



**PERCEPTIONS OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISES (SMMEs) REGARDING THE  
SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DoT) IN THE CHRIS  
HANI DISTRICT**

**by**

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## ABSTRACT

Small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) are vital contributors to economic enhancement, job creation, and poverty alleviation, particularly in developing regions. Their integration into public sector supply chain processes often faces significant challenges, undermining their growth potential. This study explores the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain management (SCM) practices of the Department of Transport (DoT) in the Chris Hani District in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. This study employs a qualitative research approach and utilizes a case study approach to explore how SMMEs engage with the Department of Transport's supply chain processes, aiming to uncover underlying challenges and potential areas for enhancement.

Data was gathered using semi structured interviews with 20 representatives from SMMEs operating in different sectors, allowing for a broad range of perspectives. The interview questions focused on the efficiency, transparency, fairness, and support provided by DoT's SCM practices. The data were analysed thematically using NVivo software, revealing key issues such as delays encountered in procurement processes, lack of clear communication, perceived favouritism, and difficulties meeting regulatory requirements. The study also highlighted limited access to financial and technological resources as critical barriers for SMMEs to participate effectively in government supply chain processes.

Guided by the stakeholder theory and the resource-based view, the research contextualizes the findings within the broader public sector accountability and resource optimization framework. Recommendations include improving SCM transparency through digital tools, enhancing communication with SMMEs, implementing capacity-building initiatives, and fostering a more inclusive procurement process. These measures aim to address identified gaps, reduce barriers, and enable the DoT to create a more equitable environment for SMME participation. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on SMME development and public sector supply chain practices while providing actionable insights for policymakers to strengthen SMME engagement and promote economic growth in the Chris Hani District.

**Keywords:** Small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), supply chain, stakeholder

theory, resource based theory, procurement.

## DECLARATION

I **Viwe Xuba**, hereby declare that:

- This dissertation reflects my work.
- I also confirm that work in this dissertation has not been submitted for examination or degree at any other University.
- The information used in this dissertation, published and unpublished, has been acknowledged and referenced.

I thus authorize the title and abstract of my thesis to be distributed to other academic institutions and students, as well as the photocopying and/or reprinting of my work, inter-library lending, and other uses.

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Date: 26 March 2026

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my two beautiful daughters (Zingce and Budlelwane), my wife (Pumza), my mother (Nozukile), and my niece (Lubanzi) who always share vital reasons to achieve and be successful.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|       |                                            |
|-------|--------------------------------------------|
| CRM   | Customer Relationship Management           |
| DOT   | Department of Transport                    |
| ECDOT | Eastern Cape Department of Transport       |
| ERP   | Enterprise Resource Planning               |
| IDC   | Industrial Development Corporation Limited |
| IMF   | International Monetary Fund                |
| MFMA  | Municipal Finance Management Act           |
| PAJA  | Promotion of Administrative Justice Act    |
| PFMA  | Public Finance Management Act              |
| SCM   | Supply Chain Management                    |
| SEDA  | Small Enterprise Development Agency        |
| SEFA  | Small Enterprise Finance Agency            |
| SME   | Small and medium enterprise                |
| SMME  | Small, micro, and medium enterprise        |
| SMMEs | Small, medium, and micro-enterprises       |

# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Supply chain management (SCM) is the process and practice of overseeing the sourcing and managing operations, handling logistics, and utilizing marketing channels to transform raw materials into finished goods and their distribution to their final consumers (Kot, Haque, & Baloch, 2020). The resulting products should fulfil or exceed the expectations of the users and organizations. For this purpose, Ilyas, Hu, and Wiwattanakornwong (2020) argue that SCM practices consist of a series of activities carried out within an organization to facilitate the efficient management of its supply chain.

Public entities known as government departments are tasked with rendering various services to citizens. The National Treasury (2015) identifies SCM as an important instrument in the implementation of government policy.

The South African Constitution (1996) promotes the principles of fairness, transparency, equity, competitiveness, and effectiveness in the procurement of public goods and services. These principles are the building blocks of South Africa's procurement and supply chain management in the public sector. The public supply chain management system is thus a mechanism through which disadvantaged categories of people should be protected from unfair and discriminatory practices (Sánchez-Flores, Ojeda-Benitez and Ramírez-Barreto, 2020; Sibanda, Zindi and Maramura, 2020).

South Africa operates through three levels of government: national, provincial, and local (Ngobeni & Muchopa, 2022). Local government, described as "the sphere of government closest to the people" (Kreuser and Slade, 2021), is primarily responsible for delivering services directly to citizens. To support this role, public procurement and supply chain management are governed by the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) No. 1 of 1999 at the national and provincial

levels, and by the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) No. 56 of 2003 at the local level. Enhancing supply chain practices within local government remains essential.

Consequently, Fourie and Malan (2020) found that skills development and a clear and well-structured policy environment are critical factors that have been persistently missing in South Africa's public supply chain management practices at the local government level. Resultantly, this gap has led to public supply chains being vulnerable to corruption, fraud, and tax evasion, among others (van Niekerk and Ponelis, 2024).

The above-mentioned social ills all occur within the context of South Africa, a country grappling with a high unemployment rate exacerbated by a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities. In the first quarter of 2024, the rate of unemployment was approximately 33 percent (Statistics South Africa, 2024). This situation has led to entrepreneurship being used as a gateway out of unemployment, further coupled with limited alternative livelihood opportunities (Liñán, Paul and Fayolle, 2019). One of the entryways to this entrepreneurship is through small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs). SMMEs are recognized as important catalysts for inclusive economic growth and progress in South Africa and globally. Studies suggest that in South Africa, SMMEs comprise 91% of formalized businesses, offering jobs to approximately 60% of the workforce and contributing around 34% to GDP (Ouma-Mugabe, Chan and Marais, 2021).

Despite, their impact on the economy, SMMEs also promote diversification by cultivating new and untapped sectors within it. SMMEs are not immune to challenges. SMMEs encounter a range of obstacles including criminal activity and corruption, unsuitable technology, limited manufacturing capabilities due to limited access to electricity, insufficient management expertise, and a skilled workforce (Fatoki, 2019).

Other challenges include financial challenges and securing credit, entry to markets and forging customer relationships, acknowledgement by major corporations and government red tape, awareness and assistance for their contribution to economic growth, and compliance with regulations (Botha, Smulders, Combrink and Meiring, 2021; Botha, Smulders, Hermanus and Meiring, 2020).

The Ministry of Transport holds a crucial role in enabling the movement of people and goods,

making it a significant component of any economy. SMMEs contribute meaningfully to economic growth and development, and they play an essential role in supplying goods and services to the Ministry of Transport. However, SMMEs often face challenges in their supply chains that can affect their performance and ability to contribute to ministry operations. SCM is a key aspect of business operations that involves coordinating activities related to producing and delivering goods and services. Effective SCMs help the DoT SMMEs overcome supply chain challenges, improve performance, and contribute more effectively to DoT operations. Against this background, the proposed study investigates the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain processes of the DoT in the Chris Hani District.

## **1.2 DEFINITION AND TERMINOLOGY**

### **1.2.1 SMME DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS**

Organizations with fewer than 250 employees are classified as small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). A small enterprise is defined as one with fewer than 50 employees within the broader category of SMEs, which are often managed by owner-operators (Berisha and Pula, 2015). For amnesty purposes, a business with a turnover of up to R10 million is considered a small business. However, for income tax purposes, specifically under Section 12E, a small business corporation (SBC) is defined as a business with a turnover of less than R14 million, along with other qualifying criteria (The Forum South Africa, 2012). The South African Revenue Service (SARS) employs various definitions depending on the context. For capital gains tax purposes, an SME is defined as a corporation with total net assets under R5 million. The Forum South Africa (2012) recommends that SARS adopt a consistent definition for small businesses, aligning it with the SBC regime's criteria of a business with a turnover slightly exceeding R14 million. The participants in this study meet the specified criteria.

The concepts of SMEs and their role in economic development gained prominence in the late 1940s, supported by policies such as subsidized credits and special tax treatments. Chimucheka (2013) notes that SMEs have been recognized as crucial drivers of growth in emerging economies, contributing significantly to competitive markets and poverty alleviation. Vermeulen

(2011), in agreement with the World Bank, emphasized the importance of the SME sector in these contexts.

In addition to employee numbers and net assets, SMEs exhibit other key characteristics, including management styles and business activities. SMEs are typically managed by their owners, often with the assistance of family members (Okello-Obura and Matovu, 2009). Decision-making within these enterprises is often informal, unstructured, and heavily reliant on the personal initiative of a few key individuals. SMEs generally have a simple management structure, a limited range of products or services, and a low tolerance for risk due to the nature of their businesses. They often struggle to capitalize on market opportunities requiring large-scale production, consistent supply, and uniform standards, and they frequently face challenges in achieving economies of scale when sourcing inputs. Moreover, SMEs are particularly vulnerable in situations where decisions are made hastily and without adequate consideration of relevant business data (Okello-Obura and Matovu, 2009; Gronum and Verreynne, 2012).

### **1.2.2 BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (B-BBEE)**

The B-BBEE Act (No. 53 of 2003) was introduced to address historical economic imbalances by encouraging the inclusion of Black South Africans in the mainstream economy. It is highly relevant to SMMEs, particularly those operating in supply chains, for the following reasons:

**Empowerment through Procurement:** Public and private sector entities are incentivized to source goods and services from B-BBEE-compliant suppliers. SMEs with higher B-BBEE ratings gain preferential access to procurement opportunities, allowing them to participate in supply chains dominated by larger businesses.

**Enterprise Development:** Larger organizations are required to support SMEs through enterprise development initiatives as part of their B-BBEE scorecards. This support may include funding, skills development, or access to business opportunities within supply chains Nangara, O.T., (2021).

### **1.2.3 PREFERENTIAL PROCUREMENT POLICY FRAMEWORK ACT (PPPFA)**

The Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA), Act No. 5 of 2000, provides

the foundation for implementing procurement policies that support historically disadvantaged individuals and groups. It introduces a preference point system aimed at increasing the participation of designated groups, including Black people, women, and persons with disabilities. The Act has been amended to ensure alignment with constitutional principles of fairness, equity, transparency, and cost-effectiveness, with a strong focus on promoting inclusivity. It mandates that government entities adopt preferential procurement policies that contribute to broader goals of economic transformation Vinti, C., (2021)

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Numerous studies highlight the benefits of SMMEs. These benefits include employment creation, technological and business innovation, the expansion and diversification of opportunities for economic growth, the use and expansion of local resources, fostering entrepreneurship, and government tax contributions (Maduku and Kaseeram, 2021; Lukhele and Soumonni, 2021; Bolosha, Sinyolo and Ramoroka, 2022). In light of their significant role played by SMMEs in local communities, SMMEs face a myriad of challenges in conducting business with local government departments. Flaws in local government procurement processes are largely blamed for these challenges. Moreover, there is a dearth of understanding regarding SMME perceptions of the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of supply chain practices that impede or aid SMME growth. This study thus aims to examine the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain processes of a local government department in a South African municipality. This study used the Chris Hani District as a case study to promote inclusive and supportive supply chain practices that take into account the voices of SMMEs.

### **1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **1.4.1 AIM OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to explore the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain processes of the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District, with a focus on identifying perceived

challenges, evaluating the effectiveness of these processes, and proposing actionable

recommendations to improve support for SMMEs.

#### **1.4.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

**The objectives of the study are as follows:**

- To examine perceptions of SMMEs on the effectiveness of the Department of Transport's supply chain processes.
- To identify the challenges facing SMMEs regarding supply chain management practices of the DoT in the Chris Hani District.
- To recommend mechanisms through which the Chris Hani District DoT can improve its supply chain practices with SMMEs.

#### **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- What are the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the effectiveness of the Department of Transport's supply chain processes?
- What are the challenges facing SMMEs regarding supply chain management practices at the DoT in the Chris Hani District?
- What are the mechanisms through which the Chris Hani District DoT can improve its supply chain practices with SMMEs?

#### **1.6 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

The value and significance of this study are three-dimensional. The value and significance of this study are multifaceted, encompassing supply chain and procurement practices, policy implications, and contributions to scholarly research. From a practical point of view, the study has the potential to improve procurement and supply chain practices in the Chris Hani District Municipality, by unravelling the challenges faced by SMMEs when working with the Chris Hani District Municipality, thus positioning the Chris Hani District DoT to improve its practices. From a policy viewpoint, the study's findings can provide much needed insights for policy

makers to improve procurement policies at the local government level. From a scholarly perspective, the study contributes to the body of knowledge on supply chain practices and SMME development in the local sphere of government in South Africa.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY CHAPTERS**

This study includes the following five chapters:

**Chapter 1** introduced the research topic, background and study context. It discussed the purpose and goals, the research issue, and the research questions.

**Chapter 2** evaluates the pertinent literature that is consistent with the study's objectives. The conceptual framework and theoretical underpinnings of the investigation are also explained in this chapter.

**Chapter 3** discusses research methods and research strategy employed in this study. This chapter also covers the research tool, the sampling strategy, ethical issues, validity, and data analysis.

**Chapter 4** in accordance with the goals and study questions, provides the data's findings and interpretation.

**Chapter 5** presents the conclusions, proposals and recommendations for further research.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

This chapter offered a summary of the research, detailing the context that shaped the research problem, aim, objectives, and rationale for the study. It also included a concise discussion of the proposed research design and methodologies. Additionally, an outline of the dissertation chapters, along with brief explanations, was provided. The upcoming chapter will review existing literature on the relationship between online interactive media and its impact on consumer buying behavior, as observed in previous studies.

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

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### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review explores essential concepts, theoretical frameworks, and prior research related to the Department of Transport's (DoT) SCM practices and their impact on small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) within the Chris Hani District Municipality. The aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of how SCM operates in the public sector, especially at the local government level and how it affects SMMEs.

SCM is crucial for the effective operation of government departments, as it involves the organized coordination of sourcing, operations, logistics, and marketing to ensure the delivery of public goods and services. However, despite its importance, SCM in the public sector, especially at the local level, faces several challenges, such as capacity limitations, policy inconsistencies, and corruption. These issues often prevent SMMEs from fully participating in government procurement processes, thereby affecting their growth and sustainability Zindi, B. and Sibanda, M.M., (2022).

This chapter will start by exploring the theoretical foundations of SCM, with a focus on stakeholder theory, which highlights the significance of relationships and collaboration among various supply chain participants. It will then examine the role of SCM in improving the performance and competitiveness of SMMEs, drawing from studies that underscore both the opportunities and obstacles these enterprises encounter. Additionally, the chapter will investigate the specific challenges SMMEs face in engaging with local government procurement practices, particularly in the Chris Hani District.

The review will also pinpoint gaps in the existing literature, particularly regarding the distinct challenges faced by different types of SMMEs, the impact of SCM on their financial performance, and the role of innovation and sustainability in their development. By synthesizing the available research, this chapter aims to build a solid foundation for the study, offering the necessary context for understanding SMMEs' perceptions of the SCM practices

of the DoT in the Chris Hani District. Ultimately, the findings will guide recommendations for enhancing these practices to better support the growth and development of SMMEs in the region.

## **2.2 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SCM PRACTICES IN DIFFERENT REGIONS**

Recent studies have extensively compared SCM practices across different regions and sectors, particularly focusing on SMEs. These comparisons highlight the significant influence of geographical location, industrial development, and sector-specific challenges on the adoption and effectiveness of SCM practices.

Geographical location and the level of industrial development play a crucial role in determining how easily SMMEs can implement sustainable SCM practices. Developed regions, with their advanced infrastructure and access to technology, find it easier to adopt sustainable practices. For instance, Mathivathanan and Haq (2017) argue that firms in developed regions have better access to the necessary resources and support systems, enabling them to implement sustainable SCM practices more effectively compared to firms in developing regions. These differences are not just limited to resources but also include the regulatory environment, which often mandates stricter sustainability standards in developed countries.

In India, a comparative study across the automobile, electronics, and textile sectors revealed significant variations in the adoption of sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) practices. The study found that the automobile and electronics sectors are more advanced in their adoption of SSCM practices, owing to the global nature of these industries, which demands adherence to international standards (Mathivathanan, Govindan, and Haq, 2019). In contrast, the textile sector lags behind, primarily due to its fragmented nature and lower levels of technological advancement. This lag in the textile sector is concerning, given the industry's significant environmental impact and the growing global demand for sustainable textiles.

Further comparisons between SMMEs in different countries also reveal intriguing insights. A study comparing Hungarian and Indonesian SMMEs found that Indonesian firms had higher levels of SCM strategy implementation, which was attributed to their more complex

geographical structure and advanced SCM capabilities (Setyaningsih and Kelle, 2021). The geographical archipelago structure of Indonesia necessitates more sophisticated logistics and supply chain strategies, which may explain the higher adoption rates of advanced SCM practices. In contrast, Hungarian SMMEs, while being part of the European Union, showed lower levels of implementation, possibly due to differences in market demands and regional integration challenges.

In the food and beverage industry, a comparative study of Turkish and Bulgarian SMMEs revealed significant differences in SCM practice efficiency levels. Turkish firms were found to achieve higher efficiency, which was linked to their better-developed SCM infrastructures and a stronger focus on quality management practices (Bayraktar et al., 2010). This difference is particularly noteworthy given that both countries are emerging economies with similar market challenges. However, Turkey's strategic location as a bridge between Europe and Asia might provide additional competitive advantages in terms of supply chain management and logistics capabilities.

### **2.3 CHALLENGES FACED BY SMMEs**

Despite the supportive legislative frameworks, SMMEs encounter several challenges that hinder their access to public procurement opportunities. The complexity and bureaucracy of procurement processes make it difficult for SMMEs to navigate the system, often leading to delays and inefficiencies (SALGA, 2020). Many SMMEs lack the necessary resources and expertise to comply with procurement regulations, limiting their ability to compete effectively for public contracts (Mphela and Shunda, 2018). The prevalence of corruption and unfair practices such as fronting further undermines the integrity of the procurement process, making it challenging for legitimate SMMEs to secure contracts (SALGA, 2020). Moreover, limited awareness of available opportunities and insufficient training on procurement processes restrict the engagement of SMMEs (IMF, 2023).

However, the study also identified that the lack of awareness among SMMEs regarding government support programs has been a significant barrier to the effectiveness of these initiatives. Respondents indicated that they often relied on external consultants and specialists, whom they believed provided

greater value to their businesses than government programs. This finding underscores the need for improved outreach and more accessible support structures to ensure that SMMEs can fully benefit from government assistance (Peters and Naicker, 2013).

SMEs encounter several barriers to effective SCM implementation. These include a lack of economies of scale, inadequate organizational structures, and technological challenges (Dubihlela and Omoruyi, 2014). Despite the potential benefits, many SMEs struggle with the complexity of digital supply chain systems, which can lead to operational inefficiencies and potential losses if not properly addressed (Sarath Menon and Shah, 2020). The adoption of World Wide Web technologies within SCM is identified to improve efficiency and market access, enabling SMEs to better compete in the global market (Coleman and Edwards, 2005).

Another critical challenges facing SMMEs in government procurement is the late payment for services rendered. Despite regulations that require government departments to pay suppliers within 30 days, delays are common across South Africa. For SMMEs in the Chris Hani District, delayed payments can be devastating, as these businesses typically operate on thin margins with limited cash reserves. Late payments force many SMMEs to seek expensive credit facilities to sustain operations, thereby increasing their financial vulnerability. In extreme cases, businesses are unable to continue operating while awaiting payment, leading to closures and job losses. The cycle of late payment not only undermines trust in the DoT but also stifles local economic development (Bailey, 2019).

Although South Africa has robust legislative frameworks such as the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA) and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act, their implementation remains inconsistent. In practice, SMMEs often find that the intended benefits of these policies are diluted due to weak enforcement and administrative inefficiencies. For example, while preferential points are meant to favor smaller and previously disadvantaged businesses, contracts still frequently go to larger firms that are better resourced and more experienced in tendering processes. This discrepancy between policy intent and practice creates frustration among SMMEs, reinforcing the perception that government support mechanisms are more symbolic than substantive Musabayana, G. & Mutambara, E. (2022).

The growing use of digital procurement systems, such as e tendering, offers both benefits and drawbacks for SMMEs. On one hand, these platforms can enhance transparency and streamline procurement processes. However, in the Chris Hani District, many small businesses struggle to take full advantage of these systems due to technological and skills related barriers. Poor internet connectivity in rural areas limits access, while low levels of digital literacy make it difficult for business owners to navigate complex e procurement portals. These challenges often result in inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and even financial losses for SMMEs. Without targeted training and capacity building programmes, the shift towards digital procurement risks sidelining the very enterprises that government initiatives are meant to support (Hamma-Adama and Ahmad, 2021).

One of the major challenges highlighted by SMMEs is the limited access to timely and reliable information on procurement opportunities. In many rural areas, tender notices are either not easily accessible or are shared through channels that small businesses cannot conveniently use. This creates an uneven playing field where better connected firms are consistently aware of opportunities, while many smaller enterprises remain excluded. In the Chris Hani District, weak communication strategies and inadequate engagement by the DoT worsen this situation, leaving many SMMEs unaware of tenders that could support their growth. As a result, some businesses turn to consultants often at a high cost to track opportunities and prepare submissions on their behalf, which further strains their already limited resources Afolayan and de la Harpe, (2015).

A common challenge faced by SMMEs is the highly bureaucratic nature of public procurement systems. These systems often involve extensive paperwork, complicated compliance rules, and long adjudication processes. For small businesses in the Chris Hani District, such hurdles frequently result in exclusion from tender opportunities or disqualification due to minor administrative mistakes. Public procurement procedures often assume that all bidders have sufficient administrative capacity and resources, an assumption that rarely holds true for SMMEs. Studies indicate that these bureaucratic obstacles generate inefficiencies and discourage smaller enterprises from actively participating in government tenders (Boatemaa-Yeboah and Tamakloe, 2019; Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012). Delays in awarding contracts and finalising decisions create uncertainty, making it difficult for SMMEs to plan ahead or manage their limited resources effectively.

Corruption and favoritism remain significant obstacles for SMMEs attempting to participate in public procurement. Politically connected firms often gain preferential treatment, while smaller or less influential businesses are routinely excluded, regardless of their qualifications or capabilities. In the Chris Hani District, many SMMEs perceive that tenders are awarded to larger companies that use smaller firms as “fronts” to secure contracts. Such practices undermine fairness and transparency, eroding trust in the Department of Transport’s supply chain processes. For genuine SMMEs, this perceived inequity diminishes their motivation to engage in future tenders, as they feel the system is stacked against them (Alonge, 2023).

## **2.4 LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS AFFECTING SCM AND SMMES**

In South Africa, the legislative and regulatory frameworks governing SCM significantly influence the operations of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) within the public procurement landscape. These frameworks determine how SMMEs access public procurement opportunities and the extent to which legislation facilitates or hinders their participation (Fugate, Sahin and Tannock, 2019; Mphela and Shunda, 2018).

### **2.4.1 KEY LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS**

#### **Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)**

The Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), Act No. 1 of 1999, is a key piece of legislation guiding public financial management in South Africa. It aims to modernize financial governance across the public sector by encouraging transparency, accountability, and effective financial practices. The PFMA provides the framework for how government departments, public entities, and municipalities handle financial resources, including procurement processes, which have a direct impact on SMMEs.

#### **Key Features of the PFM**

##### **➤ Accountability and Transparency**

PFMA obligates public entities to ensure that financial management practices align with the principles of accountability and transparency. Accounting officers must establish financial management systems, including procurement processes that are aligned with national standards, as mandated by Section 38 of the PFMA. This procedure ensures that procurement practices are auditable and in compliance with the principles of good governance.

The literature highlights that SMMEs often view public sector supply chain systems as difficult to access and insufficiently responsive to their needs. Studies note widespread concerns about bureaucratic complexity, poor communication from departments, and delayed payments, which together create a perception of inefficiency and unfairness Lipsky, M., (2010). While government policies such as Preferential Procurement are designed to promote inclusivity, the experience of many SMMEs is that implementation falls short of these intentions. This aligns with reports of small businesses struggling to compete effectively for tenders due to red tape and slow administrative procedures Kemboi, I.K. and Thogori, M., (2025). Research consistently points to three broad categories of challenges. First, financial constraints remain one of the greatest barriers. Late payments from government contracts have been identified as a serious threat to SMME survival, disrupting cash flow and preventing growth. Literature on reform identifies several mechanisms to improve SMME participation in public procurement. These include simplifying tender requirements, segmenting contracts to create opportunities for smaller suppliers, strengthening supplier development initiatives, and introducing stricter measures to ensure timely payments Binsted, A. and Paulley, N., (2009).

### ➤ **Fair, Equitable, and Competitive Procurement**

PFMA requires that procurement processes promote fairness, equity, competitiveness, and cost effectiveness, Caswell, G.S., (2021). This emphasis on inclusivity aims to create opportunities for historically disadvantaged individuals, particularly through enabling SMMEs to participate in government procurement. It establishes mechanisms to avoid corruption, inefficiency, and discriminatory practices, which are often barriers to SMME participation in public procurement.

Although the principles of fairness, equity, transparency, and competitiveness are entrenched

in South Africa's procurement legislation, particularly in the Constitution and the PFMA, the practical experiences of SMMEs suggest a persistent gap between policy intent and implementation. In theory, these principles are designed to create an inclusive procurement environment where small businesses can compete effectively for government contracts. However, in practice, SMMEs often report that procurement processes are dominated by larger, more established firms, leaving them at a disadvantage despite the existence of preferential procurement policies Khumalo, P., (2023).

debates highlight that while government frameworks explicitly promote fairness and competitiveness, many studies question whether these ideals are realised on the ground. Journals note widespread issues such as lack of transparency in bid adjudication, perceptions of corruption, and administrative complexity that disproportionately affect small enterprises' payments Binsted, A. and Paulley, N., (2009). Delayed payments and bureaucratic inefficiencies undermine the principle of equity by placing financial strain on SMMEs, who often lack the working capital to absorb such delays. Critics argue that procurement, instead of being a developmental tool, has in some cases entrenched exclusion and reinforced structural inequalities. This suggests that while fair and equitable procurement is mandated by law, its practical implementation remains contested, with significant implications for the sustainability and competitiveness of SMMEs.

#### ➤ **Compliance with Supply Chain Management Policies**

The PFMA serves as the guiding framework for SCM practices in government departments. It is aligned with other legislative instruments such as the **Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA)** (Act No. 5 of 2000) and **Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)** legislation to foster the participation of SMMEs in public procurement.

#### ➤ **National Treasury**

The National Treasury plays a pivotal role in overseeing financial and procurement policies

across all spheres of government in South Africa. It ensures the alignment of SCM processes with constitutional principles of fairness, equity, transparency, competitiveness, and cost effectiveness.

#### ➤ **Key Functions of National Treasury:**

**Policy Oversight:** The National Treasury develops and monitors financial management and procurement policies to enhance efficiency, accountability, and transparency in public resource allocation Mutembei, J.K., (2019).

**Economic Transformation:** Through its policies, the National Treasury promotes inclusivity and economic transformation, ensuring that procurement opportunities are accessible to SMMEs, particularly those owned by historically disadvantaged groups Makgoe, P., (2008).

**Capacity Building:** Treasury provides training and capacity-building programs aimed at equipping SMMEs with the knowledge and skills required to compete effectively in public procurement processes Mutembei, J.K., (2019).

**Compliance Monitoring:** Treasury ensures that government entities adhere to procurement regulations and take corrective actions when non-compliance is identified Makgoe, P., (2008).

#### ➤ **Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA)**

The PPPFA (Act No. 5 of 2000) serves as a foundational piece of legislation aimed at enhancing the participation of SMMEs in public procurement processes in South Africa. This Act is designed to provide preferential treatment in the awarding of contracts, thereby addressing historical imbalances and facilitating the involvement of previously disadvantaged individuals and businesses Khumalo, P., (2023).

The extent to which SMMEs benefit from the PPPFA remains contested. On the one hand, the scoring system where points are allocated based on price and on factors such as black ownership, local content, and SMME status has opened doors for many small enterprises to access public sector opportunities. On the other hand, several studies suggest that the practical impact of the PPPFA has been uneven. Many SMMEs still face challenges such as limited access to finance, inadequate capacity to meet tender requirements, and administrative burdens that disadvantage them despite the preferential framework. Moreover, in some cases, larger firms structure their bids in ways that still edge out smaller competitors, limiting the Act's intended impact.

#### **2.4.2 KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PPPFA**

- **Framework for Preferential Procurement:** The PPPFA establishes a framework that mandates government entities to develop and implement preferential procurement policies. These policies must align with the principles outlined in section 217 of the South African Constitution, which emphasizes fairness, equity, transparency, competitiveness, and cost effectiveness in procurement processes Mutembei, J.K., (2019).
- **Preference Point System:** The Act introduces a preference point system that allows for the allocation of points based on specific goals, such as promoting SMME participation. This system is crucial in ensuring that tenders from historically disadvantaged groups are given due consideration during the procurement process Mutembei, J.K., (2019).
- **Promotion of Inclusivity:** By prioritizing contracts awarded to SMMEs and previously disadvantaged individuals, the PPPFA aims to create an inclusive economic environment. This goal is achieved through mechanisms designed to prevent corruption and discrimination, which have historically hindered SMME participation in public procurement Khumalo, P., (2023).
- **Integration with Other Legislation:** The PPPFA works in conjunction with other legislative frameworks such as the B-BBEE Act to further enhance opportunities for SMMEs within the public sector. This integrated approach ensures that procurement policies are not only compliant with legal standards but also promote broader economic transformation goals. The integration of PPPFA with B-BBEE has been criticized as somewhat superficial. While government departments do consider empowerment credentials, these factors are sometimes treated as a tick box exercise rather than as substantive measures to level the playing field. For many SMMEs, especially those

in rural or underdeveloped districts, access to tenders continues to be constrained Hewitt, N.M., (2010).

### **Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA)**

The promotion of the Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) (Act No. 3 of 2000) is a crucial piece of legislation in South Africa that aims to ensure that administrative actions taken by government entities are lawful, reasonable, and procedurally fair. This Act is rooted in the constitutional right to just administrative action, as outlined in Section 33 of the South African Constitution.

#### **2.4.3 KEY OBJECTIVES OF PAJA**

- **Lawful and Reasonable Actions:** PAJA mandates that all administrative actions must be based on legal authority and must be reasonable in nature. This ensures that decisions made by government officials are not arbitrary and are supported by sound reasoning.
- **Procedural Fairness:** The Act requires that individuals affected by administrative actions must be given a fair opportunity to present their case before a decision is made. This includes providing adequate notice of the proposed action and allowing affected parties to make representations.
- **Right to Written Reasons:** Individuals whose rights have been adversely affected by administrative decisions have the right to receive written reasons for those decisions. This transparency is essential for accountability and allows individuals to understand the basis for decisions impacting them.
- **Judicial Review:** PAJA provides mechanisms for individuals to challenge administrative decisions in court if they believe those decisions are unfair or unjust. This serves as a critical check on the powers of public officials.
- **Promotion of Accountability:** By enforcing standards of fairness and reasonableness, PAJA promotes accountability within government entities, ensuring that they act by the law and respect the rights of citizens (Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, 2000).

SMMEs have at times successfully invoked the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA) to challenge unfair procurement processes, though outcomes have varied. For instance, in *Maximum Profit Recovery (Pty) Ltd v Sakhisizwe Local Municipality*, the court held that “any decision affecting the rights of a tenderer must be supported by reasons that are not vague, but

clear and rational,” setting aside the award after the municipality failed to provide adequate justification Malope, C.R.M., (2024).

#### **2.4.4 BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (B-BBEE) ACT**

The B-BBEE Act (Act No. 53 of 2003) is a pivotal piece of legislation in South Africa that aims to rectify historical economic inequalities by promoting the economic empowerment of Black South Africans. The Act encourages both public and private sectors to support SMMEs through various initiatives, including preferential procurement practices and enterprise development (Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003).

##### **Key Objectives of the B-BBEE Act**

- **Economic Transformation:** The B-BBEE Act facilitates economic transformation by promoting the inclusion of Black individuals in the economy. This involves increasing their participation in ownership and management structures within enterprises (DTI, 2021).
- **Support for SMMEs:** The Act emphasizes the critical role of SMMEs in economic growth, encouraging larger businesses to engage with and support smaller enterprises through procurement opportunities. This fosters a more inclusive and equitable economic environment.
- **Codes of Good Practice:** The B-BBEE Act empowers the Minister of Trade, Industry, and Competition to issue Codes of Good Practice, which provide guidelines for implementing B-BBEE initiatives. These codes set specific targets for ownership, management representation, skills development, and preferential procurement from Black-owned businesses (DTI, 2021).
- **Addressing Fronting Practices:** The Act includes provisions to combat "fronting" practices, where businesses misrepresent ownership or control structures to benefit from B-BBEE advantages without genuinely empowering Black individuals. These measures enhance the integrity and effectiveness of the Act (DTI, 2021).

The Act is designed to drive economic transformation by ensuring equitable participation of Black-owned enterprises, particularly SMMEs, in procurement opportunities. In principle, preferential procurement under the B-BBEE framework should support SMMEs by enabling their integration into supply chains, thereby fostering a more inclusive economic environment (DTI, 2021). However, SMMEs often perceive that state institutions are inconsistent in

complying with the Act. While some departments actively use B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice to prioritize Black-owned and small businesses, others are accused of treating compliance as a tick box exercise, with tenders still being dominated by larger, well-established firms. Furthermore, fronting practices undermine the Act's objectives, as businesses misrepresent ownership structures to qualify for B-BBEE points without genuinely empowering SMMEs. These realities suggest that while the legislative framework is sound, the effectiveness of B-BBEE in uplifting SMMEs depends largely on the commitment of state institutions to implement its provisions consistently and transparently.

## **2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A theory is a tentative set of statements proposed with the intention of explaining how a particular phenomenon works (Varpio and Paradis, 2020). A theoretical framework is thus a theory or a set of theories that seek to explain how an issue being investigated plays itself out in real life (Kivunja, 2018). The theoretical framework thus becomes the theoretical basis on which a research study is constructed. This study hinges on the stakeholder theory of SCM. Qazi, Appolloni, and Shaikh (2022) spell out the importance of starting and sustaining positive long-term interactions between various role players in the procurement process. This process involves stakeholders involved in the process of selecting service providers, purchasing goods, and evaluating performance (Touboulic and Walker, 2015).

The stakeholder theory elucidates how organizations take into account the concerns of people

or groups impacted by their activities. It delineates various categories of stakeholders, including those directly involved, middlemen advocating for stakeholders' interests, and external authorities imposing regulations on the organization (Freeman et al. 2010). The theory underscores the significance of stakeholder relationships and the generation of value for them (Freeman, Dmytriiev and Phillips, 2021). The stakeholder theory further proposes that managers should consider all parties involved in or impacted by the business (Freeman, Phillips and Sisodia, 2018). Barney and Harrison (2018) posit that it is the responsibility of businesses to understand these connections and generate increased value for the collective benefit of stakeholders.

In this study, stakeholder theory is viewed as a framework that can give rise to various other theories and conceptual frameworks that could be used to explain the intricacies in the relationship between SMMEs and local government departments concerning procurement processes, the challenges therein, and the possible ways to enhance the quality of the relationship therein. Additionally, the rationale for adopting this theory lies in its perspectives on the supply chain. The theory emphasizes the collaboration within a supply chain among stakeholders who share a common interest and aim to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes over time. Lastly, the theory allows SMMEs to be seen as stakeholders in the supply chain processes of the DoT in the Chris Hani District. It thus allows an analysis of the relationship between SMMEs and the DoT in the supply chain process.

According to Stakeholder Theory, organisations are expected to listen to and prioritise the perspectives of all those affected by their decisions (Freeman et al. 2010). In this study, SMMEs are central stakeholders within the DoT's procurement processes, and their perceptions reveal whether they feel recognised and engaged. When SMMEs experience the processes as transparent, fair, and responsive, it indicates that the DoT is effectively creating value for its stakeholders. Conversely, when they encounter delays, poor communication, or perceived unfairness, this points to a breakdown in stakeholder engagement. Such challenges are consistent with findings by Saengsupavanich, Gallardo, Sajor and Murray (2012), who argue that participation is often constrained by barriers that weaken collaboration in collective management efforts.

Stakeholder Theory highlights that challenges often arise when there is an imbalance in power,

representation, or resource distribution among stakeholders Barney & Harrison, (2018). For SMMEs, challenges such as limited access to opportunities, lack of support, bureaucratic hurdles, or perceived corruption can be seen as indicators that their voices are not being adequately considered within the supply chain. These issues reflect a failure by the DoT to fully integrate the concerns of its SMME stakeholders into decision making processes. The theory therefore explains these challenges as relational gaps in stakeholder management, where the DoT prioritizes certain interests at the expense of inclusivity and fairness.

Stakeholder Theory advocates for collaboration, mutual trust, and long term relationship building Touboullic & Walker, (2015). Mechanisms for improvement should therefore focus on strengthening partnerships between the DoT and SMMEs

## **2.6 SUPPLY CHAIN PROCESSES IN GOVERNMENT**

The government's ability to implement policy depends heavily on SCM, which has historically been misinterpreted and underestimated (Epoh and Mafini, 2018). The strategic significance of SCM has gone unnoticed, resulting in insufficient capacity.

To this effect, in 2015, the National Treasury outlined six primary advantages of government supply chain management concerning the advancement of SMMEs. Some of the benefits are as follows: First, effective SCM practices in government can lead to an enhancement in the quality of service delivery, resulting in notable improvements in the well-being of South Africa's citizens, particularly those who heavily depend on government support (National Treasury, 2015).

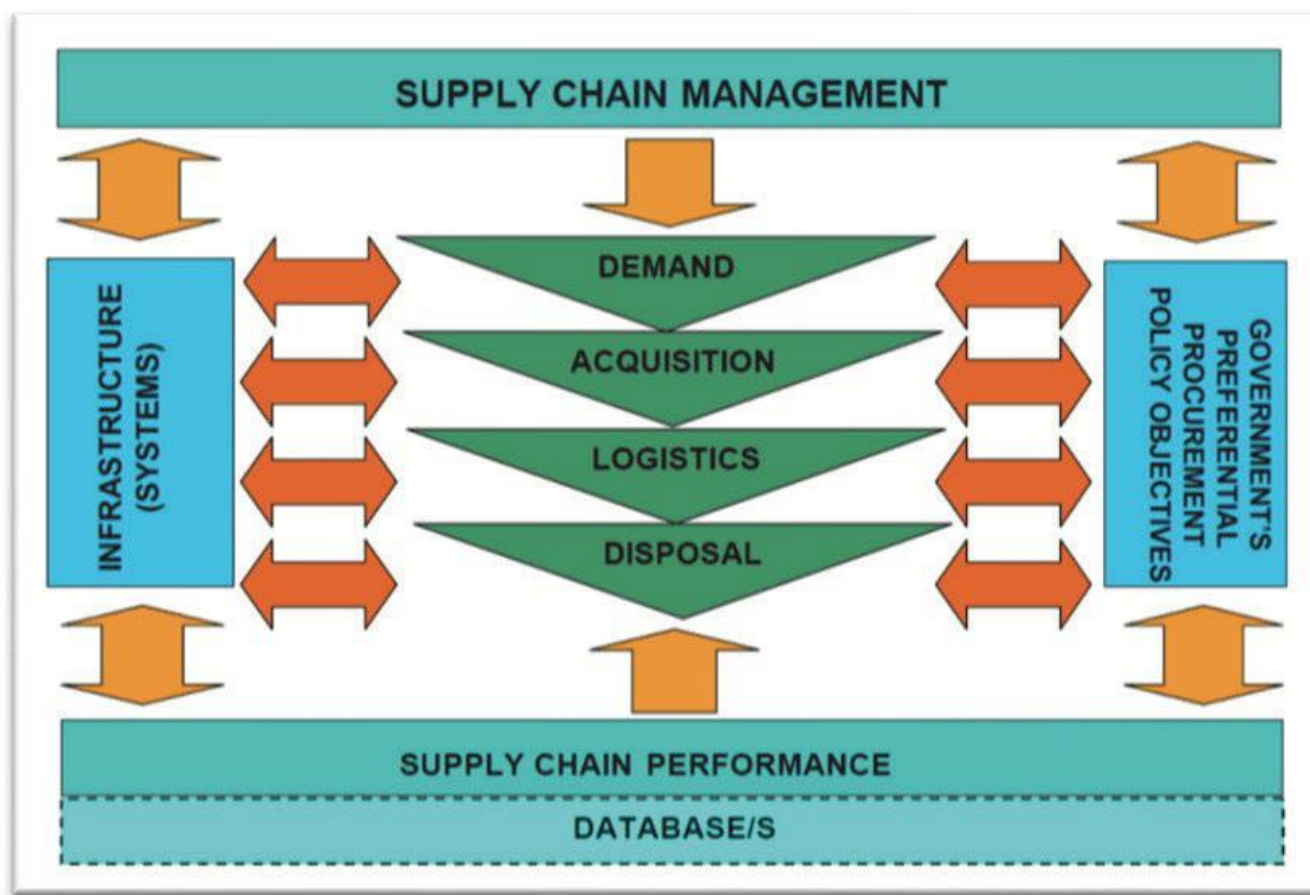
Secondly, SCM practices are believed to be connected to economic development, as the economy will expand with the expansion and efficient maintenance of economic infrastructure (National Treasury, 2015). The third advantage is that goods, services, and infrastructure will be procured at reduced expenses. The fourth benefit pertains to innovation, which will lead to the adoption of novel approaches to the products used in various industries (Atnafu, Balda and Liu, 2018). The fifth benefit is associated with utilizing and incorporating digital technology in supply chain management. Suppliers should experience a significant decrease in the cost of doing business with the government (Okoumba, Mafini and Bhadury, 2020).

### **2.6.1 SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT (SCM)**

Manuela (2019) highlights the critical role of SCM in both private and public sectors, emphasizing its importance in ensuring effective procurement management and fostering a competitive advantage for organizations. This underscores the ability of SCM to facilitate smooth operations and support the achievement of organizational objectives. Similarly, Sibanda, Zindi, and Maramura (2020) point out that SCM is a key component of public administration, as it ensures that goods, services, and infrastructure are procured and delivered in alignment with the needs of the communities it serves.

Section 217 of South Africa's 1996 Constitution mandates that the procurement of goods within institutions must adhere to principles of fairness, equity, transparency, competitiveness, and cost-effectiveness. Ingason and Jonasson (2019) further asserts that the foundational elements of SCM in government entities serve as a basis for the development of procurement policies within the public sector in South Africa.

Figure 2.1 provides the schematic summary of these generic elements as mainly being: demand management, acquisition management, logistics management and disposal management.



*Figure 2. 1 The generic elements of SCM Drivers classification (Adapted from National Treasury, 2015)*

## 2.6.2 SCM ELEMENTS

### Demand Management

South Africa's National Treasury (2015) defines demand management as the process of assessing needs that form the foundation of procurement activities within SCM. This needs assessment is a critical step that must precede the implementation of other SCM components, requiring thorough planning and proper documentation to ensure a strong basis for seamless execution Ingason and Jonasson (2019). Similarly, Liu, Agatz, and Fleischmann (2023) highlight that the primary goal of demand management is to guarantee that goods and services are consistently delivered in accordance with the identified needs and specifications.

Demand management is considered the cornerstone of procurement, as all subsequent processes for acquiring goods and services rely on it National Treasury (2015). Ingason and Jonasson (2019) explain that the Department of Transport (DoT) Supply Chain Management policy mandates a comprehensive needs assessment before issuing bids or quotations, ensuring cost estimates are

realistic and aligned with the procurement objectives. South Africa's National Treasury (2015) outlines key aspects to consider within demand management, including:

- Linking all requirements to the approved budget.
- Determining specifications in collaboration with the end user.
- Ensuring the need aligns with the strategic plan of the organization.
- Specifying the frequency of requirements.
- Ordering economically viable quantities.
- Setting clear delivery timelines.
- Verifying the necessity of goods or services.
- Confirming alignment with strategic objectives.
- Defining methods for fulfilling the need.
- Analysing past experiences.

SMME perspective, demand management shapes their perceptions of effectiveness. When DoT's needs are poorly defined or not communicated early enough, SMMEs struggle to respond appropriately. This presents a challenge, especially for smaller suppliers with limited capacity. Strengthening early engagement with SMMEs and ensuring transparent needs identification could serve as a mechanism for improvement.

## **Acquisition Management**

Akhavan and Beckmann (2017) describe acquisition management as a series of processes grounded in SCM principles, focused on sourcing goods and services. It involves applying preferential procurement policy objectives and aligning them with the specific conditions of a given contract Ingason and Jonasson (2019). According to Wilding and Wagner (2019), acquisition management also includes key activities such as:

- Determining the depreciation rate,
- Deciding on life cycle and inventory-carrying costs,
- Preparing bid documents,
- Evaluating bids, and
- Presenting recommendations to the accounting officer.

SMMEs often perceive DoT's acquisition processes as ineffective due to complex compliance requirements and lengthy evaluations. The challenges they face include lack of administrative

capacity to meet tender requirements, which often favours larger, established firms. Introducing simplified bidding processes, training on compliance, and dedicated SMME friendly procurement thresholds are potential mechanisms for improvement.

## **Logistics Management**

Akhavan and Beckmann (2017) define logistics as the strategic management of acquiring, transporting, and storing inventory within an organization, alongside its marketing operations, in a way that maintains profitability and ensures cost-efficient ordering. Logistics management forms a crucial part of the SCM process, focusing on controlling and facilitating the seamless distribution of goods and services (Oppelt, 2020).

Ingason and Jonasson (2019) identifies key logistics activities, which include coding items, setting inventory levels, placing orders, receiving and distributing goods, storage or warehousing, order expediting, transport management, and assessing vendor performance.

Logistics management is vital to SCM because it ensures that goods and services are delivered to the right place, at the right time, and to the appropriate recipient (Wilding and Wagner, 2019).

Inefficient logistics can create negative perceptions among SMMEs regarding DoT's ability to deliver projects on time. The challenges here include lack of infrastructure, and inadequate coordination between DoT and small suppliers.

## **Disposal Management**

According to South Africa's National Treasury (2015), disposal management entails a public institution's strategy or plan of removing from the asset register all the assets that are: not repairable, not usable, or even outdated. Ingason and Jonasson (2019) argues that disposal management is an integral part of SCM and when implemented, it should reveal the following:

- further explanation and description of the outdated material,
- the creation of a database of redundant material,
- the inspection of the material for potential reuse,
- the determination of a disposal strategy, and
- the putting in place of the execution of the physical disposal process.

Liu et al. (2018) agree that every institution or organization should have a disposal plan as part of its SCM. This therefore suggests that the selected CETC is bound to be subjected to the disposal management requirement as these processes unfold even in public institutions.

Disposal processes can either create opportunities or reinforce perceptions of exclusion when decisions lack transparency (Study Question 1). The challenges include limited awareness of disposal opportunities and high compliance costs relative to the benefits (Study Question 2). Transparent auction systems or recycling contracts with local SMMEs represent practical mechanisms for improvement.

## **2.7 SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES AND SMME GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT**

Christopher and Peck (2018) posit that effective SCM enables small, medium and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs) to enhance their operational efficiency, reduce expenses, and enhance customer satisfaction. This viewpoint aligns with the findings of Kumar and Sharma (2019), who discovered a positive correlation between SCM practices and the performance of SMMEs.

The utilization of SCM technologies can substantially influence the performance of small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs). Lee and Kwon (2019) assert that integrating information technology systems like enterprise resource planning (ERP) can enhance the efficiency of SCM processes and contribute to overall SMME performance improvement.

Collaborative SCM practices, such as fostering partnerships and integration with suppliers, have been recognized as pivotal elements that significantly affect the performance of small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs). Yang, Wong and Lai (2018) emphasize that establishing effective collaboration with suppliers can result in enhanced operational performance and cost reduction for SMMEs. Likewise, Chen and Huang (2019) discovered that cultivating collaborative relationships with customers has a positive influence on SMME performance through improved responsiveness and increased customer satisfaction.

The connection between sustainable SCM practices and the performance of small, medium, and micro-sized enterprises (SMMEs) has garnered considerable attention. Tseng, Chiu and Yue (2018) posit that incorporating sustainability principles into SCM can provide SMMEs with competitive advantages, including enhanced brand image and reduced environmental footprint.

While collaborative SCM practices have received some attention, there remains a dearth of research examining the impact of SCM on customer relationship management (CRM) within SMMEs. Investigating how effective SCM strategies empower SMMEs to gain a deeper understanding of customer needs, customize their offerings, and foster long-term customer relationships can significantly contribute to improving SMME performance and competitiveness (Ojala, 2018).

## **2.8 SCM AND PUBLIC PROCUREMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF SMMEs**

SCM is critical for public procurement processes, particularly in enhancing the participation and performance of SMMEs in South Africa (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2019; National Treasury, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

The South African government has implemented several policies and frameworks to integrate SCM into public procurement processes, including the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA), which emphasizes the importance of SCM in financial management and defines procurement principles as fair, equitable, transparent, competitive, and cost-effective. Furthermore, the Municipal Finance Management Act No. 56 of 2003 aims to modernize financial management practices at the local government level, and the National Treasury Regulations reinforce the PFMA and MFMA, providing a legislative framework for SCM (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2019; National Treasury, 2019).

Despite these reforms, significant challenges persist in implementing effective public procurement practices. These challenges include not fully understanding or appreciating supply chain management, difficulties for small and medium-sized enterprises to join global supply chains, and poor planning for demand and procurement, leading to inefficiencies (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

To enhance SMME participation in public procurement, strategies include improving the understanding and application of SCM practices, streamlining procurement processes to reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and providing support and capacity building for SMMEs. By effectively integrating SCM practices into public procurement, the South African government

can foster a more inclusive and competitive business environment for SMMEs (Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss, 2019; National Treasury, 2019; International Monetary Fund, 2023).

### **2.9.2 GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT SMMES**

To address these challenges, the South African government has implemented several initiatives aimed at facilitating SMME participation in public procurement. These include subcontracting initiatives, where larger firms are encouraged to subcontract portions of their contracts to SMMEs, providing them with opportunities to participate in larger projects (Mphela and Shunda, 2018). The government has introduced set asides and preferential schemes in certain procurement categories, ensuring that a portion of contracts is reserved specifically for smaller enterprises. Various capacity building programs are also in place to provide training and support to SMMEs, helping them to understand procurement processes and improve their competitiveness (National Treasury 2019).

Peters and Naicker (2013) discuss the role of government initiatives in supporting the SMME sector in South Africa. Their study highlights that SMMEs form the majority of enterprises in the South African economy and are considered vital to achieving national goals of improving job creation, reducing poverty, and promoting wealth distribution. The study aimed to evaluate the success of government support initiatives and to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of the national strategy in fostering an enabling environment for SMMEs. The research utilized a survey methodology and mixed methods, gathering empirical data from 282 respondents. The results revealed that the government's approach has primarily focused on supply-side interventions, such as providing access to training, credit, mentoring, and business information to existing and new businesses.

### **2.10 MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OFFERING SMME SUPPORT**

The South African government has taken significant steps to support SMMEs, most notably through the creation of the Department of Small Business Development. This department is responsible for guiding national policy related to SMME support. It was established to coordinate and lead efforts that promote entrepreneurship and assist the growth of SMMEs and cooperatives by developing enabling policies and legislative frameworks aimed at

improving their sustainability and profitability (Department of Small Business Development, 2024).

To fulfill its mandate, the Department of Small Business Development operates through two main agencies: the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA). SEDA is responsible for implementing the national small business strategy by creating and managing a uniform, standardized service delivery network across the country. As an agency within the Department of Small Business Development, SEDA was established in 2004 under the National Small Business Amendment Act, Act 29 of 2004, with

the goal of making a daily positive impact on the lives of SMMEs (Small Enterprise Development Agency, 2021). Its mission is to promote entrepreneurship and support the growth of small businesses by offering tailored, non-financial business services that foster business expansion and sustainability, in collaboration with other ecosystem stakeholders. SEDA works closely with a wide range of partners and invests significant resources in advancing entrepreneurship and the development of SMMEs nationwide. With 54 branches, 46 co-location sites, and 110 incubators, SEDA operates the largest office network in the country (Small Enterprise Development Agency, 2024).

SEFA, an agency under the Department of Small Business Development, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Industrial Development Corporation Limited (IDC). It was established on 1 April 2012 per Section 3(d) of the Industrial Development Corporation Act No. 22 of 1940, following a cabinet decision and the 2011 State of the Nation Address (Small Enterprise Finance Agency [SEFA], 2024).

## **2.11 THE GAP IN THE LITERATURE**

Recent studies have underscored the significance of SCM for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Research indicates that the implementation of SCM can positively influence SME performance, with human resource management (HRM) practices serving as a crucial mediating factor. For instance, Kitchot, Suksringarm, and Wongsuchat (2020) and Mamun (2023) highlight that effective HRM practices are essential for the successful implementation of SCM in SMEs. However, there are notable gaps in the literature regarding the impact of SCM on various types of SMEs and its role in fostering innovation and market competitiveness. Thakkar, Kanda, and Deshmukh (2008) point out the need for further exploration in these areas. Giunipero, Hooker, and Denslow (2008) emphasize the necessity

for more research on the multiple links within SCM chains and networks, as most existing studies tend to focus primarily on dyadic relationships.

Despite the existing research, several aspects related to the influence of SCM on SMME performance require further exploration. Firstly, there is a need for more in-depth studies focusing on the specific challenges faced by different types of SMMEs, such as manufacturing, service-oriented, or technology-based businesses. Secondly, the impact of SCM on SMME financial performance and growth requires more comprehensive examination. Additionally, the role of SCM in enhancing innovation capabilities and market competitiveness among SMMEs remains underexplored. Although previous studies have shed light on the influence of SCM on SMME performance, some limitations and weaknesses should be acknowledged. Firstly, many studies have focused on large organizations, leaving a research gap regarding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by SMMEs. Secondly, there is a lack of consensus regarding the conceptualization and measurement of SCM and SMME performance, leading to inconsistent findings. Lastly, most studies have predominantly used cross sectional data, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships.

These studies support the argument that SCM practices can enhance the performance of SMMEs, but their implementation can be hindered by various challenges. In the context of the Department of Transport at Chris Hani, these challenges may include limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to finance. The findings of these literature reviews suggest that the implementation of effective SCM practices could be beneficial for SMMEs operating in the Department of Transport at Chris Hani, but there is a need for further research to explore the specific context and challenges faced by these SMMEs.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the role of SCM in enabling SMME participation is not merely administrative but central to economic transformation and service delivery in South Africa. The advantages identified by the National Treasury demonstrate how well managed supply chain processes can empower SMMEs to grow, innovate, and contribute to local development. However, in practice, SMMEs in the Chris Hani District continue to experience obstacles such as delayed payments, limited digital access, and perceptions of unfair procurement practices.

Investigating these challenges and opportunities within the DoT's SCM processes, this study contributes significantly to understanding how supply chain management can be harnessed to support SMMEs at the local level. The findings will therefore address not only gaps in the literature but also provide practical insights for policymakers on strengthening the relationship between government departments and SMMEs. In this way, the discussion of government SCM processes in this chapter reinforces the study's broader significance: ensuring that procurement becomes a driver of inclusive growth and sustainable service delivery.

## **2.12 TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN SCM AND THEIR IMPACT ON SMMES**

Recent research underscores the profound influence of technological advancements on SCM within SMEs. The integration of Industry 4.0 technologies, particularly digitization and automation, presents significant opportunities for profit maximization and enhanced sustainability in SMEs (Sarath Menon and Shah, 2020). The deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in SCM has proven to be beneficial, particularly in

procurement processes, where it facilitates enhanced collaboration and information sharing between suppliers and buyers (Colina et al., 2015).

## **2.13 CHALLENGES FACED BY SMMES REGARDING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT PRACTICES**

Van Van Scheers (2021) notes that SMMEs make up the majority of business operations in Africa, representing over 90% of businesses and contributing more than 50% to both employment and GDP across the continent. Positive developments have been seen in the SMME sector in South Africa, Mauritius, and North Africa. In South Africa, SMMEs are responsible for creating 55% of all jobs (Small Enterprise Development Agency [SEDA], 2021). However, studies show that 40% of new businesses fail within their first year, 60% within the second year, and 90% within the first decade (Endris and Kassegn, 2022). Researchers have identified several challenges that significantly contribute to the failure of SMMEs both in South Africa and globally. From a supply chain perspective, these difficulties are often intensified by barriers to entering government procurement systems, delayed or inconsistent payments from clients, stringent compliance

requirements, and poor access to infrastructure and technology. Such supply chain-related constraints limit SMMEs' ability to compete effectively, scale their operations, and secure sustainable participation in public sector contracts.

To substantiate this, Sibisi and Makka (2022) found that SMMEs, limited by their resources and capacities, often encounter difficulties in accessing global markets. Exploring how SCM practices, such as logistics network design, transportation management, and distribution strategies, can assist SMMEs in overcoming barriers to market access and expanding their market reach could yield valuable insights into enhancing their performance and competitiveness (Li, Zhang and Liu, 2018). SMMEs encounter distinctive obstacles and resource limitations that can impede their implementation of SCM. For an example a SMME expected to provide a service can be expected to provide stock such as petrol; or diesel before the Department of Transport pay for the service. This is a resource constraint.

Narasimhan and Schoenherr (2019) indicate that limited resources, insufficient expertise, and financial constraints can hinder SMMEs from adopting advanced SCM practices. Similarly, Pereira and Estevão (2020) emphasize that SMMEs struggle to establish effective supply chain relationships due to their lack of bargaining power and influence over suppliers. Cheng, Lai, and Gunasekaran (2020) add that the complex nature of technology and the high costs associated with its adoption often prevent SMMEs from fully leveraging SCM systems. Christopher and Peck (2018) further note that resource shortages and limited awareness make it difficult for SMMEs to implement sustainable supply chain practices.

A practical example of these challenges can be seen in the case of hardware suppliers needed when constructing roads. If the Department of Transport delays in providing essential materials, SMMEs often lack the financial strength, negotiating power, and technological systems to source alternatives quickly. This weakens their ability to meet project deadlines, strains their supplier relationships, and undermines their competitiveness in government procurement processes.

In a study by Van Scheers (2021), the focus was on examining whether the marketing skills of managers in SMMEs contribute to the high business failure rate in South Africa. The research found that a lack of marketing skills significantly influences the sustainability of small businesses. Similarly, Fatoki (2019) noted that the absence of marketing expertise adversely affects the success of SMMEs, while Bushe (2019) identified a positive correlation between limited marketing skills and business failure.

This lack of marketing expertise is closely linked to supply chain management. Effective SCM not only requires the efficient sourcing, production, and delivery of goods and services but also the ability to market these products to clients and stakeholders, including government departments. SMMEs with weak marketing skills may struggle to communicate their capabilities, differentiate their offerings, or negotiate favourable contracts within government procurement processes. For example, even when an SMME can deliver road construction materials or services efficiently, poor marketing and communication may prevent them from securing contracts with the Department of Transport, limiting their participation in the supply chain and contributing to business failure. Therefore, enhancing the marketing capabilities of small business owners is critical not only for business growth but also for improving their integration and competitiveness within broader supply

chain networks, particularly in public sector projects that are vital for addressing unemployment challenges in South Africa.

#### **2.14 CASE STUDIES OF SUCCESSFUL SCM PRACTICES IN SMMEs**

The South African government has executed a number of initiatives to support SMMEs in adopting effective supply chain management practices. One successful example is the Supplier Development Programme (SDP), launched by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) (DTI, 2021). The SDP aims to integrate SMMEs into the supply chains of larger corporations and government entities. Key elements of the program include matchmaking, mentorship, and financial support. Participating SMMEs have reported significant improvements in their supply chain capabilities and competitiveness through the SDP. For example, Thandi Crafts, a small handicraft manufacturer, was able to secure a contract with a major retailer after receiving mentorship and financial support from the program, enabling

the company to expand its production, create new jobs, and increase its revenue by 40% within the first year (DTI, 2021).

In the Chris Hani District, the Department of Transport has also been proactive in supporting SMMEs through various initiatives aimed at boosting supply chain management within the transport sector. The Chris Hani District Department of Transport has developed operational plans that focus on improving public transport systems and infrastructure while integrating local SMMEs into these initiatives. The Department of Transport at the Chris Hani District has recognized the importance of SMMEs as drivers of economic growth and job creation. The local economic development (LED) strategy emphasizes collaboration with local businesses to enhance their participation in transport-related projects.

The Department of Transport aims to upgrade and rehabilitate provincial roads, creating opportunities for local SMMEs to engage in construction and maintenance work. This initiative not only supports local businesses but also improves access to economic activities for residents. The department has initiated programs focused on skills development for local entrepreneurs. These programs aim to enhance the capabilities of SMMEs in areas such as project management, financial literacy, and technical skills (Department of Transport, 2024).

The initiatives undertaken by the Chris Hani District Department of Transport have had a positive impact on local economic development. For example, local contractors involved in road maintenance have reported increased business opportunities and revenue growth due to their participation in government projects. These projects have created jobs within the community, addressing some of the challenges related to poverty and unemployment as highlighted by Mubangizi (2021).

Similarly, Singapore's government has taken proactive steps to help SMMEs enhance their supply chain management practices through the SME Transformation Programme, launched by Enterprise Singapore (Enterprise Singapore, 2022). The program offers a comprehensive suite of support measures, including supply chain consulting, technology adoption, and talent development. One success story is that of Eng Hup Seng, a small food manufacturer participating in the program.

## **2.15 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT'S SMME DEVELOPMENT**

The South African government has long recognized the importance of SMMEs for job creation, poverty reduction, and economic growth (Peters and Naicker, 2013; Botes and Vuba, 2019). However, despite various supportive policies and initiatives, the sector faces numerous challenges, including high failure rates, limited access to finance, and a lack of growth among many small businesses (Botes and Vuba, 2019; Rogerson, 2004). The Eastern Cape Department of Transport (ECDoT) SMME Development Policy aims to directly address some of these issues, particularly within the transport and automotive sectors of the province.

As Botes and Vuba (2019) highlight, over 70% of new businesses fail within two years, largely due to stringent funding criteria and financial barriers. The ECDoT's policy acknowledges these hurdles by focusing on creating enabling environments for SMMEs through SCM procedures, targeted procurement opportunities, and structured financial and business support mechanisms. By implementing ring-fenced procurement strategies and setting aside specific percentages of contracts for SMMEs, the policy seeks to improve access to

markets—a key challenge noted by Botes and Vuba (2019) and Peters and Naicker (2013).

Despite the ECDoT's progressive approach, the literature indicates broader concerns about the uneven support provided to micro-enterprises compared to small and medium enterprises (Rogerson, 2004). This critique applies not only at a national level but also to provincial policies, where micro-enterprises and informal businesses may not benefit fully from formal procurement and development programs. Additionally, the lack of awareness about government support initiatives, as noted by Peters and Naicker (2013), is another issue that could undermine the effectiveness of the ECDoT's development efforts. These shortcomings are directly linked to the challenges SMMEs face in supply chain management, particularly in relation to equitable participation, access to procurement opportunities, and sustainability within competitive bidding processes. Limited outreach and ineffective communication restrict SMMEs' ability to engage meaningfully with government tenders, thereby exacerbating barriers such as exclusion from formal supply chains, lack of timely information on bidding opportunities, and inadequate capacity to meet compliance requirements. This highlights that for SCM practices to be effective and inclusive, provincial policies like those of the ECDoT must address not only structural procurement procedures but also the communication and support mechanisms that enable SMMEs, especially micro enterprises, to participate fully.

Given the weak contributions of the SMME sector to employment creation (Rogerson, 2004), the ECDoT's policy must also focus on capacity-building and mentorship to foster long-term growth. The policy's commitment to providing training and mentorship for SMMEs, as well as its partnerships with SETAs and other developmental funding institutions, could play a crucial role in overcoming some of the sector's persistent challenges. However, as Jinabhai and Kadwa (2007) suggest, clear and actionable government policies are essential to achieving sustained SMME growth, and ongoing monitoring will be necessary to assess the long-term impact of these initiatives.

The White Paper on the National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business in South Africa (2021) highlights the vital role of SMMEs in promoting job creation, economic growth, and equity. Similarly, the National Development Plan—Vision 2030 (RSA, 2015) underscores the need to strengthen SMMEs as a key strategy in combating poverty and

unemployment. South Africa's initial socio-economic blueprint, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), also recognized the importance of supporting small and medium enterprises to stimulate employment, promote income equality, and drive economic advancement (Abisuga-Oyekunle, Patra, and Muchie, 2020). There is growing consensus among policymakers, economists, and business professionals that SMMEs serve as fundamental engines of economic progress (Abisuga-Oyekunle, Patra, and Muchie, 2020). According to Afriyie, Du, and Musah (2019), a robust SMME sector enhances the economy

by generating employment, expanding production, increasing exports, and nurturing innovation and entrepreneurship. This section also discusses the Local Economic Development (LED) strategy and SMME-focused initiatives implemented by the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District.

## **2.16 SOUTH AFRICAN SMMES CONFRONT A NUMBER OF DIFFICULTIES**

The critical perspectives of Ngwenya (2018) and Zulu (2017) challenge the assumptions central to pro-SMME arguments. Zulu (2017) found that SMMEs are not necessarily more labour-intensive or better at creating jobs compared to large enterprises. Similarly, Ngwenya (2018) noted that businesses of all sizes, not just SMMEs, are constrained by under-developed financial and legal systems. According to Ngwenya's study, these institutions prevent businesses from scaling to their optimal sizes, hindering their efficiency.

Further debate arises from academics like Mashiyi (2018), who question whether the size of a business should be treated as an external factor influencing economic growth. Research on industrial organization indicates that the ideal company size and industrial composition of a country are influenced by its natural resources, technological capabilities, and legal and institutional frameworks (Mashiyi, 2018). Ethier (2019) adds that some nations have endowments that favour production by small firms, while others are better suited to large-scale enterprises. The role of SMMEs is often questioned, especially regarding the effectiveness of policies aimed specifically at promoting them. This "business environment" perspective, highlighted by Zulu (2017), emphasizes the importance of creating a competitive economic environment for all businesses—large and small. Such an environment is characterized by low entry and exit barriers, secure property rights, and effective contract enforcement (Ngwenya, 2018).

The economic shifts caused by COVID-19 expanded the informal sector and eroded traditional employment patterns, highlighting the bottom-up approaches that address local needs as essential. This is particularly true in areas like the Chris Hani District, where the downgrading of South Africa's economy to junk status exacerbates challenges faced by SMMEs. Similar to other parts of the country, SMMEs in the Chris Hani District struggle with

issues like inadequate access to capital, poor education, lack of infrastructure, and weak management skills, as highlighted by Botha et al. (2021).

Moreover, South African SMMEs, like those in the Chris Hani District, face high failure rates. According to Refiloe, Derera, McArthur, and Ndayizigamiye (2020), a significant portion of SMMEs do not survive beyond their first two years of operation. Given the formal sector's continued job losses, SMMEs are viewed as critical in addressing unemployment.

## **2.17 MECHANISMS TO ENHANCE SMME PARTICIPATION IN SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT**

Enhancing the participation of SMMEs in government procurement processes is essential for fostering economic growth and promoting inclusive development. Based on insights from the literature, the following strategies and policy recommendations can be implemented to improve SMME participation in public procurement:

**Clear and accessible guidelines:** Governments should provide clear, concise guidelines on procurement processes to demystify the bidding system for SMMEs. This includes using simple language in requests for proposals (RFPs) and ensuring that procurement information is easily accessible online (Open Contracting Partnership, 2022).

**Streamlining application procedures:** Reducing bureaucratic hurdles and simplifying application procedures can make it easier for SMMEs to participate. This strategy may involve creating a one-stop portal.

**Workshops and training programs:** Regular training sessions should be conducted to educate SMMEs about the procurement process, including preparing bids and navigating government systems. For instance, the City of New Orleans has successfully implemented training sessions to help SMEs understand procurement requirements (Open Contracting Partnership, 2022).

**Mentorship programs:** Establish mentorship initiatives where experienced contractors guide emerging SMMEs through the procurement process, helping them build the necessary skills and confidence to compete effectively (Mdadane, 2018).

**Access to funding:** Governments should facilitate access to financial resources for SMMEs, such as grants or low-interest loans, to help them meet the costs associated with bidding for contracts (Mdadane, 2018).

**Incentives for participation:** Offering incentives, such as tax breaks or preferential payment terms for SMMEs that successfully secure government contracts, can encourage more small businesses to engage in public procurement.

**Dividing contracts into smaller lots:** By breaking larger contracts into smaller, more manageable lots, governments can make it easier for SMMEs to compete. Research indicates that smaller contract sizes significantly increase the likelihood of SMME participation (Hoekman and Taş, 2020).

**Implementing set-aside policies:** Governments can adopt regulations that set aside a certain percentage of contracts specifically for SMMEs, ensuring that these businesses have guaranteed opportunities to compete (Hoekman and Taş, 2020).

**Regular engagement with SMMEs:** Establishing regular forums or feedback sessions where SMMEs can voice their concerns and suggestions related to procurement processes can help governments identify barriers and improve practices (World Bank, 2022).

**Responsive communication channels:** Governments should maintain open lines of communication with SMMEs, ensuring they receive timely feedback on their bids and procurement inquiries.

**E-procurement systems:** Implementing user-friendly e-procurement systems can streamline the bidding process and make it more accessible for SMMEs. These systems should be designed to provide clear guidance and support for small businesses (World Bank, 2022).

## 2.18 CONCLUSION

Enhancing The analysis of supply chain management (SCM) practices across different regions and sectors highlights that the effectiveness of SCM is heavily influenced by contextual factors such as geography, industrial development, and technological capacity. Comparative studies reveal that SMMEs in more developed regions or sectors with global linkages tend to adopt advanced SCM practices more readily, while those in fragmented or underdeveloped sectors face structural and operational challenges that hinder their effectiveness. Within the Chris Hani District, SMMEs encounter additional obstacles, including limited access to procurement information, bureaucratic complexity, delayed payments, technological barriers, and perceptions of corruption or favouritism.

Despite a robust legislative framework, including the PFMA, PPPFA, B-BBEE Act, and PAJA, the practical implementation of these policies often falls short of their intended objectives. While these regulations are designed to foster fairness, inclusivity, and economic empowerment, SMMEs frequently experience inconsistencies in enforcement, weak outreach, and structural inefficiencies that limit their ability to compete effectively. Digital procurement systems and e-tendering platforms, though potentially transformative, further exacerbate disparities due to limited internet access and low digital literacy among small business owners.

Stakeholder theory provides a useful lens for understanding these dynamics, highlighting that SMMEs are key stakeholders in government supply chains whose needs and perspectives must be actively considered. Challenges such as limited participation, administrative hurdles, and inequitable practices reflect relational gaps in stakeholder management, underscoring the need for stronger collaboration, trust, and capacity-building between the Department of Transport and SMMEs.

Ultimately, the evidence suggests that while South Africa's SCM and procurement policies provide a supportive framework on paper, the practical realities for SMMEs in the Chris Hani District remain challenging. Addressing these issues requires targeted interventions such as simplifying procurement processes, improving access to information, ensuring timely payments, promoting digital literacy, and enforcing compliance with legislative frameworks. By bridging the gap between policy intent and practice, the DoT can enhance the participation of SMMEs, strengthen local economic development, and create a more inclusive and equitable supply chain environment.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

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### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter details the research methodology used to explore SMMEs' perceptions of supply chain management (SCM) processes within the Department of Transport (DoT) in the Chris Hani District. It provides a thorough explanation of the research design, philosophical paradigms, and the methods employed for data collection and analysis. The chapter begins by outlining the chosen research approach and paradigm, then describes the target population and sampling methods. It further explains the data collection and analysis procedures, offering justification for the selected tools to ensure the study's reliability and validity. These methodological elements aim to support a well rounded investigation into the challenges and opportunities SMMEs face in SCM practices.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Research methodology refers to the systematic framework and principles that guide data collection, analysis, and interpretation in a research study. It involves the selection of research methods, the rationale behind their use, and the procedures for applying them to ensure the validity, reliability, and rigor of the research. Saunders et al. (2020) describe research methodology as "the theory of how research should be undertaken, including the philosophical and theoretical assumptions upon which research is based and the implications of these for the method or methods adopted" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2020, ). Similarly, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain that research methodology "encompasses the design, methods, approaches, and techniques used by the researcher to frame a study, implement data collection and analysis, and draw conclusions" (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

Research design is a structured framework that outlines how a study is conducted. It includes the methods and procedures used to collect and analyze data, guiding the researcher in systematically addressing the research problem. The research design ensures that the study is coherent, logically structured, and capable of producing valid and reliable results (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

### **3.2.1 DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH DESIGN**

This design aims to describe the characteristics of a population or phenomenon in detail. It is used when the research problem is clearly defined, and the researcher seeks to understand specific details or patterns within the data. Common methods include surveys, observations, and case studies (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

### **3.2.2 STUDY ENVIRONMENT**

The study was conducted in the Chris Hani District, a predominantly rural area in South Africa, focusing on the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the SCM processes of the Eastern Cape Department of Transport (ECDoT). This region presents unique challenges and opportunities for SMMEs, given its socio-economic landscape and the critical role these enterprises play in local economic development. The research environment was shaped by the operational dynamics of the ECDoT, including its SCM policies and procedures, as well as the regulatory framework governing public procurement. The study participants were diverse SMMEs engaged in various sectors, providing a comprehensive view of their experiences and challenges in accessing government contracts and resources.

## **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The qualitative research methodology was used here to explore and understand the subjective experiences and views of SMMEs. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on numerical data and statistical analysis, qualitative research focuses on capturing rich, detailed information about participants' experiences, feelings, and perceptions (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Semi structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility and ability to uncover nuanced insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by SMMEs in interacting with the Department of Transport. Qualitative

research methodology is particularly suitable for examining complex social phenomena and understanding context specific issues in depth. It allows for the exploration of the underlying reasons and motivations behind participants' perspectives, which is essential for developing a comprehensive understanding of supply chain processes and their impact on SMMEs (Bryman, 2020).

The quantitative research methodology is an approach that emphasizes objective measurements and observable components to obtain statistical data. It often involves the use of structured tools such as surveys or tests to collect numerical data, which is then analyzed to identify patterns, test hypotheses, and generalize findings across larger populations (Fink, 2018).

Mixed methods research integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to capitalize on the strengths of both and offer a more nuanced understanding of research questions. By combining numerical data with detailed narrative information, this approach provides a more comprehensive perspective on complex issues (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018).

The researcher chose the qualitative research methodology for this study. This methodology is characterized by the collection and analysis of non numeric data, such as words, to understand phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing them (Bryman, 2020).

The researcher chose the qualitative research methodology for this study. This methodology is characterized by the collection and analysis of non-numeric data, such as words, to understand phenomena from the perspective of those experiencing them (Bryman, 2020).

### **3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

A research paradigm is a framework of philosophical assumptions that guides researchers in their approach to understanding and investigating phenomena. It influences how research problems are conceptualized, the methods used for data collection and analysis, and the interpretation of findings (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2020).

Several research paradigms were evaluated before the most appropriate one was chosen for this study. The paradigms that were considered are briefly discussed below:

Interpretivism believes that reality is subjective and constructed through social interactions, emphasizing qualitative methods to understand the meanings and experiences of individuals (Schwandt, 2022).

The study was conducted within the ambit of the interpretive paradigm, which was deemed appropriate because the study seeks to understand the interpretations participants attach to events occurring in their everyday environments (Davis and Fisher, 2018). The paradigm thus allows for the collection and analysis of data, offering a detailed account of both the experiences and the meanings people give to their experiences, behaviours, and attitudes (Rahi, 2017).

Paradigm closely aligned with this study is constructivism, which views reality as being shaped through social interactions and personal experiences. Within this perspective, emphasis is placed on the subjective understandings that participants develop in relation to their encounters with the supply chain management processes of the Eastern Cape Provincial Department of Transport. Constructivism further recognizes that these meanings are dynamic, influenced by social, cultural, and institutional contexts (Rahi, 2017).

### **3.5 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

A research strategy outlines the approach and methods used to address the research problem and achieve the study's objectives. It guides the process of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, ensuring the research is systematic and coherent. There are various research strategies, each suited to different types of studies.

#### **3.5.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGIES**

- **Case Study:** This approach focuses on a detailed analysis of a particular case or setting, making it valuable for studying complex issues within their actual environments (Yin, 2018). For instance, a case study might explore the supply chain operations of the Department of Transport in a designated district.
- **Focus Groups:** This involves guided discussions with a group of participants to explore their perceptions, attitudes, and opinions on a particular topic (Morgan, 1997). Focus groups are valuable for gathering diverse perspectives and generating insights into group dynamics.

➤ Interviews: This method entails direct, individual discussions with participants to gather in-depth insights into their experiences, perspectives, and opinions (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Depending on the study's objectives, interviews may be conducted in a structured, semi-structured, or unstructured format.

### **3.5.2 CHOSEN STRATEGY**

For this study, the chosen research strategy was a case study. A case study provides an in-depth exploration of a specific instance or context—in this case, the supply chain processes of the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the particular issues faced by SMMEs within this setting (Yin, 2018). By focusing on a single case, the study can capture detailed insights and offer practical recommendations tailored to the specific context.

The case study approach was chosen for this study. A case study is an in-depth exploration of a particular instance or context—in this case, the supply chain processes of the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District (Yin, 2018). This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the specific issues faced by SMMEs within this particular setting. This approach is suitable for exploring complex phenomena in their real-life context and can reveal nuanced details that other methods might overlook (Stake, 1995).

The study was stimulated by the recognition of the significant role that SMMEs play in economic growth, job creation, and innovation, particularly in South Africa. Despite their importance, SMMEs often encounter substantial challenges when interacting with local government procurement processes. These challenges include complex supply chain management practices, which can hinder their growth and participation in the economy. The study was motivated by the need to understand these challenges from the perspective of SMMEs and to explore how local government practices can be improved to support these enterprises more effectively.

This study was guided by inductive reasoning. Inductive reasoning is a research approach that begins with observations or specific instances and then develops broader generalizations or theories based on those observations (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2020). In this study, the

researcher began with specific observations gathered from SMMEs' experiences and perceptions regarding supply chain processes in the Chris Hani District. These observations will be used to identify patterns, themes, and potential theories about how supply chain practices impact SMMEs and what improvements could be made to better support them. Inductive reasoning is particularly suitable for qualitative research, where the goal is to explore and understand complex social phenomena without preconceived hypotheses, allowing the findings to emerge naturally from the data (Gray, 2020).

The strategy of this study was empirical. An empirical study relies on direct or indirect observation, experience, or experimentation as the source of knowledge (Collis and Hussey, 2020). This research involved collecting data directly from SMMEs in the Chris Hani District through semi-structured interviews. The study aimed to gather first-hand information on their perceptions of supply chain processes within the Department of Transport. This empirical approach allowed the researcher to develop insights based on actual data rather than theoretical speculation, making the findings grounded in real-world experiences and conditions (Bryman, 2020).

### **3.6.1 POPULATION**

The study population is the total number of people who have the characteristics that the study is investigating. The population can also be understood as the total sum of possible participants (Shah, 2023). Wood (2023) describes the population as the total sum of individuals that the study aims to investigate. According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), the population is defined as "the complete set of people or objects that possess some common characteristic that the researcher is interested in". The population in this study included all the SMME owners who do business with the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District Municipality. The researcher had no access to the exact number of SMMEs in the Chris Hani District. The number was projected to be approximately 60 SMMEs engaging in business with the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District.

### **3.6.2 TARGET SIZE**

While there is no precise formula for determining sample size in qualitative research, a common guideline is to aim for between 10 and 30 participants, depending on the complexity of the study and

the diversity of perspectives needed (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006).

### **3.7 SAMPLING**

A sample is a subset of the population from which the data will be collected. Sampling is the process of selecting participants from the population from which the data will be drawn (Cash, Cash, Maier and Summers, 2022). Sampling methods are broadly categorized into probability and non-probability sampling.

#### **3.7.1 PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

Probability sampling ensures that every member of the population has a known and equal chance of being selected, allowing for the generalizability of the results. Common types include:

- Simple Random Sampling: Each member of the population has an equal chance of selection, often achieved using random number generators (Fink, 2018).
- Stratified Sampling: The population is divided into subgroups (strata) based on characteristics, and samples are drawn from each stratum to ensure representation (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).
- Cluster Sampling: The population is divided into clusters, and a random sample of clusters is selected. All members of the selected clusters are then surveyed (Phelan and Bansal, 2018).

#### **3.7.2 NON PROBABILITY SAMPLING**

Non-probability sampling does not give all members of the population an equal chance of being selected. This method is often used for practical reasons and can be less costly and time consuming. Common types include:

- Convenience Sampling: Participants are selected based on their easy accessibility to the researcher (Etikan et al., 2018).
- Purposive Sampling: Participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Palinkas et al., 2018).
- Snowball Sampling: Existing study subjects recruit future subjects from their acquaintances (Noy, 2018).

Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the sample was drawn using a non-probability sampling method known as purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling is a sampling method in which not all the members of the population have an equal chance of being selected to participate in a study (Rahman, 2023). Non probability sampling was used in this study because it enables the selection of participants who are accessible to the researcher, thus easing the financial burden while ensuring that the objectives of the study are achieved in a manner convenient for the researcher. Purposive sampling, a specific non-probability sampling technique, was used in this study. Purposive sampling selects participants using a pre set criterion. In this particular study, the criteria stipulated that all participants must be owners of small, medium, and micro enterprises who conduct business with the DoT in the Chris Hani District . A sample of 20 participants was purposefully selected to take part in this study.

### 3.8 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

The research was carried out in the Chris Hani District Municipality, located in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. This inland district comprises six local municipalities: Inxuba Yethemba, Enoch Mgijima, Emalahleni, Sakhisizwe, Ngcobo, and Intsika Yethu (Chris Hani District Municipality, 2022).



**Figure 3. 1: The map of the Chris Hani District**

**Source: The Chris Hani District Municipality, 2022**

### **3.9 DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS**

Vogt and Johnson (2011) define demographic data as quantifiable statistical information about participants, including their education level, gender, age, and race. In most qualitative research, particular emphasis is placed on demographic profiles, such as the distribution of participants' age and gender. This study addresses the participants' demographics within each relevant section.

### **3.10 FINDINGS FROM ENTREPRENEURS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS**

This section is divided into the business-related demographics and the owner-related demographics. Twenty participants (SMMEs) were interviewed at the DoT in the Chris Hani District.

#### **3.10.1 BUSINESS RELATED DEMOGRAPHICS**

The interviews with SMMEs were conducted between 02 and 12 December 2024. As planned, participants were drawn from various sectors within 20 SMMEs. The variety of these sectors supports the study's objectives by providing a broad perspective on supply chain management across multiple industries. The selected participants significantly contribute to the local economy and provide valuable insights into the business environment in the Chris Hani District. Below is an outline of the demographic profiles of the SMMEs in Table 3.1.

**Table 3. 1 Demographic Profiles of the SMMEs**

| <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Type of Business</b> | <b>Years in Operation</b> | <b>Business Size</b> | <b>Location</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                              |                         |                           |                      |                 |

|        |                                                |          |                                      |                                               |
|--------|------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| SMME 1 | Transportation                                 | 12 years | Small Enterprise<br>(15 employees)   | Queenstown,<br>Chris<br>Hani District         |
| SMME 2 | Retail and<br>Supply                           | 8 years  | Micro<br>Enterprise (5<br>employees) | Cradock, Chris<br>Hani District               |
| SMME 3 | Construction                                   | 5 years  | Small Enterprise<br>(10 employees)   | Ngcobo, Chris<br>Hani<br>District             |
| SMME 4 | Service-oriented<br>(IT<br>Solutions)          | 3 years  | Micro<br>Enterprise (3<br>employees) | Sakhisizwe,<br>Chris<br>Hani District         |
| SMME 5 | Transportation<br>and<br>Logistics             | 6 years  | Small Enterprise<br>(12 employees)   | Emalahleni,<br>Chris<br>Hani District         |
| SMME 6 | Construction<br>and<br>Maintenance<br>Services | 9 years  | Small Enterprise<br>(10 employees)   | Inxuba<br>Yethemba,<br>Chris Hani<br>District |
| SMME 7 | Hospitality<br>and<br>Catering<br>Services     | 5 years  | Micro<br>Enterprise (4<br>employees) | Ngcobo, Chris<br>Hani<br>District             |
| SMME 8 | IT and<br>Software<br>Development              | 2 years  | Micro<br>Enterprise (5<br>employees) | Enoch<br>Mgijima,<br>Chris Hani<br>District   |
| SMME 9 | Cleaning and<br>Sanitation<br>Services         | 3 years  | Micro<br>Enterprise (7<br>employees) | Enoch<br>Mgijima,<br>Chris Hani<br>District   |

|         |              |         |                        |                      |
|---------|--------------|---------|------------------------|----------------------|
| SMME 10 | Cleaning and | 5 years | Micro<br>Enterprise (3 | Sakhisizwe,<br>Chris |
|---------|--------------|---------|------------------------|----------------------|

| <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Type of Business</b>                       | <b>Years in Operation</b> | <b>Business Size</b>            | <b>Location</b>                    |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                              | Sanitation Services                           |                           | employees)                      | Hani District                      |
| SMME 11                      | Event Planning and Management                 | 4 years                   | Micro Enterprise (5 employees)  | Queenstown, Chris Hani District    |
| SMME 12                      | Catering Services                             | 6 years                   | Micro Enterprise (5 employees)  | Intsika Yethu, Chris Hani District |
| SMME 13                      | Supply and Delivery Services                  | 4 years                   | Small Enterprise (10 employees) | Cradock, Chris Hani District       |
| SMME 14                      | Cleaning Services                             | 6 years                   | Small Enterprise (9 employees)  | Queenstown, Chris Hani District    |
| SMME 15                      | Supply and Delivery of Construction Materials | 5 years                   | Small Enterprise (7 employees)  | Cradock, Chris Hani District       |
| SMME 16                      | Office Supply and Delivery Services           | 4 years                   | Small Enterprise (6 employees)  | Enoch Mgijima, Chris Hani District |
| SMME 17                      | Furniture Supply and Delivery Services        | 5 years                   | Small Enterprise (10 employees) | Sakhisizwe, Chris Hani District    |

|         |                                   |         |                                       |                                             |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| SMME 18 | Event<br>Catering<br>Services     | 3 years | Micro<br>Enterprise (5<br>employees)  | Enoch<br>Mgijima,<br>Chris Hani<br>District |
| SMME 19 | Corporate<br>Catering<br>Services | 5 years | Small<br>Enterprise (7<br>employees)  | Ngcobo, Chris<br>Hani<br>District           |
| SMME 20 | Private<br>Security<br>Services   | 7 years | Small Enterprise<br>(12<br>employees) | Ngcobo, Chris<br>Hani<br>District           |

### 3.10.2 OWNER/MANAGER RELATED DEMOGRAPHICS

The owner/manager-related demographics provide essential context for understanding the background and experiences of the participants. The interviewees held key decision-making roles within their respective businesses, including owners and managers. Their gender, age, education level, and years of experience in business management varied, offering diverse perspectives on supply chain management practices. This diversity in leadership roles and

personal backgrounds helped enrich the study's findings by showcasing the different approaches and challenges faced in managing SMMEs. The detailed demographic profiles of the owners/managers are presented in Table 3.2.

***Table 3. 2 Demographic profiles of the owners/managers***

| <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Position in Business</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age Group</b> | <b>Level of Education</b>         | <b>Years of Experience</b>           |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| SMME 1                       | Owner                       | Male          | 41–50            | Diploma in Business Management    | 15years in business management       |
| SMME 2                       | Manager                     | Female        | 31-40            | High School Certificate           | 10 years in retail and supply        |
| SMME 3                       | Owner                       | Male          | 51+              | Degree in Civil Engineering       | 20years in the construction Industry |
| SMME 4                       | Manager                     | Female        | 18-30            | Diploma in Information Technology | 4 years in IT management             |
| SMME 5                       | Owner                       | Female        | 41–50            | Degree in Business Administration | 15 years in logistics and management |

|        |                       |        |       |                                         |                                                          |
|--------|-----------------------|--------|-------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| SMME 6 | Owner                 | Female | 41–50 | Degree in<br>Construction<br>Management | 12 years in<br>construction<br>and project<br>management |
| SMME 7 | Owner/<br><br>Manager | Male   | 31–40 | Diploma in<br>Hospitality<br>Management | 8 years in<br>hospitality<br>and event<br>planning       |
| SMME 8 | Founder<br>and CEO    | Female | 25–30 | Degree in<br>Computer<br>Science        | 4 years in<br>software<br>development                    |
| SMME 9 | Owner                 | Male   | 31–40 | Matric                                  | 3 years in<br>cleaning                                   |

| <b>Participant Pseudonym</b> | <b>Position in Business</b> | <b>Gender</b> | <b>Age Group</b> | <b>Level of Education</b>             | <b>Years of Experience</b>                     |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                              |                             |               |                  |                                       | Service                                        |
| SMME 10                      | Owner                       | Male          | 51+              | Matric                                | 6 years in cleaning Service                    |
| SMME 11                      | Owner/Manager               | Female        | 25-30            | Diploma in Event Management           | 6 years in event planning                      |
| SMME 12                      | Owner/Caterer               | Female        | 31–40            | Matric                                | 8 years in catering and event services         |
| SMME 13                      | Owner/Manager               | Female        | 31–40            | Bachelor's in Logistics Management    | 7 years in supply chain and delivery           |
| SMME 14                      | Owner/Manager               | Male          | 41–50            | Matric                                | 10 years in cleaning and facilities management |
| SMME 15                      | Owner/Logistics Manager     | Male          | 31-45            | Bachelor's in supply chain management | 10 years in logistics and supply chain         |

|            |                             |      |       |                                                |                                                    |
|------------|-----------------------------|------|-------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| SMME<br>16 | Owner/Operations<br>Manager | Male | 30–40 | Bachelor's<br>in<br>Business<br>Administration | 7 years in<br>supply chain<br>and delivery         |
| SMME<br>17 | Owner/General<br>Manager    | Male | 35-45 | Matric                                         | 8 years in<br>furniture<br>retail and<br>logistics |
| SMME<br>18 | Owner/Catering<br>Manager   | Male | 35–45 | Matric                                         | 7 years in<br>catering<br>and food<br>service      |
| SMME<br>19 | Owner                       | Male | 30-40 | Matric                                         | 10 years in<br>catering<br>and event<br>planning   |
| SMME<br>20 | Owner/Security<br>Manager   | Male | 40-45 | Matric                                         | 15 years in<br>security<br>and safety<br>services  |

### 3.10.3 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and focus of the study

#### 3.10.3.1 Inclusion Criteria

The study included participants who met the following criteria:

Business Size: Participants should possess small, medium, or micro enterprises (SMMEs).

- Sector: SMMEs had to operate within sectors directly relevant to the Department of Transport's supply chain processes, such as transportation services, logistics, construction related to infrastructure projects, and many more.
- Location: Businesses should have been based in the Chris Hani District, as this study focused on the specific context of the Department of Transport's supply chain in that region.
- Experience with DoT: Participants were only included if their business had previous engagement with the DoT in supply chain-related activities, such as bidding for tenders, procurement, or service provision.

#### **3.10.3.2 Exclusion Criteria**

The following exclusion criteria were applied to maintain the study's focus and integrity:

- Large Enterprises: Companies that exceeded the regulatory thresholds for SMMEs were excluded.
- Irrelevant Sectors: Businesses operating outside sectors that interact directly with the Department of Transport were excluded, ensuring that the findings are specific to the supply chain processes relevant to the DoT.
- Out-of-District Locations: SMMEs located outside the Chris Hani District were excluded to ensure geographical consistency in the data collected.
- Lack of Interaction with DoT: SMMEs without any prior interactions with the Department of Transport were excluded.

### **3.11 DATA COLLECTION**

The primary data collection tool for this study was a semi-structured interview guide. This guide is designed to facilitate an in-depth exploration of SMMEs' perceptions of the supply chain processes of the DoT in the Chris Hani District.

#### **3.11.1 STRUCTURE OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

The interview guide included a mix of predefined questions and prompts, structured to cover key topics relevant to the research objectives. These topics included:

- Effectiveness of SCM Practices: The questions explored SMMEs' views on the efficiency and fairness of the DoT's supply chain management processes.
- Challenges Faced: Participants were asked to describe specific challenges they encountered when engaging with the DoT's SCM processes.
- Recommendations for Improvement: The guide included questions aimed at eliciting suggestions from participants on how the DoT could improve its SCM practices to better support SMMEs.

The semi structured format allows flexibility for participants to provide detailed responses and elaborate on their experiences, which is crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives (Bryman, 2020). The interviews were conducted by the researcher, who ensured that the conversation stayed focused on the research topics while also allowing participants to share their insights freely. This approach helped in capturing rich, qualitative data that was analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights related to the study objectives. The use of a semi-structured interview guide complemented the qualitative nature of the research, facilitating the collection of nuanced data that revealed a more profound understanding of the SMMEs' experiences and perceptions. The interviews were conducted face to face to facilitate a deeper connection and more nuanced responses. Face to face interviews are advantageous for exploring complex issues and building rapport with participants. The interview schedule was developed to guide the conversation while allowing flexibility for participants to share their insights. The schedule included:

- Introduction: Brief overview of the study and purpose of the interview.
- Core Questions: Focused on understanding the participants' experiences with the supply chain processes, challenges faced, and suggestions for improvement.
- Closing: Opportunity for participants to add any additional comments or insights

### **3.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND RIGOUR**

Kumar (2018) notes that qualitative researchers aim to generate results that are both valid and reliable. Mohajan (2018) further explains that reliability pertains to whether consistent results can be obtained using the same methods repeatedly on the same subject. In contrast, qualitative researchers prioritize validity, as it is crucial for the study's findings to accurately represent the topic under investigation. To ensure data dependability. Two research tools, along with multiple data sources such as interviews, focus group discussions, and observations, were utilized to

achieve accurate and valid findings.

To make sure the study was trustworthy, the researcher used key approaches. For credibility, the researcher double checked with participants by sharing summaries of their interview responses to ensure the correct perspective, which helped avoid any mix ups and made the findings more reliable. Triangulation was also used, pulling insights from one on one interviews, group discussions, and direct observations to cross check findings. This gave confidence that the results truly captured what participants experienced, not just researchers's assumptions.

For transferability, the researcher included lots of rich details about the study's setting, the people involved, so others can see if the findings might apply to similar situations.

To keep things dependable, the researcher carefully documented every step from research design, tools, coding process, and analysis so anyone could follow the trail and get similar results if they tried it again under the same conditions. The triangulation of multiple data sources further minimized subjectivity, while reflexivity was maintained by acknowledging and critically reflecting on the researcher's potential biases during data collection and analysis.

### **3.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

Nayak and Singh (2021) emphasize the importance of adhering to ethical standards in research, stating that studies involving human participants must have ethical approval. Consequently, this study received clearance from the university's ethics committee. Permission was obtained from the DoT to research SMMEs under its jurisdiction. Participants were required to sign consent forms before taking part in the study. They were provided with all relevant information beforehand to make an informed decision about their participation. Participants were also made aware of their rights throughout the research, including the option to withdraw at any point if they felt uncomfortable. Since participation is voluntary, the researcher is committed to maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, ensuring that no identifying information is disclosed. In line with ethical requirements, strict data management procedures were adopted to protect participants and maintain the integrity of the research. The data were organized systematically, with codes assigned to participants rather than their names, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Only aggregated findings were reported, preventing any individual from being identified.

### **3.14 CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This section of the dissertation outlined the methods and design used for data collection and analysis. It covered various topics, including research methodology, design, approach, paradigm, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis tools. The choice of qualitative methodology over other approaches was examined and justified. The philosophical underpinnings of qualitative research were also explored and defended. The next chapter presents the study's data and analysis.

## **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The previous chapter addressed the research methodology that the study employed. This chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation of the study's results based on the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain processes of the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District. The objectives of this study were as follows:

- To examine perceptions of SMMEs on the effectiveness of the Department of Transport's supply chain processes.
- To identify the challenges facing SMMEs regarding supply chain management practices of the DoT in the Chris Hani District.
- To recommend mechanisms through which the Chris Hani District DoT can improve its supply chain practices with SMMEs.

This chapter brings forward the voices and experiences of SMMEs from the Department DoT in the Chris Hani District. The focus is on how SMMEs perceive the DoT's supply chain management practices, the difficulties they encounter when trying to participate in these processes, and the changes they believe could make the system fairer and more supportive.

The themes and sub themes discussed in this chapter were developed through a careful process of coding and analysis, guided by Stakeholder Theory and the Resource Based View. They are presented in a way that follows the natural flow of participants' experiences: starting with how they view the current SCM practices, moving into the barriers they face, and concluding with their recommendations for improvement. Direct quotes from participants are included throughout to give authenticity to their experiences and ensure that their perspectives are not lost in interpretation.

The first part of the analysis looks at how SMMEs perceive the effectiveness of supply chain practices. Here, issues such as the timeliness of procurement, the level of communication and

transparency, the fairness of bidding processes, and the quality of support provided by the DoT are explored.

The second part shifts to the challenges SMMEs face, which include limited financial resources, difficulties in accessing credit, inadequate technology and infrastructure, gaps in management expertise, shortages of skilled employees, and the heavy burden of regulatory requirements. Participants also raised serious concerns about corruption and unfair practices that disadvantage smaller businesses.

The third part of the chapter presents recommendations from SMMEs on how SCM processes could be improved. Suggestions included better communication channels between the DoT and suppliers, more transparent and streamlined bidding procedures, financial and technical support for SMMEs, capacity building initiatives such as training and mentorship, stronger anti corruption measures, and the simplification of regulatory and administrative processes.

## **4.2 QUALITATIVE DATA PRESENTATION**

In the study, qualitative methods were employed to gather data from SMMEs at the Chris Hani Department of Transport. Data was collected through face to face interviews, which provided a more profound understanding of the participants' experiences. Qualitative research allows for a more nuanced exploration of reality, leading to richer insights (Kawulich, 2005).

## **4.3 RATIONALE FOR SELECTING CHRIS HANI DISTRICT AS THE STUDY SITE**

The choice of Chris Hani District Municipality as the site for this study is grounded in the research problem itself rather than logistical considerations such as geographic proximity, ease of access, or financial constraints. While a research budget of R10 000 was allocated for data collection, editing, and related expenses, the district was chosen because it reflects the realities and challenges that many small, medium, and micro enterprises in the Eastern Cape face, making it a fitting context in which to investigate perceptions of supply chain management (SCM).

SMMEs in the Eastern Cape operate within one of the most economically marginalised provinces in South Africa. The province continues to struggle with high unemployment, weak infrastructure, and limited access to markets, which directly affect the growth and sustainability of SMMEs. Within

this provincial context, the Chris Hani District is particularly affected due to its location in the former Transkei and Ciskei homelands, regions historically characterised by underdevelopment, inequality, and lack of investment. Compared to areas such as Buffalo City and Nelson Mandela Bay, which benefit from urban infrastructure, industrial hubs, and relatively stronger economies, Chris Hani District remains predominantly rural and economically disadvantaged.

The decision not to conduct the study in districts such as Alfred Nzo or O.R. Tambo is also intentional. Alfred Nzo, although facing its own developmental challenges, lies closer to KwaZulu-Natal, a province with more economic opportunities and infrastructure that spill over into the district. Similarly, O.R. Tambo District, while underdeveloped in parts, benefits from its strategic position along the Wild Coast and government-driven development initiatives aimed at tourism and coastal infrastructure. By contrast, Chris Hani District does not enjoy these relative advantages, making it an appropriate setting to explore the realities of SMMEs that often operate with minimal support, limited access to finance, and fewer opportunities to integrate into government supply chains.

#### **4.4 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS WITH THEMES AND SUB-THEMES FROM SMMES ON THE SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES OF THE DOT IN THE CHRIS HANI DISTRICT**

##### **4.4.1 PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPLY CHAIN EFFECTIVENESS**

###### **Theme 1: Overall experience with the DoT's supply chain processes**

It was anticipated that SMMEs and suppliers would hold mostly unfavourable views of the Department of Transport's supply chain processes. This expectation was informed by existing literature on public procurement in South Africa, which points to recurring challenges such as delays in service delivery, poor communication, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic inefficiencies. Given that SMMEs usually function with limited resources and rely on steady cash flow and timely procurement outcomes, it was reasonable to expect that they would express dissatisfaction with the DoT's procedures.

### **Sub-theme 1.1: Satisfaction with timeliness**

- SMMEs were anticipated to be frustrated by delays in order processing, payment cycles, and delivery schedules, given how such inefficiencies directly affect their operations.

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Communication and transparency**

- It was anticipated that SMMEs would be dissatisfied with the Department of Transport's approach to communication and transparency within its supply chain processes. Studies on public sector procurement in South Africa consistently point to challenges such as limited feedback, unclear tender results, and insufficient support for small businesses. Given that SMMEs often face difficulties in meeting compliance requirements and depend on clear, timely communication to compete fairly, it was expected that they would view the DoT's processes as unclear and unresponsive. Since transparency is a key element of equitable procurement, and its absence is often linked to perceptions of bias or unfairness, it was therefore anticipated that SMMEs would highlight poor information sharing and a lack of openness in decision making.

### **Sub-theme 1.3: Fairness in bidding processes**

- It was anticipated that SMMEs would question the fairness of the Department of Transport's bidding processes. Research on public procurement in South Africa frequently points to challenges such as favouritism, corruption, and unequal access, which often place smaller businesses at a disadvantage.

### **Sub-theme 1.4: Quality of support from DoT**

- It was expected that SMMEs would feel dissatisfied with the support provided by the Department of Transport. Research shows that many government departments offer limited guidance, training, or resources to small businesses. Given their resource constraints, SMMEs were anticipated to feel left to navigate complex procurement processes on their own, viewing the DoT's support as insufficient or inconsistent.

## **4.4.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY SMMES**

## **Theme 2: Financial and resource constraints**

It was expected that SMMEs would point to financial and resource challenges as key obstacles to participating in the Department of Transport's supply chain processes. Research shows that small businesses often struggle with cash flow, limited access to funding, and shortages of staff or technical capacity. Because of these constraints, SMMEs were likely to face difficulties in meeting tender requirements, coping with delays, and investing in skills or capacity development. These limitations were expected to affect both their ability to compete for contracts and their overall experience with the DoT's processes.

#### **Sub-theme 2.1: Difficulty securing credit**

➤ It was expected that SMMEs would report challenges in accessing credit or financing to support their participation in the Department of Transport's procurement processes. Previous research highlights that small businesses in South Africa often struggle to obtain loans due to strict lending requirements, lack of collateral, or limited financial history. Given that SMMEs typically rely on external funding to manage cash flow, purchase materials, or cover operational costs while awaiting payments, it was anticipated that difficulties in securing credit would be a significant barrier to their ability to compete effectively for DoT contracts.

#### **Sub-theme 2.2: Limited access to technology and infrastructure**

➤ It was expected that SMMEs would face challenges due to limited access to technology and infrastructure. Many small businesses lack the digital tools, reliable internet, or equipment needed to meet tender requirements and manage administrative tasks efficiently. These limitations were likely to make it harder for them to compete effectively in the DoT's procurement processes.

### **Theme 3: Capacity and skills deficiency**

It was expected that SMMEs would report challenges related to limited capacity and skills when participating in the Department of Transport's supply chain processes. It was anticipated that SMMEs would report struggling with preparing bids, managing projects, and fulfilling contractual obligations. Such deficiencies were expected to affect both their ability to compete for contracts and their overall satisfaction with the DoT's supply chain processes

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Lack of management expertise**

➤ It was expected that SMMEs would struggle with limited management expertise, affecting their ability to participate effectively in the DoT's supply chain processes. Many small businesses lack experience in planning, organizing, and overseeing projects, which can make it difficult to meet tender requirements, manage contracts, and maintain smooth operations. These gaps were anticipated to hinder their competitiveness and overall satisfaction with the procurement process.

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Skilled workforce shortages**

➤ SMMEs were expected to share the profiles of their employees, in terms of the skills sets, work experience and knowledge that is relevant to managing and operating within their organisations. They were also expected to elaborate on the tasks that are performed by owners from those that are performed by managers and employees.

## **Theme 4: Regulatory and administrative barriers**

SMMEs were expected to share their experiences with regulatory and administrative requirements that influence their participation in the Department of Transport's supply chain processes.

### **Sub-theme 4.1: compliance with regulations**

For SMMEs to do business with government, they are required to meet several regulatory and compliance obligations. These rules are intended to ensure transparency and accountability, but many small businesses find them difficult to navigate Sople, V.V., (2016).

Another major compliance issue relates to Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE). SMMEs are required to provide either a B-BBEE certificate or a sworn affidavit, and this plays a big role in how their bids are scored. Similarly, all suppliers must be registered on the National Treasury's Central Supplier Database (CSD), which involves uploading and regularly updating company and banking information Mpehle, Z. and Mudogwa, R.M., (2020).

The questions asked from SMMEs under this theme were guided by these requirements. The aim was to understand how well they grasp these regulations, whether they find them burdensome, and how compliance obligations affect their ability to participate in supply chain

processes.

## **Sub-theme 4.2: Perceived corruption in procurement**

A recurring issue raised by participants was the perception of corruption and favouritism within the Department of Transport's procurement processes. Many SMMEs felt that the system was not always transparent and that smaller businesses were often at a disadvantage. SMMEs consistently raised concerns about the complexity of compliance requirements when engaging in the DoT's supply chain. These concerns are supported by existing regulatory frameworks. For example, to do business with government, all suppliers must be registered on the National Treasury's Central Supplier Database (CSD) and regularly update their company and banking details. In addition, the Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act (PPPFA) and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act 53 of 2003 require that companies provide a B-BBEE certificate or sworn affidavit, which plays a critical role in how bids are scored (Bolton, 2006; Republic of South Africa, 2008).

One participant stated:

You can submit everything they ask for, but in the end, the same companies are always winning tenders. It feels like they already know who they want before the process even starts.

This sentiment reflects a lack of trust in the fairness of procurement practices. Similar concerns are echoed in the literature, where Ambe and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012) point out that corruption and manipulation of procurement processes remain significant challenges in South Africa's public sector. The participants' experiences therefore support the existing view that corruption undermines fair competition and discourages small businesses from fully participating.

Other SMMEs expressed frustration with what they perceived as preferential treatment for larger or more connected enterprises:

We don't have the same networks as big companies. Sometimes it feels like if you don't know someone inside, your proposal doesn't even get a proper look.

This interpretation aligns with Bolton's (2006) argument that while procurement legislation aims to promote fairness and equity, in practice, smaller businesses often struggle because processes can be influenced by relationships and political connections.

Not all participants, however, were entirely negative. A few acknowledged that processes sometimes worked well:

I can't say it is always bad. There are times when things are done properly and timelines are kept. But the problem is the inconsistency.

This highlights that while corruption and unfairness are perceived to be widespread, there are pockets of good practice within the Department. The inconsistency itself creates uncertainty for SMMEs, making it difficult to plan and participate confidently.

The lack of transparency was another recurring theme. One SMME remarked:

They don't explain why you didn't get the tender. You just see the results and move on. It would help if there were feedback, so we know where to improve.

### **4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

**Theme 5: Enhancing fairness and transparency** involves improving the transparency, clarity, and equity of processes within an organization or system.

#### **Sub-theme 5.1: Improved communication channels**

➤ SMMEs recommended better communication channels between the DoT and suppliers, including regular updates on procurement processes and outcomes.

#### **Sub-theme 5.2: Transparent and streamlined bidding process**

➤ Calls were made for the DoT to implement more transparent and streamlined bidding processes to ensure fair competition among businesses.

**Theme 6: Support for capacity building and technology** refers to efforts aimed at strengthening an organization's abilities and infrastructure.

#### **Sub-theme 6.1: Financial and technical support**

➤ SMMEs suggested the introduction of financial assistance programs to help businesses secure credit and invest in technology that meets the DoT's requirements.

### **Sub-theme 6.2: Training and development programs**

- Most participants recommended that the DoT offer training and mentorship programs to help SMMEs enhance their managerial and technical capacities.

**Theme 7: Addressing corruption and bureaucracy** involves tackling unethical practices and reducing excessive administrative procedures within an organization or system.

### **Sub-theme 7.1: Anti-corruption measures**

- Several SMMEs emphasized the need for stricter anti-corruption measures and greater accountability within the DoT to reduce unfair procurement practices.

### **Sub-theme 7.2: Simplified regulatory processes**

- SMMEs called for simplified regulatory and administrative procedures to reduce the time and costs associated with compliance.

## **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the analysis and interpretation of findings from interviews with SMMEs regarding the Department of Transport's (DoT) supply chain management (SCM) practices in the Chris Hani District. Guided by Stakeholder Theory and the Resource Based View, the analysis highlighted how SMMEs perceive current SCM processes, the challenges they face, and their recommendations for improvement.

The first section examined perceptions of SCM effectiveness. Most SMMEs expressed dissatisfaction, citing delays in payments and procurement processes, poor communication, lack of transparency, perceived unfairness in bidding, and insufficient support from the DoT.

The second section explored the challenges SMMEs face. These included financial and resource constraints, particularly difficulties in accessing credit, limited technology and infrastructure, shortages of skilled employees, and inadequate management expertise. Regulatory and administrative barriers also emerged as major obstacles, with participants noting the complexity

of compliance requirements and raising strong concerns about corruption, favouritism, and lack of feedback in procurement decisions.

The third section presented recommendations for improvement. SMMEs proposed enhanced communication and feedback mechanisms, greater transparency and fairness in bidding, financial and technical support, and targeted training and mentorship to strengthen their capacity. They also emphasized the need for stricter anti-corruption measures, accountability in procurement, and simplified regulatory processes to make participation less burdensome.

The chapter underscored the difficult operating environment of SMMEs in Chris Hani District, shaped by historical underdevelopment, weak infrastructure, and limited opportunities compared to more urbanised districts in the Eastern Cape. Despite these challenges, participants provided practical suggestions that, if implemented, could foster a more inclusive, transparent, and supportive supply chain system between the DoT and local SMMEs.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter concludes the study on the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the Department of Transport's (DoT) supply chain practices in the Chris Hani District. The primary objective of this chapter is to address the research questions and objectives set out earlier in the study, offering a critical discussion based on the findings.

It will also provide a summary of the key findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations for improving the DoT's supply chain practices. Additionally, areas requiring further investigation will be highlighted. The chapter will revisit the main goals of the study, as outlined in the first chapter, and it will present the findings in relation to the following research questions:

- To explore the effectiveness of the Department of Transport's supply chain management practices as perceived by SMMEs in the Chris Hani District.
- To identify the challenges faced by SMMEs in engaging with the DoT's supply chain processes.
- To assess the role of DoT in supporting SMMEs and fostering their participation in the supply chain.
- To propose solutions to improve the relationship and collaboration between the DoT and SMMEs in the Chris Hani District.

### **5.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM RE STATED**

Since the end of apartheid, South Africa has made strides in enhancing its ability to compete in the global market (Mkodzongi and Rusenga, 2021). To support communities that were previously excluded from economic participation due to apartheid, the South African government has introduced a range of corrective actions (Mkodzongi and Rusenga, 2021). The role of SMMEs is one of these corrective actions, and while progress has been slow, municipalities have been tasked with ensuring that local communities have equal access to socio-economic opportunities. According to Botha et al.

(2021), the South African government's goals for SMME development are being pursued during a period when the country is striving to meet the high expectations of its citizens for a successful transition toward a more democratic and economically inclusive society. SMMEs have been identified as key drivers of inclusive economic growth both globally and within South Africa (Botha et al., 2021).

The Department of Transport (DoT) plays a crucial role in facilitating economic growth and development in South Africa, particularly in rural and underserved regions. However, despite various government initiatives aimed at promoting economic inclusion, SMMEs in the Chris Hani District continue to face significant challenges in engaging with the DoT's supply chain processes. These challenges often hinder their participation in public procurement, limiting their potential to contribute to local economic development. Although the government has implemented measures to support SMME growth, such as preferential procurement and capacity-building programs, these efforts have not fully addressed the systemic barriers faced by SMMEs.

### **5.3 REALIZATION OF THE STUDY OBJECTIVES**

➤ **Objective 1:** To investigate the perceptions of SMMEs on the overall effectiveness of the Department of Transport's (DoT) supply chain processes in the Chris Hani District.

The objective was achieved, as the findings revealed that SMMEs hold mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of the DoT's supply chain processes. On one hand, several participants expressed dissatisfaction, citing persistent delays in order processing, inadequate communication between the Department and suppliers, and perceptions of unfairness in the bidding and evaluation processes. These concerns point to inefficiencies that undermine trust and hinder the participation of smaller businesses. On the other hand, a few participants acknowledged certain satisfactory elements, such as compliance with formal procurement procedures and opportunities provided through tender notices. The evidence suggests that while the system is functional in some respects, its effectiveness is undermined by operational shortcomings that negatively affect SMMEs.

➤ **Objective 2:** To examine the challenges faced by SMMEs in the DoT's supply chain processes in the Chris Hani District.

The objective was successfully achieved, as the study uncovered several critical challenges that hinder SMMEs' effective participation in the DoT's supply chain processes. Many participants highlighted persistent financial constraints, particularly difficulties in securing credit and maintaining healthy cash flows, as a major limitation. Limited access to technology and inadequate infrastructure further restricted their ability to compete effectively. Shortages of skills and expertise within their businesses were reported as ongoing barriers, making it difficult for SMMEs to meet technical and administrative requirements. Burdensome regulatory compliance processes also emerged as a significant concern, as they often consumed time and resources that small enterprises could ill afford. These challenges contribute to the vulnerability of SMMEs and limit their ability to fully benefit from available supply chain opportunities

➤ **Objective 3:** To explore the recommendations for improving the DoT's supply chain processes based on SMMEs' feedback.

In 2020, the Chris Hani District Municipality (CHDM) had a GDP of approximately R 34.5 billion, contributing 8.15% of the Eastern Cape's total GDP (R 423 billion) and 0.63% of South Africa's national GDP (R 5.52 trillion). The district's economic growth is notable as its GDP nearly doubled from R 18.8 billion in 2010 to R 34.5 billion in 2020. While still a relatively small share of the national economy, this reflects tangible progress (Chris Hani District Municipality, n.d.).

At the national level, the transport sector contributes around 8% of GDP, covering logistics, freight, road, air, and sea transport. Logistics and freight alone account for approximately 10.2% of GDP, employing over 1.2 million people. SMMEs in the transport sector are vital as of 2022 data, they employed over 300,000 people nationally, indicating both the sector's dynamism and its capacity for job creation. SANRAL's transformation initiatives are boosting SMME participation in 2024/25, they achieved nearly 99.7% of routine road maintenance spend and 77% of other spend directed to Black owned SMMEs, engaging over 2,200 SMMEs across the country Varnavskii, V.G., (2021).

This objective was achieved, as SMMEs proposed several recommendations for improving the supply chain processes, including enhancing communication channels with the DoT, streamlining and increasing transparency in the bidding process, providing financial and technical support to SMMEs, and introducing training and capacity-building programs to improve managerial and

technical skills.

➤ **Objective 4:** To evaluate the role of SMMEs in contributing to economic growth in the Chris Hani District and identify ways to enhance their sustainability.

Objective Four was successfully met, as the study examined how SMMEs, despite encountering various challenges, play a significant role in driving regional economic growth through job creation, producing goods and services, and promoting entrepreneurship. It also identified key areas for improvement, including the need to address financial limitations and strengthen the support offered by the DoT to ensure the long-term viability of SMMEs within the supply chain.

## **5.4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The study investigated the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain practices of the DoT in the Chris Hani District. The findings uncovered key themes related to the effectiveness of supply chain practices, challenges encountered by SMMEs, and areas for improvement.

### **5.4.1 PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPLY CHAIN EFFECTIVENESS**

SMMEs provided varied perspectives on the effectiveness of DoT's supply chain operations.

#### **Timeliness:**

While some participants found the DoT's timelines satisfactory, a considerable number raised concerns about frequent delays in the processing of orders and delivery. These delays often disrupted their operational schedules and affected their ability to meet contractual obligations.

#### **Communication and Transparency:**

Many SMMEs expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of transparency in procurement processes. Stakeholders cited unclear guidelines and inconsistent communication from the DoT as major frustrations, leading to confusion and mistrust.

#### **Fairness in Bidding Processes:**

Smaller enterprises perceived a lack of fairness in the bidding process. They believed that larger, well-established businesses had an advantage due to superior resources, networks, and familiarity with procurement systems.

Participants viewed the DoT's quality of support during the bidding and procurement processes as inadequate. SMMEs reported limited guidance, which left them struggling to navigate the complexities of the supply chain system.

#### **5.4.2 CHALLENGES FACED BY SMMEs**

The study identified several barriers that hindered the ability of SMMEs to thrive within the DoT's supply chain framework.

##### **Financial and Resource Constraints:**

Many SMMEs faced difficulties securing credit, which limited their ability to finance contracts and invest in operational improvements. A lack of access to modern technology and insufficient infrastructure further compounded their challenges, reducing their competitiveness and efficiency.

##### **Capacity and Skills Deficiency:**

A significant number of SMMEs lacked managerial expertise, which hindered their ability to effectively handle complex procurement processes. The shortage of skilled workers was another recurring challenge, with many enterprises struggling to recruit personnel with the necessary technical skills to meet DoT requirements.

##### **Regulatory and Administrative Barriers:**

Participants reported that compliance with procurement regulations was cumbersome and time-consuming, with excessive bureaucracy creating unnecessary delays.

Corruption and perceived unfair practices within the procurement system were frequently highlighted as critical obstacles. Smaller businesses felt disadvantaged, as they lacked the resources to navigate these systemic challenges.

### 5.4.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

The findings suggest that while SMMEs play a vital role in the local economy, several systemic inefficiencies and challenges within the DoT's supply chain practices hinder their potential. Issues such as delays, poor communication, and a lack of transparency not only erode trust but also create barriers to entry for smaller businesses. Furthermore, financial constraints, skill shortages, and burdensome regulatory requirements exacerbate the challenges faced by SMMEs, limiting their ability to compete effectively.

This study underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions to enhance fairness, transparency, and support for SMMEs within the DoT's supply chain practices. By addressing these issues, the department can empower SMMEs to fulfill their role as key drivers of economic growth and job creation in the Chris Hani District.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.5.1 SUPPORT LONG-TERM SMME DEVELOPMENT

**Capacity Building Programs:** Invest in long-term development programs that equip SMMEs with the tools to grow sustainably.

**Collaboration Opportunities:** Foster partnerships between SMMEs and larger corporations to encourage knowledge transfer and mentorship.

### 5.5.2 PROVIDE FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

**Access to Credit:** Partner with financial institutions to create accessible loan products tailored to the needs of SMMEs.

**Subsidies and Grants:** Introduce financial assistance programs, such as subsidies or grants, to help SMMEs invest in technology and infrastructure.

**Technology Upgrades:** Facilitate access to affordable modern technology and offer training on its usage to improve operational efficiency.

### **5.5.3 IMPROVE TIMELINESS AND DELIVERY EFFICIENCY**

**Streamline Processes:** The DoT should adopt digital tools and automated systems to reduce delays in order processing and delivery.

**Set Clear Timelines:** Establish and communicate realistic timelines for procurement activities to ensure SMMEs can plan effectively.

## **5.6 AREAS FOR FUTURE STUDIES**

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following areas are suggested for future research:

### **5.6.1 BROADER GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE**

Future studies could explore SMMEs' perceptions of supply chain practices in other districts or provinces to provide a comparative analysis of challenges and opportunities across South Africa.

### **5.6.2 EVALUATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

Conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of government policies and interventions aimed at supporting SMMEs, particularly in supply chain management.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study set out to explore the perceptions of Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) regarding the supply chain management (SCM) practices of the Department of Transport in the Chris Hani District. The findings revealed that while there are policies and frameworks intended to support SMMEs, many participants perceive the system as lacking fairness, efficiency, and transparency. Concerns such as delayed payments, limited access to opportunities, bureaucratic barriers, and perceived corruption emerged as central challenges undermining the effectiveness of SCM processes. At the same time, SMMEs expressed the need for better communication, training, and support mechanisms to enhance their participation and competitiveness in the public procurement environment.

The study highlights that while the Department of Transport has an important role in promoting local economic development, significant gaps remain between policy intentions and the lived experiences of SMMEs. Addressing these gaps requires strengthening accountability, fostering inclusivity, and ensuring that procurement practices align with both national regulatory frameworks and the developmental needs of small businesses. By implementing transparent, supportive, and capacity building approaches, the Department can create a more enabling environment that empowers SMMEs to thrive, thereby contributing meaningfully to economic growth and job creation within the Chris Hani District.

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## **ANNEXURE 1**

### **1. Interview Schedule Guide for Research on Supply Chain Management in SMMEs**

My name is Viwe Xuba an MBA student at DUT, this guide is intended to assist in conducting interviews for a study on the perceptions of SMMEs regarding the supply chain processes of the Department of Transport (DoT) in the Chris Hani District. The interviews aim to explore the experiences, challenges, and suggestions of SMME owners who do business with the DoT.

**2. The purpose of the study is to:**

- To examine perceptions of SMMEs on the effectiveness of the DoT's supply chain processes.
- To identify challenges SMMEs face in the DoT's supply chain management practices.
- To recommend mechanisms for the DoT to improve its supply chain practices with SMMEs.

**3. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for the study.**

**4. Demographic profiles of the owners/managers**

**Tick the relevant box**

Position in Business

|       |         |
|-------|---------|
| Owner | Manager |
|-------|---------|

Gender

|      |        |
|------|--------|
| Male | Female |
|------|--------|

Age Group

|       |       |       |       |     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 10-19 | 20-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 51+ |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|

**Level of Education**

|           |        |         |        |       |
|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-------|
| No Matric | Matric | Diploma | Degree | Other |
|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-------|

**5. Background Information**

- Company Details:
- Name of the business
- Type of business (manufacturing, service-oriented, etc.)
- Years in operation
- Location
- Business size

**6. Perceptions of Supply Chain Effectiveness**

- General Perception:
  - How would you describe your overall experience with the DoT's supply chain processes?
- Specific Aspects:
  - Timeliness of order processing and delivery
  - Communication and transparency in procurement processes
  - Fairness and competitiveness in the bidding process
  - Quality of support and assistance from the DoT
- 7. Challenges Faced :**
  - What are the main challenges your business faces when dealing with the DoT's supply chain?
  - How do these challenges impact your business operations?
- Specific Issues:
  - Financial challenges and securing credit
  - Access to technology and infrastructure
  - Management expertise and skilled workforce
  - Regulatory compliance and red tape
  - Corruption and fraud in the procurement process
- 8. Recommendations for Improvement**
  - In your opinion, what changes can the DoT implement to improve its supply chain processes?
- Specific Mechanisms:
  - Policies and practices to enhance fairness and transparency
  - Support for technology adoption and infrastructure development
  - Training and development programs for SMMEs
  - Measures to reduce corruption and improve regulatory compliance

Thank you for participating in this interview and for your time and valuable input.



**From:** Smith, Hedley  
**Sent:** Thursday, 25 July 2024  
**To:** 14:54 Pulo, Nomava  
Njiwa, Busiswa; Xuba, Viwe  
**Cc:** **APPROVE TO CONDUCTED A RESEARCH**  
**Subject:** request for Permission to conduct research {2).docx.pdf; Request for  
**Attachment** Permission to Conduct Research.pdf  
**s:**

Good Ms Nomava

Kindly find attached memorandum for HOD approval

Regards

Smith

DOT e-mail disclaimer and confidentiality: Information transmitted on this email is intended for the recipient(s) only if you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete immediately. This Disclaimer complies with Section 11 of the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act 25 of 2002. POPIA act of 2021 and ICT policy.





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## OFFICE OF THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

32 Cowan Close Ste Ienbosch Park, Schornville | King Williams  
Town, Eastern Cape Private Bag X0023 | Bisho | 5605 | Republic of  
South Africa | [www.ectransport.gov.za](http://www.ectransport.gov.za)

|                |                                                   |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TO</b>      | <b>HEAD OF DEPARTMENT - MR A. FANI</b>            |
| <b>FROM</b>    | <b>MR.V. XUBA</b>                                 |
| <b>M</b>       | <b>19 JULY 2024</b>                               |
| <b>DATE</b>    |                                                   |
| <b>SUBJECT</b> | <b>REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH</b> |
| <b>T</b>       |                                                   |

### 1. PURPOSE

This submission aims to seek approval to conduct research on the perceptions of small to medium enterprises (SMEs) regarding the supply chain practices of the Department of Transport (DoT) in the Chris Hani District. This study is a crucial component of my Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at Durban University of Technology, where I am currently in my second year.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The research aims to explore the challenges SMEs face in their interactions with the DoT and recommend mechanisms for improving the supply chain practices of the department. SMEs are critical to economic growth, job creation, and innovation, but they face significant challenges, particularly in dealing with government procurement processes. This study will provide valuable insights that could lead to more inclusive and supportive supply chain practices.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this request.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

f







J

## REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

VIWEXUBA

STATE ACCOUNTANT (CHRIS HANI DISTRICT)

073 896 6470

RECOMMENDED/ NOT RECOMMENDED

### **COMMENTS** BY THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

The request from the Mr. Viwe Xuba is supported

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H.M SMITH

ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR (CHRIS **HANI**)

COMMENTS BY THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Online

M .A. FANI

ING HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



An efficient, safe, sustainable, affordable and accessible transport system

1aa0000a15



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OUT

**DURBAN UNIVEnS,....-v OF TEC ..**  
**NOLODV INVUVESI VASETHEKININI**  
**VEZOBUCHIAIEPHESHE**

14 July 2024

Office of the District Manager

Eastern Cape Department of  
Transport Chris Hani District

No 92 Cathcart

Road Queenstown

5320

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**Request for Permission to Conduct Research**

Dear Mr. H.M. Smith

My name is Viwe Xuba, and I am a second-year Master's in Business Administration (MBA) student at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my Master's dissertation involves SME's Perceptions of the Supply Chain Practices of the Department of Transport in Chris Hani District.

I am writing to seek your consent to conduct this research within the Department of Transport in Chris Hani District. Your participation and support would be invaluable to my study.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 073 896 6470 or via email at 22383515@dut4life.ac.za or [vjwexuba@yahoo.com](mailto:vjwexuba@yahoo.com)

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely

ViweXuba

Durban University of Technology



**Zertifikat**

**Certificado**

**CERTIFICATE**

**CERTIFICAT**

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale  
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

**Certificat de formation - Training Certificate**

CE DOCUMENT ATTESTE QUE - THIS DOCUMENT CERTIFIES THAT

Viwe Xuba

ATA ©1 1iil 1i'li'

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Module 1 (2023) - Introduction to Research Ethics

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TRREE EN EVALUATION ETHIQUE DE LA RECHERCHE OF THE TRREE TRAINING  
PROGRAN1ME IN RESEARCH ETHICS EVALUATION

Release Date: 2024/05/03

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## LETTER OF INFORMATION

**Title of the Research Study:** PERCEPTIONS OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISE (SMMEs) ON THE SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DoT) IN CHRIS HANI DISTRICT

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Viwe Xuba

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:** Dr. Pillay

### **Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:**

Hello, How are you? I am doing my final year at DUT doing research for my master's degree in business administration.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research

### **What is Research:**

Research is a systematic inquiry aimed at discovering new knowledge or increasing understanding of a topic or issue. It involves the collection, organization, and analysis of evidence to enhance knowledge in a specific area (Study.com, 2021).

### **Summary of the Research**

This study explores the perceptions of SMMEs in the Chris Hani District regarding the supply chain management (SCM) practices of the Department of Transport (DoT). It aims to assess how effective these practices are from the perspective of SMMEs, identify the challenges faced by these businesses, and

propose recommendations for improving SCM processes to support SMME growth.

### **Aims and Objectives**

**Aim:** To understand how SMMEs perceive and experience the SCM practices of the DoT in the Chris Hani District.

#### **Objectives:**

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the current SCM practices of the DoT.
- To identify the challenges faced by SMMEs in engaging with the DoT's SCM processes.
- To propose improvements to enhance fairness, transparency, and support for SMMEs.

### **Procedures to Be Followed**

The study will employ a qualitative research design using semi-structured interviews to gather data. Participants will be interviewed based on a prepared interview guide that covers supply chain effectiveness, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The procedures include:

### **Pre-interview Preparation:**

Participants will be briefed about the research, their role, and the procedures to be followed. Informed consent will be obtained before any data collection begins.

### **Interviews:**

Each participant will engage in a one-on-one semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interviews will take place either face-to-face or online depending on participant preferences and availability. An audio recording will be made of the interviews, with participant permission, for transcription and analysis.

### **Responsibilities of the Participant**

Participants will provide honest feedback on their experiences and perceptions of DoT's SCM processes. They will answer questions related to supply chain efficiency, fairness, challenges, and suggestions for improvement.

Participants are encouraged to provide additional information or insights beyond the structured questions.

### **What Is Expected of Participants**

Participants are expected to provide detailed responses to the interview questions and share their experiences with the DoT's SCM processes.

### **Randomization/Group Allocation**

No randomization or group allocation is involved, as all participants will be interviewed individually.

### **Number of Participants Involved**

The study involves 20 participants, all of whom are representatives of SMMEs operating in the Chris Hani District.

### **Consultation/Interview/Survey Details**

Interview Type: Semi-structured, one-on-one interviews.

Venue: Depending on participant preferences, interviews can be conducted:

In-person at a local venue in the Chris Hani District, such as a community center or office.

Online using video conferencing platforms (e.g., Zoom).

Duration: Each interview is expected to take between 45 minutes to 1 hour.

### **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion: SMMEs operating within the Chris Hani District.

SMMEs that have engaged with the DoT's supply chain processes.

Exclusion: SMMEs that have no experience with the DoT's SCM processes.

Businesses outside of the Chris Hani District.

### **Explanation of Tools and Measurement Outcomes**

Data Collection Tool: The primary tool for data collection will be semi-structured interviews guided by a pre-determined interview schedule.

Measurement Outcome: Thematic analysis will be conducted to extract common themes related to SCM effectiveness, challenges, and areas for improvement, using NVivo software.

### **Follow-Ups**

There will be no follow-up interviews unless further clarification is required after transcription.

### **Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:**

The study poses minimal risk to participants, as it involves non-invasive semi-structured interviews. Potential risks include emotional discomfort when discussing negative experiences with the Department of Transport's

supply chain processes and concerns about confidentiality. To mitigate these, participants can skip any uncomfortable questions, confidentiality will be strictly maintained, and interviews will be scheduled at convenient times. The overall risk is low, with appropriate measures in place to ensure participant well-being.

### **Participant Withdrawal: Reasons and Procedures:**

You can withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without facing any penalties. The researcher may also withdraw you from the study in cases of non-compliance, illness, or emotional distress. If withdrawal occurs, data collection will stop immediately, and confidentiality will be maintained. You may request a debriefing session to discuss your withdrawal, but you're not required to provide a reason for leaving.

### **Benefits:**

While participants may not receive direct benefits, their input could lead to improvements in the Department of Transport's supply chain processes, making them more equitable and supportive of SMMEs. This could result in better access to government contracts and resources, benefiting both individual businesses and the broader SMME community.

### **Remuneration:**

Participants will not receive any monetary compensation or other forms of remuneration for their involvement in the study. Since participation is voluntary, no reimbursements or payments will be provided, even if a participant does not complete the study.

### **Costs of the Study:**

Participants will not be expected to cover any costs related to the study.

**Confidentiality:**

Participant confidentiality will be ensured through anonymity, secure data storage, and limited data sharing. Participants will be assigned pseudonyms, and identifying information will be removed from reports. All data will be stored securely and only accessible to the researcher and supervisor. While

confidentiality is prioritized, it may not be guaranteed in legal situations or cases of potential harm, and participants will be informed of these limits before data collection. These measures aim to protect participants' privacy throughout the study.

### **Results:**

The researcher will disseminate the results of the study through several methods:

Final Report: Those interested in the results of the study will be pointed to the DUT repository where the dissertation can be accessed, in approximately 12 months after the survey.

Presentations: Findings may be presented at academic conferences, workshops, or community events to reach a wider audience.

Academic Publications: Results may also be published in relevant academic journals.

Communication of Significant Findings: Any significant new findings will be shared directly with participants via email or follow-up meetings.

### **Research-related Injury:**

In the unlikely event of a research-related injury or adverse reaction, the researcher will prioritize the participant's well-being by encouraging open communication about any discomfort. Participants will be referred to medical professionals for assessment and treatment as needed. While compensation may be discussed on a case-by-case basis, it is not guaranteed. Participants will be informed about alternative procedures or community resources that could provide support. These measures are in place to ensure participants are adequately supported if any issues arise.

### **Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings**

Data will be stored securely in both electronic and hard copy formats. Electronic files will be kept on a password-protected computer and backed up on an encrypted external hard drive, while hard copies will be stored in a

locked filing cabinet. Access will be limited to the researcher and the supervising academic, ensuring no unauthorized individuals can view the data. Security measures include password protection, encryption, and physical locks. Data will be stored for five years after the study's completion and will be securely deleted or destroyed at the end of this period to maintain confidentiality. These protocols ensure participant information is protected throughout and after the research.

**Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:**

Please contact the researcher on (073 896 6470), my supervisor (tel no. 073 635 0582) or the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director of research and Postgraduate Support at [researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:researchdirector@dut.ac.za)



## CONSENT

**Full Title of the Study:** PERCEPTIONS OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISE (SMMEs) ON THE SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DoT) IN CHRIS HANI DISTRICT

**Names of Researcher/s:** Viwe Xuba

### Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, \_\_\_\_\_(name of researcher), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: \_\_\_\_\_,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research

which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Full Name of Participant      Date   Time**  
**Right Thumbprint**

**Signature   /**

I, Viwe Xuba (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Viwe Xuba

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Researcher**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Full Name of Witness (If applicable)**



9 December 2024

Mr V Xuba  
P O Box 1319  
Butterworth 4960

**Institutional Research Ethics Committee** Research and  
Postgraduate Support Directorate 2nd Floor, Berwyn Court Gate 1,  
Steve Biko Campus Durban University of Technology

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Dear Mr Xuba

**PERCEPTIONS OF SMALL, MEDIUM AND MICRO ENTERPRISE (SMMES) ON THE SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT (DOT) IN CHRIS HANI DISTRICT**

I am pleased to inform you that Full Approval has been granted to your proposal.

The Proposal has been allocated the following Ethical Clearance number **IREC 284/24**. Please use this number in all communication with this office.

Approval has been granted for a period of **ONE YEAR**, before the expiry of which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the Safety Monitoring and Annual Recertification Report form which can be found in the Standard Operating Procedures [SOP's] of the DUT-IREC. This form must be submitted to the DUT-IREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

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**Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form**

**together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.**

Yours Sincerely

Professor P Mashau

Chairperson: DUT-IREC



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