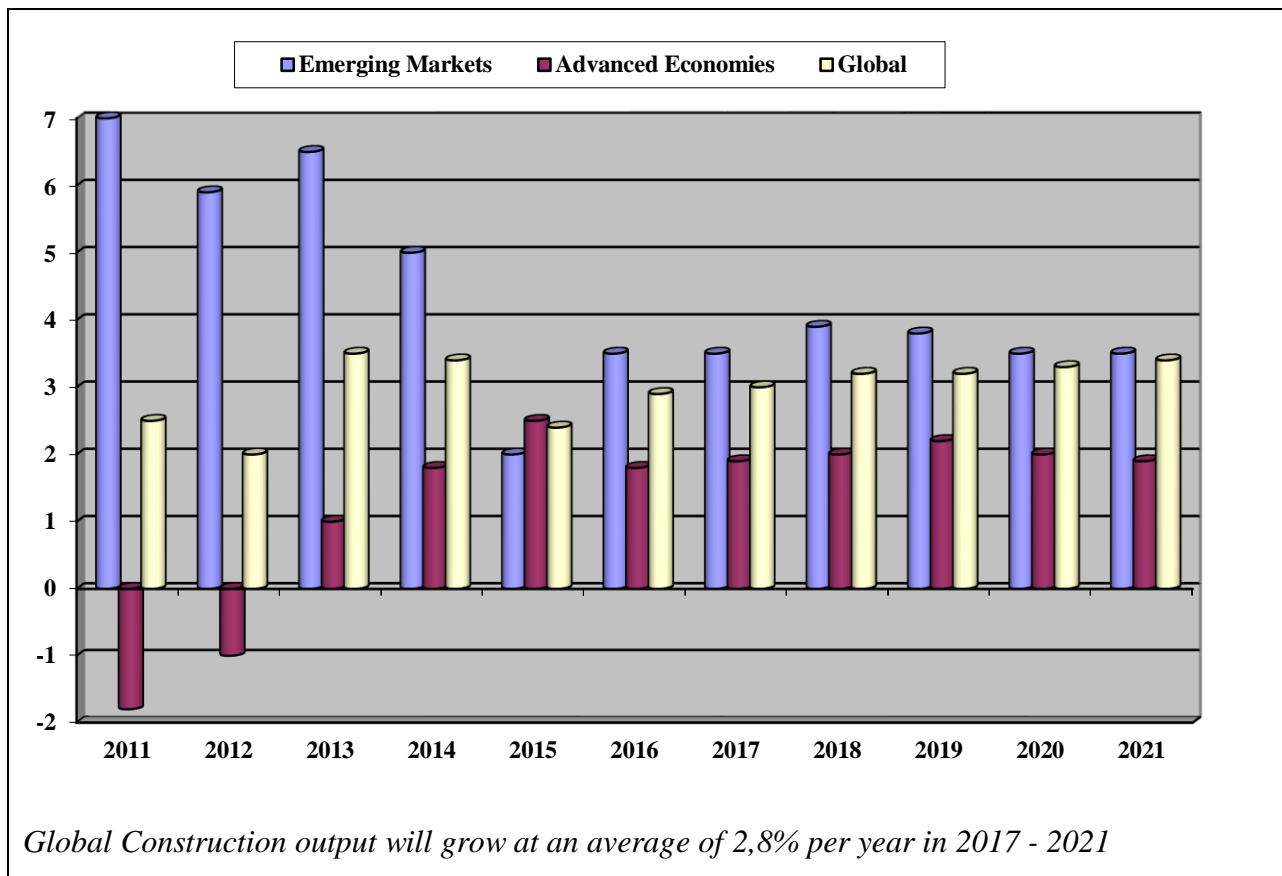
This suggests that increases in construction activity, particularly from emerging countries like South Africa is likely to trigger increases in competition amongst product manufacturer-suppliers in the global market space.

Rivera and Kashiwagi (2016:1378) state that in the last decade, unsatisfactory service delivery patterns have been of common practice in this industry across the globe. World Economic Forum (2018) provides varied underlying causes of such occurrences as follows:

- Casual progressions or inadequate rigour and stability in execution of processes due to organisational regular lack of maturity.
- Insufficient knowledge transfers from one project to another as expertise learned from one project could have been better or properly used to succeeding projects.
- Limited forms of collaborations with suppliers as organisations' procurement strategies did not involve long-term relations with key suppliers, and purchasing policies were repeatedly made on an impromptu or project after project basis.
- Shortage of skills and people development as organisations are comparatively poor, with insufficient gender diversity and limited employment security.

Also, given that product manufacturer-supplier organisations are continuously concerned about increasing their revenue and profitability, impairments such as primordial adversarial relationships and weak levels of trust still exist within the industry (Arantes, Ferreira, Costa & Wagner 2015:406). Sundin Lindahl and Ijomah (2009:723) state that one way of ensuring survival, particularly in a long-standing strategic framework for organisations, is to adopt best relationship marketing practices. According to Bresnen and Marshall (2000:9), the need for customer-organisational and inter-organisational philosophical change within the construction industry is truly needed for continued survival of the industry and the stakeholders.

Therefore, the construction industry stakeholders must strive to improve on their levels of relationship quality and commitment towards their customers to gain positive continued results, owing to the insufficiency of relationship marketing practices within the industry (Serpella, Ferrada, Howard & Rubio 2014:653; Zou, Zhang & Wang 2007:601). Figure 2.2 presents a comparison of the global construction output amongst the various markets from the year 2011 to 2017 and projections between the years 2018 to 2021.



**Figure 2.2: Comparison of the global construction output**

**Source: Timetric (2016)**

It is evident from Figure 2.2 that in actual value terms (determined at 2010 US\$ exchange rates), US\$8.8 trillion in 2016 increased from US\$7.9 trillion in 2012 and that the global construction output was reached. These figures suggest that the construction output contribution is set to grow up to US\$10.1 trillion in the year 2021. In addition, the emerging markets during the year 2012 reached 46.7 percent, which was anticipated to rise to 52.8 percent by the year 2021. Furthermore, during the year 2014 the amount of construction activity within the emerging world exceeded that of progressive economies and this form of transformation is expected to remain in the years to come.

Betts, Graham, Robinson, Blake, Charles, Burton and Godden (2011:633) explain that leading to the year 2020, many key construction markets will find the main global industrial sector in transition, as some of the emerging markets surpasses several industrialised economies to grow into major players in the global marketplace. For example, China is currently one of the major player in the market with the construction of Hospitals amid the Covi-19 pandemic. Additionally, the global construction output is estimated to grow by 85 percent to \$15.5 trillion by the year 2030, within three countries, namely, China, United States of America (USA) and India. All these

countries are in the forefront by accounting for 57 percent of all global construction industry growth followed by Japan (Timetric 2016; WEF 2015).

Timetric (2016) reports that the Chinese construction industry is the current world's major construction player in the market, which is well poised to gain slight increases in market share as growth in other countries slows down towards the year 2030. However, the Chinese construction industry is set to provide growth possibilities through new forms of infrastructure developments in the healthcare, education and social sectors. Then again, the USA's construction industry is well poised to grow faster than the Chinese market. Meanwhile, India is set to surpass Japan to become the third largest world construction market by 2021. Timetric (2016) highlight that the Indian construction market is projected to grow almost twice as fast as China. In addition, following notable trends from the global construction industry markets:

- USA's construction industry is set to remain with relative strong growth over the predicted period with the assistance from its residential segment. Indicating a degree of recession, the USA market in real terms, is predicted to turn into pre-crisis levels by the year 2021.
- Canada's construction industry has been inactive and expected not to resurface to fast growth momentum any time soon. Nonetheless, speculations are that the New Canada Building Plan growth should provide some support towards this end.
- In Western Europe, the construction industry's contribution is expected to reach US\$2.15 trillion by the year 2030, although lower than US\$2.25 trillion seen in 2008.
- In the United Kingdom's construction industry, the pace of growth slowed down in the year 2016 and endured relatively slow growth pace in 2017 which deteriorated over the years leading to 2020. The situation is exacerbated by the signifying lack of assurance over UK's government two-year period of negotiating its departure from the European Union.

It is estimated that the African continent needs a year on year investment of around US\$100 billion to meet their infrastructure demand leading to the year 2025. This prognosis is made following the projected rural population invasion of urban areas by the year 2050 (WEF 2018; 2015:32). Additionally, Timetric (2017) mentions that infrastructure investment in the low-cost housing and energy segments, transportation and logistics, will also contribute towards the growth in the emerging construction markets supported by the continued need for accommodation as high migration and urbanisation rates continue.

Olivier (2015:1) points out that with the African construction market experiencing an infrastructure development boom and administrations on the continent have pledged billions of



dollars to roll out their programmes, the strategic importance of the concrete product manufacturer-suppliers and the construction industry stakeholders will continue to play a crucial role, necessitating viable supply of concrete products to meet their targets. The expectation in the Southern African region is that such rapid infrastructure developments will enhance the prospects of the concrete product environment and thus, open the market to rigorous competition.

The next section offers a summarised perspective of the South African construction industry.

## **2.4 OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The highly competitive construction industry is mainly driven by infrastructure developments through government-supported projects (Pillay & Mafini 2017:1; Mafimidiwo & Iyagba 2015:101; Motsetse 2015:1; CIDB 2010:1). This industry is responsible for transforming the social economic conditions of the society by creating an improved quality of life through accommodation and other structures and as such, it can be the backbone of a prosperous economy providing employment and improved quality of life (Mosenogi 2014:1; Ibrahim *et al.* 2010:232).

Following the successful hosting and conclusion of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup tournament, the construction industry experienced an enormous slowdown in activity as key private and government infrastructure developments dried out (Cottle 2010). However, several latest growth paths such as R215 billion invested in infrastructure development programmes with the construction of Eskom's Medupi and Kusile power stations and over R115 billion for PetroSA's crude oil refinery plant confirmed the latter statement (National Treasury 2012). During the 2015/2016 financial year, the total budget provision for the construction industry was set at R813.1 billion to be spent in the next three years with the aim of addressing the country's ailing health, social welfare, housing, energy, water and sanitation including roads' infrastructure requirements, which threaten the feasibility and success of many businesses across various industries (National Treasury 2016; Nene 2015). Also, from the financial year's 2017 budget, R135.5 billion was allocated to road infrastructure over the next three years (Stats SA 2018:6-7).

All these budget allocations signalled an increase from R56.7 billion in 2015 to R61.4 billion in 2016 of capital expenditure towards infrastructure development and the prominence of this industry. In addition, the government of South Africa scheduled to renovate a minimum of 510 mud-school buildings around the country by the year 2023 (Report Buyer 2016), as a component of the Human Settlements Vision 2030. Timetric (2017) and CIDB (2017:4-5) also indicated that the anticipated increase in industry expenditure to grow the renewable energy segment in terms of electricity capacity, is likewise evidence to this fact, as such projects serve as indicators of

inspiring prospects confronted by the construction industry. Therefore, it is vital for all industry stakeholders counting in civil and building engineering contractors and their concrete product manufacturer-supplier organisations (CPM) to be well equipped to seize the opportunities they are faced with.

Furthermore, there is a need for CPMs and civil and building engineering contractors to facilitate and better manage their operations in the wake of these prospective infrastructure investments, as there is no need to spend more to attract new customers or suppliers, but to retain those that are at their disposal (Berndt & Tait 2012:7). This is true, based on evidence from the past, that primary causes of sub-standard business performance amongst South African construction businesses occur, following previous studies (Pillay & Mafini 2017:307; Ibem & Laryea 2015:364; Motsetse 2015:1; Khumalo, Mashiane & Roberts 2014:621; Mosenogi 2014:1; Windapo & Cattell 2013:65). Therefore, engaging in B2B relational marketing exchange strategies would be beneficial for both CPMs and their concrete product users as a means of protection from competition effects and be better positioned to lower marketing costs and realise profitable long-term goals (Theron & Terblanche 2010:384).

The next section highlights the importance of the industry's economic contributions.

## **2.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

The South African construction industry is considered the core contributor to long-term national socio and economic growth through infrastructure developments and housing investments (Ofori 2015:115; Olanrewaju & Abdul-Aziz 2015:9; Lopes, Nunes & Balsa 2011:49). Its significance can be seen from the vital role it plays in creating physical structures which, in turn, contributes towards the economic welfare of the country (Arantes *et al.* 2015:404-405). Therefore, the growing importance of this industry can be attributed to being a key instrument of prosperous economies by creating employment and social capital (Motsetse 2015:1; Sebone & Barry 2009:186; Khan 2008:279).

### **2.5.1 Economic contributions of the construction industry**

The South African economic environment is presently troubled with countless burdens threatening sustainability of many organisations across various sectors. For example, international competition, particularly from China, continues to be a leading threat, capable of offering varied products, including cementitious products, on an inexpensive and cost-competitive base (SAFCEC 2014). The construction industry contributes towards the national socio-economic growth, by

providing facilities used in the manufacturing of other goods and services (Chia, Skitmore, Runeson & Bridge 2012:1055; Ofori 2012:4). Isa, Jimoh and Achuen (2013:2) state that this is in line with the fact that at least 50 percent of infrastructure investments in some development policies are mostly in construction. Gül, Çağatay and Taşdoğan (2017:157) reiterate that it is for such reasons that the construction industry is an important tool used to trigger the overall country's economic growth.

Olanrewaju and Abdul-Aziz (2015:9) are of the view that the construction industry's degree of impact to the economy is not always clear. For instance, some scholars claim that its contribution is only limited to short terms, while others maintain that it is growth derived from the economy that drives the construction industry instead of the industry driving the economic success, as it only follows the "path" described by an all-inclusive economic growth rate (Olanrewaju & Abdul-Aziz 2015:9). Strassmann (1970:391) coined research work on the relationship amongst the economic growth and construction industry. They established that robust connections concerning the per capita GDP and the per capita Construction Value Added (CVA) does exist. Giang and Pheng (2011:119; Lewis 2009:37) resonates with this assertion and add that the CVA in GDP escalates as per capita GDP grows.

CIDB (2017:2) states that South Africa's construction industry partially contributed to the Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) by between 5 and 10 percent of the country's GDP. Accordingly, the construction industry's contributions can be witnessed from its impact on the GDP contributions (CIDB 2017:2). However, in recent times, the South African construction industry has been struggling, taking from sound reductions seen in the industry's economic contributions and unstable performances, with the highest industry percentage growth rate set at 3.4 percent last seen in the year 2011 (CIDB 2018a; Stats SA 2018:8). Report Buyer (2016) mentions that the industry's output value is set to rise at 2.62 percent annual growth rate by the year 2020. However, this could not happen due to the effects of the novel COVID-19 global pandemic, which negatively affected world markets. Therefore, it is vital to note that regardless of the low rate of infrastructure development activity witnessed lately, the projected South Africa's construction industry contribution towards the economic growth suggests that there is room and hope for improvement (Stats SA 2018:9). The estimate and actual investment in the GFCF by Industry Insight, is presented by Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1: The actual and forecast investment in GFCF in 2010 Rands by Industry Insight**

GFCF; Rand (Billion) 2010							
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017f	2018f	2019f
Construction-Total % change	276,684	288,659 4,3%	303,354 5,1%	304,900 0,5%	297,075 -2,6%	292,279 -1,6%	297,771 1,9%
Building % change	104,822	107,447 2,5%	110,573 2,9%	107,156 -3,1%	102,891 -4,0%	103,920 1,0%	106,021 2,0%
Residential-Building % change	51,114	52,526 2,8%	57,056 8,6%	55,685 -2,4%	53,736 -3,5%	54,273 1,0%	55,630 2,5%
Non-residential Building % change	53,708	54,921 2,3%	53,517 -2,6%	51,471 -3,8%	49,155 -4,5%	49,646 1,0%	50,391 1,5%
Construction Works % change	171,862	181,212 5,4%	192,781 6,4%	197,744 2,6%	194,185 -1,8%	188,359 -3,0%	191,750 2,0%

**Source: CIDB (2018a)**

The resultant forecast submits a contraction in total construction activity in 2018 because of a forecasted contraction of -3 percent in construction works, owing to a fall in public infrastructure spending and state-owned enterprises' (SOE) incapacity to efficiently spend their budget allocations (CIDB 2018a). In addition, this can be ascribed to a number of reasons, such as: the country's public-sector investment portfolio; inflation rate targets; sensible fiscal and monetary policies; higher commodity prices; and a sound banking sector which saw South Africa moderately avoiding the worst of the global economic storms (WEF 2018:34). Stats SA (2018:9) further mentions that the country's sluggish degree of economic progression caused sizeable revenue deficit, suggesting limited availability of funds for infrastructure developments as the extent of projects reduced and signified weak growth.

### **2.5.2 Employment creation**

An extensive variety of inputs from other sectors are used to produce final construction goods and services (CIDB 2017:1). The sectors which benefit from the construction industry output includes mining, manufacturing, real estate, transportation and business services. Lopes *et al.* (2011:50) mention that this industry has the second highest multiplier effects after the manufacturing sector, which puts forward the idea that one occupation in the construction industry strengthens two more

in other sectors of the economy (Biernacki, Bullard, Sant, Brown, Glasser, Jones, Ley, Livingston, Nicoleau, Olek, Sanchez, Shahsavari, Stutzman, Sobelov & Prater 2017:2750; Giang & Pheng 2011:119).

CIDB (2017:2) reports that from the year 2008, the industry contributed about 8 percent to the total formal and informal South African sectors of employment. In the year 2016, the construction industry employed around 1 004 000 individuals within the formal sector and additional 479 000 within the informal sector (meaning 1 483 000 people were employed) (CIDB 2017:2). Also, in the second quarter of the year 2017, about 965 000 individuals in the formal sector plus 430 000 in the informal sector were employed, which brings the total number of people employed to 1 395 000. Considering that South Africa confronted a burden of high unemployment rate, which at some point stood at 29 percent (Stats SA 2019), this study sets out to advance a structure which presents the effect of pre-selected construction industry role player's such as civil and building constructors relationship building intentions with their CPM organisations.

The following section presents discussions on the concrete product environment and concrete product manufacturing.

## **2.6 SOUTH AFRICAN CONCRETE PRODUCT ENVIRONMENT**

Concrete is characteristically defined as a basic building construction material made from a combination of fragmented stone, cement and water, which can be spread or discharged into steel moulds to form a stone-like mass on reinforcing material used in virtually all structures (Boshoff 2015:3). Concrete and its uses have contributed considerably as the most preferred and demanded construction building material worldwide (Biernacki *et al.* 2017:2750; Naghizadeh & Ekolu 2017:22; Saikia, Das & Das 2010:29; Abdelkader, Pozo & Terrades 2010:3412). According to Gambhir (2013:1) and Tolly (2005:4), concrete is the second most utilised construction material after water, from as far back as ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire. In post modern-day buildings, pavements, walkways, parapet walls, beams, prisms, blocks, bridges, dams and other artefacts, concrete is the most favoured and used construction material compared to others (Biernacki *et al.* 2017:2763; Ekolu, Diop & Azene 2016:19; Boshoff 2015:3).

Concrete is the most preferred building material approved by government for public and private investment on new and restoration infrastructure developments in South Africa (Khumalo *et al.* 2014:621-622; Muigai *et al.* 2013:2). The use of concrete allows for the development of complex designs and innovative applications in infrastructure developments of artefacts such as houses, industrial buildings, roads and bridge elements (Valente *et al.* 2019:1). The reasons for the

successful use of concrete products as a construction material are that it is inexpensive, strong and comparatively easy to use (Boshoff 2015:3). The final product is a rock-like structure that typically lasts longer and produces a reliable product, although it can also be enhanced using expert knowledge of advanced mix designs and chemical admixtures to produce a superior product with virtually immeasurable potentials (Biernacki *et al.* 2017:2750). Abdelkader *et al.* (2010:3412) pronounce the success and preference of concrete products as the first-choice construction material over others, with the design and development of high-performance civil and building infrastructures with special automated properties, ease of manufacturing and use, integral durability, constructability, resilience and affordability. This is evident from the R813 billion of the total national budget that the construction development expenditure was allocated in 2015 until the year 2019 (Nene 2015), R500 billion directed towards civil engineering projects and R300 billion to construction building projects (National Treasury 2016:12).

During the 2016/2017 financial year, it was projected that the South African construction industry output value would grow by 2.62 percent annually leading to the year 2020 (Report Buyer 2016), with the main driver being the expansion of infrastructure development projects funded by the South African government. Stats SA (2019) report that South Africa's GFCF at 2010 constant prices declined by 1.4 percent in 2018 paralleled to R618.5 billion in 2017, and it declined to R609.6 billion in 2018. This was preceded by an annual growth of 1 percent in 2017 and an annual reduction of 3.5 percent in 2016. It was accordingly projected that the industry will experience an increase from R743 billion in 2018 to R807 billion in 2023. Such enormous spending coupled with related works by the private sector suggest that the South African civil and building construction sector was well poised for freater things to come. In real terms, the South African construction industry recorded a 0.3 percent growth in 2017, which was preceded by an annual growth of 0.7% in 2016 and 1.7% in 2015. This sluggish growth can be ascribed to weak government policies, low commodity prices and the ongoing political insecurity. However, the implementation of flagship government programs such as the Water Infrastructure Development program, Integrated Resource Plan (IRP), National Transport Master Plan 2050 and South Africa Connect program are anticipated to support the construction industry (Stats SA 2019).

Against this backdrop, it is evident that future infrastructure developments will still require concrete products being the most preferred construction material and as such, CPMs must make sure that they seize the opportunity by applying astute relationship marketing strategies, which will enable them to gain civil and building engineering contractor's trust and win their continued support.

The foregoing section presents a discussion on concrete product manufacturing and supply in South Africa.

### 2.6.1 Concrete product manufacturing

Concrete product manufacturing comprises aggregates, admixtures and extender material suppliers, cement manufacturers, fibre cement roof sheets and cement building block producers, precast and ready-mix concrete product manufacturer-suppliers, as well as concrete pipes and roofing tile designers (civil and building engineering contractors) (Muigai *et al.* 2013:3). The process of manufacturing concrete starts with building components being produced in a factory and shipped after the curing process directly to a construction site for assembly (Khumalo *et al.* 2014:621; Polat 2010:85; Jaillon *et al.* 2009:239).

Cement which is a binding agent of sand and aggregate that sets and hardens to adhere to building units, is a key ingredient in the manufacturing of concrete products, used to build life necessities summed up as infrastructure developments (Naghizadeh & Ekolu 2017:22; Gambhir 2013:1). The term “cementitious products” refers to paste conforming with the South African National Standards (SANS) 50197-1 and adhesive extenders directly sold to users such as concrete and ready-mix product manufacturers (Muigai *et al.* 2013:3). Cementitious products in South Africa are produced by five major manufacturers, namely: Afrisam South Africa (Pty) Ltd, Dangote Cement South Africa (Pty) Ltd t/a Sephaku Cement, InterCement South Africa (Pty) Ltd, Lafarge Industries SA (Pty) Ltd, Mamba Cement and PPC South Africa Holdings (Pty) Ltd (Concrete Institute 2019; Muigai *et al.* 2013:3) presented in no order of importance. A comparison from the year 2011 until the end of the fourth quarter of 2015 of the South African cement production output and sales figures are presented in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2: The South African national cementitious sales statistics**

Domestic sales release period	Jan to Mar Quarter 1	Apr to Jun Quarter 2	Jul to Sep Quarter 3	Oct to Dec Quarter 4	Year to date sales by tones
2011	2,471,585	2,725,421	3,092,784	2,944,545	11,234,335
2012	2,637,349	2,915,120	2,976,235	3,030,862	11,559,566
2013	2,619,423	3,200,795	3,238,572	3,109,029	12,167,819
2014	2,479,227	3,038,826	3,388,646	3,161,791	12,068,490
2015	2,865,899	3,084,186	3,652,318	3,389,620	12,992,023

Domestic sales release period	Jan to Mar Quarter 1	Apr to Jun Quarter 2	Jul to Sep Quarter 3	Oct to Dec Quarter 4	Year to date sales by tones
2016	3,123,218	3,839,996	3,917,430	3,577,070	14.456.714
2017	3,028,177	3,548,648	3,937,933	3,618,985	14.133.743
2018	3,116,062	3,429,729	3,654,894	3,479,347	13.680.030
2019	2,906,443	3,264,718	3,447,822	3,106,929	12.725.912
Year on Year (12/11)	6.7% 	7% 	-3.8% 	2.9% 	2.9% 
Year on Year (13/12)	-0.7% 	9.8% 	8.8% 	2.6% 	5.3% 
Year on Year (14/13)	-5.4% 	-5.1% 	4.6% 	1.7% 	-0.8% 
Year on Year (15/14)	15.6% 	1.5% 	7.8% 	7.2% 	7.7% 
Year on Year (16/15)	9.0% 	24.5% 	7.3% 	5.5% 	11.3% 
Year on Year (17/16)	-3.0% 	-7.6% 	0.5% 	1.2% 	-2.2% 
Year on Year (18/17)	2.9% 	-3.4% 	-7.2% 	-3.9% 	-3.2% 
Year on Year (19/18)	-6.7% 	-4.8% 	-5.7% 	-10.7% 	-7.0% 

**Source: Concrete Institute (2018)**

Table 2.2 shows an upward trend on the cement production output and sales figures from the period stipulated. This suggests that concrete product demand and consumption patterns have been increasing in recent years (Stats SA 2018:9). Unfortunately, Table 2.2 demonstrate only the cement production output and sales statistics from the year 2011 until the fourth quarter of the year 2019. The reason for this is that due to the COVID – 19 global pandemic and lockdown



measures imposed by governments all over the world. No substantial construction industry activity and cement demand took place during the first and second quarters of the year 2020.

Portland Cement Association (2013) noted that the global population growth anticipated to increase from levels of around 6.6 billion to the middle of 9.5 and 12.9 billion by the year 2100 (Cembureau 2018:23-24), will have a huge effect to the use of cement in the production of concrete products. Biernacki *et al.* (2017:2748) caution that this development comes with high demands for water, food, housing, education and other life necessities, all of which require considerable progression in infrastructure developments. Owing to such developments, this suggests that the demand for concrete products will be directly amplified due to the increased need for more roads, houses, hospitals, schools and other concrete artefacts linked to the economic development (Electus 2017).

From the above discussion, the robustness of competition in the market is on the rise and thus, it is necessary for the construction industry stakeholders, particularly CPM's marketing managers, to develop new means of retaining their customers as competition soars. Grönroos (1994:11) recommends that relational marketing exchange strategies might be what organisations and their marketers need in the quest to retain customer support. This view simplifies the prominence of relational exchanges in the construction industry, mainly in light of the reconstruction and developments seen across the country. In order to remain competitive, the need for astute buyer-supplier relationships is warranted for CPMs and other industry stakeholders in properly effecting infrastructure development projects. Therefore, by classifying and forming lasting exchange relationships with industry stakeholders, their business objectives could be met through reciprocated exchange relations (Grönroos 1994:12).

The resulting sub-division presents discussion on the construction industry's key role players and this study's main participants.

### **2.6.2 The construction industry role players**

Infrastructure developments are executed by specialist industry role players (Benton & McHenry 2010:12). Muigai *et al.* (2013:2) highlight that these industry players consist of cement manufacturers; fly ash and slag suppliers; cement extenders; aggregate producers; admixture suppliers; concrete product manufacturers (CPM); ready-mix concrete suppliers, including structural concrete designers and developers (civil and structural engineers); and building engineering contractors. Also, they work alongside other industry stakeholders, which includes amongst others: architects, property developers, project managers, quantity surveyors, other

material suppliers, electrical and mechanical engineering contractors (Blayse & Manley 2004:145). To a large extent, all these industry players each independently and in isolation operate in their respective area of specialisation, despite the fact that most of their components are interrelated.

A discussion on the study's industry role players is presented in the succeeding sub-section.

### **2.6.2.1 The study role players**

Several construction industry role players have been acknowledged. In this section a discussion on the main study participants is provided.

#### **a) Civil and building engineering contractors**

Civil and building contractors' work is the core of modern developments such as well-designed and surveyed architectural buildings, advanced roads and highways for transportation of construction materials (Saikia *et al.* 2010:1). According to the CIDB (2018a), the largest share of the total construction investment 63 percent of total GFCF was contributed by civil construction. In addition, the CIDB (2018a) notes that civil work accounts for 41 percent of all infrastructure activities, paralleled with a 59 percent of general building works.

Business Wire (2019) points out that to retain its leading position, with a share of 41 percent of the industry's total value in 2022. The South African government pronounced plans to finance R327.7 billion on civil works for transport and logistics infrastructure by the year 2020 in the quest to improve the country's transport network, boost the mobility of people and services, reduce transport costs and simplify regional trade. It is for such reasons, civil and building construction work is viewed to be contributing immensely in the development of societies due to the critical role it plays in new innovations to build advanced artefacts in a cost-effective way that positively influence competitiveness (O'Donnell, Karallis, Sandelands, Cassin & O'Niell 2008:439-440).

#### **b) Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB)**

Five categories of works under which an engineering contractor must register to follow their line of speciality are: Civil Engineering (CE); Electrical Engineering (EE); General Building (GB); Mechanical Engineering (ME); and Specialist Works (SW). These categories establish the nature of work a contractor is capable and qualified to perform within their specific ranks (CIDB 2018a; CIDB 2010).

For civil and building contractors to be recognised as capable and proficient with their responsibilities, they must first register in their field with the CIDB under Section 5(2) of the CIDB Act (CIDB 2010). CIDB (2017:16) states that the register of contractors was formed following the CIDB Act (Act 38 of 2000). The register also rates and classifies contractors with respect to their financial and performance capability. It must also be noted that it is compulsory for public sector operators to make an application to register with the CIDB to be considered for construction work and tenders. Table 2.3 illustrates classes of works by showing the total number of different grades and highlights the main role players relevant for this study.

**Table 2.3: The total number of class of works by grading – all provinces from grade 1 to 9 as at 31 June 2018**

<b>Classifications and grades</b>	<b>CE</b>	<b>EE</b>	<b>GB</b>	<b>ME</b>	<b>SW</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	37754	1834	71581	7015	20717	146141
2	2950	248	4160	443	958	9046
3	1416	99	1054	145	238	3110
4	1614	166	1527	301	265	4265
5	913	96	798	166	168	2380
6	1161	91	1018	199	156	2903
7	679	51	544	106	88	1608
8	247	9	215	56	28	609
9	104	4	65	45	12	269
Total	46838	2598	80962	8476	22630	170349
<b>Legend: Civil Engineering (CE); Electrical Engineering (EE); General Building (GB); Mechanical Engineering (ME); Special Works (SW)</b>						

**Source: CIDB (2017:16)**

In addition, within each class there are nine financial categories that set the limits for contractors in respect of their ability, equipment and workforce assets, including the nature and size of projects that they are capable to undertake (CIDB 2017:20). The classification of works indicates the grade in which a contractor fits. Contractors that are ranked grade 1 to 8 are largely privately-owned organisations, while grade 9 contractors are typically public listed corporations (CIDB 2017:16).

Table 2.4 highlights the grades in accordance with contractors' project execution capability in terms of their financial affordability.

These grading designations determine the contract value a contractor can perform in terms of financial and works capability, whereby the higher the grade, the bigger the value of the project a contractor is permitted to handle (CIDB 2010).

**Table 2.4: Categorisation in accordance with capability**

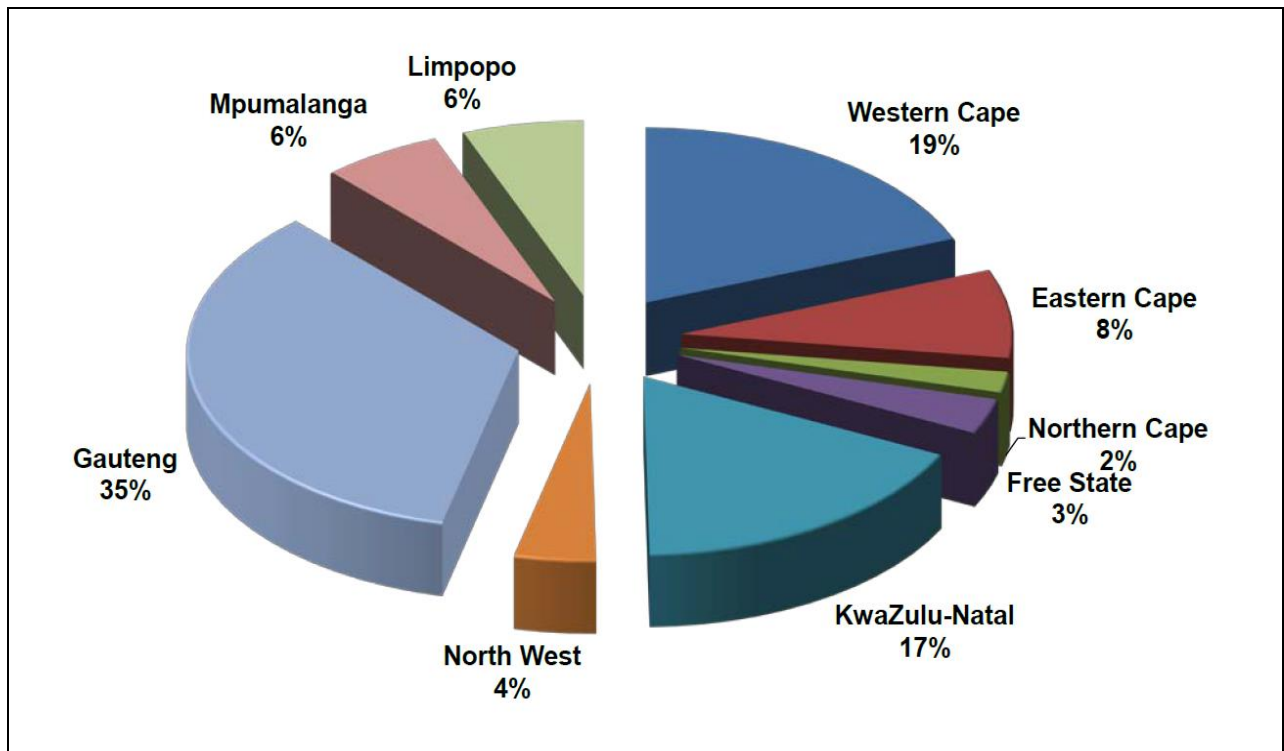
Grading designation	Maximum value of contract per grade
1	R 200 000
2	R 650 000
3	R 2 000 000
4	R 4 000 000
5	R 6 500 000
6	R 13 000 000
7	R 40 000 000
8	R 130 000 000
9	No Limit

**Source: CIDB (2017:20)**

Although all CIDB grades are considered in the study, only the Civil Engineering (CE) as well as the General Building (GB) contractors from grades 1 to 9, who are referred to throughout as "civil and building contractors", are identified as the study's industry role players' relationship intentions to be examined towards their CPM. The reason for focusing only on civil and building contractors is three-fold.

Firstly, the civil and building organisations play a vital role as the most preferred vehicles of infrastructure delivery to communities (CIDB 2018a; Saikia *et al.* 2010:1-2). Secondly, the amount of remedial work (resolution of faults due to amongst others poor workmanship) to be done on previously completed civil and building projects (CIDB 2018:8) influenced this decision. Thirdly, more than 1 400 civil and building organisations were cleaned out due to the continuous questionable workmanship and management of structures, which resulted in their demise (CIDB 2015:6).

As indicated earlier, the study’s participants are all active civil and building engineering contractors who have been involved with infrastructure and general building work from Gauteng regions. The motivation behind the selection of these areas and the participants is that: (i) Gauteng province is the economic hub of South Africa, and (ii) it experienced much more construction work activity paralleled to other provinces over the years (CIDB 2018a; CIDB 2017:20; Heath & Constantinou 2015:503; Cottle 2011:30). Figure 2.3 offers a provincial outline of the construction industry in respect of the output/value added per province.



**Figure 2.3: Provincial outline of the construction industry output/value added per province**

**Source: CIDB (2018a)**

Figure 2.3 indicates that the construction activity and output/value added is driven mainly by Gauteng province, then followed by Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Eastern Cape. The dominance of the Gauteng province as the most active construction area is highlighted by the percentage expenditure estimates of the past two years through civil and building works presented in Table 2.5. Therefore, from the population size of 2 567 registered and active civil and building contractors, the study sample will be drawn as this size was deemed appropriately large and sufficient to conduct such a study.

**Table 2.5: Construction expenditure by province - % estimates: Industry insight database**

Province	Building works % 2017 Quarter 1 to 4	Civil works % 2017 Quarter 1 to 4	Total %
Gauteng	36	15	27
KwaZulu-Natal	19	19	19
Western Cape	15	14	15
Eastern Cape	13	15	14
Limpopo	6	15	10
North West	2	8	5
Mpumalanga	3	7	5
Free State	4	4	4
Northern Cape	1	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Province	Building work % 2016 Quarter 1 to 4	Civil work % 2016 Quarter 1 to 4	Total %
Gauteng	41	11	27
KwaZulu-Natal	19	19	19
Western Cape	21	15	18
Eastern Cape	8	19	13
Limpopo	4	13	8
North West	2	10	6
Mpumalanga	3	7	5
Free State	2	4	3
Northern Cape	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: CIDB (2018a)**

However, the South African construction industry is set to remain in a period of weak growth over the next decade as weak economic growth limits infrastructure spending and a tough business

climate sees the disappearance of major domestic industry players (IDC 2019). Business Wire (2019) states that the government's incapacity to increase infrastructure spending alongside weak investor appetite remain obstacles to the wider expansion of the industry over the coming years.

Owing to the importance of customers counted in concrete product users and robust competition prevailing in this environment, organisations must realise the need to review their marketing strategies to be conducive and allow fitting customers to participate in exchange relationships (Gilaninia *et al.* 2011:789; Roshani 2009:29). Inter-organisational relations could be what they need, leading to “higher return on equity, better return on investment and higher success rates” (Todeva & Knoke 2005:123). However, Fernandes and Proença (2013:46) clarify that relationship exchange successes differ across customers and organisations due to varying application patterns, which tend to evade many organisations as its value is often understated (Wei *et al.* 2013:60; Kim *et al.* 2012:383).

Fang, Chang, Ou and Chou (2014:170) concur that preserving the existing customers is easier than attracting new ones, as organisations prefer keeping old customers with the hope of increasing their repurchase behaviour. Therefore, it is advisable for the construction industry role players to consider focusing on establishing long-term profit oriented business relationships (Ndubisi, Malhotra, Capel, Agarwal, Satkunasingam & Ndubisi 2016:373). Segarra-Moliner *et al.* (2013:196) echo that, for competition in this business environment is escalating, and the regeneration of B2B relationship marketing interest is warranted. This is necessary as the expansion of solid buyer-supplier relationships is found to contribute towards risk reductions in relational exchanges

Owing to customer preservation being important to the concrete product environment and the South African construction industry, retaining customers would increase their profitability and eventual survival (Cant & Erdis 2012:938). It is for such reasons why the construction industry stakeholders, particularly civil and building contractors and their CPMs, are also found to be vital elements that can impact on the survival and ultimately contribute towards the progression of the construction industry. This is true since competitiveness and a fight for market share in the concrete product environment is not a dissimilar phenomenon (Poggiolini 2007:1).

The challenges and concerns that the construction industry stakeholders are faced with are presented in the following section.

## 2.7 CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Sunjka and Jacob (2013:1) state that the construction industry comprises dynamic and complex processes, which tends to create various challenges despite the fact that the industry contributions are well documented. Like in any other setting, the concrete product environment in the construction industry has its own unique problems, which in some instances are similar. Some challenges have prevailed momentarily, while there is little indication that suggest those that succeeded some time ago no longer exist due to insufficient information on the matter (Windampo & Cattell 2013:66).

For example, the construction environment is viewed to be greatly volatile and characterised by inefficiency and uncertainties in customer demands (Mafini, Loury-Okoumba & Pooe 2016:259). The industry is faced with challenges ranging from corruption in tender processes, project delays and scarcity of skilled professionals (CIDB 2017:11; Chadhliwa 2015:1; Mafimidiwo & Iyagba 2015:102). Windapo (2016:2) states that the skills shortage and the ageing workforce nearing retirement has in addition been problematic and a critical factor facing the industry. The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) (2014), which facilitates and regulates the engineering profession, similarly noted that of late, the number of skilled civil and building engineers has dropped, which is one of the reasons for poor management of increasing levels of construction spending and the sluggish infrastructure delivery concerns (Mafundu & Mafini 2019:169; Motsetse 2015:1; Thwala & Phaladi 2009:533).

In addition, skilled civil and building engineers are being poached by the international community perceived as being hard-working and having suitable experience for employment in a variety of industries (Windapo 2016:2; Antony 2013:12). Moreover, Erasmus and Breier (2009:87-88) confirm that skilled professional engineers are leaving the South African market due to, amongst others, the transformation policies, emigration to other countries, premature death and early retirement. The unfortunate departure or loss of experienced professional civil and building engineers from the South Africa market, likewise, escalates the skills shortage challenge that hampers organisations to develop an additional competency that leads to lack of skill replacements (Antony 2013; Rooks, Oerlemans, Buys & Pretorius 2005:56).

Issues of deceitfulness and incapacity to embrace best practices continue to be limitless challenges as they seem to be common across most industries, including the South African construction industry (Bowen, Aktikoye, Pearl & Edwards 2007:632). The construction industry stakeholders have to contend with the ineffective budget allocations, unfavourable policy amendments, postponements in debt payment by government tender boards and industrial actions, all of which,



disrupt business operations (Mafimidiwo & Iyagba 2015:103). Considering that there is rigid competition in this industry, the procurement of materials also tends to be problematic as the material suppliers are, separately and in isolation, delivering goods and services to their customers (Ho 2016:534; Ibem & Laryea 2015:364; Arditi & Chotibhongs 2005:867).

Mafini and Dhurup (2015:1295) also noted that even where customers are content with the quality of products supplied, they often tend to be disgruntled by the level of relationship quality displayed by their suppliers. As a result, organisations procuring construction materials compete fiercely and end up engaging in questionable competitive business practices (Ibem & Laryea 2015:364-365; Poggiolini 2013:1). For example, an investigation by the Competition Commission of South Africa (CCSA) found that 300 collusions and cover pricing cases in projects worth R47,79 billion and R579 billion between the year 2004 and 2013 took place (Bowen, Edwards & Cattell 2015:72; Competition Commission 2013; Bowen *et al.* 2012:885). In this investigation, 15 top construction organisations, including civil and building contractors, were found guilty of collusive tendering, instances of bid rigging as well as cover pricing practices.

It is against this background that to deal with such challenges it is advisable for the industry stakeholders to either improve or develop effective business practices to remain competitive and expand their network of business relationships to be more sustainable (Enz 2009:4). It is also without doubt that doing so, it is vital because organisations with a strategic imperative – which is to adopt long-term relational connections and to preserve their current relationships to share, improve and control resources, that will be advantageous to their relationships' survival (Zeithaml *et al.* 2009:176).

For such relationships to survive, intelligent marketing with special focus on relationship building and deliverance of excellent relationship quality in meeting customers' needs is required, which could lead to loyalty and eventual future favourable customer behaviour patterns. Accordingly, change is necessary for CPMs to embrace effective relationship marketing strategies to achieve their profitability objectives (Van Vuuren, Roberts-Lombard & Van Tonder 2012:83). Consequently, the relationship marketing tactics could be one of the useful construction industry strategies relevant for use by the industry stakeholders.

To gain better insight of the study's role players, the next section provides a discussion on business relationships found amongst the South African construction industry stakeholders.

## 2.8 RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

There is a growing interest in promoting cooperative interactions and other forms of relational contracting in the construction industry (Young, Hosseini & Lædre 2016:833; Eriksson 2010:905). The construction industry participants are therefore found to be having a significant impact to successful formation of lasting relationships with their buyers and suppliers (Human, Lochner & Botes 2008:60; Davis 2008:310). This practice could assist them to benefit from their various undertakings, as it is important to adjust their prevailing and traditional behaviour of arm's length relationship forms found within the construction industry (Arantes *et al.* 2015:406; Dubois & Gadde 2002:622).

Papadopoulos and Pantouvakis (2010:545) assert that adversarial business relationships found within the construction industry occur in a form of joint venture relationships, are prominently established between civil and building contractors. Carter, Cushman and Hartz (1988:75) explain joint venture relationships “as business alliances formed by two or more unrelated organisations for a short period of time with the aim to provide engineering, consulting and procurement as well as construction management services by consolidating the skills and resources of the participants”. Maro and Mnyigumbi (2019:19) as well as Adnan and Morledge (2003:765) describe the civil and building contractor joint venture relationships as cooperative undertakings associated with certain business processes including entry to new markets, organisational competency and knowledge transfer. In this form of business relationship, the parties to the relationship operate in a jointly owned business formation (Kazaz & Ulubeyli 2009:185).

Thompson, Cox and Anderson (1998:31) argue that this relationship tends to be contractual rather than relational by nature. Commonly, the industry participants are contractually bound into short-term relationships and some of their material suppliers in executing construction projects (Arantes *et al.* 2015:406). In other words, there are temporary coalitions amongst them, coming together to complete an assignment and disbanded after project completion. In addition, they separately and in isolation deal with each of their area of specialisation, although most of their components are interrelated. The emergence of such a situation is not healthy for the industry players and the sustainability of the industry as it is found that realising the significance of a customer-centric business approach as a condition for sustained competitiveness, higher profitability and the very industry survival is in their best interests (Morgan and Hunt 1994:28).

Todeva and Knoke (2005:123) assert that industry players need to consider relational exchange approaches leading to “higher return on equity, better return on investment and higher success rates”. Rowlinson, Walker and Cheung (2008:277) agree, that to have a situation that leads to

minimum mistakes, decreasing time delays and the prevalent rework cycle, could support a sustainable relationship between participants. The relational connections amongst these professionals would come in handy in bridging such gaps even before they arise. Therefore, it is imperative for the industry role players to perceive each other as interrelated and affecting one another in achieving a shared or common goal, unlike working in silos.

Owing to the growing complexity of concrete products offered by material suppliers such as product exchanges required on site, a combination of product components, customer demands and requirements for total package solutions inspired by quality assurance issues, the material supplier's direct involvement on construction sites is also very critical (Gibb & Isack 2003:146; Manley & Marceau 2002:1). Larsson, Sundqvist and Emmitt (2006:553) mention that the material supplier organisations regrettably, in most cases, tend to have poor relationships with their project contractors, as they do not have an open relationship with their work on construction sites. However, there is a developing trend for material suppliers to be involved with site work, which provides them with an opportunity to develop close relationships with their customers (Manley 2008:231).

Dulaimi (2007:550) points out that these joint venture relationships are susceptible to lack of cooperation amongst stakeholders, as organisations focus mainly on reducing costs and as a result, tend to neglect value, which leads to poor performance and dodgy activities. The scale of fraud brought in the industry by such relationship forms, are greater than in any other sector of the economy (Bowen *et al.* 2007:631). Recently, joint venture relationships have become synonymous with words including collusion, bid rigging, cover pricing, fraud and racketeering within the South African construction industry (CIDB 2015; Poggiolini 2013:1). In other words, civil and building contractors divide the market amongst them and agree on margins, colluding and by presenting imitation tenders (cover pricing) to allow the associated collaborators to win the bid. Accordingly, Miozzo and Dewick (2002:991) propose inter-organisational teamwork as a way of improving construction and evading fraudulent activities.

Rowlinson *et al.* (2008:296-297) state that the escalating interest in the practise of relationship inclined approaches in the construction industry has been experienced. Using the relationship-based approach, Miozzo and Dewick (2002:992) highlight that organisations can rely on the capabilities of others to facilitate continuous teamwork with product development processes, designs and industry performance. Doing so could also be beneficial for all, as the industry is filled with several role players, each with individual expertise, brought together to execute various assignments and thus, healthy relationships amongst them would be vital for mutual success

(Blayse & Manley 2004:145). In order to achieve reciprocal benefits, the challenges that the construction industry and its role players are faced with needs to be minimised. Therefore, coordination by the industry role players is required as their efforts towards developing and growing the industry to greater sustainable levels would be beneficial to all industry stakeholders.

## **2.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

When a literature review was assumed in the chapter, the intention was to offer a suitable frame of reference, presenting a viewpoint on the concrete product environment within the construction industry. Concrete products are very important towards infrastructure developments and sustainability of the construction industry, which has significant importance towards the country's economic growth. Additionally, concrete products contribute considerably to the socio-economic development and improvements in industrial as well as its supply chain processes. This chapter introduced and provided discussions on the definitions of the construction industry. Those were followed by deliberations on the global and South African construction industry status. An outline and imperativeness of the industry was then given. Succinctly put, the challenges and concerns confronted by the industry stakeholders were also deliberated upon. The chapter concluded with a discussion on the dominant relationship form found within the construction industry.

Owing to significant contributions which the construction industry brings to the socio-economic improvement of various countries, there has been a resolute drive to discover practical solutions to challenges that hamper continued success of the industry stakeholders and sustainability of the construction industry. Prominent marketing strategies identified from extant literature that can assist the construction industry stakeholders, including marketers and organisations to deliver value-based offerings, are presented in the succeeding chapter.

**CHAPTER 3**  
**EVOLUTION OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**  
**AS A BUSINESS PRACTICE**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter commences the discussion with the marketing concept, followed by a summation of the relationship marketing definitions. These are followed by comprehensive reflections on the emergence and evolution of the relationship-marketing approach. The discussion offers the benefits and costs of engaging in relationship-marketing for customer and organisation. A presentation on the relationship-marketing success factors of engaging in relational exchange approaches follows. This chapter concludes with a presentation on the various relationship-marketing strategies.

### **3.2 OVERVIEW OF THE MARKETING CONCEPT**

The initial development of the marketing philosophy largely originates from conventional economics, with the aim of securing acceptable and lower marginal prices for basic industrial buying requirements (Hadjikhani & LaPlaca 2013:294). The marketing concept developed into a business philosophy where organisations focused on satisfying customer needs while realising their long-term profit objectives (Kurtz 2012:11; Grönholm 2012:5). Over the years, the marketing concept changed and continues to transform, due to the reengineering of the marketing philosophy (Koi-Akrofi, Koi-Akrofi & Welbeck 2012:79).

Solomon, Marshall, Stuart, Barnes and Mitchell (2009:15-16) mention that the marketing rationale advanced through four far-reaching periods of the production, sales, consumer and the relationship eras. The production era, which persisted until around the 1925s to 1930s, was considered by producers as an era of concentrating on manufacturing competences. The producers held that when they manufacture superior product quality, their goods will sell themselves off the shelves as they were initially manufactured prior to finding people that will buy or consume them (Kurtz 2012:9). Then came the sales era that sprung from roughly the 1925s - 1950s, following the production era in which the producers were bound to pursue consumers to buy their products. The producers consequently had to be persuasive in selling their products to prospective customers, that their goods can be found only in small quantities and for a very short time (Kurtz 2012:10; White 2010; Solomon *et al.* 2009:14). Soon after that, the consumer era occurred when producers eventually started to appreciate that it is worthwhile to first establish what their customers require in the quest towards satisfying their needs and wants.

Following the customer orientation process, which prevailed from the late 1950s to just before 2000, marketers progressively took note that they were gaining a competitive edge over their opponents. According to Solomon et al. (2009:15), marketers had to determine their customers' needs before manufacture goods and services could satisfy them and develop marketing strategies that inform customers about their offerings. This era is best referred to as the advent of the marketing concept (Kurtz 2012:11). Ever since, the marketing concept advanced as a business philosophy as organisations emphasised satisfying customer needs, while realising their continued returns in an ethical way (Kardes, Cronley & Cline 2011:13). Consequently, the modern marketing period termed the relationship era, commenced as organisations realised that they need to acquire and uphold lasting relational exchanges with their customers. Five viewpoints of the marketing concept are given by Kotler and Armstrong (2010:34), given in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1: Marketing management philosophies**

<b>PHILOSOPHY</b>	<b>CONCEPT</b>	<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>CAVEAT</b>
<b>Production-concept</b>	Customers want highly affordable and available products.	Marketers' goal is to improve productivity and distribution competences.	Even though it is related to some circumstances, it could lead to marketing susceptibility in which organisations limit their interest to operational competence relative to satisfying customer needs.
<b>Product-concept</b>	Customers favour advanced products, which offer top quality and performance.	Marketers concentrate on relentless product improvement.	Risks market bias by concentrating only on one marketing element – the product.
<b>Selling-concept</b>	Customers only procure adequate quantities of products should there be vigorous selling and promotions to keep using the product.	Marketers emphasise on vigorous selling strategies.	This system is transactional and constructed relative to relationship building.

PHILOSOPHY	CONCEPT	APPLICATION	CAVEAT
<b>Marketing concept</b>	A customer-centric approach, which has counter observation point that pursues and understand customer needs and wants in providing them with adequate offerings that are better than those of competitors.	Concentrate on customer's needs. Promotes a cohesive marketing approach	Customer do not at all time know what they need or what is conceivable.
<b>Societal-marketing-concept</b>	This viewpoint is an expansion of the marketing idea. It pursuits the delivery of customer value by maintaining or improving both their customers' and society's welfare.	Organisations must account to the well-being of the society and satisfy their customers' requirements.	Large number of participants and consequently needs that must be satisfied.

**Source: Kotler and Armstrong (2010:34)**

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2013:20), the production-concept advances that customers prefer products offered at low cost and the organisation's responsibility being to improve productivity and keep product prices low. The product-concept advances that customers prefer quality products and expect marketers and their organisations to provide some form of promotional activity. The selling-concept advances that organisations must embark on heavy selling and rapid promotional activities, or else customers will not buy much of their offerings (Keelson 2012:36). The marketing-concept embraced that concept with the use of target market research, in which organisations must establish customers' needs and wants to be in a position of satisfying those needs. Furthermore, organisations must ensure customer and lasting societal satisfaction as fundamental to realise their tasks and objectives.

Given this background, it is apparent that the marketing concept advocates that the basis of any marketing process is to sustain a customer centric approach by sufficiently meeting customer needs prior to focusing on the organisation's objectives. Kotler and Armstrong (2010:34) posit that the marketing concept recommends that in the quest to reach organisational objectives, it is advisable to research the target market's needs and wants and to satisfy them better than on competition. The authors further postulate that the marketing concept holds an "outside-in" view

from both the customer and the organisations' position, warranting synchronisation between the two. Therefore, proper application of the marketing conception requires organisations to establish customers' ever-changing needs and perceptions and utilise that information towards the development of astute marketing plans, which speak to the objective of meeting and satisfying those needs and achieving profits. One way of doing this is by applying intelligent relationship marketing strategies (Kim & Kim 2009:487).

The subsequent section presents an outline of the emergence of relationship-marketing approach as found in the literature.

### **3.3 THE EMERGENCE OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**

The overriding logic of marketing concentrated on tangible resources, entrenched value and exchanges. Over the years, innovative perspectives with revised logic emerged and focus is now placed on long-term relationship building, which incorporate the co-creation of value and intangible resources (Vargo & Lusch 2004:1).

The development of relationship-marketing emanated with the aim of modifying old marketing trends and advance a new approach to the marketing arena (Yoong, Lian & Subramania 2017:51). Rao and Perry (2002:600) state that the theoretical substance for relationship-marketing is underscored by both B2B marketing and the services-marketing approach suggested by Grönroos (1980:9; 1994:4) as well as Gummesson (1987:10; 2008a:15). Cant (2010:10) resonates that this idea is a valid expansion of the ongoing development of the marketing philosophy that regards the formation and preservation of long-standing profitable relationships.

Previously, customers were influenced by organisations to procure their offerings and there was limited effort placed by organisations on establishing ongoing relationships with customers (Yoong *et al.* 2017:51). Most organisations took their customers for granted as they could afford to attract new customers with no burden of losing the current ones (Kumar, Tejaswi, Srinivas & Kumar 2010:159). In the current, ever-changing market environment, organisations recognise the need to be more resourceful and effective in satisfying customer needs and retain them for longer (Kotler & Armstrong 2013:16). This assertion suggests that organisations must modify their emphasis from an impersonal business marketing approach, in pursuit of establishing custom-made lasting buyer-seller relationships as the overriding premise of marketing. The prominence of doing this is not only to maximise profitable sales volumes, but to yield revenue through customer satisfaction and retention (Chopra 2012). Considering that it is too expensive to appeal to new customers opposed to maintaining them, the drive for organisations should be to form long-



term relationships to secure customer loyalty and positive repurchase behaviour (Richards & Jones 2008:125).

The original idea of the relationship approach was coined and popularised by Berry (1983) in the academic literature in a book on marketing to services, although quite a few notions appeared much before then. For instance, McGarry (1958:125; 1953:36) incorporated six undertakings in his viewpoint of marketing tasks: contractual, propaganda, merchandising, physical distribution, pricing and termination functions. Most importantly, the conceptual development of relationship-marketing can be drawn from MaCneil's (1980:1; 1978:854) argument on the effects of longstanding lawful agreements on relational interactions. The origins of the concept assumed that longstanding relations amongst organisations and customers must be "mutually perceived and mutually beneficial" (Sheth 2017:6). As such, limitless advancement of a mutual long-term relationship approach in recent times has been one of the leading priorities for most organisations.

In his seminal work, Berry (1983:25) stressed that appealing to new customers must only be an intermediate phase in the relational exchange process. The expansion of the idea was encouraged by Morgan and Hunt (1994:22), who described the concept as a "complete marketing undertaking concentrated on forming and upholding prosperous relational associations". This is because relational exchanges encourage lasting close relationships among organisations and customers, with a sense of guarantee from the former to the latter. The foremost feature of this approach is that customers are incomparable. This thought is premised by its manifestation as several relationships are found between supplier organisations and their customers (Veerasamy 2011:2356).

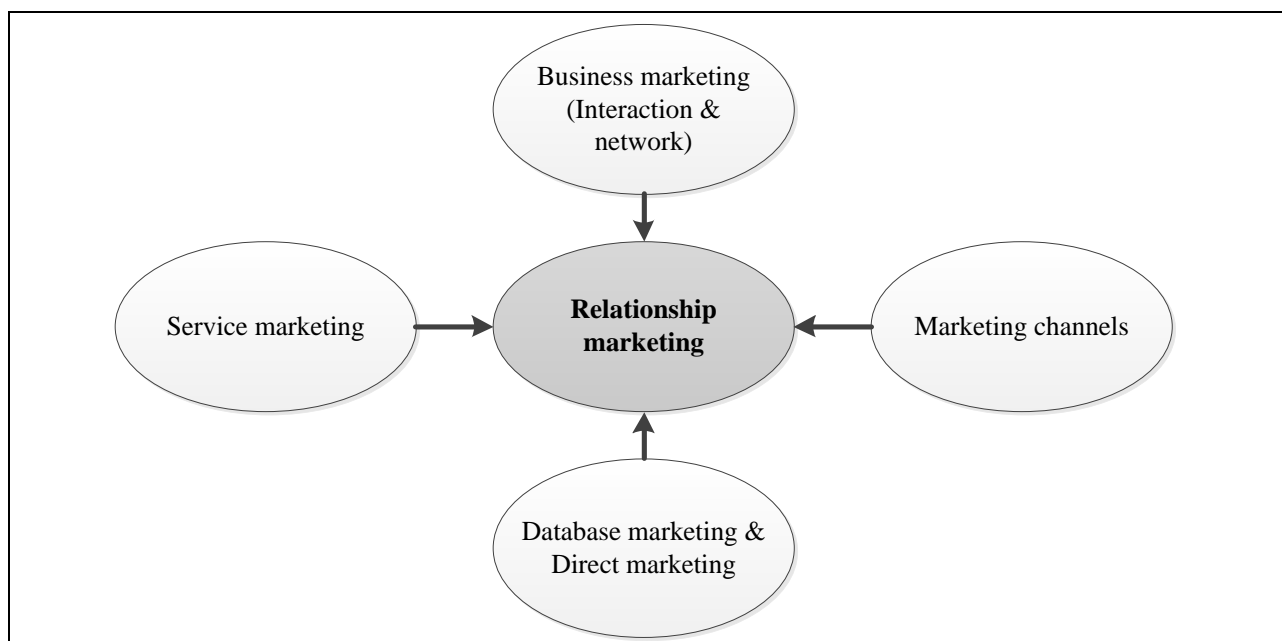
The main drive of this strategy was the economic downturn of the 1980s (Adjei, Griffith & Noble 2009:493; Morgan, Parish & Deitz 2015:1). In addition, the rise in the rate of scholars learning relational exchange marketing philosophies and the progress demonstrated by the idea, with many qualifying its application in academic discussions and research papers such as Jones, Reynolds, Arnold, Gabler, Gillison and Landers (2015:188), Egan (2011:17), Gummesson (1987:10) as well as Levitt (1983:92). The notion found its home in marketing philosophy and became an essential part of marketing manuals similar to Kotler (1997:36), which impacted on both practitioners and academics.

Brito (2011:67) asserts that the developed of relationship-marketing approach as an opponent to the traditional marketing concept, owing to its critiques on the transactional nature of traditional marketing ideas. Over the years, the relationship-marketing approach came with noteworthy variations in marketing strategies (Nezhad 2015:602). The actual core drive of relationship-

marketing is to attract and convert first time buyers into frequently buying patrons, who over time change to be active and vocal advocates of organisations (Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne 1991:22).

In the early years of the 2000s, noticeable changes towards service-based economies appeared when the relationship-marketing idea struggled to gain universal admittance to the product-oriented market (Christopher *et al.* 1991:22). Grönroos (2000:3-4) resonates that throughout this period, relationship-marketing existed as a fresh marketing paradigm, which later was regarded as the cornerstone of marketing. Subsequently, organisations gradually waved product orientation farewell and moved in the direction of a customer-centric approach of marketing (Taleghani, Gilaninia & Mousavian 2011:156; Knox, Maklan, Payne, Peppard & Ryals 2003:6).

Gilaninia, Chirani, Mousavian and Ramzani (2011:577), posit that this took place as marketers and organisations gradually moved away from using transactional marketing strategy and focused on attracting customers to a relationship-based approach, which focused on retaining customers for longer (Baran, Galka & Strunk 2008:181). As a result, numerous views that embrace the development of literature proclaiming a paradigm shift of the transactional marketing outlook that is predominant in the B2C context were put forward (Morgan *et al.* 2015:2; Šonková & Grabowska 2015:197). Figure 3.1 provides four diverse relationship-marketing origins that contributed to the formation of the concept.



**Figure 3.1: The disciplinary roots of relationship marketing**

**Source: Möller (2013:326)**

Considering this, much of the initial marketing literature was inspired by economic developments and transaction-based research (Sheth & Parvatiyar 1995:256). Hadjikhani and LaPlaca (2013:294) posit that a great part of marketing literature is moulded from a B2C centric marketing school of thought, which is encouraged by behavioural and cognitive psychology as well as academic research. B2B marketing developed along with the industrial revolution and economic growth (LaPlaca & Katrichis 2009:55). In essence, B2C and B2B marketing in their formation and evolution, took dissimilar pathways, where they both theoretically turned out to pursue the same fundamental economic transaction-cost intentions (Cockayne 2016:49).

The relationship-marketing approach evolved from short-lived transactional consultations to more long-lasting and strong loyal relational exchanges (Leahy 2011:651; Mostert & De Meyer 2010:35). Accordingly, it can be argued that when organisations are planning to take on a long-term business direction, particularly in B2B markets, the transactional marketing orientation would not be the best approach to consider, compared to relationship-marketing strategies. This is true as transactional marketing approaches do not embrace long-term interaction processes and co-creation of value was pronounced as the core of the relationship-marketing idea (Morgan & Hunt 1994:22).

The following sub-section, differences amongst the transactional marketing and relationship-marketing strategies are alluded to.

### **3.3.1 Distinguishing between transactional and relationship-marketing**

The transactional marketing approach pursues reaching the target market with no intention of building customer loyalty, as focus is on profit making by attracting customer cumulative purchases (Šonková & Grabowska 2015:202; Kotler & Armstrong 2010:38). The relationship-marketing approach aims to co-create value to customers through cooperation and teamwork, because customers are active participants to the long-term focus of the arrangement (Brito 2011:69). In addition, relationship-marketing is observed as creating, building and continuing profitable relational exchanges amongst organisations and their customers (Bataneh, Al-Abdallah, Salhab & Shoter 2015:117; Morgan & Hunt 1994:22). Table 3.2 differentiates between the two marketing concepts.

**Table 3.2: Key differences amongst relationship marketing and transactional marketing**

Concept	Relationship-Marketing	Transactional Marketing
Objective	Relationship	Single transaction
Time orientation	Long-term orientation	Short-term orientation
Focus on customer	Pre and post-sales process	Focus on pre-sale process
Contact intensity	High	Low
Dependence level	Generally high	Generally low
Dominant quality dimension	Quality of interaction	Quality of output
Quality concern	Quality concern of all in the system	Basically, concerns production department
Internal marketing	Strategic role	No or limited role
Production focus	Mass customization	Mass production
Focus	Customer value	Product features
Customer service	High importance on customer service	Little or no importance on customer service

**Source: Verma (2012:576)**

It is evident from Table 3.2, that both approaches are effective and they can both be used either individually or simultaneously. The transactional approach can be applied as the groundwork, while the relationship exchange approach as the ultimate effecting strategy. Nakhleh (2012:539) and Egan (2011:106) also indicate that simultaneous use of both strategies is acceptable because both methods complement each other (Bhaskar, Kumar, Subhashini, Reddy & Satyanarayana 2012:46).

The following section provides a summary of numerous relationship-marketing definitions as found in extant literature.

### 3.4 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING DEFINED

Relationship-marketing is described in different means as a notion that spans numerous fields and approaches with different viewpoints (Soimo, Wagoki & Okello 2015:1307). The term relationship-marketing is used in different marketing proceedings directed at building relationships with key customers. Table 3.3 presents a review of numerous definitions of relationship-marketing.

**Table 3.3: Relationship marketing definitions**

Author	Definitions
Sheth, Parvatiyar & Sinha (2015:123)	Relationship-marketing is the development of organisations cooperating with customers in a longstanding relationship, with an intent to appreciate their needs and requirements, to eventually create joint financial, societal and emotional value in a profitable way.
Lee, Kim and Pan (2014:1200)	Relationship-marketing advocates the significance of identifying the finest customers to recognise their needs, satisfy these needs and create a relationship that makes them loyal to the company.
Kurtz (2012:308)	Relationship-marketing is the organisations' marketing efforts designed at establishing, growing and upholding lucrative, equally valuable, to long-standing customer relationships.
Berndt and Tait (2012:7)	Relationship-marketing is involved with the acceleration and management of relationships amongst organisations and customers, mainly applicable when a customer has substitute service providers at his disposal to choose from.
Grönroos (2007:22)	Relationship-marketing “(the purpose of) ... marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance, and when necessary terminate relationships with customers (and other parties) so that objectives regarding economic and other variables of all parties are met”.
Morgan and Hunt (1994:22)	Relationship-marketing is “all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges”.

Author	Definitions
Shani and Chalasani (1992:44)	Relationship-marketing is “an integrated effort to identify, maintain, and build up a network with individual consumers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefit of both sides, through interactive, individualized and value-added contacts over a long period of time”.
Grönroos (1994:9)	Relationship-marketing is “identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when necessary, terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders at a profit so that the objectives of all parties involved are met and this is done by mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises”.
Berry (1983:25)	Relationship-marketing is “attracting, maintaining, and - in multi-service organizations - enhancing customer relationships”.

**Source: Author’s compilation**

It is evident from Table 3.3 that many authors have differing sentiments about what should and should not be the fundamentals that constitute relationship-marketing. Notwithstanding these definitions, certain interrelated features are evident (Benouakrim & Kandoussi 2013:148). Šonková and Grabowska (2015:197) echo that they all agree on the following basic issues:

- Relationship-marketing speaks of creating consultation proceedings in the general course of the relationship life-cycle.
- The determination and identification of individual customers or sets of clients, other organisations and/or workforces watch for relationship exchange actions.
- Reciprocal benefits for both the relational partners are involved in the relationship.

Gummesson (2008b:72) asserts that relationship-marketing epitomises a new marketing paradigm developed upon connections, and as a component which can be attached to customary marketing management and yield better outcomes. An array of definitions and their content lead to the following description of relationship-marketing for the purpose of this study:

*an on-going process of growing and expanding partner engagement through accommodative and satisfying activities that are promptly done, to create mutual economic value at reduced costs and to maintain loyalty that leads to customer retention.*

The preceding discussion conveys that relationship-marketing has to do with the growth and well-being attached to the relational exchange partners involved in the relationship, leading to the affirmation that the choice of a marketing strategy should be designed to ignite strength in areas that satisfy both parties.

The following section provides various strategies of relationship marketing that organisations can follow.

### 3.5 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING STRATEGIES

Organisations and their customers thus differ in relation to the extent to which they engage in relational exchange strategies (Hutt & Speh 2010:412). Johnson, Scholes and Whittington (2008:54) state that when developing a strategy, organisations must be cognisant of this fact and apply three sets of activities given as strategic choice, implementation and analysis. The objective of any strategy deployed by organisations must be to accomplish the full potential of satisfying customers' needs and ensure profit attainment (Hult, Pride & Ferrell 2012:14).

Du Plessis, Strydom and Jooste (2012:528) posit that it is fundamental for organisations to choose a strategy that speaks to assembling and maintaining lasting relationships. Morgan et al. (2015:18) recommend several relationship-marketing strategies that organisations can pursue, which are presented in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Berry's five relationship marketing strategies**

Strategy	Description
Core services marketing - foundation	Grow a "core service" that appeals and satisfy new customer requirements such as product quality and recommend various selections, which are long lasting and offer a platform for added service offerings to customers. This form of core service must form the basis for constructing customer exchange relationships.
Relationship customisation - not mass marketing	Custom fitting the product and service offerings in forming relationships. Learn explicit features and necessities of specific customers, gather data, and in the end generate exceptional, personalise the service experience.
Service augmentation - the extras	Expand the product offerings to inspire customer loyalty to grow the relationship. Additions can range from the chosen customer programmes to free hand-outs if the target market does value them.

Strategy	Description
Relationship pricing – an inexpensive price for customers	Giving reduced prices as an incentive for combining their business with one supplier. Thereby increasing customer loyalty through gifts.
Internal marketing – consider personnel as customer, and their occupation as a product	Using marketing events to cultivate connections with internal staff members as customer. Marketers must inspire regular customers to buy and likewise encourage internal customers to perform. Great staff performance intensifies external customer possibility to buy in the strategy.

**Source: Morgan *et al.* (2015:18)**

Therefore, organisations that support the use of relationship-marketing strategy must allocate necessary resources for proper implementation of the approach to successfully form and maintain valued and profitable customer relationships. Successful execution of this practice can take place only when organisations appreciate the significance of growing and keeping long-lasting relationships with their customers, through sharing and appropriately managing funds (Hunt, Arnett & Madhavaram 2006:77).

The subsequent section deliberates on the relationship-marketing approach as a practice.

### **3.6 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING PRACTICES**

Marketing practice refers to the acceleration of efforts applied by organisations and practitioners, aimed at retaining their existing customers and gaining new ones (Chirica 2013:295). Relationship-marketing oriented practices originates from the pre-industrial era (Sheth & Parvatiyar 1995:255). In this period, the relationship-marketing practice was very personalised and relationship inclined due to direct interactions amongst producers, and affording individuals on a custom-made basis, which led them to have relational bonding (Sheth, Parvatiyar & Sinha 2012:8). Sheth (2017:7) states that relationship-marketing practices hold bundled offerings such as customer relationship management (CRM) and key account management (KAM) acknowledged as personalised service efforts, developed to commoditise marketing strategies aimed at increasing customer “share of wallet” as a vital feature of relationship-marketing. In addition, on the wake of the latest technological advancements and the emergence of digital marketing, the application of CRM and digital marketing strategies, prompts innovative relationship-marketing practices even further (Bitner 2019:16).



The following sub-sections give further details on the application of CRM, KAM and digital marketing as relationship-marketing practices that organisations can consider.

### **3.6.1 Customer Relationship Management (CRM) practices**

Organisations these days offer augmented products, which heightens a system's selling approach. The CRM approach underscores the incorporation of product parts, materials and the selling of product and services jointly with separable capital equipment (Sheth *et al.* 2012:9).

Chirica (2013:295) notes that the most used system integration trend behind relationship-marketing practices is CRM. This is an all-inclusive approach of obtaining, preserving and connecting with customers to establish greater value for organisations and their customers (Kim & Kim 2009:477; Parvatiyar & Sheth 2001:5). Ang and Buttle (2006a:5) posit that this is a business strategy that incorporates internal practices together with external networks, in creating and offering value for money to targeted customers. In addition, Vrincianu and Popa (2010:388) state that CRM practices disseminate information sources to intensify performance while weakening the competitors' advantage.

A well-executed CRM strategy allows organisations to appreciate and satisfy their customers better than their counterparts (Payne 2006:329). Effective implementation of CRM requires organisations to integrate all processes contained in the formation and preservation of prosperous relational exchanges (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011:367). However, because organisations nowadays have various customer interaction points, it is impractical for customers to come across the same contact person over a series of separate contact sessions. Chirica (2013:298) points out that the continued growing practice of technology permits robust development of information and computer-based information systems used in decision-making processes. The amplified capability of using information technology to gather customer insights for use in relationship-marketing programmes led to the rise and growth of CRM practices.

As such, it is important for a CRM vision to be embraced and appreciated by the entire workforce across the organisation (Berndt & Tait 2012:176), as its adoption by everyone provides the organisation with valued information, enriched knowledge and superior relations with their customers (Williams, Ashill & Naumann 2016:455; Al-Shawi, Missi & Irani 2011:377). Simultaneously, an organisation can insist upon selling approaches like national accounts and master purchasing contracts through account managers to adopt account management programmes (Shapiro & Moriarty 1982:10). The selection process of suitable key relationship exchange partners is therefore crucial and should be led by account managers who must carefully identify

worthy customers with relationship intentions (Sheth 2017:8). Accordingly, the fundamentals of key account management are provided.

### **3.6.2 Key Account Management practices (KAM)**

Wang and Brennan (2014:1172) state that the advancement of a relationship-marketing paradigm came with a management perspective, which is one of the most important marketing developments referred to as KAM. Barrett (1986:64) defines KAM as "...targeting the major customers of the company ... providing them with special treatment in the field of marketing, sales administration and service". KAM is also described as a systematic approach instigated by supplier organisations aimed at managing and handling complex customer requirements (Rodriguez, Peterson & Krishnan 2018:2). The discrete handling of customer needs and requirements ultimately guarantees that both the relational partner's commercial and nonfinancial objectives are met (Noor & Ahmmed 2013:70).

Cleland (1994:73) asserts that in the case of establishing B2B relationship-marketing with a sole partner, organisations frequently use project collaboration methods. In B2B relationship-marketing circumstances, customers typically interact with an account manager who must prudently assess relationship success features, which could affect the exchange performance (Palmatier, Gopalakrishna & Houston 2006:479), considering that making profits through the use of KAM programmes might be hindered by implementation difficulties (Shi, White, Shaoming & Cavusgil 2010:620; Brehmer & Rehme 2009:961). Davies and Ryals (2013:919) state that profitability struggles could arise due to customers negotiating a better deal gained from the relationship in a form of lower prices given by the account manager, and consequently rendering the relationship unprofitable. Therefore, the selection of prospective relational partners is a crucial phase in relationship management (Malende, Samusenko & Tootmaa 2015:7).

During the prospect selection phase, account managers must be well equipped to carefully pinpoint and choose the most suitable for long-term relationship building (Malende *et al.* 2015:89; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh 1987:11). Literature reveals that to achieve success with KAM is profoundly dependent on the skill, capability and account managers' behaviour (Sheth 2017:7; Guenzi, Georges & Pardo 2009:301). Thus, emphasis by key account managers must be placed on operational, organisational and relational factors as essential features to ensure that reciprocal benefits are met (Noor & Ahmmed 2013:70).

### **3.6.3 Digital marketing practices**

Charlesworth (2018:170) submits that B2B settings characteristically have compelling offline affiliations between buyers and sellers, yet new developments in digital marketing practices remain untapped (Mero, Aarne, Karjaluo & Jayawardhena 2012:102). For B2B industrial marketing, flexible applications and features that can be adapted to the latest technological developments of digital marketing is now a part of an integrated process for modern businesses. Mathieson (2010) states that since the aim of relationship-marketing is to grow the relational partner's benefits, many organisations realise that this would be best done with innovative practices such as digital strategies.

Management practices that are linked to digital strategies evidently correlate with profitability and growth (Gil-Gomez, Guerola-Navarro, Oltra-Badenes & Lozano-Quilis 2020:3-4). According to Binter (2019:3), organisations in B2B settings which use digital marketing strategies in their programmes reach a 30 percent success rate and grow five times faster than their opponents. Accordingly, it can be argued that it would be in the best interests of organisations to consider digital marketing practices in their relationships to enhance the benefits resulting from relational exchanges.

The next section examines the benefits and costs of engaging in long-term relationship-marketing activities.

## **3.7 BENEFITS AND COSTS OF RELATIONSHIP MARKETING**

The benefits that relationship-marketing offers are important characteristics that the relational partners consider in the overall value of the offerings, that should not be overlooked (Ogungbade 2015:9; Khandabi, Klidbari & Fadayi 2014:154). Ndubisi and Natarajan (2016:228) state that in the marketing literature there are various well-explored relationship-marketing benefits, where some are considered to be universal and others are understood as subjective and contextual.

Stavros and Westberg (2009:307) state that as relationship marketing assumes a customer centric approach, its key benefits are superior customer preservation, improved dedication, decreased marketing expenses and superior earnings. Such relational benefits, resulting from the relational exchange, add value on the relationship's longevity and in turn, increase customer loyalty and repurchase intention (Ferro, Padin, Svensson & Payan 2016:13; Blythe 2012:284).

The following sub-sections provide descriptions of the relationship-marketing benefits relevant to both the customers and organisations.

### **3.7.1 Relationship-marketing benefits to customers**

Gwinner, Gremler and Bitner (1998:101) describe relational benefits as the advantage that customers enjoy as being part of a continuing relationship with organisations. Additionally, Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler (2002:230) emphasise that the benefits obtained from the relationship are “the benefits consumers receive apart from the core service” gained from their continuing relationship with organisations that provides them with products and services. These definitions recommend that customers who frequently buy from their organisations stand to receive added value as a result of their enduring commitment to the organisation, while occasional customers have none or minimum access to such benefits.

Various researchers found that customers and organisations in a long-standing relationship gain three main forms of relational benefits, these include confidence benefits, social benefits and special treatment benefits (Bojel, Julian, Binti Che Wel & Ahmed 2013:171; Dagger *et al.* 2011:273).

#### **3.7.1.1 Confidence benefits**

Spekman (1988:76) advocates that customer confidence is the “cornerstone” of lasting associations. Berry (1995:242) defines confidence as “the readiness to trust an associate partner in whom one has reassurance”. The confidence benefit is defined as “feelings of diminished customer worry, reliance and self-assurance in the service provider” (Gwinner *et al.* 1998:104). Through confidence benefits, customers gain improved emotional state of security, reduced concern, and greater level of trust in promises the organisation makes during the product delivery and service encounter (Ruiz-Molina, Gil-Saura & Berenguer-Contró 2009:493).

In most cases, customers seek benefits that would put them in an advantageous position when they engage in relationships that will make them react with trust and commitment towards their supplier organisation (Rashed & Asil 2015:82). This suggests that the approach that organisations ought to take is to ensure that their customers feel secured in their partner selection, and evade supporting other organisations (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler 2010:379). Confidence benefits would then be realised as customers gain trust and commit to the exchange relationship (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2010:379). This argument is to some extent founded on the view that greater heights of confidence in the collaboration would consequently reduce nervousness and improved satisfaction will be realised (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2002:236). In other words, customers will be delighted, for example, by the excellence of the merchandises and the services offered by the organisation. For this reason, self-reliance would influence the customers to commit to the relationship.

### **3.7.1.2 Social benefits**

Customers who end up having good relationships with organisations gain benefits associated to that relationship, where their association and personal gratitude form part of social benefits and result in superior value (Morgan *et al.* 2015:33; Mackay, Petzer & Mostert 2014:307; Bhaskar *et al.* 2012:47). Jin, Park and Kim (2010:598) state that the social benefits denote to traits of pleasure, bonds and personal relations. These benefits comprise inter alia, a sense of belonging, personal respect of customers and comforting emotional state of acquaintance and rapport towards the supplier (Dagger *et al.* 2011:274). Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:374) add that customers could form a social bond and improve their sense of intimacy with their relational partner over time.

Berry (1995:237) supports the notion that social ties lead customers towards an advanced level of obligation in relation to the benefits resulting from their relationship with the organisation. These develop from the close ties that the organisations have created and connect to a customer's emotional phase of customer-supplier relationship (Yen, Liu, Chen & Lee 2014:5). Social benefits therefore arise through emotional elements of a relationship involving sensitive state of consciousness and companionship between the relational partners (Dagger & O'Brien 2010:1528).

Since being cared for, valued and recognised are vital constituents of social benefits, customers can progressively develop trust and rapport with their exchange partner (Hasan, Mortimer, Lings & Neale 2017:34; Huang 2015:1318). Dagger and O'Brien (2010:1528) are of the view that social benefits mature with time as the relationship develops, and trust between the partners also grows and ultimately strengthens their bond. These will be persuaded by the customer's own ease with personnel and growth of friendship between them and the organisation, as a successful long-term relationship cannot continue without social interactions. Social benefits are consequences of personal interactions between customers and employees from the organisation. As such result, social benefits are regarded as a delicate appreciation of customers by staff members and the customer's acquaintance with the workforce, and by formation of friendships.

### **3.7.1.3 Special treatment benefits**

Special treatment benefits are founded on the idea that only those who participate in the relationship can gain special treaties (Morgan *et al.* 2015:33). These could arise due to the outcomes of extraordinary staff performances towards customers who have established relational bonds with their organisation (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2002:234).

Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:374) mention that special treatment benefits consist of customised supplementary services not accessible to other customers, as well as their understanding of

preferential treatment and extra attention. These benefits could be economic or customisation advantages (Yen *et al.* 2014:6; Lovelock & Wirtz 2011:374). It is assumed that special treatment and preferential treatments to devoted customers persuade them to place higher value on the organisation (Patterson & Smith 2003:115). Accordingly, customers feel very special and hence their loyalty levels increase and word-of-mouth recommendations to potential non-customers also becomes highly likely. Therefore, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase behaviour from customer part will certainly be established (Kim, Jeon & Hyun 2011:778).

Ulaga and Eggert (2006:312) add that some of the benefits customers derive from engaging in relationship marketing activities relate to product benefits such as quality and conformance to requirements, service benefits and time-to-market benefits. All these lead towards the organisation's objective of long-term relationships formed through strong customer bonds, which contribute to the accomplishment of organisational objectives.

### **3.7.2 Relationship marketing benefits to organisations**

Buttle (2009:31) explains that as better results can be obtained by engaging in long-term relationships, when customer retention can offer some rewards to organisations. Mark, Lemon, Vandebosch, Bulla and Maruotti (2013:233) posit that organisations could enjoy benefits that can be grouped as profits resulting from increased purchases, profits from price premiums, profits from reduced operating costs and profits from referrals briefly explained as follows.

#### **3.7.2.1 Profit from increased purchases**

The best route organisations can take in satisfying their customers is to make them feel safe and sound in their choices, as this will convince them to buy more and evade patronising other organisations (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2010:311). As soon as organisations prosper in meeting customer expectations, they may come back to the organisation to buy more and as a result, increase the organisation's profitability.

#### **3.7.2.2 Profit from price premiums**

When customers gain more self-assurance towards the organisation, they would be willing to pay more as they tend not to be concerned about the price, and less likely to pull out of the relationship due to price increases (Knox *et al.* 2003:103). O'Mally and Prothero (2004:1287) also found that a proper application of relationship marketing strategy can lead to customer price sensitivity reduction. as customers tend to pay premium prices because they trust the organisation and their offerings. However, it must be noted that some customers do not pay extra for normal services

rendered, but rather pay more for the devotion and care that generates additional value (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2013:255-256).

### **3.7.2.3 Profit from reduced operating costs**

Gilaninia et al. (2011:789) purport that in time, relational partners learn how best to interact with one another and eventually lead to decreasing operational costs. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002:231) add that increased know-how leads to reduced expenses costs concerning customer preservation throughout other phases of the relationship. Therefore, such relationships would earn added value and reduced costs, all of which could lead to increased profits (Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2012:159).

### **3.7.2.4 Profit from referrals**

Organisations that successfully apply a relationship-marketing strategy could increase their profitability through customer word-of-mouth referrals (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, Terblanche, Elliot & Klopper 2010:11). The authors reiterate that a constructive word-of-mouth message by satisfied customers assists organisations to entice prospective buyers to support the organisation and even affords them an opportunity to replace lost customers, thereby improving profits. However, Biggemann and Buttle (2012:1132) caution that certain cost implications are involved when engaging in a relationship-marketing strategy.

The next sub-section provides a description of costs incurred for participating in relational exchange strategy.

## **3.7.3 Relationship marketing costs**

Egan (2011:239) states that a complete customer preservation is certainly not cheaply attainable as there is some cost associated with relationship exchanges. The relationship maintenance costs increase as the relational partners learn more about each other (Bazini, Elmazi & Sinanaj 2011:158; Ang & Buttle 2006b:85). These are costs that may be incurred by both the organisation and their customers, explicated as follows.

### **3.7.3.1 Relationship marketing costs to organisations**

Owing to the opportunity when costs of resources are dedicated to one relationship that cannot be used on another, maintaining a healthy relationship could cost more for the organisation (Biggemann & Buttle 2012:1132). In other words, organisations have to give out more to maintain

their relationships, compared to serving newly acquired or once off buying customers. These costs may vary from the following:

- Costs of technological systems — involves failure by the organisation to apply and sustain the relationship marketing software, especially because of economic motives (Buhler & Nufer 2010:37).
- Fostering relationships to wrong customers – an organisation could lose customers should they employ relationship-marketing strategies to a wrong segment of customers. Rootman, Tait and Sharp (2011:184) point out that this may occur, as some customers may prefer a transactional relationship, and then later on opt to switch to another service provider.

New and innovative methods of rewarding loyal profitable customers come at a cost that organisations must pay (Njenga 2010:86). Some of these relate to promotional mix activities like personal selling, advertising and communication directed at each customer (Reinartz & Kumar 2003:78).

- a) High costs of personal selling: sales executives play a crucial part in the establishment of long-lasting relational exchanges as they act as the main link that needs to be compensated for ensuring continued relations between the organisation and its customers (Weitz & Bradford 1999:241). Personal selling costs need to be carried out as sales personnel who call on individual customers, execute promotional activities that are necessary to ensure customer continued support (Egan 2011:128). For this reason, their efforts come at a cost that organisations need to pay, to motivate and reward them for their efforts (Shadare & Hammed 2009:7).
- b) Advertising and other communications expenditures: organisations need to put messages across to customers through advertising campaigns, which are a paid-for medium. These are creative constraints that need to be paid to air the message on the organisation's part (Blythe 2008:223). In addition, sales promotions as an additional communication expense, are additional costs that need to be paid for by the organisation (Blythe 2008:228).

### **3.7.3.2 Relationship marketing costs to customers**

According to Cannon and Homburg (2001:32), costs to customers in exchange relationships are direct product and acquisition costs. These can be found in distinct forms like: (i) direct product costs, which refer to prices charged by organisations for the supply of products sold to the customers; (ii) acquisition costs, that include expenditures associated to the ordering, delivering

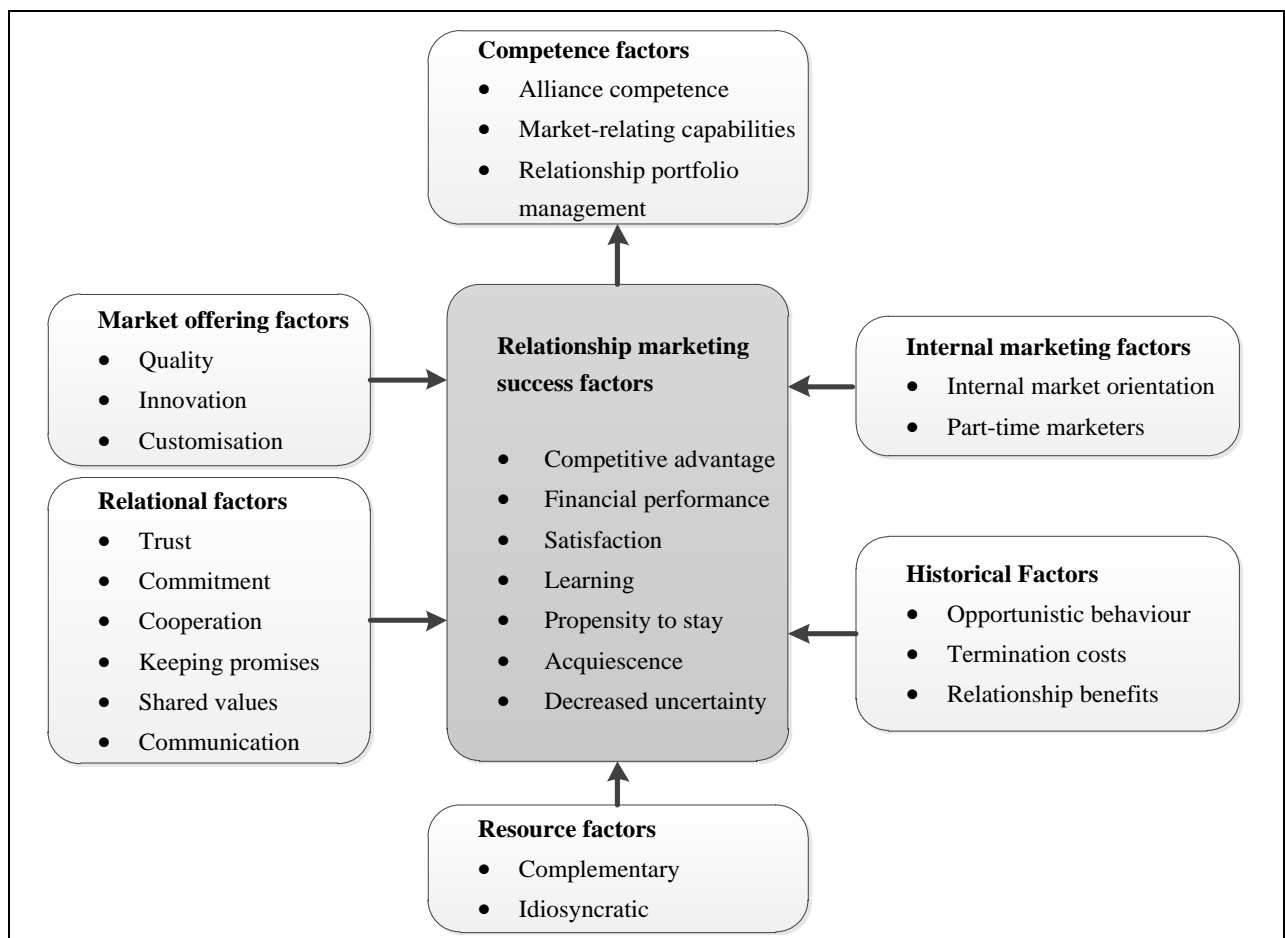


and storing of ordered products, including the cost of monitoring the organisation's performance, coordination and communication.

The next section presents discussions on the relationship-marketing success factors.

### 3.8 RELATIONSHIP MARKETING SUCCESS FACTORS

Hunt et al.'s (2006:77) model of relationship-marketing success factors provide a comprehensive view of attributes that organisations should follow in order to maintain successful relationships. Figure 3.2 provides a structure of factors that feeds towards the successful building of long-term B2B relationships.



**Figure 3.2: Relationship marketing success factors**

Source: Hunt et al. (2006:77)

If the relational partners aim to build lasting B2B relationships, the entire framework must be considered. This is imperative as all of the success factors affect the outcome and effectiveness of the relationship, and also determine their level of performance (Hunt *et al.* 2006:78).

The following discussion provide explanations of the theoretical reasoning underlying each success factor of the relationship marketing approach, as depicted on the figure.

### **3.8.1 Relational factors**

Hunt et al. (2006:77) are of the opinion that effective relationship-marketing stems from particular characteristics of the association that is exemplified by prosperous long-term interpersonal relations. In addition, although a number of studies find various factors linked with prosperous interpersonal connections, the six most advanced aspects that contribute to relationship marketing success are given below.

#### **3.8.1.1 Trust**

Trust is an inconsistent subject in the current social order, which is characterised by growing customer uncertainty, complexity and risk (Savolainen, Ikonen & Laitinen 2018:766). As such, trust as a significant prime mover that forms over time, can be viewed as a relationship characteristic that leads towards long term business success (Savolainen & Ikonen 2015:212-213). Detailed discussion on trust is given in chapter 4 (sub-section 4.3.6) as one of the dimensions of relationship intention examined by the proposed study model.

#### **3.8.1.2 Commitment**

Morgan and Hunt (1994:23) mention that commitment is a relational factor used as a proper means to distinguish prosperous relations from fruitless ones. Commitment relational outcomes could thus be regarded as universal indicators of prosperous relational exchanges (Fleming, Lynch & Kelliher 2016:84). More on commitment is discussed in chapter 4 section 4.5, as one of the mediating constructs examined as per the proposed study model.

#### **3.8.1.3 Cooperation**

According to Van den Berg and Kamminga (2006:5), cooperation is one attractive strategy for pursuing efficacy concerning costs, time, quality and other objectives. Relatedly, the success of relational exchanges in the construction industry is inextricably linked to fruitful completion of projects executed through cooperative dealings (Sebone & Barry 2009:186). Therefore, cooperation between civil and building contractors and their CPM is of utmost importance.

#### **3.8.1.4 Keeping promises**

According to Gundlach and Murphy (1993:39), any promise made by one relational partner to another should be mandatory to realise the fundamental laws of their agreement. The responsibility

to “keep a promise” is a typical example representing contemporary law or legal values. It is thus important for the relational partners to keep to their promises set out at the beginning of the relationship. Therefore, for concrete product suppliers to convince their civil and building contractors of their commitment to the relationship, the supplier must keep to their promises by surpassing their civil and building contractor’s expectations.

### **3.8.1.5 Shared values**

The prime reason for taking on shared values is that the relational partners focus on the formation of different value propositions and decrease rivalry and uncertainty (Uddin & Akhter 2011:45). This happens as “valued relationships go beyond financial concerns as knowledge transfer, reputational gains, or network accesses are characteristics of relationships that are highly valued” (Ford & McDowell 1999:429). That said, it is of significance to identify the essentials of long-term relational exchanges that generate value sharing.

### **3.8.1.6 Communication**

Communication in any relationship is an indispensable attribute for the relationship to prosper. A thriving relationship has to show high levels of communicative behaviour, rather than domination or ignorance of problems. Schreiner, Kale and Corsten (2009:1401) purport that through open and honest communication, the relational partners can recognise the need to adapt and better understand their obligations and rules if and when circumstances change in their relationship.

## **3.8.2 Resource factors**

Grudinschi (2014:40) mentions that it is imperative for the relational partners to identify which resource to value the most, since putting more effort to assets that contribute towards maintaining competitive advantages and the development of value are of utmost importance.

### **3.8.2.1 Complementary resources**

Complementary resources can be referred to as corresponding possessions. They allow the relational partners to access other resources that they did not have leverage or ownership on (Hunt et al. 2006:79). Atanasova and Senn (2011:278-279) clarify that sustenance in a form of corresponding resource allocation and acknowledgement of customers’ efforts, pronounces the eminence of senior management power to, for example, account for management initiatives. In addition, the authors state that these are fundamental in overcoming possible struggles within the organisation that impact on KAM performance, improved macro relations, decreasing conflicts and applying practical approaches.

### **3.8.2.2 Idiosyncratic**

Idiosyncratic resources can either be in a physical form or be a noticeable object such as a manufacturing plant, or an intangible object such as resourceful procedures of working together (Jap 2001:86). Noor and Ahmmed (2013:73) state that idiosyncratic resources are challenging to redistribute and consequently lose considerable significance except if the relationship continues.

### **3.8.3 Historical factors**

Historical factors reveal incidents that either positively or negatively affect relationship development processes (Hunt *et al.* 2006:82). For instance, the driving force for a great deal of interactive association is agreeing to organisations having the right to use the required resources to allow them to provide exceptional value at lower costs compared to their competitors and gain greater economic returns.

#### **3.8.3.1 Opportunistic behaviour**

Judge and Dooley (2006:26) describe opportunism as a view that an opportunity arises where decision-makers might dishonestly serve their self-interests. For example, a civil and building contractor moving business from his current concrete product supplier in a way that infringes reputable norms of their relationship. If behaviour of this sort is exposed, it may well diminish the supplier's trust towards the civil and building contractor and disturb prospective interactions.

#### **3.8.3.2 Termination costs**

These are costs incurred from relationship disbandment due to the relationship being dissolved for reasons such as customer dissatisfaction that leads to termination of the relationship (Morgan & Hunt 1994:24). At times, such costs are aggravated by personal investment challenges of customers that forces them to switch to alternative suppliers (Heide & John 1988:21). Therefore, it is vital for organisations to endeavour to satisfy their customers in the quest to gain their loyalty and ultimately retain their continued support.

#### **3.8.3.3 Relationship benefits**

The relational benefits that the relational exchange partners undertake must both profit for the relationship to be sustainable. For more on the relational benefits refer to section 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 in this chapter.

### **3.8.4 Internal marketing factors**

The internal factors could be those that an organisation has control over, while the external factors are those that organisations have little or no control over when implementing (Heimeriks & Duysters 2007:25). These factors are alluded in the foregoing section.

#### **3.8.4.1 Internal market orientation**

Hanley and Leahy (2008:138) state that focus on internal staff members is crucial in providing customer service and ensuring elimination of customer feeling a lack of helpfulness, friendliness and efficiency while being served. Focus on developing internal employee personal relations with external businesses, supported by the use of relationship marketing strategies is therefore key for the exchange relationship.

#### **3.8.4.2 Part-time marketers**

According to Gummesson (1987:10), the essence of total marketing achievement is the concept of part-time marketers. The way in which this happens, depends on the degree of information, skill and enthusiasm of the casual marketer in dealing with customers using particular techniques (Grönroos 2006:404). It can be argued that serving customers in a proper way is not the responsibility of the marketing division alone, but it is also every employees' obligation having direct or indirect contact with customers.

### **3.8.5 Market offering factors**

The market offering of relational exchange success requires organisations to concentrate on certain areas of the connection that could enhance right of entry to impartial fair offerings (Hunt *et al.* 2006:81).

#### **3.8.5.1 Quality**

Quality communicates to how an individual perceives the level of service or product value provided. What can be of good quality to one demographic group might not automatically be of good quality to a different group. In this study, it is suggested that for as long as the concrete product suppliers support their civil and building contractor's changing needs with supreme levels of product and service quality, this could be the best way to ignite their profitability (Morgan & Hunt 1994:24).

### **3.8.5.2 Innovation**

Certainly, the best valued strengths aimed at refining marketing outputs is the understanding that has remained in the customer's mind concerning the brand from the organisation's previous promotional campaign (Kotler & Keller 2012:28).

### **3.8.5.3 Customisation**

Customisation is the efficient idea that concerns product expansion, sale and conveyance of goods and service (Kay 1993:14). For organisations to be perceived as inventive and customer centric, it must be the first to advance customisation systems that can deliver generous advantages above competitors, since the organisation might become well entrenched into this position.

### **3.8.6 Competence factors**

Sanchez, Heene and Thomas (1996:8) describe competency as the capacity to sustain the distribution of resources in a way that puts an organisation at an advantageous position to attain its objectives. These are tacit and specific organisational foundations of competitive advantage, which allow organisations to efficiently use their resources (Hunt & Morgan 2006:79).

#### **3.8.6.1 Alliance competence**

The success of the relationships is influenced considerably by the relational partner's capability to grow the relationship's proficiency, which consistent with Lambe, Spekman and Hunt (2002:141), is the ability designed to ascertain, increase and manage the relationship. For a relationship to realise its objectives, it is key for the relational partners to seek ways to grow and maintain their relationship.

#### **3.8.6.2 Market-related capabilities**

Among these capabilities, organisations need to be more customer oriented. This advocates that from both the relational partners' end, their market capabilities require unification of resources to increase their competitive advantages (Hunt 2000:26). Therefore, possessing special capabilities set organisations apart from the rest, although the relationship relies on visible contributions toward organisational economic returns.

### **3.8.6.3 Relational portfolio management**

Wagner and Johnson (2004:719) state that a relational portfolio is designed to set out rules of engagement approved by the relational partner, seen as crucial guidelines that ensure sustainable return on investment.

### **3.8.7 Relationship marketing successes**

The details on definite successes derived from properly implementing relationship-marketing success factors, according to the Hunt et al. (2006:77) model, are given as follows.

#### **3.8.7.1 Competitive advantages**

Van den Berg and Kamminga (2006:60) state that engaging in long-term relationships has the highest possibility of establishing profitable competitive advantages. An increase in market share, improved contact to customers, distribution networks ownership, economies of scale and access to information and technology are variables that put organisations in advantageous competitive positions (Zappa 2008:6). However, there should be a mutual engagement between two or more organisations, which share common goals in achieving competitive advantages while preserving their individual corporate identities (Heimeriks & Duysters 2007:32).

#### **3.8.7.2 Financial performance**

The financial value that is likened to monetary gains has been highly praised in escalating levels of customer retention as a success factor when engaging in relational exchanges (Oliver 2010:4). Organisations that possess rare competitive advantages that are difficult to emulate, enjoy greater earnings and achieve sustained superior financial gains.

#### **3.8.7.3 Satisfaction**

Progressive associations that lead to sustainable long-term relations and highlight relationship satisfaction is an essential factor to relationship performance enhancement (Halimi, Chavosh & Choshali 2011:51). For more on customer satisfaction refer to chapter 4 section 4.6, under a discussion on pertinent relationship-marketing constructs of the proposed study model.

#### **3.8.7.4 Learning**

Learning involves the expansion of organisational capabilities that can activate the re-framing of provisions to kindle positive responses and ignite teamwork, consistent with the general philosophy of organisational learning (Cao & Lumineau 2015:15). The learning materials used

also allow the relational partners to align with their ever-changing environments and customer requirements (Matthews, MacCarthy & Braziotis 2017:970).

#### **3.8.7.5 Propensity to stay**

According to Berry (1995:242), “customers who develop faith towards the organisations hold decent motives to continue in such associations as they decrease doubt and susceptibility”. Subsequently, they exhibit their devotion to the organisation in many ways (Yanamandram & White 2006:159). Therefore, having satisfied customers is essential as they are very likely to continue the relationship and pay more for added services that could escalate profits (Kumer *et al.* 2003:669).

#### **3.8.7.6 Acquiescence**

Acquiescence is the extent to which a relational partner agrees to take on another’s particular requirement or procedures (Morgan & Hunt 1994:26). The higher the degree of consent, the greater the flow of communication, which allows for improved conflict resolution, decreased unscrupulous patterns of conduct and advanced trust amongst the associates (Lui & Ngo 2005:1126).

#### **3.8.7.7 Decreased uncertainty**

Firdaus and Kanyan (2014:293) state that in the endless developing world filled with uncertainties, the universal environment has made it difficult for organisations to survive on their own, stirring the acceleration and growth of relationship building amongst independent organisations. As a result, exchange relationships are needed to eradicate the financial concerns and circumstances of ambiguity and uncertainty for organisations to survive (Seshadri & Mishra 2004:513).

### **3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter first discussed the overview of the marketing concept. Deliberations on the emergence and definitions of the relationship-marketing approach were then made. Applicable strategies and practices of relationship-marketing concept were presented, also giving the benefits and costs to the relational exchange partners. To conclude, the success factors of engaging in long-term business relationships were also deliberated upon, making it clear that to ensure successful implementation of relationship marketing strategy, certain fundamental constructs which institute the concept should be in place. The next chapter focuses on the relationship-marketing constructs relevant to this study.



**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The foregoing chapter presented discussions on the development of relationship-marketing and provided details on the occurrence of relational exchange approaches. The definitions of relationship marketing were provided, including a presentation on the success factors of engaging in this approach. Various relationship-marketing strategies were discussed. In addition, the challenges that the relationship-marketing partners are faced with when engaging in relationship marketing strategies were also presented.

The intention of this chapter is to discuss the relevant relationship-marketing constructs applicable to this study, commencing with the conceptualisation of the study constructs, followed by justification of the dimensions of relationship intention set out as independent variables. These are followed by deliberations on the mediating relationship factors (relationship quality, commitment and satisfaction), set forth as dependent relationship marketing constructs leading to relationship outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intentions). A presentation on the specifics of suppliers' relationship quality and commitment in long-standing relationships, and what stimulates customer satisfaction is presented. The chapter concludes discussions by providing details on customer behavioural patterns of loyalty towards their suppliers, which leads to their long-term repurchase intentions.

**4.2 CONCEPTUALISATION OF CONSTRUCTS**

This study's research problem statement, alluded to in chapter one, indicates that most previous relationship marketing studies in South Africa took place in a B2C setting, and very little research has explored long-term relationship building intentions in a B2B context, particularly in the concrete product environment within the construction industry. As discussed, (in sections 4.4 to 4.8) relevant relationship marketing constructs are presented as factors that customers consider when establishing long-term B2B relationships. Taking note of views presented in chapter one (section 1.3) as well as in the forthcoming sections, all the study constructs are then discussed, beginning with sub-constructs encapsulated as measures of relationship intention.

### 4.3 RELATIONSHIP INTENTION

Relationship intention, also known as aspirations to participate in a relationship (Raciti *et al.* 2013:615), may be described as the outcome of customer attitude and assurance concerning the repurchase of specific products from the same supplier (Chinomona & Dubihlela 2014:26-27). Kumar *et al.* (2003:667) recommended five measures of relationship intention, titled, expectations, feedback, involvement, forgiveness and fear of relationship loss, to determine customer's relationship building intentions in a B2B context. As explained in chapter 1 (section 1.3 to 1.7), the intention of the study is to advance a different model from Kumar *et al.*'s (2003) by including other variables given as trust, flexibility and information sharing/exchange as dimensions of relationship intentions to be tested in a concrete product environment within the construction industry in a B2B context.

The findings from the literature informs the study with the rationale to validate the importance of including trust, flexibility and information sharing/exchange as additional variables of measuring relationship intention for civil and building contractors and their CPMs. Each variable appeared to a differing extent in the literature, even though they were not in a constant manner; thus, the study also examines their predictive relationships towards its mediating construct (relationship quality). It is also for this reason that the study presents an opportunity to formulate a new measurement model of relationship intention, since the inclusion of other variables is conceptually valid and supported by the literature.

The following sub-sections provide discussions on all measures of relationship intention, beginning with the first variable namely; involvement, following this study's proposed model.

#### 4.3.1 Involvement

Customer involvement is the extent to which customers, without being pressured, participate in a relational exchange with a particular supplier organisation (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). Tuu and Olsen (2010:157) assert that customer involvement facilitates relationship building, as customers get highly involved with their relationship activities which serve their interests, goals and motivations (Baker, Cronin & Hopkins 2009:116). When customers need to make a highly sensitive decision, their involvement is high and consequently they become eager to deal intellectually and passionately with the organisation (Conze, Bieger, Laesser & Riklin 2010:54). This suggests that the more involved the customers are and encounter greater relationship activity with their supplier organisation, the more satisfied they tend to be (Raciti *et al.* 2013:616).

However, Kumar et al. (2003:670) assert that organisations must first determine a customer's willingness to partake in such relationships. Delpont et al. (2011:278) concur with this assertion and add that if customers exhibit relationship intentions to get involved with the organisation, it suggests that they may be interested to participate in long-term relational exchanges. This happens when a customer tends to place superior value on the organisation and its offerings, compared to a less attached customer (Camra-Fierro, Melero-Polo & Sese 2014:15). In addition, highly involved customers embrace more accurate expectations of their organisation than to others (Steyn *et al.* 2008:144). Accordingly, organisations which satisfy their highly involved customers, tend to gain more through customer referrals and constructive communication about their offerings (Camra-Fierro *et al.* 2014:16). Therefore, it is advisable for organisations to involve their customers in their business activities to gain their confidence and boost their levels of trust by being involved with them.

### **4.3.2 Expectations**

Zeithaml et al. (2013:77) posit that expectations are the opinions or views customers hold about the organisation, which includes product and service delivery practices in which the actual performance of the organisation is measured. If the organisation fails to meet their customer's expectations, they tend to experience a variety of undesirable customer emotional displays, consisting of resentment, dissatisfaction and uneasiness (Zeithaml *et al.* 2013:75).

In the highly competitive concrete product environment in the construction industry, CPMs must understand their customers' needs and requirements in meeting or exceeding their expectations (Nadiri, Hussain, Ekiz & Erdođan 2008:265). For example, a civil and building contractor who has certain expectations from their concrete product supplier, will be more concerned about their supplier's ability to deliver on its mandate. The more concerned civil and building contractors are about their concrete product supplier, the greater the intent to form a relationship with them, as they demonstrate that they care about their association. Kumar et al. (2003:670) add that a customer that expects something from their supplier organisation would be more concerned about their relationship quality.

In other words, the more the customer is concerned about their supplier's relationship quality, the greater their intention to participate in building a relationship with them. Organisations should therefore note that customers expect to receive superior product and relationship quality from their relational partners at all times. Unfamiliar expectations that customers may have from organisations indicate that the organisation might have the customer's inclination to participate in

relational exchange approaches (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). As such, a customer who displays higher expectations could be viewed as having an influence on long-term relationship building objectives.

### **4.3.3 Forgiveness**

Tsarenko and Tojib (2011:387) state that forgiveness can be considered a complicated process that comprises cognitive, emotional and motivational reactions to offences such as product or service failure. Only when customers experience a product or service failure, their willingness to forgive their supplier develops when their emotional state with the nature of their relationship is solid. Therefore, forgiveness may be a coping approach factor for undesirable behaviour due to a poor or bad product or service encounter (Zourrig, Chebat & Toffoli 2009:404).

Customers who value their relationship with their supplier are more willing to forgive as they are emotionally connected to their relational partner, and are less interested to offend them (McCullough, Berry, Luna, Tabak & Bono 2010:360). Zourrig *et al.* (2009:404) mention that when customers forgive, they decrease the drive to anger and therefore become more likely to influence negative emotions and turn them into positive emotions such as sympathy, compassion, empathy and compassion, which leads to forgiveness. Consequently, forgiveness can build positive emotional responses to a product or service let-down and offer a chance to re-establish the relationship (Chung & Beverland 2006:98). This view corresponds with the supposition that customers who are prepared to forgive are keen to support a lasting relationship with their supplier (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). Therefore, a customer who is prepared to forgive their supplier if their expectations are not met, hold greater relationship building potential.

### **4.3.4 Feedback**

Continuous information flow between the relational partners can be seen as a vital aspect in improving relational exchanges. Egan (2011:131) point out that obtaining customer feedback is one of the vital means that organisations can employ to obtain information relating to actual overall offerings that deals with customer satisfaction. Kumar *et al.* (2003:670) purport that feedback could either be of a positive or negative nature and customers' might not even expect a reward for doing so.

Customer feedback enlightens organisations about product or service let-downs and in that way provides the needed opportunity to recover and prohibit occurrence of other disappointments going forward (Fang, Luo & Jiang 2013:342). Therefore, customer feedback assists to detect problem areas and offer organisations an opportunity to correct their mistakes, thereby avoiding

disgruntled customers from switching to other suppliers and spreading detrimental information about the organisation (Lacey 2012:137).

Tsarenko and Tojib (2011:382) cautions that at times, customers terminate their exchange relationships without informing their supplier if or when their expectations are not satisfactorily met. Similarly, those who have not received any form of compensation or apology from their relational partners, may also not provide favourable feedback as they would rather provide negative comments and word-of-mouth feedback involving the organisation (Zeithaml *et al.* 2009:221).

#### **4.3.5 Fear of relationship loss**

The perceived switching costs incurred by an exchange partner for terminating the relationship can be attributed to fear of relationship loss, which could discourage customers from converting to alternatives (Caruana 2002:813). Kumar *et al.* (2003:670) mention that a customer who has high relationship intentions tend to be very concerned with the repercussions of losing their supplier and the benefits they would lose by terminating their relationship.

The benefits that organisations fear to lose when they terminate their relationship with their customers are identified as increased revenue due to growth in repurchasing behaviour, up-and cross-selling behaviour by loyal customers as well as the provision of customer attainment through recommendations (Conze *et al.* 2010:53). The relational bond that organisations enjoy with their customers, also forms switching obstacles paralleled to the costs and benefits of ending their association (Spake & Megehee 2010:316). The switching costs for customers may comprise practical substituting costs of finding a new supplier and social switching costs relating to sales representatives' connection (Jones *et al.* 2007:337).

Customers tend to remain in their relationships because of the relational benefits. These could comprise confidence, social and special treatment benefits gained from their relationship with the supplier organisation (Bojel *et al.* 2013:171; Gwinner *et al.* 1998:109). Undesirable benefits such as abridged potential for looking for variability are also available (Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2002:54). Kumar *et al.* (2003:670) affirm that customers that are fearful of losing their relational benefits, also shows higher intentions to form and maintain long-lasting relationships.

The following sub-sections present discussions on the proposed additional measures of relationship intention, beginning with the first dimension namely, that of trust.

### 4.3.6 Trust

Numerous researchers view trust as an important component in relationship building processes, playing a critical role in driving the relationship towards the envisaged profitable objectives (Segarra-Moliner *et al.* 2013:196; Zhang, Fang, Wei, Ramsey, McCole & Chen 2011:192; Morgan & Hunt 1994:20). From an exchange outlook, trust is described as a feeling of confidence from one relational partner to another (Ki & Hon 2012:187). Trust deals with the emotional security of the relational partners arising from the belief that their business transaction will be honest, safe and consistent (Singh & Jain 2015:971; Hong & Cho 2011:470).

According to Zhang *et al.* (2011:192), the role that trust plays in stirring customer repurchase intentions is very important, which supposition has been empirically supported by previous studies (Ki & Hon 2012:187; Liu, Guo & Lee 2011:71; Lin & Lu 2010:16). When trust is found amongst the relational partners, a feeling of preserving a long-term relationship orientation is born and facilitation of an exchange relationship becomes noticeable (Morgan & Hunt 1994:23). This suggests that understanding the nature and importance of trust would be an advantage to organisations in the forming and managing of their long-term B2B relationship.

Svensson, Mysen and Payan (2010:1209) state that for the reason that manufacturer-supplier organisations evaluate many aspects of their business where several elements of trust may be applied during the evaluation process, *inter-alia* credibility, honesty and fairness as critical trust components. Hartman (2003:235-237) explains three foundations of trust in construction business that clarifies why organisations and their customers can place their reliance on each other.

- Competence trust – is established on the individual’s opinion of the others’ capability to execute the necessary work. This can be achieved by noting visible testimonies such as previous experiences, track record or connections. Trust signifies a customer’s credence in the capacity of the organisation to provide better quality in a competent and consistent manner (Kandampully, Zhang & Bilgihan 2015:393).
- Integrity trust – is founded on the individual’s judgement of the others’ preparedness to safeguard a fellow partner’s interest over the assignment. The party’s credentials related to values, ethics, morals and cultural background, are highly attached with their integrity. Furthermore, trust speaks to the extent to which the organisation performs with honesty and principles (Mubango 2015:180; Grabner-Kräuter & Faullant 2008:486).
- Intuitive trust – it is initiated upon the partner’s prejudice or personal emotional state in the direction of the other partner (Mubango 2015:84).

These are apparent to concrete product supplier organisations operating within the construction industry, who must carefully choose potential trustworthy civil and building contractors as their long-term relational partners. Consequently, it is also key to note that trust might be a significant factor in swaying customer's intentions to participate in lasting B2B relationships. When problems in a B2B relationship intensify and the association is facing dissolution, only a close relationship characterised by reciprocal trust and relationship commitment will encourage the relational partners' eagerness to restore the dysfunctional association and continue with their collaboration (Fleming *et al.* 2016:84).

Furthermore, the importance of trust is visible when prospective relational partners are scarce and switching costs are high or prohibitive (Acrouit & Diallo 2017:159). When customers trust their supplier organisation, they tend to be ready to formulate positive buying intentions towards that supplier. Therefore, trust improves information sharing and availability, reduces transactional costs and contributes to collaboration (Van Vuuren *et al.* 2012:85). Thus, trust is included as an additional measure of relationship intention, for it is acknowledged as a critical component for preserving customers and advancing long-lasting relationships in this study (Yousuf & Wahab 2017:715; Wang, Law, Hung & Guillet 2014:1).

As indicated earlier, trust has rarely been examined as a dimension of relationship intention, particularly in the concrete product environment of the South African construction industry. As extant marketing literature reveals that in both B2C and B2B relational connections, trust is viewed as one of the most perceptible dimensions and its inclusion as a measure of relationship intention in this study is warranted.

#### **4.3.7 Flexibility**

Flexibility has received much consideration in the manufacturing, supply chain and service literature from several tactical, operative and strategic viewpoints (Park, Kim, Young, Choi & Kima 2018:1; Yu *et al.* 2017:211; Fayezi, Zuthi and O'Loughlin 2017:379). However, in the concrete product B2B environment within the construction industry, flexibility has been scantily reported in relationship-marketing exchanges. Matthyssens, Pauwels and Vandembemt (2005:547) argue that there is a need in B2B marketing settings to create flexibility amongst business partners.

Flexibility denotes to the competence of an organisation to adapt to changing market environment (Arias-Aranda, Bustinza & Barrales-Molina 2011:1849). The growing product proliferation, next-day delivery expectations, decreased component, elasticity in product manufacturing and service

supply chains, which turn out to be vital focal areas for organisations (Ivanov, Das & Choi 2018:3359), compels them in B2B settings to consider how they serve and strive to maintain their customers. Fredericks (2005:555) emphasised concepts like inter-firm flexibility and intra-firm flexibility, while Ivens (2005:566) highlighted supplier's flexibility, Giunipero, Denslow and Eltantawy (2005:602) stressed supply chain management flexibility and Claycomb, Dröge and Germain (2005:629) offered the prominence of marketing-based flexibility (specifically practical customer knowledge), as various strategies they can look up to.

Fernie Sparks and Mckinnon (2010:894) also support arguments given by earlier studies highlighting the dynamic position that flexible arrangements by organisations play in long-term relational exchanges. Accordingly, it can be argued that if organisations can address their mode of flexibility towards their customers, their outcomes in terms of relational norms would ignite functional-specific performances such as product quality and delivery speed (Yu *et al.* 2017:211; Yu *et al.* 2012:1203). Therefore, being flexible is a vital operative capability that organisations could use to improve their performance and gain competitive advantages (Huo, Gu & Wang 2019:152). For example, if CPMs could address their extent of flexibility towards customer's product requirements as a tier of their operation, the consequences thereof could be related to financial performances such as return on investment (ROI), return on sales (ROS) and market share (Duclos, Vokurka & Lummus 2003:446). Against this backdrop, flexibility is also included as an additional measure of relationship intention in this study.

The third additional dimension of relationship intention, namely, information sharing is discussed next.

#### **4.3.8 Information sharing/exchange**

Sustainable relations between the exchange partners become evident when suppliers promptly respond to their customer's requirements (Johnson & Ross 2014:207; Adjei *et al.* 2009:494). According to Ashley *et al.* (2011:749), advances of the relational partner's eagerness to exchange information that permits both to acquire facts that was initially not at their disposal. In B2B relationships characterised by an atmosphere of open and honest communication the relational partners share opportunities and profit from such arrangements (Huang, Lee & Chen 2019:1449). As a result, information sharing amongst the relational partners is important and is said to be a vital inspiration of trust and satisfaction (Wickramasinghe & Weliwitigoda 2011:398). Khalifa (2014:944) states that as rapid growth of information sharing is fuelling business success, organisations must also look for new ways of delivering on their offerings.



Rapid developments in technology and global information infrastructure provides further impetus that organisations must have in place information systems to respond effectively to various customer needs and requirements (Hsu *et al.* 2008:297). When organisations share information with their customers, they get to be informed about certain aspects of their relationship, which translate into customer satisfaction (Tong & Crosno 2015:168). Hsu *et al.* (2008:297) posit that information sharing can be a tactical tool which organisations can use to enhance their operations, for example, acquisition of raw materials and logistical plans, or upgrading their customer information sharing platforms to improve their marketing strategies.

Information sharing therefore assist relational exchanges to develop long-lasting relationships and gain inter-dependence (Chen, Wu & Chien 2016:94). Peppers and Rogers (2011:243) state that organisation's competitive gain originates from the information received from their customers. Furthermore, it is the customers' willingness to choose whether to share the information with their supplier organisation or not.

The succeeding section discusses the mediating role of relationship quality construct towards the level of relationship commitment of this study's proposed model.

#### **4.4 RELATIONSHIP QUALITY**

Relationship quality plays a crucial part in the examination of relationships that exist amongst customers and their supplier organisation (Balla, Ibrahim & Ali 2015:1). The driving force of relationship marketing is the focus on developing long-lasting customer-supplier associations, wherein the relationship quality is a crucial feature of strong and sustainable connections (Tripathi & Dave 2013:479; Gilaninia *et al.* 2011a:787).

Many dimensions of relationship quality have been examined by numerous studies (Jiang *et al.* 2016:297; Emami, Lajevardi & Fakharmanesh 2013:399; Liu *et al.* 2011:72; De Cannière, De Pelsmacker & Geuens 2009:88; Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2002:242). Extant literature describes relationship quality as a composite measure of the intensity of relationship and a multi-dimensional structure reflected by trust, commitment and satisfaction concepts considered critical for driving business performance (Agarwal *et al.* 2014:732; Lin 2013:204; Leonidou, Leonidou, Coudounaris & Hultman 2013:156). Liu *et al.* (2011:72) offer overall quality as an important dimension over and above the three commonly observed concepts. Jiang *et al.* (2016:298) posit that when customers are content with the degree of relationship quality experienced from their supplier, they will buy more as they will be less likely switch to rival suppliers and endorse the organisation to others (Lamb *et al.* 2012:194).

This is true as the extent to which relationship quality organisations exhibit towards customers plays a key part in their decision-making process, which reveals their perceptions of the strength and future prospects of the relationship (Agarwal *et al.* 2014:732; Qin, Zhao & Yi 2009:394). It is also vital to note that customers will remain indifferent towards the organisation's relationship marketing approaches, even if they feel that a quality relationship does not exist (Raciti *et al.* 2013:616; Godfrey, Seiders & Voss 2011:94). It is for such reasons that organisations are encouraged to frequently assess their customer's observations of the general intensity of relationship quality (De Cannière *et al.* 2009:89), since a relationship that is perceived to be of great quality has strong links with customer commitment, satisfaction and the desired relationship outcomes such as customer loyalty and repurchase behaviour (Tripathi & Dave 2013:480). The advanced levels of relationship quality in a B2B setting must therefore be viewed as a determinant of the likelihood of a continued business relationship amongst the relational partners (Jiang *et al.* 2016:298).

Against this background, a consensus has not been reached as to what is the structural nature of the relationship quality construct (Izogo 2016:1; Balla *et al.* 2015:3), which has resulted in an academic stalemate concerning relationship quality's dimensionality (Skarmeas, Constantine Katsikeas, Spyropoulou & Salehi-Sangari 2008:23). This study therefore proposes the inclusion of other variables, namely, information sharing (Wickramasinghe & Weliwitigoda 2011:397-398) and flexibility (Yu *et al.* 2012:1203) as additional measures of relationship intention towards relationship quality, discussed earlier in section 4.3 of this chapter. For the reason that relationship quality is explained and examined in a broad range, embracing important features which symbolise strong customer-supplier relationships (Qin *et al.* 2011:392), it is necessary to find out how academics and researchers define this construct.

The following sub-section offers a presentation on the definitions of relationship quality.

#### **4.4.1 Defining relationship quality**

This study labels relationship quality as complete intensity, climate and intimacy of the relational exchange and the degree to which the organisation meets or exceeds customer needs and requirements (Qin *et al.* 2011:391; De Cannier, De Pelsmacker & Geuens 2010:82). Jiang *et al.* (2016:298) state that in buyer-supplier settings, customer's intentions will be to continue the relationship with their supplier if they perceive the relationship to be of high quality in fulfilling their needs and requirements. Liu *et al.* (2011:71) signify that it is not surprising that relationship quality is largely related with customer retention, loyalty and profitability. Table 4.1 provides an outline of numerous relationship quality definitions as found in extant the literature.

**Table 4.1: Relationship quality definitions**

Li, Green, Farazmand and Grodzki (2012:1)	Relationship quality assists with reduction of customer uneasiness and builds the relationship amongst participating parties.
Song, Su, Liu and Wang (2012:290)	Relationship quality as “the degree to which the parties in a relationship are engaged in an active, long-term working relationship that includes cooperation and conflict resolution”.
De Cannière et al. (2010:82)	Relationship quality can be defined as how accurately a relationship as one live up to the needs and requirements of customers.
Vieira, Winklhofer and Ennew (2008:273)	“Relationship quality is the cognitive evaluation of business interactions by key individuals in the dyad, comparatively with potential alternative interactions.”

**Source: Author’s compilation**

The succeeding section provides discussions on commitment construct following the study’s proposed model.

#### **4.5 COMMITMENT**

Commitment is an ongoing relationship or desire to implicitly or explicitly pledge to remain in an exchange relationship that proves to be of value (Saleh & Akhavanfar 2015:689; Moorman, Deshpande & Zaltman 1993:382). Morgan and Hunt (1994:23) identified commitment as an influential factor of long-term relationship exchanges, recognised as a source of customer future purchase frequency.

From the buyer-seller relationship’s perspective, commitment can be described as sacrifices such as disregarding profitable short-term opportunities made by the supplier organisation to its customers, in the quest to maintain the exchange relationship (De Wulf & Odekerken-Schröder 2003:98). Customers who commit to their supplier organisations have a sense of responsibility to continue their relationships (Shukla, Banerjee & Singh 2016:324). This indicates an advanced level of obligation of ensuring that a relationship succeeds and reciprocally benefits the relational partners (Wu, Zhou & Wu 2012:1762; Gundlach, Achrol & Mentzer 1995:79; Mowday, Porter & Steers 1982:28). Commitment therefore, implies that the relational partners are reliable and loyal, as they exhibit stability in their interaction with one another.

Wilson (1995:337) observed that in relationship-marketing studies, commitment is generally applied as a dependent variable, perceived as the “end game” state of relationship-marketing. However, Dagger and O’Brien (2010:1530) posit that this practice frequently limits the construct, especially in established relationships, where customers had adequate time to appraise their supplier organisation and the benefits they received from that relationship. This study also views commitment as a dependent variable preceding to customer satisfaction and loyalty with the aim of influencing their repurchase intentions.

The commitment construct encapsulates three sub-dimensions i.e.; affective, calculative and normative degrees (Wu *et al.* 2012:1762; Allen & Meyer 1990:3). Affective commitment is seen as the customer’s emotional affection and the degree of involvement with the organisation (Sharma, Young & Wilkinson 2015:46; Meyer & Allen 1991:63). Calculative commitment is related to a customer’s assessment of risks and cost implications of dissolving the relationship with their current supplier organisation (Nusair, Parsa & Cobanoglu 2011:834; Manetje 2009:43). Normative commitment is viewed as an ethical obligation in ensuring long-term benefits for the relational partners, obtained as the relationship is grounded on a mutuality norm (Roxenhall & Andréen 2012:87). It is evident that these measurements underwrite the relational partners’ will to make sure that lasting relational benefits are achieved (Roxenhall & Andréen 2012:87). In proportion to these studies, this study considers relationship commitment as a unidimensional construct, functioning with projections assigned in the interest of continued investment in the relationship (De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder & Iacobucci 2001:37). Furthermore, the study assesses commitment by adopting scale items suggested by Morgan and Hunt (1994:20).

The subsequent section discusses the third mediating construct, namely, satisfaction following this study’s proposed model.

#### **4.6 SATISFACTION**

Taking from the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm, customer satisfaction originates from an intellectual valuation through which customers associate the encounter with their supplier following their expectations (Esmaeilpour & Alizadeh 2014:228). Srivastava and Sharma (2013:274) posit that satisfaction takes place when customers’ perceived experience with their supplier during their encounter has met or surpassed their expectations. Thus, it is understood that satisfaction is a psychological assessment in which the results of customers’ expectations and the actual product or service performance are compared (Egan 2011:127).

The more customers anticipate that their supplier will tailor their offerings to satisfy their needs, the more supplier organisations are obliged to put emphasis on satisfying their customers' needs and maintain a positive customer-supplier relationship (Liang & Zhang 2012:154). By so doing organisations stand to benefit from following a customer centric relationship approach, which could be a cost-effective method for increased customer spending (Aurier & N'Goala 2010:303; Jones, Brown, Zoltners & Weitz 2005:106; Gwinner *et al.* 1998:109).

The subsequent sub-section discusses the several definitions of customer satisfaction.

#### 4.6.1 Defining customer satisfaction

Chen, Chang, Hsu and Yang (2011:391) posit that customer satisfaction progressively gained interest and attention from diverse business fields and numerous studies. This has put forward a variety of definitions for the construct. Table 4.2 provides various customer satisfaction definitions found from extant literature.

**Table 4.2: Customer satisfaction definitions**

Author	Definitions
Wilson et al. (2012:75)	Customer satisfaction is an assessment of products and service by customers relative to their needs and wants, and if they are met or surpassed by the organisation.
Gupta and Gupta (2012:223)	Customer satisfaction is a complete assessment of a presentation built on previous customer experiences with an organisation and has been linked to the overall performance and health of an organisation.
Van Vuuren et al. (2012:81)	Customer satisfaction is “the degree to which a business’s product or service performance matches up to the expectation of the customer. If the performance matches or exceeds the expectations, then the customer is satisfied, if the performance is below par then the customer is dissatisfied”.
Oliver (2010:8)	Customer satisfaction is “a customer’s pleasurable level of consumption-related” fulfilling reaction concerning a product or service – or its features.

Author	Definitions
Kotler and Keller (2009:345)	Customer satisfaction is “a person’s feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s perceived performance (or outcome) in relation to his/her expectations”. This description is reinforced by several other scholars such as Oliver (1993:65) as well as Tse and Wilton (1988:204).

**Source: Author’s compilation**

From the previous discussion, the following customer satisfaction definition can be formulated:

A pleasing level of product or service use is related to customer’s pre-set needs and expectations with reference to the actual performance by the organisation and its offerings.

Satisfying customers in a dynamic business environment is important for prosperous organisations to frequently strive and endeavour to improve on achieving customer’s needs. It is imperative for organisations to ensure that customers’ expectations are met since without them; they could function with difficulty (Martin *et al.* 2008:224). It is important for them, therefore, to continuously evaluate their customers’ satisfaction levels.

Against this background, the importance customer satisfaction is discussed next.

**4.6.2 The importance of customer satisfaction**

Yap, Ramayah and Shahidan (2012:154) state that organisations including CPMs are realising the importance of satisfying their customers on a continuous basis. In establishing long-term business relationships, understanding customer satisfaction is a critical element for their success and survival (Kellar, Preis & Hamiste 2012:87). Organisations recognise that customers’ perceptions are crucial in terms of how they take on satisfying customers’ needs and requirements and consequently, meet or exceed their needs and requirements (De Cannière, De Pelsmacker & Geuens 2010:84). Consequently, satisfaction arises when a customer encounters a progressive disconfirmation of expectations or “a pleasurable level of consumption related fulfilment” (Bowden 2011:214).

Customer satisfaction should be observed as a measure of organisational performance and proactive attitude towards customer retention (Turkyilmaz, Oztekin, Zaim & Fahrettin Demirel 2013:932). Therefore, customer satisfaction must be observed as an important factor for the

continuation of relationships, particularly when customers are turned into loyal supporters of the organisation (Gupta & Gupta 2012:222).

Yoo and Bai (2013:169-170) indicate that since customer satisfaction regulates customer loyalty, continuous assessment of their level of satisfaction is of great importance for organisations to get an idea as to how best to continue pleasing them and how to enhance their loyalty in the long run. Considering that when customers' perceived organisational performance is equivalent to or exceeds their expectations, it advocates that customers are satisfied and when it is the opposite, this suggests that customers are displeased (Amin, Isa & Fontaine 2013:81). Mostert (2012:525) confirms this assertion by highlighting that continuous customer support holds the greatest value and benefits for organisations, thus the need to strive for customer satisfaction should be one of their priorities. The subsequent sub-section discusses the benefits of customer satisfaction.

### **4.6.3 Benefits of customer satisfaction**

The relational benefits that organisations gain for continuously satisfying their customers include lower marketing expenses, lower acquisition costs and improved customer fulfilment, which similarly reduces overall operating costs and increased profitability (Machado & Diggins 2012:150). In addition, these benefits that organisations ought to gain in their commitment towards satisfying their customers and maintaining their relationship from this study's point of view are given as follows:

- Positive work environment – designates to an encouraging work atmosphere in which the employees are motivated to perform and get remunerated for their hard work that would lead them to be more productive (Hoffman & Bateson 2010:306). Examples of the incentives within the concrete product organisation set up can include sales incentives, performance bonuses and even holidays.
- Decrease the costs of futile marketing - Bateson and Hoffman (2011:388) mentions that satisfying customers assists with customer preservation that drives business profitability and reduces costs of acquiring new customers compared to keeping the current ones (Morgan & Hunt 1994:24).
- Decrease operating costs – the cost of running the organisation tends to be minimal through transaction cost economies. This area of economics suggests that proper management systems are developed in order to minimise operative costs.

- Reduce price sensitivity – When customers are satisfied, they become enthusiastic to buy more and even pay premium prices for products and services rendered (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman 1996:35).
- Prevent customer churn – satisfied customers bring benefits associated with lower cost that are linked with their retention, amplified brand equity and improved profitability as a result of customers not switching to other suppliers (Berndt & Tait 2012:10).
- Gain valuable information – this refers to information acquired by means of customer satisfaction surveys, whereby organisations associate their offerings to their customers compared to those of competitors to measure, preserve and create a competitive advantage (Hoffman & Bateson 2010:307). It is for the organisation's advantage to know where it stands in relation to service delivery gaps compared to its counterparts.
- Improve the effectiveness of advertising - this means that the marketing costs of promotions for new customer acquisition can be reduced (Buttle 2009:32), even though extremely satisfied customers could still switch to competition due to circumstances, for example, a less expensive offer (Naumann, Haverila, Khan & Williams 2010:878).
- Enhanced business reputation – this holds the greatest value for organisations that offer most benefits and strive to satisfy customer's needs (Du Plessis *et al.* 2012:525). In other words, greater commitment to the relationship highlights the value that the organisation places on its offerings by doing their utmost to satisfy their customers' needs.
- Positive word-of-mouth – when it is provided by satisfied customers, it increases their repurchase intentions and probably influence them to endorse the organisation's offerings to others (Lamb *et al.* 2012:194), and be less likely to switch to rival suppliers, and encourage them to assist the organisation to attract new customers (Zeithaml *et al.* 2009:185).

From a B2B exchange relationship point of view, organisations should strive to improve on their offerings by offering value that meets or exceeds customers needs (Levy, Weitz & Grewal 2018:154). Value offering should be a vital aspect that organisations should emphasise for customer satisfaction as satisfied customers return and buy more as their needs are met, and who tell others about their experiences with such an organisation (Forgas, Moliner, Sánchez & Palau 2010:229). Kishada and Wahab (2013:266) state that lack of customer satisfaction decreases customers' spending and their recommendations to other people.

Therefore, the impact brought by satisfied customers boosts customer loyalty and repeat business which are the ultimate envisaged outcomes that organisations would like achieve. However, of



note is that not all loyal customers are content, particularly in the concrete product market (Forgas *et al.* 2010:235). Accordingly, customer satisfaction is generally a central outcome of buyer-supplier relationships that develops during the absence of customer trust and commitment (Skarmeas *et al.* 2008:25).

The succeeding section deliberates on the study's outcomes of participating in long-term B2B relationships, beginning with customer loyalty of the study's proposed model.

## **4.7 LOYALTY**

According to Yoo and Bai (2013:166), customer loyalty developed as a necessary concept recognised to be a pillar of competitive advantages, with an influential effect on organisational performance. Since customer loyalty brings about fruitful results, the concept has developed to be the key for organisations to implement astute strategic marketing strategies. The reason for this may be that loyalty advocates that retaining current customers has lower acquisition costs and is less expensive than obtaining new ones, and new product and service provided are more positively received by loyal customers compared to non-loyal ones (Hsu, Huang, Ko & Wang 2014:80).

Pan, Sheng and Xie (2012:150) as well as Watson, Beck, Henderson and Palmatier (2015:790) highlight that even when suppliers erroneously make blunders in the process of serving their customers, somehow customers are still prepared to continue the exchange relationship with them. For this reason loyal customers are viewed as vital assets, which offer organisations less expenses in the form of reduced costs of new customer acquisition. Therefore, forming customer loyalty is important, as loyal customers represent valued assets to organisations.

The subsequent sub-sections provide discussions on the definitions and types of customer loyalty, including its role in relationship development.

### **4.7.1 Definition of customer loyalty**

According to Agrawal, Gaur and Narayanan (2012:276), customer loyalty “is a complex and multidimensional construct having numerous definitions.” It can be defined as a reliable behaviour of a customer towards an organisation. Customer loyalty definitions are given in two forms, i.e. behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Kandampully *et al.* 2015:381; Yoo & Bai 2013:167; Fathollahzadeh, Hashemi & Kahreh 2011:126; Akhter, Abbasi, Ali & Afzal 2011:1167).

- a) In behavioral terms, customer loyalty is established on the recurring support or repurchases, comprising the monitoring of customer switching behaviour. Hikkerova (2011:150-151)

alludes that sometimes customers may show behavioral loyalty towards the organisation due to lack of alternatives, accordingly customers who display behavioral loyalty do not necessarily represent genuine loyalty towards the organisation.

- b) In attitudinal terms, loyalty definition integrates customers' feelings and disposition towards organisations and its offerings to determine levels of loyalty. Some scholars integrate customer loyalty definitions by linking both attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of loyalty. Accordingly, behavioural characteristics of loyalty are focused on customer's purchasing history, measured by customers' purchasing frequency towards their supplier organisation (Fathollahzadeh et al. 2011:126; Vesel & Zabkar 2009:396). On the other hand, attitudinal features emphasise more on the psychological and emotional attitude of customers because of their loyalty (Fathollahzadeh *et al.* 2011:240). Furthermore, the attitudinal features are viewed as adding some degree of worth to an organisation's offerings.

Sanayei, Shahin and Taheri (2012:483) describe loyalty as "a degree of continuity in patronage, customer's disposition in terms of preferences and intentions and a psychological process resulting in brand commitment." Additionally, customer loyalty is alluded to by Bose and Rao (2011:546) as customer commitment to continuously participate in an exchange relationship with a particular organisation and embrace repeat purchase behaviour towards the supplier. In practical terms, organisations require repeat purchases by customers, since such a behaviour might represent a customer's desire to continue supporting the organisation and its offerings, demonstrated by repeat buying behaviour and as such, increase long-term profits (Rai & Srivastava 2014:56).

Therefore, the strength of customer loyalty represents their dispositional attachment and intent to continue patronising their suppliers even in future (Pan *et al.* 2012:151). In addition, given the changing role that customers play in exchange relationships, incorporating, for example, co-creation of value, demonstrative engagement, community engagement and customer involvement in organisational activities through social media platforms, as these could be areas an organisation can look at in the quest towards maintaining their customer support (Kandampully *et al.* 2015:402). The reason to do this is that loyal customers are competitive assets who offer a competitive edge and thus require nurturing by using new and innovative means that are challenging to duplicate (Agrawal *et al.* 2012:276).

This study adopts Cant and Du Toit's (2012:1224) definition given as "customer loyalty towards an organisation can be seen as a situation that exist when a customer consciously elects to repurchase from a particular organisation repeatedly over time, even when other options exist; contributing to the on-going success and profitability of the organisation and recommending the

organisation to their colleagues and peers where this decision is based on an emotional attachment to the organisation”.

A discontinuation of a relationship in the construction environment does not happen easily and it is very unlikely to take place in comparison to other environments, given that switching behaviour with industrial products is much more difficult compared to consumable products owing to the type of products or services presented. This assertion brings the discussion to the types of loyalty organisations and customers find themselves in, shown in the next sub-section.

#### **4.7.2 Types of loyalty**

Several categories of loyalty are found. Buttle (2009:45-46) differentiate amongst the various kinds of loyalty found as follows:

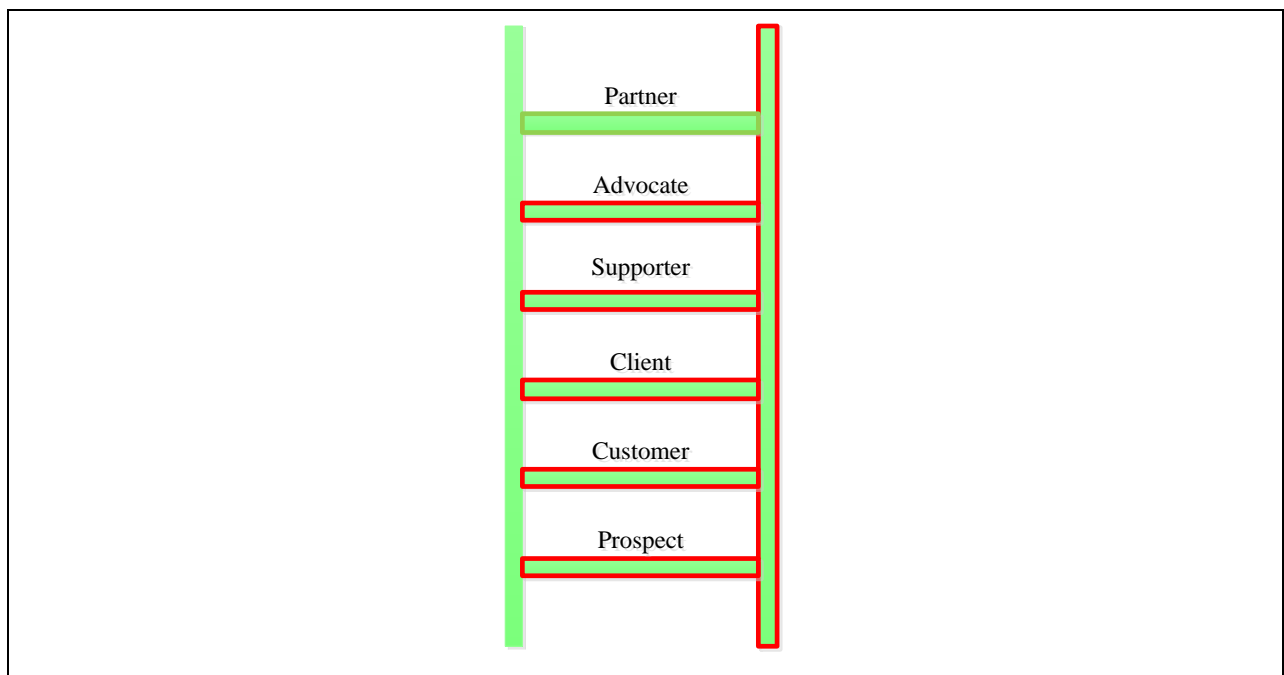
- a) Emotional loyalty – is termed exact loyalty as the inspirational drive of this kind of loyalty is personal empathy with factual or observed values and rewards;
- b) Price loyalty – is inspired by means of real-world financial behaviour. The key drive behind this type of loyalty is thoughtful supervision of money or financial obligation;
- c) Incentivised loyalty – is frequently associated with loose customers and communicates to those who do not give an indication relationship preference through repeat support;
- d) Monopoly loyalty – takes place when customers must buy from an organisation because of absence or lack of choice;
- e) Inertia – outlines behaviour that may take place irrespective of any outside stimuli. It regularly represents behaviour in relations to a reaction, hence unbiased behaviour.
- f) No loyalty – occurs in the absence of any of the above given type of loyalty or behaviour; signifying relatively low attitude levels and poor patronage behaviour.

#### **4.7.3 Developing relationships**

As soon as an organisation has acquired a customer, their relationship could grow in two diverse directions, wherein customers might develop to be “fanatics” of the organisation if they feel that their requirements are continuously satisfied, or instead, customers might become “terrorists” should the organisation not satisfactorily meet their requirements (Brink & Berndt 2013:34). Baines, Fill and Page (2008:689) state that the relationship ladder is established to classify the

numerous stages customers tend to go through in a process repeatedly acknowledged as relationship development.

The ladder of customer loyalty offers a highly regarded outline that categorises customer value at various stages of the relationship. Each stage represents one type of customer base. It is therefore, essential for organisations to understand each stage of their relationship, as they could improve on their customer relationship development in the quest to accomplish their highest level of loyalty. Figure 4.1 accordingly provides six relationship development stages heading to customer loyalty attainment.



**Figure 4.1: Relationship marketing ladder**

**Source: Baines et al. (2008:689)**

- **Partner** – is someone with whom the organisation has a good relationship. Bowie and Buttle (2011:380) echo that at this stage customer are contented and prefer the organisation taken from the period when their needs are met and the organisation has gained customer trust (Brink & Berndt 2013:35).
- **Advocate** – is an individual who enthusiastically endorses the organisation to others and promotes the business to others on behalf of the organisation. (Referral marketing). At this stage, the customer applies word-of-mouth to influence others and tells how satisfied they are with their supplier (Brink & Berndt 2013:35).

- **Supporter** – is an individual who adores the organisation, but then again only cares for it in a passive way. These individuals tend to like the organisation, but only supports the business inertly. Even though customers may support their supplier while distributing word-of-mouth about the organisation, customers are not completely moved to the next level of advocates (Buhler & Nufer 2010:31).
- **Client** – is an individual who makes purchases from a particular organisation as they are happy with their offerings and their relationship grows as loyalty begins to intensify (Brink & Berndt 2013:35).
- **Customer** – is an individual who bought something once from the business. Brink and Berndt (2013:35) enlighten that providing outstanding product and service is vital to convert customers to the next stage of the ladder.
- **Prospect** – is an individual believed to have potential to be influenced and participate in a business transaction with an organisation. When a salesperson is approaching a prospect, he should have clear specifics about it regarding customer needs, feelings about the organisation and its products, product uses and individual characteristics (Kumar & Shah 2015:180; Ferrell, Niininen, Lukas, Schembri & Pride 2015:478).

The essence of the ladder is that organisations are required to convert prospects and customers into clients. From a client status, an organisation must strive to turn clients into supporters, then advocates and eventually into partners (Baines *et al.* 2008:689). Throughout the expansion phase, organisations must endlessly evaluate the relationship and determine if they have what it takes to assign customers to the succeeding stage, as it may not be necessary all the time to do so with all customers (Godson 2009:106). The eventual result for any organisation that seeks to participate in long-term B2B relationship is to cultivate true loyalty relative to insincere behavioural loyalty. With this being said, understanding the loyalty ladder and its different types is important for organisations as mastering what drives their loyalty is of utmost importance.

The following discussion presents the determinants or drivers of customer loyalty.

#### **4.7.4 Drivers of customer loyalty**

Considering that extent literature overflows with studies that posit satisfaction is one leading driver of customer loyalty (Gupta & Gupta 2012:222; Cant & Erdis 2012:938; Ehigie & Tayler 2009:503). Douglas, McClelland and Davies (2008:21) add that complete customer satisfaction leads to loyalty. Richard and Zhang (2012:563) emphasise that contented customers hold buoyant

commitment levels towards the organisation compared to unsatisfied customers, which heightens customer loyalty.

Furthermore, customers normally depend on how they feel when they do business with a particular supplier, different behavioural reactions that can influence them to be loyal or not can arise (Raab, Ajami, Gargeya & Goddard 2008:63). This occurs because feelings of satisfaction are “an evaluation of an emotion” (Hunt 1977:459). As such, it is imperative for organisations to note that customers follow diverse decision-making processes during unrelated purchasing situations (Mostert 2012:14). With this being said, organisations need to appreciate customer’s expectations and attempt to satisfy their customer requirements in order to maintain their support (Martin *et al.* 2008:224). Correspondingly, Cant and Erdis (2012:938) reiterate that maintaining customer satisfaction is important because it forms the basis of lasting relationships, ensuing into customer loyalty and retention.

It becomes clear that customer loyalty embraces behavioural and attitudinal components (Vesel & Zabkar 2010:342). The behavioural component holds traits which move customers’ behaviour, encompasses their preference of a specific supplier from other competitors, purchases regularly from the same supplier, has the intention to continue supporting them on a continuous basis and has inclination to endorse them to others (Evanschitzky, Ramaseshan, Woisetschläger, Richelsen, Blut & Backhaus 2012:629). Quite the opposite, the attitudinal factor signifies the emotional and psychological attachments as critical aspects that influence customers to decide to support a specific supplier (Evanschitzky *et al.* 2012:629). Thus, in this study a composite measure for customer loyalty is used to mirror both attitudinal and behavioural features, which fully conceptualise the construct (Pan *et al.* 2012:150; Dick & Basu 1994:102).

The following section reports on the final relational exchange outcome of customer repurchase intention of the proposed study model.

#### **4.8 REPURCHASE INTENTIONS**

Within the basis of TRA, intentions are regarded as instant factors in the attitude-behaviour relationships that are important in measuring customer behaviour (Li & Hong 2013:161). Intentions describe the extent to which customers perceive that a certain buying behaviour will be executed. Thus, customer purchasing intentions are extensively acknowledged in marketing, consumer behaviour and psychology literature, as a surrogate measure of customer physical purchasing acts (Morwitz 2014:181; Namias 1959:26). In addition, customer purchase intentions are the most important element in customer decision-making processes, because of their

prominence as a strong dimension of purchase behaviour (Koenig-Lewis & Palmer 2008:69). Consequently, it is suggested that organisations must determine customers' goals and monitor their buying patterns to predict their repurchasing intentions (Morwitz 2014:182).

The marketing literature reveals that repurchase intentions play a critical role as a vital behavioural outcome of relationship marketing (Ludin & Cheng 2014:462). Curtis, Abratt, Rhoades and Dion (2011:4) describe repurchasing as the customer's actual behaviour ensuing from repetitive previous purchases of similar products or services from the same organisation. Customer repurchase intentions are normal efficiency measures often used to anticipate a customer's future response, consumption and behavioural patterns. For instance, repeat purchases are used to predict sales for new product introductions, advertising effectiveness and demand forecasting. Therefore, customers repurchase intentions epitomise their informed views of frequent purchasing transactions (Fang, Qureshi, Sun, Mccole & Ramsey 2014:403).

Against this backdrop, repurchase intentions in this study, are a customer's inclination to repurchase concrete product from the same CPM. Various researchers recognise a repurchase intention as the willingness and propensity of the customer's repeat buying behaviour due to the preference toward the organisation's product and services (Peppers & Rogers 2011:141). When customers show the will to recommend the organisation to others, then they are most likely satisfied and loyal and therefore more valuable to the organisation (Peppers & Rogers 2011:141).

Therefore, it is of utmost importance to build lasting relationships with willing customers as their continued support may lead to customer loyalty and long-term support. Bateson and Hoffman (2011:388) state that customer retention consequently advocates directing the organisation's marketing efforts to satisfy their existing customers with the aim of igniting their repurchase intentions.

#### **4.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter gave a detail outline and discussed of relevant constructs applicable in this study of its proposed model. Deliberations on the dimensions of relationship intentions (expectations, feedback, involvement, forgiveness, fear of relationship loss, trust, information sharing/exchange and flexibility) were made. It discussed the mediating relationship marketing factors (relationship quality, commitment and satisfaction), set forth as dependent relationship marketing constructs leading to relationship outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intentions). It presented the specifics of suppliers' relationship quality and commitment in a long-standing relationship, and what motivates customer satisfaction. The chapter concluded by providing details on customer

behavioural patterns of loyalty towards the supplier organisations, which leads to customer long-term repurchase intentions.

It is evident from this chapter that developing long-term customer relationships with the intention of increasing profitability does not automatically pivot on the duration of the relationship, but on several different factors. Distinctly, customer satisfaction does not guarantee continued customer support. As a result, the central benefit of satisfaction is the opportunity made available by having continued relationships with customers. Organisations should therefore make sure that their relationship building strategies are genuine and truthful in serving customers' best interests.

Numerous stages of customer loyalty have made it clear that organisations must go all-out to create a conducive atmosphere that customers can relate to and guarantee consistent and possible word-of-mouth referrals. In addition, organisations cannot afford to see their customers switch to other suppliers due to lack of staff and administrative support. From the succeeding chapter, the theoretical framework employed in the study, including deliberations on the study's hypotheses and conceptual model are discussed.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter provided discussions on key constructs applicable in this study. The chapter deliberated on the significance of dimensions of relationship intentions and the mediating constructs of relationship-marketing, which included the envisaged study outcomes of long-term B2B relationship as supported by the literature reviewed. The objective of the chapter is to offer an understanding of various theories that underpins the study and to propose an integrated conceptual model incorporating vital organisational factors (dimensions of relationship intentions), and to appreciate the nature of long term B2B relationship between CPMs and their civil and building contractor customers. Also, this chapter provides clarification into the research hypotheses in addition to the proposed theoretical model verified in the empirical section of the study. Following the conceptualisation and the hypothesised model development for this study, the relationship amongst the study constructs are presented.

#### 5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term “theoretical framework” incorporates the following words “theory” and “framework”. In line with Kerlinger (1986:9), theory is “*a set of interrelated constructs, definitions, and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena*”. Theory helps to appreciate behaviour in a general sense, when relevant information about behaviour is presented and an explanatory theoretical framework can then be developed, looking at facts believed to be true and advance a coherent framework that links facts to one another (Ngulube, Mathipa & Gumbo 2015:44-45).

A framework is a basic structure or outline of a research inquiry within a specific arena (Grant & Osanloo 2014:12). The theoretical framework originates from a specific theory linked with the study hypothesis from a particular field of study (Adom, Hussein & Agyem 2018:438). Accordingly, the eminence of a theoretical framework is to provide a structure of the inquiry, which encapsulates the study’s philosophical, epistemological, methodology and analytical aspects of the inquiry (Grant & Osanloo 2014:12).

Ham, Jeger and Ivković (2015:738) assert that the theoretical framework identifies relevant elements of the research process and show links between each one of them. In that way, it helps in contextualising and laying formal theories as a guide to the study (Ravitch & Carl 2016:186). Consequently, sets the study in a scholarly or academic manner, which directs the choice of the study design and the data analysis plan. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks are important in justifying why a research question or problem is proposed, why certain variables are more important than others, and how the research questions must be answered so as to make the study findings more meaningful and generalisable (Lederman & Lederman 2015:593-594).

The subsequent sub-section presents discussions on the relevant theories that underpins this study.

### **5.2.1 Theories grounding the relationship marketing concept**

As discussed in Chapter 3, the relationship-marketing idea has progressed from various number of theories as the concept evolves over the years (Palmatier 2008:7-8). Many of these theories developed and pronounce how and why people behave as they do. This took place as robust relationship developments amongst customers and organisations were found to be greatly contributing towards long-term business relationship exchanges (Segarra-Moliner *et al.* 2013:196). Alderson (1957:2-3) argued that since people are involved with the exchange process, marketing should therefore embrace the sociological factors including the social psychological aspects of “communication” and “emotional reactions”.

The relationship marketing concept started in the 1950s as institutional economics theory, which progressed in the 1970s to the exchange theory and dependence theory, then moved in the 1980s to relational contracting theory, advanced in the 1990s to transaction cost economics, commitment-trust theory and social exchange theory, then developed into resource-based outlook, then to inter-firm relationship marketing in the 2000s (Palmatier 2008:7-8). In combination with the various descriptions of relationship marketing concept advanced by numerous authors, it is apparent that its worth has been largely enriched from the sociological and psychological theories as presented in Table 5.1 in their particular time frames.

**Table 5.1: The evolution of relationship marketing theory**

<b>Theory and/or source discipline</b>	<b>Basic impact</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Institutional economics, sociology, and psychology</b>	Combined sociological and psychological elements in establishing institutional economic viewpoints of practical economic players.	Berry (1983:3)	“Relationship marketing is attracting, maintaining and enhancing customer relationships”.
<b>Exchange theory (sociology)</b>	Transferred marketing views by using “exchange theory” to vital enquiries in the marketing theory: (a) “Why do people and organisations engage in exchange relationships?” and (b) “How are exchanges created, resolved, or avoided?”	Grönroos (1994:6)	“Marketing aims to establish, maintain, enhance and commercialise customer relationships so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. This is done by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises”.
<b>Commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing (sociology and psychology)</b>	Comprehensive relationship-marketing further than buyer-supplier relationship to propose a logical theory revolving around trust and commitment. This model offered a theoretical foundation for many	(Morgan & Hunt 1994:22)	“Relationship marketing is an integrated effort to identify, maintain and build up a network with individual customers and to continuously strengthen the network for the mutual benefit of both sides, through interactive, individualised and

	relationship-marketing research investigations.		value-added contacts over a long period of time”. “Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchanges”.
<b>Resource-based-view of inter-firm relationships (management)</b>	“Integrated social network theory to develop an inter-firm-specific relationship marketing framework, which shows that in addition to relationship quality (trust, commitment), two other relational drivers are key to understanding the impact of inter-firm relationships on performance: relationship breadth and composition”.	Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995:256)	The expansion of marketing to embrace associations with a number of participants. This structure comprises: (a) Customer markets which comprises current and potential customers, (b) Current customers who endorses their suppliers organisation to others, (c) “Influence markets which include financial analysts, shareholders, the business press, government and consumer groups”;(d) “Employee markets that are concerned with attracting the right employees” to the business;(e) “Supplier markets that include traditional suppliers as well as organisations with which the business has some form of strategic alliance”; and (f) Internal marketing issues relating to the businesses “internal departments and staff”. “Relationship marketing is a marketing

			orientation that seeks to develop close interactions with selected customers, suppliers and competitors for value creation through cooperative and collaborative efforts”.
<b>Transaction cost economics (economics)</b>	Confirmed that the power of relationships can serve several roles incorporated from a transaction cost viewpoint by means of turning over cunning behaviour, reducing transaction costs and encouraging increased performance based investments.	(Parvatiyar & Sheth 2000:3)	“Relationship marketing is an on-going process of engaging in cooperative and collaborative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to create or enhance mutual economic value, at reduced cost”.
<b>Inter-firm relationship marketing built on social exchange and network theories (sociology)</b>	Incorporated social network theory which advances inter-firm relationship marketing frameworks, suggesting that supplementary to relationship quality, other relational factors (trust and commitment) are vital in appreciating the influence of inter-firm relationships on performance: relationship extent and structure.	(Richey, Skinner & Autry 2007:27)	Relationship marketing viewed as inter-firm associations which positions effective relational exchanges including the formation, growing and maintenance of prosperous B2B relational exchanges.

<p><b>Micro-theory of interpersonal relationships (evolutionary psychology and sociology)</b></p>	<p>Interconnected appreciation, reciprocity models and responsibility, integrated into an ever-changing intrapersonal relationship marketing model built on a quasi-Darwinian view of relations and willing behaviour.</p>	<p>Palmatier (2008:15)</p>	<p>Relationship marketing is viewed as an interpersonal relationship that refers to cohesive appreciation, guiltiness and reciprocity models integrated into an active intrapersonal relationship marketing model.</p>
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**Source: Palmatier (2008:14-15)**

Joshi and Rahman (2015:130) mention that several theories, which denote that individual attitudes on their own do not affect their behaviour; but in fact, other factors that do not only impact individual behaviour do exist, however, the power of attitude-behaviour relationship also does contribute. Several studies Fang, Ng, Wang and Hsu (2017:2); Howell, Shaw and Alvarez (2015:1107) as well as Han, Hsu and Sheu (2010:325), used different forms of classified values–beliefs–attitude–behaviour model proposed by Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagnano and Kalof (1999:81).

The theoretical model of the study is founded on vigorous investigation of the relationship marketing literature and consumer. Taking into account the challenge of establishing long-term B2B relationships, some marketing scholars like Voss et al. (2019:1668), Theron et al. (2013:33), Raciti et al. (2012:616) recommend that for organisations to meaningfully benefit from applying the relationship marketing approach, of key importance is to view relationship building from the customer’s standpoint. This supposition is suitable since relational marketing exchanges epitomizes the paradigm shift, which encourages customer preservation by forming, increasing and upholding resilient customer relationships (Olavarria-Jaraba, Cambra-Fierro & Vazquez-Carrasco 2018:641; Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo & Sese 2015:298; Berry 1983:25).

This study is initiated on the basis of the social exchange theory (SET) popularised by Homans (1958:597), and the relationship marketing theory (RMT) by Palmatier (2008:7-9), supported by prominent theoretic methods of the theory of reasoned action (TRA) popularised by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:20), as well as the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1991:179) as an attempt to predict human behaviour. All these theories form the basis of this study as they have been broadly used in social psychology and relationship marketing studies predicting human behavioural intentions. Research works such as (Kiriakidis 2015:40), have explored these theories by examining the potential mediating and moderating relationship of constructs which this study also examines.

The following sub-sections provide discussions and justification of the applicability of the theories underpinning this study.

### **5.2.1.1 Social exchange theory (SET)**

SET is a wide conceptual paradigm that covers various social science disciplines (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels & Hall 2017:479). Since relationship marketing is based on relational exchanges, the study adopted SET as a framework underpinning the structure of the study to clarify the relationship concerning the dimensions of relationship intentions and relationship quality leading to organisational commitment, and customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase

intentions of concrete products within the construction industry. The stated study constructs are regularly included in relationship-marketing studies that are normally linked to SET, as it commands that throughout the buyer-seller encounter a natural social exchange will take place and an emotional attachment related to the exchange relationship that possibly have loyalty and repurchasing behaviour as the envisaged end result will be displayed (Roberts-Lombard, Mpinganjira & Svensson 2019:4; Kuhn & Mostert 2018:206; Shin, Thai, Grewal & Kim 2017:559).

The theory of interpersonal relations that developed to be known as SET, is founded on the confidence of an individual's own accord to be involved in an exchange relationship with the aim of acquiring value from either a B2C or B2B setting in the relational process (Thibaut & Kelley 1959:12). Thus, SET is well recognised as a basis for building relationships in B2B environments (Voss *et al.* 2019:1668; Schetzle & Drollinger 2014:2; Briggs & Grisaffe 2009:37). Accordingly, SET encourages counter exchange norms, in which the formation of value will be beneficial for both the relational partners (Tanskanen 2015:579).

Therefore, the exchange notion experienced through a sociological lens advocates reciprocal rewards in a perceptible or imperceptible form – used to satisfy needs resulting in certain behaviours. SET also undertakes that throughout the decision making process profits increase and losses reduced, while the social interaction amongst the relational partners is directed by rewards derived from the relationship (Burns 1973:188). Auka (2012:185) states that customers that perceive their relationship as beneficial and rewarding will sustain their association with that supplier. The presence of alternatives and their inclination to continue with the same supplier symbolises their commitment towards their association. Esmailpour and Alizadeh (2014:226) highlight that greater degree of relationship quality will encourage customer's decisions to remain in the relationship with the organisation and form solid relations of being committed to the relationship with increased levels of loyalty.

The fundamental conceptual tool applied to analyse the exchange relationships is the outcome matrix (Thibaut & Kelley 1959:138). This conceptual tool points out that individual behaviours can approve the resultant outcome of each behaviour depending on the other partner's behaviour. The significance of the relational partner's interactions labelled as outcomes, indicate the rewards gained and costs sustained by each partner from executing a certain behaviour. Emerson (1976:336) states that SET proposes “a two-sided, mutually contingent and mutually rewarding process that involves transactions or simply exchange”. It advocates that organisations that benefit from another's actions might feel indebted to do the same by returning the favour (Gilde, Pace,



Pervan & Strong 2011:620). In line with this statement, SET is not initiated on financial rewards alone, but also on observations relating to relative costs and benefits to the partners, previous encounters and its effect on forthcoming relationship satisfaction (Ward & Berno 2011:1557). This suggests that the relational partners' can measure their relationship worth based on their encounter and benefits derived from the exchange relationship.

Ambrose, Anaza and Rutherford (2017:17) echo that the SET principles consists of the exchange interactions resultant in social and economic outcomes, which intensifies commitment to the exchange relationship. Liu et al. (2016:54) coincide that SET advocates the formation of long-term associations, initiated based on personal cost–benefit analysis and valuation of prominent outcomes or opportunities offered by the relationship. Consistent with the latter argument, Lioukas and Reuer (2015:1826, 1829) signify that SET is found to be producing outcomes like for example, trust, commitment and satisfaction, which this study also examines as qualifications of customer loyalty and repurchase intentions. Basically, time in an exchange relationship is a vital factor for SET, since for interactions that raise the essential levels of trust and commitment takes time to occur. Once the social and economic benefits are acceptable, the degree of retaining existing customers and transactions continue and grows. Guo, Gruen and Tang (2015:5) reiterate that it is for such reasons why organisations view both the immaterial and tangible benefits including the cost of participating in an exchange relationship, with a microscopic eye in ensuring that their involvement in an exchange relationship bear fruitful results (Tanskanen 2015:577).

As SET condones two-party individual relations (Coulson, MacLaren, McKenzie & O’Gorman 2014:135, Emerson 1976:335), the concept of long-term buyer-supplier relationship intention in this study is also underpinned in this theory. However, for SET does have limits given that the principal idea is that the flow of resources only carries on when there are valuable returns to both relational partners (Zietsman 2017:1). It must be noted that the strength of social exchanges which warrants consideration is the transformation of individual dyadic relationships converted into inter-group exchanges does not necessarily apply in all relationship situations (Adongo, Kim & Elliot 2019:43). Therefore, SET is criticised that it cannot frame all exchange practices (Coulson *et al.* 2014:134).

Despite the criticisms levelled against this theory, this study argues that there is no reason not to apply SET in an attempt to determine concrete product customer’s perceptions of the dimension of relationship intentions towards their supplier’s relationship quality and commitment, which leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty that encourages repurchase intentions of concrete products in a B2B context. This argument is fundamental in understanding the civil and building

contractors' intentions underpinning their engagement in long-term B2B relationships with their CPMs. SET allow for greater understanding as to why and how civil and building contractors do or would want to participate in long-term B2B relationships.

In addition, several studies of relationship intentions in South Africa applied the SET, although based on a B2C relationship context as discussed in Chapter 1, while other studies undertaken on a B2B setting are profoundly conducted in other countries such as (Nguyen, Thaichon & Thanh 2019:48; Mostert & Luttig 2018:76; Ata & Toker 2012:497). Therefore, the study adopted the view that relational exchanges must be conceptualised along a continuum, wherein, social exchange in its entirety is at the one end of the continuum and the economic exchange on the other.

The consequent sub-section offers a discussion on the relationship marketing theory RMT and its relevance to this study.

### **5.2.1.2 Relationship marketing theory (RMT)**

RMT signifies that to invest time and effort in creating and retaining lifelong relationships with customers is more cost-effective for organisations and their marketing strategies (Voss *et al.* 2019:1669; Morgan & Hunt 1994:20). According to Hunt *et al.* (2006:72) along with Morgan and Hunt (1994:21), the RMT advocates that organisations need to form and uphold long lasting relationships with customers, instead of concentrating on short-term business transactions (Rafiq *et al.* 2013:494). Therefore, only when customers and organisations clearly understand the RMT and its benefits, they may be more convinced to take part in such engagements (Ndubisi *et al.* 2016:373). Corresponding with the SET proposition, RMT also subscribes to the SET view that fostering mutually beneficial relationships with customers potentially result in improved profitability and enhanced competitiveness (Tanskanen 2015:579; Theron *et al.* 2013:35).

Relationship marketing studies give evidence that customers who are long-term oriented tend to be more enthused to exhibit relationship building intends unlike those who are short-term oriented and seek immediate rewards (Abubakar & Mokhtar 2015:469; Mende *et al.* 2013:125). RMT is confirmed to be emphasising a long-term customer-centric approach, which organisations can use by investing their resources towards developing and maintaining lasting relationships, instead of trying to attract new customers in pursuit of profits (Voss *et al.* 2019:1671; Theron & Terblanche 2010:384). A detail discussion on the relationship marketing benefits was given in Chapter 3 (Section 3.8).

Yet, it is also important to realise that RMT advocates that consent to participate in long-term relational exchanges is required from both relational partners (Lin 2013:205). The lifetime value

that customers display, represent their willingness to participate in long-term relationships, and has the propensity of being higher than those with short-term relationship orientation (Lin 2013:205; Kumer *et al.* 2003:678). Such reasons propel organisations to find out whether their customers do or do not have the intention to participate in a long-lasting B2B relationship (Kumar *et al.* 2003:667). Therefore, it is vital to firstly have both the customer's and the organisation's inclination to participate in a long-term relational exchange.

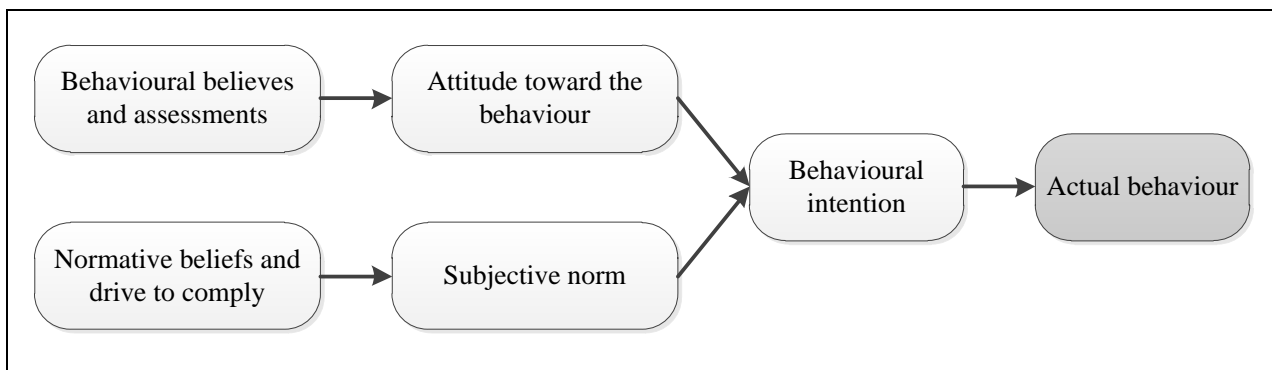
Consequently, it can be mentioned that only organisations which display relationship intends are more likely to react positively towards long-term relationship building tactics, as advocated by the RMT as well as the SET basics (Mende *et al.* 2013:129). In support of the use of the RMT and to acquire sufficient background on the structure of this study, TRA and TPB are also explained as they offer a framework to analyse how individual's perceptions influence their purchasing intentions (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975:334). The following sub-section provides details about the TRA and its relevance to this study.

### **5.2.1.3 Theory of reasoned action (TRA)**

TRA advanced by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:16) is a social psychological ideal that is essentially concerned with deliberately well-ordered individual behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 2010:20). This understanding reiterate the TRA principle that proved to provide a useful model that can clarify and predict individual's actual behaviour (Xiao 2019:3; Kiriakidis 2015:41; Myresten & Setterhall 2015:1). In addition, this theory advocates that individuals' actual behaviour can be established by noting their past behaviour alongside their views for practising a certain given behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein 1977:888). Thus, TRA has been broadly used to describe the effect of attitudes on behavioural intentions (Bian & Forsythe 2012:1443).

Considering that TRA proposes that a person's behaviour is encouraged by their intentions, which are an assessment of their confidence and attitude leading toward a specific norm (Kiriakidis 2015:41; Bhuyan 2011:207). Individuals attitudes towards a certain behaviour in this study symbolises organisation's assessment of either or not to perform in a certain way (Chang & Chin 2011:124; Kim & Cheong 2011:143). The authors reiterate that the intent to perform a specific behaviour is usually associated with the desire to perform such a behaviour. Building on the foundation that an individual's intents envision their behaviour (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975:16), this study contend that customers with high relationship objectives are probable to positively react to the organisation's relational marketing strategies, which could lead to customer loyalty formation (Raciti *et al.* 2013:616; Mende *et al.* 2013:129).

Preceding relationship intention studies coincide with this view and reiterate that customers who display high relationship intentions they are naturally stimulated to partake in and uphold long lasting organisational relationships (Kuhn & Mostert 2018:206; Pelsler & Mostert 2016:29; Camra-Fierro *et al.* 2014:15; Kruger & Mostert 2012:45). This is true and happens as customers' value their relationship due to the emotional bonds developed for the organisation (Kumar *et al.*, 2003:669). Consistent with this assertion, customers that are passionately attached to the organisation, may participate in long-term relationship building strategies and continue patronising their relational partner through repurchasing acts (Vlachos 2012:1563). As pointed out in figure 5.1, the TRA illustrates that the central leading predictor of an individual's conduct is their behavioural objective. The individual's behavioural objective is a component of the attitude they have towards their genuine objective and normative influence (subjective norm) related to the behaviour.



**Figure 5.1: The theory of reasoned action**

**Source: Ajzen & Fishbein (1980:40)**

Figure 5.1 illustrates that attitude concerning a certain behaviour can be described as an individual or organisation's desirable or undesirable feeling in relation to performing an actual behaviour. In other words, customer's long-term relationship building intentional behaviour is a symbol of their attitude towards carrying out a certain behaviour and the organisation's subjective norm linked to engaging in that behaviour. Most of the time, attitudes signify an emotional reaction towards engaging in a specific behaviour and not towards some general defiant object. This attitude is an individual's constructive or undesirable valuation of demonstrating a particular behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005:118). Ajzen and Fishbein (1980:42) mention that the subjective norm is understood as an object of normative belief and the stimulus to follow to the normative belief. Normative belief is described as an important behavioural expectation that individuals or organisations will support or condemn of the other one's behaviour (Chuttur 2009:3; Ajzen & Fishbein 1980:42).

Chuttur (2009:3) argues that one's behavioural intention to act in a certain way can be considered as the extent of their attitude and degree of the subjective norm related with their behaviour. Therefore, the interest to approve or disapprove an individual's act depends on the other one's weakness to act on the commands of the other (Hagger, Chatzisarantis, Barkoukis, Wang & Baranowski 2005:378; Ajzen & Fishbein 1977:890).

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1972:487), TRA was primarily associated with voluntary behaviour and it was improved to better comprehend relations between attitudes, intentions and behaviours. Montaña and Kasprzyk (2002:71) purport that TRA undertakes that the utmost significant direct determining factor of behaviour is behavioural intention. The authors further signify that the achievements of this theory in elucidating behaviour, rest on the degree to which people can display a greater amount of control over the behaviour. It is therefore, acknowledged that individuals' intentions influence their specific behaviour (Caulfield 2011:10).

However, it is not sufficiently evident that the TRA instruments are suitable enough to forecast individual's behaviour, where a large amount of control over that the behaviour can be reduced. Armitage and Conner (2001:472) state that soon after it became obvious that behaviour was not completely voluntary, this led to the model being modified in 1988 by Ajzen. The model was modified to embrace perceived behaviour control and it was then titled the TPB (Caulfield 2011:10; Ajzen 1991:181). Therefore, as this study also examines civil and building contractors' perceived behaviour of dimensions of relationship intentions towards their CPM's relationship quality, this theory is deemed valid to be applied in the study. The subsequent sub-section offers details about the TPB and its relevance to this study.

#### **5.2.1.4 Theory of planned behaviour (TPB)**

Ajzen (1991:181) explains TPB as a cognitive model of human behaviour, wherein the emphasis is on predicting and understanding the individual's logical behaviour. TPB undertakes that attitude concerning a behaviour, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intention (Asare 2015:44). The vital model of Ajzen's (1991) assumes that individuals are probable to execute a certain form of behaviour if they trust that: (a) such a behaviour can lead to outcomes that they value, (b) some could value and support that behaviour and (c) they have the required assets, capabilities and opportunities to execute such behaviour (Lam & Hsu 2006:216).

Ajzen (1991:178) explains that the primary construct of TPB is behavioural intention that influences individual conduct or manners. The secondary construct is attitude concerning the behaviour, which is the degree of intend displayed by an individual on a specific behaviour.

Attitude comprises behavioural beliefs and outcome appraisals. The third construct is subjective norms related to social forces to effect a given behaviour. This constitute a combination of subjective norms, normative beliefs and the encouragement to conform. In addition, TPB provides one more element as a determining factor of individual behaviour - perceived behavioural control (Ajzen 1991:179).

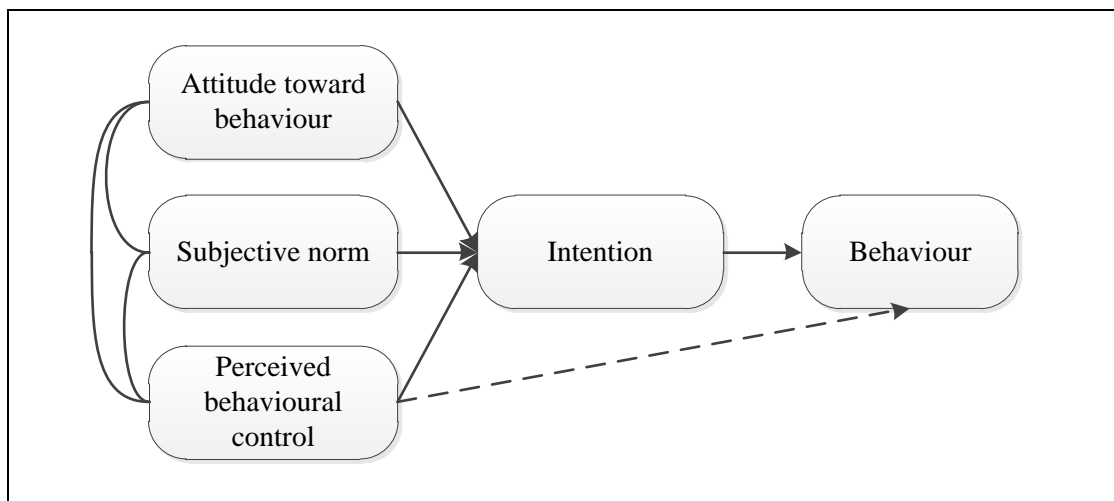
This is the behavioural control that an individual has over one's buying behaviour. Ajzen (1991:181) states that the principal behavioural prediction is an individual's intentions, since people tend to follow their feelings in displaying certain behavioural patterns. Kim and Cheong (2011:143) put it succinctly that, individual intentions are stimulated by their attitudes and perceptions of control over a certain behaviour. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:16), operationalised intentions as the possibility to display or perform an act. Therefore, the TPB generally pursues to deal with actions over which objects do not have comprehensive desired control. The TRA was thus modified to TPB as its extension with the intention of compensating for the confines of the TRA.

Like with TRA, the TPB depends upon the supposition that people are sensible and that they openly cogitate the significance of their actions. Consistent with this, TPB recommends that intentions to execute a certain behaviour is the most important element of that action (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005:118). Joshi and Rahman (2015:130) is of the view that the TPB does not clearly explain customer's decision-making processes throughout the purchasing act, and if they would procure again from the same organisation (post-purchase behaviour), even though it looks at the qualifications of customer intentions in pre-consumption conditions.

Furthermore, the adjustment of the TRA was enthused by the fact that individuals' logical reasoning component may be determined through their reaction or interpretation of their surroundings, or something that a person believes in (Olusoga, Fasanmi & Olubunmi 2018:3). TRA and the TPB both concentrate on hypothetical concepts concerned with the individual's reasons as elements of the probability of carrying out a particular behaviour. Both theories undertake that the greatest interpreter of a behaviour is behavioural intention, validated by attitudes and social normative observations (Montaño & Kasprzyk 2002:68; Fishbein & Ajzen 1975:16). Therefore, this supports the hypotheses development of a study and permits measurements as well as their observations by means of value assignment to the study factors.

Maddux (1995:68) have suggested that some adjustments to the TPB are needed to reduce its boundaries. A better approach would be to attempt to incorporate key features of the relevant models into one integrated model. These adjustments could assist in clarifying the motives behind

perceived attitude-behaviour discrepancies in the framework of long-term B2B relationship building intention within the concrete product environment. Figure 5.2 illustrates the model of the TPB.



**Figure 5.2: The theory of planned behaviour**

**Source: Caulfield (2011:12)**

Figure 5.2 illustrate the process of TPB focusing on a more differentiated set of descriptive factors found to be formed after a buying experience (Mosavi & Ghaedi 2012:163; De Cannière *et al.* 2009:83; Ajzen 1991:181). Attitudes, perceived behavioural control and subjective norms are given as three variables projecting a person’s behavioural intention. This suggest that individual intentions embrace stimulating details that influence their specific behavioural patterns (Caulfield 2011:10), which advocates that individual’s intention to act in a specific way is an instant determining factor of that action (Ajzen & Fishbein 1980:5). Consequently, it can be reasoned that individual’s intentions form their truthful behavioural actions (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975:16).

Kumar *et al.* (2003:665) mention that individuals’ relationship intentions encompass distinct dimensions modelled as (involvement), drawn from the involvement theory introduced by Astin (1984:297); (expectations), drawn from the expectation-disconfirmation theory advanced as explaining customer decision-making process by Oliver (1980:460); (feedback), drawn from Ilgen, Fisher and Taylor’s (1979:349) model referring to feedback as a distinct occurrence of communication practices including a source (the sender) and a destination (the recipient) (Kio 2015:135); (forgiveness), drawn from a starting point that at its foundation it is a motivational construct that is prosocial (McCullough 2000:44); (fear of relationship loss), which stems from customer’s concerns linked to loss of benefits from the relationship (Kumar *et al.* 2003:667).

As discussed in Chapter 4 Section 4.3, sub-sections 4.3.1.6 to 4.3.1.8, three constructs added as dimensions of relationship intention in this study; (trust) drawn from Morgan and Hunt's (1994:20) commitment-trust theory; (flexibility) drawn from the cognitive flexibility theory by Spiro and Jehng (1990:163); as well as (information sharing) that stems from information sharing theory by Constant, Kiesler and Sproull (1994:400), were incorporated in the study model to form part of the dimensions of relationship intention. These constructs are viewed as prominent measures of relationship intentions in predicting their effect towards the relationship-marketing concept. Furthermore, to improve the internal and external validity of the study, and to increase its feasibility and to eliminate any potential ethical concerns.

The mediating constructs set up as (relationship quality, commitment and satisfaction), leading to the outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intention) are built on investigations discussed in Chapter 4 Sections 4.4 to 4.8. Numerous authors declare that various features of relationship quality are recognised and trust, satisfaction and commitment are considered as key features of this construct (De Canniere, De Pelsmacker & Geuens 2008:5; Ulaga & Eggert 2006:314). Thus, relationship quality is also grounded in the RMT and considered a multidimensional meta-construct that involves numerous features that mirror the nature of associations amongst customers and their supplier organisations (Balla *et al.* 2015:2; Hennig-Thurau *et al.* 2002:234).

Blau (1968:452) as well as Thibaut and Kelley (1959:12) mention that commitment remained fundamental in the social exchange literature. The affective commitment by customers relates to stronger organisational behaviour (Fasanmi 2018:18). The greater the level of organisational behaviour by customers, the more committed to the organisation they will be and less likely to switch to other organisations (Morgan & Hunt 1994:20). The authors emphasise that the existence of commitment amongst the relational partners, is essential to effective relationship marketing. Subsequently, brings about loyalty and favourable acts of repurchasing behaviour, which would be conducive for the relationship's success as both the relational partners will be satisfied with their relationship.

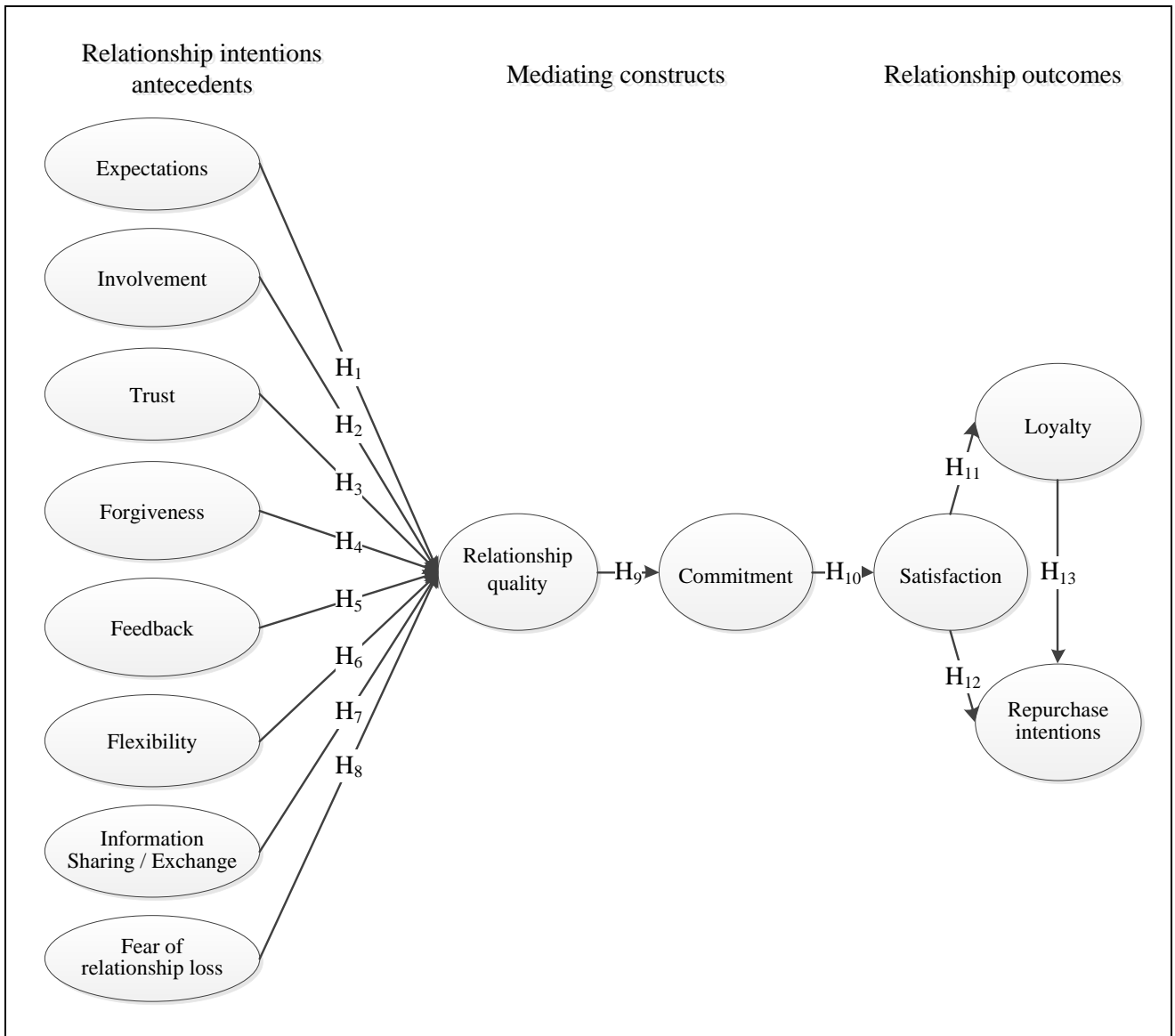
Consistent with the TPB, the proposed study model suggests that the civil and building contractor's (customers) attitude towards their concrete product supplier's relationship marketing efforts, subjective norms (pressure from competition and customers), and behavioural control (management sustenance and accessibility of resources) will affect their customers' behavioural intentions to start or continue patronising their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers. Therefore, the TPB is also deemed relevant for use in this study.

The subsequent section presents deliberations on the conceptual model proposed for this study.



### 5.3 CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL

A conceptual model is an illustration of a system made by perceptions used to assist in recognising and appreciating a subject represented by the study model (Fakhimi, Mustafee, Stergioulas 2015:1585). Figure 5.3 demonstrates the conceptual model portraying how the constructs proposed for this study relate to each other.



**Figure 5.3: Conceptual research model for this study**

**Source: Author's own compilation**

Taking from Figure 5.3, the relationship between all dimensions of relationship intention and the relationship quality construct, are shown and predicted to be having a significant relationship. In addition, the relationship between the following factors; relationship quality and commitment construct suggested by Morgan and Hunt (1994:20) is shown. The relationship between

commitment and satisfaction supported by Zeithaml et al. (2009:109) is presented, including the relationship amongst satisfaction and loyalty construct supported by Antón, Camarero and Laguna-García (2017:2) and Fornell, Rust and Dekimpe (2010:29). Furthermore, the relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intention construct supported by Kellar and Preis (2011:11) is offered. Lastly, the relationship between loyalty as well as repurchase intentions supported by Yoo and Bai (2013:166) is also shown in the proposed study model.

The main constructs from the study's conceptual model and their hypothetical relationships are discussed in the next section.

### **5.3.1 The interrelationship of constructs**

Hypotheses are assertions of circumstance yet to be verified. This study tests the hypotheses consistent with the commendations of Morgan et al. (2015:273). This is done noting that no empirical investigation has been done on customer relationship intentions in the concrete product environment of the South African construction industry. This study proposes that customer loyalty and repurchase intention are outcomes of customer satisfaction following their supplier's relationship quality and commitment towards their relationship. From the discussion on the dimensions of relationship intentions Chapter 4, it becomes clear that in terms of customers' relationship intention intensities, their views will differ based on the variables used to determine their long-term relationship goals (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670).

The following sub-section offers an outline of the literature supporting the existence of interrelationship amongst the dimensions of relationship intentions and the relationship-marketing constructs. The research hypotheses measured in the empirical section of this study are presented.

#### **5.3.1.1 Relationship between expectations and relationship quality**

Customer expectations point out their ruling on the degree of product and relationship quality experienced when dealing with supplier organisations (Esbjerg, Jensen, Bech-Larsen, de Barcellos, Boztug & Grunert 2012:446). Customers grow relationship quality with organisations as they “want to”, “ought to”, and “have to” be content with their relationship and have no better substitutions, since they invested greatly in such a relationship (Sornsri 2018:45). For example, in the concrete product environment, concrete product users would expect that concrete product suppliers must deliver good quality products and services, to gain or depict their good reputation in the marketplace. If concrete product suppliers successfully live up to customers' expectations, this will likely result in customers having a positive long-term relationship building intention with the concrete product supplier.

Positive expectations usually benefit the relationship quality (Lemay & Venaglia 2016:4). Several studies support the view that relationships between customer expectations and the organisation's relationship quality does exist (Sornsri 2018:45; Bojel *et al.* 2013:176). Therefore, relationship quality plays a crucial role on the concrete product customer's expectation of future interactions with for example, their concrete product organisation's sales personnel or representatives (Crosby, Evans & Cowles 1990:68). It can accordingly be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The expectations that civil and building contractors hold of the concrete product manufacturer-suppliers will positively impact the relationship quality between them*

### **5.3.1.2 Relationship between involvement and relationship quality**

Involvement is the extent to which customers would on purpose take part in the organisation's relational activities without being forced or intimidated (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). When customers are engaged with the organisation, they willingly take part in the events connected with that organisation (Ashley *et al.* 2011:755; Baker *et al.* 2009:116). Vesel and Zabkar (2010:1336) add that considering the significance of customer involvement to relationship quality, issues such as loyalty programmes quality, personal interaction quality between the personnel from the organisations and customers must take a central stage in ensuring customer commitment.

Dagger and David (2012:450) opine that because customers that are involved with their organisation's activities participate eagerly in events that relate to matters of personal significance, therefore organisations must make sure that their customers are involved in their operations as that might positively impact on their decision-making processes. Consequently, one can reason that involved customers reveal their relationship intentions towards their organisation. As a result, it becomes easier to develop close ties with such customers, as they display the will to get involved in long-term business relationships through such engagements (Kruger & Mostert 2012:42). However, the level of relationship quality presented by the organisation as perceived by the customers plays a crucial role for the continued success of such a relationship. Several other studies support the view that relationships between customer involvement and the organisation's relationship quality does exist (Kruger & Mostert 2012:42; Ashley *et al.* 2011:755; Vesel & Zabkar 2010:1336). Therefore, it is hypothesised that:

*H<sub>2</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractors' involvement with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

### **5.3.1.3 Relationship between forgiveness and relationship quality**

Lemay and Venaglia (2016:57) state that encouraging relationship prospects seem to promote forgiveness. People ponder on “exploitation risk” in their determination of whether to pardon a wrongdoer, with an expectation that the wrongdoer will not commit further damaging acts in the future (Burnette, McCullough, Van Tongeren & Davis 2012:345). As a result, the probability of forgiveness is expected to be less with the rise of perceived risk that the level of compassion will be misused by the offender even in the future (Lemay & Venaglia 2016:4).

Supporting this view, Burnette et al. (2012:348) as well as Koutsos, Wertheim and Kornblum (2008:340) found that the relational partners who expected their associates to continue with damaging acts, showed less forgiveness to their associates. These findings suggest that positive relationship expectations, which is the belief that wrongdoers will stop their wrongdoings and improve their behaviour promotes forgiveness. Other studies that support the view that relationships between customer forgiveness and the organisation’s relationship quality do exist are (Kuhn & Mostert 2018:206; Kim *et al.* 2012:59; Fehr, Gelfand & Nag 2010:894). It can in view of that be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractors’ forgiveness with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

### **5.3.1.4 Relationship between feedback and relationship quality**

Ndubisi and Wah (2005:545) define feedback as the capability to provide in an opportune time and truthful information to a counterpart. This is a process of communication by customers, either in an encouraging or damaging way depending on the degree of their relationship and opportunities exhibited by the organisation (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). From the literature, several features appeared as imperatives to bear in mind with a vision to promote feedback (Liu & Mattila 2015:213; Lacey 2012:139; Kim, Ko & James 2011:566; Lin, Wang & Chang 2011:529; Blanchard, Ballard & Finch 2005:27).

Feedback by customers is essential for supporting and developing the relationship since that lays the foundations to express or lodge complaints, proposals or recommendations (Richey, Roath, Whipple & Fawcett 2010:237). Customers tend to provide feedback on a regular basis when they feel self-reliant that their grievances or proposals will be dealt with. This is important to organisations to constantly advance product and service offerings as well as high quality relationship by taking from customer feedback.

Also, this suggest that depending on the modes of communication set by the organisation to get regular feedback from customers, the feasibility of the procedure put in place to facilitate feedback permits organisation to serve its customers with quality product and services, in pursuit of higher relationship quality. Several empirical studies found that relationship quality encourages positive feedback in disappointing situations (Sornsri 2018:41; 2015:45; Dowden, Pittaway, Yost & McCarthy 2013:349; Kim *et al.* 2011:566; Lin *et al.* 2011:530). Consequently, it can be hypothesised that:

*H4: The relationship between civil and building contractors' feedback with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

#### **5.3.1.5 Relationship between fear of relationship loss and relationship quality**

Once a relationship grows customers tend to find security and comfort in such a relationship. The relational ties that customers appreciate from dealing with the organisation, generate switching impediments as customers compare the significance of ending their association to the benefits they ought to lose when they terminate the relationship (Spake & Megehee 2010:316). Customers, who fear to lose their business relationship with their supplier, are more likely to be concerned with the penalties of losing their investments (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). Accordingly, it can be hypothesised that:

*H5: The relationship between civil and building contractors' fear of relationship loss with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

#### **5.3.1.6 Relationship between trust and relationship quality**

Trust symbolises the willingness of the relational partners to take risks by being open to the other party in a business relationship building process (Alhabash, Jiang, Brooks, Rifon, LaRose & Cotten 2015:149). When customers have faith towards an organisation and believe that their needs will be successfully met by a credible and experienced organisation, their level of trust increases (van Vuuren *et al.* 2012:82).

According to Karimi, Sanayei & Moshrefjavadi (2011:10), offering customers with consistent and high-quality products and services, organisations are inclined to develop customer trustworthiness, which will ensure their relationship continuity (Hutchinson, Wellington, Saad & Cox 2011:466). Consequently, customers become satisfied and gain greater trust with their supplier built on the nature of the relationship as well as product quality displayed by their supplier organisation.

A couple of empirical studies found that a relationship does exist among customer trust and organisation's relationship quality, which encourages long-term relationship building intentions (Wang, Lu & Feng 2019:3; Fang, Shao & Wen 2016:1205; Espejel, Fandos & Flavián 2011:210; Vesel & Zabkar 2010:213). Therefore, the study formulates the subsequent hypotheses:

*H<sub>6</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractors' trust with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

### **5.3.1.7 Relationship between flexibility and relationship quality**

According to Richey, Adams and Dalela (2012:34), relationship flexibility expresses mutual expectancy of willingness in an exchange relationship, to adjust or alter operations to suite customer requirements through new information without lobbying on a sequence of new contracts and renegotiations. Thus, for organisations to be flexible towards their customers' requirements denotes to the capability of their system to acclimatise or adapt in dynamic environments (Ivanov *et al.* 2018:3359).

In the context of this study, flexibility is a management tool that the relational partners must use in adjusting their operations such as product standardisation and response time to unanticipated variabilities in pricing and changes in site requirements when they arise. Flexibility is a crucial competency that inspires an organisation's capability to render distribution services of outstanding quality with reference to convenience, timeliness and physical conditions of products, which sequentially can bring about greater levels of key account customer satisfaction (Yu *et al.* 2017:212; Ishak 2016:7). Rexhausen, Pibernikand Kaiser (2012:269) state that in pursuit of customer loyalty and retention, organisations can look at adjusting a couple of its undertakings such as factory warehouse capacity in relation to its location, size, resources, technology and mechanising.

Furthermore, they may consider improving accessibility of products, fine-tuning delivery schedules in transportation routes and pushing out loads, which may permit shorter delivery times. Such an exercise might be viewed as outstanding levels of relationship quality by customers.

This submit that advanced levels of distribution flexibility for example, could permit organisations to serve its customers with quality products and services, in pursued of higher relationship quality. Several other studies found that a relationship exist between organisational flexibility and relationship quality (Han, Sung & Shim 2014:2115; Yu *et al.* 2012:1203). Therefore, the study formulates these hypotheses:

*H<sub>7</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractors' flexibility with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

### **5.3.1.8 Relationship between information sharing/exchange and relationship quality**

Information sharing is the amalgamation of business operations management, business processes, information systems and decisions systems employed to conduct information searches, monitor business details and make other business actions (Hsu *et al.* 2008:298). Luu, Ngo and Cadeaux (2018:165) argue that the magnitude of information being exchanged, may root out supply chain ineffectiveness and have a direct positive consequence on the relationship quality among the relational partners. In other words, information exchange is a proper and informal sharing of significant and appropriate information amongst the relational partners for a successful continued relationship (Anderson & Narus 1990:42).

Bordonaba-Juste and Polo-Redondo (2008:71) stress that information exchange amongst organisations is a vital mechanism in managing organisational relationship quality. The capability to access information from customers could offer organisations unlimited opportunities. Mafundu and Mafini (2019:2) posit that the required information could enable organisations particularly in the South African construction industry to turn their operational outcomes around. When supplementary information is shared, organisations can cash in on the amplified prominence to adjust or adapt current actions or strategies for upcoming activities. Other studies support the view that a relationship amongst customer information sharing/exchange and the organisation's level of relationship quality do exist (Luu *et al.* 2018:165; Sarmiento, Simões & Farhangmehr 2015:133). Following this discussion, it can be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>8</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractors' information sharing/exchange with their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their relationship quality*

### **5.3.1.9 Relationship between relationship quality and commitment**

Relationship quality denotes to the strength of the relationship (Palmatier *et al.* 2006:138). According to Tehubijuluw (2015:381), relationship quality is the development of a customised, one-to-one relationship between buyers and their supplier organisations that gradually develop and both learn about each other over a period time. Wang *et al.* (2019:4) highlight that from a behaviour standpoint, commitment is an act of beginning and preserving progressive long-term relationships and forfeiting temporary profits in an exchange relationship with the aim of gaining long-term profits. In this study, relationship quality denotes to civil and building contractor's

perceptions and evaluations of how well their CPMs satisfies their expectations, objectives, desires and needs regarding their concrete product requirements.

In an examination of relationship quality between organisations and customers, a significant impact on customers' willingness to spread positive impression and review about the organisation and its offerings was found (Purnasaria, Yuliando, Guritno, Schlich & Pawelzik 2015:149; Purnasaria & Yuliandoa 2015:152). Furthermore, the authors found that the attitude portrayed by the customers toward their organisation influenced them to commit to the relationship, as customers were found to be satisfied with the organisation and its contributions. Aurier and N'Goala (2010:309) state that customers tend to continue with the relationship as they felt that their needs and expectations were satisfactorily met.

Anderson and Weitz (1989:310) echo that from attitude standpoint, commitment is the relational partner's attitude to develop and maintain a long-term relational exchange. When acceptable levels of commitment are presented, willingly the relational partners will establish a reliable business relationship and eliminate possible relationship termination. An infinite extent of commitment is therefore required for prosperous cooperation. Previous studies such as Ngcwangu, Vibetti and Roberson (2018:1); Purnasaria and Yuliando (2015:149); Čater and Čater (2010:1321), also found that between relationship quality and commitment construct a relationship does exist. Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

*H<sub>9</sub>: The relationship between concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality with their civil and building contractor's will positively impact their commitment*

### **5.3.1.10 Relationship between commitment and satisfaction**

Commitment is an important element of close relationships in B2B marketing (Chang, Wang, Chih & Tsai 2012:940). Sung and Choi (2010:1051) refer to commitment as the relational companion's readiness to form a longstanding relationship with another. Schmiedel, Vom Brocke & Recker (2013:292) posit that commitment is the desire and determination process of contributing to the accomplishment of relationship objectives.

For this study, organisational commitment is viewed as an essential component in the quest to secure long-term B2B relationships. Taking from the behavioural commitment seminal work of Salancik (1977:1), this study argues that organisational commitment is influenced by the attachment displayed by the supplier on their own free will, perceived responsibility to see the affective action through and the perceived costs of continuing the relation. This study refers to commitment as the CPM manager's attitude towards their relationship with concrete product



customers and the efforts placed to their association in the quest to increase their customer's repurchase behaviour (Keiningham *et al.* 2017:152; Sarmiento *et al.* 2015:133; Wu *et al.* 2012:1760).

Correspondingly, the degree of the customers' commitment will be subjected to the customer's view of the extent of the determination that organisations put in the relationship (Human & Naudé 2014:921). The higher the extent of commitment in relational exchanges, the more the organisation profit (Kaur, Sharma & Mahajan 2012:285). The greater the extend of customer satisfaction and customer trust towards the relational partner, the greater the degree of relationship commitment (Espejel *et al.* 2011:205). In this theoretical lens, CPM's behaviour crafts situations through which their emotional state of commitment to a relationship with their customers is achieved. Consequently, a high level of commitment would offer better levels of satisfaction in the relationship.

However, satisfaction will be stimulated only if both the relational partners are completely committed to the relationship (Fullerton 2011:95). Commitment can be seen as an element of customer satisfaction, as true commitment is demonstrated by the proactiveness of the relational partners in taking steps to form and maintain their relationship. By so doing, the relational partners will experience escalated levels of satisfaction. Nyaga, Whipple & Lynch (2010:102) support this assertion by stating that commitment is a significant constituent of successful relationships. Previous studies such as (Samudro, Sumarwan, Simanjuntak & Yusuf 2019:117; Roberts-Lombard *et al.* 2019:4; Su, Swanson, Chinchachokchai, Hsu & Chen 2016:3261; Chiu, Kwag & Bae 2015:627; Akman & Yörür 2012:217), established that a relationship between satisfaction and commitment does exist. Following this discussion, it can be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>10</sub>: The relationship between concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment to civil and building contractors will positively impact their satisfaction*

### **5.3.1.11 Relationship between satisfaction and loyalty**

Several earlier relationship intention studies found that satisfaction is an element related and affects loyalty and repurchase intentions (Shin *et al.* 2017:559; Hannan, Suharjo, Kirbrandoko & Nurmalina 2017:346; Ramaseshan, Wirtz & Georgi 2017:691). Madjid (2013:49) state that, in developing and maintaining long-term B2B customer loyalty, organisations must make sure that they satisfy their customers. Huang *et al.* (2019:1458) and Gures, Arslan and Tun (2014:72), state that customer satisfaction is important as it influences loyalty by means of progressive effect on positive recommendations, price tolerance and repurchase intention.

Dong, Ding, Grewal and Zhao (2011:38) as well as Dagger and O'Brien (2010:1534) further emphasise that loyalty comes as a consequence of customer increased satisfaction, self-assurance and commitment towards the relationship with the purpose of ensuring continued patronage (Raza & Rehman 2012:5085). The main inspiration for the growing importance of customer satisfaction is to guarantee that customer satisfaction is not over exaggerated, because higher customer pleasure, leads to robust competitive positions, higher market shares and higher profitability (Fornell 1992:7).

Against this backdrop, one can argue that it is advisable for product supplier to form exchange relations with customers who show high relationship intents, as organisations can better satisfy their customers and harness their loyalty with the intention of retaining their support. Correspondingly Cant and Erdis (2012:938) maintain that satisfaction is significant because it forms the basis of longstanding customer relationships, ensuing in trustworthiness and retention. Preceding studies that corroborated the presence of a relationship between satisfaction and loyalty that eventually lead to increased profitability includes amongst others (Huang *et al.* 2019:1452; Ruiz-Martínez, Frassetto & Gil-Saura 2019:1866; Lee, Kang & Kang 2019:232; Ngoma & Ntale 2019:6; Rizan, Warokka & Listyawati 2014:8). Accordingly, it can be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>11</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction to their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers will positively impact their loyalty*

### **5.3.1.12 Relationship between satisfaction and repurchase intention**

As the satisfaction-repurchase intention relationship is recommended to be one key factor describing consumption behaviour/loyalty and repurchase intention (Deng, Lu, Wei & Zhang 2009:289), in which positive relationship amongst satisfaction/attitude and loyalty/repurchase intention is frequently proposed. Measuring customer satisfaction and repurchase intention has become a key factor to managers and researchers in the quest towards business performance enhancement (Pappas, Pateli, Giannakos & Chrissikopoulos 2014:187; Lee, Choi & Kang 2009:7848).

The prominence of customer satisfaction is thus unparalleled as it exceedingly impacts continuous customers repurchase intentions (Fitzgerald & Bias 2016:638; Arokiasamy 2013:14). This statement is true as it gains strength from other studies such as (Bolton & Christopher 2014:17; Yeung *et al.* 2013:406). Although even with the theoretical support to this view, Reichheld (1996a:28) claim that switching rates of customers are high even among the hugely satisfied customers. Previous studies such as (Anha, Diem, Cam & Viet 2020:532; Blut, Frennea, Mittal &

Mothersbaugh 2015:226; Balla *et al.* 2015:6; Kellar & Preis 2011:11; Dong *et al.* 2011:38), found that a relationship does exist between the two constructs. Accordingly, it can be hypothesised that:

*H<sub>12</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction to their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers will positively impact their repurchase intentions*

### **5.3.1.13 Relationship between loyalty and repurchase intentions**

Loyalty is “a psychological character formed by sustained satisfaction of the customer coupled with emotional attachment formed with the service provider that leads to a state of willingly and consistently being in the relationship with preference, patronage and premium” (Youcef, Djelloul & Abderrezak 2015:1). Loyalty lead to progressive approaches such as repeat purchases and whole-hearted recommendations, which could influence other potential customers (Ngoma & Ntale 2019:3). When customers are willing to continue supporting their supplier organisation, they are may be loyal and not switch to alternative suppliers (Peppers & Rogers 2011:141).

Kim and Kim (2009:486) recommend that because it is too costly to attract new customers and not only the cost of nurturing newly acquired customers is five times more expensive. It costs six to seven times more to appeal to new ones (Yoo & Bai 2013:166). It is therefore, advisable for organisations to retain their old customers, as profitability would also grow as much as 25% to 85% with 5% increase in retention rate (Reichheld & Sasser 1990:105). This happens as loyal customers have a tendency of making greater volume of purchases in a form of rapid repeat purchases, and less likely switch to alternative suppliers, but drive more customers towards the repurchasing of the organisation's offerings (Yoo & Bai 2013:167). Therefore, retaining loyal customers should be an important focus to organisations.

Accordingly, Anha *et al.* (2020:533) contend that repurchase intention variable can be considered as one crucial relationship-marketing outcome intended at enhancing organisations long-term goals. Previous studies such as (Prayag 2012:1; Curtis *et al.* 2011:1; Čater & Čater 2010:1321), established that a relationship between customer loyalty and repurchasing intention exist and therefore this study hypothesised that:

*H<sub>13</sub>: The relationship between civil and building contractor's loyalty to their concrete product manufacturer-supplier will positively impact their repurchase intentions*

## 5.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is seemingly evident that relationship intention behaviour by customers involves a variety of elements amongst them and the organisational foundations. Any conceptual framework that does not consider both elements in its effort to appreciate customer relationship intention behaviour in a B2B context can be considered inadequate. An integrative framework in aggregation with theories on individual decision-making processes in relationship marketing strategies, implementation behaviour it is suggested since it offers a more all-inclusive representation of customer relationship intention behaviour.

Consistent with its objectives, this study has presented and combined the conceptual framework that groups RMT and SET framework with TRA and TPB to improve an understanding on factors that impact the application of long-term B2B relationship strategies in the concrete product environment, within the construction industry. The framework also underscores the ever-changing and reciprocated effect of technical and individual essentials of relationship intention behaviour by customers. The examination of the literature assisted with the establishment of the hypothetical relations amongst the study constructs used in the theoretical framework.

The study proposed 13 hypotheses to examine the dimensions of concrete product user's B2B relational exchange intentions towards their concrete product suppliers. As discussed in this chapter, the next discussion on the research design and methodology followed in this study is provided in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter provided discussions on the theoretical underpinnings of this study. An understanding of various theories grounding this study was provided. Clarity with respect to the research hypotheses and the suggested theoretical model were given. Following the conceptualisation and development of the hypothesised study model, pertinent relationships among the study constructs were presented.

The aim of this chapter is to outline the study's research design and methodology. Philosophical underpinnings which guide the study are discussed. The research design and methodology applied to address the study research objectives and the posited hypotheses are presented thereafter. Finally, this chapter sets out the sampling procedures followed, concluding with discussions on statistical techniques applied to examine the data. The following section pronounces the research philosophy and outlines the methodology of this study.

#### **6.2 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS AND RESEARCH PARADIGMS**

Research studies are conducted within a philosophical assumption led by beliefs and views about how the world should be appreciated (Ritchie 2013:257; Denzin & Lincoln 2011:97). An understanding of a research philosophy assists to identify an appropriate research design method to be used in the subject of investigation. Thus, any systematic research study begins with a choice of a research philosophy appropriate for a research project (Birks 2014:17). According to Birks (2014:18), research philosophy may well be described as “a view of the world encompassing the questions and mechanisms for finding answers that inform that view”.

Mora, Gelman, Steenkamp & Raisinghani (2012:47) state that the philosophical viewpoint of the study as to the way data will be collected and analysed, should provide the primary paradigm within which the operationalisation and design of the research method must be planned. Accordingly, concerted efforts must be specified to philosophical assumptions underpinning any investigation, as they influence the research methods used and the investigation processes employed in data collection, interpretation and analysis.

A set of philosophical assumptions that each study embraces around the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), and the human nature (axiology), are reflected by the methods the study chooses to follow – either meaningfully or innocently, deliberately or instinctively (Khan 2014:225; Mertens 2010:10). Ontology alludes to the existing physiognomies of knowledge, which resonances beliefs about what exists and outlines the behaviours or sense of being (Collins 2010:36; Niglas, Kaipainen & Kippar 2008:176). In short, ontology provides the structural framework for the underlying database (Biernacki *et al.* 2017:2764). In contrast, epistemology is mainly associated with foundations of reality and fundamentally; it focuses on the relationship concerning the research inquiry and the known (Dainty 2008:3). Conversely, axiology ponders on the influence of values and beliefs, while the methodology emphasises on the background of the inquiry and whether it can be protracted from a particular situation in a different environment (Wahyuni 2012:70).

Mora *et al.* (2012:47) point out that the philosophical viewpoint of the study, should provide the primary paradigm within which the operationalisation and the design of the research method must be planned. Paradigms emphasise what represents the truth for answering research questions or solving research problems, by using different methods with the objective of understanding the shared meaning amongst the research participants (Panhwar, Ansari & Shah 2017:253; Morgan 2015:789). Theoretically, research paradigms signify a set of hypothetical norms as well as views that channel an implementation of a research study (Jonker & Pennink 2010:29). The principal research paradigms which direct modern literature include positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, interpretivism, pragmatism, phenomenology and postmodernism (Atkinson 2017:29; Gratton & Jones 2010:23, 26; Creswell 2009:6, 16).

The post-positivism paradigm is of relevance to this study. Since positivism is epistemologically deterministic, materialistic and bound by an ontology of naïve realism or common sense, post-positivism corrects positivism by presuming essential limits in the attainment of knowledge (Guba & Lincoln 1994:110). This suggests that post-positivism recognises that natural fluctuations cripples' positivism. Therefore, the ontological realism of post-positivism is vital and gaining knowledge thereof is imperfect (McMillan & Schumacher 2010:4). As a result, the post-positivism is a suitable paradigm deemed fit to provide relevant responses to the research hypothesis and to verify the proposed study model (Panhwar *et al.*, 2017:253).

The post-positivist assumptions have epitomised the traditional research methods and such norms hold more truth for quantitative research methods compared to qualitative research approaches

(Creswell 2014:36). Post-positivism originates from an ontological standpoint of the worldview that focuses on material reality that can be practically measured (Atkinson 2017:29; Mertens 2010:10). It is for this reason, Panhwar et al. (2017:253-254) resonate that post-positivism can be regarded as an approach that attempts to use the natural science model of research to social research as the beginning for investigating social wonders and to explain the social world. Aliyu, Bello, Kasim and Martin (2014:83) reiterate that the post-positivist paradigm highlights that sincere, real and factual behaviours can be systematically investigated and could be explained by means of clear and rational investigations and analysis.

Post-positivism is also viewed as an expansion of positivism because it portrays the rationale behind positivism, testing the old-fashioned belief of unqualified and unbiased truth of understanding in the social sciences (Creswell 2014:36; 2009:6). A positivist researcher chooses to operate with an apparent social reality; of which such an approach would yield generalisations comparable to those created by natural scientists. Positivists believe that meanings can be practical and measured to determine the rules and laws of the universe; while post-positivists admit that limitations in meaning-making render such goals impossible and as such, they instead focus on demonstrations (Atkinson 2017:29). Teddlie and Johnson (2009:68) posit that the use of post-positivism moved to the advancement of alternative perspectives due to limitations of positivism, and the dissatisfaction with this paradigm and post-positivists' mechanism gained credibility within the space of social science.

To provide a post-positivism paradigm with vigour as the method followed by this study, the interpretivism paradigm is also incorporated. The interpretive paradigm is also termed the phenomenological approach aimed at understanding people and their behaviour (Cal & Tehmarn 2016:9; Babbie & Mouton 2010:28). The purpose of interpretive research is to appreciate social arrangements and interpret the day-to-day human experiences and values attached by people to this phenomenon (Rubin & Babbie 2011:37; Collis & Hussey 2009:57). Babbie and Mouton (2010:29) add that people on a continuous basis give meaning, define, understand, create and justify their daily actions. Therefore, interpretivists hold that social reality is subjective to the perceptions and values attached by the research respondents' and the voice of the researcher.

The reason behind the use of a post-positivists and interpretivism lie in the fact that human interests not only stimulate their way of doing things but also influence the way the world is being examined and how facts are being made (Blumberg *et al.* 2011:18). Additionally, this study had to investigate methods of personal interpretation, recognising the interests, beliefs, values, intentions,

motives, meaning-making and perceptions of the study members (Blumberg *et al.* 2011:18). Finally, in using the post-positivist paradigm for the current study, the deductive instead of inductive research approach was used to discover clarifications for the phenomenon considered (Creswell 2009:11).

Barton (2019) and Gabriel (2013) mention that the distinction between the inductive as well as deductive approaches is that when the deductive approach is intended to test theory, the former approach focuses on new theoretical development. The strong deductive approach dictates that the study is initiated with an open mind, free of preconceived ideas as to what will be found. The deductive logic necessitates articulating the theory and describing the hypotheses. The rationale begins with an identified base of theoretical knowledge, thereafter, specifies a solution to the research problem or question (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:44).

The following section alludes to the study's research design for the data collection procedure employed in this study.

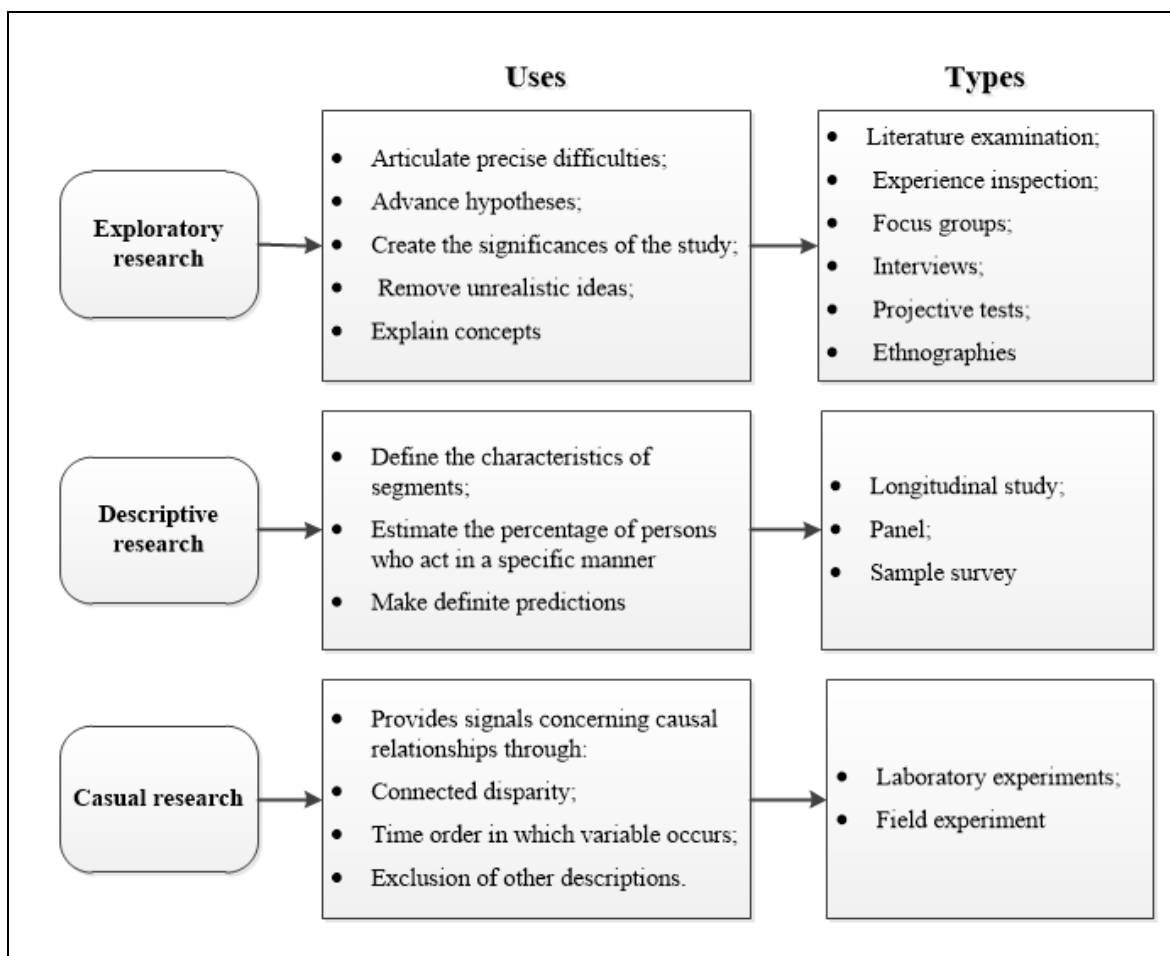
### **6.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Evaluating the quality of social research without providing sufficient information on the research design of the study can be problematic for researchers (St. John, Keane, Jones & Milner-Gulland 2014:1479). It is for this reason that after the hypothesis has been formulated, a researcher must choose a suitable research design to guide the research study (Hair, Bush & Orinau 2008:32). Research design is an outline or strategy used to direct the collection and analysis of data initiated from the research question (Sekaran & Bougie 2013:95; Churchill & Iacobucci 2010:58).

A number of scholars attest that for proper marketing decisions to be made, a research problem and the data collection process which focuses on gathering information must first take place (Berndt & Petzer 2011:202; Churchill & Iacobucci 2010:205). McDaniel and Gates (2010:78) assert that this process includes clarification of the design method, and the questionnaire layout utilised in the study. Furthermore, Wiid and Diggins (2013:54) state that the purpose of designing a research method is to offer a summary of the investigation process, with the determination of facilitating the valuation of the study with admiration to its reliability and validity. Furthermore, Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2011:52) posit that research design guides the researcher with the choice of suitable methods for data collection and analysis.



Therefore, the design serves as the master plan, which identifies procedures for data collection and analysis (Burns & Bush 2010:143). Marketing research designs are found in three distinct categories; i.e. exploratory, causal and descriptive research designs (Sarstedt & Mooi 2014:14; Churchill, Brown & Suter 2010:79). Aaker, Kumar, Leone and Day (2013:65) state that these classifications vary considerably, regarding the nature of the formulated hypotheses, the research questions, and the data collection methods. Figure 6.1 clarifies the different categories of the research study designs and their particular uses.



**Figure 6.1: Types of research designs**

**Source: (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:60)**

Following the preceding figure, a brief explanation of each research design is given in the succeeding sub-sections.

### **6.3.1 Exploratory research design**

An exploratory research design examines comparatively unknown conditions with the aim of gaining new ideas and to generate understandings about situations that can at a latter stage, suggests the hypotheses or instigate further future research (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:60; Malhotra 2010:102). Salkind (2010:125) highlights that generally, exploratory research is more valuable when less about a phenomenon is known and the investigation is conducted when the investigator is uncertain about problems that may be encountered. Moreover, exploratory research design methods (particularly quantitative in nature) are consistent with post-positivist philosophical foundation adopted for this study.

### **6.3.2 Causal research design**

Zikmund and Babin (2013:55) state that causal research design is a highly structured and controlled research strategy, which produces specific results through experimentation. The causal research design concentrate on outlining the cause-and-effect of the association among variables (Zikmund & Babin 2015:57; Churchill & Iacobucci 2010:74). In other words, causal research answers the question “why?” thus, it can be labelled experimental research, as tests are generally conducted physically in determining the outcome (Burns & Bush 2010:57).

### **6.3.3 Descriptive research design**

Descriptive research design attempts to outline the market conditions, problems, attitudes, views and beliefs of the study respondents (Phophalia 2010:16). In other words, descriptive research design is undertaken with the aim of signifiying factors used in a study to examine marketing phenomenons, as well as to evaluate the study outcomes and reveal the relationships between the study factors (Burns & Bush 2014:103; Zikmund & Babin 2010a:51).

Descriptive research designs are built on the supposition that the prevailing relationships amongst the study variables are already known (Feinberg *et al.* 2013:57; Hair *et al.* 2013:108). Therefore, descriptive research is undertaken on the basis of a well-known prevailing nature of a research problem, even though this problem necessitates thorough motivation. A descriptive research study could either be longitudinal or cross-sectional in nature (Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:86; Churchill *et al.* 2010:109; Malhotra 2010:108). These two commonly utilised research design approaches are briefly explained in the next sub-sections.

### **6.3.3.1 Longitudinal studies**

Longitudinal research studies comprise data collection and analysis of the same sample elements (sample survey) over a period (Babbie & Mouton 2010:93). In other words, the process of measuring the sample with a longitudinal approach is that the procedure is repeated at various points in time, where the sample elements remains the same throughout. Owing to the repetitive measurements used over time, longitudinal approach is often time consuming (Caruana, Roman, Hernández-Sánchez & Solli 2015:538).

### **6.3.3.2 Cross-sectional studies**

A descriptive, quantitative cross-sectional design approach was employed in this study. Cross-sectional studies include the gathering of data from the same sample elements only once at a time (Burns & Bush 2014:103; Babbie 2014:82; Blumberg *et al.* 2011:199). This was done with the purpose of obtaining an accurate description of the situation and to measure and ascertain the relationships between variables from the same sample (Hair *et al.* 2013:108; Malhotra 2010:108).

As the study aimed at determining the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions of civil and building contractors (customer) towards their concrete product manufacturer (supplier) organisations within the construction industry in a B2B setting, a descriptive research method was chosen. The researcher's choice of the research approach design was informed by the post-positivist philosophical paradigm adopted for this study. The methodological paradigms of data collection normally used in research studies (qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research approaches) are discussed in the following section.

## **6.4 QUALITATIVE, QUANTITATIVE AND MIXED METHOD RESEARCH**

Research studies can be informed by quantitative, qualitative and mixed method approaches. Qualitative research approach is undertaken to expand the understanding of customer perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, sociological and psychological effects on their behaviour, including theories that define these understandings (Holloway & Galvin 2016:86; Munhall 2012:491; Lancaster & Massingham 2011:384). A qualitative research approach attempts to get to the bottom of what precisely transpires to the study participants and what stimulates them to make the decisions they took, and how these decisions are ultimately taken (Yin 2016:124; Curry, Nembhard & Bradley 2009:1442).

A qualitative research approach uses an all-inclusive picture of the object under study, scrutinises arguments, reports, comprehensive interpretations of data, and carries out the study in an acceptable setting. Although the reliability of qualitative research studies is frequently questioned by quantitative researchers, the idea of validity and reliability of both research approaches is addressed in different ways (Ritchie 2013:32-34). Accordingly, the strength and consistence of the data collected using qualitative research methods depends on the interpretations and adjustments of data to reputable sets of information (Zikmund & Babin 2013:97).

Quantitative research is described as a “research paradigm that emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis data and viewing the relationship between theory and research as deductive” (Bryman & Bell 2011:26). Quantitative research endeavours to establish facts, makes estimates and examines the hypothesis that was previously indicated (Nykiel 2007:55), and involves clarifying phenomena by gathering data to be analysed with the use of mathematically built approaches (DeFranzo 2011; Muijs 2011:1). It embraces using large samples, which represent the population and thus, broadens the range of data and eventually creates an enhanced picture for analysis (Cooper & Emory 1995:202).

Furthermore, the mixed method approach is one in which the data is collected concurrently using both approaches in a specific and given priority where data is integrated into a variety of stages during the investigation process (Creswell 2003:212). Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007:112) suggested three forms of mixed research approaches: the equal-status mixed research, where equal importance is assumed to both quantitative and qualitative instruments; qualitative dominant mixed research, where superiority is assumed to qualitative elements; as well as quantitative dominant mixed research, in which significance is set to quantitative components (Johnson *et al.* 2007:112). This is an extension instead of a replacement of either of the two approaches, as they are both undertaken in the same study in order to increase the prominence of the study outcomes (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie 2004:14). Bergman (2010:172) as well as McMillan and Schumacker (2010:39), state that the benefits of mixed method research methodology consist of its integrative and holistic nature, flexibility, capacity to overhaul limitations carried out by distinct monomethods and the reliability of the study. Table 6.1 summarises the differences among qualitative and quantitative research study methods.

**Table 6.1: Differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods**

Qualitative research method	Quantitative research method
Approach is subjective	Approach is objective
Objective is to discover and ascertain ideas	Seeks to assess cause and effect relationship among variables
No statistical tests	Statistical tests
Less generalizable	More generalisable
Text based	Number based
Unstructured or semi-structured	Fixed response options

**Source: Author's compilation**

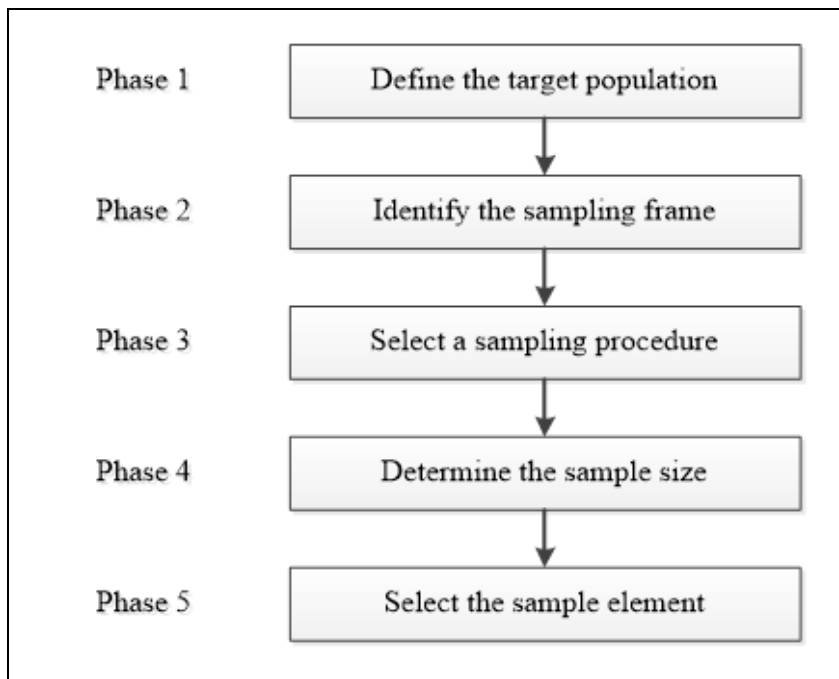
To a certain degree, both of these methods are suitable to be used in response to diverse types of enquiries. On the contrary, owing to the descriptive nature of this study, the quantitative method was undertaken. This approach was chosen as it is the most effective and frequently recognised method to deal with relationship studies (Hanaysha 2016:302). In addition, firstly, the study applied a large sample size (Zikmund & Babin 2012:136; Hair *et al.* 2010:78). Secondly, this approach is entrenched in the post-positivist paradigm, which this study also adopted (Bryman & Bell 2011:152).

Thirdly, this method is flexible, cost effective and priority was given to financial and time limits to pursue a study of this magnitude (Dhurup & Surujlal 2008:19). Fourthly, quantitative studies pursue a generalisation of the research findings by means of proven statistical evidence (Tybout & Calder 2010:69; Borrego, Douglas & Amelink 2009:53). Fifthly, this study adopted a quantitative research method as it allows duplication of the process and consequently refines the reliability and validity of the research outcomes. Accordingly, the study was proficient to enumerate data and improved the accuracy of the research findings. Lastly, the impartiality and consistency required to address issues underpinning relationship intentions in the concrete product environment are also catered for within this procedure.

Subsequent to constructing the research plan with its research method, it was important to select the study participants for the study. The following section provides the research sampling design procedure carried out in this study

## **6.5 THE SAMPLING DESIGN PROCEDURE**

The procedure followed in developing a sampling design comprises identifying the study population, defining the target population, identifying the sample frame, selecting the sampling technique, determining the sample size, selecting the sample elements and collecting the data (Salkind 2012:95). Figure 6.2 illustrates the course of action towards the development of the sampling design followed in this study.



**Figure 6.2: Sampling procedure**

**Source: Iacobucci & Churchill (2010:283)**

### **6.5.1 Defining the target population**

Prior to a sample been taken, the researcher must first define the target population to which the results will be generalised (Churchill & Iacobucci 2010:283). This process involves narrowing down the study population to circumvent measuring incorrect target respondents who might yield irrelevant data. The target population is described as individuals, units or items that are applicable to the study (Stevens, Loudon, Ruddick, Wrenn & Sherwood 2012:185). Malhotra (2010:372) defines targeted respondents as a prominently defined assembly of units that have comparable features pertinent to the study. Accordingly, a target population specifies a recognisable assembly of people or elements for the research purpose (Babbie 2014:207; Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer & Tourangean 2009:69).

The target population in this study comprises all civil and building contractors (customers) from grade 1 to 9 from the South African construction industry. The reasons why these elements were deemed appropriate for the study, are given in chapter 2 (section 2.3.6.1). The following phase after classifying the study target population is the identification of the sample frame discussed next.

### **6.5.2 Identify the sampling frame**

As soon as the study respondents have been defined, a list of all entitled sampling units must be identified. This list works as a frame from which all elements of the population under study are selected only once (Brown, Suter & Churchill 2018:207; Kumar 2014:231; Bryman & Bell 2011:182). During this phase a sample frame from which the sample elements for a research study are identified and the sample elements are then drawn (Bernard 2018:116; Silver, Stevens, Wrenn & Loundon 2013:155; Burns & Bush 2010:390).

A sample frame may include for example, telephone directories, customer list, customer register and business' internal databases (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk 2010:155; Iacobucci & Churchill 2010:284). Babin and Zikmund (2016:343) postulate that if the sample frame does not accurately match the study population, a covering error occurs. Accordingly, the proposition by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016:277) is to employ consolidation of lists or as Brown et al. (2018:206) put it, casting a wide net of respondents. The CIDB's register of contractors was utilised as a sample frame to draw the sample size (CIDB 2018b). A list of all active registered civil and building contractors in the Gauteng province, who were actively involved with construction work in the past five years, was used. In total, the list contained 2 567 contractors (CIDB 2018b). The subsequent phase after identifying the study sample frame is to identify the sampling procedure.

### **6.5.3 Selecting a sampling procedure**

Babin and Zikmund (2016:348) posit that sampling is the procedure used by researchers to select the study population for a research project. Sampling methods are characterised by two main classes known as; probability as well as non-probability sampling. Aarker et al. (2013:309) submit that with probability sampling, the study elements have a well-known possibility of being incorporated in the study sample. Therefore, a list of the study elements from the targeted population is required when using probability sampling (Zikmund & Babin 2010a:417). While with non-probability, a possibility of being included in the study sample is not known by the population (Sekeran & Bougie 2013:245). Table 6.2 depicts key differences between the two sampling procedures.



**Table 6.2: Probability and non-probability samples**

Probability sampling	
Simple random sampling	Every element in the study has an equal recognised opportunity of participating in the study.
Stratified random sampling	The targeted members are distributed into equal groups should the population elements believed to be skew in one or more areas like race or age groups.
Systematic sample	Utilising a sample frame that hosts a list of targeted members, all having an equivalent opportunity of being counted in the sample, better than simple random sampling.
Cluster sample	The study elements are divided into equal groups where a sample is going to be drawn for the interview.
Non-probability sampling	
Convenience sample	The study elements that are easily obtainable are selected by the researcher.
Referral (snowball) sampling	The study elements are requested to provide names of individual who may possibly qualify to partake in a study.
Judgement sample	The study elements that are worthy of providing accurate information are chosen.
Quota sample	Taking from various groups of the population members, the researcher selects and interview a prearranged number of people.

**Source: Burns & Bush (2010:369, 383)**

The study applied a probability-sampling procedure, with a systematic random sampling method. The succeeding phase after choosing the sample is to establish the appropriate sample size, which a discussion around that is provided.

#### **6.5.4 Determine the sample size**

The portion of the population partaking in a study is referred to as a sample size (Gupta 2011:196). It is advisable that the selection process of these elements or units must be applied in a proficient and specialised manner (Silver *et al.* 2013:166). Malhotra (2010:405) states that the mandatory sample size of a study depends on, for instance, the proposed data analysis techniques to be used. The study sample size was set on the premise of the sum and nature of constructs involved, resource constraints as well as the nature of the analysis (Sekaran & Bougie 2013:246; Malhotra 2010:407). To establish the sample size, the skip interval was employed to obtain the required

number (Boyce 2002:246). For example, the required sample size was calculated as indicated on Figure 6.3 with the use of the skip interval in the next page.

Skip interval	=	$\frac{\text{Number of elements in the population}}{\text{The required sample size}}$
	=	$\frac{2567}{600}$
	=	55.1

**Figure 6.3: Calculation of the required sample size using the skip interval**

From the identified civil and building contractor sample frame, where the selected respondent decided not to take part on the survey or due to non-availability, the subsequent contractor on the list who was eligible for selection with the use of drop-down substitution (Zikmund & Babin 2012:315) was chosen. Every 55th contractor on the database was selected.

Commonly, sample sizes of 250-400 are suggested for multivariate analysis in CFA or a ratio of 5:1 or 10:1 cases to free parameters (Pallant 2016:184). Additionally, SEM was undertaken in this study and normally a minimum sample sizes of 300 is regarded suitable for multivariate analysis (Malhotra, Nunan & Birks 2017:804; Leedy & Ormrod 2010:88). The nominated sample size was pegged at (N=600) participants to ensure the maintenance of the statistical power of the data set. Furthermore, Roscoe (1975:173) postulates that in 98% of research studies undertaken, sample sizes larger than 500 are effective in guaranteeing sample error will not go beyond 10% of standard deviation. Consistent with Gupta's (2011:122) argument that it is prudent to collect more data because the statistical power will be better by increasing the sample size, the sample size was pegged at N=600.

The subsequent phase after establishing the sample size was to select the sample elements and a discussion is provided in the succeeding sub-section.

### **6.5.5 Select sample elements**

Subsequent to the determination of the sample size, the next phase necessitates the choice of the sample units. The selected sample elements comprise all study participants, who eventually take part in the research study, their views and individualities epitomise the study elements (Bernard

2018:117; Wiid & Diggins 2009:214). The study respondents included the civil and building contractors that are registered with the CIDB from the Gauteng province.

### 6.5.6 Sample plan employed

A sample plan is an outline of the basis from which a research study is conducted. In summary Table 6.3 shows the sample plan employed in this study.

**Table 6.3: The study-sampling plan**

Design elements	Application to empirical study
Extent	Republic of South Africa.
Target population	Active civil and building contractors operating within the construction industry, buying and using concrete products for their building and infrastructure development projects.
Sample size	600 respondents.
Sampling method	Probability sampling
Sampling frame	A list of civil and building CIDB registered contractors.
Sampling element	South African civil and building engineering contractors operating in the Gauteng province.
Time frame (fieldwork)	September 2018 to end February 2019.

**Source: Zikmund and Babin (2013:315); Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:283)**

The following section offers a discussion on the questionnaire design technique undertaken in this study.

## 6.6 QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN PROCEDURE

The study questionnaire is a structured prearranged instrument that contains a set of questions intended to gather data from the study participants, with the principal aim of attaining the research objectives (Neelankavil 2015:184; Berndt & Petzer 2011:198). The study questionnaire contained structured questions only. Malhotra (2010:344) posits that structured questions allow for closed-ended answers as they stipulate a pre-determined set of response options, which means that the respondents are not permitted to give answers that are already provided for in the questionnaire. Accordingly, such an instrument is useful as it reduces the extent of reasoning on the part of the

respondent. Essentially, closed-ended structured questions lead to greater response rates and improved data accuracy that is easy code and analyse.

Consistent with these assertions, this study utilised a self-administered structured questionnaire as it is cost effective, easy to manage and has high response rate in collecting data using quantitative methods compared to other methods (Jones, Baxter & Khanduja 2013:6). In line with its formalised structure, the study questionnaire was developed to allow for data to be collected in an orderly and organised manner (Malhotra 2007:299). Salkind (2012:147) mentions that the benefit of using self administered survey forms is that they reduce researcher bias and save the participant's time to answer the questions. In addition, Babin and Zikmund (2016:168) assert that it is advantageous to use a questionnaire as it includes the respondent's objectivity and gather data efficiently, less costly and it captures higher and faster response rates.

### **6.6.1 Questionnaire format and layout**

The value of such an instrument is that it is very reliant on its structure. For example, Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:216) confirm that a measuring instrument that is poorly designed for a research study, will not yield the envisaged data or the information presented might not be accurate. Therefore, an unsystematically designed questionnaire provokes bias responses with the likelihood of rendering the research findings insignificant (Wiid & Diggins 2015:171), while a well-thought-questionnaire is arranged in such a way that stimulates responses and provides insight that will assist the respondents in answering the research questions (Malhotra 2007:299). As such, considerable efforts were given to the design of the study's measuring instrument.

Section A of the study questionnaire required the respondents' demographic data. Section B required the respondent's perceptions comparative to the dimensions of relationship intentions. Items from sections B, C, D, E, F and G of the study's questionnaire measured responses centred around a five-point Likert scale to specify the level of agreement or disagreement (1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree). Likert scale usage relied on the basis that it permits the responses to be collected in a standardised and easy way for evaluation and analysis (Rickards, Magee & Artino 2012:407; Ghuman & Aswathappa 2010:147). Table 6.4 demonstrates the study constructs with sources from which the items were adapted. The Cronbach alpha values for each construct are also given where applicable.

**Table 6.4: Detailed description of questions asked in the questionnaire**

Question asked in the questionnaire	Source	Context and industry	Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Country
<b>Section A: Respondents' demographic information and purchasing habits</b>				
What is your position within the organisation?	Manitshana (2012:160) Thwala and Phaladi (2009:533)	B2B Construction industry B2B Construction industry	N/A	South Africa
What is your organisation's speciality?	Sebone and Barry (2009:185)	B2B Construction industry	N/A	South Africa
What is your contractor Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grading?	Manitshana (2012:160-161) Sebone and Barry (2009:185)	B2B Construction industry B2B Construction industry	N/A	South Africa
In which of the listed provinces did your organisation perform construction work?	Thwala and Phaladi (2009:533) Sebone and Barry (2009:185)	B2B Construction industry B2B Construction industry	N/A	South Africa
From which of the following listed concrete product suppliers do you make concrete purchases?	De Wulf et al. (2003:101)	B2C Retail clothing industry	N/A	Belgium and Netherland
From which ONE of the listed concrete product suppliers do you make concrete purchases most frequently?	Mackay et al. (2014:314)	B2C Short-term insurance industry	N/A	South Africa
How long have you been making concrete product purchases from the CPM which you most frequently support?	Mackay et al. (2015:50).	B2C Short-term insurance industry	N/A	South Africa
<b>Section B: Questions asked in relation to the relationship marketing study dimensions, their sources and Cronbach alpha values.</b>				

<p><b>Relationship quality</b></p> <p>Compared with other suppliers my CPM adds more value to the relationship overall.</p> <p>Compared with other suppliers we gain more in our relationship with our current CPM.</p> <p>Compared with other suppliers the relationship with our current CPM is more valuable.</p>	<p>Ulaga and Eggert (2006:320)</p>	<p>B2B Manufacturing industry</p>	<p>0.95</p>	<p>United States of America</p>
<p><b>Satisfaction</b></p> <p>Overall, our organisation is very satisfied with our current CPM.</p> <p>Our organisation is not completely happy with our current CPM.</p>	<p>Homburg et al. (2003:46)</p>	<p>B2B Chemical, Mechanical and Electrical industries</p>	<p>0.89</p>	<p>United States of America and Germany</p>
<p><b>Section C: Questions asked in relation to customer's behavioural intention or relationship marketing outcomes, their sources and Cronbach alpha values.</b></p>				
<p><b>Loyalty</b></p> <p>We say positive things about our current CPM to other civil and building contractors.</p> <p>We recommend the products of our current CPM to other civil and building contractors who seek concrete product advice.</p>	<p>Dagger et al. (2011:280)</p>	<p>B2C Travel agencies, Hairdressers, Family Doctors, Photo printing service, General banking, Pest control, Cinemas, Airlines and Fast food outlets</p>	<p>0.94</p>	<p>Australia</p>
<p><b>Repurchase intentions</b></p> <p>It is probable that our relationship with our current CPM will continue.</p> <p>We will purchase from our current CPM again.</p> <p>We intend to stay loyal to our current CPM.</p>	<p>Homburg et al. (2003:46).</p>	<p>B2B Chemical, Mechanical and Electrical industries</p>	<p>0.93</p>	<p>United States of America and Germany</p>

**Source: Author's own compilation**

Prior to conducting the main survey, the reliability of the research instrument must be verified by conducting a pilot study. A discussion on the findings of the pilot study is presented next.

## **6.7 PILOT TESTING THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

A pilot study is a small-scaled survey that symbolises the practicability of the main survey (Sokhela 2015:33). The purpose of performing a pilot study is to take full advantage of the consistency of the respondents and to achieve the study's objectives (Moloantoa 2015:69). This is done to refine the study variables and reduce the potential risk of the study being unreliable (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:59). This process was undertaken to make sure that clear and correct information is communicated by the questionnaire. Consequently, the pilot survey for the purpose of this study was conducted to confirm the reliability and to verify the accuracy of the questions (Zikmund & Babin 2013:183). The questionnaires were circulated over a period of three weeks to a sample size of 40 participants. The reliability of the pilot study is reported in chapter 7 section 7.3.

## **6.8 DATA COLLECTION**

Berndt and Petzer (2011:201) state that a systematic process of collecting information pertinent to the research problem is referred to as data collection process. This process was performed in two intervals in this study. The first interval was through a preliminary extant literature review, which was delineated upon in chapters two, three, four and five of this study. The second interval of collecting data was through an empirical investigation.

Chapters two, three, four and five utilised secondary data sources from journal articles, textbooks, dissertations, thesis, conference proceedings and Internet reports, through search engines such as Sage, Science Direct, Jstor and Emerald to gather relevant information in the context of concrete product and the construction industry, from both global and South African marketing perspectives. Most often, research inquests begin with secondary data collection, as it is abrupt, inexpensive and convenient with no need to engage any respondent (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:161). Then again, secondary data only offered contextual information from which the researcher gained greater understanding of what has been accomplished by prior research studies and what might be lying ahead in terms of future research opportunities.

The primary data were mainly necessary to respond to the empirical part of the study. The survey technique was applied to obtain the data from the study respondents. Sekeran and Bougie

(2013:102) describes a survey as a system of gathering information from the study elements, comparing and explaining their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. The primary data were collected using self-administered structured questionnaires (Wiid & Diggines 2009:158). A self-administered structured questionnaire guaranteed comparability, speed and accurate data capturing procedure, which enables improved data processing (Malhotra 2007:299). The questionnaires were hand delivered to the study participants who voluntarily completed and returned the fully completed forms. The data collection for the main survey took place during September 2018 and January 2019. The fieldworkers were employed to hand deliver and collect the questionnaires from the study participants.

### **6.8.1 Fieldworkers**

In executing the fieldwork to distribute the questionnaires and collect them for data analysis, Wiid and Diggines (2015:213) advise that fieldworkers must be carefully chosen and assessed, making sure that they know and understand the research area as well as all of the questions contained by the measuring instrument. For this study, 10 fieldworkers were used. They were sales executives recruited from Pretoria Portland Cement (PPC), who are manufacturers and suppliers of cement products, as well as from Simstone (Pty) Ltd, Alarn Concrete Products, Lefika Concrete (Pty) Ltd, who are all manufacturers of precast concrete. Prior to the fieldworkers receiving the questionnaires, they were provided with training to prepare them for the data collection process. The fieldwork for data collection took place for five to ten weeks. After the completion of data collection, data was prepared for the analysis phase.

The next section provides a discussion on the process followed in analysing the data.

## **6.9 DATA ANALYSIS**

In this study, SPSS and AMOS packages, Version 25.0 were used to analyse the data. The statistical methods used on the empirical data sets include frequency distribution analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive statistical analysis, data normality tests, correlation analysis, multicollinearity analysis and structural equation modelling.

The process of analysing the data started with data validation. The quality and interpretation of the results are subjected to proper preparation of data in a format deemed appropriate for analysis (Aaker, Kumar, Day & Leone 2011:381). Cooper and Schindler (2011:490) highlight that the data preparation is critical in analysing data from completed questionnaires. The process began with



the gathering of data for editing, coding and capturing before the reassignment and cleaning of the data (Zikmund & Babin 2012:352). Four phases of data preparation applied in this study are explained in the next sub-sections.

### **6.9.1 Data editing**

This is an evaluation of the questionnaire with the purpose of intensifying data accuracy (Malhotra 2010:453). In other words, it is a process that involves scrutinising completed questionnaires with the aim of increasing precision. This process includes checking completed questionnaires for inadequacies or impractical responses, unnoticed and evident irregularities (Zikmund & Babin 2013:369). Following the editing process, the subsequent phase is to perform data coding.

### **6.9.2 Data coding**

This is a technical process in which raw data is assigned and converted into symbols or code numbers for responses given by the study participants (Zikmund & Babin 2010a:353). Pallant (2010:11) states that the formulation of a codebook assists with the determination of how questions and responses are defined. The study questionnaire was pre-coded through the supervisor's approval and the statistician assistance to expedite computer data input. Comparable codes were allocated to related responses in specific groups that were reciprocally exclusive. The coding procedure included the following three steps provided by Wiid and Diggins (2015:231), the description of classes, codes assignment to data categories and assembling a codebook. Following the preparation of the codebook, the subsequent phase was to build a data file. In generating the data file, information that was collected from the study respondents was captured in a manner that resonates with the codebook (Pallant 2010:11).

### **6.9.3 Data capturing**

A codebook is used to provide guiding principles on how the responses to questions are to be captured on the data sets, by reassigning coded information through a Micro Soft Excel spread sheet, directly into a computer programme (Malhotra 2010:459). During the data file compilation, the process necessitated the capturing of information consistent with the codebook (Pallant 2010:11).

#### **6.9.4 Data cleaning**

Consistent with Pallant's (2010:43) recommendation, the succeeding phase was to monitor and clean data set for mistakes. The process followed for error checks was through the use of frequency inspections for all the questions. During the cleaning process, an examination with outliers was also observed by checking whether the minimum and maximum possible score values on each question were within the range (Wiid & Diggins 2015:235).

#### **6.9.5 Assumptions of parametric data test**

The assumption of normality for data is supported by the sample size of (N=600) in this study. Researchers commonly agree that larger sample sizes compensate for potential problems associated with lack of normality in the data (McDaniel & Gates 2013:343; Hair *et al.* 2010:72).

Field (2013:581) recommends that when studying the statistical tests of normality, it is at all times vital to plot the data and and strive to make well-informed decisions regarding the magnitude of non-normality collected on converging proof, instead of over-reliance on statistical tests such as Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests. The K-S and S-W both examine null hypothesis indicating that the data is derived from a normally disseminated population. Statistical methods such as EFA and CFA are grounded on parametric data as explained by Field (2013:580). The normality assumption for all relationship-marketing construct items were established by means of the K-S and S-W tests. The reason for using these approaches to test for normality assumption is that K-S and S-W tests are sensitive to large sample sizes and in that, even small deviations from normality are also testified as noteworthy. Normality assessments were conducted to check the parametric data assumptions as discussed in the next sub-section.

#### **6.9.6 Assessment of normality**

Prior to the hypothesis testing of the study, a determination of data distribution for each construct was essential to be obtained, with the intention of ensuring that accurate statistical techniques are applied. Harris, Taylor & Taylor (2005:140) advocate that when data is normally distributed, parametric statistics are employed. Pallant (2010:59) recommends that the realisation of data normality set must be considered as a pre-condition for using inferential statistical practices, which this study also followed.

As non-parametric statistics are useful in situations where normal data distribution is impossible to be assumed (Hair *et al.* 2013:279), parametric statistics would however, be convenient to use

in cases when data is normally distributed (Harris *et al.* 2005:140). To ascertain normal distribution of data, the skewness as well as kurtosis statistics with the application of SPSS 25.0, were used to clean, capture and analyse data (Pallant 2010:59). The data were subsequently examined for normality utilising probability plots (P-P plots) representing movement of normality and histograms. Consistent with Pallant (2010:60-61), the data normality tests were conducted with the use of kurtosis and skewness of the data distribution, including the standard deviations obtained from the mean and its scores. The kurtosis measured the peakedness (pointiness, flatness or modality) of the distribution, and positive kurtosis indicated most scores settled inside the tail of the distribution, while negative kurtosis indicated few scores inside the tail end of the distribution (Field 2013:581-582; Curran, West & Finch 1996:16). The following formulas were used to find out the skewness and kurtosis:

$$\text{Skewness} = \sqrt{\frac{6}{n}}, \quad \text{And} \quad \text{Kurtosis} = \sqrt{\frac{24}{n}}$$

The skewness values pointed out the consistency of the data distribution, where positive values confirmed that data distribution is skewed to the lower values, whilst a cluster of scores were specified by negative skewness values, which appeared more on the high end of the distribution. In addition, in ensuring that data were normally distributed, the histogram that forms part of descriptive statistics represented the data distribution, and thus, data were tested for normality on dependant variables (loyalty and relationship intention), including the independent variables (relationship quality, commitment and satisfaction). This took place by first identifying mean scores, and then convert fitting clusters of data into SPSS.

Considering that the dispersion of data effect final results and self-reliance of the central location measures, descriptive statistics was applied to specify and examine variances as well as standard deviations. Data testing for this study, was done utilising the descriptive statistics, reliability and validity analysis as well as multivariate analysis, CFA. The results presented in chapter 7, suggest that each statement evaluating individual constructs have a reasonably univariate normal distribution, and making the cut-off point (West, Finch & Curran 1995:72).

The following section provides deliberations on the descriptive statistical processes followed in the study.

## **6.10 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Descriptive statistics is expressed as basic alterations of raw data to fundamental features such as frequency distributions, central tendency (mean) and standard deviation (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:54; McDaniel & Gates 2013:343). Data were evaluated using the SPSS package, Version 25.0. Deliberations on descriptive statistical methods undertaken in this study are presented in the following sub-sections.

### **6.10.1 Frequencies**

Zikmund *et al.* (2013:69) state that frequency distribution is used to represent the rate of recurrence a certain variable value arises. Frequency distributions in the form of histograms, line charts, graphs, percentages and bar charts are used to reveal the research results of a study. In chapter 7, frequency distributions, tables and figures are presented to illustrate the study results.

### **6.10.2 Central tendency**

This refers to a number that indicates numerous ‘medians’ of variable values (Walliman 2011:117). In this study, the arithmetic mean (average) was used (Walliman 2011:117). The mean was calculated by measuring the central tendency by adding all values divided by the number of observation (Steyn, Smit, Du Toit & Strasheim 2003:101). Iacobucci and Churchill (2010:394) labels this as a common method for application in ratio scales. The means were computed as presented in chapter 7, Table 7.3.

### **6.10.3 Standard deviation**

Churchill *et al.* (2010:430) describe standard deviation as the square root of a calculated adjustment on variables, which measure distances from the mean for each score. The standard deviation is normally applied to determine dispersion (Sarstedt & Mooi 2014:105). In other words, the measures of variability uncover the extent of inconsistency in the distribution when determining the range or scatter of scores (Tustin *et al.* 2010:544). In addition, standard deviation assists by providing data on how discrete the distribution is around the mean value (Sarstedt & Mooi 2014:105; Malhotra 2010:486). According to Clow and James (2013:378), standard deviation indicates the degree of variation in the study responses. This is an index of a distribution’s variability determined using a formula (Zikmund & Babin 2010b:332):

$$S = \sqrt{S^2} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{X})^2}{n-1}}$$

Where:

X = each score

$\bar{X}$  = the mean or average

n = the number of values and,

$\Sigma$  = means one sums across the values

The standard deviation's results are reported in chapter 7, Table 7.3.

## 6.11 MEASURES OF ACCURACY TESTS

The results of distinctive measures applied in the study to measure the reliability and validity of constructs are accordingly discussed as follows.

### 6.11.1 Reliability analysis

The study questionnaire's reliability is the propensity to yield reliable results, in relation to a sequence of repeated tests (Trochim, Donnelly & Arora 2015:119; Leedy & Ormrod 2014:95). There are three approaches to measure reliability identified as (i) Test-retest reliability, (ii) Equivalent forms and (iii) Internal consistency (McDaniel & Gates 2010:313-316). A summary of reliability estimates is provided in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.5: Summary of reliability estimates**

Type	Coefficient	What is measured	Techniques
Test-retest	Stability	The consistency of an examination inferred from the examinee scores. An identical examination is run twofold on equivalent subjects over a break of not more than six months	Correlation
Parallel forms	Correspondence	The extend to which different methods of very similar measures yield parallel outcomes. They are concurrently conducted. Iterator estimations of parallel evaluators' remarks.	Correlation
Split-half KR20	Internal consistency	The extend to which objects from the questionnaire are similar and replicate the corresponding original ideas.	Specialised correlation formulas

Cronbach's alpha			
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**Source: Cooper & Schindler (2003:237)**

The determination of the reliability for this study was first conducted during the pilot testing phase as well as in the main study. Therefore, reliable responses reflected the consistency of this study's measuring instrument.

#### **6.11.1.1 Cronbach's alpha test**

To regulate the reliability of the questions incorporated in the measuring instrument, Cronbach's alpha values were calculated. Normally, Cronbach's alpha values in a study are stated for every compound measure ranging in the middle of a score of 0 and 1; whereby a value of 1 suggests a seamless reliability and a value of 0 advocates that there is no reliability (Hair *et al.* 2013:165-166). Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) value of 0.70 or above, pointed out that measures used in the study are acceptable and reliable, and values in the middle of 0.60 to 0.70 shows reasonable reliability (Hair *et al.* 2013:38-39; Cronbach 1951:297-298). A measure with a Cronbach's alpha value of less than 0.60 shows insufficient reliability.

#### **6.11.1.2 Composite reliability (CR)**

This reliability is recognised as a more precise method to assess complete reliability of an assembly of varied but comparable items (Bagozzi & Yi 1998:74; Fornell & Larcker 1981:44). Composite reliability in this study was assessed to examine the internal reliability of the construct's subscales. The rule of thumb of CR is that 0.70 or greater reflects sufficient or adequate consistency (Hair *et al.* 2010:710). CR for every construct was calculated manually by computing formulas provided by directly replacing the values from AMOS output with the use of the Microsoft Excel 2016.

The following formula as suggested by Fornell and Larker (1981:45) was used to compute composite reliability.

$$CR = \frac{(\sum_{i=1}^n Li)^2}{(\sum_{i=1}^n Li)^2 + (\sum_{i=1}^n Ei)}$$

Where:

L = the standardised factor loading,

I = the number of the corresponding item,

Σ = the error variance term for an item.

Following Bagozzi and Yi's (1998:74) conception for relationship marketing constructs in this study, composite reliabilities were above the recommended level. These results are represented in chapter 7, section 7.6 and Table 7.12.

### **6.11.1.3 Average Variance Extracted (AVE)**

AVE is “the variance in the indicators or observed variables that is explained by the latent construct” (Malhotra 2010:725). The AVE values must be equivalent or greater than 0.50 to sustain convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi (1998:80). However, Neuman (2006:59) advocates that even AVE values ranging from 0.40 to 0.50, can be regarded as representative of marginal sustenance for model convergence, as it is assessed as the summary of squared factor loadings divided by the sum of the summation of the squared factor loadings and summation of error variances. The following formulation for calculating AVE was used:

Where;

V= composite reliability

= summation of factor loadings

= summation of error variances

= Completely standardised factor loadings

In addition, various statistical accuracy tests were administered to validate the precision of the study's results as discussed in the following sub-section.

### **6.11.2 Validity analysis**

While as a pre-condition a study can attain reliability, it is essential, however, to administer some accuracy tests with respect to the validity of the measuring instrument (Malhotra 2010:734). The

reason for this is that a measure cannot be deemed valid when it is not consistent. According to Ary, Jacobs, Sorensen and Razavieh (2010:225), validity is the scale to which firstly, the study questionnaire encapsulates proper items and secondly, assesses what it essentially seeks to measure. In assessing validity in this study, content, construct, discriminant, convergent as well as predictive validity tests were performed to validate the precision of the study questionnaire (Leedy & Ormrod 2015:115).

#### **6.11.2.1 Content validity**

Content validity usually denotes to face validity, which evaluates the degree to which measurement scales connect to the hypothetical lens of the study constructs (Malhotra 2010:45). In other words, content strength is built on the researcher's valuation of a scale's capacity to evaluate what is intended to measure (Hair *et al.* 2010:158). The content validity in this study was tested to assess if critical statements were included in the measuring instrument. This was done by compiling the constructs with items collected from existing research and from previously tested questionnaires, which were checked by the promoters and co-promoters.

Furthermore, a preliminary study (pilot study) was used to evaluate the content validity of the study's research questionnaire (Dhurup, Mafini & Dumasi 2014:6). The outcomes of the preliminary study revealed that the study's survey instrument has the ability to examine the dimensions of relationship intentions and the relationship marketing constructs towards long-term B2B relationship building between concrete product suppliers and their civil and building contractor organisations.

#### **6.11.2.2 Construct validity**

One way to rule out substantial method effects is to establish construct validity of measures (Strauss & Smith 2009:1). This validation attempts to establish the degree to which an item being measured correctly apprehends the latent variables that are being measured (Zikmund & Babin 2013:259; Welman *et al.* 2011:142). Bagozzi and Yi (2012:18) state that construct validity reflects the association among the study items of measure and the construct being examined. One of the key elements for measuring construct validity is that the researcher must carefully consider the theory and the measuring instrument (Field 2013:641). The average inter-item correlations were computed to assess construct validity in the study. Consistent with Hair *et al.* (2010:710), construct validity was measured by removing items which did not produce factor loadings greater than the



acceptable threshold of 0.50. This procedure aims to detect fundamental concepts that are measured and to regulate how best the test signifies those concepts.

### **6.11.2.3 Discriminant validity**

Discriminant validity measures the presence or nonappearance of relationships between the distinct constructs in a research study (Malhotra 2007:287). This is measured using inter-factor correlations as one of the main pillars of model evaluation (Welman *et al.* 2011:143). Hair *et al.* (2010:709) state that discriminant validity signifies phenomena of interest, which other measures of SEM do not capture, and it guarantees that construct measures are empirically unique. Discriminant validity denotes to the extent to which the study constructs are discrete from each other as they cannot assess the same underlying constructs (Malhotra 2007:287). In other words, the establishment of discriminant validity stresses that the scale of interest representing a specific construct is different to scales representing other constructs. Therefore, discriminant validity is established when low correlation amongst theoretically distinct measures from a measured construct are observed (Welman *et al.* 2011:143).

Theoretically, discriminant validity necessitates that “a test does not correlate too highly with measures from which it is supposed to differ” (Campbell 1960:548). Anderson and Gerbing (1988:411) add that when the predictor variables correlate too highly ( $r \geq 0.80$ ), this can be an indication of collinearity complications and the absence of discriminant validity. Confirmation of discriminant validity is measured by associating squared pairwise correlations matching measure of average variance extraction (AVE) (Fornell & Lacker 1981:46). Discriminant validity is therefore attained when AVE are higher than the square root of the correlations for every pair of measurement (Farrell 2010:324-327; Venable, Rose, Bush & Gilbert 2005:295).

### **6.11.2.4 Convergent validity**

Cooper and Schindler (2006:319) state that the extend to which variables that are measuring similar hypothetical measures, positively correlate with each other in a scale represent convergent validity. In this study, by using the computation of the the inter-construct correlation matrix amongst several study constructs, i.e. expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing, fear of relationship loss, relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions, the convergent validity was measured. In ensuring convergent validity, the study examined all constructs to determine if all item loadings were larger than 0.5, as proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (1998:80).

The average inter-item correlation values ranging from 0.15 to 0.50 are indicative of convergent validity (Clark & Watson 1995:316). In addition, it is recommended that the AVE values should be identical or greater than 0.50, to support convergent validity (Bagozzi & Yi 1998:80). In the same vein, Neuman (2006:59) proposes that AVE values that range between 0.40 and 0.50 must be viewed as indicative of minimal sustenance for model convergence.

#### **6.11.2.5 Predictive validity**

Nunnally (1978) propose that predictive validity signifies how well the tests predict some future behaviour of the study elements. Additionally, predictive validity is only verified by the extent of correlation between the predictor test and the criterion variable; this advocates that a predictor test is not in a position to be predictably valid, with the exception that it has a significant correlation with the criterion variable (Nunnally 1978). Predictive validity for this study was measured by examining the path coefficients and t-values. The results confirmed the occurrence of satisfactory levels of predictive validity for this study. Finally, the outcomes of the reliability and validity measurement scales are obtainable in chapter 7, section 7.6 by Table 7.12, which summarises the measures of reliability and validity of this study.

The ensuing sub-section offers discussions on common method biased problems that are normally found in research studies and the procedures that this study followed to control them.

#### **6.11.3 Common method bias checks**

The term common method bias denotes to the form of measurement at different levels of abstraction, such as the content of specific items, scale type, response format and general context (Friske 1982:81-82). A common method bias is evident when inconsistency is ascribed to the measurement method instead of to the construct of interest. In other words, the systematic measurement method introduced into the measures and shared among the variables by a certain measurement technique represent common method bias (Jakobsen & Jensen 2015:3; Richardson, Simmering & Sturman 2009:762; Doty & Glick 1998:374).

Common method bias tends to be problematic as they are key source of measurement error, especially in self-administered surveys and often known to cause inter-correlations of constructs to be either inflated or deflated (Podsakoff, Podsakoff & Mackenzie 2017:881; Min, Park & Kim 2016:126). Podsakoff and Todor (1985:65) state that usually, with self-report measures acquired from the same sample being applied in a study, general method variance arises. Furthermore, some

of the problems resulting from common method bias are that biased estimates of reliability and validity could be reported (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff 2012:539-540).

Consistent with Podsakoff et al. (2017:881), the study performed a single factor test to assess the rigorousness of the possible common method bias. The study applied a one-factor test using EFA and examined the un-rotated factor solution to assess factors that accounted for variances in the variables. When the fit indices of the factor model are not exceeding that of the single-factor model significantly, the common method bias may be the main concern (MacKenzie & Podsakoff 2012:543; Chang *et al.* 2010:181; Podsakoff *et al.* 2003:889). Therefore, if a considerable amount of common method variance exists, this suggests that firstly, a single factor will develop from the factor analysis. Secondly, one general factor will represent most of the covariance between the measures (Podsakoff *et al.* 2003:889). If one of the two situations prevail, then this is viewed as evidence that common method bias is not a concern (Chang *et al.* 2010:181). The results of the data normality are obtainable in chapter 7, sub-section 7.3.2 and presented by Table 7.4

The following section presents discussions on the correlation analysis and multicollinearity assessments performed in the study.

## **6.12 CORRELATION ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF MULTICOLLINEARITY**

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was used to examine the inter-factor relationship amongst this study's constructs to determine the intensity of association.

Gogtay, Deshpande and Thatte (2016:49) state that correlation analysis examines the strength and order of construct association and provides means of establishing the size of the association amongst variables. According to Cohen and Kohn (2011:812), correlation analysis is a standardised measure of covariation generally applied to refer to two distinctive phenomena. The first use of correlation analysis refers to tuning similarity measured as the correlation in the mean responses of two constructs. The second use is a measure of the degree to which construct responses vary in strength. This is normally measured as the Pearson correlation which was used for this study.

### **6.12.1 Pearson (product-moment) correlation**

The extent of linear associations amongst two or more variables is measured to determine whether some common factors that cause two data sets to increase and decrease or move together in a similar way (Cohen & Kohn 2011:812). Consistent with Malhotra's (2010:562) recommendations,

a value of zero found with the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) signify that no relationship exists between the constructs. Pearson correlation fluctuates over a variety of +1 to 0, to -1 and it is epitomised by an  $r$  character (Nikoloski, Deo & Kucera 2005:240; Cooper & Schindler 2003:570). When the coefficient ( $r$ ) has a value of one, it suggests flawless associations on the variables of interest.

### **6.12.2 Multicollinearity tests**

Multicollinearity denotes to an extraordinary level of inter-correlation amongst the study constructs (Bradley 2010:336). Shen and Gao (2008:517) state that multicollinearity indicates the greater extent of inter-correlation between the study constructs. Similarly, Bradley (2010:336) asserts that to eliminate problems of multicollinearity and to moderate the number of variables to reduced sets of factors, an examination must be carried out to uncover the underlying dimensions. Field (2000:445) posits that multicollinearity can be discovered by means of the determinants of correlation matrix, which in this study was calculated using SPSS: where the determinant was greater than 0.00001, which provided evidence that there is no multicollinearity. Field (2000:444) cautions that with the correlation matrix, to circumvent multicollinearity variables have to inter-correlate although not too highly as that could cause complications when varifying the contributions of variables to a factor. For a detail report on multicollinearity refer to section 7.8 and the results thereof are provided by Table 7.11.

The subsequent section presents a discussion on the exploratory factor analysis conducted in the study.

### **6.12.3 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA)**

This is a procedure performed to ascertain a suitable number of conjoint factors and to determine which variables realistically indicate the latent dimensions as suggested by Brown and Moore (2012:3). Malhotra (2010:739) describes EFA as a method of finding fundamental reasons that clarify the connections amongst a set of variables. In other words, this is a data-driven analytic approach which determines the nature of factors that represent the variation amongst a set of indicators. Therefore, EFA is a technique used to reduces variables into factors (Field 2013:627).

Consistent with Fornell and Lacker's (1981:41) suggestion, to decrease data with the aim of purifying the survey instrument before the SEM can be executed, the EFA must be carried out first. The primary intention of applying this first is to determine if discriminant validity concerns are end results of below par performance of (i.e. cross-loadings) items (Farrell 2010:324). The

degree of factor loadings of  $\geq 0.4$  as suggested by Hair et al. (2010:117), would be considered significant as the first condition for items to be reserved or deleted. In addition, where items seamlessly cross load on to two or more factors with a loading of  $\geq 0.4$  or greater, this would be another criterion used to delete items as they do not provide satisfactory evidence of discriminant as well as construct validities (Hair *et al.* 2010:117). This procedure also ensures that a factor is uni-dimensional and crucial to make first statements about the discriminance-validity of the relevant concept (Robson 2002:433).

#### **6.12.4 Procedures for exploratory factor analysis**

To establish if the data collected is appropriate for EFA, two of the most common statistical methods performed to ascertain the appropriateness of data for EFA involved in this study are the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) as well as the Bartlett's test of Sphericity (BTS) (Malhotra 2010:69). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was used as a guide that associated the extent of detected correlation coefficients, to the degree of limited correlations. The most frequently applied rule with this index is that KMO values between 0.5 and 1.0 are required (Field 2013:684-685). Correspondingly, the BTS was embarked to examine whether variables are uncorrelated and whether the perceived significance level is  $p < 0.05$  in the correlation matrix (Ledesma & Valero-Mora 2007:3).

Consistent with Hair et al. (2014:92) recommendations of using maximum likelihood extraction with varimax rotation, this study followed suit because it reflects the underlying structure of data. From a practical standpoint, the focal objective of EFA was to establish if the scale for each construct under study is uni-or multi-dimensional (Baglin 2014:1). The KMO and MSA results are presented in chapter 7 section 7.4, where the EFA procedure for dimensionality tests is reported by Table 7.5.

The next section presents a discussion on the confirmatory factor analysis procedure performed in this study.

### **6.13 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA)**

CFA concentrates on the notion that theory is the basis used to construct latent variables (Hair *et al.* 2014:599). McGrath (2005:122) posit that any relationship between two latent constructs would be unclear if the measurement reliability of the procedures had not been initially confirmed.

As soon as the primary structure of a set of data was attained through the EFA, the CFA was instituted to find out in what way the achieved measurement model matches with the data (Burton, Ryan, Axelrod, Schellenberger & Richards 2003:630). CFA was executed to determine if the interval scale items incorporated in the measuring instrument, could be assembled compatible to factors acknowledged by the EFA executed during the pilot study (Hair *et al.* 2014:599). The items used in the study's measuring instrument were employed as variables in the analyses. Prior to the valuation of the measurement model, the practice of item refinement was undertaken.

Hair *et al.* (2010:234) highlights the following concerns with regards to performing a CFA procedure:

- when using a model comprising five or less constructs, where each has in excess of three items having high item communalities  $>0.50$ , 100 respondents are acceptable;
- when using a model that has seven or less constructs and modest communalities, 150 respondents are adequate;
- when using a model containing seven or less constructs and low communalities, 300 respondents are adequate; and
- when using a model including a high number of variables, some having lesser communalities or having less than three items, 500 respondents or more are adequate.

The CFA consisted of all latent and manifest variables, namely; expectations (seven-item scale), involvement (seven-item scale), trust (seven-item scale), forgiveness (three-item scale), feedback (three-item scale), flexibility (three-item scale), information sharing and exchange (three-item scale) and fear of relationship loss (three-item scale). CFA confirmed the factor structures of the dimensions of relationship intentions and relationship-marketing measurement model with eight factors identified during EFA. The items with loadings that were lower than the minimum threshold of 0.50 were removed following the procedure endorsed by Chinomona, Dhurup and Chinomona (2013:7).

Hussain, Khan and Al-Aomar (2016:1309) state that CFA helps to provide an empirical representation of the underlying hypothetical construct. Subsequently, CFA allowed the testing of the hypothesis that verified that the association between perceived variables and their basic latent constructs does exist. Furthermore, CFA confirmed the number of primary factors of the instrument with factor loadings. Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow and King (2006:323) highlight that when CFA is used, the study employs a theoretical model to evaluate the population covariance matrix that is matched with perceived covariance matrix. The AMOS version 25.0 was

used to test the proposed study model (Arbuckle 2008:1). Built on the CFA, the significance of the measurement model was evaluated by examining the significance of item loadings.

A discussion on the measurement model is presented next.

### **6.13.1 The measurement model**

The measurement model explains the association among latent variables and manifest variables in a research study (Anderson & Gerbing 1988:414). In other words, the measurement model ascertains how the different indicators are associated to the factors including the relationship between indicator errors. With the use of AMOS, the competence of the measurement model was evaluated by performing CFA (Arbuckle 2013:1).

Bagozzi and Yi (2012:9) state that a suitable measurement model must first be generated before approximating and understanding the structural relationships between the latent variables. Hair et al. (2010:710) recommend that to calculate how best the data collected fits the hypothesised theoretical model, some fit indices must be reported. Since some of them consist of the Chi-Squared, comprising its degree of freedom value ( $\chi^2$  /Chi-square value and the linked points of autonomy ( $\chi^2$  /df), Goodness-of-Fit-test statistic (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) as well as Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and its related confidence intervals, encompassing Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which were key absolute fit indices performed to evaluate the measurement model fit (Van de Schoot, Lugtig & Hox 2012:487; Jackson, Gillaspay & Purc-Stephenson 2009:19). These fit indices are elaborated further as follows.

#### **6.13.1.1 Absolute fit indices**

Regulates by what means the proposed model reproduces the observed data. An approach that is usually performed to assess the model fit is the Chi-Square value (Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen 2008:54). The chi-square “assesses the magnitude of discrepancy between the sample and fitted covariance matrices” (Hu & Bentler 1999:3). Bagozzi and Yi (1998:77) add that the chi-square assesses the model fit by linking variances among the observed sample covariance and the model’s inferred covariance.

RMSEA is another index that was executed to measure the model fit (Blunch 2008:116). The RMSEA statistic is generally observed as the most informative fit indices (Martínez-López,

Gázquez-Abad & Sousa 2013:116). The RMSEA defined the level that the covariance matrix of the sample data fits with the model (Hooper *et al.* 2008:54).

According to Fadlelmula (2011:37), unlike the supplementary fit indices, the RMSEA focuses on examining the residuals which report inferior values that indicates the fit amongst the model and the data. Hu and Bentler (1999:2) signify that 0.06 threshold is the minimum acceptable value, while 0.08 is the proposed better perimeter (Van de Schoot *et al.* 2012:488; Steiger 2007:897). Hair *et al.* (2010:667) opine that the RMSEA statistic must be applied concurrently with other measures. The GFI is another measure of the model fit that this study used. In CFA, the GFI evaluates variances amongst the covariance matrix and the measurement model of the sample (McQuitty 2004:176). Miles and Shelvlin (1998:89) assert that for fitting models, the proposed minimum threshold for GFI is 0.90.

#### **6.13.1.2 Incremental fit indices**

Bentler (1990:238) mentions that these are applied to enhance the chi-square test. Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) provides another fit index known as the TLI (Hooper *et al.* 2008:55). TLI is used either to link other measurement model with a null model (Blunch 2008:115). Van de Schoot *et al.* (2012:487) as well as Hu and Bentler (1999:2) endorsed NNFI 0.90 as an acceptable threshold.

Hooper *et al.* (2008:55) posit that another incremental fit index is the CFI. The CFI associates the sample covariance matrix of the measurement model to that of a null model by considering the non-centrality and distribution values of model parameters and undertakes that all latent variables are uncorrelated (Schumacker & Lomax 2004:89). The minimum acceptable value for a good model fits with CFI is between 0.0 and 1.0, while a value of 0.90 is generally acceptable (Van de Schoot *et al.* 2012:487; Meyers, Garnst & Guarino 2006:608).

#### **6.13.2 Structural equation modelling (SEM)**

To examine the multidimensional relationships amongst the perceived and latent variables including the association between the underlying variables, structural equation modelling (SEM) must be performed. Malhotra (2010:729) describes SEM as an amalgamation of CFA and multiple regression analysis. A tool used to analyse multivariate data that is suitable for use in theory testing (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2010:630; Hair *et al.* 2010:776). SEM's objective is to determine



if the hypothetical model is sustained by the sample data (Schumacker & Lomax 2016:1). Thus, in testing the relationship amongst the constructs under investigation, SEM was undertaken.

SEM comprise two parts, namely the measurement model (confirmatory factor analysis) and the structural model (path analysis) (Zikmund et al., 2010:630). Malhotra (2010:725) state that unlike conventional analysis, SEM has numerous advantages including greater flexibility regarding assumptions (mainly permitting clarification despite multicollinearity). SEM permits the insertion of latent variables into the analysis and not restricted to relationships between constructs and observed variables. It allowed the study to measure any combination of relationships by concurrently examining a series of dependent relationships, while taking into consideration the possible errors of measurement amongst all variables. According to Arslan, Yilmaz and Aksoy (2012:323), structural models vary from measurement models with respect to the nature and prominence of connections amongst the constructs.

The hypotheses of this study involved relationships between variables that were previously tested in different contexts from other studies. The aim of testing the hypotheses was to validate findings from earlier studies. In so doing, a consolidation of analytical techniques was needed to reach interpretations on relationships among the dimensions of relationship intentions and relationship-marketing constructs comprising behavioural intentions. Arslan et al. (2012:328) posit that the structural model examines relationships amongst latent variables.

The structural model was estimated with the purpose of testing the postulated hypotheses presented in chapter 1 of this study. The structured model contained all latent variables, i.e. expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing/exchange, fear of relationship loss, relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intention. The correlations amongst the constructs were evaluated.

A number of fit indices including GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI and RMSEA were established and according to Bagozzi and Yi (2012:15), the use of these indices is a good exercise to evaluate and report on the measurement and model fitness. In evaluating the adequacy of the measurement and the structural model, the study followed the tolerable thresholds of model fit indices specified by Table 6.6.

**Table 6.6: Measurement and structural model fit indices**

Fit indexes	Acceptable levels
Chi-square	Values with non-significant p-value
(CMIN/DF)	< 3.00
(GFI)	$\geq 0.800$
(AGFI)	$\geq 0.800$
(CFI)	$\geq 0.900$
(TLI)	$\geq 0.900$
(RMSEA)	$\leq 0.080$

**Source: (Bagozzi & Yi 2012:15; Fornell & Larcker 1981:46)**

The next section highlights the various phases performed in the study's sample data to achieve the ultimate structural model.

### 6.13.2.1 Model specification

This was the first phase that dealt with the formulation of the study model, built on a theory and earlier studies in the field. This process initially specified the model by determining which parameters needs to be fixed or free (Malhotra 2010:728). The study model was established on an appropriate theoretical background outlined under the theoretical framework discussion in chapter 1, section 1.6 and the literature review in chapter 3 and 4 of th study.

To acquire unbiased estimates of the linear regression parameters, the study was also cognisant of the possibility of model misspecification. Model misspecification is when the study model made with regression analysis is in error (Berk, Brown, Buja, George, Pitkin, Zhang & Zhao 2014:422). In other words, if the study model does not account for all variables when the model is examined with regression analysis, it is misspecified. For instance, if important variables are not included or if irrelevant variables are included in the model for a variety of reasons, being by mistake or on purpose. Such a model could be misspecified, as it might fail to account for the relationship between the explanatory and response variables, also, it can have biased coefficients and error terms, which tend to have biased parameter estimations (Buja, Berk, Brown, George, Pitkin, Traskin, Zhao & Zhang 2016:423).

### **6.13.2.2 Model identification**

According to Blunch (2008:76), model identification is an evaluation of the degree to which the data sample are tolerable for parameter estimates or allow a distinctive solution to be initiated for regularities reserved in the theoretical model. Automatically, the data must comprise sufficient data solution points to cater for all parameters to evaluate. Schumacker and Lomax (2010:57) highlight that should there be an indefinite number of explanations and presence of insufficient data in the matrix for estimation, consequently the model will be under-identified. If that is the case, then the degrees of freedom are undesirable, suggesting that the model is under-identified and not suitable for parameter estimations to be initiated. In contrast, a model will be identified should only one solution be found, as the model comprises potential inter-relationships amongst variables and matches each data set, indicating that the same elements that are in the correlation matrix would be reproduced. This tends to happen with a just-identified model as it produces very similar results and perfectly fits because there exists zero degrees of freedom in the model.

Weston and Gore (2006:732) posit that over-identification of a model transpires only when surplus information to evaluate a SEM model as signified by diminution of the matrix exist. Over-identification infers that there is more than one way of assessing parameters as there is an overabundance of information in the correlation matrix (Schumacker & Lomax 2010:58). For that reason, possibilities of the model fitting the data poorly arise, leading towards failure to discard the null hypothesis as more than zero degrees of freedom exist. Thus, if excess information for evaluating the model is found, it advocates the existence of positive degrees of freedom and the model can be assessed and verified. In addition, once excess degrees of freedom are found, the more accurate the assessment is and the more significant the test will be (Schumacker & Lomax 2010:58). Furthermore, if the data fits well with the model, the significant relationship amongst latent and observed variables will be demonstrable. Accordingly, Blunch (2008:76) resonates that a model is identified once at any rate, there are various non-redundant equations in the matrix since there are constraints to be assessed.

### **6.13.2.3 Model estimation and fit**

Primarily, SEM is the initial phase of CFA, wherein estimations of a measurement model using the Cronbach's alpha threshold. Loehlin (2004:68) states that this is a process undertaken to produce from the model, an estimated covariance matrix  $\Sigma(\theta)$  of the population where preliminary values of the free parameters are selected. In the main, this is done to establish numerical values

for unknown parameters (fit a model to data means solving a set of equations) by means of an estimation technique (Bollen & Long 2010:136). Therefore, fitting a model is a process that starts with an initial fit, testing how the model fits, modifying the model, testing the fit once more, until the model fits sufficiently. Commonly used methods of model estimation in SEM are Maximum Likelihood, General Least Squares and Weighted Least Squares.

#### **6.13.2.4 Model testing**

To assess the model, a combination of model fit measures has been construed. According to O'Rourke and Hatcher (2013:149-150), three classes of model fit assessment are commonly found:

- Absolute fit indices which measure the overall goodness-of-fit.
- Comparative fit indices which evaluate the model fit relating to the null model.
- Parsimonious fit indices which determine the level of parsimony in the appraised models.

The goodness of fit is measured by associating the endogenous variable values with their expected values, largely in relation to the root mean squared error (O'Rourke & Hartcher 2013:148). With respect to the latent endogenous variables, the root mean squared error was assessed from the permanent model. Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2006:580-581) posit that when the  $t$ -value  $> 1.96$  and the ratio of path estimates was reached. The model fit assessment for this study was evaluated as per fit indices indicated in Table 6.5.

After examining the model for goodness-of-fit, the subsequent step was to assess paths amongst variables to regulate the statistical significance of paths with the application of SEM. Standardised path coefficients were carry out to measure the strength of associations amongst variables, where  $-1$  and  $+1$  was considered acceptable baseline point (Garson 2008:2). After the statistical impact of the standardised paths was analysed, the study explored the strength of relationships among the variables, taking note that at a significance level of 0.05 ( $p$ -value  $< 0.05$ ) the statistical significance can be achieved (Garson 2008:2).

#### **6.13.2.5 Model modification**

The arrangement of unconventional models in research is reinvigorated, even though the original SEM model exhibits satisfactory fit. The modification process of a model is embarked on through specification explorations that are established on the basis of theory. Jöreskog (1993:294) states

that a modified model should, however, also be retested against the same sample data. The purpose of doing this is to advance and regulate the model to encapsulate the following three properties:

- it makes theoretical sense;
- it is reasonably parsimonious; and
- its correspondence to the data is acceptable.

In addition, the other reason for embarking on this is to compare the two competing models with the aim of accepting the best possible fit grounded on the superiority and interpretation of the study outcomes (Hair *et al.* 2010:675).

#### **6.14 SUMMARY**

This chapter was undertaken to offer thorough details of the study's research methodology and its theoretical underpinnings. The formation of the study research design together with the process of selecting a suitable research sample were explicated. The concluding section of the chapter provided the data gathering procedures additional to the data analysis methods followed in this study.

The subsequent phase deals with the presentation and interpretation of the study results, explaining the implications and illustrating the applicable conclusions for managerial decision making process (Malhotra 2010:11). These phases are presented in chapters 7 and 8, where the results are presented, the findings are interpreted and recommendations are discussed. The following chapter provides discussions on the study results only.

**7.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology applied in this study. The basic approaches validating the reliability and consistency of the study's measuring instrument were explained. The research strategy and procedures used in collecting data were clarified. The objective of this chapter is to present the study results and deliberate on the findings of this study. The study results are presented with the use of tables and figures.

This chapter commences by presenting the study's preliminary results (the outcomes of the pilot survey). The results emanating from the main study are subsequently provided. Firstly, presentations on the EFA and CFA results are given. Then discussions on the statistical measures of accuracy tests results and the correlation analyses are provided. These are followed by a brief presentation of the multicollinearity and common method biased findings. The results of the study's measurement model fit and SEM findings will subsequently be presented. Lastly, the hypothesis test results are given, with a presentation of the study's reliability and validity of measurement scales concluding the discussions. The following section provides a discussion on the study's preliminary results.

**7.2 PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

This section provides the preliminary results of the study (pilot study) regarding questions included in the measuring instrument. This process was conducted to make sure that items found in the study's measuring instrument were properly structured to obtain the envisaged information and to verify that questions were clearly understood and correctly answered by the respondents. The measuring instrument used was divided into seven sections, which included: Section A (sample profile), Section B (dimensions of relationship intentions), Section C (relationship quality), Section D (commitment), Section E (satisfaction), Section F (loyalty) and Section G (repurchase intentions). The items from Sections B, C, D, E, F and G were based on a 5-point Likert scale measure: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree) and 5 (strongly agree).

The fieldworkers observed the potential respondents in conformity to screening questions to ensure that the study participants (civil and building contractors) purchased their concrete product requirements in the past six months or longer, from concrete product manufacturer-supplier

organisations (CPM) based in the Gauteng province. They also had to ensure that the respondents were the primary decision-makers who purchased from the selection of manufacturer-supplier organisations.

The subsequent section presents the reliability and validity of the study's measuring instrument.

### 7.2.1 Reliability and validity of the measuring instrument (Pilot study)

The appropriateness of the study questionnaire was assessed through reliability evaluations. A comprehensive literature review on relationship marketing constructs and an examination of the CPM's and the civil and building concrete product users informed the development of the study's measuring instrument. The research scales approved for use in the study were adopted from the measuring instruments developed by other researchers, as discussed in chapter 6 (section 6.6). Thus, the measuring instrument was deemed fit to measure the dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the construction environment.

A pilot study was restricted to (n=40) respondents which were drawn from the sample frame containing the target population using a systematic random sampling procedure. By computing Cronbach alpha coefficient values to test the consistency of each scale, the reliability of this study's measuring instrument was subsequently established.

Construct items for the dimensions of relationship intentions recorded the following Cronbach alpha values:  $\alpha = 0.73$  on **expectations** items,  $\alpha = 0.88$  on **involvement** items,  $\alpha = 0.87$  on **trust** items,  $\alpha = 0.97$  on **forgiveness** items,  $\alpha = 0.94$  on **feedback** items,  $\alpha = 0.96$  on **flexibility** items,  $\alpha = 0.91$  on **information sharing/exchange** items and  $\alpha = 0.91$  on **fear of relationship loss** items. As for the relationship marketing mediating factors, the following Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient values were computed. A  $\alpha = 0.96$  on **relationship quality** items,  $\alpha = 0.93$  on **commitment** items and  $\alpha = 0.77$  on **satisfaction** items. Lastly, with respects to the relationship marketing outcome factors, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient values returned  $\alpha = 0.91$  on **loyalty** items and  $\alpha = 0.83$  on **repurchase intentions** items. All alpha reliability values computed, surpassed the 0.60 internal consistency of measurement items endorsed by Malhotra (2010:319) and Field (2009:647), including the recommended threshold for internal consistency of the measurement items of 0.70 by (Pallant 2016:104; Hair *et al.* 2013:38-40; Nunnally 1978:245), consequently providing acceptable reliability results. Therefore, this advocates that the inter-item correlation between items measuring the study constructs were satisfactory (Andrew, Pedersen & McEvoy 2011:202).

Clark and Watson (1995:316) caution that the base line point with the average inter-item connection is a value within the range of 0.50 and 1. Inter-item correlation values that were too low suggested that some items could have been redundant or not properly measuring the construct. One item from Section B (Information sharing/exchange, B32) of the measuring instrument was reversed. This was done to moderate the inter-item correlation, which subsequently improved the reliability of the construct after being reverse coded. In addition, two items from section E (Satisfaction, E2 and E5) had low item-total correlations. After careful consideration, these items were removed to alleviate the low inter-item correlation. Consequently, the original number of five items from section E was reduced to three, which were used in the final questionnaire for the main study. Owing to the removal of two items (E2 and E5), the reliability of the construct (Satisfaction) improved from 0.575 to 0.774. The respondents from the pilot study were not incorporated in the analysis of the main survey. Table 7.1 presents the findings of the pilot study.



**Table 7.1: Results of the pilot study**

Scale	Means	Std. Dev. (SD)	Average item-total correlation	Cronbach Alpha ( $\alpha$ )	Number of items	Number of items deleted	Number of remaining items	Revised Cronbach Alpha
Dimensionsts of relationship intentions	3.800	0.799	0.780	0.90	37	0	37	0.897
Relationship quality	3.625	0.851	0.912	0.96	4	0	4	0.964
Commitment	3.787	0.777	0.798	0.93	6	0	6	0.929
Satisfaction	3.588	0.726	0.600	0.56	5	2	3	0.774
Loyalty	3.736	0.706	0.741	0.91	7	0	7	0.911
Repurchase intentions	4.069	0.663	0.685	0.83	4	0	4	0.829

The subsequent section offers discussions on the results obtained from the study's main survey.

### 7.3 MAIN SURVEY RESULTS

A total of 600 questionnaires were administered to the civil and building contractors from Gauteng province and 590 of them were returned. However, 30 of the returned questionnaires were unusable and consequently excluded for analysis owing to response errors, such as incomplete answers to the questions or either more than one option to a question was chosen. The following sub-section provides a discussion on the sample profile.

#### 7.3.1 Distribution of data

The descriptive statistics analysis for the main survey was provided to ascertain the respondent's (civil and building contractors) profile. Questions concerning the characteristics of the respondents were included to describe their biographical sets as discussed in chapter 6 (section 6.6) relating to section A of the measuring instrument. The main goal of Section A was to obtain information about what describes the study respondents. Table 7.2 illustrates the distribution of the respondent's profile, which discloses the sample profile with the frequency (N) and percentages (%) of each variable examined in Section A of the measuring instrument.

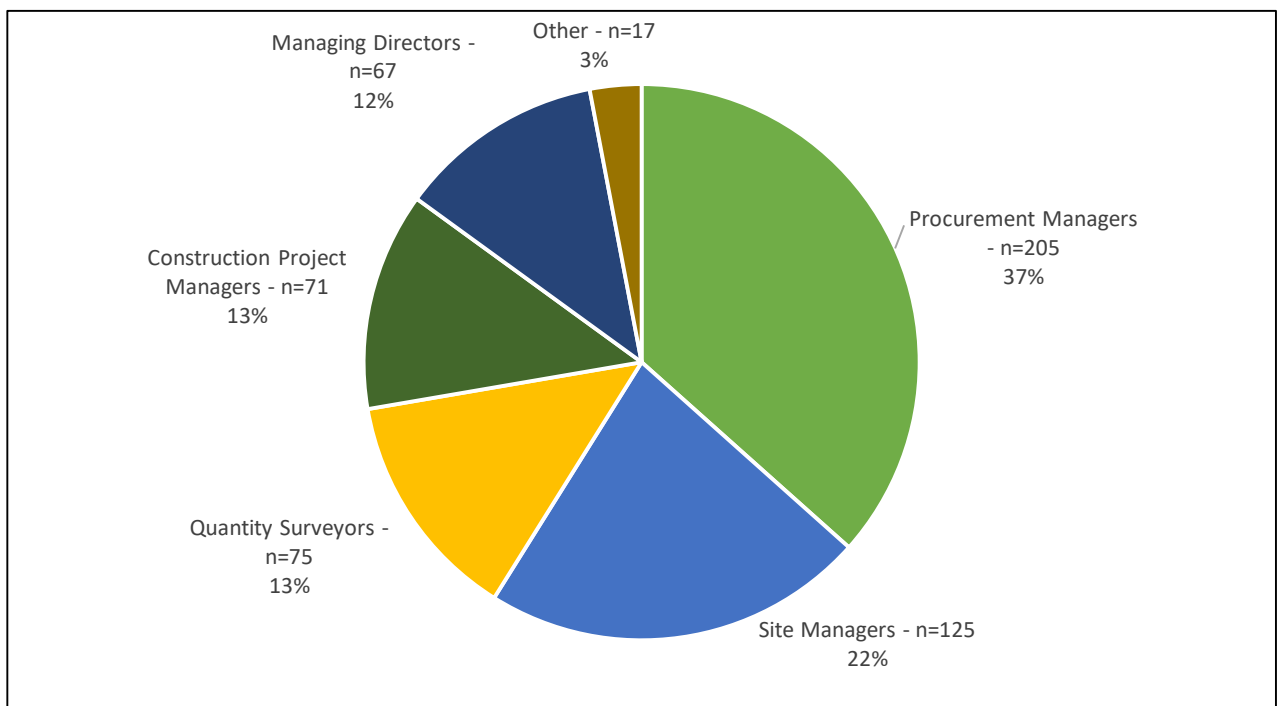
**Table 7.2: Sample profile**

<b>Position holding</b>	<b>Frequency (N)</b>	<b>Percentages (%)</b>
Managing Director	67	12
Procurement Manager	205	36.6
Site Manager	125	22.3
Construction Project Manager	71	12.7
Quantity Surveyor	75	13.4
Other.....	17	3
<b>Organisational specialty</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Civil works	105	18
General building works	122	21
Both	332	59
Other...	1	2
<b>CIDB grading</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Grade 1	1	0.2

Grade 2	2	0.4
Grade 4	5	0.9
Grade 5	232	41.4
Grade 6	128	22.9
Grade 7	82	14.6
Grade 8	83	14.8
Grade 9	27	4.8
<b>Frequency of purchases</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Bosun	46	8
Cast Industries	87	15
Concrete Units	60	10
Infraset	61	11
Kerbman	96	17
MVA	70	12
Rocla	37	6
Salberg	51	9
Technicrete	35	6
Vibro	15	2
Other: please identify:	2	4
<b>Period of support</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than 1 year	120	21.4
1 year or longer but less than 3 years	196	35
3 years or longer but less than 5 years	96	17.1
5 years or longer but less than 7 years	88	15.7
7 years and longer	60	10.8
<b>Total yearly expenditure.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
Less than R650 000.00	131	23.4
R1 000 001 – R6 500 000.00	202	36.1

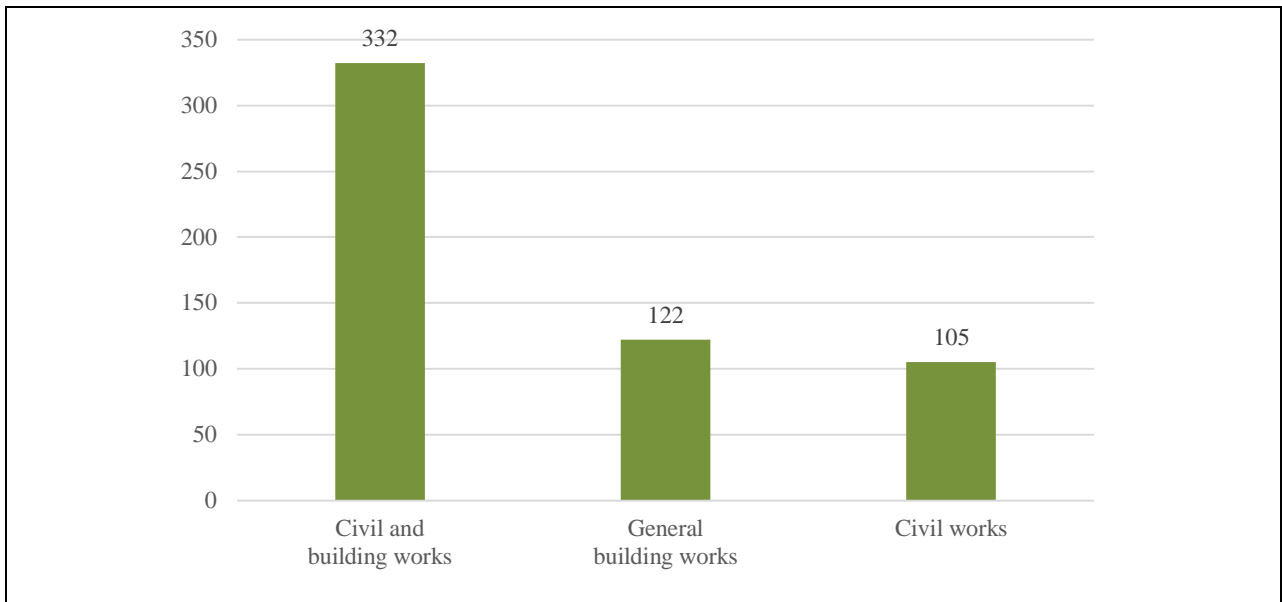
R6 500 001 – R13 000 000.00	90	16.1
R13 000 001 – R40 000 000.00	68	12.1
R40 000 001 – R130 000 000.00	50	8.9
R130 000 001 – and more	19	3.4

From Table 7.2, it is clear that the majority of respondents were Procurement Managers (n=205; 36.6%), followed by Site Managers (n=125; 22.3%), Quantity Surveyors (n=75; 13.4%), Construction Project Managers (n=71; 12.7%), Managing Directors (n=67; 12%) and others (n=17; 3%). Figure 7.1 illustrates the different positions held by the study respondents.



**Figure 7.1: Positions held by respondents**

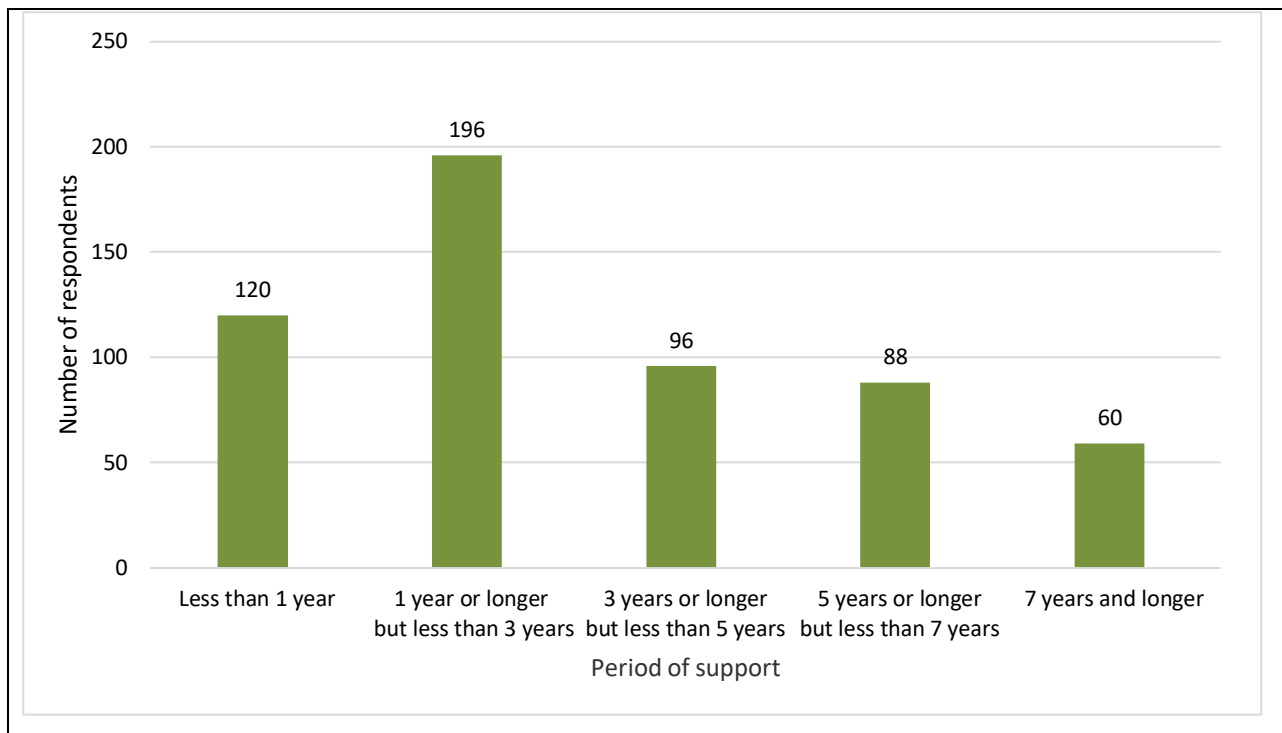
On questions relating to the respondent's industry registration and grading, 232 (41.4%) of them were registered with the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) as grade 5 contractors, followed by 128 (22.9%) grade 6 contractors, 83 (14.8%) grade 8 contractors, 82 (14.6%) grade 7 contractors, 27 (4.8%) grade 9 contractors, 5 (0.9%) grade 4 contractors, 5 (0.9%) grade 2 contractors, 2 (0.4%) and 1 (0.2%) grade 1 contractor. In terms of these respondents' organisational speciality, the majority of them specialise with both civil and building works (n=332; 59%), followed by those who focus only in general building (n=122; 21%) while (n=105; 18%) were those who strictly deal with civil engineering construction work. Figure 7.2 presents the spread of the respondents' organisational specialities.



**Figure 7.2: Respondents' organisational speciality**

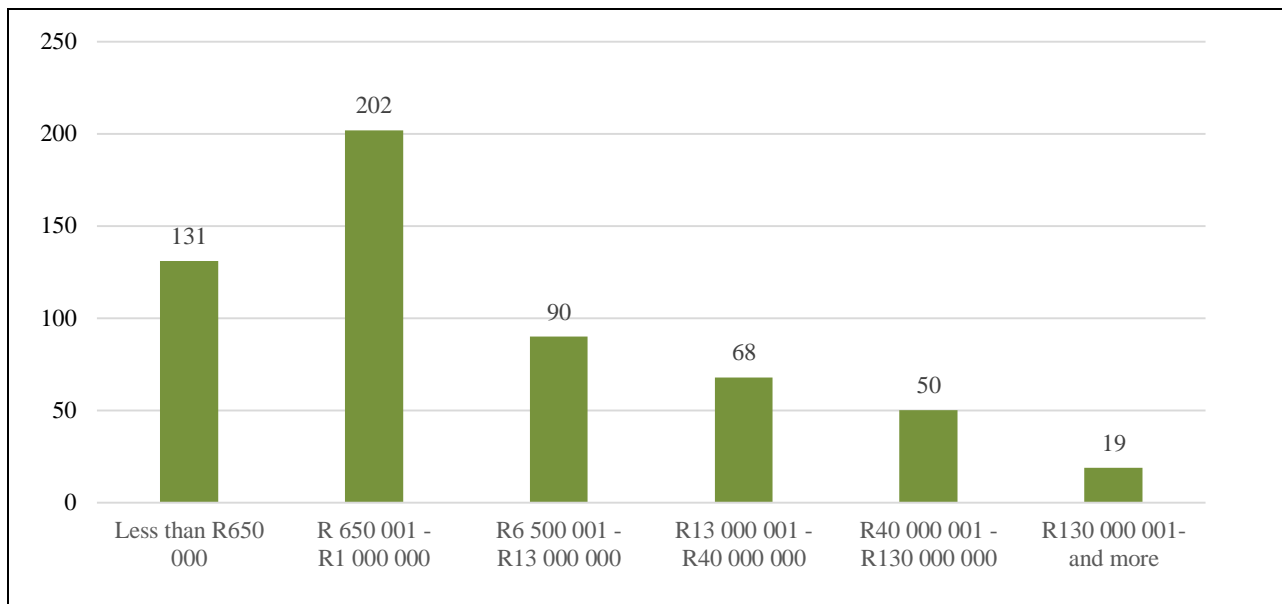
In terms of the distribution of respondents' frequency of concrete product purchases from their preferred CPM, 96 (17%) of them frequently purchased from Kerbman, followed by 87 (15%) who purchased from Cast Industries, 70 (12%) from MVA, 61 (11%) from Infracrete, 60 (10%) from Concrete Units, 51 (9%) from Salberg, 46 (8%) from Bosun, 37 (6%) from Rocla, 35 (6%) from Technicrete, 15 (2%) from Vibro and finally 2 (4%) of the respondents made their purchases from other concrete product suppliers.

Moreover, 196 (35%) of respondents have been supporting their preferred CPM for a period of one year or longer but less than three years, followed by 120 (21.4%) who supported the CPM for less than a period of one year. They are followed by 96 (17.1%) of respondents who supported the CPM for three years or longer but less than five years. Furthermore, 88 (15.7%) of the respondents supported their CPM for five years or longer but less than seven years. In addition, 60 (10.8%) of the respondents supported their CPM for seven years and longer. Figure 7.3 demonstrates the respondents' period of support to their preferred CPM.



**Figure 7.3: Respondents' period of support**

Regarding the respondents' total yearly expense rate on their concrete product requirements, 202 (36.1%) of respondents spend between R1 000 001.00 and R 6 500 000.00 a year with their preferred CPM. They were followed by 131 (23.4%) who spend less than R650 000.00 per year; 90 (16.1%) who spend between R6 500 001.00 and R13 000 000.00 per year, followed by 68 (12.1%) who spend between R13 000 001.00 and R40 000 000.00 per year; 50 (8.9%) of those who spend between R40 000 001.00 and R130 000 000.00 per year. Finally, 19 (3.4%) spend R130 000 001.00 and more on their concrete product requirements with their preferred CPM per year. Figure 7.4 presents the total yearly concrete product expenses of respondents with their preferred CPM.



**Figure 7.4: Respondents' concrete product yearly expenses**

Descriptive statistics including the means, standard deviations and variances of the constructs of the study are presented in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3: Mean scores and standard deviations of research variables**

Study constructs	Sample size (N)	Means	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Dev	$\bar{x}$ rank
<b>Dimensions of Relationship intentions</b>						
Expectations	560	4.496	2.30	5.00	0.550	1
Involvement	560	3.793	1.00	5.00	0.939	10
Trust	560	4.117	1.10	5.00	0.718	3
Forgiveness	560	3.966	1.00	5.00	0.915	6
Feedback	560	4.293	1.00	5.00	0.685	2
Flexibility	560	3.880	1.00	5.00	0.895	9
Information sharing/exchange	560	3.640	1.10	5.00	1.024	12
Fear of relationship loss	560	3.273	1.00	5.00	1.261	13
<b>Relationship marketing mediating factors</b>						
Relationship quality	560	3.767	1.00	5.00	0.919	11
Commitment	560	3.951	1.00	5.00	0.830	7

Study constructs	Sample size (N)	Means	Minimum	Maximum	Std. Dev	$\bar{x}$ rank
Satisfaction	560	4.003	1.00	5.00	0.836	4
<b>Relationship marketing outcomes</b>						
Loyalty	560	3.917	1.14	5.00	0.841	8
Repurchase intentions	560	3.985	2.00	5.00	0.698	5

The descriptive statistics indicate that all the study constructs have a mean above the mid-point 3 for the 5-point Likert scale as they all recorded means ranging between (3.273 and 4.496). The mean score of the respondents' **expectations** as an antecedent of relationship intention construct towards their CPM's relationship quality factor yielded a value of 4.496. This finding suggests that the respondents generally agree that the quality of relationship with their CPM as being of high standard as expected. The respondents' approach of giving their CPM **feedback** returned the second highest mean score of 4.293, related to other study constructs. This score shows that respondents are in agreement that they are influenced by the degree of communication received from their CPM in their formation of concrete product repurchase intentions. The mean score of **trust** is also high (4.117), compared with other mean scores of the dimensions of relationship intentions. This result suggests that the civil and building contractors' level of trust towards their CPM's degree of relationship quality is high in increasing their concrete product repurchase intentions. This finding is supported by Theron et al. (2013:387) who affirm that implementation of what was promised is a vital part of the relationship marketing concept.

The mean score of **forgiveness** was 3.966, signifying that there are dissimilarities in the manner in which the respondents deal with either service or product failure from their CPM's position and with respect to the level of relationship quality they portray. Solid relationships provide organisations some fortification following a service or product disappointment that has happened (Yu & Xie 2011:1). Customers who have a strong association with their organisations showed tolerance and a strong probability of forgiving their suppliers for poor service or product experiences (Kim, Ok & Canter 2012:60-61). The mean score of **flexibility** recorded a value of 3.880, signifying that the respondent's willingness to adjust towards their CPM's requests is high in improving their concrete product repurchase intentions. This finding also indicates that differences exist in the level of promptness that CPMs afford their customers in stimulating their functional-specific performances like service or product quality and supply speed (Yu *et al.* 2017:211-212). The mean score of **involvement** of 3.793, indicates that a difference in the criteria



that CPMs use in involving their customers when making their concrete product purchases exist. The lowest means scores were obtained from **information sharing/exchange** and **fear of relationship loss** factors, resulting in means scores of 3.640 and 3.273 respectively. This implies that the respondents are neutral in admitting the existence of these dimensions towards the CPM's relationship quality to be just ordinary.

**Relationship quality** reported a moderately high mean score of 3.767, while **commitment also** shows a high mean score of 3.951 indicating that the respondents shared a common view relating to their CPM's level of accountability towards their relationship. This result depicts that the civil and building contractors were contending with the level of treatment received from their CPM, as they also displayed their willingness to continue their business relationship with them. The summated mean score of **satisfaction** 4.003 indicates that customers are in agreement that civil and building contractors appear to be content and keen to continue repurchasing their concrete product requirements from the same CPM as they are content with the level of service or product performance received from them. As for the relationship marketing outcome constructs, **loyalty** yielded a mean score of 3.917, close to a mean score of 4, suggesting that the respondents were in agreement that they shared a common outlook relating to the level of dependability towards their CPM. The **repurchasing intention** reported a mean score of 3.985, which demonstrate that were in agreement that the respondent's intention to repurchase concrete products from the same CPM.

The next sub-section provides a discussion on the data normality tests for the study.

### 7.3.2 Data normality test

The values for skewness and kurtosis of between -2 and +2 are assumed satisfactory to demonstrate normal univariate distribution (Field 2013:89). All scaled items ranged between -0.019 to -1.200 for skewness values of and between 0.10 to 3.127 for kurtosis values, consequently falling within the baseline limit points. Therefore, it can be said that the spread of data for this study falls within the limits of a normal distribution. Table 7.4 in the next page provides the descriptive statistics including the skewness and kurtosis values of the study constructs.

**Table 7.4: Skewness and kurtosis values of study constructs**

	Valid cases	Missing cases	Skewness			Kurtosis		
			Sig.	Statistic	Std. Error of Skewness	Sig.	Statistic	Std. Error of Kurtosis
EXP	560	0.000	560	-0.50	0.103	0.000	-0.62	0.206
INV	560	0.000	560	-0.52	0.103	0.000	0.61	0.206
TRU	560	0.000	560	-0.50	0.103	0.000	0.60	0.206
FOR	560	0.000	560	-0.90	0.103	0.000	0.90	0.206
FEE	560	0.000	560	-1.00	0.103	0.000	2.40	0.206
FLE	560	0.000	560	-0.60	0.103	0.000	0.40	0.206
INF	560	0.000	560	-0.40	0.103	0.000	-0.40	0.206
FEA	560	0.000	560	-0.40	0.103	0.000	-0.40	0.206
REL	560	0.000	560	-0.40	0.103	0.000	0.00	0.206
COM	560	0.000	560	-0.30	0.103	0.000	-0.41	0.206
SAT	560	0.000	560	-0.60	0.103	0.000	0.90	0.206
LOY	560	0.000	560	-0.40	0.103	0.000	0.00	0.206
REP	560	0.000	560	-0.40	0.103	0.000	0.50	0.206

*EXP=Expectations; INV= Involvement; TRU=Trust; FOR=Forgiveness; FEE=Feedback; FLE= Flexibility; INF=Information sharing/exchange; FEA= Fear of relationship loss; REL=Relationship quality; COM= Commitment; SAT= Satisfaction; LOY= Loyalty; REP= Repurchasing intentions.*

The subsequent section provides discussions on the results of the exploratory factor analysis.

#### **7.4 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA) RESULTS**

Kumar et al. (2003:670) originally recommended five relationship intention measures valid in a B2B setting. This relationship intentions measure was adjusted and used in many B2C and a few B2B settings within various industries, except the concrete product environment, as discussed in chapter 1, section 1.3. An EFA was applied to determine if the newly proposed eight-construct measure could be used to examine the concrete product users' relationship intentions. To establish

if the data captured for relationship intention measures proposed for this study were suitable for EFA. The KMO and BTS tests were used as the most frequently utilised statistical tools for this purpose.

The EFA was conducted by means of the maximum likelihood extraction (MLE) using varimax rotation as it accurately reflects the underlying structure of data (Field 2013:642, 644). The varimax rotation was applied to identify the underlying factors constituting concrete product users' relationship intentions. For the measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) "values between 0.5 and 0.7 are mediocre, values between 0.7 and 0.8 are good, values between 0.8 and 0.9 are great and values above 0.9 are superb." (Field 2009:647). The findings of the KMO and BTS tests and the outcomes thereof are revealed in Table 7.5.

**Table 7.5: KMO measure and the Bartlett's test results**

CONSTRUCTS	KMO MEASURE	BARTLETT'S TEST		
		Approximate Chi-Square	Degrees of freedom	Significance level
Dimensions of relationship Intentions	0.899	13077.870	630	0.000
Relationship quality	0.834	1584.793	6	0.000
Commitment	0.879	1380.089	15	0.000
Satisfaction	0.679	326.911	3	0.000
Loyalty	0.842	1796.094	21	0.000
Repurchase Intentions	0.806	1162.644	6	0.000

An EFA procedure was undertaken on the dimensions of relationship intentions scale, relationship marketing mediating factors as well as the relationship marketing outcomes. The KMO assessment yielded sampling adequacy of 0.899 for the dimensions of relationship intentions, 0.879 for commitment, 0.834 for relationship quality, 0.842 for loyalty, 0.806 for repurchase intentions and 0.679 for satisfaction dataset for the overall measure, which all falls within the recommended KMO values. The BTS also generated a significant result ( $p < 0.01$ ) (Field 2013:647; Pallant 2013:199; Malhotra 2010:293) indicating factorability of the data set.

#### **7.4.1 Factor naming and extraction procedure (dimensions of relationship intentions)**

The interpretation of relevant features of the study items within each of the factors was done and the naming thereof undertaken. Since the factor structure of this study was coherent with the

descriptive framework and the investigators' observations, this signified good construct validity. This examination was undertaken to find out if items utilised to measure the respondents' dimensions of relationship intentions could be assembled together, following the constructs identified in the literature. Furthermore, the percentage of variance was clarified as well as the scree plot principle which steered factor extraction. None of the items cross-loaded on any of the factors and all factor loadings recorded  $\geq 0.5$ . From this time, the 36 items assessing the respondents' dimensions of relationship intention were retained (Hair *et al.* 2014:116). The EFA process ensued with the extraction of eight-factor structure, as shown in Table 7.6.

**Table 7.6: Rotated component matrix**

Description	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Factor6	Factor7	Factor8
If a situation arises in which we have different assumptions about our agreement, our current CPM is open to working out a new deal that is acceptable to both of us.	<b>.821</b>	.247	.155	.082	.157	.113	-.001	.082
When unexpected situations arise, and we disagree on how to proceed, our current CPM is open to working out a new deal that is acceptable to both of us.	<b>.821</b>	.227	.149	.040	.130	.004	.001	.102
Our current CPM is open to modifying our agreement if unexpected events occur.	<b>.807</b>	.199	.188	.065	.199	.044	-.010	.048
If our views differ regarding events in our relationship, our current CPM is open to developing a common understanding.	<b>.788</b>	.306	.122	.008	.142	.123	.012	.085
In this relationship, our current CPM is open to the idea of making changes, even after we have made an agreement.	<b>.757</b>	.140	.121	.118	.212	.124	-.040	.160
In this relationship, our current CPM makes it possible for us to make adjustments to cope with changing circumstances.	<b>.751</b>	.053	.049	.197	.138	.147	-.070	.199
Flexibility in response to requests for changes is a characteristic of our current CPM.	<b>.714</b>	-.036	.165	.357	.092	-.004	-.056	.144
In this relationship, it is expected that any information which might help the other party will be provided.	.126	<b>.813</b>	.032	.116	-.020	.089	-.006	.109
The parties are expected to keep each other informed about events or changes that may affect the other party.	.045	<b>.810</b>	.020	.135	-.074	.080	-.009	.133
We inform our current CPM in advance of our changing needs.	.122	<b>.793</b>	-.071	.091	.237	-.048	.040	-.032

Description	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Factor6	Factor7	Factor8
We share proprietary information with our current CPM.	.109	<b>.764</b>	-.074	.091	.265	-.012	.015	-.044
Our current CPM share proprietary information with us (e.g., about products in development phase, etc).	.325	<b>.728</b>	.042	.149	.090	-.016	.003	-.037
It is expected that the parties will only provide information according to pre-specified agreements.	.111	<b>.681</b>	.248	.099	.012	-.045	-.037	.110
Our current CPM keeps us fully informed about issues that affect our business.	.351	<b>.610</b>	.059	.330	.148	-.029	-.037	-.118
In our relationship, our current CPM can be counted on to do what is right.	.115	-.062	<b>.747</b>	-.003	-.015	.053	.050	.202
In our relationship, our current CPM is always faithful.	.209	.115	<b>.706</b>	.155	.170	.092	.048	.015
In our relationship, our current CPM has high integrity.	.082	.078	<b>.673</b>	.042	.317	.024	.111	.165
In our relationship, our current CPM is an organisation that we have great confidence in.	.081	.011	<b>.607</b>	.033	.068	.253	.053	.328
In our relationship, our current CPM can be trusted at times.	.337	-.018	<b>.574</b>	.130	-.009	.337	-.031	.120
In our relationship, our current CPM can be trusted completely.	.144	.270	<b>.544</b>	.307	.322	.145	-.063	-.059
In our relationship, our current CPM can be trusted at times.	.103	-.005	<b>.528</b>	.009	-.012	.350	.039	.167
We are concerned to lose quality products of our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	.156	.171	.132	<b>.838</b>	.112	-.082	-.009	.075
We are concerned to lose our relationship with our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	.202	.333	.088	<b>.817</b>	.135	-.001	-.001	.033
We are concerned that we might lose special privileges of our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	.216	.349	.107	<b>.814</b>	.112	-.042	.000	.027

Description	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3	Factor4	Factor5	Factor6	Factor7	Factor8
We will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is something below the standard, we expect from them.	.261	.145	.160	.098	<b>.830</b>	.003	-.003	.090
We will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is below the standard of other CPMs.	.319	.145	.188	.141	<b>.799</b>	.013	.041	.085
We will forgive our current CPM if we experience bad service from them.	.296	.146	.126	.129	<b>.788</b>	-.015	.001	.046
We care about the image of our current CPM.	.065	.041	.152	-.074	-.009	<b>.866</b>	.084	.006
We are proud when we see our current CPM's name or advertising materials.	.128	-.024	.172	-.033	-.041	<b>.817</b>	.077	.026
We are proud to be a customer of our current CPM.	.110	.019	.214	-.005	.066	<b>.816</b>	.009	.084
We expect our current CPM to offer us more value for our money than other CPMs.	-.050	-.009	.016	-.037	.009	.024	<b>.886</b>	-.012
We expect our current CPM's products to be better than other CPMs.	-.030	.025	.068	.021	-.019	.032	<b>.839</b>	.065
We expect our current CPM to offer us value for our money.	-.022	-.031	.075	-.004	.040	.103	<b>.837</b>	.085
We will tell our current CPM if their products meet our expectations.	.121	.050	.210	.023	.051	-.009	.026	<b>.818</b>
We will take time to tell our current CPM about their product quality so that they can improve.	.222	.036	.161	.022	.069	.085	.111	<b>.758</b>
We will tell our current CPM if their products are better than what we expect.	.187	.068	.231	.067	.060	.070	.022	<b>.752</b>

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.*

The extracted factors correspond with previous studies conducted in South Africa, although from different industries and from a B2C context. These studies also examined the dimensions of relationship intentions, such as Mostert and Luttig (2018:76-92); Kuhn and Mostert (2018:206-230); Pelser and Mostert (2016:29-50); Spies and Mostert (2015:473-495); Kruger and Mostert (2014:35-64); Delpont et al. (2011:277-293); Steyn et al. (2008:139-156) including Kumar et al. (2003:667-676). However, what is unique about this study is that from the five measures of relationship intention originally recommended by Kumar et al. (2003:670), this study proposes three additional measures, as discussed in chapter 4 (sub-section 4.3.6 to 4.3.8).

In Table 7.6, it is alluded that 36 items loaded satisfactorily, seven of them loading onto Factor 1, seven items loading onto Factor 2, seven items loading onto Factor 3, while three items each loaded onto Factor 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 respectively. The seven items which loaded on Factor 1, include; “communicate to the respondents’ appreciation of their CPM’s willingness to be flexible in dealing with their requests for changes and being open to new ideas”, including their changing circumstances. Yu et al. (2017:212) posit that if organisations can address flexibility in serving their customers, the end result thereof in terms of relational norms would ignite functional-specific performances such as product quality and delivery speed, which enthruses customers to come back and repurchase from the same CPM. Factor 1 was subsequently labelled *Flexibility*.

The seven items which loaded onto Factor 2, concentrated on the civil and building contractors’ and their CPMs’ inclination to share information about issues that affect their business relationship and keep informing each other about incidents that may affect their connection. Tong and Crosno (2015:168) highlight the importance of information sharing, which transforms into well-informed and content relational partners. Factor 2 was consequently labelled *Information sharing/exchange*.

Seven items loaded onto Factor 3, dealt with the respondents’ trust on their CPMs’ service delivery and product performance. Consequently, trust echoes the expectation and confidence of a relational partner to the other’s compassion, honesty and competence to perform in the best interest of their business relationship (Gilaninia, Danesh & Shahmohammadi 2012:10722). These findings support earlier studies, which found that the significance of trust amongst the relational partners is key, especially when switching costs are high (Akrouf & Diallo 2017:159; Wong & Sohal 2002:43). Factor 3 led to its label called *Trust*.

Factor 4 relates to civil and building contractors’ fear of losing their relationship with the CPM. The three items which loaded on Factor 4 included: “concerned to lose quality products of our



current CPM by switching to another”, including; “they are concerned that they might lose special privileges from their current CPM by supporting another supplier”. Jones, Reynolds, Mothersbaugh & Beatty (2007:337) maintain that any alleged loss of relationship benefit and relationship bonds including probable switching costs, increases customer concerns regarding the consequences which may arise, when their relationship with the organisation be terminated (Kumar *et al.* 2003:673). Consequently, customers who fear losing quality products and special relationship privileges, from their supplier organisation, demonstrates their relationship intentions (Kumar *et al.* 2003:674). Factor 4 was then considered ***Fear of relationship loss***.

Factor 5 relates to civil and building contractors’ readiness to pardon their CPM for poor quality of products or bad service, was loaded with three items. The three items which loaded on Factor 5, included: “we will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is something below the standard we expect from them”, “we will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is below the standard”, and “we care about the image of our current CPM”. Tsarenko and Tojib (2011:383) state that at times, even strong organisational relationships are susceptible to interruptions or face difficulties as soon as customer expectations are not met. In such relationships, rather than acting vengefully or holding a grudge, the aggrieved customer chooses to tolerate poor product or service experiences by forgiving the transgressor and allows for relationship restoration expecting to maintain their relationship (Mooney, Strelan & McKee 2016:45; Kim *et al.* 2012:60-61). Kumar *et al.* (2003:673) consequently recommend that customers’ inclination to pardon the organisation when their expectations are not met, or when wrongdoings happen, discloses their relationship intentions towards that organisations. Factor 5 was accordingly labelled ***Forgiveness***.

Factor 6 focused on the civil and building contractors’ level of involvement with their CPM as they are proud of their relationship, loaded with three items. These loaded on Factor 6 included; “care about the image of our current CPM”, included; “we are proud when we see our current CPM’s name or advertising materials” and “we are proud to be a customer of our current CPM”. The civil and building contractors’ responses advocated their pleasure of having a sound business relationship with their CPM, as they were delighted when they see their name on the advertising boards since they care about their image. Camra-Fierro *et al.* (2015:298-299) echo that this would be advantageous for the organisation as their involved customers not only provide recommendations for improvements, but also endorses their relational partner through confident word-of-mouth to others. Subsequently Factor 6 was labelled ***Involvement***.

Factor 7 focused on civil and building contractors' expectations of getting value for money and adequate service, loaded with three items. These loaded on Factor 7 included: "expect our current CPM to offer us more value for our money than other CPMs", included: "expect our current CPM's products to be better than other CPMs," and "expect our current CPM to offer us value for our money". Customers who display high relationship intentions raise progressive expectations and interest with respect to the quality of products and services rendered by their supplier organisation (Kumar *et al.* 2003:673). Correspondingly, since customers' expectations are shaped by their procurement practices, which develops against the standards set to measure product quality and services rendered, their forthcoming repurchasing decisions will be encouraged by how past transactions were experienced (Conze *et al.* 2010:52-53). Factor 7 was labelled ***Expectations***.

Finally, Factor 8 relates to civil and building contractors' consistency of feedback towards their CPMs' product and service delivery, loaded with three items. These loaded on Factor 8 included: "we will tell our current CPM if their products meet our expectations"; "we will take time to tell our current CPM about their product quality so that they can improve;" and "we will tell our current CPM if their products are better than what we expect". Fishbach, Eyal and Finkelstein (2010:518-519) state that customer feedback not only motivates criticism or flattering of the organisation; but a distinctive step is taken by the relational partners to improve their relationship by sharing positive or negative views and inclinations with their supplier organisation. According to Wirtz *et al.* (2010:364), these positive or negative comments assist organisations to identify strengths and weaknesses to either be reinforced or avoided in the quest to meet or exceed customer expectations and to improve their product and service offerings. Kumar *et al.* (2003:673) suggested that customers are more inclined to give positive or negative comments if they carry high relationship intentions. The items encompassing Factor 8 led to it be labelled ***Feedback***.

This section concludes the discussion around factor naming and the extraction procedure of dimensions of relationship intentions. In relation to the other remaining study constructs (relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions), an EFA was conducted, and these factors were found to be unidimensional.

The succeeding section presents a discussion on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis.

## **7.5 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA)**

In order to confirm the factor structure of the proposed eight-construct measure used to examine the concrete product users' relationship intentions were suitable for this study. All variables were

included as exogenous variables in the proposed study model using AMOS version 25.0. The CFA of the retrieved adjusted indices including the standardised residual covariance matrix, revealed that none of the items were deleted to adjust the model fit. While assessing the influence of items with their individual constructs signified by their particular individual items' factor loadings, the study established that acceptable factor loadings were reached. The factor loadings ranged between 0.53 and 0.89 from the measurement model. The Chi-Squared value achieved from CFA was significant at ( $\chi^2/df = 2.90$ ). However, considering the sample size of this study peaked at  $N=600$ , the Chi-square estimations could have been susceptible to small model inconsistencies as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1998:74), necessitating the model fit statistics to also be affected. Following Hooper et al. (2008:55) suggestion determining if a specified model fits the data was one important step in SEM. A distinction was made between the absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices and parsimony fit indices. Table 7.7 presents the fit indices.

**Table 7.7: Confirmatory factor analysis fit statistics**

Fit indexes	Acceptable levels	Fit Achieved
Chi-square $\chi^2$	Values with non-significant	4682.85
Degree of freedom (df)	p-value	1615
(CMIN/DF)	< 3.00 acceptable	2.900
(GFI)	$\cong 0.80$	0.78
(IFI)	$\cong 0.90$	0.87
(CFI)	$\cong 0.90$	0.87
(TLI)	$\cong 0.90$	0.85
(RMSEA)	$\leq 0.08$	0.06

Table 7.7 presented moderately acceptable fit indices. The Chi-square/degree of freedom (CMIN/df) ratio was less than 3 at 2.900 while the IFI, CFI and TLI were all slightly below the suggested 0.90 threshold reflecting a moderate model fit and GFI at 0.78 below 0.80 threshold also revealing a moderate model fit with the RMSEA less than 0.08 at 0.058. Given that CFA provided moderately acceptable model fit results not yielding the recommended values according to the cut-off criteria (Bagozzi & Yi 2012:15), this indicated a limitation of the hypothesised study model.

The following section discusses the study's statistical measure of accuracy tests.

## 7.6 STATISTICAL MEASURES OF ACCURACY TESTS

The accuracy of the study's measuring instrument was evaluated by using the reliability, including composite reliability. The following sub-section provides results on the reliability of the study-measuring instrument, followed by a discussion on validity.

### 7.6.1 Reliability analysis of the main survey

All Cronbach's alpha reliability values computed surpassed the internal consistency of measurement items endorsed by Malhotra (2010:319) and Field (2009:647), including the recommended threshold for internal consistency of the measurement items of 0.70 (Pallant 2013:104), consequently providing acceptable reliability results. Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient values for the dimensions of relationship intentions constructs ranged from 0.793 to 0.910. The remaining relationship outcome construct items recorded Cronbach's alpha values as follows: relationship quality = 0.910; commitment = 0.866; satisfaction = 0.718; loyalty = 0.861; and repurchase intentions = 0.875. The reliability values that confirm the capability of the study's measuring instrument to consistently measure all constructs are reported in section 7.13 below by Table 7.12.

#### 7.6.1.1 Composite reliability

To measure the internal reliability in this study, the composite validity was performed. The endorsed minimum threshold for composite reliability (CR) 0.70 and above was considered (Hair *et al.* 2008:38). The CR values for all the study constructs ranged between 0.71 and 0.94, suggesting the achievement of acceptable composite reliability levels. The internal consistency and equivalent of Cronbach's alpha coefficient were computed using a formula as an index of composite reliability proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981:45). A formula of composite reliability is presented below as follows:

$$CR_{\eta} = (\sum \lambda_{yi})^2 / [(\sum \lambda_{yi})^2 + (\sum \epsilon_i)]$$

Where  $CR_{\eta}$  = Composite reliability,

$(\sum \lambda_{yi})^2$  = Square the sum of the factor loadings;

$(\sum \epsilon_i)$  = Sum of error variances.

The findings of the composite reliability are also presented by Table 7.12.

## **7.6.2 Validity analysis of the main survey**

To measure the accuracy and to evaluate the precision of the measurement relative to what exists, the validity analysis was conducted (Zikmund *et al.* 2013:308). This was done with the application of EFA and CFA, which were used to determine if the different items from the study questionnaire, could be assembled together verified by constructs identified in the literature (Bagozzi 1994:342). The accuracy of the study questionnaire was heightened using content, construct, discriminant and predictive validities, as discussed next.

### **7.6.2.1 Content validity**

Preceding the development of the measuring instrument of this study, a detail review of the marketing literature was embarked to confirm the dimensions and outcomes of B2B relationship intentions of civil and building concrete product users from the construction environment. The scale items in the final measuring instrument sufficiently encapsulated the realm of the study constructs and accordingly, the content validity of the survey instrument was found to be satisfactory. Moreover, the study's measuring instrument was examined through a pilot study survey (n=40) to measure its suitability, as suggested by Malhotra (2007:287). In addition, the content validity was also ascertained through a thorough check by both the study supervisor and co-supervisors, including two academics in the field of marketing. Taking from the results of the pilot study, small modifications were made to improve the study questionnaire.

### **7.6.2.2 Construct validity**

To measure the construct validity of all the study constructs, the CFA was performed. The factor structure showed that all the items loaded on their respective constructs, thus affirming the construct validity of the scale items. The eight-factor model structure identified in the EFA was confirmed in the CFA, with an acceptable model fit, therefore providing additional confirmation of construct validity.

### **7.6.2.3 Convergent validity**

An evaluation of the study construct item loadings was conducted as an indirect indicator of satisfactory convergence between the constructs from the study model (Malhotra 2010:734). Convergent validity was measured by computing the AVE values. The formula that was applied to compute AVE for this study is provided as follows:

$$V\eta = \frac{\sum \lambda_{yi}^2}{(\sum \lambda_{yi}^2 + \sum \epsilon_i)}$$

Where AVE = (summation of the squared of factor loadings)/ (summation of the squared of factor loadings) + (summation of error variances)

Firstly, AVE was performed to evaluate convergent validity of thirteen constructs. With the exception of trust (0.42), satisfaction (0.46) and loyalty (0.46) constructs, item loadings were lower than 0.5 threshold endorsed by Fornell and Lacker (1981:46), indicating that minimal convergent validity exist, as recommended by Neuman (2006:59). Then the rest of the other constructs had item loadings above 0.5, as proposed by Bagozzi and Yi (1998:80), thereby affirming that convergent validity is present in the study. Table 7.12 presents a summary of the results for all AVEs ranging between 0.42 and 0.91, which validates the existence of convergence amongst the study constructs. In addition, by computing the Pearson's rho coefficients, convergent validity was verified. Both negative and positive path coefficient values amongst the study constructs ranged between  $r = -0.031$  to  $r = 0.807$  ( $p < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), as indicated by Table 7.11 in section 7.12 of the study.

#### 7.6.2.4 Discriminant validity

To confirm discriminant validity, the process of associating the AVE of all constructs with the highest shared variance amongst the constructs was undertaken (Bagozzi & Yi 1998:80). The AVEs were all higher than the shared variance for each of the study constructs and as a result, demonstrating the presence of discriminant validity. Only the the square roots of the AVEs for information sharing and fear of relationship loss constructs were 0.61 and 0.67 respectively, greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlation estimate of 0.120 amongst the two constructs. Additionally, the square roots of AVEs for all constructs were larger than the associations between all other constructs.

Furthermore, the results of discriminant validity measured by examining the inter-construct correlation matrix, revealed the inter-construct correlation values of less than 0.8 threshold recommended by Fraering and Minor (2006:284), confirming that discriminant validity exist among the study constructs. Moreover, by associating the AVE for all the study constructs with the greatest shared variance discriminant validity was validated. Table 7.12 depicts that the AVEs are greater than the maximum shared variance (SV) value for each construct, signifying the existence of discriminant validity.

### **7.6.2.5 Predictive validity**

The predictive validity was measured through SEM were the small-to-significant associations of constructs (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing/exchange, fear of relationship loss with relationship quality, relationship quality with commitment, commitment with satisfaction, satisfaction with loyalty and repurchase intentions, loyalty with repurchase intentions), as presented by Table 7.12. This finding endorses the occurrence of satisfactory levels of predictive validity of this study. The subsequent section provides a discussion on the inter-factor correlation analysis of the constructs under study.

## **7.7 CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS ANALYSIS**

An examination of associations among the study constructs was embarked upon in this section. The correlation assessment was undertaken to determine the presence of relationships among the constructs, including the strength and direction of their associations (Wen, Prybutok & Xu 2011:17). The Pearson's (product-moment) correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was calculated to examine the extent of linear associations between two or more variables, and to examine the existence of multicollinearity as well as the influence and manner of relations between the constructs. The examination was subjected to a two-tailed assessment of significance ( $p < 0.01$ ) and significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Table 7.8 in the next page provides the Pearson correlation matrix for the variables of the study.

**Table 7.8: Pearson correlation matrix**

	EXP	INV	TRU	FOR	FEE	FLE	INF	FEA	REL	COM	SAT	LOY	REP
EXP	1												
INV	.444**	1											
TRU	.466**	.216**	1										
FOR	.430**	.521**	.328**	1									
FEE	.543**	.377**	.427**	.375**	1								
FLE	.230**	.034	.438**	-.023	.072	1							
INF	-.041	-.015	.109**	-.018	.029	.131**	1						
FEA	.386**	.138**	.466**	.179**	.255**	.178**	.120**	1					
REL	.551**	.554**	.389**	.642**	.399**	.190**	.013	.215**	1				
COM	.470**	.424**	.296**	.535**	.272**	.188**	-.034	.180**	.705**	1			
SAT	.340**	.391**	.295**	.373**	.232**	.156**	.013	.216**	.573**	.606**	1		
LOY	.384**	.216**	.275**	.354**	.110**	.225**	-.045	.224**	.502**	.581**	.547**	1	
REP	.342**	.112**	.272**	.240**	.074	.236**	-.027	.235**	.413**	.503**	.433**	.688**	1

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), EXP=Expectations; INV= Involvement; TRU=Trust; FOR=Forgiveness; FEE=Feedback; FLE= Flexibility; INF=Information sharing/exchange; FEA= Fear of relationship loss; REL=Relationship quality; COM= Commitment; SAT= Satisfaction; LOY= Loyalty; REP= Repurchasing intentions.



### 7.7.1 Relationships among the study constructs

The correlation results obtainable in Table 7.8 show that the study constructs are positively interrelated with each other. Consistent with Choudhury's (2009:4) recommendation, the effect of the interrelationship between the study constructs were established as 0.0 to 0.1 (very weak or no relationship); 0.1 to 0.3 (weak relationship); 0.3 to 0.5 (moderate relationship) and 0.5 to 1.0 (strong relationship).

**Fear of relationship loss** revealed a strong association with relationship quality ( $r = 0.642$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result concurs with a study undertaken by Gwinner et al. (1998:109-110), which showed that customers choose to remain in business relationships with their suppliers on account of the confidence, special treatment and social benefits attained from such a relationship, as these differentiates customers who display high relationship intentions from those with low relationship intentions.

**Information sharing** also demonstrated a strong association ( $r = 0.554$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with relationship quality. This result advocates that the respondents efficiently share information with their CPM. Similarly, Chen, Chuang and Chen (2012:110), echo that effective information sharing and non-opportunistic behaviour can be promoted only if the relational partners have confidence in each other as they share common concerns about the well-being of their relationship.

**Flexibility** displayed a strong association with relationship quality ( $r = 0.551$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result corroborates with the results obtained by Fernie et al. (2010:894), which revealed that flexible arrangements play a major role in long-term relationships, as being flexible is an ever changing and practical competence that organisations can use to gain competitive advantages (Huo *et al.* 2019:152).

A moderate relationship between **forgiveness** and relationship quality was recorded ( $r = 0.399$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), signifying that at the point of purchase customers are tolerant of either a service or product disappointment, in this manner diminishing the possibility of switching to other competitors after experiencing frustrations (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670). This moderate association could possibly indicate that civil and building contractors who have high relationship intentions might pardon a first service or product disappointment but can be disappointed when let-downs happen again (Lovelock & Wirtz 2007:395-396).

Furthermore, a moderate relationship between **trust** and relationship quality was revealed, as there was evidence of associations as shown by correlation ( $r = 0.389$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This outcome

corroborates with the study undertaken by Rotenberg and Boulton (2013:230), which revealed that perceived relationship quality is associated with trustworthiness.

However, evidence of a weak relationship between **feedback** and relationship quality was found ( $r = 0.215, p < 0.01$ ). This result indicates the existence of a gap between the respondents' appetite to give their CPM's regular feedback, and the lack of enthusiasm from CPMs to do the same towards their concrete product customers. This advocates that the CPMs must deal with their concrete product users below par attitude of not giving feedback.

**Involvement** and relationship quality association had a weak relationship ( $r = 0.190, p < 0.01$ ), representing the presence of a gap between customers' and CPM's willingness to involve each other in their business endeavours. A plausible explanation for such a weak relationship could be attributed to the notion that the civil and building contractors regarded the CPM's extent of involving them in their business activities as not being of high importance.

**Expectations** which influence their concrete product repurchase intentions, also showed a very weak relationship with the CPM's relationship quality levels ( $r = 0.013, p < 0.01$ ). This weak association may be explained by the very nature of the relationship, which engages the customer non- permanently during project development and application.

**Relationship quality** revealed a strong relationship with commitment ( $r = 0.705, p < 0.01$ ). This result also corroborates with the findings from other studies, which advocate that feelings of affective attachment and sense of responsibility to an organisation are not independent of one another (Meyer, Allen & Smith 1993:538). This viewpoint validates Dwyer et al.'s (1987:14) classification of commitment in relational exchanges as the presence of an inherent or explicit initiative of interactive continuity amongst the exchange partners.

**Commitment** presented a strong relationship with satisfaction ( $r = 0.606, p < 0.01$ ), signifying that continued customer support provides organisations with the greatest value while striving to please and satisfy their customers' needs and requirements (Du Plessis *et al.* 2012:525). This finding corresponds with Liang and Zhang (2012:154) study, which revealed that the more customers anticipate that organisations will tailor their products and services to satisfy their needs, the more organisations are to some extent compelled to put prominence on satisfying their customers and preserve their relationship.

**Satisfaction** exhibited a strong and positively significant relationship with **loyalty** ( $r = 0.547, p < 0.01$ ). This result corresponds with findings by Mentz (2014:106), who found that satisfied

customers have the inclination to be more content and ultimately become loyal customers of their supplier organisations. This outcome supports the finding that customer satisfaction and loyalty are joint factors documented in extant literature, and as predictors of customer continued support (Amani 2015:144). As soon as the bond between the relational partners grows, organisations then gain customer attitudinal loyalty that paves the way towards the formation of customer continued support.

**Satisfaction** displayed a moderate and significant relationship with **repurchase intentions** ( $r = 0.433, p < 0.01$ ). This advocates that positive attitudes towards CPM's efforts to please their civil and building contractors are found. It is broadly confirmed in extent literature that increased satisfaction may reinforce the relationship with loyalty and increase customer repurchase decisions (Ha, Janda & Muthaly 2010:997). Accordingly, the results of the relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction and repurchase intention corroborates with previous research results of Bulut (2015:55) as well as Pratminingsih, Lipuringtyas and Rimenta (2013:104), where the researchers established that high satisfaction levels expressively motivate repurchase intentions. Taheri and Akbari (2016:21) as well as Voss, Godfrey and Seiders (2010:111) also reiterate that customers are satisfied when their actual experiences with their supplier exceeds their previous expectations. Therefore, satisfied civil and building contractors are more inclined to repurchase from their CPMs. **Loyalty** displayed a strong relationship with **repurchase intentions** ( $r = 0.688, p < 0.01$ ). Consequently, the finding indicates that devoted customers are prone to making repeat purchases from the same CPM. Earlier studies discovered that the driving forces of customer purchasing intention are energised by supplementary gains such as confidence, special treatment and social benefits attained from their supplier (Gwinner *et al.* 1998:109-110). In addition, Liang and Lai (2002:431) found that conveniences such as a payment options, price comparison, privacy and information content are some of the other functions that propel customer-purchasing intentions. Thus, loyal civil and building contractors are more likely to make repeat purchases with their CPMs.

## 7.8 MULTICOLLINEARITY TESTS

Hair *et. al.* (2014:193) state that higher levels of collinearity enhance the probability that a good predictor of the outcome will be insignificant and excluded from the model. On examining Table 7.11, there is no evidence of multicollinearity in this study as all associations among the study constructs are lower than +0.80 and -0.80 as advocated by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013:90). Also, all correlations are lower than 1 or -1, suggesting the non-appearance of multicollinearity in the data set.

## **7.9 COMMON METHOD BIAS REMEDIES**

Numerous scholars such as Podsakoff et al. (2012:539) and Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff (2003:539), have cited two key useful techniques to regulate common method biases. Firstly, to minimise the effect of method biases the study carefully designed the study procedure. Secondly, an application of statistical remedies to regulate the influence subsequent to data collection procedure was employed. The practical statistical remedies recommended for this study were used before data collection and after data analysis processes proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2017:881) as well as MacKenzie & Podsakoff (2012:542). The measures of the predictor and criterion variable were obtained from various sources.

Following Min et al. 's (2016:131) recommendations to avoid problems of measurement errors such as correlations to be either inflated or deflated, a self-administered measuring instrument was used in this study, when the researcher dealt with possible common method bias estimates of the reliability and validity of the measuring instrument that could appear. The scale items were carefully constructed by simplifying unusual terms, keeping questions simple, precise and concise, as well as avoiding the use of value concepts. Furthermore, double-barrelled questions were avoided, and the questionnaire was checked for conceptual overlap of items that measured different constructs. Negatively worded items were also not included in the questionnaire. Lastly, the Harman's single factor test was run using EFA by loading each variable and assess all unrotated factor solutions to determine if one single factor emerges or whether single general factor results to most of the covariance among the measures (Chang *et al.* 2010:179-180).

Common method bias was assessed using Harman's single factor test. Harman's test requires that all the variables (dependent and independent) being tested are placed in a factor analysis. In this study, common method bias did not constitute a problem as the highest single factor from unrotated factor analysis was 26.92%, which is less than the recommended threshold of 50%.

The following section presents a discussion on the assessment of measurement model fit.

## **7.10 ASSESSMENT OF MEASUREMENT MODEL FIT**

Prior to the testing of hypothesis using AMOS 25.0, CFA was undertaken using the maximum estimation likelihood to measure the suitability of the measurement model in line with the two-stage process, suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988:418). This was done in order to test the measurement properties of constructs in the conceptual model. The measurement model was evaluated by examining the significance of the item loadings of all the constructs. All items scored

factor loadings above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.50 and as such no items were deleted. Table 7.9 in the next page presents the measurement model fit indices of the study.

**Table 7.9: Measurement model fit indices**

Fit indexes	Acceptable levels	Model fit results	Decision
Chi-square (CMIN/DF)	< 3.00	2.422	Acceptable
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	$\geq 0.800$	0.824	Acceptable
Comparative fit index (CFI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.903	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.904	Acceptable
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.900	Acceptable
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq 0.080$	0.050	Acceptable

Based on acceptable model fit (Table 7.9), the measurement model fitness was tested by means of absolute fit indices, which showed that the CFA yielded satisfactory fit: chi-square value which normalised over degree of freedom ratio ( $\chi^2/df$ ) = 2.422. Hair et al. (2010:666) point out that the chi-square statistic has a tendency of being susceptible to the effects of large samples, which is why other goodness-of-fit indices were developed. The GFI = 0.824, RMSEA = 0.050, CFI = 0.903 and IFI = 0.904 as well as TLI = 0.90. The measurement model generated statistical values that were corresponding with recommended thresholds for good model fit (Bagozzi & Yi 2012:15). Subsequent to the validation of the measurement model, the resultant phase was the evaluation of the structural model.

### 7.11 STRUCTURAL MODEL FIT ASSESSMENT (SEM)

The structural model path analysis was tested to confirm the proposed relationships established by the CFA. To determine the structural model fitness, SEM with the maximum likelihood estimation was undertaken by applying AMOS 25.0. The model indices examination showed a satisfactory fit for the structural model. Table 7.10 encapsulates the structural model outcomes.

**Table 7.10: Structural equation model fit indexes**

Fit indexes	Acceptable levels	Study model fit results	Decision
Chi-square (CMIN/DF)	< 3.00	2.272	Acceptable
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	$\geq 0.800$	0.825	Acceptable
Comparative fit index (CFI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.912	Acceptable
Incremental Fit Index (IFI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.912	Acceptable
Tucker-Lewis index (TLI)	$\geq 0.900$	0.901	Acceptable
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	$\leq 0.080$	0.048	Acceptable

To establish the fitness of the structural model, absolute fit indices ( $\chi^2/df$ ), GFI, CFI, IFI, TLI and RMSEA indices were used. The fit indices reported by the model are within the approved limits, as recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (2012:15), signifying the fitness of the model to the data. The structural model fit indices as indicated on Table 7.10 are greater than the minimum satisfactory threshold for all indices (Bagozzi & Yi 2012:15; Anderson & Gerbing 1988:418). The results of the structural model fit assessment of the model validated the outcomes of the measurement model that confirmed the fitness of the data set. This advocated that the recommended research study has the prospects of clarifying the dimensions of relationship intentions behaviour and the long-term buyer-supplier repurchase intentions of concrete products in the South African construction industry.

## 7.12 RESULTS OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Following the acceptable outcomes of the measurement and structural models' evaluation, the subsequent phase in the study was the testing of the hypothesised construct relationships. AMOS Version 25.0 was used to carry out SEM to confirm the suggested hypotheses, with the quest to evaluate the relationships among latent variables (Sarstedt & Mooi 2014:257). The path coefficients that originated from SEM clarified all recommended hypotheses and both statistically significant and insignificant relationships of all the hypotheses at a level of  $p < 0.01$  and  $p < 0.05$ . The  $p$  value indicates a level of confidence, which, therefore, means that the hypothesis is supported and significant.

This study's hypothesis is supported once the statistical significance is reached at a significance level of 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), in line with recommendations by Ellis and Steyn (2003:51). In addition, the satisfactory level of significance at  $p < 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$  as progressed by by Zikmund and Babin (2010b:542), were taken into account. Table 7.11 presents the study's hypotheses testing results.

**Table 7.11: SEM hypotheses testing results**

Paths	Path coefficient	p-values	Standardised estimates	t-values	Hypotheses results
EXP→REL	0.002	0.958	0.046	0.052	H1: Not supported
INV→REL	0.082	0.009	0.032	2.598	H2: Supported $p < 0.05$
TRU→REL	0.123	0.074	0.069	1.785	H3: Not supported
FOR→REL	-0.031	0.363	0.034	-0.909	H4: Not supported
FEE→REL	-0.082	0.139	0.056	-1.478	H5: Not supported
FLE→REL	0.282	0.000	0.038	7.451	H6: Supported $p < 0.01$
INF→REL	0.080	0.024	0.035	2.253	H7: Supported $p < 0.05$
FEA→REL	0.284	0.000	0.028	10.078	H8: Supported $p < 0.01$
REL→COM	0.805	0.000	0.059	13.592	H9: Supported $p < 0.01$
COM→SAT	0.807	0.000	0.060	13.496	H10: Supported $p < 0.01$
SAT→LOY	0.698	0.000	0.061	11.527	H11: Supported $p < 0.01$
SAT→REP	0.298	0.000	0.083	3.593	H12: Supported $p < 0.01$
LOY→REP	0.531	0.000	0.107	4.970	H13: Supported $p < 0.01$

*EXP=Expectations; INV= Involvement; TRU=Trust; FOR=Forgiveness; FEE=Feedback; FLE= Flexibility; INF=Information sharing/exchange; FEA= Fear of relationship loss; REL=Relationship quality; COM= Commitment; SAT= Satisfaction; LOY= Loyalty; REP= Repurchasing intentions.*

Drawing from Table 7.11, it is evident that only nine path coefficients are significant and supported in relation to the hypotheses proposed for this study.

The **first hypothesis (H1)** hypothesised that customer expectations have a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. This hypothesis was not supported as this study found no relationship between civil and building contractor's expectations and their

CPM's relationship quality and **H1** was rejected (path coefficient = 0.002, t-value = 0.0520, p= 0.958). It is important to note that an examination of the correlation between customer expectations and their CPM's relationship quality also yielded a very weak association ( $r = 0.013$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The **second hypothesis (H2)**, the study postulated that involvement has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. The empirical results show that customer involvement positively influences CPM's relationship quality (path coefficient = 0.082, t-value = 2.598,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis **H2** was supported. This result is in line with findings by Nammir, Marane and Ali (2012:33), that customer involvement in a customer-organisational relationship is largely associated with the supplier organisation's relationship quality. Furthermore, the confidence in customer-organisational relationships could be improved when high levels of customer involvement are practised (Hess, Fannin & Pollom 2007:26). This suggests that CPM's should view customer involvement as a critical factor in understanding B2B relationships, since proper customer participation in relational activities can enhance their profitability and sustain the relationship (Nielsen 1998:441; Dwyer *et al.* 1987:12-13).

The **third hypothesis (H3)** proposed that customer trust has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. Primarily, the study revealed a weak relationship (path coefficient = 0.123, t-value = 1.785) between the respondent's trust and their CPM's relationship quality and thus, **H3** was not supported. The path coefficient value 0.124 represented a weak relationship between trust and relationship quality. However, the findings in this study advocate that the respondents' level of trust towards their CPM's degree of relationship quality seems not always to translate into more customer centred behaviour.

The **fourth hypothesis (H4)** posited that customer forgiveness has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. The study found no significant relationship between the respondents' forgiveness and their CPM's relationship quality. **H4** was as a result not supported (path coefficient = -0.031, t-value = -0.909). These findings are consistent with Chung and Beverland's (2006:98) supposition that the process of forgiveness begins with the dissatisfied relational partner's cognitive determination to understand the supplier's disappointment. The aggrieved partner becomes less encouraged to discipline the perpetrator by not imposing any punishment towards them.

The **fifth hypothesis (H5)** proposed that feedback has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. The results of the hypothesis testing presented a negative causal relationship between the two constructs (path coefficient = -0.082, t-value = -



1.478). This outcome suggests that although regular feedback inspires corrective measures of improved performance and behaviour, in this study it emerged that the frequency and extent of customer feedback towards their CPMs did not at all times translate into positive effects towards their relationship quality. Thus, hypothesis **H5** was not supported.

The **sixth hypothesis (H6)** predicted that flexibility has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. It emerged from the study that flexibility positively influences CPM's relationship quality, as indicated by a moderate (path coefficient value = 0.282, t-value = 7.451,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hypothesis **H6** is thus supported. These results are consistent with the proposition of the Theory of Planned Behaviour that states that intention drives performance of the behaviour (Ajzen 1991:181). Therefore, the support established for this hypothesis underlines the need by concrete product manufacturer-supplier organisations to realise the significance of being flexible in their operations when marketing their products.

The **seventh hypothesis (H7)** suggested that information sharing/exchange has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. Thus, hypothesis **H7** is supported (path coefficient value = 0.080, t-value = 2.253,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding suggests that rapid and frequent flow of information between the relational partners is more likely to prompt their relationship to last. This argument resonates with Devlin and Bleackley's (1988:20) study which revealed that information sharing is a significant predictor of relationship continuity. Varki and Wong's (2003:89) study also revealed that handing out information influences the relational partners' interest in relationship building.

The **eighth hypothesis (H8)** posited that fear of relationship loss has a positive influence on concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship. First, the study showed significant yet moderate relationship (path coefficient = 0.284, t-value = 10.078, ( $p < 0.01$ ) between fear of relationship loss and relationship quality. The hypothesis **H8** is therefore accepted. This finding is consistent with Bojel et al. (2013:171) who found that customers continue the business relationship because of the relational benefits entrenched in their relationship, enthused by confidence, social and special treatment benefits which they do not want to lose. In addition, Dagger et al. (2011:273) claim that because customers know what to expect from their supplier organisation (confidence benefits), they also obtain personal understanding, gratitude and attachment from their supplier organisation's personnel (social benefits), along with reduced prices and tailored product offerings (special treatment benefits). These benefits enable the development of relational bonds when they interrelate properly over time (Liang & Wang 2006:125; Homburg

*et al.* 2003:44). Therefore, civil and building contractors who fear losing their relationship with CPM disclose their intent to continue their business relationship (Kumar *et al.* 2003:670).

The **ninth hypothesis (H9)** postulated that there is a positive relationship between concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality and commitment. The empirical outcomes of the study provide evidence that CPM's relationship quality positively and significantly impacted their level of commitment towards their relationship with the civil and building contractors (path coefficient = 0.805, t-value = 13.592,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hypothesis **H9** is accepted. High levels of commitment demonstrate the significance of the relationship that capitalises on the efforts to guarantee relationship continuity (Van Tonder & De Beer 2018:6; Hajli 2014:17). Wong and Sohal (2002:43) stress that when high levels of commitment are experienced, there is similarly a higher level of obligation to make the relationship prosper and reciprocally satisfying. Therefore, the importance of supplier commitment towards the relationship is reinforced by its strong relationship with the overall relationship quality, as it tends to form a positive overall impression towards the entire relationship duration (Macintosh & Lockshin 1997:487).

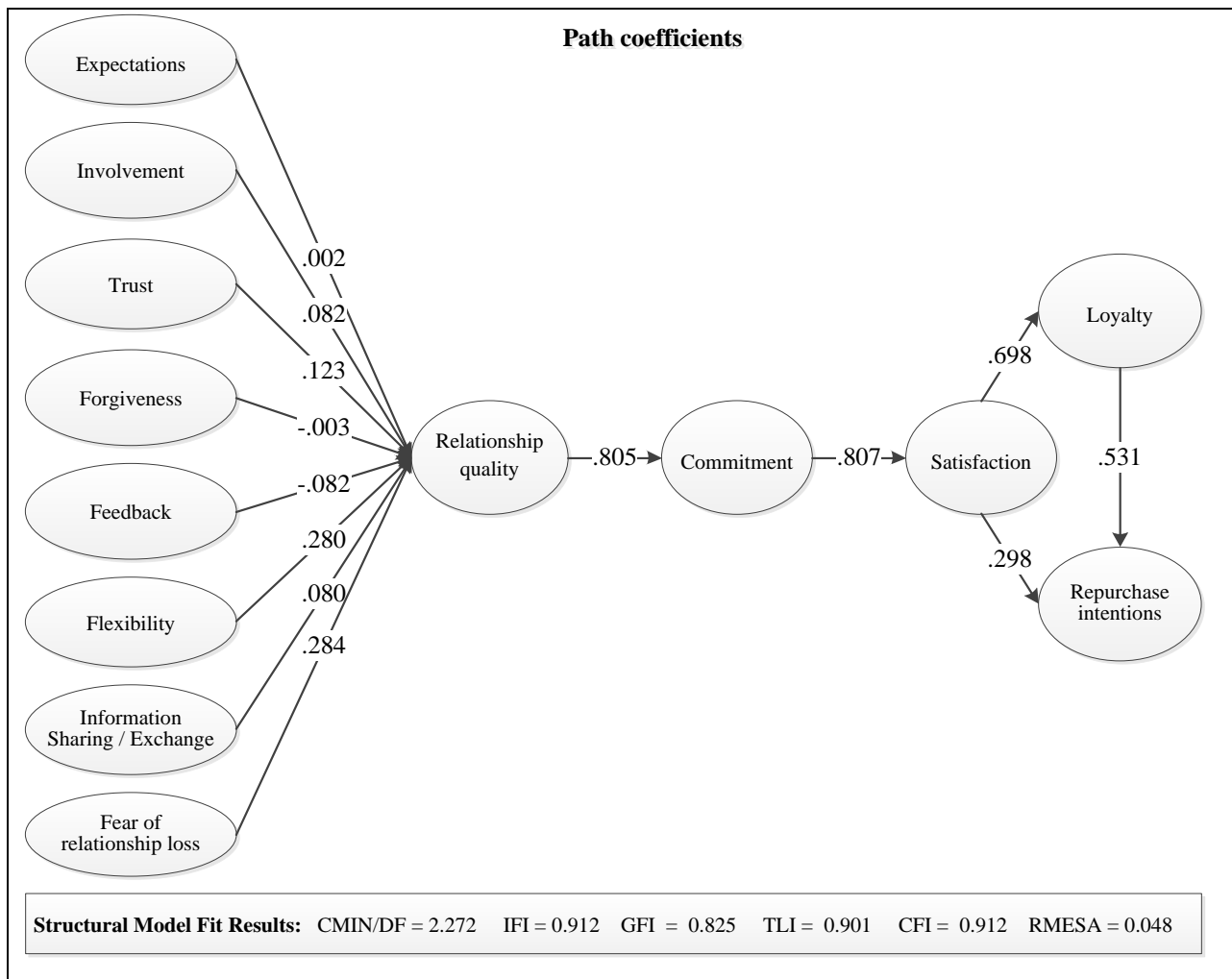
The **tenth hypothesis (H10)** proposed that concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment has a positive effect on civil and building contractor's satisfaction. The hypothesis **H10** is accepted. CPM's commitment positively and significantly influenced civil and building contractor's satisfaction levels (path coefficient = 0.807, t-value = 13.496,  $p < 0.01$ ). These results are in line with Espejel *et al.*'s (2011:209) study, which, revealed that customer satisfaction is a direct outcome of buyer's commitment. Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007:836) also found that prospects of an ongoing B2B relationship are significantly affected by the level of commitment exhibited by suppliers' in as far as intensifying customer relationship satisfaction going forward.

The **eleventh hypothesis (H11)** proposed that there is a positive relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction and loyalty. The empirical results provided ample evidence that civil and building contractor's level of satisfaction positively and significantly affected their level of loyalty towards their CPM (path coefficient = 0.698, t-value = 11.522  $p < 0.01$ ). This finding was further supported by a strong correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.547$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between satisfaction and loyalty. Hypotheses **H11** is accepted. These results are congruent with a study undertaken by Zeithaml *et al.* (2009:109) whereby it was found that intensified levels of customer satisfaction are associated with high levels of loyalty. Contrariwise, Hui, Wan and Ho (2007:974) as well as Jones and Sasser (1995:89), caution that even though there seems to be a positive association between customer satisfaction and loyalty, this association is not linear as fulfilled customers may still switch to other suppliers. Additionally, it was proposed by Fečiková (2004:57) that customers

who are satisfied with their product or service supplier organisation are more credible to come back, as opposed to disgruntled customers who would perhaps defect. In noting these concerns, supplier organisations must concentrate more on determining specific fundamentals that develop customer loyalty (Reichheld 1996a:58).

The **twelfth hypothesis (H12)** proposed that there is a positive relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction and repurchase intentions. The significance of satisfaction towards repurchase intentions is well documented in the literature (Dabholkar & Sheng 2012:1433; Hong & Cho 2011:469; Huddleston, Whipple, Mattick & Lee 2009:63). Hypothesis **H12** is accepted (path coefficient = 0.298, t-value = 3.593  $p < 0.01$ ). This result resonates with Amani (2015:144) and Selnes' (1998:305) findings that satisfaction seems to be a reliable predictor of repurchase intentions.

The **thirteenth hypothesis (H13)** posited that there is a positive relationship between civil and building contractor's loyalty and repurchase intentions. This hypothesis **H13** was supported (path coefficient = 0.531, t-value = 4.970  $p < 0.01$ ), demonstrating that the respondent's loyalty inspired their concrete product repurchase intentions. The high level of loyalty shown by the respondents demonstrate the possibility of a successful running of a B2B relationship, which is mostly true in the later stages (long-term and final stages) of the relationship development process (Bagdoniene & Zilione 2009:16; Rauyrueen & Miller 2007:21). It is also being confirmed in marketing literature that improved strong relationship loyalty subsequently improves customer repurchase intentions (Fang *et al.* 2014:402; Lin & Lekhawipat 2014:597; Ha *et al.* 2010:997). Figure 7.5 illustrates the hypothesised structural path results of this study.



**Figure 7.5: Hypothesised structural path results**

The following section discusses the study’s reliability and validity of the measurement scales.

### 7.13 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF MEASUREMENT SCALES

As one of the study objectives was to propose a theoretical framework that clarifies dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in B2B concrete product environments in the South Africa construction industry. The measurement scales related to the questionnaire were subjected to reliability and validity tests in order to confirm that the items measured what they intended to measure. Firstly, the study questionnaire was responsively aligned with the study’s research objectives. The pilot study results were used to perfect and make the mandatory modifications to the final study measuring instrument.

On examining the psychometric properties of the thirteen constructs with a 36 indicator measurement model, the reliability test of the measuring instrument and the content, construct, convergent, discriminant and predictive validities were performed to ensure validity. The thirteen

constructs included expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, fear of relationship loss, information sharing/exchange relationship quality, commitment, satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale revealed satisfactory results and the internal consistency of measurement items were acceptable as recommended by Malhotra (2010:319) and Field (2009:647). The CR was also assessed and found to be acceptable as suggested by (Hair *et al.* 2006:8).

As for the validity tests, consistent with Malhotra (2010:734-735) recommendations, the convergent validity was measured by means of factor loading and AVE, which insist on the factor loading values to be greater than 0.5 and for this study, acceptable loadings were achieved for majority of the constructs except trust (0.42), satisfaction (0.46) and loyalty (0.46) respectively. Table 7.12 presents the accuracy analysis statistics of the study.

**Table 7.12: Reliability and validity measures**

Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	AVE $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$	Shared variance	Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item total	$\alpha$ Value					
Expectations (EXP)	B1	4.50	0.55	.663	0.83	0.83	0.62	0.47	0.02	.759
	B2			.723						.845
	B3			.661						.748
Involvement (INV)	B4	3.79	0.94	.696	0.84	0.84	0.64	0.52	0.05	.792
	B5			.758						.869
	B6			.667						.740
Trust	B7	4.11	0.72	.504	0.83	0.83	0.42	0.38	0.22	.491
	B8			.613						.662
	B9			.547						.682
	B10			.592						.650
	B11			.630						.693
	B12			.584						.676
	B13			.588						.663
Forgiveness (FOR)	B14	3.97	0.92	.809	0.89	0.89	0.74	0.63	0.16	.875
	B15			.818						.908
	B16			.740						.787
Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	AVE $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$	Shared variance	Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item total	$\alpha$ Value					
Feedback (FEE)	B17	4.29	0.69	.638	0.79	0.79	0.56	0.41	0.06	.761
	B18			.660						.763

Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	AVE $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$	Shared variance	Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item total	$\alpha$ Value					
	B19			.610						.719
Flexibility (FLE)	B20	3.88	0.895	.695	0.94	0.94	0.68	0.66	0.30	.694
	B21			.780						.851
	B22			.742						.732
	B23			.819						.834
	B24			.853						.917
	B25			.820						.871
	B26			.802						.869
Information sharing (INF)	B27	3.64	1.024	.759	0.89	0.87	0.50	0.61	0.31	.703
	B28			.723						.689
	B29			.714						.653
	B30			.679						.620
	B31			.589						.548
	B33			.678						.832
	B34			.752						.847
Fear of relationship loss (FEA)	B35	3.27	1.261	.826	0.91	0.90	0.75	0.67	0.41	.907
	B36			.775						.797
	B37			.839						.895
Relationship quality (REL)	C1	3.77	0.919	.697	0.91	0.71	0.91	0.86	0.49	.782
	C2			.825						.889
	C3			.851						.869
	C4			.816						.830
Commitment (COM)	D1	3.95	0.830	.658	0.87	0.87	0.52	0.46	0.36	.703
	D2			.687						.752
	D3			.640						.709
	D4			.635						.709
	D5			.657						.676
	D6			.695						.765
Satisfaction (SAT)	E1	4.00	0.836	.518	0.72	0.77	0.46	0.29	0.30	.649
	E3			.551						.660
	E4			.550						.727
Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	AVE $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$	Shared variance	Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item total	$\alpha$ Value					
	F1	3.917	0.841	.608	0.86	0.85	0.46	0.50	0.47	.616

Research construct		Descriptive statistics		Cronbach's test		CR	AVE	AVE $\sqrt{\text{ROOT}}$	Shared variance	Factor loadings
		Mean	SD	Item total	$\alpha$ Value					
Loyalty (LOY)	F2	3.985	0.698	.692	0.88	0.86	0.61	0.56	0.47	.717
	F3			.772						.788
	F4			.655						.677
	F5			.568						.603
	F6			.633						.695
	F7			.538						.621
Repurchase intention (REP)	G1	3.985	0.698	.694	0.88	0.86	0.61	0.56	0.47	.685
	G2			.752						.737
	G3			.727						.843
	G4			.762						.850

#### 7.14 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented and interpreted the findings of the empirical study. Initially, discussions on the preliminary results of the study. The analysis of quantitative data collection using preliminary analysis through data coding and a normality test to assess the distribution of scores. The outcomes of the data normality test suggest that the data were normally distributed and non-parametric statistics were utilised. The means and standard deviations were undertaken to describe the respondent's data profile. A report on the pilot study was then given where the reliability and validity of the study questionnaire were also explained and found to be accurate to carry out the main study survey.

Deliberations on the data analysis carried out on the data set through descriptive analysis were given. The accuracy of data was assessed for reliability and validity. Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) results were presented. The discussions on the results of the EFA, CFA and SEM were given and the overall fitness of the study measurement model was indicated. The measurement and structural model fitted well with the data. Subsequently, the study proceeded with a hypothesis testing discussion and a presentation of the study accuracy analysis statistics including a discussion of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales which concluded the chapter. The next chapter provides the main conclusion, recommendations and implications of the study.

## **8.1 INTRODUCTION**

The preceding chapter empirically established the dimensions of civil and building contractor's long-term relationship intentions regarding their concrete product manufacturer-supplier organisations. SEM was conducted to validate the proposed study hypotheses. The results of the hypotheses testing revealed that involvement, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss constructs, are the main dimensions influencing long-term B2B relationship building that leads to customer loyalty and repurchase intentions.

This chapter presents a summary of the achievement of the theoretical and empirical objectives of the study. Then a report on the hypothesis assessments is provided. Recommendations for marketing practitioners, the contributions of this study, its limitations and implications for future research are alluded to. The next section discusses how the study objectives were achieved.

## **8.2 ACHIEVEMENT OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The primary, theoretical and the empirical research objectives of this study are discussed in this section to exemplify their fulfilment within the framework of the study. Several theoretical, primary and empirical research objectives are formulated and the outcomes thereof are presented.

### **8.2.1 Achievement of the primary objectives**

The primary objective of the study presented in chapter 1 section 1.7.1 was to examine the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in a B2B concrete product environments in the South African construction industry. The study gained civil and building contractors' (customers) insights of their ongoing experiences about their CPM's (suppliers) levels of relationship quality and commitment, which influenced customers' satisfaction and loyalty levels, leading to their repurchase intention of concrete products on a continuous basis. To accomplish the primary objective, a set of theoretical and empirical research objectives were examined as discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

### **8.2.2 Achievement of the theoretical objectives**

The theoretical objectives were accomplished with a comprehensive review of secondary sources from textbooks, peer reviewed research journal articles, conference proceedings, published and



unpublished thesis and the internet. Table 8.1 presents an outline of how the theoretical objectives presented in chapter 1, section 1.7.2 of the study was addressed.

**Table 8.1: Accomplishment of the theoretical research objectives**

<b>Specific research objective</b>	<b>Theoretical research objective being addressed</b>	<b>Section where the research objective was addressed</b>
Theoretical objective 1	To review the literature on dimensions of relationship intentions in B2B marketing environments. This objective was accomplished through a detail literature review.	Section 4.3.1.1, 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3, 4.3.1.4, 4.3.1.5, 4.3.1.6, 4.1.3.7 and 4.3.1.8
Theoretical objective 2	To conduct a literature review on relationship marketing theory. This objective was achieved through a broad literature review.	Section 5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.2, 5.2.1.3 and 5.2.1.4
Theoretical objective 3	To provide a literature synthesis on the benefits of relationship marketing in B2B marketing environments. This objective was achieved through a literature review.	Section 3.7.1 and 3.7.2.
Theoretical objective 4	To evaluate literature on the challenges of implementing relational exchanges in B2B marketing environments. This objective was achieved through a literature review.	Section 3.7.5
Theoretical objective 5	To propose a theoretical framework that clarifies dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in B2B concrete product environments in South Africa. A theoretical framework was hypothesized to demonstrate how the dimensions of relationship intentions associates with the projected study constructs.	Section 1.7.3

The first theoretical research objective involved conducting a comprehensive literature review on the dimensions of relationship intentions, which was accomplished in sections 4.3.1.1, 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3, 4.3.1.4, 4.3.1.5, 4.3.1.6, 4.1.3.7 and 4.3.1.8 respectively. Section 4.3 discussed the dimensions of relationship intentions, which influence civil and building contractors' willingness to engage in relational exchanges and procure concrete products from the same CPM organisation on a long-term basis. In the same breath, it was important to provide an overview of the

construction industry. Taking from the literature review, it was revealed that as a starting point for strategic maximum relationship marketing outcomes (Wei *et al.* 2013:60), before engaging in long-term relational exchanges, organisations must first identify and classify customers following their relationship intents (Kumar *et al.* 2003:668). Section 4.3.1 provided an overview of the foundation of relationship intentions.

The second theoretical research objective was to conduct a literature review on the relationship marketing theory (RMT), covered in section 5.2.1. This study was imbedded on the principles of the social exchange theory (SET), supported by the prominent theory of reasoned action (TRA) and the theory of planned behaviour (TPB). Accordingly, the literature supported the notion that using SET and RMT in a B2B context within a concrete product environment, business customers experience a stimulating encounter with their suppliers and feel the need to return the favour, which inspire their long-term relationship intentions.

The third theoretical research objective intended to provide a literature synthesis on the benefits of relationship marketing in B2B marketing environments. This objective is achieved in sections 3.7.1 and 3.7.2, wherein an evaluation of the relational benefits towards customers and organisations derived from engaging in relational exchanges was made. The fourth theoretical research objective envisioned to evaluate literature on the challenges of implementing relational exchanges in B2B marketing environments. This objective was achieved in section 3.8.5, where it was revealed that it is not a simple task to implement long-term relationship marketing strategies and as thus, organisations are urged to only identify customers who exhibit long-term relationship building intentions since they are easy to manage.

The fifth theoretical objective formulated for this research was to propose a theoretical framework that clarifies dimensions and outcomes of relationship intentions in B2B concrete product environments in South Africa. This objective is attained in section 5.3. The theoretical framework demonstrated how the dimensions of relationship intentions links with the proposed and measured study constructs that leads to the envisaged study outcomes.

The succeeding sub-sections elucidate how the empirical research objectives of the study were achieved.

### **8.2.3 Achievement of the empirical objectives**

In view of addressing the research problem by gathering data from the study respondents, a set of empirical objectives articulated in section 1.7.3 were formulated. The first empirical research

objective was to confirmed and expanded Kumar *et al.s*' (2003) five-factor model of relationship intentions with three measures to eight dimensions. This empirical research objective was achieved as Kumar et al's (2003) five-factor model and its measures were confirmed and three additional dimensions (trust, flexibility and information sharing/exchange) were tested and found that all three positive influence concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality towards their civil and building contractors, which lead to outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intentions) in B2B marketing environments.

The second empirical research objective was to examine civil and building contractors' perceptions of the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions, which lead to outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intentions) in B2B marketing environments. This empirical research objective was achieved through an examination of various mean scores of constructs as demonstrated in section 7.3.1 in Table 7.4.

The following mean scores were recorded, expectations = 4.50, involvement = 3.79, trust = 4.12, forgiveness = 3.97, feedback = 4.29, flexibility = 3.88, information sharing/exchange = 3.64 and fear of relationship loss = 3.27. These results demonstrated agreeability from the study respondents, whereby the mean score value of the civil and building contractors' perceptions of the dimensions of relationship intention component ranged from 3.27 to 4.50. The third empirical research objective aimed at determining the association between the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions on manufacturer-suppliers' relationship quality among civil and building contractors. This objective was addressed and achieved in section 7.6. The correlation analysis disclosed a significant amount of association between the dimensions of relationship intention and their CPM's relationship quality.

The fourth empirical research objective intended to examine the impact of the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions on manufacturer-suppliers' relationship quality with civil and building contractors. This objective was achieved in section 7.11 through a test of various hypotheses. The findings of the hypothesis test revealed that the dimensions (involvement, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intention did have a significant and positive influence on CPM's relationship quality.

The fifth empirical research objective was to examine the association between concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality in relation to their `relationship commitment which

was found. This empirical objective was attained in section 7.6. The correlation analysis revealed that a significant positive relationship between the CPM's relationship quality and the level of commitment toward their relationship with their concrete product users does exist. The presence of a significant relationship among the two constructs was confirmed ( $r = 0.705$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The sixth empirical research objective examined the predictive relationships of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality towards their relationship commitment. This objective was achieved in section 7.11 by conducting hypothesis testing. its findings revealed the presence of a significant positive relationship among relationship quality and commitment (path coefficient = 0.805, t-value = 13.592,  $< 0.01$ ).

The seventh empirical research objective determined the association of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment towards their civil and building contractors' satisfaction. This objective was accomplished in section 7.6 wherein a significant positive correlation between CPM's level of commitment towards their civil and building contractor's level of satisfaction was found ( $r = 0.606$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

The eighth empirical research objective aimed to examine the predictive relationships of concrete product manufacturer-supplier's commitment towards civil and building contractor's satisfaction. The hypothesis test confirmed that CPM's level of relationship commitment was a significant determining factor of civil and building contractors' satisfaction ( $p < 0.01$  level, path coefficient = 0.807, t-value = 13.497).

The ninth empirical research objective examined the association of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and repurchase intentions. This empirical objective was established in section 7.6.1. The correlation analysis revealed that a strong and significant ( $r = 0.433$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) positive relationship exists among satisfaction and repurchase intentions.

The tenth empirical research objective examined the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and repurchase intentions. This objective was achieved in Section 7.11 by conducting hypothesis testing, which resulted in a strong relationship among the respondent's satisfaction levels and repurchase intentions (path coefficient = 0.805, t-value =13.592).

The eleventh empirical research objective examined the association of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and loyalty towards their concrete product manufacturer-supplier. This empirical objective was attained in section 7.6. The correlation analysis results ( $r = 0.547$ ,  $p <$

0.01), showed a strong significant relationship with satisfaction displayed by the civil and building contractors and loyalty towards their CPMs.

The twelfth empirical research objective aimed to establish the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' satisfaction and loyalty towards their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers. This objective was achieved in Section 7.11 by conducting a hypothesis test, which ascertained the presence of a positive relationship between civil and building contractor's satisfaction and loyalty from the same CPM (path coefficient = 0.698, t-value = 11.522).

The thirteenth empirical research objective examined the association of civil and building contractors' loyalty and their repurchase intentions of concrete products. This empirical objective was accomplished in section 7.6. This objective was achieved by conducting a correlation analysis, which revealed that a positive correlation between loyalty and repurchase intentions constructs ( $r = 0.688, p < 0.01$ ) existed.

The fourteenth empirical research objective intended to establish the predictive relationships of civil and building contractors' loyalty and their repurchase intentions of concrete products. This objective was achieved in section 7.11 by conducting hypothesis testing. The findings of the hypothesis test discovered the existence of a significant positive relationship among the respondent's loyalty and their repurchase intentions (path coefficient = 0.531, t-value = 4.970), signifying that the civil and building contractor's loyalty levels certainly impacts their concrete product repurchase intention from the same CPMs.

### **8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Taking from this study's research outcomes, the resulting recommendations are put forward for marketing practitioners and CPMs:

#### **8.3.1 Resource investment**

Drawing from the study outcomes that the dimensions (involvement, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intention does have a significant and positive influence on CPM's relationship quality, a vital point of departure with relationship marketing practices, especially when deciding on which customers to target, it recommended that CPMs managers must invest more of their resources in relationship marketing practices towards customers who display the willingness to engage in such operations. The importance of doing so originates from the substance that growing solid customer relationships stimulate improved customer satisfaction, loyalty and repurchase intentions (Kotler & Armstrong 2013:59; Adjei *et*

*al.* Noble 2009:494). The study concurs with Kumar, Sunder and Leone's (2015:65) assertion that organisations must focus on the prominence of assigning their marketing resources in money-spinning customer relationships and invest in suitable customers in pursuit of long-term profitable gains.

### **8.3.2 Developing efficient CPM relationship quality**

The study revealed both positive and negative results on the association between civil and building contractor's perceptions of the dimensions of relationship intentions towards their CPM's relationship quality. The following antecedents of relationship intentions (expectations, trust, feedback and forgiveness) showed insignificant relationship results with their CPM's level of relationship quality. This result reflects that the CPM's marketing initiatives were possibly not credible enough to meet the civil and building contractors' expectancies, reliance and reaction, as they seemed to perceive the extent of relationship quality presented to be of an insignificant value. This outcome showed that the CPM's resourcefulness had a minimal influence towards the development of civil and building contractor's concrete product repurchase intentions.

Against this backdrop, other dimensions (involvement, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intention, exhibited significant causal relationship with CPM's relationship quality. Accordingly, in order to enhance the civil and building contractor's B2B relationship goals of concrete product repurchase intentions, it is recommended that the CPMs focus on investing more in relationship marketing strategies. This recommendation is recognised as a vital business philosophy in which organisations emphasise on customer satisfaction while realising their long-term profits (Kurtz 2012:11).

Therefore, the significance of relationship-marketing is for supplier organisations to go all out in gathering customer perceptions on what their inclinations are, in meeting their needs and requirements (Ellis, Fitchett, Higgins, Jack, Lim, Saren & Tadjewski 2011:134). In addition, it is recommended that the efficiency of CPMs relationship quality must be assessed by measuring customers' attitudes toward their supplier's level of relationship excellence, and by assessing their short and long-term relationship outcomes. For instance, when CPMs dispatch customer orders they should be wary of their views regarding the quality of products and service rendered. Therefore, it is recommended that CPMs should adopt suitable methods such as loyalty programmes to increase customers' positive attitudes towards the organisation and its offerings.

### **8.3.3 Understanding the veracity of commitment**

Against the background of the current unpredictable and very competitive market environment, it is recommended that CPMs should consistently represent themselves as reputable suppliers over their competitors by reassuring their customers. This can be done by introducing social responsibility programmes, product development and innovations as value attributes that are commonly perceived as benefits and means of displaying supplier commitment (Verma 2012:65-66; Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello 2009:572). In addition, the effectiveness of product and service supply and quick response to urgent orders necessitate care for CPMs, since this is an opportune moment to distinguish themselves from competitors.

Ritter and Walter (2012:136-137) as well as Kotler and Keller (2012:561) resonate that quick supply and delivery of products and services are essentials that customers look for in determining the level of commitment when dealing with a specific supplier. According to Upton (1994:75), CPMs who use the value chain by ensuring persuasive on-time order achievement, flexibility in decision-making and transportation of goods will accomplish a positive customer encounter in a form of astute relationship quality, resulting in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

### **8.3.4 Harnessing customer satisfaction**

The study discovered that customer satisfaction as a relationship marketing construct is important for civil and building contractors to heighten their level of loyalty towards their CPM's offerings. It is therefore recommended that marketing practitioners and CPMs improve their customers' satisfaction as it plays an essential part in relationship marketing, leading to outcomes of loyalty and repurchasing intentions. Thus, customer satisfaction must be measured and achieved in an all-inclusive manner of escalating delightful customer experiences (Szwarc 2005:12). According to Hoffman and Bateson (2010:293), this can be done by directly measuring customer satisfaction. Direct measures can be achieved by using customer satisfaction surveys concerning matters ranging from product or service, organisational image and customer perceptions (Sarлак 2011:212).

### **8.3.5 Integrating loyalty and customer repurchase intentions**

The study revealed civil and building contractors' extent of loyalty towards their CPM to be significant, leading them to repurchase their concrete products from the same supplier. Against this background, it is recommended that CPMs must improve their loyalty programmes and monitor the period of customer support, in the quest to enhance their relationship longevity

(Bolton, Kannan & Bramlett 2000:95). The reason for monitoring the length of customer support is that this resonates with the notion that the success of relational marketing strategies increases over time (Ward & Dagger 2007:282) while profitability and customer lifespan grows proportionately with the period of their sustenance (Liang & Wang 2006:142).

Since the study shows that satisfaction is a key predictor of loyalty and repurchase intentions, CPMs long-term relationship building strategies with their concrete product users should focus on customers' satisfaction with good quality products and service. Frequent monitoring of satisfaction and its drivers for instance; on time delivery and after sales service should be enhanced by CPMs to identify and correct operating insufficiencies, and through this process heighten customer satisfaction and ultimately loyalty and repurchase intentions.

### **8.3.6 Meeting and exceeding customer expectations**

Expectations as an antecedent of civil and building contractors' relationship intentions showed insignificant relationship with CPM's relationship quality. The study recommends that marketing practitioners and CPMs should at all times meet or exceed customers' needs and requirements, as customers who expect to get more from their supplier organisation are not taking it lightly when it comes to the improvement of products and services and therefore are inclined to develop lasting relationships with organisations (Kumar *et al.* 2003:673). Further, it is recommended that CPMs must ensure that their concrete products match or exceed customers' expectations by improving implementing smart resource allocation strategies in meeting their relationship objectives. This is important since meeting customers' needs improves their reliance and augment their loyalty and sustained repurchase intentions.

### **8.3.7 Improving levels of customer trust**

Trust is observed as an important element in the relationship building process to maintain a long-term coordination through the formation of commitment (Taylor, Donovan & Ishida 2014:129). Ng, Fang and Lien (2016:38) declare that the level of trust prevailing between buyers and sellers, pointing out the likelihood of a continuing relationship and its prospects of success. The authors further argue that relationships epitomised by high levels of trust are strongly valued by the exchange partners, leading to improved willingness to commit to the relationship.

Trust as an antecedent of civil and building contractor's relationship intention showed an insignificant impact on their CPM's relationship quality. Considering this finding, the study recommends that CPMs and marketing practitioners enhance their credibility with their customers



as trust is a critical building block for a healthy relationship, particularly in B2B contexts where customers attempt to moderate their perceived risk by choosing a supplier organisation that is viewed proficient, trustworthy, credibility and demonstrate concerns about the well-being of its customers (Li, Li & Feng 2015:1045; Chai & Dibb 2014:64). In the construction industry, customers will trust their CPM if they are content with the level of relationship quality, if the CPM exhibit competence and confidence in their offerings, if there are constant, timely and regular communications.

### **8.3.8 Promoting regular customer feedback**

Further, feedback as an antecedent of civil and building contractor's relationship intention revealed an insignificant impact on their CPM's relationship quality. It is therefore recommended that CPMs and marketing practitioners must keep in touch with their customers, encourage regular and timely feedback as a source of managerial information as feedback sessions are essential to acquire vital information relevant for exchanges and decision-making purposes (Caemmerer & Wilson 2010:289). In this way new ideas for service and product advancements are brought to the fore (Wirtz *et al.* 2010:363).

Gentile, Spiller and Giuliano (2007:395) reiterate that organisations which seek to differentiate themselves from others must create some positive customer perceptions of their administrative functions, such as friendly correspondence, ease of order processing and fulfilment, providing invoices and statements on time and supply issues feedback that keeps customers on track in fulfilling their expectations. Furthermore, user-friendly statements should be generated for information sharing and feedback to be exchanged with ease, since hassle free administrative service attributes enhances the B2B relationships (Lewin, Barry & Terry 2008:230).

### **8.3.9 Escalating customer forgiveness**

The findings of the study showed that forgiveness as an antecedent of civil and building contractors' relationship intentions showed an insignificant causal relationship with CPM's relationship quality. It is therefore recommended that marketing practitioners and CPMs need to enhance customer benevolence among their customers and concrete product users. This is important as forgiveness is a multifaceted process incorporating intellectual, demonstrative and inspiring responses to wrongdoings, especially in instances of service or product failure (Tsarenko & Tojib 2011:387). Within the framework of this study, forgiveness by civil and building contractors may be enhanced by minimising poor product quality or bad service delivery. Further,

customers must be allowed to voice their dissatisfaction to restore their relationship (Kumar *et al.* 2003:671).

### **8.3.10 Incorporating high customer involvement**

Involvement as an antecedent of civil and building contractors' relationship intentions showed a significant causal relationship with CPM's relationship quality. Against this outcome, it is recommended that CPMs must continue to keep their highly involved customers satisfied as that could stimulate their desire to prolong their long-term relationship (Hess, Story & Danes 2011:20). The CPMs can do this by continuously involving their customers in their operations, as doing so will enable them to identify areas of improvement (Egan 2011:131; Lovelock & Wirtz 2011:406).

### **8.3.11 The benefits of long-term flexibility**

Flexibility as an antecedent of relationship intention toward CPM's relationship quality showed a significant causal relationship. This finding advocates that the CPMs have been flexible when it comes to their civil and building contractor's requirements, therefore, it is recommended that CPMs must continue with this endeavour to improve by reacting quickly to customer's needs in terms of, for example, deliveries, support and service, as this would keep their operational costs low, delivery lead-time short and improve their relationship quality levels. This recommendation concurs with Yu *et al.* (2012:1199) who reiterate that for organisations to be flexible, the outcomes thereof are often connected with financial and business performance such as market share, return on investment and return on sales (Sánchez & Pérez 2003:139-140).

### **8.3.12 Intensifying information sharing/exchange**

Since customers have free access to information in this ever-changing competitive global environment, the study recommends that CPMs and marketing practitioners should learn to respond quickly to customer requirements. In turn, this would increase customer inclination to share information that permits CPMs to advance an understanding of their requirements and how best to fulfil them compared to others (Ashley *et al.* 2011:749). Information exchange showed significant relationship with relationship quality. In global competitive environments, information exchange is essential. It is therefore recommended that CPMs and marketing practitioners continue to share information and learn from each other.

The faster the information is shared with customers, the more appreciative customers become in the buyer-supplier relationship (Ritter & Walter 2012:136), as they will value the level of relationship quality. Information sharing can provide organisations with reliable data in relation

to the demand, supply and rivalry of products apart from the organisational accomplishments and failures in the market (Tabassum 2014:41).

### **8.3.13 Enhancing fear of relationship loss**

Fear of relationship loss as an antecedent of civil and building contractors' relationship intentions showed a significant causal relationship towards CPM's relationship quality. Taking this outcome into consideration, it is recommended that CPMs must continue focusing on setting up competitive relational benefits and enhance the quality and availability of concrete products relative to alternative offerings. The relational benefits provided by the CPMs strengthens the formation of relational bonds they share with their customers, particularly when customers fittingly connect with them over a period of time (Lovelock & Wirtz 2011:373). These relational bonds correspondingly upsurge customers' insights of switching cost, specifically, of losing resources invested should they switch to another supplier (Spake & Megehee 2010:316).

## **8.4 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study made important contributions to B2B relationship marketing's existing knowledge by demonstrating that many of the dimensions of relationship intentions influence long-term B2B outcomes of loyalty and repurchase intentions in the concrete product environment within the construction industry. The specific contributions are presented as follows.

### **8.4.1 Theoretical contributions**

Significant advancements in numerous studies are available which examine the dimensions (expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing and fear of relationship loss) of relationship intentions, leading to outcomes (loyalty and repurchase intentions) in B2B marketing environments. Evidence exists from the literature for an uproar on future studies to increase B2B research enquiries in the marketing field. A growing interest and use of rather relationship-based approaches in the construction industry has been witnessed (Rowlinson *et al.* 2008:295). However, there is no evidence in the literature on the existence of a cohesive model of relationships among the proposed study constructs, especially in the concrete product environment and the construction industry.

At the conceptual level, by developing a new model of B2B relationship intentions in the concrete product environment within the construction industry. The study adds to the existing body of knowledge by examining a model of variables inspiring customer repurchase intentions of concrete product users within the South African construction industry in an empirical form. Built

on this study's findings, it is proposed that the civil and building contractor's relationship intentions as buyers of concrete products, are an eight-factor model depicting relationships between their expectations, involvement, trust, forgiveness, feedback, flexibility, information sharing/exchange and fear of relationship loss with concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality. In addition, both concrete product manufacturer-supplier's relationship quality and commitment components, directly influence civil and building contractors' satisfaction evaluation. Furthermore, civil and building contractor's satisfaction levels towards their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers directly influence their loyalty and repurchase intentions of concrete products from the same supplier.

Against this backdrop, this study also adds to relationship marketing theory by closing a gap by recommending a framework with dimensions particularly aimed at civil and building contractors and their concrete product manufacturer-suppliers. In developing the proposed study model, theoretical considerations on statistical measures to determine if the model aligns with theory or not, were taken into account. Consistent with Ivanescu, Li, George, Brown, Keith, Raju and Allison's (2017:3-4) advise, in determining the quality of the proposed model, a validation of its predictive power was conducted. Primarily, a detailed examination of the model's predictive capacity was established using an independent dataset, wherein the proposed study model was subjected to reliability and validity assessments, whereby its statistical accuracy was validated using the statistical accuracy statistics.

Based on the theory, the proposed model included three additional predictors (trust, flexibility and information sharing/exchange) to a set of relationship intention dimensions' original suggested by Kumar et al. (2003:669). This was done with the aim of significantly improving the existing theoretical model's validity and to close the relationship-marketing gap that exists in the construction industry, using the proposed framework. The explanatory power of the model was supported by the emergence of new theoretical relationships of added predictors (flexibility and information sharing/exchange) with CPM's relationship quality. Flexibility and information sharing/exchange increased the model validity for the civil and building contractors' sample, as in terms of the R-squared value both predictors fitted well in the model (Ivanescu *et al.* 2017:4). In view of this, the SET, which this study is grounded upon, has also been found to engender supplier commitment and customer satisfaction, which leads to their long-term support (Lioukas & Reuer 2015:1826, 1829). Therefore, this study proposes an inclusive and practical model, that is easy to apprehend and apply for it proves valuable for an academic understanding of the theme.

## 8.4.2 Practical managerial contributions

In practice, the dimensions and outcomes of relationship intention in B2B relationships within the concrete product environment has not been tested, predominantly in the construction industry. The outcomes of the study revealed that in practical terms, the additional dimensions (flexibility and information sharing) of relationship intentions had a significant influence towards relationship quality, which before was never tested in the concrete product environment. CPMs, therefore, need to embark on a dependable examination of their external and internal environment to understand the need for engaging in relational exchange approaches, as the study revealed the importance of these constructs for CPMs and civil and building constructors. Therefore, information sharing/exchange between CPMs and the concrete product users should be seen as an important source of value in their relationship (Skarmeas, Zeriti & Baltas 2016:24).

In addition, CPM managers are offered insights as to which aspects require priority when examining their business performance. The approach could be to reconsider their strategies to moderate the adverse impact of constraints identified in this study. This may be done by harnessing their level of relationship quality initiatives, to improve their customers' perceptions of their relationship welfare. To alleviate marketing and customer switching costs, there is a need for effective feedback and information sharing/exchange that would improve long-term relationship building efforts. Less effective resource allocation strategies can be discontinued through implementation of strategic undertakings to ensure that resources such as financial, human, plant and equipment, including materials, are equitably allocated to different business processes and intensify acceptable performance (Kumar & Suresh 2009:238).

Furthermore, because competition in the concrete product environment increases owing to technological developments, maintaining current customers tends to be a challenge as it continues to switch to other suppliers. Accordingly, organisations must display high levels of commitment towards their relational partners by intensifying activities, which grow their sense of relationship satisfaction (Ngoma & Ntale 2019:13). This would help drive their committed partners to have a strong inclination to do business with them, even in the future, as their satisfaction levels are also amplified.

Martins, De Fariab and Campi (2017:49) as well as Akman and Yörür (2012:218), support this statement by emphasising the prominence of trust in acquiring satisfaction in the relationship building process. In addition, maintain that commitment is a vital factor that impacts satisfaction in the relationship building process based on trust. On the contrary, should a relational partner,

being a buyer or seller, becomes disgruntled in their relationship, chances are the relationship would end, with no opportunity for future continuance, particularly in a B2B context.

## **8.5 LIMITATIONS AND AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Even though the study offers appropriate and stimulating insights on relationship-marketing approaches, it is essential to appreciate the limitations related with it.

The study was undertaken with civil and building contractors registered with the CIDB operative in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Accordingly, the study outcomes may not be generalised to the target population outside the category and possibly to other provinces of South Africa. It is therefore suggested that future studies survey the dimensions of relationship intentions in a nationwide perspective (larger sample sizes) so that the hypothesised relationships can be further tested by spreading the study to other concrete product users also found in other provinces of the country. Accordingly, the study results must be viewed with caution.

This study was conducted over a certain period as a snapshot reliant on conditions appearing during that time. With the current slump of the building and civil industry, perceptions and attitudes of customers and CPMs may be different when compared to a period of recovery. Considering that data collection took place during September 2018 and February 2019, which is a period of slow activity from the fact that in this industry, rampant construction activity is usually seen after provincial and local budget approvals by government during the months of June and July of each year.

Using a single method of data collection may be regarded as a limitation to this study. Data was gathered with the application of a survey method (quantitative research approach). It is therefore, vital to note that the latter mentioned limitation does not necessarily contradict the contributions of this study, although it opens supplementary paths for future research. Future research may attempt to conduct similar research within a pragmatist paradigm by applying mixed methodologies that permit the triangulation of data across both qualitative and quantitative measures.

The study was aimed only at customers as concrete product users, which excluded material suppliers. Therefore, future research can try to involve other construction material suppliers and while doing so, use their customer databases as a basis for mixed method research design to broaden the understanding of the influence of relationship intention in the relationship marketing

discipline. Only selected dimensions and outcomes were used in this study. Future researchers should respond to the outcome of this research by empirically formulating different versions of variables that are dimensions and outcomes of B2B relationship marketing. Likewise, future research can investigate the contribution of specific CIDB categories of interest, such as electrical engineering and mechanical engineering contractors.

## **8.6 CONCLUSION**

The outcomes resulting from this study have valuable insights for both marketing practitioners and CPMs, including civil and building contractors. This study is unique in that its outcomes have vital implications for both marketers and the construction industry stakeholders. It indicates to marketers the importance of understanding customer behaviour patterns, and the eventual significance of building long-term relationships with those who exhibit high relationship intentions. It is evident from the study outcomes that marketers and the construction industry stakeholders should highlight the functional aspects of relationship marketing building in B2B environments by harnessing their relational exchange strategies pertaining to the dimensions of long-term relationship intentions.

The empirical research findings provided evidence and sustenance concerning the practicality of adopting and incorporating relationship-marketing approaches into strategic approaches of organisations that would be beneficial for relational partners. On a broader perspective, this study reiterates that superior relationship quality leads to lasting customer value in loyalty and repeat purchases, influenced by higher intensity of customer satisfaction. Therefore, marketing practitioners and CPMs who involve customers in their operations and exercise flexibility and share information with them could gain their trust, as they would fear losing benefits derived from their relationship and perform better, compared to those who are not relationship marketing inclined.

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## APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO USE CIDB REGISTER

### RE: PERMISSION TO USE CIDB REGISTER OF CIVIL AND BUILDING CONTRACTOR INFORMATION FOR AN ACADEMIC RESEARCH STUDY

**Enoch Masibi** <EnochM@cidb.org.za>

Mon, Sep 4, 2017 at 3:54 PM

To: Amos Masitenyane [amosmasitenyane@gmail.com](mailto:amosmasitenyane@gmail.com)

Cc: Ntswaki Mokonyane [NtswakiM@cidb.org.za](mailto:NtswakiM@cidb.org.za)

Good Day.

Reference is made to your email where you requested permission to utilise our register of contractors' database as a sample frame for your research purpose. Please note that permission is granted and the information is available to you on the website - <https://registers.cidb.org.za/reports/contractorlisting.asp>

There is a filter for active contractors on the top so you can filter that. You can also filter by Region and by Grade. You click on the CRS number in the table and the contact details are displayed. The Grade is an indicator of Financial and Work capabilities. Attached is the registration form which shows the grading criteria requirement to qualify for the various grades.

Please note that unfortunately we are not providing any bulk spread sheet of contact details. You can use the website to obtain any information for your research.

Regards.



### DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Enoch Masibi

Registrations Manager: Construction Registers Services

SABS Campus, Blocks N&R,

2 Dr. Lategan Road, Groenkloof, Pretoria, South Africa

PO Box 2107, Brooklyn Square, 0075

Tel: +27 12 482 7270 (direct)

## APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT



Faculty of Management Sciences

### **Informed consent for participation in an academic research study**

#### **Department of Marketing and Sports Management**

**Study Title:** To determine the dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the construction environment.

Research conducted by:  
Mr. L.A. Masitenyane (9868445)  
Cell: 065 991 2923

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Lehlohonolo Amos Masitenyane, a Doctoral student from the Vaal University of Technology.

The purpose of the study is to determine the dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the construction environment.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 20 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal.
- Please contact my supervisor Prof. Dhurup on (016) 9507564 if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

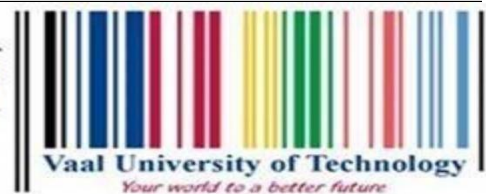
Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Respondent's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE



FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

### DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT:

#### APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

##### Dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the construction environment.

###### 1. Introduction

The information obtained during this survey will be treated confidentially and will be used for no other purpose than academic research. The survey will only take 20 minutes of your time.

**Researcher:** LA Masitenyane

**Supervisor:** Prof. M. Dhurup

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr. A. Muposhi

**Co-Supervisor:** Dr. B.A Mokoena

**Contact:** (016) 950 7561

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to receive the results of this study, kindly provide your e-mail address which will be confidentially kept.

The questionnaire comprises seven sections. When answering questions place an X in an appropriate box. Thank you for participating in this survey.

###### Screening question

Have you bought concrete products from a concrete product manufacturer-supplier in the past six months?	Yes	No
Are you the primary decision-maker as to the choice of concrete product supplier organisation?	Yes	No

If you answer “Yes” to both questions above, please complete the entire questionnaire.

If you answer “No” to any of the questions above, you do not have to complete the questionnaire.

Thank you for your willingness to participate.

## Section A: Customer demographic information and patronage habits

This section of the questionnaire refers to the background or biographical information of the respondents. The researcher is aware of the sensitivity of the questions asked; hence, respondents are reminded to note that this information will allow the researcher to compare responses amongst the different groups. Once more, respondents are assured that their responses will remain anonymous.

**Please select one from the following by crossing (X) in the relevant block:**

I understand my right to choose whether to participate in the study or not, and that the information furnished will be handled with confidentiality. I am aware that the results of the study may be used for purposes of publication.

I wish to participate in the study	<b>A</b>
I do not wish to participate.	<b>B</b>

If you have chosen A, carry on completing the rest of the questionnaire. If you have chosen B, do not complete the questionnaire. Submit it back.

1.1) What is your position within the organisation?  
speciality?

Managing Director	1
Procurement Manager	2
Site Manager	3
Construction Project Manager	4
Quantity Surveyor	5
Other Specify: _____	6

1.2) What is your organisation's

(If applicable choose both)

Civil works	1
General building	2
Both	3
Other Specify: _____	4

1.3) Mark your organisation's Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) grading?

Grade 1	1
Grade 2	2
Grade 4	4
Grade 5	5
Grade 6	6
Grade 7	7
Grade 8	8
Grade 9	9

1.4) From which **ONE** of the listed concrete product suppliers do you make concrete product purchases **most frequently?** (Choose one only).

Bosun	1
Cast Industries	2
Concrete Units	3
Infraset	4

Kerbman	5
MVA	6
Rocla	7
Salberg	8
Technicrete	9
Vibro	10
Other: please identify: _____	11

Please note that the rest of the questionnaire must be answered in reference to the concrete product manufacturer-supplier you indicated in question 1.4 (This means the reference should be made to the concrete product manufacturer-supplier from which you **most frequently** make your concrete purchases). **Also, note that concrete product manufacturer-suppliers will from hereon be abbreviated as CPM.**

1.5) How long have you been making concrete product purchases from the CPM which you most frequently support?


Less than 1 year	1
1 year or longer but less than 3 years	2
3 years or longer but less than 5 years	3
5 years or longer but less than 7 years	4
7 years and longer	5

1.6) What is your total yearly expenditure with the CPM you most frequently support?

Less than R650 000	1
R1 000 001 – R6 500 000	2
R6 500 001 – R13 000 000	3
R13 000 001 – R40 000 000	4
R40 000 001 – R130 000 000	5
R130 000 001 – and more	6

## Section B: Dimensions of relationship intentions

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree		Strongly agree		
<b>DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIP INTENTIONS</b>						
<b>Expectations</b>						
B1	We expect our current CPM to offer us value for our money.	1	2	3	4	5
B2	We expect our current CPM to offer us more value for our money than other CPMs.	1	2	3	4	5
B3	We expect our current CPM's products to be better than other CPMs.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Involvement</b>						
B4	We are proud to be a customer of our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B5	We care about the image of our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B6	We are proud when we see our current CPM's name or advertising materials.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Trust</b>						
B7	In our relationship, our current CPM can be trusted at times.	1	2	3	4	5
B8	In our relationship, our current CPM is perfectly honest and truthful.	1	2	3	4	5
B9	In our relationship, our current CPM can be trusted completely.	1	2	3	4	5
B10	In our relationship, our current CPM can be counted on to do what is right.	1	2	3	4	5
B11	In our relationship, our current CPM is always faithful.	1	2	3	4	5
B12	In our relationship, our current CPM is an organisation that we have great confidence in.	1	2	3	4	5
B13	In our relationship, our current CPM has high integrity.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Forgiveness</b>						
B14	We will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is something below the standard, we expect from them.	1	2	3	4	5
B15	We will forgive our current CPM if the quality of their products is below the standard of other CPMs.	1	2	3	4	5
B16	We will forgive our current CPM if we experience bad service from them.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Feedback</b>						
B17	We will tell our current CPM if their products are better than what we expect.	1	2	3	4	5



	STATEMENTS	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <span>Strongly disagree</span> <span>Strongly agree</span> </div>				
B18	We will tell our current CPM if their products meet our expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
B19	We will take time to tell our current CPM about their product quality so that they can improve.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Flexibility</b>						
B20	Flexibility in response to requests for changes is a characteristic of our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B21	In this relationship, our current CPM is open to the idea of making changes, even after we have made an agreement.	1	2	3	4	5
B22	In this relationship, our current CPM makes it possible for us to make adjustments to cope with changing circumstances.	1	2	3	4	5
B23	Our current CPM is open to modifying our agreement if unexpected events occur.	1	2	3	4	5
B24	If a situation arises in which we have different assumptions about our agreement, our current CPM is open to working out a new deal that is acceptable to both of us.	1	2	3	4	5
B25	When unexpected situations arise, and we disagree on how to proceed, our current CPM is open to working out a new deal that is acceptable to both of us.	1	2	3	4	5
B26	If our views differ regarding events in our relationship, our current CPM is open to developing a common understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Information sharing/exchange</b>						
B27	We inform our current CPM in advance of our changing needs.	1	2	3	4	5
B28	We share proprietary information with our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B29	In this relationship, it is expected that any information which might help the other party will be provided.	1	2	3	4	5
B30	The parties are expected to keep each other informed about events or changes that may affect the other party.	1	2	3	4	5
B31	It is expected that the parties will only provide information according to prespecified agreements.	1	2	3	4	5
B32	We do not volunteer much information regarding our business to our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B33	Our current CPM keeps us fully informed about issues that affect our business.	1	2	3	4	5
B34	Our current CPM share proprietary information with us (e.g., about products in development phase, etc).	1	2	3	4	5

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
<b>Fear of relationship loss</b>						
B35	We are concerned that we might lose special privileges of our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B36	We are concerned to lose quality products of our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
B37	We are concerned to lose our relationship with our current CPM by switching to another CPM.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section C: Relationship marketing dimension (RELATIONSHIP QUALITY)**

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
<b>RELATIONSHIP QUALITY</b>						
C1	Compared to other suppliers our CPM adds more value to the relationship overall.	1	2	3	4	5
C2	Compared with other suppliers we gain more in our relationship with our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
C3	Compared to other suppliers the relationship with our current CPM is more valuable.	1	2	3	4	5
C4	Compared to other suppliers our current CPM creates more value for us when comparing all costs and benefits in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section D: Relationship marketing dimension (COMMITMENT)**

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
<b>COMMITMENT</b>						
D1	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM is something we are very committed to.	1	2	3	4	5
D2	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM is very important to our organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
D3	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM is of significance to us.	1	2	3	4	5
D4	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM is something our organisation intends to maintain indefinitely.	1	2	3	4	5

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
D5	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM is something our organisation really cares about.	1	2	3	4	5
D6	The relationship that our organisation has with our current CPM deserves our organisation's maximum effort to maintain.	1	2	3	4	5

### Section E: Relationship marketing dimension (SATISFACTION)

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
<b>SATISFACTION</b>						
E1	Overall, our organisation is very satisfied with our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
E3	If we had to do it all over again, we would still choose the current CPM for our concrete product requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
E4	We are very pleased with our relationship with the current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5


### Section F: Relationship marketing outcome (LOYALTY)

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

	STATEMENTS	Strong disagree  Strongly agree				
<b>LOYALTY</b>						
F1	We say positive things about our current CPM to other civil and building contractors.	1	2	3	4	5
F2	We recommend the products of our current CPM to other civil and building contractors who seek concrete product advice.	1	2	3	4	5
F3	We encourage other civil and building contractors to do business with our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
F4	We consider our current CPM as our first choice when we purchase the products they supply.	1	2	3	4	5
F5	We will continue to do business with our current CPM for the next few years.	1	2	3	4	5
F6	We are willing to maintain our relationship with our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
F7	We are loyal to our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5

**Section G: Relationship marketing outcome (REPURCHASE INTENTION)**

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements regarding the CPM you use most frequently (with 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree).

STATEMENTS		Strong disagree				Strongly agree
<b>REPURCHASE INTENTION</b>						
G1	It is probable that our relationship with our current CPM will continue.	1	2	3	4	5
G2	We will purchase from our current CPM again.	1	2	3	4	5
G3	We intend to stay loyal to our current CPM.	1	2	3	4	5
G4	We expect our current CPM to be working with us for a long time.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to receive the results of this survey, kindly provide your e-mail address in the space provided below which will be kept confidential.

<b>Email Address (optional)</b>	
-------------------------------------	--

## APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM THE LANGUAGE EDITOR

8 Belle Ombre Road

Tamboerskloof

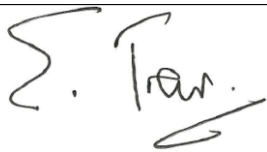
Cape Town

8001.

28 February 2020.

### LANGUAGE EDITING

This is to certify that I language-edited and arranged the bibliography of the dissertation “Dimensions and outcomes of buyer-seller relationship intentions for concrete products in the construction environment,” by Lehlohonolo Amos Masitenyane for the DTech degree in Marketing Management, in the Faculty of Management Sciences, Vaal University of Technology.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Trew', with a horizontal line above it.

Elizabeth Trew

[Trew.eliz@gmail.com](mailto:Trew.eliz@gmail.com)

021 424 6135

073 235 1147