

6760

KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING
DEPARTMENT OF BUILDING TECHNOLOGY

KNUST

**HOMEBUILDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF
CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANCY SERVICES**



A thesis submitted to the Department of Building Technology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science (MSc)

by

Samuel Yaw Frimpong

Bachelor of Science (Building Technology)

April 2013

Statement of originality

This work or any part thereof contains no material which has previously been submitted in any form to the university or other body whether for the purpose of assessment, publication or for any other purpose and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my dissertation, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for use subject to the provisions of the University.

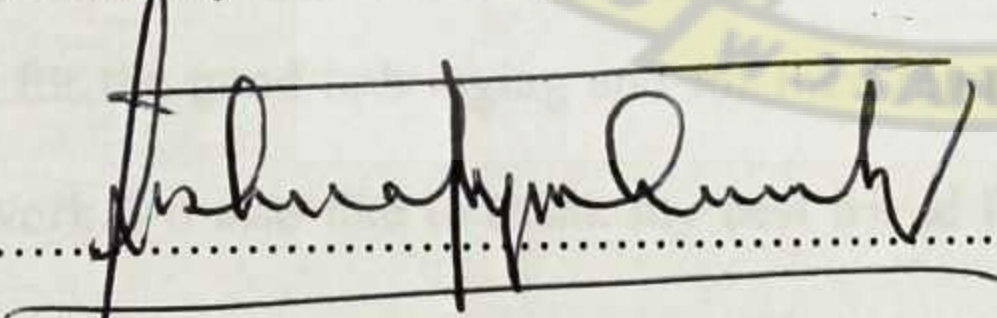
KNUST

Acknowledgement of authorship/collaboration

I hereby certify that the work contained in this dissertation is the result of original research, which was completed subsequent to admission to candidature for the degree.

Signed.......... Date..... NOVEMBER 01, 2013.....
(Student: Samuel Yaw Frimpong)

Signed.......... Date..... NOVEMBER 01, 2013.....
(Supervisor: Mr. Ayirebi Dansoh)

Signed.......... Date..... 7/11/13.....
(Head of Department: Professor Joshua Ayarkwa)

Acknowledgements

This research is a result of the invaluable effort of many people. Firstly, I am grateful to my supervisors, Mr. Ayirebi Dansoh and Mr. Peter Amoah, for introducing me to the world of research, and for providing me with all the necessary assistance during the course of the study. I would also like to thank the Department of Building Technology at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology for providing the support structures required for me to carry out my research. My sincere appreciation also goes to all the research participants who freely and willingly offered their time and resources to be interviewed on this study. Without them, there would have been no stories to talk about.

I am greatly indebted to a number of people who offered their varied support and interest; my course mates for sharing with me their ideas and enthusiasm; my workmates Kwasi Antwi, Kenneth, and Moses for their encouraging and insightful conversations during the course of this study; my friends Derek, Kwasi Kyei, Claudia, Bemah, Lawrvette, Eliza, Helena and Rachel for listening to my complaints and frustrations and for never failing to cheer me up whenever I needed encouragement; my nephew Kofi for all the encouraging and entertaining discussions we had while I was preparing this work. I would like to thank all my family members; for their strong faith and trust in me that I could achieve whatever objective I set for myself; dad and mum for the good upbringing and for their regular phone calls just to check on the progress of this work. I'd also like to thank my best friend Boatemaa for her patience in putting up with me and my occasional absence in her life as a result of this work, and most importantly, for unconditionally supporting me in my endeavours. I could not have wished for a better friend.

Finally, my utmost thanks go to Jehovah God almighty for creating me and for bringing all these special people into my life.

Table of contents

1.0 Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Research Background.....	1
1.3 Aim and Objectives.....	2
1.4 Scope of the Study.....	3
1.5 Significance of the Study.....	3
1.6 Method.....	3
2.0 Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	5
2.1 Introduction.....	5
2.2 The Nature of Private Housing Projects in Ghana.....	6
2.2.1 Project performance.....	8
2.2.2 Factors influencing project performance.....	8
2.3 Competence and Capabilities of Project Actors.....	8
2.3.1 The client.....	8
2.3.1.1 Clients' roles and responsibilities.....	11
2.3.1.2 The need for client competence.....	13
2.3.2 The consultant.....	15
2.3.2.1 Competence and capabilities of consultants.....	16
2.3.2.2 Roles and responsibilities of consultants.....	17
2.3.2.3 Performance of consultants on private housing projects.....	18
2.4 Client-Consultant Relationships on Private Housing Projects.....	19
2.4.1 Close and open-ended relationships.....	20
2.4.2 Client-consultant partnering.....	22
2.5 The Role of Perception in Client-Consultant Relationships on Private House Projects.....	23
2.5.1 The client perceptioning process.....	23
2.5.1.1 What clients receive – the input.....	24
2.5.1.2 How clients process the input.....	24
2.5.1.3 How clients judge.....	25
2.5.2 The consultant's perceptioning process.....	27
2.5.3 Perception gaps in client-consultant relationships.....	29
3.0 Chapter 3 Methodology.....	31
3.1 Introduction	31
3.2 Research Strategy.....	31
3.2.1 Research aim and objectives.....	31
3.2.2 Proposition.....	31
3.3 Research Method.....	31
3.3.1 Nature of research problem.....	32
3.3.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research.....	33
3.4 Qualitative Approach.....	35
3.5 The Researcher.....	36
3.6 Constructivist Paradigm.....	37
3.7 Phenomenological Research Strategy.....	37

3.7.1	Choosing Phenomenology as a research approach.....	38
3.7.2	Defining the units of analysis and the research participants.....	40
3.7.3	Participant selection and sources of data.....	41
3.8	Methods of Collecting, Analyzing Data and Interpreting Results.....	42
3.8.1	Stage One: Collection of participants' views on the phenomenon.....	42
3.8.2	Stage Two: Analysis of participants' description of the phenomenon.....	43
3.8.3	Stage Three: Providing structural descriptions of the phenomenon.....	43
3.8.4	Interview instrument.....	44
3.9	Quality Assurance Strategies.....	44
3.9.1	Credibility.....	44
3.9.2	Soundness.....	45
3.9.3	Ethical conduct.....	45
4.0	Chapter 4 Results.....	46
4.1	Introduction.....	46
4.2	Client Unit One.....	46
4.2.1	Interview with Kay.....	46
4.2.1.1	Background to Kay.....	46
4.2.1.2	Kay's story.....	47
4.2.2	Interview with Ann.....	49
4.2.2.1	Background to Ann.....	49
4.2.2.2	Ann's story.....	49
4.2.3	Interview with Rice.....	53
4.2.3.1	Background to Rice.....	53
4.2.3.2	Rice's story.....	53
4.2.4	Interview with Lizy.....	54
4.2.4.1	Background to Lizy.....	54
4.2.4.2	Lizy's story.....	54
4.3	Client Unit Two.....	56
4.3.1	Interview with Joe and April.....	56
4.3.1.1	Background to Joe and April.....	56
4.3.1.2	The story of Joe and April.....	56
4.3.2	Interview with Kate.....	60
4.3.2.1	Background to Kate.....	60
4.3.2.2	Kate's story.....	60
5.0	Chapter 5 Discussions.....	64
5.1	Introduction.....	64
5.2	Consultancy Services Sought for by Clients.....	64
5.3	Providing Composite Description for Perceptions.....	65
5.3.1	Changing portraits into scientific concepts.....	65
5.3.2	Integrating and synthesizing the insight into a descriptive structure of the meaning of the experience.....	66
5.4	Development of Models of Perceptions.....	66
5.4.1	The 2C3R Model: The Perception Pentagon.....	66
5.4.2	Competence and capabilities.....	66

5.4.2.1 Performance.....	67
5.4.2.2 Improvement.....	68
5.4.2.3 Age.....	69
5.4.2.4 Availability/Accessibility.....	70
5.4.2.5 Service/Business quality.....	71
5.4.3 Cost of engagement.....	72
5.4.3.1 Fees.....	72
5.4.3.2 Convenience.....	74
5.4.3.3 Differentiation/Stratification.....	75
5.4.3.4 Standardization.....	76
5.4.4 Roles and Responsibilities.....	76
5.4.4.1 Need.....	76
5.4.4.2 Expectation.....	77
5.4.4.3 Scope.....	78
5.4.4.4 Differentiation/Stratification.....	79
5.4.5 Relationships.....	80
5.4.5.1 Learning opportunities.....	80
5.4.5.2 Essence/Meaning.....	82
5.4.5.3 Communication.....	83
5.4.5.4 Treatment.....	84
5.4.5.5 Choice/Autonomy.....	85
5.4.5.6 Age.....	86
5.4.6 Rules of engagement.....	87
5.4.6.1 Need.....	87
5.4.6.2 Benefits.....	88
5.4.6.3 Enforceability/Choice.....	89
5.4.6.4 Understanding/Appeal.....	89
5.4.6.5 Effects.....	89
5.5 Factors Influencing Clients' Perceptions.....	90
5.5.1 The client.....	90
5.5.2 Social factors.....	92
5.5.3 Construction industry conditions.....	93
5.5.4 The consultant.....	94
5.5.5 The house.....	95
5.6 Effects of Perceptions on Clients' Attitude toward Engagement of Consultants.....	95
5.6.1 The Perception Effect Model.....	96
5.6.1.1 The Yes.....	96
5.6.1.2 The No.....	97
5.6.1.3 The Second Resort.....	98
6.0 Chapter 6 Conclusions.....	101
6.1 Introduction.....	101
6.2 Conclusions to Research Problem.....	101
6.2.1 Clients perceptions.....	102
6.2.2 Factors affecting client perceptions.....	102
6.2.3 The consultant's role in clients' perceptions.....	103

6.2.4 Effects of clients' perceptions on their action.....	103
6.3 Limitations.....	103
6.4 Implications for Future Research.....	104
6.4.1 Type of client and project.....	104
6.4.2 Research method.....	104
7.0 Chapter 7 References.....	105
8.0 Chapter 8 Appendices.....	115



List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Characteristics describing clients (source: Kelly et al., 1992, p.7).....	10
Figure 5.1 Themes of client perceptions.....	69
Figure 5.2 The Perception Effect Model.....	99



List of Tables

Table 3.1 Summary of clients' characteristics.....	41
--	----

KNUST



Abstract

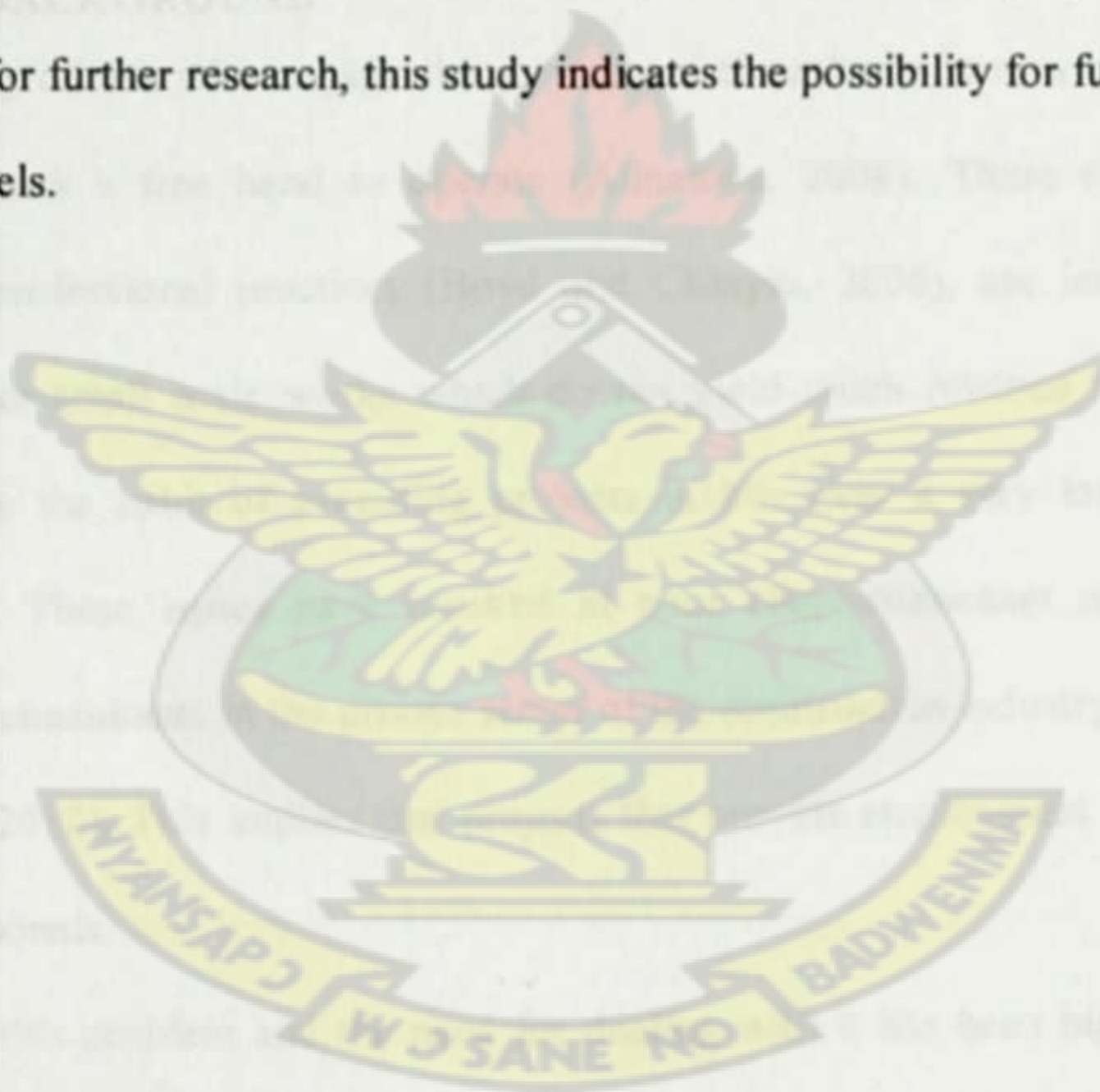
Owner-built-occupier housing projects are the most common construction projects undertaken in Ghana, yet very little study has been done on the management of these projects. Previous studies highlight the negative attitudes of clients toward the engagement of consultancy services on such small projects, and the consequent impact on relationships as well as project performance. A notable feature of the projects is the limited engagement of the services of construction professionals. This study explored the phenomenon of low utilisation of otherwise extensively available highly trained underutilised professionals, from the client's viewpoint.

The underlying proposition of this study was that clients' attitudes toward the engagement of consultants on homebuilding projects are largely determined by their perceptions on the need for the professional services on these projects. This study therefore provides an in-depth description of homebuilder clients' perceptions on the employment of professional services, and what feeds those perceptions. Using the qualitative approach underpinned by a phenomenological approach for data collection and analysis, six in-depth interviews were conducted. The narrative inquiry approach was used to define clients' perceptions on professional services in homebuilding, and to establish the extent to which these perceptions affect client-consultant engagements. The stages involved in the client perceptioning process were also described.

The findings indicate among other things that the services mostly sought for by clients are Architectural services. Clients perceive consultants in general to be highly capable and competent, yet not easily accessible. Clients also perceive the engagement of consultants as a very inconvenient and expensive process. The factors that have led to these perceptions include clients, social conditions, construction industry conditions, consultants' actions and the client's experience of living in the houses they build. In explain the reason for the phenomenon of low

utilization of consultants on house projects, the findings revealed that clients' perception lead them to mostly engage non-professional on their house projects. In cases where clients engage professionals, they mostly do so only after their initial decision not to engage a consultant does yields negative results. To many clients, consultants are a second resort.

This study has contributed to the understanding of the consultant-client relationship on house projects by exploring more deeply how the attitude of clients toward consultant engagement is affected by clients' perceptions on house projects. It has also shown that consultants can change the negative perceptions of their clients in order to promote successful project relationships. By suggesting areas for further research, this study indicates the possibility for further application of the proposed models.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Before any research work is carried out, it is necessary to first establish the reason for that study – why it is important – and explicitly spell out the how the researcher intends to carry out the research. This serves as a tool for thoroughly and objectively evaluating all aspects of the research endeavour.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Many homebuilding clients who engage the services of consultants have a track record of not giving the consultants a free hand to operate (Alinaitwe, 2008). These clients lack basic understanding of professional practices (Boyd and Chinyio, 2006), are inconsistent in their payments, undertake small scale works which do not yield much revenue for the consultants involved, and have the habit of executing projects in bits over a very long period of time (Alinaitwe, 2008). These issues have resulted in poor client-consultant relationships and a marginalization of consultants in the private sector of the construction industry (Alinaitwe, 2008; Siva and London, 2012). This implies that projects that provide employment for consultants are lost to non-professionals.

The awareness of this problem and the need for dealing with it has been highlighted by many studies conducted over the years (Cuff, 1991; Green, 1996; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006; Alinaitwe, 2008; Siva and London, 2012). However, many of the studies conducted in this field so far have focused mainly on foreign and international settings, contractors and consultants, as well as on issues other than perceptions of the client (e.g. Young and Mustaff, 2011; Chelische and Yirenkyi-Fiango, 2011; Khan et al., 2011). Other studies that have looked at this subject from the viewpoint of the client have focused mainly on the role of the client on projects and have been

limited to the large public sector (Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998; Egan, 2002). Those that have touched on the private sector have focused on large commercial developers and corporate bodies and have only criticized professionals in the way they execute their work (Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Vennström, 2008; Nuamani and Tsegay, 2011). Beyond these, discussions about clients have been based on personal experiences of construction professionals as well as on hearsay. These limitations notwithstanding, all studies generally demonstrate a growing awareness in the construction industry of the position of the client.

Nevertheless, many key questions still remain to be answered or have only been partially investigated. For instance what is the attitude of the homebuilding client toward the need to engage the services of consultants during project execution? Have these attitudes been informed by their perception of the services offered by professionals, and if so, what are these perceptions? What factors have influenced these perceptions? How have these factors influenced clients' perceptions? Is there any evidence that construction professionals have themselves in some way contributed to these perceptions, and if they have, in what way have they done so?

The fundamental proposition of this research is that clients' attitudes toward the engagement of consultants on homebuilding projects are largely due to their perceptions on the need for construction consultancy services. The potential for understanding the attitudes of these clients therefore lies in exploration of their perceptions from their own point of view.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to provide a composite description of homebuilders' perceptions on the need to engage the services of construction consultants.

To achieve the aim, the study will seek to identify:

1. Consultancy services sought for by clients;

LIBRARY
KWAME NKRUMAH
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY
KUMASI

2. Clients' perceptions on services provided by consultants on construction projects;
3. The factors that have led to these perceptions;
4. The effect of clients' perceptions on their attitude toward engaging consultants.

1.4 SCOPE OF STUDY

This research is limited to the investigation of the simplified client-consultant engagement (from inception to completion) on private single residential projects in Ghana. Hence, findings should be interpreted in context of the private sector of the Ghanaian construction industry.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Clients are the source of business activity in the construction industry. In this they are the key stakeholders in the survival and growth of the industry. Private residential projects form the majority of construction works in Ghana, and therefore improvements in this area can have a marked effect on the work of consultants and the Construction Industry as a whole.

Problematic consultant-client relationships have resulted in the "marginalisation" of consultants in the private sector (Siva and London, 2012). An understanding of clients' perceptions on the need to engage consultants can thus serve as a starting point for dealing with this problem.

This study will also provide a foundation of information, as there has been limited study of the client in this context locally.

1.6 METHOD

The research adopted a phenomenological research approach to study the social phenomenon of "client-consultant engagement". This approach is fitting because "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence" Creswell (2006). The phenomenological research process was carried out in three main stages:

1. In-depth "Phenomenological interviews" (Marshall, 2006).

2. "Phenomenological reduction" (Giorgi, 1997).

3. "Phenomenological description" (Giorgi, 1997).

Prior to this, peer-reviewed literature was studied to determine the originality of the study as well as what had currently been established. This enabled the development of instructions and guiding issues needed for the phenomenological research interviews.

Data was collected from individuals who were preparing to build their houses as well as those who gone through the experience of engaging the services of consultants. In this case, the sampling was purposive. The participants were therefore selected on the basis that they would yield the most information about the topic under investigation.

Informal and topical-guided interviews were conducted using open-ended and specific questions respectively.

Following the procedure described by Giorgi (1985) and Creswell (2006), transcripts were analyzed by first highlighting significant statements that provided an understanding of clients' experiences. Clusters of meaning from these significant statements were developed into themes. Based on these significant statements and themes, "textural" and "structural" descriptions were developed (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, based on these "structural and textural descriptions", a "composite description" that reflects the perception of the clients was written.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Single owner-built dwellings are the most common construction projects undertaken in Ghana, yet very little study has been done on the management of these projects. In cases where private housing projects have been studied, the focus has been on consultants, and virtually all analyses have been from the perspective of the consultant. A notable feature of the projects is the limited engagement of the services of construction professionals. Although consultants are generally acknowledged as useful in the construction industry, on the local front, their services are not viewed as indispensable. The reason for this is that many private individual homebuilding clients do not have the desire to go through the process of de-mystifying the consultant's group habitus mainly because they have alternatives to choose from. Often, for the scale and complexity of projects that they undertake, these clients are not mandated by the law to make use of consultants. Yet, even as they work on the same project, clients and consultants view issues in different ways and, to get a fuller understanding of clients' attitudes, they have to be observed through their own eyes. Previous studies (Smith *et al.*, 2001; Alinaitwe, 2008; Winch, 2010; Siva and London, 2012) hint on the negative attitudes of clients toward consultancy services on small projects, and the consequent impact on relationships as well as project performance. Previous studies have identified some negative preconceptions of clients, among a broad range of causes, for their unwillingness to engage professionals on private housing projects, but do not explore the bases for the perceptions of clients. This vital knowledge notwithstanding, there are still a number of gaps in our understanding of the concept of client perceptions. Key questions remain about the relationship between what is known about perceptions and how it can be utilized to

guide professional practice. One area neglected in construction research is the investigation of clients' perceptions of the need for consultants in settings other than the formal public work environment. Besides this, the extent of the impact of these perceptions is not set out. This situation makes it difficult to assess how the perceptions of the client in context affect the service delivery of consultants and the construction industry as a whole. The purpose of this review is to explore the phenomenon of low utilisation of otherwise extensively available highly trained underutilised professionals by examining existing research to demonstrate the rationale for this study, and to assist in determining the specific questions to guide the inquiry.

2.2 THE NATURE OF PRIVATE HOMEBUILDING PROJECTS IN GHANA

Private construction projects constitute a significant portion of construction work in Ghana. These projects range from simple residential buildings to large commercial structures. Work may be new or a repair, addition or alteration of an already existing work. However, all these projects have an initiator- the person or entity that sees the need for a construction product and acts on it. This initiator is known as the client or employer. The beneficiaries of these activities may be either private individuals or private organizations and institutions. The project must be executed to satisfy the needs and wants of the initiator or any other persons who will use it. To achieve this, the client must have answers to many questions including but not limited to: How will the finished building look like? How much will it cost? Who will build it? How will it be built? Will it meet the needs of those who will use it? (Lux et al., 1982, pp. 9-10) This is the composite construction problem. Private clients typically make some preliminary decisions concerning these questions if they are within their scope of experience. For those that are beyond them, they seek help from other people. These often include those who have executed projects that are similar to what the client has in mind. Locally, when it comes to handling technical issues like

design, on-site construction, and project supervision, clients have the option of seeking the services of consultants (architects, engineers, project managers, and quantity surveyors) or bypassing them for experienced site operatives and artisans (masons, carpenters, plumbers, steel fixers, and electricians). A temporary project relationship is formed in order to bring together the various specializations, labour, capital and other resources required for the project. In some cases, especially those involving professional consultants, the “rules of engagement” are set out in written contracts (Cherns and Bryant, 1984). But often this is not so in the case of private individual clients in the informal sector. Often, the terms and conditions of contracts are verbal. Private projects are frequently fraught with myriads of problems. This state of affairs has inspired a significant amount of research into the nature of service delivery of the construction industry, with a lot of emphasis being placed on factors affecting project performance. Some of these factors have been discussed in this review. The key ones are related to the project participants and to be specific, the client and consultant. The views and findings established through the review of literature, suggest that the success or failure of a construction project depends to a large extent on the “vision and drive of the client” (Armitt, 2012). Locally, it is common to find many private clients who with the help of artisans and site operatives, attempt to execute projects on their own without the input of consultants. Besides these, some who seek professional services have a reputation of giving consultants a hard time on projects. This attitude of clients may be a natural result of their perception of the need for consultancy services (Argyle, 1990). This natural tendency of clients’ perceptions to shape their behaviour and decision-making has particular relevance for the construction industry because of its project oriented nature. If clients perceive consultants in a negative way, then they will not use them on their projects and vice versa (Arredondo, 1991).

2.2.1 Project performance

Project performance refers to the extent to which the composite construction problem is solved. Project objectives may vary depending on the kind of project being undertaken, but they generally concern the satisfaction of the needs of all project actors (Ankrah and Proverbs, 2005). These include project profitability, better services delivery and other key organizational objectives (Mullins, 2005). In the process of evaluating and improving performance, attention is usually given to the issue of critical success factors.

2.2.2 Factors influencing project performance

Over the years, a lot of studies have been done on critical success factors (CFSs) (Cooke-Davies, 2002; Nicolini, 2002; Chan *et al.*, 2004; Anderson *et al.*, 2006; Toor and Ogunlana, 2009) in an effort to improve project performance. According to Soetanto (2002), there are some CFSs over which project participants can have influence during the project in order to achieve project success (Ankrah, 2005). These include Relationships among project actors, Competence and capabilities of project actors, Project control systems among other things. An in-depth examination of those that are relevant to this study is done in the next section.

2.3 COMPETENCE AND CAPABILITIES OF PROJECT ACTORS

Competence and capability refers to the necessary ability and knowledge that project actors possess to “integrate and coordinate specific resources, skills and competencies and to perform various activities” (Zollo and Winter, 2002). In this study, attention is given to the consultant and the client.

2.3.1 The Client

The term “client” refers to the owner of the constructed product but it can also refer to the end user. The term can however be extended to include those who act in behalf of the owner (Boyd

and Chinyio, 2006). This is typically true in the case of the private sector. It is a common practice for people living outside the country to send money to others to do building projects for them. Researchers have classified clients in a different ways. As stated in Chen (2008), these groups include “continuing clients and one-off clients (Hillebrandt, 1984), public, individuals or corporations (Rougvie, 1987), secondary inexperienced, secondary experienced, primary inexperienced or primary experienced (Masterman and Gameson, 1992) and identifiable and virtual (Darlington and Culley, 2004)”. The classification done by Kelly *et al.*, (1992) seems most appropriate as it is well suited for this study. They classified clients according to size, sector of operation and project type. Figure 2.1 illustrates the classification done by Kelly *et al.*, (1992). According to Alinaitwe (2008) the roles and responsibilities required of a client are dependent on the nature and type of the client in context. Generally however, construction clients play two main roles: first, they employ, authorize, pay and form a coalition with various key participants who execute the desired project. Secondly, clients determine and communicate project requirements (Hartmann *et al.*, 2008). This makes the creation of the project environment and agenda the client’s responsibility. According to Shiplee (2012), clients set the bar and the industry steps up to it. “If customers want cheap as chips, quick as possible, then it doesn’t give the impetus for the industry to push the boundary on other things. Contractors don’t set the market” (*ibid*). For clients to continue patronizing construction services, they must be satisfied with the returns of their investments (Turner, 1990). In simple terms, a satisfied client is one whose needs are met. This makes the assessment of a client’s needs imperative (Kotler, 1997).

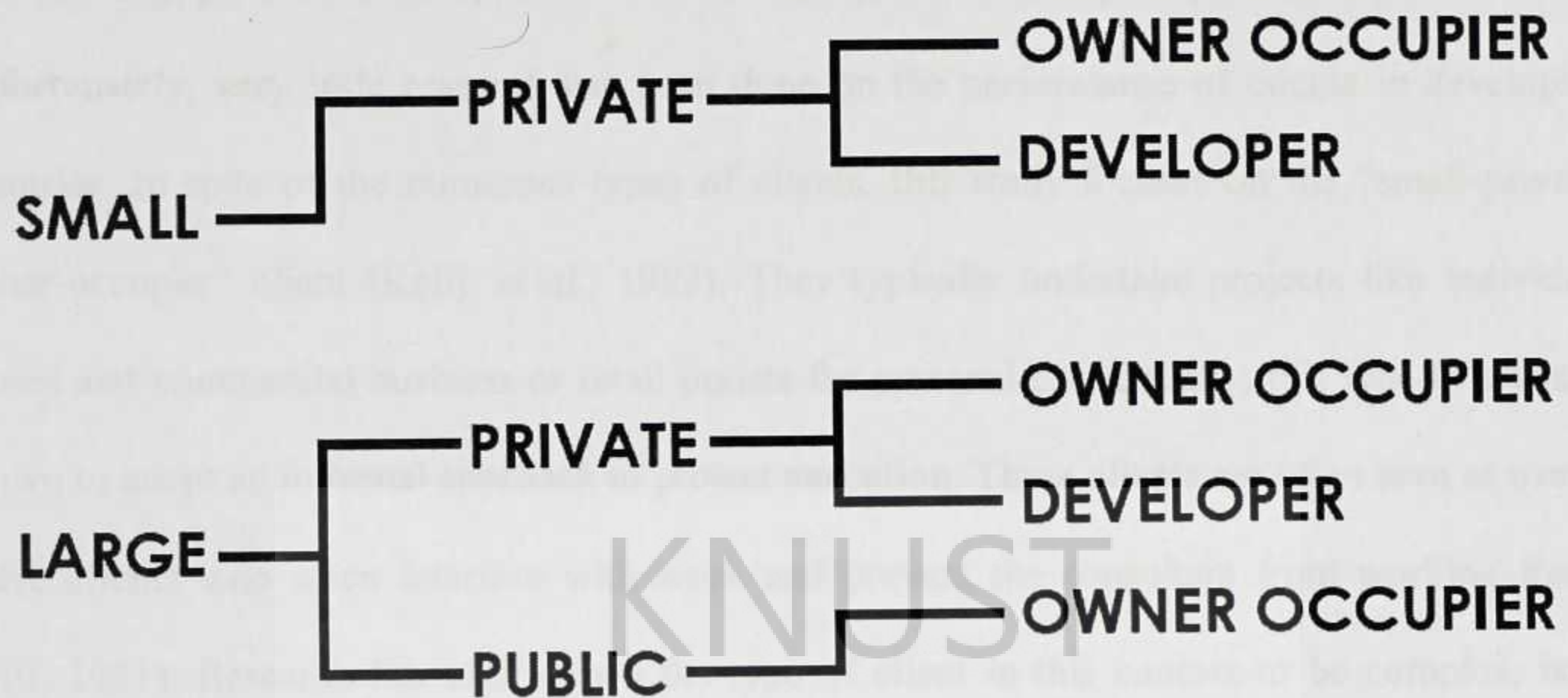


Figure 2.1 Characteristics describing clients (source: Kelly et al, 1992)

Several studies have shown clients to have two basic sets of needs. These are the “latent” and the “stated” needs (Runyon, 1980; Salisbury, 1990; Richardson, 1996; Nkado and Mbachu, 2001). Latent needs are those needs that are consciously or unconsciously not disclosed by the client. They are often the client’s real needs. Stated needs on the other hand are the clients’ explicit requirements for the fulfillment of the real needs (*ibid*). Clients are always dissatisfied when their stated needs go unfulfilled. Nevertheless, meeting only stated needs may not wholly result in client satisfaction. A holistic client satisfaction is only achieved when the fulfillment of the stated needs lead to a satisfaction of the concealed needs (Goodacre *et al.*, 1982). Armitt (2012) intimates that the other project actors (consultants and contractors) are often blamed when client satisfaction is not achieved. A careful analysis of problems on projects, however, often points to the client as the cause. This makes it important to assess client performance. In a study conducted by Alinaitwe *et al.* (2007a), certain project problems commonly caused by clients were identified. These include introduction of haphazard design variations, stoppages because of disagreements between client and other project actors, execution of projects in small volumes

over a long period of time, reluctance to adhere to statutory requirements, and so on. Unfortunately, very little research has been done on the performance of clients in developing countries. In spite of the numerous types of clients, this study focuses on the “small-private-owner-occupier” client (Kelly *et al.*, 1992). They typically undertake projects like individual houses and commercial business or retail outlets for personal use. Locally, this type of client is known to adopt an informal approach to project execution. These clients are often seen as overly active clients who often interfere with work and prevent the consultant from working freely (Cuff, 1991). Research has also shown the type of client in this context to be complex, non-homogeneous, and prone to conflicting objectives (Cherns and Bryant, 1984; Walker, 1996; Boyd and Kerr, 1998). This is because, unlike large public sector clients, they often do not have laid down systematic procedures for regulating their dealings with consultants. Thus, it is very difficult to give such clients what they need as they do not know or cannot definitely decide until much of the work has started. This is the problem that many consultants have to deal with when working for this type of client.

2.3.1.1. Clients' roles and responsibilities

Clients' roles and responsibilities refer to the things that they are required to do as part of a project. Various studies have shown the client to have many roles and responsibilities. Egan (1998; cited in Vennström, 2009) for example, states that it is the responsibility of construction clients to influence the outcome of projects by selecting an “appropriate procurement method and management process”. The client also has the responsibility of making the other project participants realize their needs (Kometa *et. al*, 1995). Issues such as functionality, design, technical solutions and managing the implementation process are also covered. These are somewhat technical and therefore not a usual thing that clients can easily do

on projects (*ibid*). Kometa *et al*, (1995) further identified five major roles played by the construction client. These are: defining project objectives, outlining the project organization, selecting the project team, forming the project governing method and building project culture (Cited in Nuamani and Tsegay, 2011). In real life, this is not too far from what many individual homebuilding clients strive to do. A critical responsibility of the client is to finance the total cost of a project as well as all fees charged by consultants and other project actors. In doing this, many clients, because of their lack of knowledge in design and construction issues, make uninformed predictions and guesses about costs without consulting the appropriate people. The result is that the real cost of the project tends to be higher than anticipated. Unfortunately, because private individual clients mainly fund projects all by themselves, many of them find it difficult to absorb the cost discrepancies that result when the project begins. Under such circumstances, because clients are mainly interested in the finished product itself but not the processes leading to it (Boyd and Kerr, 1998), they have the tendency of allocating the limited funds to the purchasing of materials and other things that physically form part of the finished product, leaving the other project participants (consultants and contractors) unpaid. This is confirmed by the fact that in developing countries, one of the main problems faced by the other project participants is delayed payment by the client (Alinaitwe, 2008). It is interesting to note that clients sometimes try to reduce the fees charged by consultants after project agreements had been concluded and sometimes even when work has started. Where consultants do not yield to these demands, it is common for clients to argue about the worth of the work done by consultants, thereby downplaying professional work in order to make it seem that the fees charged by consultants are too expensive. It is therefore not surprising that many consultants rate timely payment and more respect as the two most important things that they need from their

clients (*ibid*). Another shortfall of clients in the area of finance is that because they do not always keep track of project developments (*ibid*), they are unable to readily tell how much money they spend on their own projects. Often this leads to clients not having a good picture of total project costs. The effect of this is that they sometimes make the mistake of thinking that working without the inputs of consultants costs less. Unfortunately, some of them end up spending more money than they would have, had they sought professional guidance from consultants.

These issues notwithstanding, Egbu (2008) argues that it is not appropriate to expect all clients to have the same roles and responsibilities on all projects due to the complexity and diversity of projects as well as the nature, and different categories of construction clients (cited in Kulatunga *et. al.*, 2011). Beside, not all research supports the view of the client being the industry leader (Hillebrandt, 2000; Green, 1999). Hillebrandt (2000) for example argues that much of the key research conducted in this field of study centre around large public clients and not construction clients in general. Furthermore, many other studies have identified clients to be key inhibitors of certain useful processes during the project life cycle (Ball, 1988; Blayse and Manley, 2004; Ivory, 2005; Lim and Ofori, 2007).

Naturally, people earn the title "client" just by virtue of their being the initiators, owners or users of the project. But in reality, being a client does not have to be just a title. The differences in research opinions notwithstanding, it is safe to say that being a client is a role, and for that matter an active one that qualifies to be seen as a profession in its own right.

2.3.1.2. The need for client competence

The ICCF defines a professional client as one that is capable of exerting effective leadership from inception to completion of the project. In playing their professional role however, clients are widely perceived to be poor managers who have the tendency to shift difficult responsibilities

and blame to other project participants (Winch, 2010). This often leads to adverse relationships among project actors during and after the project (*ibid*). Hence, to deal professionally with project complexities, clients need to develop their competences and capabilities to deliver projects successfully (Hartmann *et al.*, 2008). In simple terms, clients have to learn how to become 'clients'. In developing competence and capability, clients are required to utilize their current knowledge while at the same time looking for new ones. This however has not been the case among many clients especially those in the informal private sector (*ibid*).

In an international study, Persson and Svedinger (2000) identified that clients require technical competence in the fields of engineering, law, economics, and the ability to communicate effectively. They further identified clients' behavioral competences to include being apparent, being present in the process, acting personally in the process and not just through consultants. Alinaitwe (2008) confirmed this when he found that clients are unable to track project developments because they do not regularly attend site meetings themselves. Thus, they introduce certain variations without even understanding their impact on the overall project scope. Persson and Svedinger (2000) however stressed on how well the construction client has to approach the project briefing process. The importance of proper project briefing cannot be overemphasized because it is a difficult and recurring problem on many projects (Smith and Wyatt, 1998; Barrett *et al.*, 1999), and in some cases has even resulted in project failure (Thomson, 2010). It is common for many clients to rush the early stages of a project. Unfortunately, this does not yield a constructed product that effectively satisfies both parties (Smith *et al.*, 2001). The reason is that incomplete briefs, designs, and project documentation cause a lot of variations. When this happens, clients are willing to provide reasonable time for the necessary adjustments to be made in the work. Yet, many of them feel reluctant to bear the

resultant financial obligations to the consultants. This results in project discontinuity, thereby severing the connection between projects in general and the business process (Alinaitwe, 2008). Another limitation of homebuilding clients is that they typically have very little understanding of design and construction related issues. Thus, even those clients who know the worth of consultants sometimes feel that they cannot function competently when working with them. Within the project environment, where the project practices that they are used to may not be shared by consultants, these clients easily feel intimidated and alienated (Tzortzopoulos *et al.*, 2006; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006). This is a key reason why some of these clients do not make use of consultants. In their study of individual private clients, Siva and London (2012) however found that clients who go ahead and engage consultants despite this hurdle, over the course of their relationship, seek ways to cope with the difficulties they experience. They acquire new skills and knowledge to help them function more competently. Primarily, they acquire some form of learning from the consultants. Their study revealed that the clients demonstrated a high level of reliance and trust in the consultant on all project issues, which provided the consultant the freedom to develop creative solutions. Also, making use of the finished building enabled them to develop a degree of cultural competency which gave them a more tangible understanding of the work of consultants. Thus, the clients changed the negative perceptions that they had toward consultants prior to working with them. They ended up having a more refined understanding of the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of the consultant and recognized their value in delivering cost-effective project solutions.

2.3.2 The Consultant

In this context, “consultant” refers to a person who provides expert advice to help the client achieve project objectives. At the individual private level, this term typically covers architects,

quantity surveyors, structural engineers and the like (Cherns and Bryant, 1984; Chua *et al.*, 1999; Soetanto *et al.*, 1999). This part of the review is aimed at providing an insight into what makes consultants indispensable for project success. The focus will be on their competence and capabilities, their roles and responsibilities as well as their performance on house projects.

2.3.2.1 Competence and capabilities of consultants

The competence of consultants is enhanced by their academic background, professional qualifications, experience-related knowledge, and skills (Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer, 2000). The competencies, capabilities and skills required by consultants for practice, however, transcend the scope covered by academic programmes. Modern consultancy practice demands other general and management knowledge, coupled with skills that extend beyond the technical aspects of traditional academic training (*ibid*). This is where the professional bodies come in handy. They bridge this gap by providing “Continuous Professional Development (CPD)” programmes (Chartered Institute of Building, 2012). While it is acknowledged that CPD programmes and their requirements do not equate with academic degree programmes, they provide a realistic view of the industry challenges that consultants have to face up to. As mentioned earlier, the project team basically works to solve the composite construction problem. For this reason, a paramount thing that makes consultants indispensable for project success is their problem-solving skills. Solving problems calls for defining problems and making decisions which are concerned with those problems (Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer, 2000). In defining problems, consultants are often better at being able to distinguishing between causes and symptoms. They are able to make quick decisions which serve as workable responses to problems. Consultants also demonstrate “the ability to pass on the solution to the client, hence possessing a solution-transferring ability” (Hakansson and Wootz, 1978; cited in Kilpady, 2005). Consultants acquire a more abstract

understanding of building science in general. This enables them to come out with theoretically derived improvements from time to time (Boyd, 2011), which in turn promotes a much efficient use of materials and a much more accurate form of construction (Kurrer, 2008). It is to be expected that consultants who specialize in, say general building works, will not necessarily be specialists in civil engineering projects. However, their training enables them to acquire specific skills which relate directly to their areas of specialization, as well as general skills, which are transferable from one field of construction to another (Burke, 1995; Walker, 1996). This makes consultants versatile.

2.3.2.2 Roles and responsibilities of consultants

The literature existing on consultants within the building delivery process commonly identify many of their roles and responsibilities. There is however no general agreement on a suitable set of criteria for grouping these (Oyedele and Tham, 2005). The reason is that consultants are now responsible not just for the technical content of projects, but also undertake additional roles that have traditionally not been their responsibility (Gilleard and Chong, 1996; Shenhar et al., 1995; cited in Edum-Fotwe and McCaffer, 2000). Lukumon and Tham (2005), however, identified and grouped consultants' roles and responsibilities under the headings: client focus, buildability of design, ensuring quality of works, and provision of management systems.

Clients are the core of the building delivery process and their needs must be met by the project (Latham, 1994). Consultants have a responsibility to make sure that this happens. According to Egan (1998), most clients are interested only in the finished product, its cost, its delivery on time, its quality and functionality. Thus, most clients do not practically involve themselves in the technical and managerial aspects of a project. They prefer leaving it to consultants (Winch, 2010). In maintaining client focus therefore, consultants do things such as, promoting an

understanding client objectives among the project team, identifying and prioritizing project objectives, analyzing design concepts and requirements, designing the project within budget, completion of design on time and making sure that the design conforms to the requirements of the owner (Lukumon and Tham, 2005). Another key responsibility of consultants is to ensure constructability or buildability of the design. Although the ease of construction is influenced by several factors, the major contribution factors are those which lie within the control of consultants (Griffith, 1984). This is because consultants influence the project right from the conceptual planning stage. Also, Planning and achieving buildability requires an optimum combination of knowledge and practical experience in design and construction (O'Connor and Tucker, 1986), a quality possessed by consultants. Construction is a very complex venture and requires the input of many individuals with different goals who often come together as a team; thus the adoption of proper management methods is essential if the client's goals are to be achieved (Lukumon and Tham, 2005). The client can look up to consultants to provide this service. This perhaps is the most important service provided by consultants as it is related significantly to all measures of success (Sidwell, 1982; Ireland, 1984).

2.3.2.3 Performance of consultants on private house projects

In assessing the performance of consultants in relation to the client's priorities, Cheng *et al.* (2006), identified "overall service quality, technical accuracy, and value for money," as the most important aspects of service delivery. Over the years, however, the industry has consistently been characterized by waste, pollution, collapse of buildings, repeated delays, and cost overruns (Earth Watch Institute 2011, Roodman and Lenssen 1995; Mansfield *et al.*, 1994; Elinwa and Buba, 1993; Okpala and Aniekwu, 1988). Owing to this, the performance of construction professionals has consistently been a source of concern to both public and private sector clients

(Cheng *et al.*, 2006). While some would blame the contractor, the majority would hold the consultant responsible (Lukumon and Tham, 2005). A major reason for this is that, the consultant is perceived to be responsible for the buildability and constructability of the building through the provision of a good design and effective construction supervision (Othman, 2011). Many consultants in spite of that fail to play their roles effectively. When dealing with individual clients in the informal sector, consultants rarely make reference to formal management methods (Cuff, 1991; London *et al.*, 2005; Chen, 2008). They also find it difficult and are even sometimes reluctant to explain the nature of their professional activities. In some instances they are unable to recognize when it is acceptable to yield to the demands of the client (Cuff, 1991; Siva and London, 2012). They “just do” things (Cuff, 1991). Interestingly, consultants seldom behave this way when dealing with large public and private clients. Individual private clients therefore view this attitude on the part of consultants as an attempt to maintain social distinction (Siva and London, 2012). This has resulted in some clients feeling alienated, thereby unable to appreciate the potential contribution that consultants can deliver to them (Cuff, 1991; Winter, 2002). This has further resulted in some of the clients’ negative perceptions of consultants, especially among clients who have never worked with them on projects. Many architects, for example, are over enthusiastic when it comes to design. Oftentimes they concentrate too much on designing at the expense of the other elements, making designing an end in itself (Cheng *et al.*, 2006). According to Emmitt (1999) however, design is not the only reason why clients choose architects. They need to be present throughout the project.

2.4 CLIENT - CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIPS ON PRIVATE HOUSE PROJECTS

All construction projects serve as a common platform where many different actors are required to work towards accomplishing a common project objective. However, the increasing complexity

of construction projects, the turbulent economic environment within which they are procured, and the extensive fragmentation and specialization of trades within the construction industry often makes it a challenge for project actors to act as a team (Love *et. al.*, 2010). Regardless of these challenges however, the final constructed product is a composition of the outcomes of the different tasks performed by individual project actors. This invariably means all project participants perform tasks that are interdependent (Vennström, 2009). This makes the concept of project partnering inevitable.

2.4.1 Closed and open-ended relationships

Traditional partnering procedures have successfully been in use for many years. These procedures are often close ended with all contract conditions predetermined. They tend to focus too much on the work process and the rewards for project actors and give very little attention to important factors such as individual differences among project actors (Locke, 1977; Kohn, 1996), and social relationships (Arditi and Yasamis, 1998). Their use often requires a relatively competent project team. These characteristics of the traditional partnering approach make it very difficult to use even on public projects which are often managed by a highly competent and capable project team. They usually face delays, cost overruns, and dissatisfaction of project participants (Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2001, 2002a, 2004, 2005).

A common characteristic of individual private projects is that, clients often push too much for reduced consultancy fees during the initial stages. Sometimes they even feel reluctant to make full payments. This reduces consultants' motivation. A lack of professionalism by consultants because of reduced fees sometimes results in inadequate services being provided, often leading to rework that manifests as a lack of professionalism (Love *et. al.*, 2010). To tackle this challenge, project actors, especially consultants, resort to the traditional and more formal

approach to partnering. According to Kadefors (2004) however, formal contracts with predetermined penalty clauses betray less trust among the contracting parties. This invariably causes trepidation on both sides. On private projects especially, clients often take liberties to make many changes to the specification and scope of work as and when they wish. This leads to an inherent degree of uncertainty within construction projects. Under such circumstances, initial scope and specifications will invariably change, and the project team will have to deal with many unanticipated problems as and when they arise. This phenomenon is incompatible with traditional partnering. Traditional approaches do not take account of the fact that not all project risks are foreseeable (Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2004). When parties enter into a relationship that is very formal and a specific predetermined contract clause fails to account for an unforeseen event, or is interpreted to suit one party, disputes are likely to arise (Mitropoulos and Howell, 2001; cited in Love *et. al.*, 2010). Some project actors may see this as an opportunity to take undue advantage of others (*ibid*). Project activities are performed simultaneously by several different participants. Tasks are also interdependent. For these reasons, project contracting has to be approached in a way that is different from the traditional approach to contracting. Less formal contracts with "flexible adjustment mechanisms" (Klemetti, 2006; Ring and Van de Ven, 1994) encourage project participants to work together as a team rather than working towards individual objectives. This is partly because partnering creates a project atmosphere that makes contracting parties understand and accept that it is not possible for all risks to be foreseen and that project risk can be shared fairly among the project team (Larson, 1995; Rahman and Kumaraswamy, 2005; Khan *et. al.*, 2012). Collaborative partnering is also an effective way of reducing attrition in project relationships especially when project resource and objective sharing is mutual (Palaneeswaran *et al.*, 2003).

2.4.2 Client –consultant partnering

The very nature of consultancy service provision lends itself to collaborative and cooperative partnering. It is common for the service provider to have a face-to-face interaction with the client. In the case of private individuals especially, the contact is almost invariably personal (Yorke, 1990), with the consultant being much attached to the client. This personal interaction should naturally lead to long-term relationships as well as a product that is jointly delivered by both parties (Gummesson, 1996). This has however not been the case. Although many clients regard cooperative and collaborative partnering as a better option for project success (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008), it has not practically reflected in the choices that they make on their projects. Research has revealed that clients are just not willing to share the power and control with other project actors (Bresnen *et al.*, 2005; Fernie and Thorpe, 2007). Vennström and Eriksson (2010) further cite reasons such as a lack of business ethics and short term project focus. Many clients, because of their short-term focus on single projects, have a habit of changing service providers on and between projects (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008). This invariably makes service provision project-based and subject to deadlines (Karantinou *et al.*, 2001). This is adversarial because the hope and expectations of future work often serve as a strong basis for consultants' motivation in partnering relationships (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000a; cited in Eriksson *et al.*, 2009). The tendency therefore has been for consultants too to take a short-term view of projects and to focus more on trying to secure other projects (Hsieh, 1998 cited in Kilpady, 2005). Chen (2008) also argues that these new initiatives do not sufficiently touch on "the social dimension" of professional practice although this is a basic issue underlying all projects and to be specific, private practice. The culture of consultants and how it affects their relationships with clients has to be further explored as it could shed more light on how it affects the client's perceptioning process.

2.5 THE ROLE OF PERCEPTION IN CLIENT-CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIPS ON PRIVATE HOUSE PROJECTS

Perception means a way of understanding or regarding something. It is considered to encompass clients' whole view of consultants' reputation, including image and identity, and is itself a relationship between the past, present, and future choices as well as particular environmental issues that a professional service provider is exposed to (Kilpady, 2005). Though a lack of agreement as to the common use of the term still exists, it has been used in literature interchangeably with 'reputation', 'image' and 'identity,' (Caruana, 1997). A significant effort has also been made by a number of researchers who see perceptions as a phenomenon worthy of study (Hampton *et al.*, 2012; Yong and Mustaffa, 2011; Vennström and Eriksson, 2010; Eriksson *et al.*, 2008; Hlaing *et al.*, 2008; Forsythe, 2008; Boyd and Kerr, 1998).

"Perception is more powerful than fact" (Arredondo, 1991). This implies that how people perceive something has a greater effect on how they react to it as opposed to what that thing actually is (Argyle, 1990). Thus, consultants may be very useful on projects but if clients do not perceive them as such, they will neither patronize their services nor appreciate their work (Cuff, 1991; Winter, 2002). To confirm this, Day *et al* (1992) discovered that among clients who seek professional help, perception is indeed an important factor that influences their selection of consultants.

2.5.1 The client's perceptioning process

The perceptioning process describes how clients' perceptions of consultants are formed. According to Arredondo (1991), perceptions are formed on three main levels. Clients receive an input. They go ahead to process it and, they make judgments in the context of their experience. It is against this background that this section of the review will be carried out.

2.5.1.1 What Clients Receive – The Input

Clients respond on the basis of everything that goes on around them. This is called the input. During the temporary project relationship, clients are affected by everything that consultants say and do. However, the sources from which clients receive input are not limited to the consultant. Clients also react to the environment in which they find themselves. Mahon and Watrick (2003) therefore believe that perception is not totally under the direct control of service providers. Perception develops out of the kind of interactions among project stakeholders in specific contexts and around certain issues. These issues and contexts could be social, technical, economic, political or cultural (Cuff, 1991). It is common to find clients consulting family members and friends who have executed projects similar to what they have in mind. Often, these people subconsciously pass on their perceptions to the client. From a cultural perspective, it is typical of those in a particular environment to handle construction projects in a particular way. This culture affects the client's perceptions. The bottom line however is that, clients will invariably choose only what they think is necessary. This choice is affected by a number of factors revolving around both the client and the consultant. According to Nelson & Quick (1999), these include but are not limited to familiarity with [the consultant], attitudes, mood, motives, and interests.

2.5.1.2 How clients process the input

At this stage of the perception forming process, the client's initial reaction to the input relatively happens without conscious thought and it results in a first 'first impression' being formed (Lord, 1997). Clients go through the preliminary processes of 'categorisation' and 'inference'. They automatically categorize all inputs and draw their own preliminary conclusions (*ibid*).

Clients may not have a clear picture of construction issues. Thus, to get a good picture they attempt to sort out and organize everything that they receive from the environment as well as that from consultants. However, they may not do it properly because they sometimes lack an understanding of design and construction issues (Tzortzopoulos et al., 2006; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006). This puts clients through some form of disorientation (Siva and London, 2012) and as a result, they often find the input from consultants to be complicated, cluttered and technical. For that reason, they are unable to perceive professional work the way consultants intend them to. Perception can positively be influenced if consultants make sure that their input is understood by clients. That means helping clients to understand the nature of professional work (RIBA, 1992; Crafford, 1997), eliminating distractions from the environment (Siva and London, 2012), working in an organized and systematic manner, and involving clients in the project.

2.5.1.3 How clients judge

The third stage in the perception forming process is a natural outcome of the first two. Having received and analyzed the input, clients continually evaluate and interpret their experiences. According to Lord (1997), clients make conscious changes to their first impressions at this stage of the perceptioning process. Typically, they do this by going through a process of gathering further information and re-categorisation (Crafford, 1997). Generally, they do not do so as professionally trained critics on the basis of objective criteria. Instead, they form subjective opinions (Arredondo, 1991). Lord (1997) however believes that clients will engage in this process only when they are 'willing and able to exert greater effort' to develop a more accurate perception of the consultant. In effect, clients should be given reasons to go through this process, and reasonably, this should be the responsibility of the consultant. How they evaluate their experience of working with consultants depends, in large part, on what consultants do to shape

their perceptions. At this stage, it is possible for clients to change their perceptions that they had prior to evaluating their experience with consultants. Although the client and the consultant apparently work on the same project, they both view these issues in different ways and the client often looks at them from a perspective that is different from the consultant's (Siva and London, 2012). This phenomenon is known as the 'Perceptual Gap' (Boyd and Kerr, 1998). According to Boyd and Kerr (1998), "the clients' experience of consultants must be seen within the context of the perceptual gap". Many clients view the constructed product as a sign of prestige and personal success or as a means of financial gain. Because of this, they often pay much attention to the finished product to the detriment the processes required to deliver it. Clients attach more importance to project risks and costs and often put off making decisions and payments until a time that they feel ready. Consultants on the other hand tend to focus on the technical aspects of the building and so concern themselves with the intricate processes involved in its design and construction. This is where they wish to realize some of their concepts and ideas. They also need the project to continue uninterrupted so that they can get paid. This perceptual gap inadvertently results in a big difference between what is initially expected before the project begins and what is eventually realized (Lavers, 1992) by both parties at the end of the project. This can result in a negative experience of the project relationship. Boyd and Kerr (1998) also argue that apart from clients' perceptions resulting from their relationships with consultants, some of their perceptions are personally generated independent of the consultant. These personally generated perceptions are often subject to client bias due to factors such as stereotyping and selective perception (Crafford, 2007). Clients may therefore be wrong in judging consultants in the context of their experiences.

2.5.2 The consultant's perceptioning process

According to Chen (2008), consultants acquire skills in two main ways; primarily through their formal academic training, and secondly, through practical experiences in their field of work. Cuff (1991) suggests the formal academic training to be somewhat similar to an "initiation rite" due to its tendency to cause "a high degree of commitment, a certain amount of isolation from non-group members, cohesion within the group, sacrifices, and rituals marking passage at various stages". During their academic training, works produced by students are subjected to critique by their instructors and sometimes by external examiners who are respected authorities in their group habitus. Other members of the social field are rarely allowed to participate in the critiquing process (*ibid*). It is at this early stage that students unconsciously learn to give more weight to the views of those in their group habitus and disregard the interests of other members of the social field (Chen, 2008). During the early years after school, recent graduates are required to understudy accomplished professionals in their field of work. Due to their lack of experience however, they are often viewed as laymen by their masters. Thus, they are given very little responsibility and are allowed to make little or no contact with clients (*ibid*). To become full-fledged consultants, they are required to make a good impression on their masters, peers, and other members of their group habitus but not on clients (Cuff, 1991). Ultimately, when they become masters of their profession, consultants' do more of mentoring, marketing, promoting public recognition of their services and other things that demand a "widening sphere of influence" on others outside their group habitus(*ibid*). Ironically, this is when the weaknesses they have adopted from their habitus begin to manifest. Over time, consultants begin to see the world through the professional lens. In other words, they develop an eye that is different from that of the general public. This serves as a major divide between their group habitus and that of

the others. Consultants continuously seek ways to maintain and preserve this divide so that they can distinguish themselves from others in the social field (Dovey, 2002; cited in Chen, 2008). According to Cuff (1991), professionals achieve the maintenance of their social distinction by making some aspects of their profession "tacit". This is based on the premise that as long as others in the social field cannot easily understand their profession, they (consultants) would continue to function. Therefore according to Dovey (2002 as cited in Chen, 2008), "non-members of the [consultant's] habitus are silently but consciously excluded from the mystical world of [professional] practice wherein distinctions between tastes and preferences are made to appear as pure [professional] judgments". This social distinction between habituses serves as a mismatch in the consultant-client relationship. Thus clients experience a state of confusion or frustration when they find themselves exposed to an unfamiliar habitus as they embark on a project and enter into a relationship with a consultant (Chen, 2008). This phenomenon is termed *habitus shock* (*ibid*). According to Chen (2008), the client's habitus is in a state of shock as they may be unable to deal effectively with the new [consultant] habitus on the project, thereby resulting in "potential uneasiness or discomfort". Generally when clients enter into a relationship with the [consultant] they are often uncertain about what is expected of them or what they can expect from the [consultant]. It is in this state of shock that clients form new perceptions of consultants and change or reinforces what they already had prior to the project relationship. In some cases, the parties are able to resolve the conflicts leading to the client's de-mystifying of the consultant's habitus (Siva and London, 2012). In other cases however, the two may not be able to successfully resolve their differences. In such cases, the perceptual gap between the two habituses is further widened (Chen, 2008).

Although social distinctions are inevitable and a necessary aspect of professional practice (Bourdieu, 1982; Gutman, 1988; and Cuff, 1991), they have silently eroded the stranglehold of consultants in the social field. The consultant's method of maintain autonomy in the social field has inadvertently resulted in the alienation of the client who happens to be the very source of the consultant's work. Unlike other professionals who enjoy patronage from different classes of people, the nature construction work requires that all clients be financially sound (Cuff, 1991). Ironically, these clients by virtue of their capital create for themselves strong group habituses, and so are difficult to manipulate in the social field. They seldom give consultants the degree of autonomy they want (*ibid*).

2.5.3 Perception gaps in client-consultant relationships

Over the years, a lot of studies have been done on the sociology of professional practice (Blau, 1984; Cuff, 1991; Cowdroy, 1992; RIBA, 1992, 1995; Stevens, 1998; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006; Chen and London, 2007; Emmitt and Gorse, 2007; Chen, 2008; Siva and London, 2012). A common thread running through all these studies is the importance of examining the consultant-client relationship in the social dimension of the "design and construction environment" (Chen, 2008). In this environment, consultants face many challenges when discharging their duties. In addressing these challenges, the RIBA (1992, 1993, and 1995) conducted several studies on key issues about professional practice. The studies revealed wide gaps in certain areas of the consultant-client relationship. One of the five major areas identified was "perception". The gap in perception bordered on that fact that once the service had actually been delivered, the consultant's perception on the service was different from that of the client. Thus, contrary to what many professionals thought, the studies revealed that clients were often dissatisfied with the services they received. On the one hand, clients perceived consultants as domineering, arrogant,

boring and imposing. On the other hand, the consultants felt that they were doing well in the management of their work as well as providing high quality services to the clients. Some researchers have linked this discrepancy in relationships to the social environment of professional practice. Cuff (1991), for example, intimates that every consultant although unique and dynamic, is affected in their relationship with clients by “certain cultures, rituals and common methods” and ideologies that underpin professional practice. Clients for instance, when trying to negotiate with consultants, sometimes try persuading them by assuring them of more future projects. Yet, the underlying values of professional practice make consultants see this as a compromise on and sometimes to their profession. Cuff (1991) further argued that those in the professional field try to create for themselves a distinct form of social environment by identifying themselves with a particular body of knowledge. In an attempt to maintain autonomy in this “social milieu of practice”, these professionals keep certain aspects of their knowledge secret from their clients (Freidson, 1986; Cuff, 1991; Stevens, 1998; cited in Chen, 2008). Stevens (1998) argued that this is so because the success of professionals apart from stemming from their capabilities also derives from their social background. Thus, an objective of the educational culture and social system governing professional practice has been to produce people who are seen as “cultivated individuals” and “instruments of taste” (*ibid*). Over the years however, many professionals have been unable to maintain a balanced view of their autonomy in their relationship with clients primarily because their training gives little attention to this key skill (Cheng, 2008). The resulting unintended alienation of the client has led to the creation of negative perceptions and the development of indignation against professionals as well as the subtle erosion of their position within certain sectors of the construction industry (Cuff, 1991; RIBA, 1993; Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Grilo et al, 2007).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the methodology adopted for adopted this research study, a qualitative approach in this case. Justifications are also given for the choice of this research approach as well as the specific research methods used for data collection.

3.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The research strategy adopted is of an exploratory and descriptive nature.

3.2.1 Research aim and objectives

The purpose of this research is to provide a composite description of homebuilders' perceptions on the need to engage the services of construction consultants.

The research objectives include the identification of:

- Consultancy services sought for by clients;
- Clients' perceptions on services provided by consultants on construction projects;
- The factors that have led to these perceptions;
- The effects of clients' perceptions on their attitude toward engaging consultants.

3.2.2 Proposition

The fundamental proposition of this research is that clients' attitudes toward the engagement of consultants on homebuilding projects are largely determined by their perceptions on the need for the services of construction consultants.

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

Two main research paradigms are identified in the exploration of client perceptions. These are the quantitative and qualitative approaches. To determine the more appropriate of these two, the nature of the research problem is addressed.

3.3.1 Nature of research problem

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature because there has been little empirical research on the delicate interaction between consultants and homebuilding clients. Although consultant-client engagement in general has become an area of concern in construction research as indicated prior, the studies conducted so far have focused on the public sector (Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998; Egan, 2002), the large private commercial sector (Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Vennström, 2008; Nuamani and Tsegay, 2011), and other industries with a stronger regulatory environment (Cuff, 1991; Khan et al., 2011; Siva and London, 2012). These studies, although instrumental in the development of the current research, fail to offer comprehensive insight into the actual nature of client perceptions of consultancy services on the local scene. An objective of this research is to provide rich and deep descriptions of client's perceptions on the phenomenon of engaging consultancy services on house projects. Past studies hint on the negative attitude of clients toward the work of consultants on house projects and how this affects their relationship and the project as a whole (RIBA, 1993; Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Alinaitwe, 2008). These studies however do not provide in-depth descriptions of the nature of perceptions of clients and what has influenced them. The study seeks to make issues known from the client's perspective. Locally, very little research is available on the type of client being studied. To get a fuller understanding of the whole picture therefore, clients have to be observed through their own eyes. An underlying tenet of this research is that perceptions are subjective. Owing to differences in the quality of service provision by consultants (Dunning, 1989; cited in Siva and London, 2012), and the fact that clients do not evaluate their project experiences as professionally trained critics on the basis of objective criteria (Arredondo, 1991), they form subjective opinions leading to subjective perceptions. Different clients may have different views leading to a condition of

“multiple realities” (Cheng, 2008). Therefore capturing these “multiple truths” will ensure a broader understanding of client perceptions (*ibid*).

Exploratory and descriptive research demands the use of methods that are pliable and fluid in nature. This is intended to allow greater spontaneity and adaptation of the interaction between the researcher and the study participant.

3.3.2 Qualitative versus quantitative research

Qualitative research, on the one hand, is concerned with phenomena involving quality or kind (Tewksbury, 2009), and aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the issues being studied as seen from the viewpoint of the people being studied (Wilmot n.d). Qualitative research leads to the generation of hypotheses and theory.

Quantitative research, on the other hand, is generally applicable to phenomena that can be expressed in terms of quantity or amount (Tewksbury, 2009), and often uses statistically oriented methods inference to generalized its results to a population (Wilmot n.d). Quantitative research also tends to be more specific and hypothesis-driven. The former is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions and behaviour. Such an approach leads to the generation of data in non-quantitative form which is not subjected to rigorous quantitative analysis. Thus, such research is largely influenced by the researcher’s insights and impressions. The quantitative approach on the other hand involves the generation of data in quantitative form which can be subjected to thorough and strict statistical analysis in a formal and rigid fashion. In quantitative approaches, the researcher has greater control and manipulation of the research environment. Thus, this approach is useful in building models for understanding future conditions.

The two methods can be adopted side by side for the same research work. However, a large divide exists between these two approaches in that the very bases of those approaches differ (Wilmot n.d). Based on the works of Becker (1996), Miles and Huberman (1998), Lincoln

and Guba (2000), and Punch (2005), five key differentiating factors between the two approaches were identified by Cheng (2008).

These are:

- Exploratory examination of everyday life in their natural settings versus examination of well defined situations in experimental settings
- In-depth versus general descriptions

Qualitative research focuses on the significance of in-depth descriptions of study results. This leads to an output that reflects what happens in the real world of the sample under study (Miles and Huberman, 1998; Tewksbury, 2009). On the contrary, quantitative research is deliberately unconcerned with the rich and detailed descriptions because it is believed that “such detail interrupts the process of developing generalizations” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; as cited in Cheng, 2008).

- Individual’s “voice” versus broad “brushstroke” view

Both approaches are interested in the point of view of those being studied. However, qualitative research on the one hand seeks to portray the results from study sample’s point of view, whereas quantitative research views the “empirical materials produced by interpretive methods as unreliable, impressionistic and not objective” enough (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; as cited in Cheng, 2008).

- Interpretive paradigms versus positivists paradigms

Qualitative research tends to lean toward interpretive paradigms, thus being underpinned by the point of view that there can be multiple versions or interpretations of the “truth” (Cheng, 2008). Quantitative research however leans toward positivism, being underpinned by the viewpoint that there is one truth, which can be captured and understood (Guba, 1990).

- Fluid versus strict and rigid set of methods and practices

Qualitative research often depends on a diverse use of multiple tools and strategies aimed at capturing as many versions of reality as possible (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.11), whereas quantitative research tends to focus on the use of strictly defined sets of tools and strategies (O'Leary, 2005).

3.4 QUALITATIVE APPROACH

Based on the nature of the research and the differences between the two main research approaches discussed, the qualitative approach is well suited for this study.

In undertaking qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.23; as cited in Cheng, 2008) outline a five stage strategy, which will be adopted for this study:

- *The researcher*: in conducting qualitative research, the researcher brings with them a set of personal values, beliefs and influences which can simultaneously guide and constrain the work that is performed in a study. Therefore it is important that the values and influences of the researcher are exposed in order to minimize potential for bias.
- *Interpretive paradigms*: are a basic set of beliefs that guides the researcher's actions. The present research is underpinned by a constructivist paradigm.
- *Strategies of inquiry*: a strategy of inquiry is composed of a "bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that the researcher employs as he or she moves from paradigm to the empirical world". The strategy of inquiry adopted for this study is the empirical phenomenological research strategy.
- *Methods of collecting and analyzing empirical material*: there are many ways in which qualitative researchers can collect and analyse empirical material. In addition, the manner in which the researcher reads and analyse the data collected can be performed through a variety of ways. The selection of methods is often guided by the research problem in question and the most appropriate way to explore the problem.

The phenomenological inquiry is employed as the method for collecting and analyzing empirical material in the present study.

- *Interpretation*: the final stage of qualitative research involves the interpretive practice of making sense of the findings, which can again involve a variety of methods to develop multiple interpretive truths. The specific methods for interpreting the findings in this research are based upon the phenomenological inquiry approach.

3.5 THE RESEARCHER

The qualitative research process is influenced by the researcher's background and personal experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Thus, an outline of the researcher's background is necessary at this point.

The researcher is a Ghanaian male who attended both private and public primary and secondary schools respectively. He attended a public Ghanaian university completing a Bachelor of Science in Building Technology 2009. He worked as a teaching and research assistant for one year after his undergraduate studies. Since 2007, the researcher has been a member of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB). He has also been a part of a small design-and-build firm undertaking work mainly on private residential dwellings since 2009. He has had firsthand experience in dealing with clients on house projects from the inception stage to the completion of projects. Although the results of this study is based only on the data collected for this study, the research has nonetheless been informed by the researcher's personal observations of consultant-client engagements on house projects. The type of work that the researcher does informs his attitude towards the issues under study, thereby shaping his interpretation of it thereof. The social environment of the researcher is mainly constituted by professionals, academics, researchers and students of the built environment.

Cheng (2008) argues that "the greater the understanding and appreciation of the built environment system or environment that the [consultant and client] are a part of, the richer

the interpretations of the phenomenon under analysis". In other words, "the understanding of the data can be enhanced through the researcher's understanding and appreciation of the phenomenon" (*ibid*).

3.6 CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

In qualitative research, multiple constructed realities are recognised (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005) and are grounded in people's different attributions of meaning to events and experiences (Higgs et al., 2009, p. 19). Constructivists view knowledge as an internal construction where meaning is individually assigned to events, ideas and experiences".

Firstly, this study seeks to observe the multiple "truths" constructed by the different study participants and the link between these "truths". In towing the line of constructivism, the premise of this study is that there may not be just one straightforward perception that clients hold of consultants. Instead, different participants will reveal different perceptions based on their experience and background. Therefore exploring the multiple truths will lead to a more rounded and thorough understanding of what is being studied. Secondly, the research is based on the premise that the outcome of the research is jointly constructed by both the researcher and the study participants. Finally, because the phenomenon under study occurs in a natural world, this study employs naturalistic methods to explore client perceptions.

3.7 PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH STRATEGY

Phenomenology is a form of humanistic research that give special attention to the views and personal experiences of individuals (Denscombe, 2010, p 94). According to Welman and Kruger (1999, p. 189; as cited in Groenewald, 2004) "phenomenologists are concerned with understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspectives of people involved". Thus, phenomenological research focuses on "the ways in which people interpret events and, literally, make sense of their personal experiences" (Denscombe, 2010, p 96).

Often, these are things of “which we are aware but as yet, remain known to us only in terms of how it appears to us directly through our senses” but not through the senses of those actually involved (Denscombe, 2010, p 95). Thus, phenomenology concentrates efforts on “the kind of human experiences that are pure, basic and raw in the sense that they have not (yet) been subjected to processes of analysis and theorizing” in order to obtain a clearer picture not from “strangers” but from the perspective of those directly experiencing it. This involves seeing things through the eyes of those involved, understanding things way, and providing a description that adequately portrays how those involved experience the situation (*ibid*). By doing this, the researcher just ‘describes’, thereby staying *faithful to the original* (Groenewald, 2004; Denscombe, 2010, p 95). For these reasons, “*phenomenology has an affinity with humanistic perspectives on research that are keen to accord normal people and their own everyday reasoning higher status in research*” (Denscombe, 2010, p.95).

In accepting the fact that the world is actively constructed by humans who interpret and give meaning to their experiences “through a structure of multiple realities which are made meaningful through language, rules, roles, and statuses”, phenomenology rejects the notion of one universal truth (Shutz, 1978; Swingewood, 1984; Davis n.d). It accepts, instead, that “things can be seen in different ways by different people at different times in different circumstances, and that each alternative version needs to be recognized as being valid in its own right” (Denscombe, 2010). This does not however imply that there are as many realities as there are individuals (*ibid*). Phenomenology acknowledges that the perception process is not unique to each individual, but instead, they must be necessarily shared with others in the social group (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Davis n.d; Denscombe, 2010).

3.7.1 Choosing phenomenology as a research approach

The phenomenological research strategy is considered an appropriate choice for this study for three main reasons.

Phenomenology is focused on studying a phenomenon which happens in the 'real world', and detailed study "into the thick of what is going on" (Stake, 2005, p.449). Past studies exploring the client-consultant engagement have tended to focus on large public sector clients or large scale private developers (Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998; Egan, 2002, Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Vennström, 2008; Nuamani and Tsegay, 2011). Consequently there has been little understanding of the relationship between consultants and homebuilding private clients who usually undertake one-off residential projects. On house projects, the client and the consultant "often invest a significant amount of personal and financial commitment on the project, which inevitably lead to a highly charged and emotional" environment in which both parties operate (Cheng, 2008). Therefore the phenomenological approach is suited to examine in-depth the real-life context of the perceptions of homebuilding clients on the engagement of consultancy services. Because "the social world is complex and rarely straightforward" (Denscombe, 2010), the phenomenological approach allows the researcher the appropriate degree of flexibility needed paint a good picture of the phenomenon being studied. It does this by allowing for the selection of participants who have experienced the phenomenon being studied. This research aims to explore the perceptions of homebuilding clients on the engagement of consultants. Phenomenology thus offers the prospect of dealing with those who can give authentic accounts of the phenomenon under study (Denscombe, 2010). The researcher can therefore delve into the phenomenon, providing descriptions that are detailed enough to give a true reflection of the client perceptions. Phenomenology is also well suited to small-scale research with a low budget, with which the researcher is the main resource.

According to Morrissey and Higgs (2006), phenomenological research is based on certain premises. One of these is that phenomenology stems from the view that the "everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge, and that we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurs in our

daily lives” (Becker, 1992; as cited in Morrissey and Higgs, 2006). This research is consistent with this premise, reflecting the belief that studying the specific and individual perceptions of clients, rather than theories or trends of human behaviour, reveals knowledge about the client-consultant engagement that cannot be known otherwise.

3.7.2 Defining the units of analysis and the research participant

This research focuses on the phenomenon of low utilization of consultants by clients on house projects as well as the associated perceptions of the client. According to Giorgi (2008a), the purpose of phenomenology is to “clarify the nature of the phenomenon being studied in a more traditional, normative, and scientific sense” (Cited in Finlay, 2009). He thus recommends using at least three research participants as this helps to highlight the differences among their perceptions, making it easier to understand each individual’s experience from the “more general experience of the phenomenon” (*ibid*). Thus the phenomenon as a whole is in itself understood regardless of the individuals involved (Finlay, 2009). A multiple-case approach (Yin, 1994; Stake, 2005, p 445) was therefore adopted to allow for a difference in the stories obtained from the study participants in order to satisfy the concept of “multiple realities” (Denscombe, 2010), as well as to acquire more knowledge about the topic. Phenomenological study is primarily concerned with data and so non-probability (purposive) sampling of participants was chosen because of its potential to yield the most relevant information (Hansemark and Albinsson, 2004). It was hoped that each client unit would have its unique characteristics and that themes and categories would emerge from comparing the different stories. In order to guarantee this, there were two units of analysis under this study. The first one comprised clients who were in a position to build a house but had not done so. These were also clients who have never engaged the services of a consultant. The second unit was made up of clients who had engaged the services of consultants on a house project.

3.7.3 Participant selection and sources of data

Borrowing from the concept of case study research, the participants selected should be typical of the population being studied (Huberman and Miles, 1994; Ryan and Bernard, 2000). Besides this, they must offer the researcher more opportunity to learn. In explaining this Stake (2005, p. 451; as quoted in Chen, 2008) states,

“The researcher examines various interests in the phenomenon, selecting a case of some typicality but leaning toward those cases that seem to offer opportunity to learn. My choice would be to choose that case from which we feel we can learn the most...Sometimes it is better to learn a lot from an atypical case than a little from a seemingly typical case”.

According to Eisenhardt (1989), the minimum number of participants is two and the maximum, fifteen. Giorgi (2008 a) also recommends the use of at least three participants. In this study, six participants (see Table 3.1) were chosen. In order to achieve “geographic diversity” (Nitta et al., 2010), the research participants were drawn from the two regions in Ghana with the most private home building projects (Greater Accra and Ashanti Region). Moreover, financial diversity was sought by drawing participants from different income groups (*ibid*).

CLIENT	REGION	OCCUPATION	AGE RANGE (YEARS)
UNIT ONE			
Ann	Greater Accra	Banker	30 - 40
Kay	Greater Accra	Cement Retailer	20 - 30
Rice	Ashanti	Nurse	20 - 30
Lizy	Ashanti	Student	20 - 30
UNIT TWO			
Joe and April	Greater Accra	IT Personnel/ Administrative Staff	30 - 40
Kate	Greater Accra	Clothes Seller	20 - 30

Note: Names are all pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Table 3.1: Summary of Client Characteristics

3.8 METHODS OF COLLECTING, ANALYZING DATA AND INTERPRETING RESULTS

Face-to-face in-depth interviewing was employed as the overall strategy for data collection. This is primarily because it is a relevant data collection method for research seeking to explore complex social phenomena (Alizedah, 1996). Phenomenological inquiry comprises three levels of in-depth interviews (Seidman, 1998). According to Marshall (2006, p. 105), the first deals with past experience with the phenomenon being studied; the second focuses on present experience; and the third bridges the first two to describe “the individual’s essential experience with the phenomenon”. Although this process is quite tedious and “requires a reflective turn of mind on the part of the researcher”, phenomenological interviewing has a key advantage in that “it permits an explicit focus on the researcher’s personal experience combined with those of the interviewees. This type of interview process requires much focus from the researcher (an inquiring mind, good listening skills and sound interpersonal skills), with the interview being in-depth, open-ended and conversational in manner (Yin, 1994; Alizedah, 1996). This is meant to help the researcher to “understand an interviewee’s views and perceptions on the phenomena under study, seeing them from the interviewee’s view, not from the researcher’s perspective” (Alizedah, 1996; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; as cited in Cheng, 2008). Although this study seeks to remain open to the subjective stories that the participants may have, the interviews sought to primarily yield information on the research objectives.

Collecting, analyzing data, and presenting the results of the study were done in three main stages. These are:

3.8.1 Stage One: Collection of Participants’ Views on the Phenomenon

According to Creswell (2006), the first stage of phenomenological research deals with the collection of data from individuals who have experience in the phenomenon under study. Using the sampling procedure described prior, seven clients were selected from different

geographical areas and financial classes, providing a vast perspective and wealth of knowledge on the topic under study. Sixty to ninety minute recorded interviews were conducted with them to shed more light on the phenomenon of low utilisation of otherwise extensively available highly trained underutilised professionals, from the clients' viewpoint. All interviews were voluntary and confidential.

3.8.2 Stage Two: Analysis of Participants' Descriptions of the Phenomenon

The method of data analysis adopted in this research involved a “deep and repeated reading of all data (transcripts and field notes)” (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006). It was based on Giorgi's (1985; as cited in Morrissey and Higgs, 2006) approach and included the following main steps:

1. Reading the entire description of the experience to get a sense of the whole
2. Rereading the description
3. Identifying the transition units of the experience
4. Clarifying and elaborating the meaning by relating constituents to each other and to the whole. This phase involved reducing the number of different highlighted portions by allocating them to themes or meaning units. Meaning units and themes that became linked, related, or sometimes separate entities were then compared among transcripts.

3.8.3 Stage Three: Providing Structural Descriptions of Perceptions

5. Reflecting on the constituents in the concrete language of the participant.

A portrait of participants' perceptions was produced for each of the seven participants. These were derived and condensed from the transcriptions with the aim of reducing the entire story to the important themes and key aspects of their perceptions. Every effort was made to stay faithful to participant descriptions of their experience/views. These participant portraits generated further insights into the essential structural components of their perceptions. In addition to developing participant portraits, thematic and illustrative quotations were

extracted from the transcripts to reveal the many expressions of participants' perceptions. In this approach to data analysis, themes were uncovered and the steps of relating meanings to participants, and to the whole, led to organizing a rich, evocative structural description of the phenomenon.

3.8.4 Interview instrument

The interview questions for this study were designed to be open-ended to afford participants the opportunity to express themselves freely without being influenced by the researcher. There were four main parts to the interview including; firstly, a broad question to gain insight into the consultancy services sought for by clients and secondly, the client's knowledge of the role of consultants on house projects. The third part sought to gain insight into the personal views that clients have on Ghanaian consultants and, finally a more specific discussion to draw out how clients have been influenced by their experiences.

3.9 QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGIES

In qualitative research, rigour is of serious importance. According to Sandelowski (1986), rigour is achieved when the researcher renders the story of study participants in a way that accurately reflects their perception of the phenomenon under study. Given the phenomenological approach adopted in this study, the criteria adopted were "credibility, soundness, and ethical conduct" (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006).

3.9.1 Credibility

This study sought to achieve credibility in several ways. Prior to interviewing, the researcher engaged in the "*epoche* (self-examination) process as a way of creating an atmosphere and rapport for conducting the interview" (Moustakas, 1994). This self-examination also helped the researcher to identify and set aside his own preconceptions about the phenomenon under study (Marshall, 2006). During the interview process, the researcher took notes in a way that ensured bracketing (Moustakas, 1994). Checks were conducted with participants to verify

that the transcripts reflected a true rendition of their stories, and that the portraits accurately represent the summary and key elements of their perceptions (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006).

Credibility in a qualitative study is also achieved if the researcher makes effort to achieve "fittingness" (Sandelowski, 1986). This means that the portraits and study reductions must be a reflection of participant' stories and must also "fit into "other situations and contexts" (Murray-Bannister, 1997). Transcripts, portraits, theme notations, and reductions were thus sent to the thesis supervisors for review and confirmation of "fit" (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006; Sandelowski, 1986).

3.9.2 Soundness

A study is said to be sound if the research process and methods adopted by the researcher are clear enough to be understood by other researchers (Koch, 1994; as cited in Morrissey and Higgs, 2006). In this research, effort has been to achieve soundness in several ways. Firstly, an in-depth explanation of the research strategy adopted for this work has carefully been done. A research journal has been kept throughout the research process. This contains all reflections, sketches, etc. During the interviewing and data analysis, additional information was added to what was already contained in the journal (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006).

3.9.3 Ethical Conduct

Written correspondence from the researcher was sent to the participants in order to obtain their consent to participate in the study. Participants who agreed to take part in the study were asked to endorse the consent forms. They were then provided with an Information Package, which outlined in detail the research study aim and objectives, their rights and their duties. The form also guaranteed the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Participants were made aware that they could end their participation at anytime. To conceal the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used in reporting the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the empirical part of the study by providing a narrative analysis of the interviews conducted. In total, six interviews were conducted with six different clients. The fundamental proposition of this research is that clients' attitudes toward the engagement of consultants on homebuilding projects are largely determined by their perceptions on the need for the services of construction consultants. Each narrative therefore includes a description of the client's views and experiences to highlight "critical moments" which have affected their perceptions. Specific expressions within the narratives that serve as significant pointers to unique perceptions of the interviewee have therefore been quoted.

4.2 CLIENT UNIT ONE

The interviews with the four clients in this unit were guided by the interview instrument. The interview results and processes have been analyzed and re-ordered and are now presented in the portraits below.

4.2.1 Interview with Kay

The interview with Kay was conducted at the food court of a shopping mall for seventy minutes. The interview was carried out in a relaxed manner in outdoor area and Kay seemed comfortable and willing to tell stories about her house project.

4.2.1.1 Background to Kay

Kay is a self-employed high income earner who lives in Tema. He primarily works as a cement retailer but also owns a cold store. His highest level of education is at the Senior Secondary School level. At the time he was interviewed, Kay had not acquired a land nor had he engaged

the service of a consultant, but he had planned to start building his first mansion by the middle of 2013.

4.2.1.2 Kay's story

Kay said if he was ready to build his house he would get help from “good architect”. He said this was because “some of these masons and others these days just want the money. The architects however take their time to work”. He also felt this was a necessary step because the architects would also teach him a lot of things. He felt that if the architect alone came to him wanting “to do only his part without bringing in other professionals”, he would think the architect just wants to take his money and go away. He explained that his reason for feeling this way by saying that he has “very little knowledge when it comes to buildings so” he would rely on “the architect and his team to provide all of that knowledge”. Personally, he expects the consultant to have worked for more than 10 years as that would make him feel the consultants has done a lot of work and so has a lot of experience. Kay knows that the new consultants are good and they can do the job too but he will go in for the older ones because he feels they know the ups and downs of the work. When it comes to whether consultants are really needed on house projects or not, Kay feels that it boils down to an individual's opinion and what they want. Kay expects a lot from his engagement with a consultant. He also expects the consultant to be “someone who can provide good and quality work” as well as someone “who is not too expensive and can cut down cost” for him “without compromising on quality”. Kay said he thinks if the consultant visits his site from time to time after the design is completed just to make sure that the workers are doing the right thing, he will consider that as work and pay them. Kay said he would love to build a storey house with six bedrooms, two big halls, a kitchen, laundry, study, spacious garage, car park and a summer hut. In talking about how much it will cost him to engage an architect to prepare

drawings for such a building, Kay said he will need to ask the architect first and will not like to predetermine the cost of the engagement. However, he guessed that it would cost him about GHC5000 to prepare the drawings for his building. Kay acquired the knowledge he had of buildings and the need for consultants primarily from discussions he had been having with his friends who are consultants. Besides this, he also has a friend who had recently built a house during the time of the interview. According to Kay, "the work was done very well and is very neat" because his friend engaged a consultant. Kay said she has influenced how he feels about consultants. Kay has mixed views about Ghanaian consultants. On a general note, Kay thinks that finding a consultant is not easy, but if he wants to find one he would go to TDC (local statutory development office) and ask. He feels that there are a whole lot of bad consultants in town now. He has the opinion that once a building is well constructed and beautiful, then it means the client engaged a consultant and vice versa. However, Kay feels that consultants in Ghana should work harder than they are working now because there is still the need for an improvement in their work.

In giving a composite description of Ghanaian consultants, Kay said that "some are good, some do for name, and others do for money". He personally prefers to work with "one who wants to make a name". From the way Kay told his story, it seemed that he knows the value of consultants. He also felt that other like him shared his view but were not willing to engage consultants on their projects because it is not by force and it involves a lot of money. Kay thinks that even though it is really difficult when it comes to money matters, the best advice he can give to those who think they do not have money to still engage a consultant. He thinks it is possible for such people to find a consultant who will come down to their level because not all Ghanaian

consultants work for money; at least some “work for the name” because they “always want to be praised as the good ones around”. At least “these are the ones that can help”.

4.2.2 Interview with Ann

Ann’s interview was conducted in a restaurant of a shopping mall and lasted for fifty-five minutes.

4.2.2.1 Background to Ann

Ann is a middle income earner who works as at the corporate banking section of a local bank in Accra. She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology. As of the time the interview took place, she had purchased two parcels of land near Tema in the Greater Accra Region. Ann says she plans to build a three bedroom single-storey building on one of the plots.

4.2.2.2 Ann’s Story

At the beginning of the interview, Ann asked to be given more insight into the work done by consultants on a house project. After she was told, she says that she wants to be told which consultants she would specifically need on her house project as she doesn’t know. She then admits that she has a fair idea of the work done by Architects on house projects but does not know much about the work that Engineers and Quantity Surveyors do on house projects. All she knew was that they work on road construction. In her engagement with an Architect, Ann expects him to see the building as his. According to her, the Architect must put himself in her shoes and give her the best advice possible. She also expects the consultant to be “level minded when it comes to the financial aspects”. His “charges as well as the costs of the construction should be moderate” without him compromising on the quality of his output. Ann also expects the consultant to follow up on the construction after he has finished drawing the plans for her. She strongly feels that the decisions that are made by the consultant in her absence should suit

her tastes. Ann reveals that she sees “consultants to be more like teachers”. She believes that having the architect from the beginning to the end of the project will ensure that she has a perfect finish. Ann feels that the consultant knows better and is the experts so it should not take him too long to make decisions on her project. She will feel that her time has been wasted if this happens. But she does not expect that to happen. When it comes to their project relationship, Ann wants the consultant to “have the major control and set the pace for the project”. In spite of this, she “won’t be so happy if” the consultant imposes his ideas on her. She wants to be made to feel that her input is appreciated otherwise she will just end up feeling that he ideas have “been rubbished”. At least “the core” of her suggestions should be there but be presented by the architect “in a professional way”. Ann intimated that she feels that when a consultant is not meeting her expectations, “the right thing to do is to guide the consultant so that” he is “able to deliver exactly what” she wants “instead of just doing away with” him and “moving onto another person”. She believes doing this will make her feel that the final product has her input. According to her, “it is fair enough” that the consultant is paid even is all he does is to go the site on weekends just to inspect the work that has been done. She however feels that “all of these things should be discussed and documented right at the beginning of the project so that the client understands everything”. Ann says she “personally will like to deal with a younger consultant. She feels that “the old people always want to create the opinion that they know better than their clients”. She feels that this is not right because sometimes “clients have things that they want and are not prepared to compromise on”. She feels that working with an older person will be difficult because they “will give you what they want and not what you want”. She feels that if she insists on her preferences, they will see her to be disrespectful. Ann also feels that some old consultants have “archaic ideas”. But with the younger consultants, because the generation gap is not so

wide, she can easily relate to them. Personally, Ann admits that she has no knowledge at all when it comes to the construction of buildings. The closest she came to technical issues was when she studied technical skills and drawing in JSS. She says she did not benefit much from this education because those were subjects she didn't like as she lacked "imagination and visualization", had a lot of difficulty using the instruments, and was also very lazy when came to the drawing aspect. Interestingly, she heaps much of the blame on the educational system by saying that "at the basic level, the construction industry is not presented in a palatable way". She feels that at least all students should be taught the "basics of building" as well as "how to acquire houses". Ann strongly feels that this is not out of place since "shelter is a basic need of mankind". In expressing her views on consultants in Ghana, Ann feels that they "are not accessible". She uses an analogy of health workers to explain how she feels by saying that "if we want doctors, we know where to find them. It is the same with seamstresses and pharmacists. Building consultants don't even do advertisements on television and radio. And when you go to the internet what you find about them is very scanty so we don't even know where they are for us to find them and speak to them. Where are they?" Ann thinks because of these reasons, many clients do not know what consultants can really do for them. Ann feels it might be difficult for consultants to deal with these problems but at least as time goes on if clients have a lot of information to read about the consultants it will get them somewhere.

Ann openly admits that she has the perception that she "cannot always approach consultants because they always want big deals. They don't want the small deals". She feels consultants just like to work for large developers and on large construction projects. Thus, when clients even hear that the consultant is into road construction and things like that, they "think he is a big man so you won't even venture". This view that Ann holds has largely been reinforced her elder

brother's experience. Ann says her brother went to see a consultant who provided a lot of help but after the engagement her brother "felt that the fees he paid were too high". Thus, he just took the drawings and got some other people to do the construction for him. She feels the consultancy fees are too high and that turns many people off. Nevertheless, Ann feels perceives consultants in Ghana to be highly competent when it comes to the technical aspects of their work. She honestly thinks that "building consultants are doing extremely well" because in the recent years she has seen very nice buildings around. She feels "there is a touch" to their work and so works that have had the input of consultants are easily recognizable. She necessarily associates good building s with consultants and vice versa. She said that she was not initially interested in issues pertaining to consultants and buildings in general but something that touched her very much was the collapse of the Melcom building. She said that she had always had this feeling that aside consultants there were others who could "make very good buildings, thus there was no need to pay high fees for professional advice. But upon the collapse of the Melcom building, she realized that seeking professional input "was a very critical thing". Now, she has "come to know that construction is a matter of life and death. Anything can happen". She began to feel that she could not "just entrust her life into anyone's hands". She now feels that consultants far better because they are extra careful and vigilant since it is their work. Besides this, Ann also feels that she will feel comfortable telling her friends and family that a consultant did her work for her. "At least, it will add some prestige to the whole thing". That will make her feel better. In ending her story, she makes it clear that she will definitely engage a consultant on her house project but adds that she will be careful because she knows that "in some few cases, some consultants deliver poor works". She then re-emphasizes her feeling "consultants should look at is the fees they charge". She says "they should reduce it and they should also make themselves accessible".

4.2.3 Interview with Rice

The interview with Rice was conducted in the researcher's home and was for forty-five minutes. Although Rice was comfortable and willing to participate in the interview, she openly admitted before the interview started that she knew nothing about building construction. However, as the interview unfolded, it was evident that rice was confident about her perceptions.

4.2.3.1 Background to Rice

Rice is a low income earner who works as a nurse in a mission hospital. Her highest educational qualification is a diploma in psychiatric nursing. She lives in Kumasi with her elder sister and her brother-in-law. As of when the interview was conducted, she had not taken any concrete steps toward the commencement of her project.

4.2.3.2 Rice's story

Rice sees consultants as "people who have expert ideas" about building. To start her project, she has plans to get "someone two draw the plan for" her. She says that if she likes it she will keep it. Otherwise she will get another plan. After acquiring the drawings, she will get a mason to do the construction for her. She feels this is "less costly" as opposed to engaging a consultant. She said she had a few friends who had built houses so would "ask them to link" her up with those who built their houses for them. She did not have any problem with this process as she knew that it was not mandatory for her to engage a consultant for the kind of project she wanted to do.

Rice feels that professionally, she could get the best output from consultants. She however does not deem it necessary to pay high fees to seek help from consultants because "the fact that consultants are good does not mean the others are not good. To Rice, getting a good house is "a matter of finding the right laypeople to do the work". She said she actually does not "know why consultants charge that much". Rice also has the view that consultants, apart from being

expensive, try to impose their ideas on their clients. She thinks that engaging a consultant will be too formal and that is not something that she really likes. Rice said she will not advice people like her to engage consultants because she feels that they will turn them away because “their money is not sufficient”, whereas “the masons can always find a way to help you”. According to her, the only reason why she would turn to a consultant is when those masons that she engages are unable to deliver what she wants. Rice confessed that she “had a friend who built a house and that is how he went about the whole thing”. She was told by that friend “that it is expensive to engage a consultant” and that, since other people charge cheaper, the surplus could be used for something else.

4.2.4 Interview with Lizy

Lizy’s interview took place in quiet and calm atmosphere of her private study room and lasted forty-five minutes. She had already read and signed the consent form when the researcher arrived. Lizy seemed keen to partake in the interview.

4.2.4.1 Background to Lizy

Lizy is a final year French student in a local university located in Kumasi. She is a low income earner who works part time as a cosmetics retailer. As of the time she was interviewed, she had planned to start building her house right after completing her schooling.

4.2.4.2 Lizy's story

When Lizy hears the term “consultants” what comes to mind is “architects, engineers, interior decorators” and the like. She feels that consultants are really needed on house projects because “that is their field”. She says “if you want your building to last long you must go to a good consultant”. Lizy has many hopes and wishes as she plans to engage consultants. Primarily, she strongly hopes “that the final work they bring will be the best of quality” and she expects that

they guide her on the project right from inception to completion. She says she is not the type of "client who will just go away from them" when she "gets her drawings". She also expects to bring her ideas and then maybe the consultants can polish it up. She thinks that "the real deal must be according to" her plan. She knows that working with consultants "will involve technical things. And when it comes to the technicalities not everybody can understand it". Thus, she will wish to work with a consultant "who is flexible because there are some who are not flexible".

Lizy strongly believes that "consultants are expensive" and "charge a lot". She feels they "won't make any compromise" when it comes to money issues. However, Lizy says she understands the situation of consultants by adding that "they also have to meet their need to feed their families and all that. It's their work. They have studied to acquire their knowledge so you can't expect them to reduce their standard just for one particular case." Lizy strongly associates engaging consultants with having a good building and vice versa. Lizy believes waiting till she is ready is the right thing to do because building a house is "just like having a baby."

Lizy's real perception comes out when she is asked to share her specific views on consultants in Ghana. She says she does not think they are really working. She doesn't know how effective they work anyway as well as how frequently people come to them and how efficient they are. She says she does not like the fact that local consultants do not have standards when it comes to pricing because she does not think it is good to bargain over the prices of professional services. Then she adds that "the consultants are not really performing". She also feels very sad about the fact that she does not know how to find consultants on her own and has to rely on referrals. Lizy believes that consultants "probably look down on some of" their clients because of their educational background and sometimes because the clients do not pay them well. To Lizy, clients too do not treat the consultants well because they know they have other options. If the

situation was not like that the clients would have treated them well. She says that “the regulations in the system are not very straightforward”. She feels there should be laws that would force clients to engage consultants. Lizy says she “honestly does not trust Ghanaian consultants. But at least one thing is that when” she picks them she “will learn a lot from them”. To wrap it up, she says that sometimes people don’t patronize the services of consultants because they are too formal.

4.3 CLIENT UNIT TWO

In addition to the areas on which the first set of interviews was based, the researcher was also sought to uncover stories of past experiences that the interviewees had had with consultants. The general approach used during the client interviews was to invite the participants to tell stories relating to their experiences.

4.3.1 Interview with Joe and April

The interview with Joe and April was conducted in the living room of their home. The interview lasted sixty-five minutes. Joe had been looking for an opportunity to make known his views on consultants in Ghana and so he appeared well prepared for the interview.

4.3.1.1 Background to Joe and April

Joe and April are high income earners who live in Accra. Joe works with a telecommunication company while April works with an international government agency. On their first housebuilding project, they engaged the services of an Architect.

4.3.1.2 The story of Joe and April

Joe seemed to have a good idea of the different construction consultants available and the services that they offer. He knew of Architects, Quantity Surveyors, and Structural Engineers. To him, the sort of consultant required depended on the complexity of the project being undertaken.

Initially, Joe and April did not engage the architect on their project because they knew that “in our part of the world where things don’t work, it is not compulsory”. However, in relating what led to their engaging the Architect on their house project, Joe said “it was just for the paper work because the other guy couldn’t have done that for us”. They felt that “at the time” if they could have done without the Architect, they wouldn’t have involved him at all. They gave further reasons why they did not want to engage consultants. They felt that “with the services of professionals, quality goes with cost. If you want quality work you need to pay more money”. Joe and April feel that consultants know building regulations. According to April, “sometimes [they] are influenced by the amount that [consultants] are charging. [Consultants] think that they are professionals so they will charge you. You look at your budget and because you don’t have the resources you are forced to go to the other side. But when the finances are good, you can go there.” Joe said that they had also gotten to a point where “things are okay [financially] and then [they] want to really get a descent work, something that we you see and you are very much satisfied with. By living in the house, they had experienced the effect of their actions and that had caused them to change their perception of the need for consultants on house projects. Joe and April still had their own reservations about consultants in Ghana. They still felt that engaging a consultant was “a bit dicey”. Irrespective of the fact that they felt that they were financially okay, Joe stated that “I also think of the fear of the unknown. You don’t know whether it is going to cost you so much to engage a consultant. There is this perception that going to the professional is expensive so naturally you will like to look at what is that the other side. That is also there. Joe said that “with the second project that I am doing, I talked to some few friends at work who suggested an architect, and the name he mentioned just scared me. I just gave it a try because I felt something good could come out of it. So I called this Architect and when he mentioned the

charges I "wasn't disappointed". You know what I mean. He was just doing architectural designs and his charges were huge so I reasoned to myself that I could put up the foundation for my building." Their desire to seek the help of consultants, however, continued to grow despite this setback. Joe "didn't give up" but rather, he "turned elsewhere to another firm and they were willing to provide a composite service at a reasonable price. So I made an initial contact with an Architect from the firm and I had good feedback. I showed him a few websites for him to look at and asked him if he could get me the quality of finishing of the hoses over there. So he showed me the quality of his office building and I was impressed. Later we went to do some site visits and took a few measurements. He then promised to work on my building but since my deadlines were too tight, we had to revise the dates." Unfortunately, Joe's expectations were not fully met by the new consultant and therefore he found himself experiencing some form of disappointment. According to Joe, "later they asked for extension of time because they were working on other project that they had to complete. That was when my impression was affected. The impression from Joe was that he expected consultants to meet the client at every level. The inability of the consultant to meet his expectations caused Joe to "sometimes even get a bit emotional about it...It saddens me to see that kind of attitude on the part of the consultants." Joe and April said: "They do not value the business that we are bringing and that is what makes us emotional. [We] feel that there has to be some kind of mutual respect as we need each other, but it should be more from the consultant to the client. The reason is that their services are not free, we don't beg for their services. They have to try as much as possible to make us feel happy. Normally, we don't get that in Ghana. And I think that is why people are resorting to buying homes from the estate developers." According to Joe, "if it were Vodafone that was asking for the same services I am asking for, and I was a representative of Vodafone, and I sent a mail in

my name as a representative of Vodafone, I am 200% sure that the kind of treatment I would get will be different from what I am getting now.” The reason why the consultant was behaving that way was “obvious”. “The first thing is the brand of the project. And also there is the possibility that since Vodafone has more money, consultants can quote flexibly since there will not be so much negotiation and nagging, and that work if it came on their portfolio will fetch them more projects as opposed to dealing with an individual.” Joe and April intimated that they seriously were having a very difficult time dealing with even though they were getting what they technically want from the consultant. Joe added that “well for now, I will give them 6 out of 10. They can improve but from what I am seeing, that will be difficult. I know the system cannot be perfect but they should give it a try. By my expectations are very high.” In turning to consultants, Joe expected professional treatment. According to him, “if I don’t, then I will turn to the other side which is way cheaper. If there was a firm that would just take my money, and then do their own professional things and come out with all the quality output that I need at the end of the day, trust me, I won’t look elsewhere... And the other thing too is that, this guy [the carpenter] that we dealt with to build for us is like one-stop shop. He won’t do something and ask you to take it to another person. And he charges the cost as and when it comes. But you will see it as the Architect coming to do just the drawing, charges you huge and then just leaves. Then when he is gone, you have to go and deal with non-professionals to take it from there. So sometimes that is what makes us go to the non-professionals straight away. It is a matter of convenience too. We don’t have all the time to go round searching for different professionals to do different things for us. I expect my work to come out as a product”. Joe and April thought that finding a local consultant who could meet all these expectations would be a “fifty-fifty situation”. They however believed that “there should be companies around who can do that”. They were even

optimistic that eventually their consultant would meet their expectations. In expanding on this, Joe said “I want to try the other side of the coin and see if my expectations will be met. If it is not met, I will be forced to go back to the laymen.” April added that “people also need the necessary exposure because sometimes people have the money but because they don’t have the information and the exposure, they just go to the other side and they are given inferior work.”

4.3.2 Interview with Kate

Kate’s interview was conducted in the nice and cool atmosphere of her private living room. The interview lasted forty-five minutes. Throughout the process, Kate seemed very confident and sure of everything that she spoke. She seemed to remember all the details very well.

4.3.2.1 Background to Kate

Kate is a low income earner who sells clothes. At the time she was interviewed, she and her family had just completed the constructing their family house. Although she admitted that the project was technically challenging, she and her family did not engage the services of a consultant.

4.3.2.2 Kate’s story

At the opening of the interview, when the researcher began to inquire whether Kate had knowledge of the role of consultants, Kate replied by saying that consultants charge “fat fat cash”. She was someone who perceived consultants as people who charge high fees. She said that they did “not really” engage the services of consultants, but at least they sought some expert help “for the basic things” like “the plan”. The project represented a very significant event for Kate and her family as she described how they “needed our [their] own space for one, and then [their] family was growing so [they] had to get a bigger house that fitted [their] own specification”. They regarded it as “[their] own house, [their] own space”. At this point she

appeared disconcerted so the researcher asked her whether she thought it was really necessary for them to engage a consultant on the project. Kate responded by saying “really necessary? Well, I was just thinking. I think it was necessary, but really necessary, no”. In describing their emotional reaction to her project experience, Kate said she and her family “were very angry”. At that point, she remembered that her “dad called [her] to complain bitterly about what the local people were doing. She gave a long pause and said that they “still have problems with plumbing works and other simple things that if [they] had engaged a consultant [they] would have gotten right”. She admitted that “[they] know that now so maybe if [they] are building a new house [they] will fully engage consultants right from the start”.

From her negative experience, it was clear that her little interaction with the consultant had been an eye-opener. Prior to their interaction, she had little exposure to construction issues. Thus, Kate began to relate what her interaction with the consultant meant to her. She stated that “the relationship” had “helped [her] to know that it is really essential to know some basic things before you go ahead to build”. She described her experience with the consultant as “great”. She had learned that it was “really essential to know a lot of things about buildings before you start because the consultant showed [her] many pictures of projects he was working on. He had picked them up from the damaged parts and he was fixing them so [Kate] got to learn that it was really good to know what [she] getting into before [she] started”. Kate felt that “the experience was good”. Kate further described her expectations when engaging this consultant. She said she primarily wanted “to know more”. This desire to know more was triggered by the fact that the “local people” capitalized on their ignorance to cheat them. Kate said she “wouldn’t have asked the consultant in the first place about the problem but at a point [she] was feeling that what the guys [were] doing [was] mean. She didn’t think a consultant was going to be that mean to them.

However, what prevented them from calling consultants from the start was that they didn't know that they could tell the consultants that they wanted to build the house in stages. [They] thought that "the consultants would want to complete the work all at once, and [they] didn't have money for that. [They wanted] to do the work bit by bit. We [didn't] think they [would] be ready to do that." To get Kate to expand on her view of consultants prior to her experience, she was asked whether she would still have sought professional help if everything had gone well for them. Interestingly, she said "if they were not giving us problems, I wouldn't have thought it necessary to get help from a consultant. Kate simply felt that they were not "financially sound, and thus were not ready to pay a consultant. Consequently, Kate was asked what it was that pushed her to find money to engage a consultant "when things were really getting out of hand". Surprisingly, she admitted: "I didn't pay him to work for me". She had received the service free of charge. Thus, she was asked to tell how she knew that consultants' services are expensive. At this point, she gave a long pause, looked aside and said: "Uhm, I just guessed. Look, the local people, they just learn on the job. But consultants go to school; they acquire degrees, so obviously their services are going to be expensive. I needn't ask anybody."

After her engagement with the consultant, Kate felt that her level of knowledge had increased. Comparing that to what she had prior, she said: "Oh it's high now, very high. Now, when they are talking I can talk some." She went ahead to relate specific aspects of her view that had changed. She said: "We didn't have money to do the completion. We didn't have money to finish all the work in a year or six months. That was it. That was what we thought. But now I know that it's possible to get the consultant to do the work in stages even if I want to do it small. The consultant told me that". Kate said that "before the project, I used to think that the older people were better. But the consultant I dealt with was very young. That has gotten me to see that I need

to see the persons work before I make a decision. If I should see your work and think that it is good, that will be my deciding factor. Now age is not an issue for me". She felt that consultants in Ghana were doing well and that she would "give them 8 out of 10". She said that if in the future she wanted to build "just a house, [she] will pick someone from Ghana even if she could afford to engage foreign consultants. Kate also told us the expectations she would have of consultants if she ever engaged consultants of a future house project. She said: "I would expect him to listen and do what I want. I would expect the truth from him and also expect that he honours his contract and do a good job for me with the kind of money I am paying. For the small work of preparing the drawings and getting a quantity surveyor to give me cost information I will budget GHC 5000. I know it could be more but I think GHC 5000 will be okay." She felt that if all the consultants did was "just to come on site to issue instructions and make sure that the work goes on smoothly" she would pay him for that "because this time I have money". She also felt that if the consultant met all her expectations, their fees will be higher. In describing how her experiences had affected her, Kate said: "never again will I use the local people".

Each of the interviews was subjected to several stages of analysis as previously described. The steps and results of the preliminary stages of analysis were reported in this chapter. The following chapter presents the steps and results of the final stages of analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The discussion in this chapter specifically seeks to answer among other things the key questions posed the Chapter 1 which were:

“What is the attitude of the homebuilding client toward the need to engage the services of consultants during project execution? Have these attitudes been informed by their perception of the services offered by professionals, and if so, what are they? What factors have influenced these perceptions? How have these factors influenced clients’ perceptions? Is there any evidence that construction professionals have themselves in some way contributed to these perceptions, and if they have, in what way have they done so?”

In order to find answers to these questions, in line with the fundamental proposition for this research, there was a need to firstly establish the perceptions that clients hold of the need for consultants on house projects. The discussion in this chapter is thus modeled around the four research objectives which include the identification of:

- Consultancy services sought for by clients;
- Clients’ perceptions on services provided by consultants on construction projects;
- The factors that have led to these perceptions;
- The effects of clients’ perceptions on their attitude toward engaging consultants.

5.2 CONSULTANCY SERVICES SOUGHT FOR BY CLIENTS

“Okay, I have a fair idea of what Architects do, but I don’t know much about the work that Engineers and Quantity Surveyors do on house projects. I know they work on road construction... Okay maybe getting just the architect is okay. (Ann)

The analysis revealed that although many clients did not have in-depth knowledge of the nature and types of consultancy service available to homebuilding clients, they were keenly aware of the work of Architects. A few however made references to engineers and quantity surveyors although many of them were not able to explain the specific role that these professionals play on house projects. This finding suggests that when homebuilding clients seek consultancy services, they usually have Architects in mind. This might serve to explain why a relatively greater portion of the key literature available on consultancy services (Hershberger, 1980; Schon 1983; Cuff, 1991; Cowdroy, 1992; Lavers, 1992; Royal Institute of British Architects, 1992, 1993, 1995; Lawson and Pilling, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Barrett and Stanley, 1999; Smith, 2001; Kamara et al., 2002; Macmillan et al., 2002; Emmitt and Gorse, 2007; Chen, 2008; Siva and London, 2009; Prins, 2009; Siva and London, 2012) for house projects are related to the provision of architectural services.

5.3 PROVIDING COMPOSITE DESCRIPTIONS OF PERCEPTIONS

The narratives from each of the stories were interpreted to identify their meanings. Particular features that pointed to certain elements of clients' perceptions were also identified. It is not the intention of this research to simplify the nature of clients' perceptions by superficially grouping them into stages and categories. Rather, the approach used in the analysis leads to the discovery of themes as well as to rich and in-depth structural descriptions of clients' perceptions.

5.3.1 Changing portraits into scientific concepts

At this stage of the analysis, a structural description of clients' perceptions was produced by reading through each of the portraits and transcripts, "identifying common themes, reducing the themes, and reordering" them (Morrissey and Higgs, 2006). The process involved shifting focus from the individual portraits and focusing on the common themes of clients' perceptions in order

to yield a comprehensive description of the fundamental nature of clients' perceptions. Further analysis enabled the organization of the themes into five key categories of the thematic model, describing the perceptions of clients with respect to sub-themes.

5.3.2 Integrating and synthesizing the insight into a descriptive structure of the meaning of the experience.

According to Giorgi (1985; quoted in Morrissey and Higgs) "the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject's experience. This is usually referred to as the structure of the experience and can be expressed at a number of levels" (p. 10). The models developed in this study are a composite representation of clients' perceptions and they paint a picture of how clients' experiences shape their perceptions and attitudes.

5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF MODELS OF PERCEPTIONS

Three models were developed: one thematic and two structural. Textural descriptions are provided for each of the models. The first model is discussed in the section below.

5.4.1 The 2C3R Model: The Perception Pentagon

The 2C3R model (The Perception Pentagon), was developed to portray a specific and in-depth understanding of the multifaceted nature of clients' perceptions. This model (See Figure 5.1) highlights multiple aspects of clients' perceptions of consultants. The five key elements of the 2C3R model are: Competence and Capabilities, Cost of Engagement, Roles and Responsibilities, Relationships, and Rules of Engagement.

5.4.2 Competence and capabilities

This theme focuses on how clients perceive the abilities, knowledge, skills and resources that consultants possess in order to successfully discharge their duties on house projects. Five sub-themes were identified under this theme. They include; performance, age,

availability/accessibility, improvement, service/business quality. A noteworthy point in connection with this theme is that although clients' perceive consultants to possess the competence and capabilities highlighted in the literature review (Boyd, 2011; Kurrèr, 2008; Burke, 1995; Walker, 1996; Hakansson and Wootz, 1978; cited in Kilpady, 2005), their perception of local consultants in relation to this theme is different. Perhaps, this can be attributed to social factors and construction industry conditions. These factors are discussed in a subsequent part of this chapter.

"You have to study everything to be able to be a professional and that is why they are called professionals and experts...they have an in-depth knowledge and they know what they are doing." (Lizy)

5.4.2. 1 Performance

This sub-theme captures clients' perceptions of how well consultants are meeting their expectations. According to Cheng et al., (2006) performance revolves around "overall service quality, technical accuracy, and value for money". Although clients have a mixed perception of consultants' performance, the analysis revealed the clients' rating of consultants to be just above average. In line with Lukumon and Tham's (2005) study, some of the stories told by the clients revealed that they perceive consultants to be responsible for the poor performance of the construction industry.

"...Well me, I don't think it's really working. I don't know how effective they work anyway and I don't know how frequently people come to them and how efficient they are...The consultants are not really performing...Things are not really organized in Ghana. But honestly, I don't trust Ghanaian consultants. I don't." (Lizy)

This perception of clients is somewhat linked to their perceived roles and responsibilities of consultants. Generally clients perceive consultants to be responsible for the buildability and constructability buildings through the provision of a good design and effective construction supervision (Othman, 2011). Thus, in their estimation of consultants' performance, clients may consider a wide range of factors that are beyond the scope of consultants' duties. Nevertheless, clients' perceptions on consultants' performance seem warranted as the construction industry has consistently been characterized by waste, pollution, collapse of buildings, repeated delays, and cost overruns (Earth Watch Institute 2011, Roodman and Lenssen 1995; Mansfield et al., 1994; Elinwa and Buba, 1993; Okpala and Aniekwu, 1988).

5.4.2.2 Improvement

The discussion on this sub-theme centers on how clients perceive the possibility and ability of consultants to improve on the work. This sub-theme stemmed from clients' perception that consultants' performance locally was not too good. As a natural consequence, clients felt that consultants needed to "do better".

"Of course, they need to improve on their work. They should do better." (Kay)

Although they are hopeful, clients perceive that consultants will find it "difficult" to improve on their performance. The analysis of clients' stories reveals that they have this perception because they feel that the consultants' performance is determined by other factors beyond their control. Clients feel that consultants do not have what it takes to change "the system".

"They can improve but from what I am seeing, that will be difficult. I know the system cannot be perfect but they should give it a try. By my expectations are very high." (Joe and April)

THE 2C3R MODEL: THE PERCEPTION PENTAGON

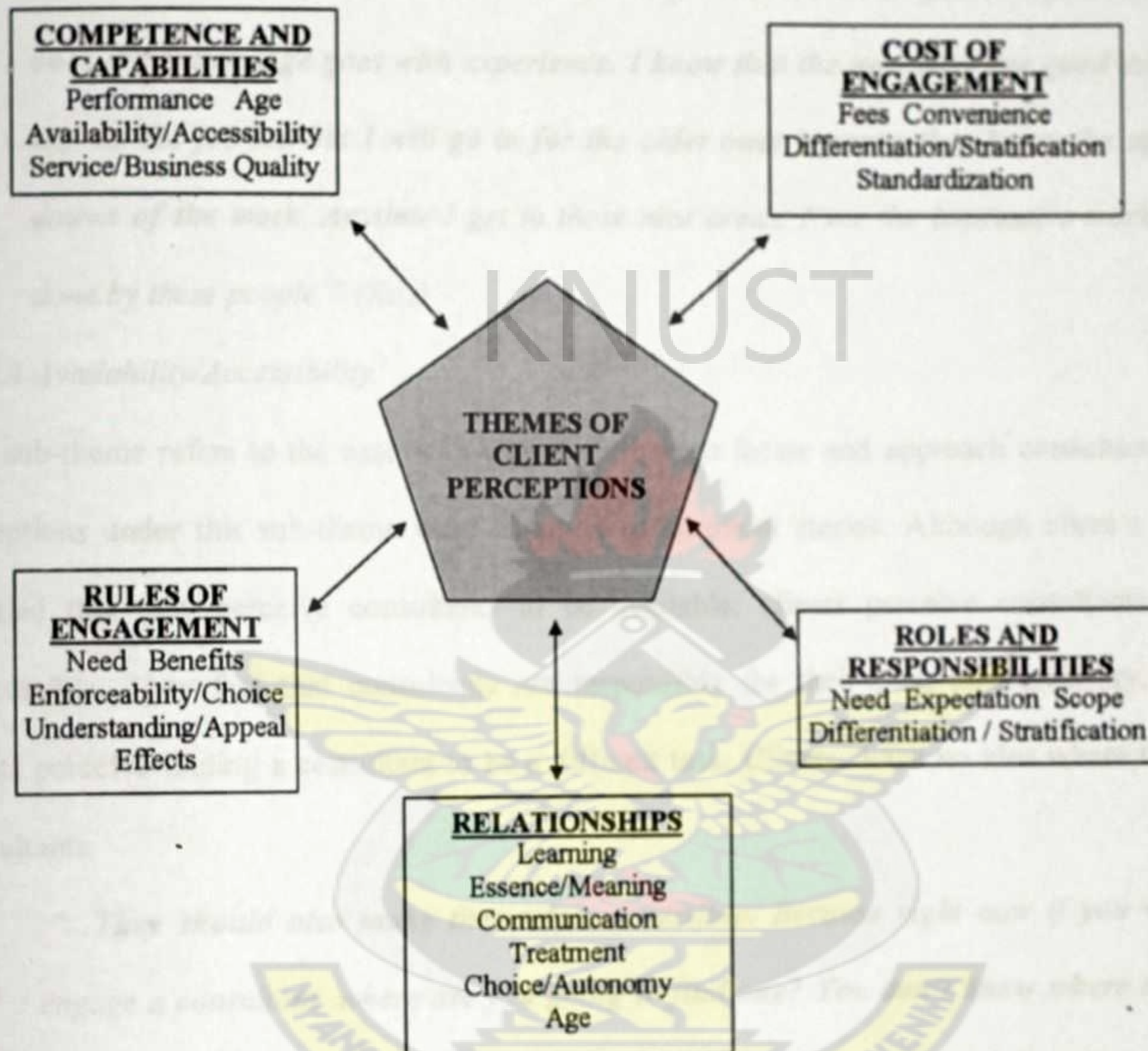


Figure 5.1: Themes of Client Perceptions

5.4.2.3 Age

The stories told by the clients revealed them to have the perception that the age of a consultant has an effect on his competence and capabilities. Although the experiences of clients have affected their perception in this regard, generally, they perceive older consultants as well as those

who have “at least ten years” to be more competent and capable. Interestingly, clients feel that the good buildings they see around are the works of older consultants.

“...I expect the professionals to have worked for more than 10 years...I feel the older ones are better. Age goes with experience. I know that the new ones are good and they can do the job too but I will go in for the older ones because they know the ups and downs of the work. Anytime I get to those nice areas, I see the impressive work being done by these people.” (Kay)

5.4.2.4 Availability/Accessibility

This sub-theme refers to the ease with which clients can locate and approach consultants. The perceptions under this sub-theme were common to all client stories. Although client's stories revealed that they perceive consultants to be available, clients perceive consultants to be inaccessible. They feel that consultants are responsible for their own inaccessibility. Many clients perceive finding a consultant to be a difficult task. Clients “have no idea where to find” consultants.

“...They should also make themselves accessible. Because right now if you want to engage a consultant, where are you going to find one? You don't know where to go. It is not so with banks. There might be some banks that you might never have entered but at least you know they are there. They are accessible at least...Where are they? We can't find them. They are not accessible. If we want doctors, we know where to find them. It is the same with seamstresses and pharmacists...Where are they?” (Ann)

“...And sometimes we have the perception that we cannot always approach them...”
(Ann)

Clients feel that information on consultants is not widely available. As such, they have no idea of the nature of [consultants'] services and also "they have no idea that [consultants'] services are better.

"...I think people don't know much about your work. There are a lot of shows on health, sports and others, but there is none on construction. I think there has to be advocacy and sensitization. People don't know much. But a lot of these people are in the position to build a house." (Lizy)

As a natural consequence, all clients interviewed mentioned referrals as their main means of locating a consultant. Interestingly, resorting to referrals seems to be a major means by which professional service firms get their clients (Halinen, 1997). In the literature on habitus theory, Cuff (1991) suggests the "formal academic training" and "professional ethics" of consultants have the tendency to cause them to isolate themselves from those who do not belong to their group habitus. This may explain why clients hold the perception that consultants are not accessible.

5.4.2.5 Service/Business quality

The discussion under this sub-theme deals with what clients perceive to be the quality of service or business that contractors are providing. This sub-theme specifically deals with how consultants organize their business and deliver their services. Past studies (Boyd and Kerr, 1998 and Lavers, 1992) have shown consultants to be mainly interested in the technical and intricate processes of design and construction as it is on projects that they seek to realize their concepts and ideas. This finding seems to have a link with clients' perception of business quality of consultants. Clients perceive consultants to be poor businessmen who are only interested in the

technicalities of construction. They feel that consultants are do see and run their work in a businesslike way.

"I also want to say that consultants should be able to separate the business side of their work from the technicalities. They should be two different things...many of the firms do not have centralized offices and websites so what I foresee is that in case they have a number of clients, it might be difficult for them to manage them since they do not have administrative staff. They should have administrative systems in place to handle the business aspects of their work. What we really need are professionals who will provide a differentiated service. (Joe and April)"

5.4.3 Cost of engagement

The data analysis revealed that all clients irrespective of their financial and social background shared similar perceptions under this theme. The stories under this theme consider the perceptions clients hold about how much it will cost them to engage consultants as well as how easy or difficult it will be for them to meet these costs. All clients perceive the cost of engagement for consultants to be very high and inconvenient. A total of five sub-themes were categorised into this theme of clients' perceptions including; fees, convenience, differentiation/stratification, and standardization.

5.4.3.1 Fees

Clients perceive fees paid to engage consultants to be too high. They use terms such as "pay so much", "expensive" and "charge a lot" to describe the nature of fees they are required to pay to engage consultants. Interestingly, such perceptions are shared not only by those who have engaged consultants but those who have never engaged consultants as well. Past studies on consultancy fees (CIC, 1998; Drew et al., 2002a) intimate that many clients put undue emphasis

on fees paid to consultants during their selection process. The data analysis revealed this finding to be the same in the case of clients interviewed.

"...They should have sympathy on us... You charge us fat fat fat cash." (Kate

"Because you pay so much...Because we know the work done by consultants is expensive so we try so hard to churn out the money...I also think of the fear of the unknown. You don't know whether it is going to cost you so much to engage a consultant. There is this perception that going to the professional is expensive so naturally you will like to look at what is that the other side. That is also there." (Joe and April)

To clients, it is only those who are "financially prepared", that can approach consultants. Generally, clients feel that the best time for them to engage consultants is when they have money.

"...We are talking about money here. Before you approach a consultant, you need to be financially prepared. It is about money." (Kay)

Interestingly, when it comes to clients' perception of the bases for which consultants charge their fees, there are varied views.

"They think that they are professionals so they will charge you..." (Joe and April)

Clients perceive the fees charged by consultants to be a barrier in their quest to seek professional services.

"I have also taken the time to find out the professionals who are doing the good works in town...But you see the first thing that comes to mind is that these guys are "big boys" so it just puts me off. I know I can't bear the service charges. I can't see myself working with them." (Joe and April)

5.4.3.2 Convenience

This sub-theme discusses clients' perceptions on how well the cost of engaging consultants suits their needs, plans, and efforts. Drew et al., (2004) found that most clients in their selection of consultants look to obtain the highest quality of service at the lowest price possible. However, when it comes to professional services, there is a positive correlation between cost and quality (Drew et al., 2002a). Thus, in many cases, clients are torn between making a choice in favour for cost or quality. They often do not find this condition to be convenient as they wish to maximize utility of their money.

"...He told me that the other people will charge cheaper and the surplus will be used for something else." (Rice)

The analysis revealed a second dimension of clients' perception of convenience that is linked to the scope of services of consultants. Clients perceive a one-stop shop consultancy service to be more convenient than those that are offered individually. To some extent, this perception is in resonance with Emmitt's study (1999). He found out that clients' motive for selecting consultants goes beyond just the design stage. They select consultants with the hope of receiving a composite service. This is what they find to be more convenient.

"And the other thing too is that, this guy that we dealt with to build for us is like one-stop shop. He won't do something and ask you to take it to another person. And he charges the cost as and when it comes. But you will see it as the Architect coming to do just the drawing, charges you huge and then just leaves. Then when he is gone, you have to go and deal with non-professionals to take it from there. So sometimes that is what makes us go to the non-professionals straight away." (Joe and April)

A third dimension of convenience revealed by the analysis is that clients perceive consultants to take too long discharging their duties on projects. As a result of this perception, when clients feel that they have little time to undertake their house projects, they feel it will be inconvenient for them to seek professional services.

"It is a matter of convenience too. We don't have all the time to go round searching for different professionals to do different things for us." (Joe and April)

5.4.3.3 Differentiation/Stratification

The discussion under this sub-theme focuses on perceptions that clients hold on how well consultants are able to structure the cost of their services to suit their clients. Clients have negative perception about consultants when it comes to this sub-theme. In telling their stories, some clients make comparisons that reveal their perceptions.

"No, I don't think so. They will just tell you that your money is not sufficient so go away...But I am sure the masons can always find a way to help you." (Rice)

The analysis revealed clients to perceive consultants to be unwilling to reduce their fees to suit their clients. They perceive that in cases where consultants reduce their fees, they compromise on the quality of their service. At best, consultants are willing to review the costs of their services to suit their clients only when they are familiar with them.

"They won't make any compromise...You can't expect them to reduce their standard just for one particular case. I understand them. You won't find anyone who will come down and do the work correctly and happily for you for small money." (Lizy)

"Ghanaian consultants like money. If you go and you don't have money they won't mind you. The consultants will only be willing to do some things for free if they know you personally." (Ann)

It is evident that the discussion on the main theme of “cost of engagement” is supported by the findings of some past studies on clients. The analysis has confirmed that most clients are interested only in the finished product, its cost, its timely delivery, its quality and functionality (Egan, 1998). Clients tend to place less emphasis on the processes required to deliver the project.

5.4.3.4 Standardization

Clients hold the perception that there are no standards regulating the cost of engagement with consultants. They feel that this creates “the fear of the unknown” as clients do not know what to expect as far as the cost of their engagement with consultants is concerned.

*“When you read these magazines, there are **standard fees** that people are supposed to pay. Here, things are not like that. You have to bargain and all that which I don't think is very good. There have to be standards for the fees of consultants.” (Lizy)*

5.4.4 Roles and responsibilities

Stories coded into the theme of “roles and responsibilities” identified that clients perceive the roles and responsibilities of consultants on house projects as useful. Four sub-themes were identified under this theme including; need, expectation, scope, differentiation/stratification.

5.4.4.1 Need

This sub-theme is related to how clients perceive the need for the work that consultants do on house projects. The clients interviewed felt that consultants play a key role on house projects. They used expressions such as “necessary” and “they count” when describing the how they perceive the need for the roles and responsibilities of consultants.

*“...To me, **they count** when I want to build a house.” (Kay)*

However, it was evident from their stories that clients, although they perceive consultants' duties to be important, do not see consultants themselves as indispensable. In one dimension, the roles

and responsibilities of consultants in themselves are perceived by clients to important but consultants per se are not perceived to be very important. In another dimension, it was evident from the stories told by the clients that they viewed the work done by consultants as something small.

"Really necessary? Well, I was just thinking. I think it was necessary, but really necessary, no... For the small work of preparing the drawings and getting a quantity surveyor to give me cost information I will budget..." (Kate)

In summary, the perception of clients on this theme is that the specific duty (roles and responsibilities of consultants) itself is very necessary but the specific doer (the consultant) is not indispensable. This perception is in line with some previous studies on client-consultant engagements (Cuff, 1991 and Cheng, 2008), which identified that unlike other professionals, building consultants do not have a stranglehold on their clients. Several factors have accounted for this and are discussed in a later section of this chapter.

5.4.4.2 Expectation

Expectation focuses on the clients' strong feelings of what will happen when they engage a consultant. Stories coded into this sub-theme were shared by all categories of clients. Even clients who admitted having very little knowledge of consultants' roles and responsibilities and were not interested in engaging consultants had a high level of expectation when it comes to how consultants discharge their roles and responsibilities.

"And they should be very professional...I should be able to sit in the comfort of my office and be able to have an idea of what is going on...The service should be quality and highly professional...my expectations are very high." (Joe and April)

"But I will expect the consultant to follow through on the project." (Kate)

From the analysis of clients' stories, it appears that although clients have a high level of expectation when it comes to how consultants deliver their roles and responsibilities, they are not very certain that their expectations will be met by local consultants. As a result, they would choose other alternatives if possible.

"...I believe there should be companies around who can do that for me." (Joe and April)

"I would get outsiders if I could." (Lizy)

5.4.4.3 Scope

This is a common sub-theme that revolves around what clients perceive to be the extent to which consultants should discharge their roles and responsibilities on house projects. Generally, across all clients' stories, there was a strong indication that clients perceive the roles and responsibilities to go beyond just their traditional technical duties of planning, design, cost analysis and estimation (Lukumon and Tham, 2005). They include duties that consultants would consider to be beyond the scope of their work.

"Well, I think they should help me to acquire the land on which I want to build my house. They will know whether the land is good or not..." (Ann)

The analysis revealed that clients perceive the scope of consultants work as a design-build system. Beyond the design roles of consultants, clients perceive the work of consultants to include contracting. This is consistent with Winch's (2010) findings that most clients do not practically involve themselves in the technical and managerial aspects of a project and would prefer leaving it to consultants. It was evident from the analysis that clients' perception on the scope of consultants' roles and responsibilities was closely linked with their expectations. Clients may expect that consultants take on additional roles that have traditionally not been their responsibility (Gilleard and Chong, 1996; Shenhar et al., 1995; cited in Edum-Fotwe and

McCaffer, 2000) because they are mainly interested only in the finished product and its quality and functionality (Egan, 1998).

"...If your work comes out as a product, exactly...So if there was a firm that would just take my money, and then do their own professional things and come out with all the quality output that I need at the end of the day, trust me, I won't look elsewhere." (Joe and April)

5.4.4.4 Differentiation/Stratification

The sub-theme focuses on how clients perceive the stages or extent to which consultants would want to carry out their roles and responsibilities on house projects. The analysis of the stories revealed that clients perceive consultants to want to do all their work upfront. To clients, consultants are not willing to stratify their services to suit their clients. This perception cut across both groups of clients.

"The thing is, what will stop you from going to the consultant is that we don't know that we can tell them that we want to do the house from this part and then move on that part...We think that the consultants would want to complete the work all at once... We want to do the work bit by bit. We don't think you will be ready to do that. That was it. That was what we thought." (Kate)

For several reasons, clients tend to have a short term focus on projects (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008) and as a result would want to engage a consultant on-short term bases. They would want consultants to do just specific things at a time and not work on the whole projects all at once. Consultants however do not see such engagements as beneficial (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000a; cited in Eriksson *et. al.*, 2009) especially when it comes to financial issues.

Another dimension of the differentiation/stratification sub-theme is that clients perceive consultants to consider their offers to be “small deals”.

“...And sometimes we have the perception that we cannot always approach them because they always want big deals. They don’t want the small deals. They just like to work for large developers and on large construction projects...” (Ann)

Past studies (Hsieh, 1998 and Kilpady, 2005) have revealed this perception of clients to be valid. They intimate that consultants have the tendency to take a short-term view of projects that they already have and to focus more on trying to secure other projects. Vennström and Eriksson (2010) however argue that this attitude of consultants is a direct reaction to the lack of business ethics and short term project focus that clients have. On house projects, it is also common for clients, because of their short-term focus on that project alone, to haphazardly change service providers (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008). This might explain why consultants would want to focus on the “big deals” which offer better job security, consistency and financial returns.

5.4.5 Relationships

An interesting feature of this theme is that it is the only one whose perceptions are common to all clients interviewed. The stories under this theme were coded into six sub-themes namely; learning opportunities, essence/meaning, communication, treatment, choice/autonomy, and age.

5.4.5.1 Learning opportunities

Across all interviews, clients irrespective of their varied perceptions of consultants on other themes shared the common perception that engaging a consultant was an avenue for “client learning” (Siva and London, 2012). An important point to note here is that in contrast to the findings of some previous studies on professional practice (Cuff, 1991), when it comes to the

issue of 'learning opportunities, clients do not perceive consultants as people who "just do" things.

"The architects however take their time to work for you... They don't just build... They also teach you a lot of things. Anything they do, they will talk to you about it." (Kay)

"...But at least one thing is that when you pick them [consultants] you will learn a lot from them..." (Lizy)

The literature available on client learning revealed that clients, over the course of their relationship with consultants, acquire some form of learning from the consultants (Siva and London, 2012; Chen, 2008). This was evident in the stories of clients who had gone ahead to engage consultants after they had faced challenges on their projects.

"Yes, to know more...I wouldn't have asked the consultant in the first place about the problem...I told a consultant about it and he told me a lot of things about what could be done to make the floor firm and strong...So I got to learn that it was really good to know what you are getting into before you start...the relationship has helped me to know that it is really essential to know some basic things before you go ahead to build...Because the consultant showed me many pictures of projects he was working on. He had picked them up from the damaged parts and he was fixing them...Oh it is high now, very high (her knowledge in construction)." (Kate)

In telling their stories, all the clients made comparisons that showed that they had a measure of reliance and trust in the ability of consultants in general to understand construction issues, solve problems and possess "the ability to pass on the solution to the client, hence possessing a solution-transferring ability" (Hakansson and Wootz, 1978; cited in Kilpady, 2005).

"...I have very little knowledge when it comes to buildings so I will rely on the architect and his team to provide all of that knowledge." (Kay)

"They [non-professionals] don't understand most of the technical principles behind most of the things they do. They are good with some of the things because they have perfected their trade from experience over time. But they do not really understand most of the principles behind what they do except that they have done it over the years and it works for them. One thing with the consultants is that they know the building regulations to start with." (Joe and April)

5.4.5.2 Essence/Meaning

This sub-theme touches on clients' perception of the level of importance attached to the client-consultant relationship. Within the literature review, clients were identified to view the constructed product as a sign of prestige and personal success. As a result of this view they have, clients focus much of their attention on the finished product (Boyd and Kerr, 1998). This might explain why all clients interviewed attached a high level of importance to their client-consultant engagement. Clients perceive the relationship with a consultant to be a very important thing. Clients used words such as "great", "better", "prestige" and "refreshed" to describe how engaging consultant on their project will make them feel. Generally, clients perceive a relationship with a consultant as the "best for their building". They see it to have a very serious meaning.

"...Oh I think it was great like I said...The experience was good...Now, when they are talking I can talk some." (Kate)

"Not really. But at least I will feel comfortable telling my friends and family that a consultant did my work for me. At least, it adds some prestige to the whole thing but

that won't be the main influence. That will make me feel better. If I got the same output from the mason too it would be fine, I wouldn't feel that good about it as I would if a consultant helped me out." (Ann)

"...and then we want to really get a descent work, something that we you see and you are very much satisfied with. (Joe and April)

"Yes. Like I was saying a house is just like having a baby. You must be prepared before you do anything. You want the house to last long for your children to come and use it so you must employ good people." (Lizy)

5.4.5.3 Communication

This sub-theme of communication refers to how clients perceive the ease with which information and ideas will flow across their relationship network with consultants. This sub-theme is linked to client's perceptions of their expectations of consultants already discussed. Clients expect that the quality of communication between them and consultants would be very high and that they would not feel left out of the project. However, they perceive that although this is possible, it would be fairly difficult for consultants to meet their expectations in this regard.

"There should also be regular feedback. The communication should be seriously good. I should be able to sit in the comfort of my office and be able to have an idea of what is going on. I should get a good response from the consultants. I should have a real time update of what is happening in the form of videos, pictures and all that. I have told them that I need daily updates and responses...With that I believe there should be companies around who can do that for me...I made an initial contact with an Architect from the firm and I had good feedback...Normally, we don't get that in Ghana. (Joe and April)

"But I think in all these things, there should be open conversation. They should not keep things to themselves because they think I will not understand the technical terms. They should just open up to clients. They will always listen to you and explain things to you." (Ann)

5.4.5.4 Treatment

The literature on client-consultant relationships revealed clients to have negative perceptions on how consultants treat their clients (RIBA, 1992, 1993, and 1995). The stories coded into this sub-theme revealed something similar.

"...we deserve a lot of respect from them." (Kate)

"Some of them don't treat people well. They even dupe people and just take their money. There are a whole lot of bad people in town now." (Kay)

Past studies (Cuff, 1991; Siva and London, 2012) have shown that these perceptions of clients have stemmed from consultants' attempts to make social distinctions in the course of their professional practice. Unfortunately, this has resulted in some clients feeling alienated and unrespected by consultants (Cuff, 1991; Winter, 2002). In sharing their experiences, clients used words such as "saddened" and "emotional" to describe their emotional reactions toward the treatment meted out to them by consultants.

"That is the case. Sometimes I even get a bit emotional about it. It saddens me to see that kind of attitude on the part of the consultants. They do not value the business that we are bringing and that is what makes us emotional. I feel that there has to be some kind of mutual respect as we need each other, but it should be more from the consultant to the client. The reason is that their services are not free, we don't beg for

their services. They have to try as much as possible to make us feel happy. Normally, we don't get that in Ghana..." (Joe and April)

It is interesting to note that clients' existing perceptions on "treatment" have led them to develop the negative perception that consultants only treat their clients well when they perceive them to be in a position to offer them "big deals".

"If it were Vodafone that was asking for the same services I am asking for, and I was a representative of Vodafone, and I sent a mail in the my name, I am 200% sure that the kind of treatment I would get will be different from what I am getting now... Seriously I have had a very difficult time even though I am getting what I want." (Joe and April)

Consultants' hope and expectations of future work often serve as a strong basis for their motivation in selecting clients (Bresnen and Marshall, 2000a; cited in Eriksson *et al.*, 2009). Homebuilding clients however tend to have a short project focus as well as the tendency to jump from one consultant to the other (Eriksson *et al.*, 2008). This might explain why consultants prefer "the big deals" instead of the "small deals" offered by homebuilding clients.

5.4.5.5 Choice/Autonomy

This sub-theme focuses on clients' perception of how free they will be able to make decisions and implement their ideas when they form relationships with consultants on house projects. The analysis revealed that clients would want to maintain autonomy in their engagement with consultants.

"I will bring my ideas and then maybe they can polish it up. But the real deal must be according to my plan." (Lizy)

Clients however do not perceive consultants to be very flexible when it comes to the issue of autonomy on project relationships. Past studies (Freidson, 1986; Cuff, 1991; Stevens, 1998; cited in Chen, 2008) have shown that consultants always attempt to maintain autonomy in their relationships with clients by keeping certain aspects of their knowledge secret from their clients and by identifying themselves with a particular body of knowledge. These practices sometimes make it difficult for consultants to recognize when it is acceptable to make compromises in favour of the client. Consequently, clients have developed the negative perception that consultants are not flexible and would always like to “impose” their ideas on them. Clients feel that they will not be in control of their own project when they engage a consultant.

“I feel it will be easier for me to be in control if the relationship is with the masons. However, when it comes to the consultants, it will be difficult, because they might try to impose on me.” (Rice)

Thus, clients generally indicated that they would want to deal with consultants who are “flexible” enough to “accommodate” their “preferences” and not those who will impose their ideas on them.

“But inasmuch as I will take a consultant, I will want one who is flexible because there are some who are not flexible...Yes oh, because if you ask them to do something, there are some who will want to impose their preferences on you and not do what you are asking them to do. I will choose one who will accommodate my preferences.” (Lizy)

5.4.5.6 Age

In this context, the discussion under the sub-theme of age is related on clients’ perception of how a consultants’ age will affect the project relationship. The stories told by the clients, irrespective of their age, revealed them to have the perception that the older a consultant, the more difficult

he will be to work with. Clients perceive older consultants to be “difficult” and “archaic” when it comes to selecting project preferences. To them, it would be difficult for them to maintain their autonomy when working with an older consultant.

“I personally will like to deal with a younger person. An older person only if the person is cosmopolitan. The old people in this our society, if you want something they always want to create the opinion that they know better than you. Sometimes we have things that we want and are not prepared to compromise on that. Working with an older person will make that difficult. They will give you what they want and not what you want. And some of them have some archaic ideas. But with the younger consultants, because the generation gap is not so wide, you will easily be able to relate to them. And sometimes even if the younger person wants to impose their ideas on you, you are able to negotiate with them. It is not like that with the older consultants. In the end, if you insist, they see you to be disrespectful whereby in the real sense you were just insisting on your preference.” (Ann)

5.4.6 Rules of engagement

The final theme under client perceptions discusses how clients perceive the rules of engagement that govern their relationship with consultants. This discussion covers work contracts, statutory regulations, and general paperwork that consultants use in their work. Five sub-themes were identified as part of this main theme including; need, benefits, enforceability/choice, understanding/appeal, and effects.

5.4.6.1 Need

This sub-theme deals with the perceptions that clients hold on the need for formal rules of engagement on house projects. The analysis revealed clients who had engaged consultants as

well as those who had attained higher education to hold positive perceptions on the need for rules of engagement. These groups of clients felt that formal rules of engagement were required to inject some level of seriousness in project relationships. Interestingly, the other groups of clients were revealed to feel otherwise. They felt that there were no right or wrong building processes. To them, what matters most is their building. This point again reinforces the findings in previous studies that indicated that most clients are primarily interested in their building and not the processes required to deliver it (Boyd and Kerr, 1998).

"The paperwork is very important. Documents can be signed so that our agreements will be binding. This will prevent a lot of later confusion" (Joe and April)

5.4.6.2 Benefits

Past studies (Akintoye et al., 2005) indicate that the main objective for which clients would like to make use of formal rules of engagement is to ensure "the transfer of risk" related to time, cost, and quality. Primarily, clients seek to shift risks associated with the delivery of the project to the service provider. The analysis revealed that clients perceive formal rules of engagements to have some benefits when it comes to the transfer of risk. Primarily, they would make use of formal rules of engagement because of its perceived benefits. Clients' stories revealed that they demonstrate a high level of trust in consultants as far as the use of rules of engagement is concerned.

"And I know that with consultants, a contract is a contract. And they will want to honour their contract...and they will charge you for all that and you will get your work done...Anything else will go against the consultant." (Kate)

"At least it promotes a lot of transparency and provides checks and balances so that both parties can be up to the task." (Ann)

5.4.6.3 Enforceability/Choice

This sub-theme discusses clients' perceptions on the choice and flexibility that they have when it comes to abiding by statutory regulations. All clients, irrespective of their background have the perception that abiding by statutory regulations is "not compulsory" to seek professional help when building houses. They feel that this is so because the conditions in the construction industry are not very good. An interesting point to note here is that some of the clients perceive the non-enforceable nature of statutory regulations as the cause of poor quality construction works.

"You see, it is not by force" (Kay)

5.4.6.4 Understanding/Appeal

In this context understanding/appeal refers to what perception clients hold in connection with how easy or difficult it is to implement rules of engagement as well as how willing clients are to make use of regulations. The intricate processes required by the standard rules of engagement are not well suited for the conditions prevailing on individual house projects. These factors negatively affect the attractiveness of these standard rules of engagement clients on small house projects. Clients' stories coded into this sub-theme revealed these facts.

"Well I feel that is complicated. Why should we be signing papers when what I want is my house? I feel they should just tell me how much the materials will cost and the labour costs so that I will give the money to them." (Rice)

5.4.6.5 Effects

The analysis revealed clients to hold the perception that enforcing regulations would create some inconvenience as it would make it compulsory for them to engage consultants.

"...What you said makes it compulsory because as part of the permitting process, one needs to at least get a consultant so that the permit will be given". (Joe and April)

The analysis revealed a second dimension of clients' perceptions with respect to the effects of adopting formal rules of engagements on house project. Clients hold the perception that adopting formal rules of engagement would necessarily mean that consultants will demand higher fees and vice versa. This perhaps could explain the reason why some of them are apprehensive toward adopting formal rules of engagement on their projects.

"...I know that sometimes all these things add to the cost of the services that is why I have not pushed the consultants too hard on this issue." (Joe and April)

5.5 FACTORS INFLUENCING CLIENTS' PERCEPTIONS

The analysis revealed five inter-related factors that influence clients' perceptions, namely the client, social factors, construction industry conditions, the consultant, and the house. In addition to revealing the factors that account for clients' perceptions, the findings also confirm the fact that clients' perceptions are not totally under the direct control of consultants (Mahon and Watrick, 2003). These factors are discussed in the subsequent sections

5.5.1 The client

The analysis suggests that some of the perceptions that clients hold of consultants are self-generated. This is supported by the literature review. The findings of some past studies (Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Crafford, 2007) indicate that clients generate some of their perceptions independent of consultants and are often biased in their generation of these perceptions due to factors such as stereotyping and selective perceptioning.

"Like you guys. You charge us fat fat fat cash...Uhm, I just guessed. Look, the local people, they just learn on the job. But consultants go to school; they acquire degrees, so

obviously their services are going to be expensive. I needn't ask anybody." ... "Oh I don't know. We just know them. And then you have to draw your plan after acquiring your land and all that. That was just what we knew." (Kate)

These quotes are examples of clients' self-generated perceptions on their engagement with consultants. As to whether a self-generated perception of a client is wrong or not is beyond the scope of this study. Arredondo (1991) however revealed that in generating perceptions, clients do not do so as "professionally trained critics on the basis of objective criteria. Instead, they form subjective opinions." Nevertheless, the analysis did not reveal all clients' perceptions to be self-generated. This was especially true in the case of clients who seemed to largely hold positive perceptions about consultants.

"I have also searched the websites of the local professional bodies. I have also taken the time to find out the professionals who are doing the good works in town because I am also passionate about construction...I have personally taken steps to learn more about construction..." (Joe and April)

This study has not only confirmed the findings in the literature but has also revealed specific characteristics about clients that account for the subjectiveness of their self-generated perceptions. Majority of the clients indicated that they have very little knowledge and understanding of the technicalities involved in construction.

"Well, I have very little knowledge when it comes to these things. I cannot say any other thing about them." (Rice)

Within the literature review, mention was made of the fact that the level of construction education given to clients is very inadequate. In teaching people how to address their basic needs which include shelter, the formal and informal education curriculums interestingly fall short

when it comes to the issue of shelter. For this reason, many people, apart from those with specialized training in construction, demonstrate a lack of knowledge of the proper processes required to provide shelter for themselves. This was confirmed by analysis. Among clients who had been to school, apart from those who had taken practical steps to know more about construction, the closest the rest had come to design and construction was pre-technical skills and drawing they studied in Junior High School. At least, many clients are ignorant about issues that they should otherwise have knowledge about.

"...I think there is a lot wrong with our educational system. They do not teach us how to acquire houses. At least they can teach us the basics of building..." (Ann)

5.5.2 Social factors

The analysis to some extent reveals that social factors account for the perceptions that clients hold of the construction industry and its workforce. Some past studies confirm this finding. Generally, Malaysian youth prefer to be unemployed rather than take up jobs in construction (Abdul-Aziz, 2001). According to Vaid (1999; cited in ILO, 2001), many people including construction workers do not want their children to work in the construction industry; "they wish for better things for their children". Thus, to many people, the construction industry and its workforce is not presented in an appealing way.

"...And at the basic level, the construction industry is not presented in a palatable way." (Ann)

The findings from this study confirmed that even though client had self-generated perceptions, they also borrowed the perceptions of those they had social ties with. This was evident in the stories of all clients interviewed.

"I had a friend who wanted to build and that is how he went about the whole thing. He is the one who told me that it is expensive to engage a consultant. He told me that the other people will charge cheaper and the surplus will be used for something else."

(Rice)

5.5.3 Construction industry conditions

The discussion in this section revolves around the nature of cost, regulations, labour force and industry happenings. The global construction industry is characterized predominantly by poor conditions. These include collapse of buildings, poorly constructed building, widespread corruption, political interference, and unqualified workforce undertaking shoddy works (ILO, 2001). Nevertheless, the construction industry also has to some extent a positive image. Internationally and locally, all of these conditions affect clients' perceptions of the industry. The results of the analysis confirm this fact. It is evident that where the industry conditions are good, clients tend to have a positive perception and vice versa.

"Something that touched me very much was the collapse of the Melcom building...When the Melcom building collapsed I realized that it was a very critical thing. You can't just entrust your life into anyone's hands. You have to get a qualified person to do the work for you so that you know that when you are sleeping you are safe."

(Ann)

Several factors account for the poor image of the construction industry. Some past studies have revealed that construction is widely regarded as work that is indecent, a low status job (ILO, 2001). This might be because in both developed and developing countries a greater percentage of the labour force in construction is made up of those with little or no education. Interestingly,

these are the people that the relatively few highly skilled and educated consultants compete with. The results of the analysis are confirmed by these facts.

"The fact that consultants are good does not mean that the others are not good. It is not everyone in this country who has a good house that used consultants. Others also use laypeople and their houses are nice. It is a matter of finding the right laypeople to do the work. Actually, I don't know why consultants charge that much." (Rice)

It is no wonder that clients continually compare professional consultants with artisans when telling their stories. Clients find it challenging to accept the high standards (fees, rules of engagement, insistence on professionalism) of professional consultants because they generally do not attach much importance to the work done by those in the construction industry. They use terms such as "small work" and "just" to describe the nature of work done by consultants.

"But you will see it as the Architect coming to do just the drawing, charges you huge and then just leaves..." (Joe and April)

5.5.4 The consultant

The analysis shows that the actions of the consultant during the project relationship also account for the perceptions of clients. They can either reinforce clients' existing perceptions or change them.

"I don't think so. But I am very sure they can do that. I know specific consultants who can do that but I have been having doubts. The reason for this is that my elder brother wants to build a house and he went to see this consultant who provided a lot of help but my brother felt that the fees he paid were too high. So my brother just said 'I will take the plan alright but I will get someone else to build it for me'". (Ann)

Within the perception literature, it was suggested that by working in a systematic manner to help clients understand the nature of professional work (RIBA, 1992; Crafford, 1997) consultants can change clients' negative perceptions. The findings in this study confirm this fact.

"Yes. We didn't have money to finish all the work in a year or six months. But now I know that it's possible to get the consultant to do the work in stages even if I want to do it small. The consultant told me that." (Kate)

5.5.5 The house

"Looking at our house and the kind of problems we are having right now, if we used consultants, we would have gotten everything right..." (Kate)

This quote demonstrates how the clients developed perceptions through their contact with the house. This finding is supported by the literature review. Past studies on client learning found that through living in the house which was a product of a consultant's work or not, clients acquired a better appreciation of the work done by consultants (Siva and London, 2012). This indicates that another avenue where consultants can influence the perceptions of their clients is the house. This confirms the fact that for consultants to influence the perceptions of their clients it is not enough for them simply to talk about the need for their services but they must also express it through the product of their work, the house (Cheng, 2008).

5.6 EFFECTS OF PERCEPTIONS ON CLIENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGAGEMENT OF CONSULTANTS

This section builds on the discussion in the previous section by discussing the effects of the outcome of the clients' perceptioning process on their attitude toward engaging consultants.

5.6.1 The Perception Effect Model

The second structural model, the Perception Effect Model was developed (See Figure 5.2) to provide an understanding of how clients' perceptions affect their decision making process. In effect, it is this model that provides an explanation for the existence of the phenomenon of low-utilization of consultants on house projects. The three key outcomes of the model are: Yes, No, and Second Resort. A more detailed explanation of this model is provided in the next section.

5.6.1.1 The Yes

The analysis of clients' stories revealed that the perceptions of some clients on the need to engage the services of consultants on house projects has resulted in their being more determined than ever to engage consultants on their projects. This effect is what is referred to as the "Yes" on the Perception Effect Model. The illustrative quotes below highlight this finding.

"They are not being imposed on us. This boils down to the individual's opinion and what they want. In my own perspective, I think engaging consultants will be the best for me." (Kay)

The analysis revealed two direct routes to the "Yes". First, clients who had a strong desire to engage consultants on their house projects had adequate knowledge of construction issues that made them generate positive perceptions about consultants. Second, some clients had come into contact with a house that had caused them to generate positive perceptions of consultants or they wanted to have a house that meant so much to them (the dream house) that it had led them to develop positive perceptions of the need for consultants. The analysis further revealed an indirect route to the "Yes". The clients' positive financial standing alone was not enough to lead them to the "Yes". It had to be combined with a positive perception of consultants that had been fuelled by the client's adequate knowledge on issues pertaining to construction. This indicates that for a

client to choose to engage consultants, it is not enough just for them to be financially sound as all those interviewed stated. Rather in addition to that, the client needs to have adequate knowledge of construction issues, must have been positively been affected by a house that is the product of a consultant's work or must want to build a house that means something to him. The clients who fell into this category were influenced by a combination of at least two of these factors. Only two of the clients interviewed had made an outright decision to engage the services of consultants on their house projects.

5.6.1.2 The No

The analysis of clients' stories revealed that the perceptions of some clients on the need to engage the services of consultants on house projects had led them to see the engagement of a consultant on their house project as unnecessary. This effect is what is referred to as the "No" on the Perception Effect Model. The illustrative quotes below highlight this finding.

"...Unfortunately at that time, we did not have an overbloated budget to spend the building. Whatever we would have paid the consultant could have comfortably been used to do other things... And the other thing too is that, this guy that we dealt with to build for us is like one-stop shop. He won't do something and ask you to take it to another person. And he charges the cost as and when it comes. But you will see it as the Architect coming to do just the drawing, charges you huge and then just leaves. Then when he is gone, you have to go and deal with non-professionals to take it from there. So sometimes that is what makes us go to the non-professionals straight away. It is a matter of convenience too. We don't have all the time to go round searching for different professionals to do different things for us. (Joe and April)

The analysis revealed three direct routes to the “No”. First, clients who had a strong desire not to engage consultants on their house projects perceived consultants not to be “the only good people to” help them on house projects. They felt that getting a good house was a matter of choosing the “right laypeople”. This gives the indication that if a client has a positive experience dealing with non-professionals, they would make an outright decision not to engage consultants. Second, the house that these clients wanted to build did not mean anything to them. They felt that it was “just a house” and so this had led them to develop the perception that engaging a consultant on such a project was a “waste of time and money”. Third, the clients who fell in this category perceive engaging a consultant to be expensive and so since their financial standing was negative, they could not see themselves engaging a consultant. The analysis further revealed one indirect route to the “No”. As in the “Yes”, when the clients’ financial standing was positive, it had to be combined with a perception of consultants that had been fuelled by the client’s knowledge on issues pertaining to construction. In this instance, clients who did not have adequate knowledge of issues pertaining to construction and consultancy services, even though they were “rich” headed for the “No”. This might explain why among clients who do not engage consultants on their project are people who are in a position to afford the cost of engaging consultants. The clients who fell into this category were influenced by at least one of these factors. None of them had had a positive experience working with non-professionals. This suggests that they had mainly been influenced by their perceptions pertaining to the house or their financial standing.

5.6.1.3 The Second Resort

The analysis of clients’ stories revealed that the perceptions of some clients on the need to engage the services of consultants on house projects had led them to see the engagement of a

Figure 5.3: The Perception Filter Model

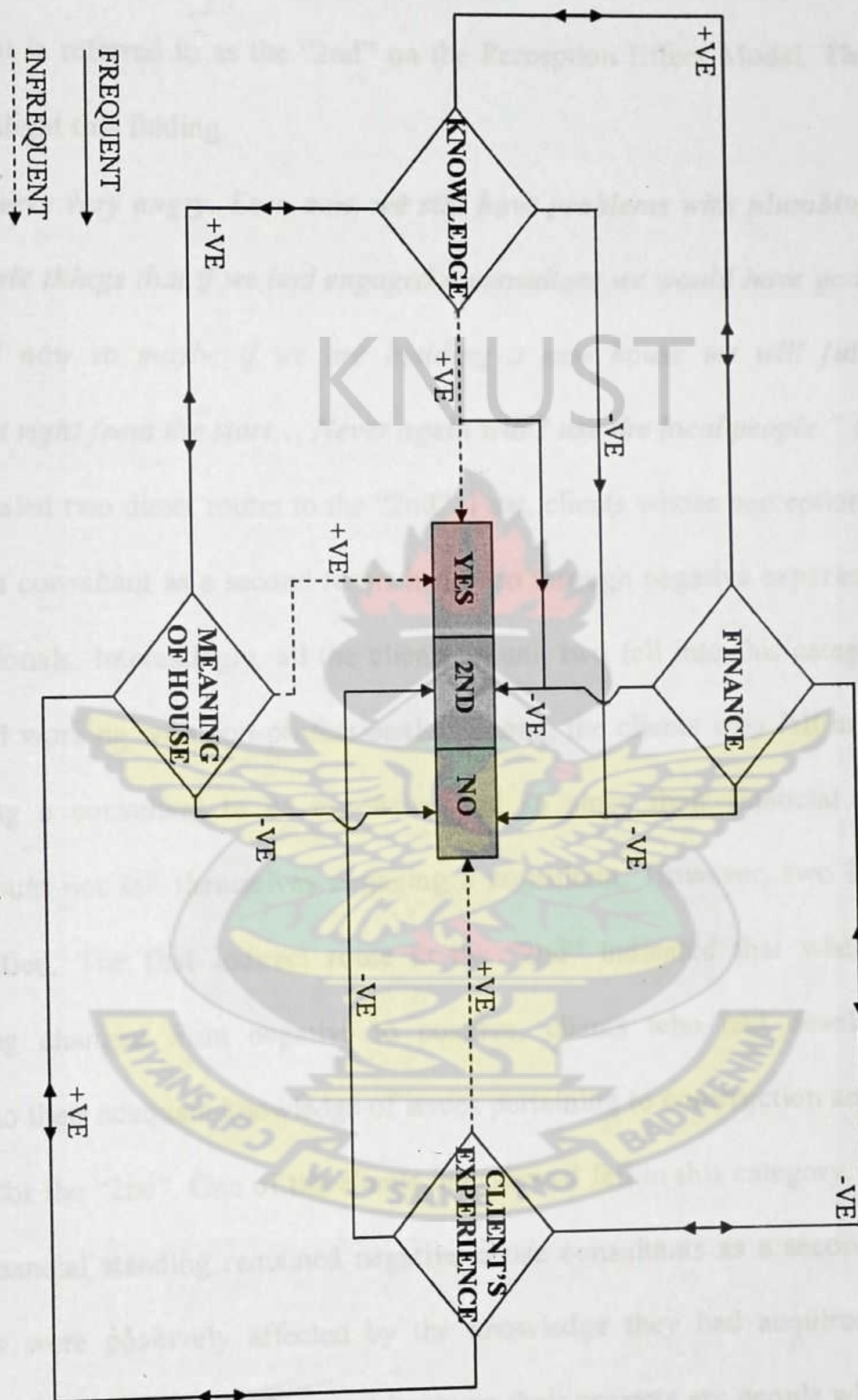


Figure 5.2: The Perception Effect Model

consultant on their house project as second resort if they undergo a change in circumstance or their initial decision not to engage consultants becomes unsuccessful.

This effect is what is referred to as the "2nd" on the Perception Effect Model. The illustrative quotes below highlight this finding.

"Yes, we were very angry. Even now, we still have problems with plumbing works and other simple things that if we had engaged a consultant we would have gotten right. We know that now so maybe if we are building a new house we will fully engage a consultant right from the start... Never again will I use the local people." (Kate)

The analysis revealed two direct routes to the "2nd". First, clients whose perceptions made them regard engaging a consultant as a second resort had been through negative experiences working with non-professionals. Interestingly, all the clients in unit two fell into this category. None of them had enjoyed working with non-professionals. Second, the clients who fell in this category perceive engaging a consultant to be expensive and so since their financial standing was negative, they could not see themselves engaging a consultant. However, two indirect routes were also identified. The first indirect route to the "2nd" indicated that when the clients' financial standing changed from negative to positive, clients who had developed positive perceptions due to their adequate knowledge of issues pertaining to construction and consultancy services headed for the "2nd". One of the clients interviewed fell in this category. Alternatively, clients whose financial standing remained negative chose consultants as a second resort when their perceptions were positively affected by the knowledge they had acquired. This might explain why among clients who engage consultants on their projects are people who are not in a position to afford the cost of engaging consultants. This situation might also explain why some consultants find themselves working on house projects that they themselves did not start.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conclusions to the research problem and shows how study has added to the knowledge and understanding of certain aspects of the client-consultant engagement. The chapter also outlines the limitations of this study as well as future research that could stem from this study.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

The literature review identified various past studies that provided background to this research (Arredondo, 1991; Cuff, 1991; Green, 1996; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006; Alinaitwe, 2008; Siva and London, 2012). These past studies provided a lot of insight into projects success factors, regulations, professional service provision as well as client-consultant relationships and the role of perceptions. Other studies that were identified provided key insight into the nature of the client role on projects as well as the issues affecting the project environment (Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998; Egan, 2002). Further insight was gained into the nature of work done by consultants in the industry and its effect on their clients (Boyd and Kerr, 1998; Vennström, 2008; Nuamani and Tsegay, 2011). The studies identified also highlighted the complex nature of the interactions between the consultant and the client on house projects and its impact on project success and relationships (Tzortzoulos et al, 2006; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006).

The fundamental proposition of this research was that clients' attitudes toward the engagement of consultants on homebuilding projects are largely determined by their perceptions on the need for the services of construction consultants. The research involved determining the extent to

which clients' perceptions affected their attitude toward engaging consultants on house projects. Six in-depth phenomenological interviews were conducted with homebuilding clients. The data collected from the interviews was analyzed the phenomenological research approach to examine the phenomenon of low utilization of construction consultants on house projects. This study built on existing research on the consultant-client relationship on house projects by exploring in much detail client perceptions and how it impacts on client-consultant relationships on house projects.

6.2.1 Client perceptions

By means of the 2C3R model (The Perception Pentagon) that was developed from the data analysis, the findings revealed a specific and in-depth understanding of the multifaceted nature of clients' perceptions. The five key themes of clients' perceptions that were derived are Competence and Capabilities, Cost of Engagement, Roles and Responsibilities, Relationships, and Rules of Engagement. The findings indicated that clients' perceptions of consultants in general were different from the perceptions that they held of local consultants, especially when it came to the theme of competence and capabilities. This study has confirmed the stages of the client perceptioning process proposed by previous studies (Arredondo, 1991; Lord 1997). It has also identified that even before the perceptioning process starts, clients have their default perceptions made by input from themselves and the social conditions in which they find themselves.

6.2.2 Factor affecting client perceptions

This study has revealed five inter-related factors that influence clients' perceptions. They include the client, social factors, construction industry conditions, the consultant, and the house. This

study has not only confirmed the findings past studies but has also revealed specific characteristics about these factors and how they affect the perceptions of clients.

6.2.3 The consultant's role in client perceptions

One of the most significant findings of this study is that although clients' perceptions are to a large extent influenced by factors beyond the consultant, there is the possibility for consultants to cause clients to change their perceptions. The study identified the actions of the consultant as well as the house that has been built as a product of the consultants work as the two main means through which consultants can help clients to develop positive perceptions about the need for engaging professionals on house projects. Therefore irrespective of the current perceptions that clients hold of consultants, there are ways in which clients can be helped to change these so as to promote successful client-consultant relationships on house projects.

6.2.4 Effects of clients' perceptions on their actions

The most significant finding of this study perhaps is the explanation for the existence of the phenomenon of low-utilization of consultants on house projects. By means of the structural model developed from the data analysis, the study has successfully provided an understanding of how clients' perceptions affect their decision making process. The study identified three key outcomes of clients' perceptions. The analysis revealed that the perceptions of most clients influence them to chose the frequent path, naturally leading them to the "No" or the "2nd" outcome. Only a few clients are led to the "Yes" outcome by their perceptions. This explains the existence of the phenomenon of low utilization of consultants on house projects.

6.3 LIMITATIONS

The scope of this study is primarily limited to the client-consultant engagement on single homebuilding projects. The data obtained represents the unique circumstances prevailing among

consultants and clients on such type of projects. The conclusions drawn may therefore not be typical of all situations. Although the sample size chosen was above the recommended minimum of three (Giorgi, 2008a), the data obtained represents the views of a relatively few set of clients. Thus, the different models proposed, although characteristic of the client-consultant engagement on house projects would need to be further refined to make it broadly applicable.

6.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the discussion of the results of the study, several key areas for future have been identified. These include type of client and project, research method, the consultant's actions.

6.4.1 Type of client and project

This study focused on the client-consultant engagement on single a single house project as well as on the homebuilding (owner-occupier) client. In reality, this is a small dimension of the scope of the client-consultant engagement. The methodology and the models developed from this study can be applied to the investigation of the client-consultant engagement on other project types (large commercial and government projects) as they are also common and offer a variety of circumstances and challenges to client-consultant relationships.

6.4.2 Research method

The phenomenological research method adopted for this study is a relatively underutilized method of research locally, especially in the area of construction. However, owing to its potential to yield more knowledge and promote a refined understanding of the client-consultant engagement, it would be worthwhile to adopt it extensively for use in studies related to client and consultant behaviour. This study could also be replicated with a larger sample to yield a broader generalization of the results obtained.

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFERENCES

A -

Abdul-Aziz, A. (2001), "Site operatives in Malaysia: Examining the foreign local asymmetry", Unpublished report for the ILO

Alinaitwe, H.; Mwakali, J.; Hansson, B. (2007a), "Analysis of accidents on building construction sites reported in Uganda during 2001–2005", in *CIB World Building Congress, Construction for Development*, 1208–1221

Alinaitwe, H. M. (2008), "An assessment of clients' performance in having an efficient building process in Uganda", *Journal of Civil Engineering and Management*, 14(2): 73-78

Alizedah, Y. (1996), "Small ethnic enterprises and entrepreneurial networks", Southern Cross University

Andersen, E.S, Jessen, S.A, Birchall, D., and Money, A.H. (2006), "Exploring project success", *Baltic Journal of Management*, 1(2), 127-147

Ankrah, N. A. and Proverbs, D. (2005), "A framework for measuring construction project performance: overcoming key challenges of performance measurement", in Khosrowshahi, F. (Ed.) *Proceedings of the 21st Annual ARCOM Conference*. London, ARCOM.

Applebaum, H. (1999), "Construction workers, USA", Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press

Arditi, D. and Gunaydin, H.M. (1997), "Total quality management in construction process", *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 235-43.

Argyle, M. (1990), "The psychology of interpersonal behaviour", Harmondsworth Penguin Books

Armitt, J. (2012), "Roundup: clients make or break projects", www.ciob.org.uk; retrieved on 19th July, 2012

Arredondo, L. (1991), "How to present like a pro", McGraw-Hill Inc, pp. 4-8

B -

Ball, M. (1988), "Rebuilding Construction", Routledge, London.

Becker, F. (1996) Applications of the performance concept in building, CIB-ASTM-ISO-RILEM 3rd International Symposium, Israel, National Building Research Institute

Blau, J. (1984) Architects and Firms: a sociological perspective on architectural practice, Cambridge: The MIT Press

Blayse, A.M. and Manley, K. (2004), "Key influences on construction innovation", *Construction Innovation*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 143-54.

Bourdieu, P. (1977), "Outline of a theory of practice", Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (English translation by R. Nice of *Esquisse d'une theorie de la pratique*, Librairie Droz, Geneve)

- Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992), *"An invitation to reflexive sociology"*, Cambridge: Polity Press
- Boyd, D. (2011), *"Connecting parts to wholes in construction education and practice"*, 47th ASC Annual International Conference Proceedings, the Associated Schools of Construction
- Boyd, D. and Chinyio, E. (2006), *"Understanding the Construction Client"*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Boyd, D and Kerr, E (1998), *"An analysis of developer-clients' perception of consultants"*, in: Hughes, W(Ed.), *14th Annual ARCOM Conference*, 9-11 September 1998, University of Reading, Association of Researchers in Construction Management, Vol. 1, 88-97.
- Bresnen, M. and Marshall, N. (2000), *"Partnering in construction: a critical review of issues, problems and dilemmas"*, Construction Management and Economics, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 229-37.
- Bresnen, M., Goussevskaia, A. and Swan, J. (2005), *"Implementing change in construction project organizations: exploring the interplay between structure and agency"*, Building Research & Information, Vol. 33 No. 6, pp. 547-60.
- Burke, R. (1995), *"Project Management: planning and Control"*, Chichester: Wiley.
- C -
- Caruana, A., (1997), *"Corporate Reputation: Concept and Measurement"*, Journal of Product & Brand Management, Vol. 6(2), p109-143.
- Chappell, D. and Willis, C.J. (2000), *"The Architect in Practice"*, 8th ed., Blackwell Science, Oxford
- Chen, J. (2008), *"The development of a habitus shock model for architect-client relationships on house projects"*, Master's dissertation, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Newcastle, Newcastle
- Chen, J. and London, K. (2007), *"Habitus and second birth: The development of a model for architect-client relationships on house designs based on culture shock theory"*, CIB W92 Procurement Systems: Building across Borders Conference, 23-26 September, Hunter Valley, Australia
- Cheng, J., Proverbs, D.G., Oduoza, C.F. (2006), *"The satisfaction levels of UK construction clients based on the performance of consultants: Results of a case study"*, Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 13 Iss: 6 pp. 567 - 583
- Cherns, A B and Bryant, D T (1984), *"Studying the client's role in construction"*, Construction Management and Economics Vol 2 pp 177e 184
- Chua, D.K.H., Kog, Y.C. and Loh, P.K. (1999), *"Critical success factors for different project objectives"*, Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, ASCE, Vol. 125 No. 3, pp. 142-50
- CIRIA (1985), *"CIRIA Report 109"*, CIRIA, London.
- Cooke-Davies, T. (2002), *"The 'real' success factors on projects"*, International Journal of Project Management, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 185-90. Chan et al., 2004
- Cowdroy, R. (1992), *"Relationships between outcomes of proposals for house alterations and life issues affecting house owners"*, PhD dissertation, The University of Newcastle
- Creswell, J. W. (2003), *"Qualitative inquiry and research design"*. London: Sage Publications.

Cuff, D. (1991), *Architecture: the story of practice*, Cambridge: MIT Press Cambridge, MA.

D -

Darlington, M and Culley, S (2004), *"A model of factors influencing the design requirement Design Studies"* Vol 25 pp 329-350

Davis, K. (n.d), *"The construction of meaning in composition research"*, Phenomenology of Research, pp. 121-129

Denscombe, M. (2010), *"The good research guide for small-scale social research"*, Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education, 4e, pp. 93-105

Denzin, N. (2008), *"The new paradigm dialogs and qualitative inquiry"*. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 21 (4), 315-325

Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (2005), *"Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research"*, in Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds), *"The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research"*, Third edition, US: Sage Publications

Dovey, K. (2002), *"The Silent Complicity of Architecture"*, in Hillier, J. and Rooksby, E. (Eds) *Habitus: "A sense of place"*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Drew, D. S.; Tang, S. L.Y., and Lui C. K. (2004), *"Balancing fee and quality in two envelope fee bidding"*, Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management Volume 11 · Number 3 · 2004 · pp. 159-175

Dunning, J.H. (1989), *"Multinational Enterprises and the Growth of Services: Some Conceptual and Theoretical Issues"*, Service Industries Journal, Vol.9 (1), pp.5-39.

E -

Earth Watch Institute (2011), *"Construction"*. [Online] Available from: <http://www.businessandbiodiversity.org/construction.html> (Accessed 10 August 2012).

Edum-Fotwe, F. T. and McCaffer, R. (2000), *"Developing project management competency: perspectives from the construction industry"*, International Journal of Project Management, Vol.18, pp.111-124

Egbu, C. (2008), *"Clients' roles and contributions to innovations in the construction industry: when giants learn to dance"*, in Brandon, P. and Lu, S.L (Eds), *Clients Driving Innovation*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Egan, J. (1998), *"Rethinking Construction: Report from the Construction Task Force"*, Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions, London.

Egan, J. (2002), *"Accelerating Change"*, Construction Industry Council, London.

Eisenhardt, K. (1989), *"Building theories from case study research"*, Academy of Management, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 532-50

Elinwa, A.U. and Buba, S.A. (1993), *"Cost factors in Nigeria"*, Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, ASCE, Vol. 119 No. 4, pp. 698-713

Emmitt, S. (1999), *"Architectural Management in Practice"*, Addison-Wesley Longman, Glen View, IL

Emmitt, S. and Gorse, C. (2007), "*Communication in Construction Teams*", London: Taylor and Francis

Enderwick, P. (1989), "*Multinational Service Firms*", London: Sage.

Eriksson, P.E., Nilsson, T. and Atkin, B. (2008), "*Client perceptions of barriers to partnering*", Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 15, pp. 527-39

Ewing, M.T., Caruana, A. and Loy, E.R. (1999), "*Corporate reputation and perceived risk in professional engineering services*", Corporate Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 4(3), pp. 121-128

F –

Fan, C.N. (1995), "*The development of quality assurance in Hong Kong construction works*", Hong Kong Contractor, March/April.

Fernie, S. and Thorpe, A. (2007), "*Exploring change in construction: supply chain management*", Engineering Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 319-33.

Finlay, L. (2009), "*Debating phenomenological research methods*", Phenomenology and Practice, Vol. 3 No. 1, pp. 6-25

G –

Gilleard, J.D. and Chong, W.S. (1996), "*New challenges from Hong Kong's new airport.*" In: Langford DA, Retik A, editors. The organisation and management of construction: shaping theory and practice, 2. Spon, London, 1996, pp 767-777.

Giorgi, A. (2008a). "*Concerning a serious misunderstanding of the essence of the phenomenological method in psychology*", Journal of Phenomenological Psychology, 39, 33-58.

Goodacre, P., Pain, J., Murray, J. and Nobel, M. (1982), "*Research in building design*", Occasional Paper No. 7, Department of Construction Management, University of Reading, UK.

Green, S.D. (1999), "*The missing arguments of lean construction*", Construction Management and Economics, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 133-7

Griffith, A. (1984), "*A critical investigation of factors influencing buildability and productivity*", PhD thesis, Department of Building, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh

Groenewald, T. (2004), "*A phenomenological research design illustrated*", International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3(1), Article 4. Retrieved [INSERT DATE] from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/pdf/groenewald.pdf

Guba, E. (1990), "*The paradigm dialogue*", Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications

H –

Hakansson, H. and Wootz, B. (1978), "*A framework of industrial buying and selling*", Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 8, pp. 28-39; in Kilpady, N. (2005), "*Relationship marketing in professional services: a case study of architectural practice*", MBA thesis, University of Nottingham

Hampton, G., Baldwin, A. N., and Holt, G. (2012), "Project delays and cost: stakeholder perceptions of traditional v. PPP procurement", *Journal of Financial Management of Property and Construction*, Vol. 17 Iss: 1 pp. 73 - 91

Hartmann A, Isabelle, M. M. J. Reymen and Oosterom G.V. (2008), "Factors constituting the innovation adoption environment of public clients", *Building research and information* Vol.36 (5) pp.436-449

Hartmann, A., Davies, A., and Federiksen, L. (2010), "Learning to deliver service-enhanced public infrastructure: balancing contractual and relational capabilities", *Construction management and economics* Vol.28 pp.1165-1175

Higgs, J. (2001), "Charting standpoints in qualitative research". In H. Byrne-Armstrong, J. Higgs, & D. Horsfall (Eds.), *Critical moments in qualitative research* (pp. 44-67). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Higgs, J., McAllister, L., & Whiteford, G. (2009), "The practice and praxis of professional decisionmaking": In B. Green (Ed.), *Understanding and researching professional practice*. (pp. 101-120). Rotterdam: Sense.

Hillebrandt, P. (1984), "Analysis of the British construction industry", Basingstoke: Macmillan

Hillebrandt, P.M. (2000), "Economic Theory and the Construction Industry", Macmillan, London

Hillier, J. and Rooksby, E. (Eds) (2002) *Habitus: A sense of place*: Aldershot: AshgateHubbard, 1995; cited in Chen, J. (2008), "The development of a habitus shock model for architect-client relationships on house projects", Master's dissertation, School of Architecture and the Built Environment, University of Newcastle, Newcastle

I –

International Labour Organization (2001), "The construction industry in the twenty-first century: Its image, employment prospects and skill requirements", tripartite meeting on the construction industry in the twenty-first century: its image, employment prospects and skill requirements, Geneva

Ireland, V. (1984), "The role of managerial actions in the cost, time and quality performance of high rise commercial building projects", PhD thesis, University of Sydney, Sydney

Ivory, C. (2004), "Client, user and architect interactions in construction: implications for analyzing innovative outcomes from user-producer interactions in projects", *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 495-508.

K –

Kadefors, A. (2004), "Trust in project relationships – inside the black box", *International Journal of Project Management*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 175-82

Karantinou, K. M. and Hogg, M.K. (2001), 'Exploring Relationship Management in Professional Services: A Study of Management Consultancy', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.17 (3), pp.263-286:

Karantinou, K. M. and Hogg, M.K. (2001), 'Exploring Relationship Management in Professional Services: A Study of Management Consultancy', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol.17 (3), pp.263-286.

Khan, S., Gul, S. and Shah, A. (2011), "*A review of literature on the role of trust and partnering in success of construction projects*", African Journal of Business Management Vol. 5(35), pp. 13541-13549, 30

Kilpady, N. (2005), "*Relationship marketing in professional services: a case study of architectural practice*", MBA thesis, University of Nottingham

Klemetti, A. (2006), "*Risk Management in Construction Project Networks*", Laboratory of Industrial Management Report 2006/2

Koch, T. (1994), "*Establishing rigour in qualitative research: The decision trail*. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 19, 976-986: in Morrissey, G. and Higgs, J. (2006), "*Phenomenological research and adolescent female sexuality: discoveries and applications*. The Qualitative Report Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 161-181

Kometa, S., Olomolayie, P.O. and Harris, F.C. (1995), "*An evaluation of clients' needs and responsibilities in the construction process*", Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 45-56

Kotler, P. (1997), "*Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation and Controls*." 9th Edition, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

L –

Langford D. and Hughes W. (2008), "*Building a Discipline; the story of construction management*", ARCOM, ISBN-10: 0-9552390-3-6

Larson, E. (1995). "*Project partnering: results of study of 280 construction projects*", J. Manage, Eng., 11(2): 30-35.

Latham, M. (1994), "*Constructing the Team: Final Report of the Government/Industry Review of Procurement and Contractual Arrangements in the UK*", London: HMSO

Lavers, A. (1992), "*Communication and clarification between designer and client: Good practice and legal obligation*", in Nicholson, M. (Ed) Architectural Management, London: E&FN Spon

Leedy, P. D. and Ormrod, (n.d), "*Practical research: Planning and design*", Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.

Li, B.; Akintoye, A.; Edwards, P.J. and Hardcastle, C. (2005), "*Perceptions of positive and negative factors influencing the attractiveness of PPP/PFI procurement for construction projects in the UK*", Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 12 No. 2, 2005 pp. 125-148

Lim, J.N. and Ofori, G. (2007), "*Classification of innovation for strategic decision making in construction businesses*", Construction Management and Economics, Vol. 25 No. 9, pp. 963-78

Lincoln, Y. and Guba, E. (1985), "*Naturalistic Inquiry*", London: Sage Publications

Locke, E.A. (1977), "*The myths of behavior modeling in organizations*", Acad. Manage, Rev., 4: 543-53

Lord, C. G. (1997), "*Social Psychology*". New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Love, P., Davis, P., Ellis, J., Cheung, S.O. (2010), *"Dispute causation: identification of pathogenic influences in construction"*, Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 17 Iss: 4 pp. 404 – 423

Lux, D.G., Ray, W.E., Blankenbaker, E.K. and Umstattd, W.(1982), *"World of construction"*, McKnight Publishing, 5/e pp. 9-10

M –

Mahon, J.F. and Wartick, S.L. (2003), *'Dealing with Stakeholders: How Reputation, Credibility and Framing Influence the Game'*, Corporate Reputation Review, Vol.6 (1); p.19.

Mansfield, N.R., Ugwu, O.O. and Doranl, T. (1994), *Causes of delay and cost overruns in Nigerian construction projects*, International Journal of Project Management, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp 254-260

Marshall, C. and Rossman, G. (1999), *Designing qualitative research*, 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Masterman, J. and Gameson, R. (1994) *Client Characteristics and Needs in Relation To Their Selection of Building Procurement Systems*, in Rowlinson, S. (Ed.), CIB W92: East Meets West, Symposium, Department of Surveying, University of Hong Kong, December, CIB Publication No. 175, 79-87

Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994), *"Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook"* (2nd Edn) Sage Publications, California

Morrissey, G. and Higgs, J. (2006), *"Phenomenological research and adolescent female sexuality: discoveries and applications"*. The Qualitative Report Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 161-181

Moustakas, C. (1994), *"Phenomenological research methods"*, Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, California.

Mullins, L. J. (2005), *"Management and organisational behaviour"*, Harlow, England; New York, Prentice Hall/Financial Times

Murray-Bannister, S.(1997), *"Clients' perceptions of the four roles of the professional nurse in a health promotive setting"*, Master's thesis, University of Alberta

N –

Nelson, D. L. and Quick, J. C.(1999) *"Organizational behaviour, Foundations, realities and challenges"*, Cincinnati, Ohio: South-Western College Publishing.

Ng, T., Rose, T., Mak, M. and Chen, S.E. (2002), *"Problematic issues associated with project partnering – the contractor perspective"*, International Journal of Project Management, Vol. 20 No. 6, pp. 437-49.

Nicolini, D. (2002), *"In search of 'project chemistry'"*, Construction Management and Economics, Vol. 20 No. 2, pp. 167-77

Nitta, K., Holley, M., and Wrobel, S. (2010), *"A phenomenological study of rural school consolidation"*, Journal of Research in Rural Education, 25(2), 1-19

Nkado, R N and Mbachu, J I (2001) *Modelling client needs and satisfaction in the built environment*. In: Akintoye, A. (Ed.), *17th Annual ARCOM Conference*, 5-7 September 2001, University of Salford. Association of Researchers in Construction Management, Vol. 1, 917-27

Nuamani, M. and Tsegay, A.(2011), "*Clients' capabilities in managing major infrastructure construction projects in Sweden*", Master's Thesis, Chalmers University of Sweden

O -

O'Connor, J. and Tucker, R. (1986), "*Industrial project constructability improvement*", Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, Vol. 113 No. 2

Okpala, D.C. and Aniekwu, A.N. (1988), "*Causes of high costs of construction in Nigeria*", Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, Vol. 114 No. 2, pp. 234-44

Othman, A. A. E. (2011), "*Improving Building Performance through Integrating Constructability in the Design Process*", An International Journal, 3(2), pp 333-347

Oyedele, L. O. and Tham, K.W. (2005), "*Examining architects' performance in Nigerian private and public sectors building projects*", Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management, Vol. 12 Iss: 1 pp. 52 – 68

P –

Persson, M. and Svedinger, B. (2000), "*Byggherren och byggherrens funktioner skapandet utveckling*", Göteborg, Institutionen för installationsteknik, Chalmers tekniska högskola

Punch, K. (2005), "*Introduction to social research: quantitative and qualitative approaches*", London: Sage publications

R –

Rahman, M. and Kumaraswamy, M. (2004), "*Contracting relationship trends and transitions*", Journal of Management in Engineering, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 147-61

Roodman, D.M. and Lenssen, N. (1995), "*A Building Revolution: How Ecology Health Concerns are Transforming Construction*", Paper 124 World Watch Institute, Washington, DC

Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) (1993), "*Strategic Study of the Profession: Phase 2: Clients and Architects*", London: RIBA Publications

Richardson, B. (1996), "*Marketing for Architects and Engineers: A New Approach*", E&F Spon, London

Ring, P.S. and Van de Ven, A.H. (1994), "*Developmental processes of cooperative inter-organizational relationships*", Acad. Manage., Rev., 19(1): 90-118

Runyon, K. E. (1980) "*Consumer behaviour and the practice of marketing*", 2nd Edition, Columbus: Charles E. Merrill.

S –

Salisbury, F.(1990) "*Architect's Handbook for Client Briefing*", London: Butterworth Architecture.

Sandelowski, M. (1986), "The problem of rigor in qualitative research", *Advances in Nursing Science* 8(3), 27-37; in Murray-Bannister, S. (1997), "Clients' perceptions of the four roles of the professional nurse in a health promotive setting", Master's thesis, University of Alberta

Seidman, I. E. (1998), "Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences" (2nd Ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Shenhar, A.J., Levy, O. and Dvir, D. (1997), "Mapping the dimensions of Project Success", *Project Management Journal*; 28(2):5-15.

Siva, J. and London, K. (2012), "Client learning for successful architect-client relationships", *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management*, 19(3): 253-268.

Smith, J.M., Kenley, R. and Wyatt, R. (1998) *Evaluating the client brief problem: an exploratory study* *Engineering, Construction and Architectural Management* Vol 5 No 4 pp 387e398

Soetanto, R. (2002) *Modelling satisfaction for main participants of the construction project coalition: a study of mutual performance assessment*, Ph.D. thesis, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton.

Soetanto, R., Proverbs, D. and Cooper, P. (1999), "A conceptual model of performance and satisfaction for main participants of construction project coalitions", *Proceedings of ARCOM 15th Annual Conference*; John Moores University, Liverpool, ARCOM

Stevens, G. (1998), "The favoured circle", Cambridge: MIT Press

Swingewood, A. (1984), "A Short History of Sociological Thought". New York: St. Martin's, 105; in Davis, K. (n.d), "The construction of meaning in composition research", *Phenomenology of Research*, pp. 121-129

T –
Tewksbury, R. (2009), "Qualitative versus Quantitative Methods: Understanding Why Qualitative Methods are Superior for Criminology and Criminal Justice", *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Criminology*, Vol 1 (1)

Thompson, P.J. and Sanders, S.R. (1998), "Partnering continuum," *J. Manage, Eng.*, 14(5): 73-78

Thomson, D (2011), A pilot study of client complexity, emergent requirements and stakeholder perceptions of project success, *Construction Management and Economics*, Vol. 29, pp. 69-82

Toor, S.R. and Ogunlana, S.O. (2009), "Construction professionals' perception of critical success factors for large-scale construction projects", *Construction Innovation: Information, Process, Management*, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp. 149-67.

Turner, A. (1990) *Building Procurement*. London: MacMillan.

Tzortzopoulos, P., Cooper, R., Chan, P. and Kagioglou, M. (2006), "Clients' activities at the design front-end": *Design Studies* Vol 27 No. 6

V –
Vaid, K.N. (1999), "Contract labour in the construction industry in India", in D.P.A. Naidu (ed.): *Contract labour in South Asia*. Geneva, ILO, Bureau for Workers' Activities.

Vennström, A. (2008), "*The construction client as a change agent - contextual support and obstacles*", Thesis, Environmental Engineering, Construction Management, Luleå University of Technology, ISSN: 1402-1544

Vennström, A. and Eriksson, P. E. (2010), "*Client perceived barriers to change of the construction process*", Construction Innovation: Information, Process, Management, Vol. 10 Iss: 2 pp. 126 - 137

W –

Walker, A. (1996), "*Project management in construction*", 3ed. Oxford: Blackwell Science

Welman, J. C., & Kruger, S. J. (1999), "*Research methodology for the business and administrative sciences*", Johannesburg, South Africa: International Thompson

Winter, G. (2000), "A comparative discussion of the notion of validity in qualitative and quantitative research", The Qualitative Report, 4(3&4), Retrieved February 25, 1998, from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/winter.html>

Winch, G. (2010), "*Managing Construction Projects*", 2nd ed. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons

Y –

Yin, R. (1994), "*Case Study Research – Design and Methods*", Applied Social Research Method Series 5, 2nd ed., Newbury Park, CA: Sage

Yong, Y. C. and Mustaffa, N. E. (2011), "*Clients, consultants and contractors' perception of critical success factors for construction projects in Malaysia*"

Yorke, D. A. (1990), "*Interactive Perceptions of Suppliers and Corporate Clients in the Marketing of Professional Services*": A Comparison of Accounting and Legal Services in the UK, Canada and Sweden', *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 5(3), pp.307-323

Z –

Zollo, M. and Winter, S. (2002), "Deliberate learning and the evolution of dynamic capabilities", *Organization Science* Vol. 13, 13p

CHAPTER 8

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

CLIENT INFORMATION SHEET

RESEARCH PROJECT: HOMEBUILDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS ON HOUSE PROJECTS

We would like to invite you to participate in a research project, which is part of a Master of Science (MSc) in Construction Management at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Kumasi. The principal researcher is Samuel Yaw Frimpong, Masters Candidate. The study is being supervised by Ayirebi Dansoh (Principal Supervisor) and Peter Amoah (Co-Supervisor), Department of Building Technology, KNUST.

The purpose of the project is to explore the perceptions and experiences of clients in relation to the phenomenon of low utilisation of consultants on private single homebuilding projects. This is an opportunity for homebuilders to tell consultants how they felt about them.

Overall, the study seeks to understand clients' motivations for the utilization or non-utilization of consultancy services on house project from inception to completion and provides the opportunity to address some of the problems inherent in the client-consultant engagement. It provides the opportunity to enhance the public perception of construction consultants as information collected through this study will be used to help form a better understanding of how to achieve better client-consultant relationships within the house environment.

Who can participate in the research?

There are two main phases to the study: the **Unit 1 Client** study and **Unit 2 Client** study. Each phase has different participant requirements as outlined below:

Unit 1: Those clients who are in a position to build a house but have not done so. These will also be clients who have never engaged the services of a consultant.

Clients will be asked to explain their ideas and approaches with regards to house design and construction. They will be asked to describe their perceptions of the need for consultants and their general views on the work done by consultants.

Unit 2: Those who have at least utilized the services of a consultant in the design and construction of their house or are currently doing so. They may have had experiences of living in the house.

Clients will be asked to describe their experiences and interactions with the consultant throughout the process. Those who are living in the house will also be asked to describe their lived experiences in the house and identify any transformations that they have made to the house. They will also be asked to describe and identify any changes in their perceptions through their engagement with consultants. They can also identify from their perspectives the difficulties encountered on their engagement with consultants as well as successful strategies or methods used for dealing with these.

Participants should not be construction professionals or be working in an environment directly related with construction.

What choice do research participants have?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Each participant who chooses to participate is provided with this Information Statement and Consent Form which outlines the type of questions they will be asked and what will be required of them. Only those who sign the informed consent form will be included in the project. Whether or not someone decides to participate, the decision will not disadvantage them in any way and will not affect their relationship with the other participants. Participants may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason.

What would participants be asked to do?

Participants who agree to participate will be asked to be involved in an interview, which will run for approximately **60 to 90 minutes**. The interviews will be conducted by the principal researcher, Samuel Yaw Frimpong, at the participant's home or workplace (or wherever most convenient to the participants). A list of the team members has been included at the end of this letter. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed by the research team so that it can be analyzed for recurring themes.

Please find attached a guideline to the interview which outlines the topic areas that will be asked of participants.

How will privacy be protected?

All information participants give as part of the research will be treated in the strictest confidence and all identifiable features of the discussion (names and house projects) will be de-identified in the transcripts. Participants will not be identified by name in the interviews and will be offered the use of a pseudonym. Steps will be taken to honour their privacy and autonomy throughout the research. In addition, a copy of the transcript of the interview will be provided to the participants where they will be given the opportunity to review, edit, or erase the recordings or transcripts. Only the research team listed on this Information Sheet will have access to the data collected. All information will be transcribed from recordings and will be stored in password protected computer files. The information will be stored and discharged according to the KNUST's procedures.

How will the information collected be used?

The data will be reported in a Master's thesis and will be housed at the KNUST. Data may also be used in the production of papers in academic and professional journals. Individual participants will not be identified in any papers arising from the project and all efforts will be made to ensure confidentiality.

What would participants need to do to participate?

If participants wish to participate they will be asked to read this Information Sheet and be sure that they understand its contents before they consent to participate. They will be provided with the opportunity to contact the research team (Samuel Yaw Frimpong or Ayirebi Dansoh) to ask further questions. If they agree to participate, they will then inform the Principal Researcher (Samuel Yaw Frimpong) through email or telephone. Signed consent forms will be taken by the

principal researcher before the interview is conducted. The principal researcher will contact them to arrange a time and place convenient for the interview.

Further information

If you would like to obtain further information please contact Mr. Samuel Frimpong on (020) 985 8726 or at muncaster88@yahoo.com. Thank you for considering this invitation.

Yours sincerely,
Ayirebi Dansoh
Principal Supervisor
Senior Lecturer
Department of Building Technology
Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

Research team members:

Mr. Samuel Yaw Frimpong, KNUST. Tel: (020) 9858726, Email: muncaster88@yahoo.com

This project has been approved by the Department of Building Technology, KNUST Kumasi. Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Head of Department, Department of Building Technology, KNUST, PMB, Kumasi



Appendix 2

LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT

Samuel Yaw Frimpong ICIOB, B.Sc. Building Technology
MSc Construction Management Candidate
Graduate Student, Department of Building Technology
KNUST
Kumasi
December 14, 2012

Dear _____,

I am a construction consultant and a graduate student at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. I have worked with homebuilding clients in the construction industry for the past 5 years. I have a special interest in understanding the perceptions of clients on the need for the services of construction consultants on house projects.

I would like to talk with individuals who are in the position to build a house as well as those who have had the experience of working with consultants. If you would be willing to talk about it, I would like to talk with you. I would appreciate hearing whatever you are comfortable sharing.

This research is important in helping consultants to understand what their services mean to individuals like you. If you would like to take part in this research study, please read the information sheet to make sure you understand the research process.

If you have *any* questions, do not hesitate to call me on 0209858726 or email me on muncaster88@yahoo.com. Or, if you like, please fill out the attached form and return to me when I visit you for the interview.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Samuel Frimpong, ICIOB, BSc.BT
Graduate Student
Department of Building Technology
KNUST

Appendix 3 CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROJECT: HOMEBUILDERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE ENGAGEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION CONSULTANTS ON HOUSE PROJECTS

Researcher: Samuel Yaw Frimpong
Graduate Student
Department of BT
KNUST Kumasi
020 985 8726

Principal Supervisor: Mr. Ayirebi Dansoh
Senior Lecturer
Department of BT
KNUST Kumasi
020 777 7245

The purpose of this research project is to help consultants understand clients' perceptions of the need to engage consultants on house projects. Construction consultants would like to know *more* about what that their services mean to homebuilding clients.

You will be asked to take part in an interview which will last about one and a half hours each. All interviews will be recorded and then typed word for word. This will allow the researcher to review the information later.

There will be no harm to you if you take part in this study. However, there are no direct benefits to you either. Results arising from this study may help construction consultants to understand how individuals view the need for their work. This research may help consultants be better prepared to give what is important to individuals in a way that is meaningful.

You do not have to take part in this study if you do not wish to. You do not have to talk about any subject or answering any questions that you do not want to. You can drop out of the study at any time by contacting the researcher or one of the people at the details provided. If during the study, the researcher becomes aware of information that may be harmful to yourself or others the researcher will discuss this with you.

Your name will not appear anywhere in the study. Only a code number will appear on any forms or data sheets. The recordings of the interviews belong to the researcher. The researcher will erase your name and any materials that may lead to identification. Written copies of the recordings will be made by the researcher himself to make sure your identity is not known.

This information may be used for teaching and research purposes only.

The tapes will be shared with the researcher's supervisors only. These members will keep the information in strictest confidence. The information and findings of this study may be published or presented at conferences. Any material that may identify you will not be used. If you have concerns or questions at any time regarding this study, you call the researcher or his supervisor.

Consent

I _____

have read this information and agree to be in the study called **“homebuilders’ perceptions on the need for engaging the services of construction consultants”**. I have had a chance to ask whatever questions I have in relation to this study and my role in it. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand the possible benefits of joining this study, as well as the risks. I have been reassured that records relating to this study will be kept confidential. I understand that I can drop out of this study at any time. I understand that if I decide not to take part in this study, I will not have to account to anyone. I understand that if any knowledge becomes known that could change my decision to continue in the study, I will be made aware right away. I have received a copy of the Information Sheet and this Consent Form.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Please complete the next section if you wish to receive a summary of the study when it is completed:

Name: _____

Mailing address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____

Appendix 4

GUIDELINES FOR TOPICAL GUIDED INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEW – UNIT ONE

Part 1: Knowledge of Consultancy Services

If you are ready to build your house, can you tell me which consultant(s) you think you will need to help you?

Part 2: Knowledge on Roles of Consultants

Do you think consultants are really needed on house projects? Why?

Part 3: Personal Views

Please share with me your views on consultants in Ghana.

Part 4: Effects on client's attitude

If you are ready to build, and you have your own way, will you engage the services of a consultant? Why?

INTERVIEW – UNIT TWO

Part 1: Knowledge of Consultancy Services

Did you engage any consultants when you were building your house? If yes, which consultants?

Part 2: Knowledge on Roles of Consultants

Did you think engaging the consultant(s) was really necessary on your house project? Why?

Part 3: Experience

Can you tell me the story of your house from why you decided to work on it to how you went about it? If you worked with a consultant, can you describe your relationship and interaction with them from the beginning of the project till now?

Part 4: Effects on client's attitude

What effect do you think your experience has had on you? If you had another chance to work on a house project, and you had your own way, would you engage a consultant?

Probing/ clarifying questions: for use to extend discussion for any of the questions above

- How would you describe your experience of working with a consultant?
- Did you have any expectations of your engagement? (If so), can you describe them?
- Did you have any thoughts or feelings during the engagement? (If so), can you describe them/tell me about them?
- What did you think of your project experience?
- Did you have any emotional reactions? (If so), what were they?
- What did your engagement mean for/to you, if it held any meaning at all?
- What led/contributed to your decision to engage or not to engage?
- Did you feel prepared for the engagement? (If so or not) what made you feel prepared, or what made you feel like you weren't prepared?
- What sort of education, formal or informal, (however you want to describe it) did you feel you had received before, and after your engagement?
- What kind of effect do you think your engagement has on has you now? (Self-concept or life in any way)

General topical areas for framing and focusing the conversation

Expectations

Hopes/wishes/ideal experience and how personal was the experience?

Preparation for project

Construction Education – formal and informal resources and experience (views)

Emotional experience – including thoughts, feelings, perceptions, affect (pressure, regret, other emotions)

Power

Choice (personally as well as what client will advise others to do)

Communication (friends, family, partner – before, during, after)

Peer group pressure, role in group, status

Decision-making influences

Regulations (Paperwork, contracts, local laws, etc)

Treatment/Human relations

Partnering (Teamwork)

Personal meaning (Feelings, perceptions about that, effect of on self, life, reflections)

Transition

Importance of experience in context of personal life

Time (Decision making, working, etc)

