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An investigation on the level of competition in procurement of architectural consultancy services and its relationship to project performance and innovation in Gauteng

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ABSTRACT

In the construction industry, procurement of consultants' services plays a big role in the project delivery process and therefore the selection process/procedure of consultants is very crucial. In South Africa many projects' budgets are drawn based on the initial design sketches drafted by architects, hence clients are often presented with a problem of how to secure the right consultant. The right consultant is one who will exhaustively conceive and capture the brief thus keeping the project in its original parameters of cost, among other things. This study investigates the link between consultants' service procurement method and performance parameters of cost (total capital outlay) and scope change. It also examines the current consultants' service procurement system that is predominant in the industry and its impact on innovation as well as in facilitating new entrants. Through questionnaire survey oriented towards participants from architectural service providers with hands-on project handling experience, the perceptions of these consultants were examined and evaluated in relation to their selection procedures. Their experience with regards to consultants' services procurement was evaluated and presented, in particular, the link between consultants' service procurement method and performance, assessment of the current service procurement procedures and its impact in facilitating new entrants. The results indicate that there was a strong link between consultants' service procurement method and performance. The results also reveal that the current procedures of client relationship and networking, poses a big challenge to new entrants and rebirth of new ideas as they are likely to favour only those that are already established in the industry. The study recommends that further research be done to incorporate other stakeholders such as property developers and other clients. This would help assess their views/perception towards the idea of subjecting consultants to some degree of competition based selection or towards a bidding (request for proposals) approach.