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The influence of shared values in the management of project-based B2B  
professional relationships

Yasar DOGAN

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University of Bradford

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## **Abstract**

Yasar Dogan

The influence of shared values in the management of project-based B2B professional relationships.

Keywords: Shared-values, professional relationships, B2B relationships, professional services, manufacturing projects.

In this doctoral study I conceptualise shared values in order to explore a management problem from my work place environment. I observe that business-to-business (B2B) relationships between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers terminate; project managers switching to other vendors and self-employed consulting engineers losing their contract.

The findings from the doctoral study show major influence of the shared values in managing project based professional relationships. Specifically, the elements of B2B professional relationships “commitment” and “trust” embedded in relationship performance show managerial implications.

Furthermore, the literature review revealed a lack of qualitative knowledge in the research domain of B2B relationships. Hence, the findings from the doctoral study fill this gap and contribute to the academic knowledge by providing practise based qualitative evidence.

This doctoral study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, building on previous research articles, six elements of B2B professional relationships were refined and tested through qualitative interviews in order to explore their relevance in the B2B professional relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. As a result from the first phase, a conceptual model of shared values was developed. In the second phase, the conceptual model of the shared values developed from the first phase was explored and validated through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

## **Acknowledgements/ Dedications**

Before starting this professional doctorate programme I pursued the idea of conducting a doctoral study in the management practice. My intention was to continue my education without suspending my professional life.

This is a DBA programme. I went for this programme because it upheld exactly my expectations. I was able to explore a management problem from my work base environment, and at the same time continuing my professional life.

This doctoral study is about exploring a management problem from the management practice. The findings show major influence of shared values in managing project based professional relationships. Specifically, the elements of B2B professional relationships “commitment” and “trust” embedded in relationship performance show managerial implications. Furthermore, the findings revealed the existence of a market segment for self-employed consulting engineers. It has an equivalent status to an industry sector; it is known but not recognized. This finding is unique because I have not found any research article or textbook dealing with the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers.

I hope that the findings of this doctoral study have contributed to the understanding of the concept of shared values in the management of project based professional relationships and inspire academics and professional alike for exploring the unrecognized market segment for self-employed consulting engineers.

This doctoral study was completed with the support of my supervisor Gillian Wright from the Manchester Metropolitan University. I want to thank Professor Gillian Wright for her valuable support starting from the research stage until the end of the doctoral study.

I also thank the participants who have contributed to this doctoral study as interviewees.

The completion of this professional doctorate opened a new perspective. Now I feel being the necessary link between the academia and the management practice to bridge both domains in order to transfer knowledge. It is not a one way transferal; rather practical knowledge can be transferred to the academia and vice versa. Both domains benefit from contribution to existing knowledge. Therefore, from my personal viewpoint, there will be a post-doctoral scientific agenda, i.e. continuing with research and transferring knowledge between academia and management practice or vice versa.

Yasar Dogan, July 2016

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## List of abbreviations

<b>ASA</b>	American Sociological Association
<b>B2B</b>	Business-to-Business
<b>CCI</b>	Conceptual Category Indicator
<b>CSR</b>	Case Study Research
<b>DBA</b>	Doctor of Business Administration
<b>e.g.</b>	for example
<b>f2f</b>	Face to face
<b>GT</b>	Grounded Theory
<b>IT</b>	Information Technology
<b>m</b>	million
<b>OEM</b>	Original Equipment Manufacturer
<b>PMI</b>	Project Management Institute
<b>p.</b>	page
<b>Q</b>	Question
<b>Q-1</b>	Quadrant 1
<b>ROI</b>	Return on Invest
<b>SAP</b>	Software of SAP-Company
<b>SME</b>	Small-and-midsized Enterprise
<b>SEP</b>	Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy
<b>SMART</b>	Specific Measurable Action Realistic Time
<b>UB</b>	University of Bradford
<b>USP</b>	Unique Selling Proposition
<b>viz.</b>	that means

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction:**

#### **1.1 Motivation**

The motivation behind the interest for conducting this doctoral study in the context of professional relationships is twofold. First, I participate in the business-to-business (B2B) market segment for engineering services in the region of Cologne, Germany for five years in a consultancy role. I provide engineering services for the project controls of large & major capital projects (cost controlling and project management support). This participation in this market segment allows developing managerial sensitivity for the expectations of clients, but also for emerging phenomena that may lead to management problems. Second, the interest for conducting the doctoral study in this field of business is driven by the vast market figures for engineering services in Germany. According to the Federal Statistical Office Germany (2011) the market for architecture and engineering services in Germany measures around €51.7 b; around €43.5 b (84.2%) falls into the category of engineering services. The majority of these engineering service providers is small-and mid-sized enterprises (SME). From this viewpoint, it makes also a great deal of sense to explore in-depth the concept of shared values in the context of professional relationships.

## **1.2 Research context**

The research context of this doctoral study is a business case wherein the vendor client relationship between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers (vendors) is explored. The client organisation is a manufacturing company in the region of Cologne (Germany), but in this business case it is represented by the project managers. Thus, the focus of the doctoral study is on the B2B professional relationship between the project managers representing the client organization and self-employed consulting engineers. This is important because the management problem is that relationships terminate, project managers switching to other vendors and self-employed consulting engineers losing their contract. The reason is that the project managers are often unsatisfied and terminate their relationships with self-employed consulting engineers. This doctoral study is an attempt to explore this management problem.

The vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is a project based cooperation wherein large and major capital projects are implemented with an investment value > € 20 m. Significant for the doctoral study is the obvious portion (~80%) of self-employed consulting engineers that makes-up the project management team. This study has evolved from my own experiences. In this capacity offering business service comprising the management and controls of the project resources (budget, expenditure and man-hours), SAP-support (enterprise resource planning tool) and project management support. This is thus a role of the “Project Services Management” in the client organisation.

My management role provides an evidence for a close cooperation with the project managers especially in the capacity of membership of the project management board. There are further posts which are outsourced to self-employed consulting engineers, e.g. construction or engineering management, and it is important to understand the project business model of the client organisation. The technical complexity of the industry projects caused by intermingled business and engineering skills is the reason for the outsourcing of the aforementioned key posts to self-employed consulting engineers. For instance, the project services manager must be experienced in project business administration, acquainted with contemporary IT tools and at the same time show affinity to technical engineering. The client organisation cannot cover this kind of eclectic posts with its personnel which results in an expertise gap and seems to be a formidable challenge for the client organisation. In order to cope with this challenge, the expertise gap is filled by contracting self-employed consulting engineers who are highly experienced in the industrial project business.

Although the focus of the doctoral study is on existing business relationship, it is worth mentioning how these relationships emerge. Prior research studies and my work based experience underpin the notion that recommendation by the project managers is the key marketing channel that leads to the emergence of the project based business relationships between the project managers and the self-employed consulting engineers. The background information about the research context mentioned hitherto shows that the business segment wherein the doctoral study is conducted is a B2B market segment for professional services.



The B2B market segment is widely discussed in the literature, but the relevance for the doctoral study is the fact that B2B market segments do not emerge; rather they are formed by the organizations because they define their personnel resources and competencies by combining their functions, know-how and processes (Nickel 2007, p. 20). This is exactly reflected by the vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The unique relationship dyad between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is shown in the following relationship model:

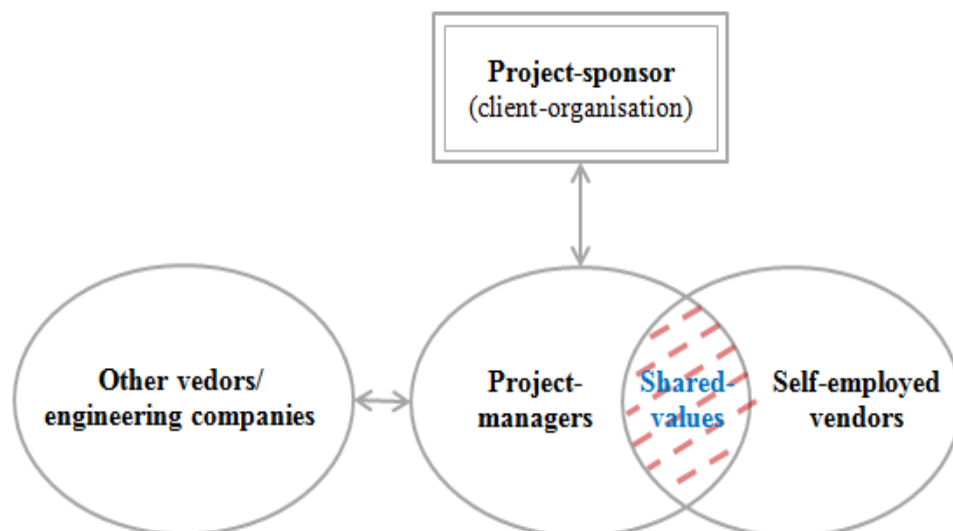


Figure 1 *Relationship model*

The unique relationship dyad between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is an evidence for this B2B market segment. Azziz et al. (2014, p.38) propound that certain market segments show uniqueness regarding their participants.

The access to certain market segments is limited to a group of business participants that have unique needs (Azziz et al. 2014, p.38). The uniqueness does not necessarily refer to the niche markets or intellectual property; rather it can refer to needs resulting from organizational specific regulations or processes, too. The vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is an endogenous market segment which is created due to lack of project expertise of the client organization. This is in line with the findings of Azziz et al. (2014, p.38). Special products and exceptional or customized demands emerge alongside with the creation of market segments (Jebarajakirthy and Lobo 2014, p.39).

However, significant for the doctoral study is the relationship between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers because in this business environment often relationships terminate, vendors losing their contracts or project managers switching to other vendors. The phenomenon of switching relationships is not confined to this business case because Karantinou and Hogg (2009, p. 250), too, observe this phenomenon in other research context.

### **1.3 Management problem and research question**

As outlined in the previous section, the underlying management problem is that relationships terminate, vendors losing their contracts or project managers switching to other vendors. Since this is often observed, it is to question why it occurs.

Choosing an observed phenomenon from the business environment is in line with the suggestion of Boudah (2011, p.22). The personal experience and the daily engagement with the observed phenomenon enables the researcher to first get a quick access to the management domain and second s/he can judge the significance of the phenomenon that causes a management problem.

In order to explore the management problem of this doctoral study the following research question were raised: **“How does the concept of shared values influence the management of B2B project based professional relationships”?** The research question addresses to three major points: first shared values, second influence of shared values and third professional relationship management.

## **1.4 Research aim and objectives**

The overall research aim is to explore and validate the conceptual model of the shared values through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

In general, this doctoral study is an inductive study with an open end outcome. There are not any expectations about the outcome. However, a conceptual model of the shared values was developed from the previous pilot study which is explored from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, it is to expect that the conceptual model of the shared values will play a role in this research setting, but solely the research outcome of this doctoral study will provide evidence and reveal which role the conceptual model plays.

### **Objectives**

Objective 1: exploration and evaluation of how the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers understand the B2B market segment they are in.

Objective 2: understanding and critically assessment of why consulting engineers are hired for key posts like construction, engineering and project services management.

Objective 3: exploration and evaluation of the perception of shared values by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

## **Explanation and clarification of the objectives**

Objective 1:

The exploration of the objective 1 is aimed at gathering information about the business environment of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. It is expected that the information collected from this exploration allows an insight into the perception of the market environment by its participants.

The insight into the perception and understanding of the market segment will add new value to the existing knowledge because the literature review shows a lack of evidence and knowledge for the market segment wherein the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers participate. In fact, there are not research studies or textbooks available that consider or explore profoundly the aforementioned market segment. Therefore, the exploration of the objective 1 will contribute to the understanding of this market segment. Furthermore, the findings from the objective 1 can be used for different research setting wherein other types of professional relationships are conceptualised and explored.

Collectively, the objective 1 is primary aimed at exploring how the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers perceive and understand the market segment they are in. However, it is expected that the knowledge gained from this exploration contributes to the existing knowledge. The knowledge about the market segment may motivate researchers to conceptualise different types of business relationships in this kind of market segment wherein professional relationships occur.

Since the literature review shows a lack of knowledge further knowledge about the market segment for professional relationships is needed.

Objective 2:

The objective 2 is aimed at the understanding and critically assessment of why consulting engineers are hired for the key posts like construction, engineering and project services management.

The objective 2 explores the professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. The insight into these professional characteristics will enable me to critically assess and understand which professional characteristics play a role in the successful professional relationships. The role and influence of the professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers in this kind of research settings is less explored. Therefore, the outcome of the objective 2 will add new value to the concept of the professional relationships.

Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the understanding of the professional characteristics will contribute to the understanding of the market segment in the objective 1. The knowledge gained from the objective 2 may provide evidence that can be used for the exploration and understanding of different kind of professional relationships.

Collectively, the objective 2 is aimed at exploring and understanding of the professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. However, the objective 2 builds upon the objective 1 because the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers are the participants in the market segment subject to the objective 1. Therefore,

the knowledge gained from the objective 2 will ultimately contribute to the objective 1. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the objective 2 may motivate researchers to explore the professional relationships other than in this doctoral study.

#### Objective 3:

The objective 3 is the principal objective of this doctoral study. It is about the exploration and evaluation of the perception of the shared values by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

The objectives 1 and 2 are supportive objectives in order to understand the research environment and the interviewees of this doctoral study. The objective 1 explores the market segment, the objective 2 explores the professional characteristics, but the objective 3 explores the professional relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers from the micro perspective. Specifically, it explores the conceptualised idea of shared values. It is aimed at understanding of the perception of the shared values because the shared values are the mutual values appreciated by both business parties. Hence, it is expected that the knowledge gained from the objective 3 will contribute to the understanding of the role and influence of the shared values on the success of the professional relationships.

The objective 3 is significant for this doctoral study because it will provide evidence whether the conceptual model is valid, invalid or need to be modified. Furthermore, it will provide practise based qualitative evidence for the role and influence of the shared values.

The aforementioned evidence contributes to the qualitative research domains. However, the research domain of B2B relationship wherein the numeric perspective dominates can profit from the knowledge gained from the objective 3 because the six elements of the shared values were refined predominantly from quantitative research articles. Consequently, the knowledge gained from the exploration of the shared values may affect positively the quantitative research domain. By using this qualitative knowledge new research perspectives may be opened or existing research can be revisited.

Collectively, the objective 3 is at the heart centre of this doctoral study. The exploration of the shared values will influence ultimately the validation of the conceptual model and finding an answer to the research question. The knowledge gained from the objective 3 will contribute to the qualitative research domain by providing practise based evidence, but it may also influence the conceptualisation and understanding of other professional relationships in different research settings. For instance, the qualitative knowledge gained from the exploration of the shared values can be used to explore the success factors of B2B professional relationships in quantitative research settings.



## Chapter 2

### **Literature review:**

In this chapter an extensive literature review on B2B professional relationships is undertaken. It is primarily aimed at exploring the elements of professional relationships which define the success of the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, in order to understand the elements of professional relationships an exploration on the professional services and B2B relationships was undertaken.

The section 2.1 covers the exploration of professional services; the characteristics of professional services and its relevance to the business practice. The section 2.2 covers the exploration of B2B relationships; the emergence of strategic partnerships and its value for the business practice. The section 2.3 covers the exploration of the elements of professional relationships; it explores the characteristics and relevance of the aforementioned elements for the success of professional relationships. Finally, the sections 2.4 to 2.6 conclude and summarize the literature review and its outcome.

The purpose of the literature review is to explore the existing research articles in order to understand the existing knowledge about professional services, B2B relationships and elements of professional relationships. The outcomes of the literature review inform the objectives of this doctoral study and underpin the conceptual model of shared values.

## **2.1 Professional services**

This section describes the outcome of the literature review on professional services. According to the consultancy company PricewaterhouseCoopers (pwc), professional services are all kind of external consultancy support which is aimed at improving the productivity and growth across the economy (pwc homepage). The professional service providers support companies of all size with specialists' advice (pwc homepage). Hence, the notion of pwc points-out the importance of professional services in the industrial sector because high sophisticated industrial goods require specialists' advice. For instance, Perner et al. (2014, p. 840) note that contemporary organizations invest around 50% of their expenditure for services. There is an increasing interest in professional consultancy (Perner et al. 2014, p. 840). Therefore, according to the authors the increase in interest is a solid evidence for the strategic importance of professional services.

However, the increase of interest in professional services goes beyond the private business; the authors Liang and Laing (2007, p. 709) found out that the paradigm shift in the research domain of marketing affected the B2B and professional services, too. The focus of the academia shifted to B2B relationships and professional services which bestowed them with academic importance and knowledge (Liang and Laing 2007, p. 709). Consequently, professional services became knowledge driven service category which require specialists' capacity and long term experience.

The authors Van der Valk and Axelsson (2015, p. 113) suggest that the degree of complexity is a classification measure for services. The degree of complexity is determined by the technology and science used in a company for development of product and services (Dewick et al 2002, p. 4). Hence, technology intensive industries require knowledge driven services. The knowledge driven service categories are difficult to purchase because of their complexity (Pemer et al. 2014, p. 840). Additionally, professional services are business interactions wherein individuals are involved. Generally, on the one side of the business interaction is the service provider and on the other side the client (Liang and Laing 2007, p. 709). Therefore, the personal involvement of the business partners enhances the complexity of professional services because their personal relationship affects the success of their business relationship (Liang and Laing 2007, p. 709).

The authors Permer et al. (2014, p. 840) refer to three points which cause the complexity of professional services: intangibility, buyer seller interaction and abstractness.

### **Intangibility**

Intangibility is a feature that refers to the immaterialness of service products; i.e. it is not physically available. Matys (2007, p. 13) describes the intangibility of services as “in-concrete feature”. However, services are products which are produced for the needs and requirements of customers (Matys 2007, p. 13).

### **Buyer seller interaction**

According to Permer et al. (2014 p. 840) services are dependent on buyer seller interaction. Therefore, services are delivered and consumed at the same time. Consequently, services are not storable (Matys 2007, p. 14). The quality of services is dependent on the personal characteristics of both business parties. Hence, services are always personal related (Matys 2007; p. 14).

### **Abstractness**

The abstractness is coming along with the non-storable feature of services (Permer et al. 2007, p. 840). Since services are delivered and consumed at the same time, it is difficult to specify, compare and evaluate the services (Permer et al. 2007, p. 840). Hence, services are perceived as risky to purchase and consume (Permer et al. 2007, p. 840).

## **2.2 B2B relationships**

This section describes the outcome of the literature review on B2B relationships. The 1990s show a surge in interest in science concerning the B2B sector. Within this, dyadic relationships between companies became subject to the academic interest. Anderson et al. (1994, p. 1) confirm that traditional industrial value creation, e.g. design and manufacturing, depends on coordinated relationships between the clients and vendors. Hence, the authors note a continuous deconstruction of traditional companies involving all value creation processes. This notion is supported by the industrial trend.

According to Goepfert (2009, p. 136) the value creation of the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) decreased from 30.95% to 29.66% between 1998 and 2003; and the trend is still continuing. This trend explains the focus of the manufacturer on their core competencies. For instance, car manufacturers develop in-house the car engines, body and chassis. Other parts, e.g. axis or cockpit modules are delivered by automotive suppliers. Hence, the trend regarding the focus on core competencies is leading to vendor client relationships between specialists. A great portion of the manufacturing goods is generated within B2B relationships. These relationships are called value adding partnerships (Anderson et al. 1994, p. 1). Within the surge in interest in the B2B sectors and the trend towards B2B vendor client relationships, Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 20) note a paradigm shift and develop a specific focus on professional relationships. Generally, professional relationships emerge in certain business segments within a B2B market. The B2B market segments for professional relationships do not emerge independently; rather they are formed by organizations because they define their personnel resources and competencies by combining their functions, know-how and processes (Nickel 2007, p. 20).

The research domain of B2B relationships set the focus on cooperation and relationship commitment. For instance, Anderson et al. (1994, p. 10) describe cooperation as coordinated activities between two companies in order to create value in the form of goods and services. The relationship commitment, on the other hand, is a perceived continuity or growth in the business relationships (Anderson et al 1994, p. 10).

However, according to Ganesan (1994, p. 1) B2B relationships lead inevitably to mutual dependence. The author suggests long term orientation as success factor in B2B relationships. Hence, the shift from overall value creation in one company to value adding partnerships leads to mutual dependency. All activities within these partnerships are coordinated towards the value creation over a long period of time. It can also be called “strategic partnerships”. Within these strategic partnerships, both business parties set their mutual objectives and coordinate their activities according their needs and benefits.

### **2.3 Elements of professional relationships**

This section describes the outcome of the literature review on shared values; the elements of professional relationships which define the success of the business relationships. With the surge in interest in science concerning the B2B sector and the paradigm shift, academics develop specific focus on professional relationships in the B2B sector. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 20) explore 1994 the nature of relationship marketing (management) by developing a commitment-trust theory wherein successful relationship management is practiced. They theorise that the business partners are committed to their relationship when they recognise the worthiness of maintaining their relationship (Morgan and Hunt 1994, p. 23).

The following sections comprise an examination on shared values. The aim is to develop an understanding of the elements of professional relationships.

### **2.3.1 Commitment in professional relationships**

Generally, committed business partners have quantitative objectives which are mostly related to time and money. Time refers to the duration of the business relationship. When business partners recognize the long-term significance of the relationship, then they show propensity to maintain their relationship. Money, on the other hand, is related to the operative benefit of the relationship. In other words, it is a question of how much turn-over is generated from the business relationship. Although turn-over can be coined as a short-term objective, at the end the business relationship is maintained when acceptable return-on-invest (ROI) is given. Therefore, when monetary benefit is recognized, then the worthiness of maintaining the business relationship is perceived. However, Dwyer et al. (1987, p. 19) suggest consistency as a measurable criterion of commitment. Transferring the idea of consistency into the business practice, it is to assert that living-up to the promises made to the business partners must be consistent. Otherwise, the worthiness of maintaining the business relationship may be questioned. Consequently, the notion of consistency in business relationships is the connecting link to the idea of trust in professional relationships because consistency in living-up promises or expectations contributes to the trustworthiness of the business partners.

The idea of commitment has long been conceptualized in various research domains. Cook and Emerson (1978) explore commitment in the social exchange framework. From this sociological viewpoint, they label commitment as “important concept” that differentiates social from economic exchange theory (Cook and Emerson 1978, p.737).

The underlying precondition for their quantitative research was the perfect competitive market, i.e. exchange partners do not develop long-term relationships or loyalty; the exchange bases solely on rational decisions (Cook and Emerson 1978, p.718). According to the authors with this mind set the exchange partners remain “uncommitted”. If “uncommitment” is associated with remaining rational and not developing long-term relationships, than “commitment” must be associated with long-term relationships, loyalty and emotional ties ( $\neq$  rational). However, Cook and Emerson (1978, p.737) point-up the potential complexity of commitment; therefore “attitudes” and “values” of the exchange partners play a potential role in the development of commitment in business relationship.

From the organizational perspective, on the other hand, Meyer and Allen (1991) explore commitment of employees in organizations. They develop a three component model of organizational commitment which seems to be an arch-type research in the domain of organizational theory. The authors claim that their research exceeds the boundaries of attitudinal and behavioural commitment and suggest that commitment can take three distinguishable formations (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 61). They label them: affective, continuance and normative commitment.



### **2.3.1.1 Affective commitment**

According to Mayer and Allen (1991, p. 61), affective commitment characterises the emotional ties between the employee and organisation. The employees remain in the organisation due to emotional attachment (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 61). The authors highlight the “personal characteristics” and “work experience” as the most significant antecedents of affective commitment. The personal characteristic refers to the attitude of the employee when s/he is looking for a match between their personal goals and the organization (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 70). The work experience, on the other hand, refers to the positive experience of employees in the organization they are employed (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 70). The authors assume that the workplace commitment emerges when the needs of the employees are satisfied; but significant is the emergence of commitment when the workplace experience is compatible with their values (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 70).

### **2.3.1.2 Continuance commitment**

Unlike affective commitment, the continuance commitment is calculative. It develops when the employees perceive costs with leaving the organizations (Mayer and Allen 1991, p. 71). According to the authors the perceived costs can be financial (salary decrease) or social (losing friends or colleagues). In explaining continuance commitment, Meyer and Allen (1991) draw on the research paper written by Becker (1960). He explores commitment from the sociological perspective in organisations. Commitment leads to consistent human behaviour when interests are associated with a consistent line of activity (Becker 1960, p. 32). He labels the interests “side bets”.

Side bets can be money related interests (available offer) or value related; i.e. value perception of the employees (Becker 1960, p. 32).

### **2.3.1.3 Normative commitment**

The idea of normative commitment stem from the research conducted by Wiener (1982). He suggests that normative pressures on employees cause behavioural consequences (Wiener 1982, p. 418). This kind of pressure can be exerted by organizations or by the social environment, e.g. family (Wiener 1982, p. 418). For instance, an organization invests time and money in the employees in the form of training or graduate development; in reward the employees feel obliged to remain with the organization even better opportunities are available (Wiener 1982, p. 421). However, nowadays feeling of obligation to remain with organizations is more or less pragmatic. Generally, better opportunities make employees change their employer, unless the obligation to remain with the organisation is forces by formal agreement between employees and organisations.

### **2.3.2 Trust in professional relationships**

The exploration of the trust theory in the context of professional relationships is extensive. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22) define trust as a key because it leads directly to cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of business relationships. Moorman et al. (1993, p. 82), on the other hand, define trust as the willingness to rely on a business partner in whom one has confidence. They refer to two general approaches to explain trust.

Firstly, trust is the willingness to believe to the trustworthiness of the business partner and secondly, trust is a behavioural intention for reliance on the business partner (Moorman et al. 1993, p. 82). Unfortunately, the authors do not elaborate on the suggested two general approaches to trust. Consequently, there's a lack of elaboration of the nature of these approaches which leaves the reader with vague understanding.

However, the willingness to rely on the business partner refers to a general attitude that considers an action after evaluating its cost and benefit. For instance, if the long-term significance of a business relationship is perceived by the business partners, than they are willing to invest in or maintain their relationship. In contrast, the second approach to trust which is the behavioural intention to rely on the business partner is more delicate to understand because of its connotation. Semantically, it means being directed towards a goal or thing (SEP 2010). Scientifically, the behavioural intention is explored from diverse perspectives. In the social psychology, behavioural intention is explored from the motivation perspective to carry-out an action (Hagger et al. 2006; Vallerand et al. 1992; Juarrero 2002), whereas Baker-Eveleth and Stone (2008), Menash (2013), Jayasingh and Eze (2009), Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Parasuraman et al. (1991) explore the idea of behavioural intention in the context of business organisation. Drawing on the core content of the aforementioned research papers, it is to conclude that behavioural intention to rely on the business partner is a conscious behaviour caused by intrinsic motivation, viz. a behaviour entailed inter alia by emotions. Therefore, it is to assert that emotions play a pivotal role in developing trust to the business partners.

### **2.3.3 Communication in professional relationships**

The idea of communication is a key in delivering professional services due to the fact that services are intangible and need to be communicated to the business partners. Laing and Liang (2005, p. 116) conclude that relational closeness is characterised by the formality of the communication; the less formal the communication, the closer the relationship. Sharma and Patterson (1999, pp. 151-170) even hypothesize that communication, viz. communication effectiveness, is an antecedent of relationship commitment which is underpinned by their research findings. However, in the project management practice, communication is highly ranked. It is the necessary link between all project participants (project team and stakeholders). For instance, Verzuh (1998, p. 297) describes communication in the project management as a success factor leading to successful project completion. Communication is closely linked with cooperation and commitment. According to the Australian Government (FAHCSIA 2009) commitment is about recognizing responsibilities and cooperation is about help/assistance. The American Management Association (AMA 2010), on the other hand, notes that the success of the project management is directly linked with cooperation. Therefore, it is to assent that cooperation is linked closely with commitment in order to achieve the project objectives. Furthermore, communication is the medium to exchange valuable project information within the cooperation.

Communication, within the project cooperation, starts with setting the project objectives. The project objectives are pre-defined and a plan is set to achieve these objectives (Mujtaba and Alsua 2011, p.3). From the project management practice it is obvious that clear objectives influence the performance outcome of any project. Furthermore, Verzuh (2008, p. 65) suggests that objectives should be specific and measurable in order to create a basis for an agreement on the project. However, how can the project objectives be clear, specific and measurable? In the project management practice it is common to set SMART project objectives. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely. Even in the academia, the SMART technique is applied to set objectives. For instance, The University of Kansas (KU 2014) suggests on its homepage the SMART technique for setting objectives. Specific: the project objectives must be defined and posed clearly (specific). The project team must be clear about what they want to achieve. Measurable: in order to measure and warrant high quality, the outcome of the project tasks must be quantifiable and measurable. Thereby, the project performance can be managed. Achievable: the project objectives ought to be achievable for the person who is concerned with the project task. It simply means that the objectives must not be utopian. For instance, the output of a production unit cannot be increased by 500%. Setting this kind of project objective is not achievable. Relevant: the project objectives must be relevant to the project that is carried-out. The outcome of the project task must provide a great deal of value addition to the project success whereby the success of the business relationship is also warranted.

It can be an enhancement of the project performance or a contribution to the existing organizational knowledge. Timely: the project tasks ought to be completed within a limited time period because the project resources are pre-defined; any deviation from the project schedule will have an impact on the project resources and thereby on the overall project performance.

#### **2.3.4 Closeness in professional relationships**

The idea of closeness in business relationships in the context of professional services refers to the distance between the business partners. From the social network's viewpoint, it is defined as the level of intimacy and/or frequency of communication (Wu et al. 2008, p. 440). The level of intimacy can be neglected in the research settings of this doctoral study because it causes probable conflict of interest among business partners which leads to violation of corporate code of conduct of the client organisation. The frequency of communication possess high relevance to the business practise because communication is a key in delivering professional services due to the fact that they are intangible and need to be communicated to the business partners. Laing and Liang (2005, p. 116) conclude that relational closeness is characterised by the formality of the communication; the less formal the communication, the closer the relationship. Sharma and Patterson (1999, pp. 151-170) even hypothesize that communication, viz. communication effectiveness, is an antecedent of relationship commitment which is underpinned by their research findings.

Collectively, the determinant of relational closeness is inter alia the time factor because the longer a business relationship endures the more experience the business partners gain from it which influences the willingness to maintain their business relationship. Predominantly, positive experience from the business relationship may lead to maintain the relationship, whereas negative experience leads to termination of or switching the relationship.

### **2.3.5 Cooperation**

Generally, cooperation refers to the completion of the project tasks within a group or project team. Cooperation in the context of commitment, according to the Australian Government (FAHCSIA 2009), is about recognizing responsibilities and providing help/assistance. The American Management Association (AMA 2010), on the other hand, notes that the success of the project management is directly linked with cooperation. The project objectives are set in order to implement the project. Therefore, it can be asserted that cooperation is closely linked with communication and commitment. In fact, the quality measurement of the cooperation between the business partners is highly focused on the objective achievement. Therefore, clear objectives influence the performance outcome of any project.

### **2.3.6 Flexibility**

According to Wirtschaftslexikon24 (2014) flexibility is a metric for adaptation to changing business environment. It is considered as a key metric for stability and business success (Wirtschaftslexikon24, 2014). However, Smith and Oltman (2010, p. 2) note that projects are within volatile business environment because technological projects are exposed to constant change. This could be due to constant development of the technology and changing requirements of the stakeholders. Since projects are planned and implemented by a project team, the focus needs to be drawn to the project team members (Smith and Oltman 2010, p. 2). Involving the right people in the project team is crucial because in a dynamic environment, coordination and communication are important factors for the project success (Smith and Oltman 2010, p. 2). Therefore, the project manager, who is usually concerned with setting up the project management team, needs to select the team members according to the project requirements in order to warrant flexibility. This means, the project team needs to be flexible enough to cope with the volatile project environment. However, the authors Smith and Oltman (2010, p. 2) refer to the experience factor in managing projects that can be influential on the project performance (success). The project performance always goes through the team performance; therefore effective participation in the project team in order to achieve the mutual project objective determines the overall project success. Hence, it can be asserted that there is a positive relationship between the experience of the team members and flexibility.



The team members who have long experience in technical projects, and at the same time are able to keep the big picture in their mind are flexible enough to cope with volatile project environments.

The organizations have long been concerned with the experiential factor in the form of organizational and work based learning. The work based learning is of utmost importance for the project team because it determines the individual learning of employees. In the project management practise generating and promulgating knowledge is called lessons learned. The projects wherein I was involved have always had a lessons learned session. However, Verzuh (2008, p. 256) refer to high performance teams when it comes to set up flexible project management. According to the author the project management faces two major obstacles. Firstly, the complexity of project produces challenging problems which needs to be resolved by the project team effectively. This idea is also supported by Smith and Oltman (2010, p. 2); projects are within volatile business environment because technological projects are exposed to constant change. This could be due to constant development of the technology and changing requirements of the stakeholders. Since manufacturing project are temporary enterprises to implement unique ideas, their complexity is high. Furthermore, the complexity is driven by the cost-schedule-quality triangle (Verzuh 2008, p. 255). The implementation of projects is budget and time constraint, and within this budget time frame a certain quality needs to be maintained. Here, the quality is associated with the successful completion of the project. Therefore, the arrangement of the cost-schedule-quality triangle ought to be the primary objective of the project management (Verzuh 2008, p. 154).

Secondly, the previous mentioned arrangement of the cost-schedule-quality triangle is aimed at successful implementation of the project which requires an efficient project team (Verzuh 2008, p. 254). In contrast to the idea of Smith and Oltman (2010, p. 2), it is not sufficient to employ experienced personnel; rather the project members need to work together effectively (Verzuh 2008, p. 256). This can also be coined as cooperation. Therefore, Verzuh (2008, p. 256) suggests setting up high performance team that is experienced enough to cope with the challenges emerging throughout the project implementation, and flexible enough to maintain the cost-schedule-quality equilibrium.

### **2.3.7 Sympathy: emotional factor in professional relationships**

Professional relationships are a matter of long-term relationships wherein the personalities of both parties play a significant role. Therefore, a common ground for understanding and agreement is existent which is assertively influenced by emotional factors. Transferring the aforementioned assertion to the settings of this doctoral study the following question emerges: “In which form does the emotion between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers occur that influences their business relationship”?

Yi-ting and Allison (2001, p. 236) note that consumption emotions are a form of response to service delivery, whereas Laros and Steemkamp (2003, p. 1441) set-up a taxonomy of positive and negative responses of consumer to product or service delivery. However, my observations of the business relationships and reflecting on my work based experience resulted in the assent that emotions in the form of sympathy describe well an emotional

shared value between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Sturmlechner (2003, p. 1), for instance, defines sympathy as a success factor for customer retention. It is positive related to the future buying decision of the customers (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 37). He argues that sympathy can even compensate customer dissatisfaction; when a high level of sympathy is given then dissatisfaction has less impact on the business relationship (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 46). In contrast, an absence of sympathy leads to relational conflict or even in the worst case to termination of the relationship (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 46). However, it is worth mentioning that sympathy can never be a warranty for toleration of failures; rather it can be considered as a credit granted by the business partner which will be decreased by occurring dissatisfaction.

Collectively, it the idea of sympathy is an element of professional relationships that entails behavioural intention which can result in trusting the business partners. But how can trust be measured in order to make it concrete for its understanding? The answer to this question remains vague in the literature. Moorman et al. (1993, p. 82) in reference to Anderson and Weitz (1990), Blau (1964), Dwyer et al. (1987), Pruitt (1981), Rotter (1967), Schurr and Ozanne (1985) attempt to measure trust by the expertise or reliability of the business partner, whereas Selnes (1998, pp. 315-322) notes that the perceived risk in the relationship indicates the level of trust because trusting in the relationship reduces risk. In contrast, an absence of trust increases the perceived risk (Selnes 1998, pp. 315-322). Anderson and Narus (1990, p. 45) theorise a causal relationship between trust and cooperation; they posit that cooperation is an antecedent of trust.

Indeed, in the management practise the willingness to cooperate with a business partner indicates a certain level of trusting in the business relationship. Otherwise, the cooperation would not be a business relationship based on values; rather it would be a formal business transaction.

### **2.3.8 Fairness in professional relationships**

Greenberg (1987, pp. 9-19) explores the role of perceived fairness in the context of organisational justice theory. Transferring the idea of fairness into the research settings of this doctoral study, it is to wonder which role the perceived fairness plays in the professional relationship between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Patterson et al. (1997, p. 7) hypothesize a positive causal relationship between fairness and customer satisfaction. Their hypothesis is supported by their research findings (Patterson et al. 1997, p. 12). However, it is surprising that the role of perceived fairness in the context of professional relationships is less explored. Nevertheless, my work based experience underpins the notion that it can play a major role in maintaining a professional relationship.

## **2.4 Summary of literature review**

The paradigm shift in the 1990s in the research domain of marketing affected the B2B professional services and relationship, too. The academia showed increasing interest in exploring the field of professional services. Hence, B2B professional services were bestowed with academic importance and knowledge. Consequently, professional services are considered as knowledge driven service category.

Nowadays, professional services are widespread service category in the industrial sector. Contemporary organizations invest around 50% of their expenditure for externally provided services; services provided by vendors and business partners. The investment in services is even increasing because of the continuous development of the technology which produces high sophisticated industrial goods. The more the degree of sophistication of industrial goods is increasing, the more specialists' advice and consultancy is required. Therefore, not solely specialized small-and mid-sized companies (SME), but self-employed consultants are emerging who provide highly specialized service. Therefore, B2B professional services are of strategic importance for the industrial sector. However, increasing complexity of professional services is coming alongside with the specialization of the service provider. The complexity is firstly caused by the general characteristics of services. Services are intangible, require vendor client interaction and cannot be stored because services are delivered and consumed at the same time.

Furthermore, the specialisation of the service provider enhances the complexity of services because the more sophisticated industrial good is developed the more the sophisticated services are required.

The surge in interest in science concerning the B2B sector accelerated the explorations in the field of B2B relationships. Within this, researcher focused on inter-firm cooperation because since the 1990s strategic partnerships are emerging. No more high degree of in-house manufacturing, but focussing on the core competencies is the trend. For instance, the value creation of the OEM decreased from 30.95% to 29.66% between 1998 and 2003.

Within the strategic partnerships all activities are coordinated towards the mutual objectives of the partners. Consequently, inter-firm dependency is increasing. Nowadays, highly sophisticated industrial goods are developed and manufactured within strategic partnerships; also called value adding partnerships. Value adding partnerships require cooperation and commitment. All activities within the partnerships are coordinated and the partners perceive continuity and growth from the partnership. However, within the surge in interest in the B2B sectors and the trend towards B2B strategic partnerships, some researcher developed a specific focus on professional relationships. Generally, professional relationships emerge in certain business segments within a B2B market. The B2B market segments for professional relationships do not emerge independently; rather they are formed by organizations because they define their personnel resources and competencies by combining their functions, know-how and processes. Hence strategic partnerships in B2B professional relationships are knowledge driven and long-term oriented business partnerships.

From the literature review it is evident that the success of B2B professional relationships is determined by certain values. Firstly, commitment and trust are the classical determinants of successful professional relationships. Both have fundamental influence; however commitment is slightly more emphasized than trust. The committed business partners show high performance and flexibility which leads to trustworthiness. Nevertheless, commitment and trust are intermingled and influence each other in both directions.

The literature review suggests three distinguishable formations of commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment. Affective commitment characterizes the emotional ties between two parties. It is enforced when both parties recognize the compatibility of their personal values with the values of the partnership. Continuance commitment, on the other hand, is more calculative. It is associated with the costs when the partnership is terminated. Therefore, continuance commitment can lead to consistent human behaviour. Normative commitment is caused by external factors. This means, normative pressures on employees cause behavioural consequences. For instance, investment on the partnership and expecting reward from the investment is a form of normative commitment.

Secondly, communication is highly ranked within the project management practise. It is the necessary link between all project participants and a success factor leading to successful project completion. In fact, effective communication is a quality characteristic of high performance project teams. Therefore, it is to assent that communication is the medium for successful cooperation within the project.

Thirdly, close cooperation leads to achieve the mutual project objectives. Cooperation starts with setting-up the project objectives. In the project management practise it is common to set SMART project objectives. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely. Thereby, it is warranted that all parties are involved in the objective setting resulting in a common ground; viz. mutual values that all participants share. Thus, close cooperation while setting the project objectives and achieving these objectives leads to successful professional relationships.

Fourthly, project businesses require flexibility because the market environment is volatile due to constant development of the technology. Furthermore, problems occur due to the complexity of manufacturing projects. Therefore, business partners needs to be flexible in order to resolve effectively the emerging problems.

Fifthly, since professional services are intangible and delivered personally to the business partners, the emotional factor has a vast influence on the success of the professional relationships. Furthermore, trust is a behavioural intention to rely on the business partner; a conscious behaviour caused by intrinsic motivation, viz. a behaviour entailed inter alia by emotions. Therefore, it is to assert that emotions play a pivotal role in developing trust to the business partners. Emotions can also be in the form of sympathy. In the context of professional relationship it refers to functioning interpersonal communication. Here, it can be seen as an evidence for matching personalities of the business partners. However, from my viewpoint, it is worth mentioning that sympathy can never be a warranty for relationship success; rather it is a supporting construct that facilitates the interpersonal



communication. Therefore, sympathy is not a key but a lack of sympathy will reduce the relationship to an ordinary business transaction.

Sixthly, there is a positive causal relationship between fairness and customer satisfaction. However, it is surprising that the role of perceived fairness in the context of professional relationships is less explored. The following figure 2 shows the outcome of the literature review:

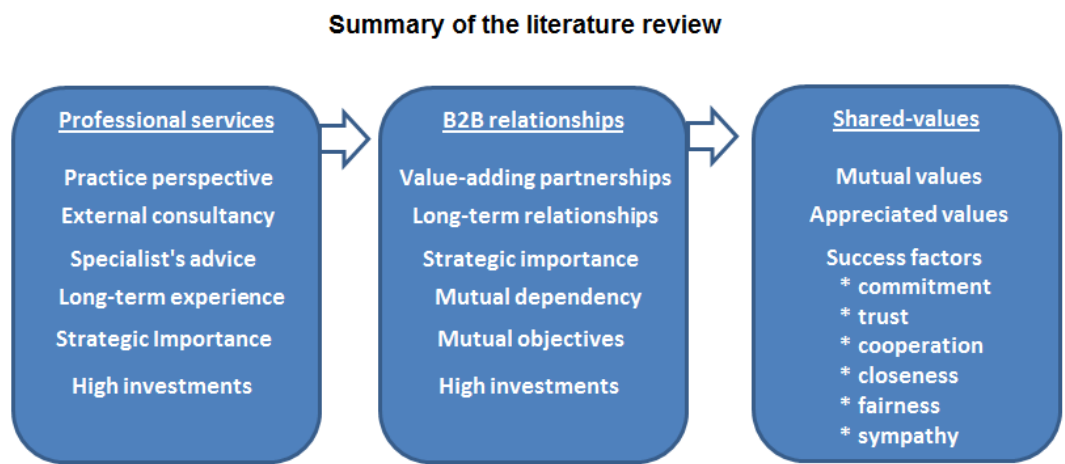


Figure 2 *Summary of the literature review*

## **2.5 Critical evaluation and lack of knowledge**

The research articles explored in the context of this literature review cover the fields of professional services, B2B relationships and elements of B2B professional relationships. The majority of the articles draw on empirical data collected through survey questionnaires. Predominantly, quantitative methodology is adopted which is aimed at exploring the causal relationships between pre-defined variables. Hence, the research articles live-up academic rigor and quantitative objectivity. However, the dominance of the quantitative methodology results in the fact that the numeric perspective is leading in the research domain of professional relationships. Consequently, there is a lack of qualitative knowledge existent.

Even though all research articles have major relevance to the doctoral study, the research conducted by Morgan and Hunt (1994) is outstanding, because it covers the field of elements of professional relationships and B2B relationships. Both fields, elements of professional relationships and B2B relationships are at the heart centre of the doctoral study. The authors Morgan and Hunt (1994) adopt a structured approach. First, drawing on previous research ten forms of B2B relationships are refined and presented in a figure. Second, “relationship commitment” and “trust” are anticipated as key mediating variables between their antecedents and outcome. Third, the conceptual model drawn from the aforementioned anticipation is tested in a pilot study. Thereafter the main research was conducted.

The structured research approach adopted by Morgan and Hunt (1994) upholds academic rigor. Furthermore, adopting a quantitative research method reduces the influence of the authors on the research outcome to a minimum. Therefore, quantitative objectivity is given. The aim of the authors is to test their conceptual model by exploring the causal relationships between pre-defined variables. For instance, there is a positive relationship between “communication” and “cooperation” mediated by “trust”. The numeric perspective adopted through the quantitative research method provides evidence for the existence of causal relationships between variables; however it remains unclear why the causal relationships exist. Furthermore, the numeric perspective does not provide evidence for how “trust” mediates between “communication” and “cooperation”. Consequently, the leading numeric perspective in the research domain of B2B professional relationships results in lack of qualitative knowledge.

## 2.6 Outcome of the literature review

The key finding from the literature review is the idea of shared values. A set of elements of professional relationships that defines the success of B2B professional relationships. Six elements of professional relationships were refined from the literature review: commitment, trust, cooperation, sympathy, closeness and fairness. The following figure shows the anticipated construct of shared values:

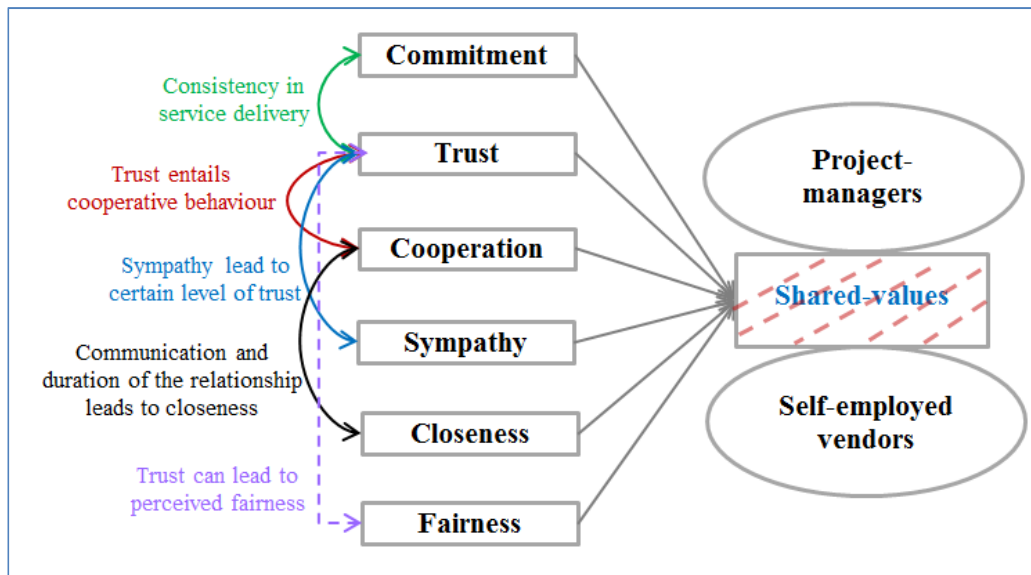


Figure 3 *Theoretical construct of shared values*

The abovementioned elements form the building block of the shared values. It is theorised that the shared values define the success of the B2B relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Furthermore, it is anticipated that any violation of the shared values leads to relationship breakdown.

Exploring the six elements of professional relationships is not a novel attempt. However, never before they were conceptualised in a qualitative framework in the context of professional relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Exploring the six elements of professional relationships provide a fresh eye on the existing knowledge.

In the first phase of the fieldwork, the theoretical construct of shared values was piloted in order to explore its relevance for the vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. In the second stage, the main fieldwork, the elements “flexibility” and “communication” was identified and was added to the literature review (see sections 2.3.3 and 2.3.6).

## Chapter 3

### **Methodology and research method:**

This chapter describes the methodology and research method chosen for the data gathering and analysis. The first section 3.1 considers the nature of the approach and associated theoretical issues; involving interviewees in a research study and generating knowledge require inductive research approach. The issue of knowledge generation and specific approaches is addressed in this section. It ends with a summary and justification of the chosen research method.

The second section 3.2 describes how the research was conducted. It describes the data collection method and analysis procedure; exploring the opinions of the interviewees and generation knowledge require context related analysis.

The third section 3.3 describes how conducting interviews and involving interviewees in a research study leads to ethical issues. This section describes the ethical issues and measures taken to resolve these issues.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology and justify the chosen research approach. The objectives of this doctoral study require practise based evidence in order to explore and validate the conceptual model of the shared values from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Hence, adopting the right research approach warrants collecting reliable data wherefrom evidence based conclusions are drawn.

Since this doctoral study is an attempt to explore and validate the conceptual model of shared values from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers, an inductive research approach was compulsory. Therefore, a qualitative research approach is well-suited to attain reliable and evidence based research data.

An investigation on qualitative methodologies was undertaken which revealed that multiple methodologies seemed to be suitable for the research settings of the doctoral study. However, an in-depth investigation revealed the contrary and finally a qualitative research approach was adopted. The research methodology adopted in this doctoral study is primary qualitative research in which principles and elements of Grounded Theory (GT) methodology were used because it allows adopting a structured approach for exploring a management problem based on the research participants' opinions.

### **3.1 Inductive approach: choosing the right research methodology**

Rich qualitative data were necessary to receive an answer to the research question of this doctoral study and achieve the research objectives. Using the principles and elements of the GT methodology provides an inductive research approach to gather rich qualitative data.

The rationale behind using the principles and elements of the GT methodology for exploring the concept of the shared values through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is that the numeric perspective is leading in the research domain of professional relationships.

Mostly quantitative research design is adopted to explore causal relationships between variables. For instance, Morgan and Hunt (1994) explore causal relationships between commitment and trust. Thus, adopting a qualitative research approach wherein the principles and elements of the GT methodology is applied will provide a fresh eye on existing research because little evidence is available why the causal relationships emerge. This is the significance of using the GT methodology because it allows generating a theory where little evidence is available. Therefore, there is sufficient justification for adopting the principles and elements of GT methodology to explore the concept of the shared values through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

The outcome of this doctoral study supports the aforementioned justification by highlighting the significance of the practise based qualitative evidence. For instance, in the phase 1 of this study it was theorised that the six elements refined from the literature review forms the shared values. However, the outcome of the qualitative field study shows that the perception of the shared values depends on the task or relationship orientation of the business partners. Thereby, new value is added to the existent knowledge because the six elements of the shared values refined from the quantitative studies were developed further by providing qualitative evidence. This is the significance of the qualitative studies which goes beyond identifying causal relationships between variables or ideas.

Furthermore, by conducting qualitative studies in the numeric driven research domains new perspectives can be opened. The outcome of this doctoral study is a practise based example how commitment and trust are embedded



in the realm of performance depending on the research context. Therefore, qualitative studies are needed in the numeric driven research domains in order to open new research perspectives. This idea is also supported by the research articles by Theron et al. (2008), Theron and Terblanche (2010), and Theron et al. (2011). These research articles explore the role and impact of commitment, trust and business relationships from the quantitative perspective in the financial services sector. Therefore, it seems that other market segments lack qualitative studies, as well.

The analysis procedure of this doctoral study has also proved that using the elements and principles of the GT methodology is well suited to structure the findings from the interview data in order to warrant logical traceability within the analysis procedure. This is in line with the suggestion of Punch (2005, p. 204). The author considers the GT method as a powerful analysis tool.

According to the literature review the GT is a distinct methodology which has its well-deserved place among the qualitative methodologies and is a widely spread research methodology. The GT is a research approach, but it is also a powerful analysis tool which was developed by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s (Punch 2005, p. 204). The rationale behind GT methodology is to explore phenomena in the organisations from the sociological perspective (Punch 2005, p. 204) because the social interactions cannot be understood without engaging the actors of the social world into the exploration (Johnson and Duberley 2000, p. 34; Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 13).

The key idea of GT methodology is to develop a theory which is solely based on the qualitative research data (Punch 2005, p. 204). In contrast to quantitative methodologies, it rejects hypothesis or theories developed per se

because the methodological objective is to reveal an open end research outcome (Punch 2005, p. 205). Therefore, GT is well-suited for exploring unknown fields of management practise and where evidence fall short.

Basically, there are two key approaches to GT: the systematic approach developed by Glaser and Straus is more analytic, and the constructivist approach developed by Charmaz is more interpretative. The former is aimed at developing systematically a theory about simple or complex phenomena (Creswell 2013, pp. 195-196). In the first attempt a couple of interviews are conducted and analysed which reveal ideally patterns of conceptual categories; the key information about the explored phenomena. The rest of the information surrounding the conceptual categories is supportive data (Punch 2005, p. 205). In the second attempt, additional interview data are collected and integrated to the analysis (Punch 2005, pp. 205-206). The iterative process of overlapping the data collection and analysis is called theoretical sampling which is considered as a key activity in the data analysis (Punch 2005, p. 205; Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 46).

### **3.1.1 Theoretical sampling**

The iterative process of overlapping the data collection and analysis is called theoretical sampling because the researcher collects codes and analyses the research data which results in an emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 46). The entire process is controlled by the emerging theory because depending on the emerging theory the researcher decides which data to collect next (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 45). However, Alberti-Alhtaybat and Al-Htaybat (2010, p. 223) suggests that the iterative process goes beyond

deciding which data to collect next; rather it opens new perspectives to explore and analyse the research data. The result is refining and condensing the core content of the research data until a complete theory is developed (Hoflund 2013, p. 480). Thus, the theoretical sampling is a critical contemplation of the research data because the chunks of data that are already labelled with meaningful codes are reviewed critically. It enables the researcher to assess and validate the emerging codes. Furthermore, it can open new perspectives wherefrom the data can be explored which may lead to condense distinct results. The iterative process of overlapping the data collection and analysis continues until the conceptual categories or the information surrounding them is saturated (Creswell 2013, p. 196).

### **3.1.2 Theoretical sensitivity**

Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 46) refer to theoretical sensitivity in the context of theoretical sampling; viz. the researcher ought to be sensitive to the research data in order to conceptualize and formulate the emerging theory. The sensitivity of the researcher to the data is of utmost importance because a set of research data bears various theoretical possibilities (Punch 2005, p. 208). It is simply the resistance of the researcher against the temptation to take the data for granted and stop exploring the data content through different lenses (Punch 2005, p. 214). By developing theoretical sensitivity the researcher takes on a critical stance and avoids overseeing theoretical possibilities (Punch 2005, p. 2014). However, Nunes et al. (2010, p. 74) suggest that the theoretical sensitivity does not start with exploring the research data; rather the researcher ought to be sensitive to the complexity

of the social interaction before the research is undertaken. Hence, the context wherein the social interaction takes place determines the sense making from the research data (Nunes et al. 2010, p. 75).

The importance of the context wherein the social interaction takes place comes into the scenery after the open coding (Scott 2004, p. 115). Hereafter, the researcher faces the challenge of axial coding whereby the core categories are teased-out (Scott 2004, 115, p. 3). The author suggests using the reflexive research approach by Straus and Corbin (1998). Within this approach the researcher investigates the open coded data by constant asking of what, when, where, why, how, and with what result or consequence they emerged (Scott 2004, p. 116). Thereby, it is warranted that the researcher does not lose the red line; rather s/he is enabled to arrange the open codes to context related meaningful categories (Scott 2004, p. 116). The result is a set of categories reflecting the core content of the research data on a higher abstraction level (Scott 2004, p. 117). However, the author suggests combining the context related investigation with reflective coding matrix (Scott 2004, p. 120). The reflective coding matrix sets the focus primary on the consequences of the emerging categories; viz. once the categories are identified, they are examined again in order to tease-out their consequences (Scott 2004, p. 120). The result is a set of core categories that describe the core content of the research data; the rest of the categories are sub categories which support the core categories (Scott 2004, p. 120). Finally, this stage leads directly to the selective coding wherein the core categories are interpreted to a comprehensive theory (Scott 2004, p. 120).

In summary, the theoretical sensitivity enables the researcher to contextualise the research data in order to tease-out the core categories which describe the core content of the research data. It is to point-up that without relating the research data to the context wherein the social interaction takes place, the outcome of the analysis will not make any sense.

### **3.1.3 Theoretical saturation**

Theoretical saturation is a further important term in the realm of qualitative research because it determines the completeness of an analysis (Bryman and Bell 2011, p. 443). The data collection and analysis continues until no more value is added to the research; thereby it is ensured that the theory is complete (Punch 2005, p. 215).

However, from the literature review it is to assent that the theoretical saturation can be divided into stages, because the GT development goes through three stages: open, axial and selective coding. Therefore, within each stage it must be warranted that the theoretical saturation is reached. For instance, in the first stage additional interview data is integrated to the analysis and explored whether it adds value to the existing codes. If not, the open coding is theoretically saturated. In the second stage, the core categories need to be compared with each other which require theoretical saturation before the researcher moves on to the final stage. In the final stage the core categories are arranged to themes that represent the core content of the research data on the highest abstraction level. These themes are the theoretical framework wherein a comprehensive story is developed.

### **3.1.4 Constant comparison**

From the literature review it is evident that the constant comparison activity is considered important in the qualitative methodology; in fact it is an integral part of it. However, Boeije (2002, p. 392) claims that the traceability of the data analysis falls short in the majority of the qualitative research reports. In other words, the researcher fails to describe the analysis in a manner so that the readers can follow. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 105) point-up the importance of the constant comparison activity. For instance, the constant comparison of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage bestows these categories with certain theoretical properties (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 105), whereas Boeije (2002, p. 392) in citing Tesch (1990) alleges that the constant comparison activity is the intellectual activity of the researcher. The researcher is deeply engaged with the research data. Hence, it can be asserted that the constant comparison is the intellectual part of the analysis wherein the researcher bestows the emerging categories with logical values, so that the pattern of the core content of the research data emerges. This is the groundwork for the interpretation of the major themes until a comprehensive story is developed.

The constant comparison is intermingled with the theoretical sampling because the collection of additional data, integrating into the analysis and comparing is a sort of enclosed process (Boeije 2002, p. 393). Furthermore, the author suggests that the constant comparison activity enhances the internal validity of the research data (Boeije 2002, p. 392). This means that the findings from the research data are logically structured. Although the internal validity is mostly relevant in the quantitative research domain,

it needs to be considered in the qualitative research, as well (Punch 2005, p. 264). Within the domain of qualitative research the internal validity refers to the logical correspondence of the categories with the research objectives that the researcher aims to achieve (Boeije 2002, p. 393). A quality measurement for the internal validity is the variety of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage (Boeije 2002, p. 393). The researcher describes and conceptualizes the variety of the research data by teasing-out various categories (Boeije 2002, p. 393).

Beside the internal validity, the constant comparison of the research data or the categories increases the external validity (Boeije 2002, p. 393). It is simply the generalizability of the research outcome (Punch, p. 255). However, it is worth mentioning that the external validity is also given when the research outcome or the conceptual model can be applied to the same phenomenon that occurs in different organisations (Boeije 2002, p. 393).

### **3.1.5 Key advantages**

The key advantage of using the principles and elements of the systematic GT approach is that it enables the researcher to bracket him-/herself out and generates a theory solely based on the research data without skewing the results (Creswell 2013, p. 196; Punch 2005, p. 215). The constructivist approach by Charmaz (2006), on the other hand, has its validity in social constructivist paradigm (Creswell 2013, p. 86). While the systematic approach sets the focus on conceptual categories, the constructivist approach emphasises multiple realities, plurality and ephemeral existence of social phenomena (Creswell 2013, p. 86). Therefore, Charmaz (2006, p. 10)

argues for more flexible approach to GT. This pledge can be seen as an attempt to justify the influence of the researcher's opinion and experience on the data analysis.

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 242) the flexibility of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage makes the methodology advantageous. The flexibility of the categories is warranted by a proper abstraction level of the categories whereby they can be generalized, but their core meaning is maintained (Glaser and Straus 1967, p. 242). Thereby, the emerging theory from the categories is flexible enough to be applied in a variety of social situations and also flexible enough to be reformulated (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 242). However, for the authors Alberti-Alhtaybat and Al-Htaybat (2010, p. 223) the flexibility of GT is twofold. Even though they praise its flexibility as a fundamental pillar of qualitative research, the authors point-up that the understanding and usage of the flexibility pose a major challenge for novel researcher (Alberti-Alhtaybat and Al-Htaybat 2010, p. 223). Hence, they consider the flexibility of GT methodology as an advantage but at the same time a disadvantage (Alberti-Alhtaybat and Al-Htaybat 2010, p. 223). Bryman et al. (1996, p. 353), on the other hand, consider the empirical leverage of qualitative research as its fundamental advantage. The exploration is conducted from the viewpoint of the people that are being studied whereby the research findings are based on their opinions or responds (Bryman et al. 1996, p. 353). Nunes et al. (2010, p. 75) supports this idea by referring to the "groundedness" of the qualitative research. Furthermore, the empirical leverage refers to the contextual sensitivity of the research (Bryman et al. 1996, p. 353), viz. the researcher



ought to be sensitive to the research data in order to conceptualize and formulate the emerging theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 46). By developing theoretical sensitivity the researcher takes on a critical stance and avoids overseeing theoretical possibilities (Punch 2005, p. 2014). However, Nunes et al. (2010, p. 74) suggest that the theoretical sensitivity does not start with exploring the research data; rather the researcher ought to be sensitive to the complexity of the social interaction before the research is undertaken. Hence, the context wherein the social interaction takes place determines the sense making from the research data (Nunes et al. 2010, p. 75).

### **3.1.6 Evaluating grounded theory as a research approach**

The major critique that GT methodology faces is that bracketing oneself out while generating a theory from the research data is hardly possible (Creswell 2013, pp. 89-90). Furthermore, the structured approach of the data analysis is less appreciated among researchers because it is inflexible (Creswell 2013, pp. 89-90). On the other hand, flexible approach to GT like the constructivist approach may jeopardise the outcome of the research because the researcher may skew the results by interpretation of the phenomena. Consequently, new perspectives can be overlooked (Walshalm 1995, p. 70). The author suggests openness to the research data and willingness to modify initial findings or the theory (Walshalm 1995, p. 70). This is in line with the suggestion of Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 242) that the flexibility of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage makes the GT methodology advantageous. The flexibility of the categories is warranted by a proper

abstraction level whereby the categories can be generalized, but the core meaning of the categories is maintained (Glaser and Straus 1967, p. 242). Thereby, the emerging theory is flexible enough to be applied in a variety of social situations and also flexible enough to be reformulated (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 242).

### **3.1.7 Other qualitative methodologies**

This section describes other qualitative methodologies beside the one chosen for this doctoral study. At the first glance, other qualitative methodologies seem to be well suited for the settings of this doctoral study. First, the case study research (CSR) seems to be well suited because it explores cases from the management practise. The settings of this doctoral study showed traces of case study research because I decided the time, venue and the interviewees (cases). Second, the phenomenology seems to be well suited because the management problem explored in this doctoral study can be seen as a phenomenon that occurs in the management practise. Third, the ethnography can be considered as suitable for the setting of this doctoral study because I participate in the management practise wherein I observed the management problem.

However, an in-depth investigation revealed that the aforementioned qualitative methodologies are not suitable to explore the management problem of this doctoral study. They are ill suited because their primary objective is aimed at providing an authentic description of phenomena and cases, but the research question and objectives of this doctoral study require findings that go beyond description. They require an in-depth access to the

opinions of the interviewees in order to collect rich data and inform the objectives of this doctoral study. Therefore, CSR, phenomenology and ethnography cannot be considered as well suited for exploring the management problem of this doctoral study.

### **3.1.8 Summary of research methodology**

In summary, the GT methodology is a systematic approach for conducting qualitative research. Using the principles and elements of the GT methodology enables the researcher to develop a theory based on the research data without skewing the results when the systematic approach is adopted. Furthermore, it appreciates semi structured interviews for gathering research data. Therefore, it is well suited for the purposes of this doctoral study.

The rationale behind using the principles and elements of the GT methodology for exploring shared values through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is that the numeric perspective is leading in the research domain of professional relationships. Mostly, quantitative research design is adopted to explore causal relationships between variables. For instance, Morgan and Hunt (1994) explore causal relationships between commitment and trust. Thus, adopting a qualitative research approach wherein the principles and elements of the GT methodology is used will provide a fresh eye on existing research because little evidence is available why the causal relationships emerge. This is the significance of using the GT methodology because it allows generating a theory where little evidence is available. Basically, there are two

approaches to the GT: the systematic approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is more analytic, and the constructivist approach developed by Charmaz (2006) is more interpretative. The systematic approach by Glaser and Strauss is aimed at developing systematically a theory about simple or complex phenomena (Creswell 2013, pp. 195-196). In the first attempt a couple of interviews are conducted and analysed which reveal ideally patterns of conceptual categories which are the key information about the explored phenomena; the rest of the information surrounding the conceptual categories are supportive data (Punch 2005, p. 205). In the second attempt additional interview data are collected and integrated to the analysis (Punch 2005, pp. 205-206). The iterative process of overlapping the data collection and analysis is called theoretical sampling which is considered as a key activity in the data analysis (Punch 2005, p. 205; Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 46). The entire process of theoretical sampling is controlled by the emerging theory because depending on the emerging theory the researcher decides which data to collect next (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 45). However, Alberti-Alhtaybat and Al-Htaybat (2010, p. 223) suggests that the iterative process goes beyond deciding which data to collect next; rather it opens new perspectives to explore and analyse the research data. The result is refining and condensing the core content of the research data until a complete theory is developed (Hoflund 2013, p. 480). The theoretical sampling is a critical contemplation of the research data because it allows a critical revision of the data that are already labelled with meaningful codes. It enables the researcher to reevaluate the assessment and the identified codes in order to validate them. Furthermore, the theoretical sampling can open new

perspectives wherefrom the emerging ideas become divers which may lead to condense distinct results. The iterative process of overlapping the data collection and analysis continues until the conceptual categories or their surrounding information are saturated and become thereby accurate (Creswell 2013, p. 196).

However, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 46) refer to theoretical sensitivity in the context of theoretical sampling; viz. the researcher ought to be sensitive to the research data in order to conceptualize and formulate the emerging theory. The sensitivity of the researcher to the data is of utmost importance because a set of research data bears various theoretical possibilities (Punch 2005, p. 208). It is simply the resistance of the researcher against the temptation to take the data for granted and stop exploring the data through different lenses (Punch 2005, p. 214). By developing theoretical sensitivity the researcher takes on a critical stance and avoids overseeing theoretical possibilities (Punch 2005, p. 2014). However, Nunes et al. (2010, p. 74) suggest that the theoretical sensitivity does not start with exploring the research data; rather the researcher ought to be sensitive to the complexity of the social interaction before the research is undertaken. Hence, the context wherein the social interaction takes place determines the sense making from the research data (Nunes et al. 2010, p. 75).

According to the literature review the intellectual activity within the qualitative methodology is the constant comparison throughout the entire coding stage. For instance, the constant comparison of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage bestows these categories with certain theoretical properties (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 105). Boeije (2002, p. 392) in citing Tech

(1990), on the other hand, alleges that the constant comparison activity is the intellectual activity of the researcher. The researcher is deeply engaged with the research data. Hence, it can be asserted that the constant comparison is the intellectual part of the analysis wherein the researcher bestows the emerging categories with logical values, so that the pattern of the core content of the research data emerges. This is the groundwork for storyline of the research.

Although the GT methodology faces a major critique that bracketing oneself out while generating a theory from the research data is hardly possible (Creswell 2013, pp. 89-90), the flexibility of the categories emerging in the axial coding stage makes the methodology advantageous (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 242). The flexibility of the categories is warranted by a proper abstraction level while maintaining the core meaning of the categories (Glaser and Straus 1967, p. 242). Thereby, the emerging theory from the categories is flexible enough to be applied in a variety of social situations and also flexible enough to be reformulated (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 242). Collectively, it is to assent that using the elements and principles of the GT methodology is well suited for the settings of this doctoral study.

However, beside GT methodology other qualitative methodologies seemed to be suited. For instance, at the first glance the settings of the doctoral study shows traces of CSR because I decided the time, venue and the interviewees. However, the key objective of the CSR is to provide a distinct account of the research cases and develop a full understanding of it (Creswell 2013, p. 98), but the management problem of the doctoral study

requires an approach that goes beyond a distinct account. Therefore, CSR is ill suited for the purposes of this doctoral study.

Similar to CSR, phenomenology and ethnography seem to be suitable for the purposes of the doctoral study because both utilise the interview method as a primary data gathering method which fits to this doctoral study. However, both methodologies attempt to provide a qualitative account of the research phenomenon by deriving its essence from several sources of data (Creswell 2013, p. 76; Punch 2005, p. 145-150). Therefore, they cannot be considered as proper methodologies to explore the management problem of this doctoral study.

### **3.2 Research method**

This section describes how the research was conducted. It describes the data collection method and analysis procedure; exploring the opinions of the interviewees and generation knowledge require context related analysis. The research project consists of two phases. In both phases qualitative semi structured interviews were conducted. Hence, the research approach, interview question development, preparation and implementation of the field research, sampling of interviewees, data management and analysis outlined in the following section go for both phases.

#### **3.2.1 Approach**

The research project consists of two phases. The data for both phases were collected through face-to-face semi-structured interviewing. The aim was to apply in-depth interviews in order to get access to the individual opinions of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The

interviewees were allowed to respond freely to the posed interview questions. Thereby, rich interview data was collected and my influence as researcher was reduced to a minimum. The objectives of this doctoral study require practise based evidence in order to explore and validate the conceptual model of the shared values from the opinions of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, evidence based rich qualitative data warrants achieving the objectives of this doctoral study.

### **3.2.1.1 Phase 1: exploring the relevance of shared values**

The aim of phase 1 was the exploration and testing the relevance of the concept of shared values in the context of professional relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, in the first step of the phase 1 existing research articles were explored in order to refine the information that forms the shared values in the B2B professional relationships. It was theorized that a set of mutual values (shared values) between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers defines the success of their business relationship. Furthermore, it was theorized that any violation of the shared values leads to relationship breakdown.

The set of shared values shown in figure 3 on page 39 comprises the components commitment, trust, cooperation, sympathy, closeness and fairness. These are the building blocks of the shared values in the professional relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.



The previous mentioned six elements refined from the existent knowledge form the shared values. They are not values standing independently, rather they are intermingled. The six elements are linked to each other directly or indirectly by connectors. For instance commitment and trust are linked together by consistency in delivering results. Trust, on the other hand, entails cooperative behaviour. Therefore, commitment and trust are linked together directly, and commitment is linked to cooperation indirectly by its linkage to trust.

In the second step of the phase 1 four explorative interviews were conducted in order to explore and test the relevance of the shared values shown in figure 4. The theoretical construct of shared values was fully supported by the outcome of the phase 1. As a result, the following conceptual model was drawn from phase 1:

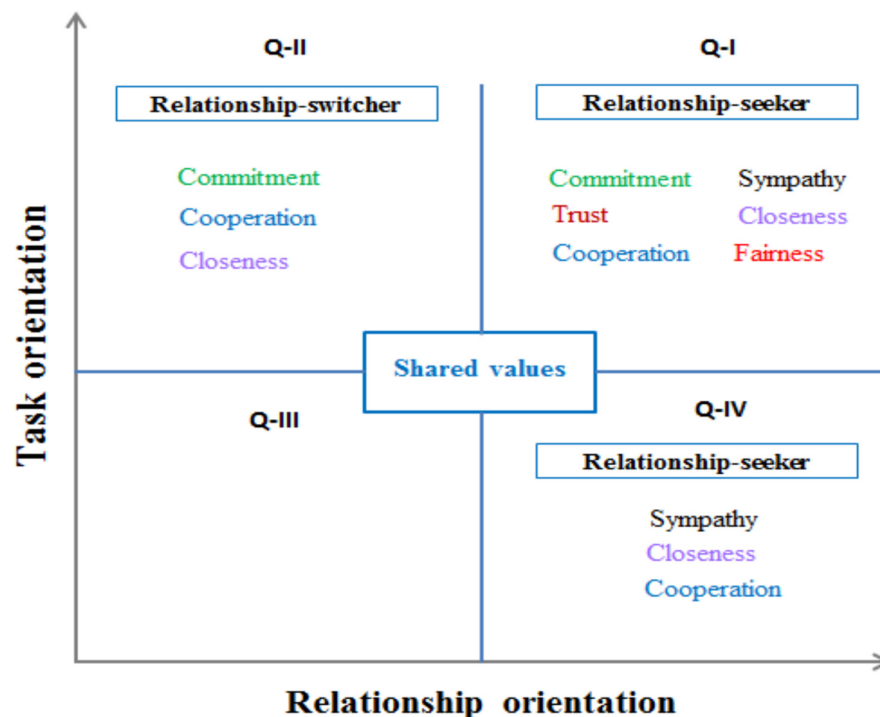


Figure 4 Conceptual model of shared values

The conceptual model in figure 4 was developed from the theoretical concept of shared values in figure 3 and the initial findings from the four explorative interviews. The findings from the four interviews went beyond the confirmation of the relevance of the shared values because the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees play a role in their perception of the shared values. These findings added a new value to the theoretical idea of shared value because the practical perspective of the study (four explorative interviews) proof that the understanding of the shared values is dependent on the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees. Consequently, the initial idea of shared values in figure 3 was transformed to the conceptual model of shared values in figure 4 based on the initial findings from the four explorative interviews.

The outcome of the phase 1 the conceptual model of shared values was the basis for the phase 2.

### **3.2.1.2 Phase 2: exploring the conceptual model of shared values**

The aim of phase 2 was the exploration and validation of the conceptual model of shared values through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. In total 15 explorative f2f interviews were conducted in order to explore the conceptual model of shared values from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, in the phase 2 the perspective “performance” emerged. Consequently, two major themes were derived from the conceptual model: commitment-performance relationship (figure 13, p. 118) and trust-performance relationship (figure 15, p. 143).

With the emergence of the performance perspective and development of the two major themes, the results of the phase 2 went beyond the confirmation of the conceptual model of shared values. The focus of the interpretation of the results was shifted to the two major themes.

### **3.2.2 Development of interview questions**

The interview questions were developed through a brainstorming activity. Initially, around 20 questions were brainstormed. The following list shows the brainstorming and mapping of the brainstormed questions to the research objectives:

- What is your position? **objective 1**
- How do you maintain your relationship? **objective 1**
- Do you know the business environment you are in? **objective 1**
- How do you analyse your business environment? **objective 1**
- Is it a B2B market segment? **objective 1**
- The project business you are in seems to be a B2B market segment which has unique mechanics. Do you share this idea? **Objective 1**
- Which business relationships do you have? **objective 2**
- Are the relationships close relationships? **objective 2+3**
- Do you have close business relationships? **objective 2+3**
- Do you experience relationship breakdowns? **objective 2+3**

- I observe many project-based business relationships between project managers and self-employed engineers who are concerned with project management tasks like construction management, engineering management or project services management. In your opinion, what are the reasons and criteria for hiring self-employed engineers? **objective 2**
- What are the success criteria in your business relationships? **objective 3**
- Do you have an idea about shared values? **objective 3**
- What are these success criteria? **objective 3**
- Do you experience relationship breakdown? **objective 2+3**
- What are the reasons for relationship breakdowns? **objective 2+3**
- I also observe self-employed vendors losing their contract and project managers switching to other relationships. What do you think goes askew that leads to vendors losing their contract and project managers switching their relationships? **objective 2**
- Do you think that trust and commitment plays a major role in your business relationship? **objective 3**
- How do you communicate in your business relationship? **objective 3**
- Do you think that there is a shared value which is important for the relationship between self-employed engineers and project managers? **objective 3**

Afterwards four questions were selected which were most suitable for gathering the data needed for reaching the research objectives. Firstly, the interview questions were applied in the pilot interviews in phase 1 of the field work. Since phase 2 is an extension of phase 1 the interview questions remained the same. The following four questions were selected:

*Q1: The project-business you're in seems to be a B2B market segment which has assumedly unique mechanics. Do you share this idea?*

This first interview question is an introductory question about the context of the doctoral study. It is aimed at attaining the opinion of the interviewees about the B2B market segment wherein they participate. Furthermore, it helps achieving the first objective of the doctoral study.

*Q2: I observe many project-based business relationships between project-managers and self-employed engineers who are concerned with project-management related tasks like construction-management, engineering-management or project-service-management. In your opinion, what are the reason and criteria for hiring self-employed vendors for the aforementioned key posts?*

The purpose of Q2 is to find a smooth access to the individual opinion of the interviewees about their business relationship. At the same time it demands a respond that will provide some clues for the shared values of their business relationship. This question is aimed at attaining the second objective of the doctoral study.

*Q3: I also observe self-employed vendors losing their contract and project-managers switching to other relationships. What do you think goes askew that leads to vendors losing their contract and project-managers switching their relationship?*

This is the key question of the interview because it attempts to ignite a discussion which is expected to grant an insight into the perception of the shared values by the interviewees. In the course of the Q3 the final Q4 was posed to the interviewees.

*Q4: Do you think that there's a shared-value which is important for the relationship between the self-employed engineers and project-managers?*

The purpose of the fourth question is to explore the shared values from the opinion of the interviewees which is aimed at achieving the third objective of the doctoral study. In the phase 1 the four interview questions were piloted in the context of an interview in order to test their suitability and develop additional prompt questions. The result was that Q1, Q2 and Q3 were suitable, but the Q4 seemed to be superficial because the interviewees responded: *"What do you mean by shared value"*? Consequently, the way of posing the question had to be changed to the following examples:

*Q5: Do you think trust is important for your relationship with the vendors?*

*Q6: What about commitment? Do you think it is important?*

In this format, all components of shared values were asked. Furthermore, sometimes the responds fell short and a prompt question had to be posed in order to get more information: *Q7: Could you explain why?*

### **3.2.3 Preparation and implementation of the field work**

Prior studies in the context of the DBA program showed that 60 min. interviews were the maximum length that the interviewees appreciate. Furthermore, their feedback supports the idea that the venue of the interview session ought to be outside the daily business environment of the interviewees in order to enable them to clear their mind from the daily business. Otherwise, the interview session would get disturbed by the daily business issues. However, the venue should be close to their workplace. Therefore, the most appropriate venue for the interview sessions is my office nearby the manufacturing site of the client organisation.

The time of the interview sessions is important as well because scheduling an interview appointment during the workdays from Monday to Friday would not be appropriate because of the tight schedule of the interviewees. Therefore, they would not be available or not willing to attend an interview session. Consequently, the most convenient time for conducting an interview is around noon on Fridays because most of the daily work is done and the interviewees are preparing themselves for the week end.

### **3.2.4 Sampling of interviewees**

The sampling procedure was fully based on my work based experience. The project managers are employed at the client organisation, while the self-employed consulting engineers are hired by the project managers. Around 50% of the project managers who were interviewed are my clients, as well. However, there is no business relationship to the self-employed consulting engineers. Both business parties were asked personally for an explorative

interview. Before conducting the interviews the ethical approval (EC1801) was received from the School of Management and Law, University of Bradford.

In total the sample size is 15 interviewees; 8 project managers and 7 self-employed consulting engineers. The age, gender and origin of the interviewees did not play any role. In general, they have a minimum work experience of 10 years.

### **3.2.5 Data management: interview recording and transcription**

The interviews were recorded and afterwards transcribed word-by-word. In order to check the accuracy of the transcripts the recordings were listened again while reading the transcripts. Furthermore, prior interview sessions showed that taking notes during the interviews was useful. Therefore, during the interviews notes were taken and used in the interview analysis. This data management was of utmost importance because taking notes during the interview sessions and transcribing the interview recordings are the necessary link to the analysis procedure. In fact, they are a part of the analysis because it helped drawing a theoretical linkage between the conceptual indicators in the interview data while analysing the interview transcripts.



### 3.2.6 Analysis procedure

The interview transcripts and the notices from the field work were analysed by using the principles and elements of the GT method. The figure 5 shows the continuous analysis procedure used in the doctoral study:

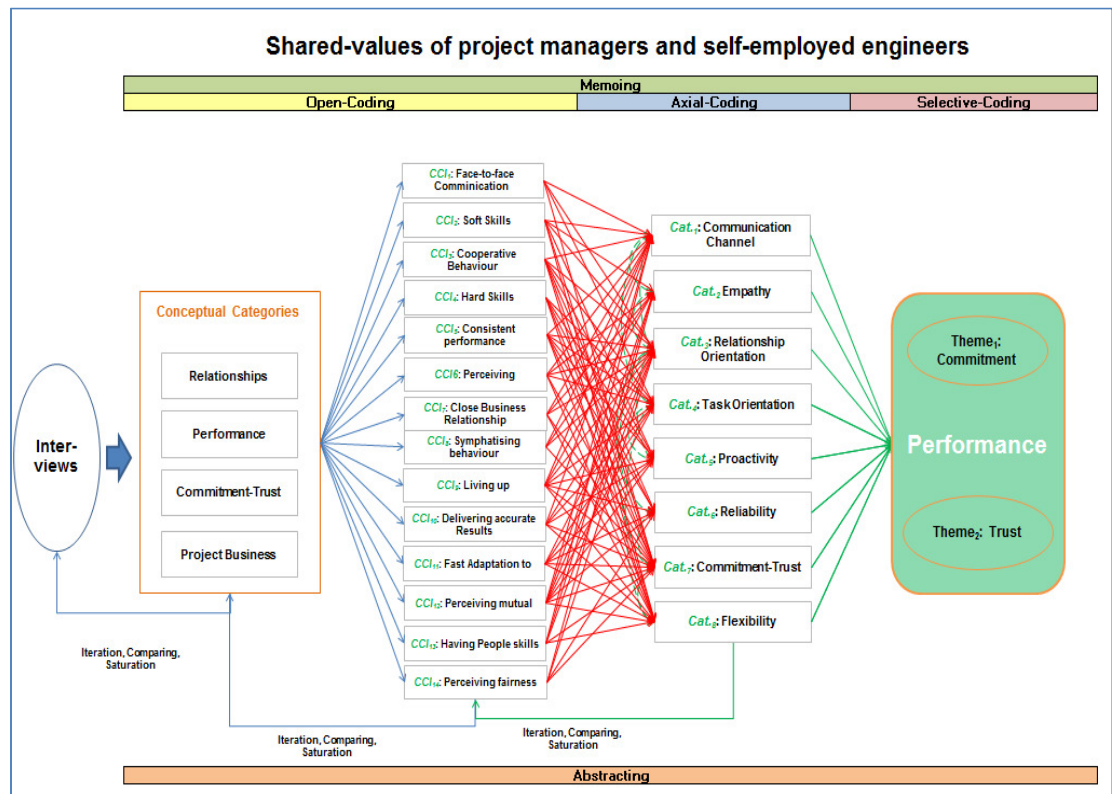


Figure 5 Continuous analysis procedure

The analysis procedure comprises four steps: identifying conceptual categories, open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

#### Step 1: identifying conceptual categories

The following extract from the interview outcome shows the first step of the data analysis:

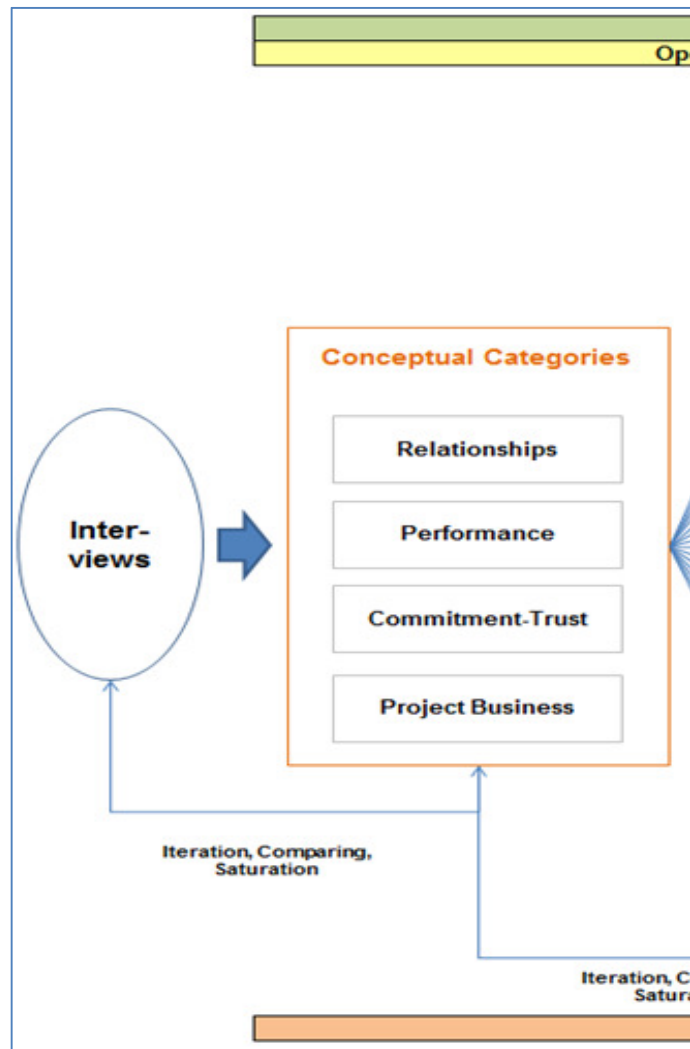


Figure 6 *Identifying conceptual categories*

In the first step of the analysis the interview transcripts were read many times and analysed until initial ideas emerged. However, the identification of the conceptual categories started with the interview session because being part of the happening and collecting primary data enhanced my sensitivity to the research data. Hence, while reading the interview transcripts I was able to draw theoretical linkage between the notices taken during the interview

session and emerging ideas from the transcripts. For instance, the conceptual category “performance” was mentioned many times during the interview sessions and was taken as a notice. Afterwards while scanning and analysing the interview transcripts for conceptual categories I was able to draw linkage between “performance” and emerging ideas from the interview transcripts. The result of the step 1 was four conceptual categories: relationships, performance, commitment-trust, and project business.

Identifying the aforementioned four conceptual categories was equal to setting the theoretical framework for the core content of the interview data.

## Step 2: open coding

The figure 7 shows the second step of the analysis.

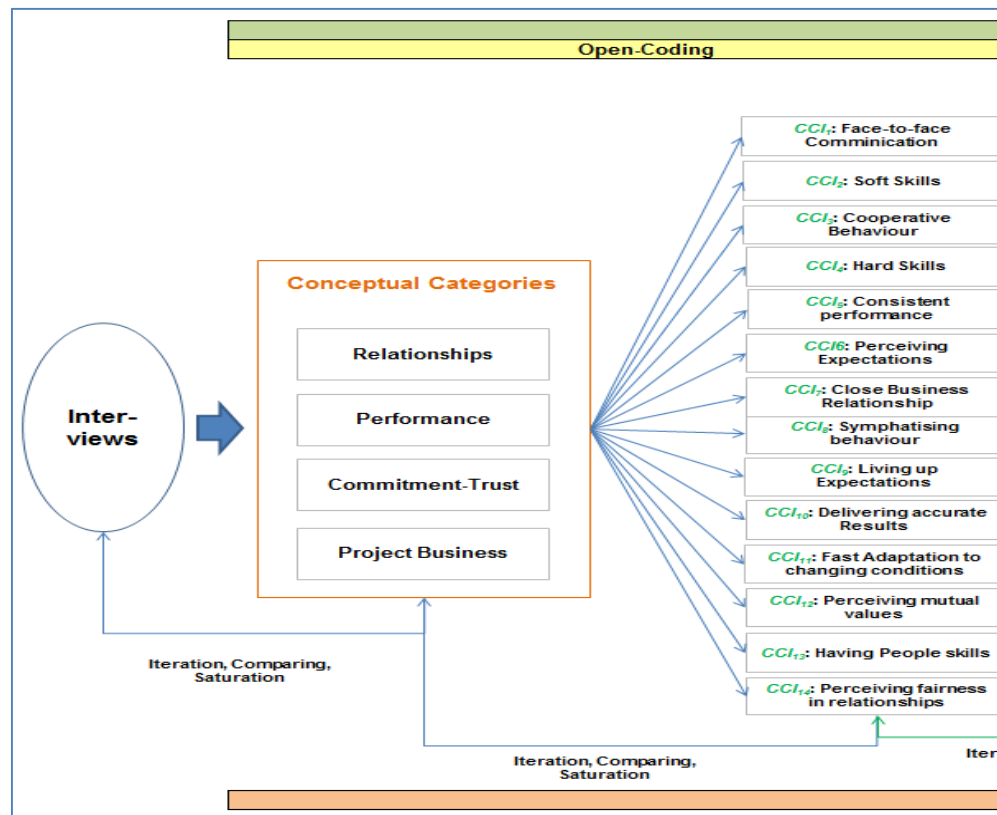


Figure 7 Open coding

After setting the theoretical framework the interview transcripts were scanned and analysed again in order to derive conceptual category indicators (CCI). The CCI can be a term, a sentence or an entire paragraph. For instance, the CCI<sub>10</sub> “Delivering accurate results” is represented by the following interview extract:

*“.....you don't normally change your supplier if the performance is acceptable....it costs time and therefore money to develop new relationships or partnerships...”.*

The CCI are the substantive codes representing the conceptual categories as a whole, but reflect their theoretical properties, as well. The open coding analysis was controlled by comparing the conceptual categories with the notices taken during the interviews, and notices taken during the analysis of the interview transcripts. The aim was to identify chief linkages between the emerging ideas, new data integrated from further interviews and the conceptual category indicators. The comparison of the interviews data bestowed the emerging ideas with certain value because the emerging ideas were analysed and evaluated intellectually. The aim was to bestow the emerging ideas with local values. Finally, the identification of the CCI warranted the logical structure of the outcome of the open coding analysis. Thereby, a solid ground for the next step was created.

This exercise continued until all conceptual categories were linked to the CCI and a set of CCI were completed; theoretical saturation was achieved.

### Step 3: axial coding

The analysis continued with the set of CCI. The following extract from the interview outcome shows the step 3 of the data analysis:

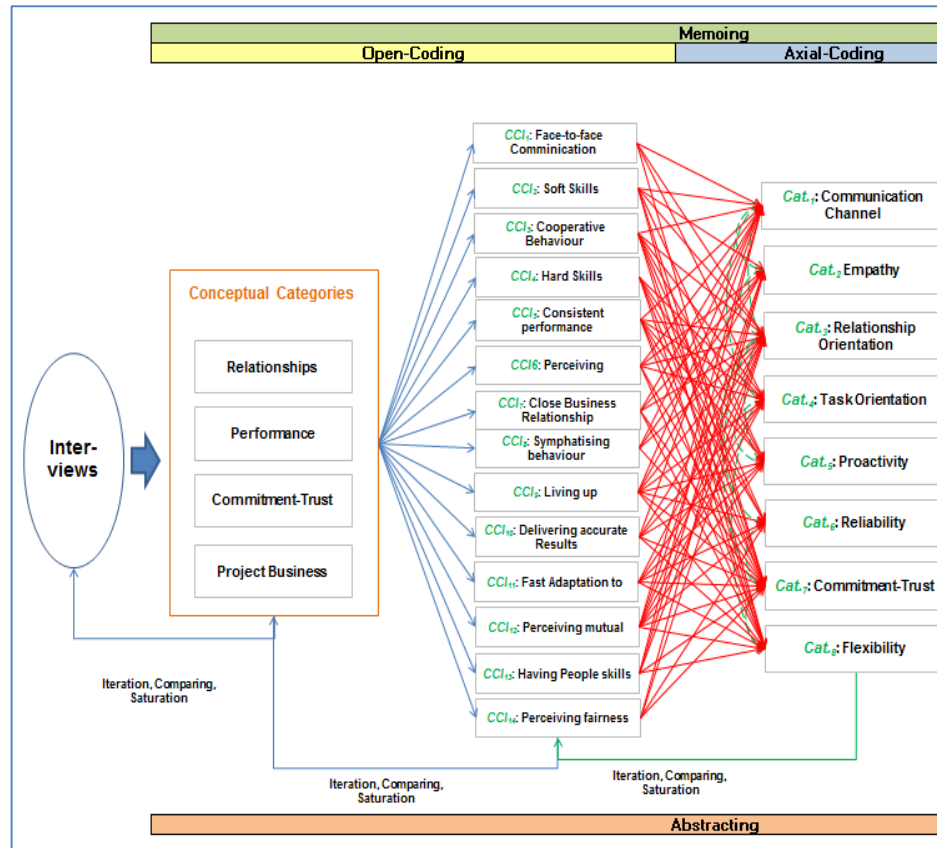


Figure 8 Axial coding

Throughout the step 3 the CCI were assembled to the core categories. This step was dominated by the constant comparison of the CCI with each other in order to find the chief linkages. The identification of the chief linkages between the CCI created a continuous logical structure in the data analysis. These chief linkages were described and supported by the emerging ideas and interview responds. Thereby, they were bestowed with logical values.

The outcome of the axial coding was a set of core categories. The core categories reflect the key information content of the interview data on a higher abstraction level and draw the outlines of the storyline about the shared values. The challenge in this step was to find ideas and interview responds that describe the core categories because of the higher abstraction level. However, this challenge was coped with the logical structure created by the chief linkages. Tracing back the logical structure of the CCI enabled me to find the ideas and interview responds that supports the core categories.

#### **Step 4: selective coding**

In the final stage of the data analysis the set of core categories were reviewed and arranged to major themes which explain the core content of the research data on the highest abstraction level. The following extract from the interview outcome shows the step 4 of the data analysis:

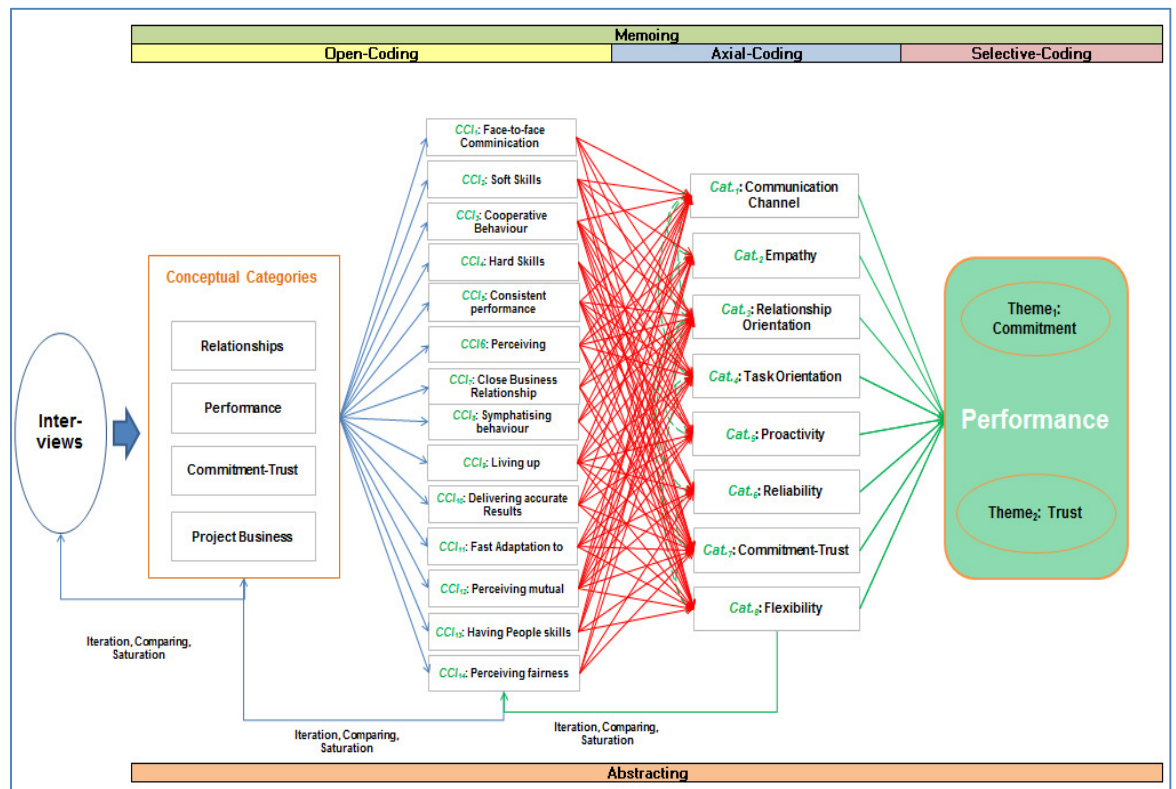


Figure 9 *Selective coding*

The final step of the data analysis was a combination of the constant comparison and drawing an overall picture from the interview data. Beside the constant comparison of the core categories, the emerging ideas, codes and categories were pulled together and integrated to the analysis. The constant comparison of the core categories warranted the logical value and structure of the core categories. The revisit of the interview transcripts and emerging ideas, on the other hand, warranted that the logical structured analysis was embedded in the interview transcripts.

At the end of the analysis I sensed the risk of losing the original meaning of the interview outcome because the higher abstraction level at the end of the analysis could have jeopardised the linkage between the core categories and the original meaning contained in the interview data.

However, the constant comparison of the core categories in combination with the revisit of the interview transcripts and emerging ideas resolved this problem.

The result from the selective coding was three major themes. However, as shown in the figure 9 the central point condensed from the data analysis is “performance”. The entire happening in the interview data is about performance surrounded by the two major themes: commitment and trust. The performance is the major theme that reflects the core content of the interview data on the highest abstraction level; commitment and trust are the themes embedded in the realm of performance. From this central point of performance the storyline of the interview analysis is developed by using the themes-categories-CCI relationships construct. This is grounding the storyline on the interview data.

### **3.2.7 Summary of research method**

In summary, the research context of this doctoral study is the professional relationship between project managers representing a client organisation and the self-employed consulting engineers. The professional relationship is a project based B2B relationship.

The field work consists of 2 phases. In the phase 1 four explorative interviews were conducted in order to explore the relevance of the theoretical construct of shared values in the context of professional relationships. As a result a conceptual model was developed from the phase 1 which was explored in the phase 2.



The phase 2 is the main field work. The research sample of the field work comprises 15 interviewees; eight project managers and 7 self-employed consulting engineers. The sampling of the interviewees was fully based on my work based experience. The method for collecting the data was semi structured interviews. The interviews were recorded and transcribed word-by-word and analysed by using the elements and principles of GT analysis method.

The analysis of the interview transcripts were completed in four steps: identifying conceptual categories, open, axial and selective coding. The analysis steps were dominated by constant comparison in order to find chief linkages which represented the codes on a higher abstraction level. Furthermore, the constant comparison bestowed the codes and categories with logical value and warranted a logical structure within the analysis procedure. Thereby, the traceability of the emerging codes and categories were warranted.

The overall outcome of the interview data analysis was two themes: commitment and trust. However, the two themes are embedded in the realm of performance. The entire happening in the interview data is about performance. From this central point of performance the storyline of the interview analysis is developed by using the themes-categories-CCI relationships construct. This is grounding the storyline on the interview data.

### **3.3 Ethics in qualitative research**

Ethical issues arose before the field work was undertaken. Right from the identification of a point of interest ethical questions arose concerning the influence of the research settings on the interviewees, and my influence on the research outcome. The interviewees under investigation were project managers and self-employed consulting engineers who had certain accountability for confidentiality regarding business secrets. In addition, their opinions about the shared values would have influenced their business relationship with the vendors or clients. Therefore, anonymity and non-disclosure of the research outcome were among the primary ethical issues. Ethical issues, too, arose throughout the interview sessions; I was obliged to retain neutrality while the interviewees responded to the questions in order to not skewing the results. Moreover, using the principles and elements of the GT method required ethical conformity because its outcome was a storyline based solely on the interview data. Thus, I had to bracket myself out in order to develop a story without skewing the results.

In general, ethics refers to the researchers' behaviour that has an impact on people under study or events in the scientific communities. In qualitative research settings wherein people and their behaviour are explored, it is of utmost importance to retain ethical conformity. The literature shows extensive investigations on ethics. In fact, textbooks of social sciences always include an ethics section, and any serious organisation always has a "code of conduct" regarding the ethical issues. For instance, the American Sociological Association, brief ASA (2008) postulates five general principles in its "Code of Ethics" for professional sociologists: professional competence,

integrity, professional and scientific responsibility, respect for people's rights, dignity and diversity, and social responsibility. These principles are aimed at drawing the researchers' attention to ethical conformity when any kind of social event is subject to research studies.

In summary, it is to emphasise that the ethical issues are of utmost importance when a research study touches any kind of the privacy of people. It is the researchers' primary goal to retain ethical conformity by always being conscious about the implications of their behaviour on their environment.

## Chapter 4

### **Data results and discussion:**

This chapter sets the focus on the data results and discussions. The sections 4.1 and 4.2 describe and discuss the B2B market segment for self-employed consulting engineers which is a known market segment but not recognized. It has an equivalent status to an industrial sector. The sections 4.1 and 4.2 inform objective 1 of this doctoral study. The sections 4.3 and 4.4 describe and discuss the criteria for hiring self-employed consulting engineers by the project managers. Flexibility, commitment and objective orientation are the important characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. These findings inform the objective 2 of this doctoral study. Finally, the sections 4.5 and 4.6 describe and discuss the core findings from the interview transcripts; the elements of shared values which inform the objective 3 of the doctoral study and provide practice based evidence for the exploration and confirmation of the conceptual model.

#### **4.1 B2B market segment for self-employed consulting engineers**

The objective 1 of this study is the understanding of the market segment wherein the project manages and self-employed consulting engineers participate. The interview results show evidence for a certain market segment:

Interviewee 1: *"...in this market segment people are specialists...they are offering unique services...people usually specialist services...big companies they offer general services like Siemens company because they have standardized processes..."*.

Interviewee 3: *"...for me the independency of the s-engineers is important because this make them flexible...engineering companies cannot provide this...therefore yes there is a market segment for self-employed engineers...."*.

However, the focus of the objective 1 of this doctoral study is to explore the emergence of this market segment in order to understand why organisations hire self-employed consulting engineers. It is not aimed at exploring the characteristics of the market segment. Generally, two major aspects drive the emergence of the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers: organizational demand and complexity of manufacturing projects.

#### **4.1.1 Organisational demand**

Organisational demand refers to the lack of expertise of the client organisation represented by the project managers. The client organisation cannot provide fully the project expertise. The following interview extracts underpin this notion: interviewee 2: *"...project are time limited therefore companies cannot keep this specialist as permanent staff because of high costs...specialist like the self-employed engineers offering this services take time to educate and to collect this experience...therefore many specialist are self-employed engineers..."*.

Interviewee 8: *"...probably I will be a s-eng as well after getting retired because this is a small market segment but the demand for experienced engineers is present...and I think this market segment will always be available because engineers live with experience, if you have experience this means practise that you can use it for different technical assignment..."*.

From the interview results it is evident that the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is created because organizations cannot provide fully the necessary expertise for implementing complex manufacturing projects.

#### **4.1.2 Complexity of manufacturing project**

Implementing manufacturing projects requires certain technical know-how due to the fact that multiple technical disciplines are involved in a manufacturing project, e.g. process, piping and electrical engineering. Therefore, project teams in implementation of manufacturing projects are

eclectic involving multiple disciplines which make the projects complex. This is supported by the following interview extracts:

Interviewee 3: *"...project are complex...you can plan a project as precise as you can but believe me in the execution phase there is always a problem which make you think different...so you must be flexible to solve this challenges...with the s-engineer you have a competent partner to implement the project..."*

Interviewee 4: *"...our organization set the frame for hiring project personnel but I do the selection...it is not easy to find cooperative people because specialist are normally focused on one thing for example technical specification of rotating equipment, but in a matrix organization in project you need to be open for other challenges...therefore the self-employee engineers offering service are important for the project business..."*

The demand for self-employed consulting engineers coming alongside with the complexity of manufacturing projects fosters the emergence of the market segment:

Interviewee 9: *"...sometimes we set EPCM contracts which means a general engineering companies are contracted for turn-key projects...but we employ from our side s-eng as well because we need support in key functions like engineering managers because we cannot capture this temporary capacity with our available staff...therefore we employ experience s-eng..."*

Although the cost factor is considered important by a couple of interviewees, in general it is not evident from the interview results that the cost factor is a determinant for hiring self-employed consulting engineers.

The key points from the exploration of the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers are:

- providing special services
- independency of self-employed consulting engineers
- flexibility
- complexity of the implementation of manufacturing projects

The key points above proof the emergence of the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers. It is driven by the organizational demand and complexity of the implementation of manufacturing projects.

The following section 4.2 discusses the emergence of the previous mentioned market segment driven by organizational demand and complexity of manufacturing projects.



## **4.2 Discussion of the results of B2B market segment for self-employed consulting engineers**

This section discusses the results from exploring the B2B market segment for self-employed engineers which addresses the objective 1 of this doctoral study.

### **4.2.1 B2B market segment for self-employed consulting engineers**

The objective 1 is the understanding of the market segment wherein the project manages and self-employed consulting engineers participate. The interview results show evidence for the existence of this market segment. However, the important question is why this kind of market segment is existent? In order to find an understanding, the focus of the exploration needs to be set on the emergence of this market segment. Indeed, from the interview results it can be asserted that the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is created by the client organization. The client organization is not able to keep highly skilled personnel in their personnel stock because of economic reasons, but most importantly because of high complexity of manufacturing projects. It needs tens of years to attain high skills required by the aforementioned project business. Therefore, the client organization does business with self-employed consulting engineers; this is exactly the genesis of any market segment for self-employed consulting engineers.

#### **4.2.2 Organizational demand**

The emergence of the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers, according to the interview results, is a consequence of expertise gap of the client organization. Even though the interview results refer to the cost factor of keeping highly skilled project personnel, it plays a role, but not an important role. Rather, it is sheer impossible to educate highly skilled project personnel because of the time limited life cycle of projects. Furthermore, the self-employed consulting engineers collect their expertise by the so called training on the job which means collecting the expertise while implementing projects. Consequently, the source of expertise of the self-employed consulting engineers is the project they were involved whereby valuable experience is collected. Therefore, educating this kind of expertise to the personnel in the client organisations is not possible.

However, it would be justified to raise a critique that even small or mid-sized engineering companies possessed the capacity of offering the required qualities by their personnel instead of hiring self-employed consulting engineers. The thing is that the engineering companies are too big to be concerned with the key posts like the engineering manager, project controls engineer or construction manager. Usually, they offer turn-key projects delivering the project as one package. Even in this case, the client organization hires self-employed consulting engineers in order to be well-staffed. Collectively, in the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is created because the client organization cannot provide fully the necessary expertise for implementing complex manufacturing projects.

Therefore, self-employed consulting engineers are sought after in the market segment of manufacturing projects.

#### **4.2.3 Complexity of manufacturing projects**

Throughout the previous section the emergence of the market segment was outlined. The market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is driven by the organizational demand because they lack the required expertise. Exactly the aspect of the complexity is the most important one. The technical projects such as manufacturing project are complex due to the fact that various technical disciplines are involved. Therefore, the implementation of manufacturing projects requires certain technical know-how in the field of process, piping and electrical engineering. Hence, the project teams in manufacturing projects are eclectic involving multiple disciplines which make the projects complex. The needs for self-employed consulting engineers coming alongside with the complexity of manufacturing projects foster the emergence of the market segment:

*Interviewee 8: "...probably I will be a self-employed engineers as well after getting retired because this is a small market segment but the demand for experienced engineers is present...and I think this market segment will always be available because engineers live with experience, if you have experience this means practise that you can use it for different technical assignment..."*

Although the cost factor is considered important by a couple of interviewees, in general it is not evident from the interview results that the cost factors a driver for the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers.

Interviewee 5: *“...it is right that the cost factor is the reason why companies outsource project functions to for example self-employed engineers, but in my opinion the other reason is that organization cannot have all the experience to implement a complex technical manufacturing project...even big engineering companies hire self-employed engineers because they cannot capture all requirements therefore there is a market segment for self-employed engineers...”*

However, the complexity of the manufacturing projects will keep increasing because the technologies continue developing. Therefore, the need for highly skilled self-employed consulting engineers will also remain in the future. Consequently, it is to assent that the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is not an ephemeral phenomenon emerging and disappearing in a client organization; rather it is to assert that it will continue existing.

#### **4.2.4 Summary of the discussion of B2B market segment for self-employed consulting engineers**

This section provides a summary of the discussion in sections 4.2. In summary, the interview results provide evidence for the existence of a market segment for self-employed consulting engineers. It is not a market segment created by the self-employed consulting engineers; rather the needs and requirements of the client organization are the drivers for the emergence of the market segment. From the interview results it is evident that two factors play a pivotal role. Firstly the organizational demand for highly skilled project personnel. The organisations are not able to keep highly skilled personnel in

their personnel stock because of economic reasons, but most importantly because of high complexity of manufacturing projects. It needs tens of years to attain high skills required by the implementation of complex manufacturing projects. Therefore, the client organization does business with self-employed consulting engineers; this is exactly the genesis of any market segment for self-employed consulting engineers.

Secondly, as mentioned previously, the complexity of the manufacturing projects drives the needs for self-employed consulting engineers. Exactly, the aspect of complexity is the most important one. Technical projects such as manufacturing project are complex due to the fact that various technical disciplines are involved. Therefore the implementation of manufacturing projects requires certain technical know-how in the field of process, piping and electrical engineering. Hence, the project teams in the manufacturing projects are eclectic involving multiple disciplines which make the projects complex. Consequently, the need for highly skilled self-employed consulting engineers will also remain in the future. The market segment for self-employed consulting engineers is not an ephemeral phenomenon emerging and disappearing in a client organization; rather it will continue existing.

### **4.3 Flexibility, commitment and objective orientation**

This section addresses the objective 2 of this doctoral study. It raises the question why self-employed consulting engineers are hired in order to find an understanding of the professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. The interview results show evidence for the importance of three major aspects in finding an understanding of hiring self-employed consulting engineers: flexibility, commitment and objective orientation.

The key points from the exploration of why self-employed consulting engineers are hired reveal the importance of their professional characteristics: Flexibility, commitment and objective orientation. The following sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.3 and 4.4 describe and discuss these key points which inform the objective 2 of this doctoral study.

#### **4.3.1 Flexibility**

According to the interview results the idea of flexibility is predominantly emphasized by the task oriented interviewees. However, from the interview results it is to expect that flexibility is an integral part of the attitudes of relationship oriented interviewees, but it is clearly evident that flexibility is not always present: This is supported by the following interview extract:

*Interviewee 4: "...I worked with many self-employed engineers, so I can say you sometimes it was not a business relationship, it was just a transaction of information...but now over years I work together with self-employed engineers in a professional relationship, highly skilled people, so flexible and committed to their work and relationship..."*

### **4.3.2 Commitment**

The interview data revealed that first “commitment” is mostly recognized by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The following interview extract supports this notion:

Interviewee 1: *“...at the end, I am interested in the performance. If the vendor gives good performance then I am satisfied. For me, the soft-skills are not important, for me the hard-fact is important. Therefore, the performance, which means the delivered outcome of the task is important...”*

Obviously, commitment is considered as an antecedent of performance because among the task oriented project managers and self-employed consulting engineers it has high importance:

Interviewee 4: *“For me the performance is first.... therefore as long as the performance is 100% and my expectations are fulfilled, there’s no reason for me to switch”*.

These evidences prove that the idea of shared values is highly appreciated.

Both, task and relationship oriented project managers and self-employed consulting engineers recognize the importance of commitment in their business relationship.

### **4.3.3 Objective orientation**

Objective orientation refers to focussing on the completion of the project tasks:

Interviewee 3: *“....I always like cooperative behaviour in the project because cooperation is not just working together, it is working together to a specific goal I mean the project goals...”*

Interviewee 10: *“...it is clear what the customer expects because you work together in projects...the project goals drives us when working together in a project...some goals in a project means going the same way therefore I know what are the project requirements what the business partners expect...”*

From the interview results it is evident that setting and achieving the project objectives seem to be pivotal in the project business.

#### **4.4 Discussion of flexibility, commitment and objective orientation**

This section discusses the results from hiring self-employed consulting engineers. The results revealed that three professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers are important: flexibility, commitment and objective orientation. This section addresses the objective 2 of this doctoral study.

##### **4.4.1 Hiring self-employed engineers**

From the interview results it is evident that flexibility, commitment and the objective orientation are the drivers for hiring self-employed consulting engineers in the project business. These findings are in line with the literature outcome because Hibbarth et al. (2003), Basu (2014), Smith and Oltmann (2010), Kelly (1998) and Abbott (2005) refer also to the idea of flexibility, commitment and objective orientation.



#### 4.4.2 Flexibility

According to Wirtschaftslexikon24 (2014) flexibility is a metric for adaptation to changing business environment. It is considered as a key metric for stability and business success (Wirtschaftslexikon24 2014). The project managers who are concerned with the execution of projects appreciate the flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers. They are able to adapt themselves quickly to changing client request.

The importance of adaptation to changes is also supported by Iglesias et al. (2011, p. 644). The authors suggest the flexibility as a shared value because the development of relationship orientation requires adaptation to changing business environment. Even though the research settings of the aforementioned research article is embedded in the organisational context and the idea of the flexibility refers to the adaptation of the employees to the changes, the research results show the relevance and influence of flexibility in the relationship management.

The idea of flexibility in the context of this doctoral study refers to the adaptation of the business partners to changing project conditions. The flexibility in the project task completion refers to being flexible while completing the project task. For instance, the technical engineering of a machine needs to be considered from a different angle which requires cooperating with other or different technical disciplines:

*Interviewee 10: "...the project team is a matrix organisation with people from different departments and different formations, so normally these are people with high flexibility so you can deal with complex issues and feel comfortable in unknown project environment..."*

Therefore, the idea of flexibility in the project business is a must. However, engineering companies does not show high level of flexibility. They are not able to adapt quickly to changing client request because of their big size. Usually, they have their own organizational procedures and regulations which impede them from being flexible. This is exactly the strength of the self-employed consulting engineers which make them sought after in the project business. Therefore, it is justified to argue that flexibility is a unique selling proposition (USP) of the self-employed consulting engineers. From the viewpoint of the self-employed consulting engineers, their flexibility entails independency because they are not strictly bounded to the organizational structures.

However, flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers goes beyond USP; from the interview results it is evident that flexibility is a measure to manage contingencies. That means, managing of known and unknown problems or challenges that may emerge during the project execution. Unknown problems or challenges in the project business refer to risk, viz. project risk. In fact, the project risk management is a separate discipline. Depending on the size of the project, the entire teams are concerned with the analysis and evaluation of probable project risks in order to provide a basis for a risk management.

According to Selnes (1998) managing risks in professional relationships is about managing uncertainties. The uncertainties and their negative consequences increase the perception of risk (Selnes 1998, p.3). Hibbarth et al. (2003, p.378) label the uncertainties as the variance of the distribution of future benefits. The perceived risks or uncertainties reduce the value of a

relationship because of the negative effects on the future benefits of the relationship.

However, the business relationship between the project managers and the self-employed consulting engineers goes beyond a simple business transaction based on cost benefit analysis as propounded by Hibbarth et al. (2003, p.378). Rather, it is a distinct project cooperation which develops over time and whose success is determined by the shared values. This is also in line with the findings of Iglesias et al. (2011, p. 644). The authors point-out that business relationships develop over time and the flexibility of the employees determines the transition from a business transaction into a business relationship (Iglesias et al. 2011, p. 644).

Hence, the flexibility in this context is the management of the uncertainties that have a negative influence on the success of the business relationship and the project performance. It is to assent that not the technical risks are at the focus but the challenges or uncertainties resulting from the interpersonal cooperation within the project team and with the project stakeholders. Therefore, flexibility is recognized as a valuable trait of the self-employed consulting engineers which reduces the perception of risks. The uncertainties are still perceived, but the flexibility is a measure to attain stability when uncertainties unfold during the project execution.

Collectively, in order to understand the role of the flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers in the project business, the relationship dyad between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers needs to be distinguished from ordinary business transaction based on cost benefit analysis. It exceeds the boundaries of a win-win solution because it is

a complex project cooperation that develops over time whose success is determined by the idea of shared values; mutual values of both business parties. Its success has an ultimate influence on the performance of the relationship and the project performance. Therefore, flexibility from the self-employed consulting engineers' viewpoint is a USP which make them valuable within the market segment of manufacturing projects. Hence, the element of the professional relationships "flexibility" is an important criterion to hire self-employed consulting engineers.

#### **4.4.3 Commitment**

According to the Australian Government (FAHCSIA 2009) commitment is about recognizing responsibilities and cooperation is about help/assistance. The American Management Association (AMA 2010), on the other hand, notes that the success of the project management is directly linked with cooperation. For instance, Morgan and Hunt (14994) explore trust and commitment simultaneously because of their strong reciprocal effect on the success of professional relationships. Commitment is a criterion to hire self-employed consulting engineers because it entails trust, cooperative behaviour and consistency in delivering successful project results.

The interview results provide an evidence for the importance of cooperative behaviour when working in a project assignment. The cooperation of the business partners and their commitment to the project task lead directly to high performance. Therefore, cooperative behaviour and commitment are directly linked to each other.

Furthermore, from the interview results it is also evident that communication is highly relevant in professional relationships. In fact, the close cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers requires frequent communication. It refers to the closeness and cooperation in business relationships in order to achieve the project objectives; the distance between business partners. The less formal the communication the shorter the distance between the business partners. This idea possesses a high relevance to the business practice because communication is important in delivering professional services.

The services are intangible and need to be communicated to the business partners. This idea is in line with the findings of Laing and Lian (2005, p. 116). They conclude that the formality of communication characterizes relational closeness; the less formal the communication the closer the relationship. In the project management practise, communication is highly ranked. It is the necessary link between all project participants (project team and stakeholders). Verzuh (1998, p. 297) describes communication in the project management as a success factor leading to successful project completion. From the interview results it is evident that the communication among the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is deformed. The information exchange takes place through brief f2f meetings whereby an informal communication channel is created. All participants appreciate the informal communication channel.

The existence of an informal communication channel is an evidence for trustworthiness. Consistency, on the other hand, plays an important role because consistent commitment to the project tasks entails trust. This means

the completion of the project task is at the locus. Since the project objectives are pre-set, inter alia by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers, a completion of the project tasks and achievement of the project objectives will ultimately lead to high project performance.

Collectively, it is to assent that commitment is a criterion that determines the employment of self-employed consulting engineers. The interplay between commitment, close cooperation and consistency in completing the project tasks leads directly to high project performance.

#### **4.4.4 Objective orientation**

Objective orientation refers to focussing on the completion of the project tasks:

Interviewee 7: *“...the project goals are set this is true, but I mean this is not just the only way to reach the project goals and complete the project successfully...sometimes you have to take other ways or directions to complete the project...”*

In fact, objective orientation and commitment to the project task is closely related. The committed behaviour to the completion of the project task entails objective orientation because the project objectives are pre-set. Therefore, a structured approach needs to be adopted in order to achieve the project objectives. This is in line with the findings of Mujtaba and Alsua (2011, p.3). The authors propound a structured approach for achieving the pre-set project objectives. Project objectives are pre-defined and a plan is set to achieve these objectives (Mujtaba and Alsua 2011, p.3). Therefore, it is to assent that the quality measurement of objective oriented self-employed consulting

engineers is determined by the task completion and deadlines. From the project management practise it is obvious that clear objectives influence the performance outcome of any project.

Furthermore, Verzuh (2008, p. 65) suggests that objectives should be specific and measurable in order to create a basis for agreement on the project. However, how can the project objectives be clear, specific and measurable? In the project management practice it is common to set SMART project objectives. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely. Even in the Academia, the SMART technique is applied to set objectives. For instance, The University of Kansas (KU 2014) suggests on its homepage the SMART technique for setting objectives. Specific: the project objectives must be defined and posed clearly (specific). The project team must be clear about what they want to achieve. This criterion of specific project objectives is of utmost importance for the task-committed business partners because the success of their relationship is focused on the project task. Measurable: in order to measure and warrant high quality, the outcome of the project tasks must be quantifiable and measurable. Thereby, the project performance can be managed. Achievable: the project objectives ought to be achievable for the person who is concerned with the project task. It simply means that the objectives must not be utopian. For instance, the output of a production unit cannot be increased by 500%. Setting this kind of project objective is not achievable. Relevant: the project objectives must be relevant to the project that is carried-out. The outcome of the project task must provide a great deal of value addition to the project success whereby the success of the business relationship is also warranted.

It can be an enhancement of the project performance or a contribution to the existing organizational knowledge. Timely: the project tasks ought to be completed within a limited time period because the project resources are pre-defined and any deviation from the project schedule will have an impact on the project resources and thereby on the overall project performance. The time criterion is of utmost importance for the task committed business partners because the success of their business relationship is focused on the timely completion of the project tasks. Therefore, a functioning business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers always preconditions objective orientation.

From the interview results it is evident that setting and achieving the project objectives seem to be pivotal for the project performance. The objective orientation is not a separate theme; rather it is the result of the personalities of the self-employed consulting engineers and their attitude to the completion of the project task. For instance, flexibility and commitment discussed in the previous sections contribute much to the objective oriented attitude. Further character traits that need to be considered as influential on the objective orientation are communication, consistency and trustworthiness.

The communication is important because services are intangible and need to be communicated to the business partners. Laing and Lian (2005, p. 116) conclude that the formality of communication characterizes the relational closeness; the less formal the communication, the closer the relationship. In the project management practice, communication is highly ranked. It is the necessary link between all project participants (project team and stakeholders).



For instance, Verzuh (1998, p. 297) describes communication in the project management as a success factor leading to successful project completion. Therefore, the effective information sharing is an integral part of objective orientation. However, the interview results provide evidence for an informal communication sharing between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Usually, the information sharing takes place through f2f meetings. Obviously, it is the most efficient way of sharing the project information. Hence, it is to assent that the communicative behaviour of the self-employed consulting engineers contributes to the creation of an informal communication channel which results in communication efficiency. Consistency, on the other hand, refers to the manner how the project tasks are completed in order to achieve the project objectives. The consistent commitment to the completion of the project tasks entails objective orientation. Achieving the project objective is the primary goal.

Obviously, the interplay between consistency and commitment to the completion of the project tasks leads to the objective orientation. The consistent commitment to the project tasks leads to maintaining high project performance. The project performance, on the other hand, determines the success of the projects. Therefore, consistent commitment leads directly to trustworthiness of the self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, for the task oriented interviewees the idea of trust is reduced to the project task respectively how it is completed and what is its influence on the project performance. Maintaining high project performance through consistent commitment to the completion of the project tasks influences the relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

Therefore, showing consistent commitment in completing the project tasks has a vast influence for hiring self-employed consulting engineers.

The importance of the objective orientation is not confined to the research settings of this doctoral study because Iglesias et al. (2011, p. 645) highlight the positive influence of the objective orientation on the implementation of relationship marketing. The authors label their idea “result orientation”, but the meaning is equal to the objective orientation because objectives are pre-set and the employees need to show commitment to achieve these objectives.

#### **4.4.5 Summary of hiring self-employed consulting engineers**

In summary, the interview results provide evidence for the importance of flexibility, commitment and objective orientation. These characteristics play a pivotal role for hiring self-employed consulting engineers in the project business. Firstly, project managers who are concerned with the execution of projects appreciate flexibility of self-employed consulting engineers because they are able to adapt themselves quickly to changing client request. Flexibility within the project management refers to quick adaptation to changing conditions while completing a project task. For instance, the technical engineering of a machine needs to be considered from a different angle which requires cooperation with other or different technical disciplines. Therefore, the flexibility is the strength of the self-employed consulting engineers which make them sought after in the project business. Hence, it is justified to argue that flexibility is a USP of the self-employed consulting engineers. From the viewpoint of the self-employed consulting engineers,

on the other hand, it entails independency because they are not strictly bounded to organizational structures.

Secondly, commitment is a criterion to hire self-employed consulting engineers because it entails trust, cooperative behaviour and consistency in delivering successful project results. From the interview outcome It is clear that the cooperative behaviour of the self-employed consulting engineers is an evidence for commitment. The cooperative behaviour leads directly to commitment to the completion of the project task in order to achieve the project objectives. Therefore, cooperative behaviour and commitment are directly linked to each other. Furthermore, it is also evident that communication is highly relevant in the professional relationships. In fact, the close cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers requires frequent communication. It refers to the closeness and cooperation in business relationships in order to achieve the project objectives. The less formal the communication the shorter the distance between the business partners. The information sharing between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is through brief f2f meetings; an informal communication channel which warrants communication efficiency. Since the project resources are constraint creating an informal communication channel with business partners is highly efficient and contributes to maintaining high project performance.

Thirdly, the objective orientation refers to focussing on the completion of the project tasks. In fact, the objective orientation and commitment to the project task is closely related. The committed behaviour to the completion of the project task entails objective orientation because the project objectives are

pre-set. Therefore, a structured approach needs to be adopted in order to achieve the project objectives. In the project management practise it is common to set SMART project objectives. It stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely. It is a structured approach in order to maintain the focus on the expected project outcome; e.g. a specific client request. Even in the academia, the SMART technique is applied to set objectives. For instance, The University of Kansas (KU 2014) suggests on its homepage the SMART technique for setting objectives. However, the objective orientation is of utmost importance because the project performance is determined by the timely achievement of the pre-defined project objectives. Therefore, a functioning business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers always preconditions objective orientation. Therefore, the objective orientation of the self-employed consulting engineers determines whether they are suitable or not.

#### **4.5 Exploring the concept of shared values**

This chapter explores the concept of shared values of this doctoral study which informs the objective 3 of this doctoral study. Essentially, it is the exploration and evaluation of how project managers and self-employed consulting engineers perceive the shared values. Figure 10 on page 105 shows the overall interview results as they relate to this objective. The interview data revealed that the shared values components “commitment and trust” are considered as important. This is in line with previous research considered in the literature review.

According to the literature review, commitment and trust are the components that are mostly treated and recognized in the research domain of B2B professional relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994).

Although the interview results of the doctoral study supports the conceptual model of shared values, a further perspective emerged in the main fieldwork. Commitment and trust do not emerge as the only components; rather they emerge alongside the context of performance. Here, performance refers to the project and relationship performance of the relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

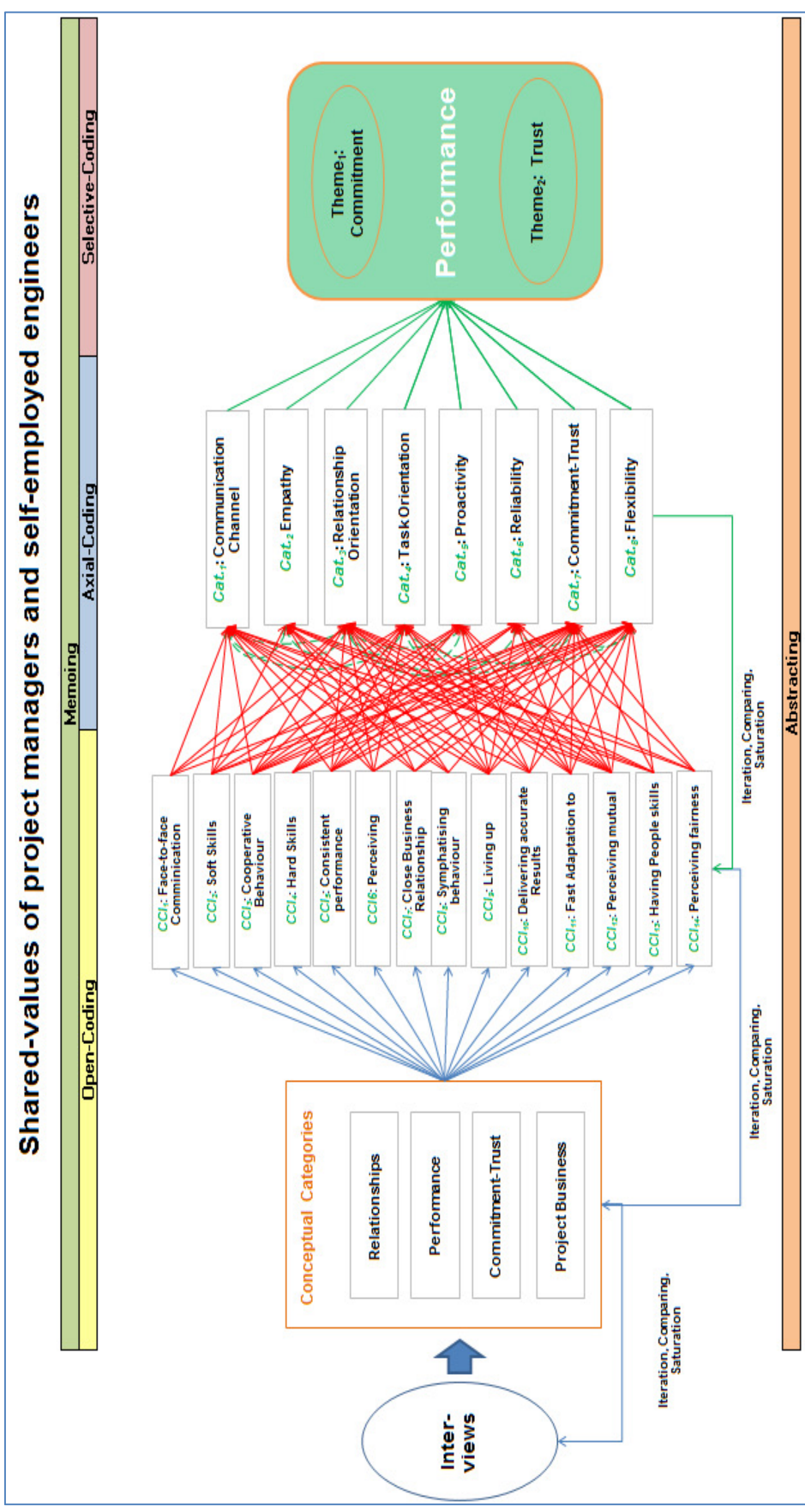


Figure 10 Interview data analysis (results)

Therefore, two major themes were compiled from the conceptual model of shared values: commitment-performance and trust-performance. The key points are commitment and trust embedded in performance. The following components surround the aforementioned key points:

- communication
- cooperation
- closeness
- sympathy
- empathy
- fairness
- flexibility
- consistency
- time orientation

The sections 4.5.1 to 4.5.11 and 4.6 describe and discuss these key findings which inform the objective 3 of this doctoral study.

The key findings are supported by the interview extracts. Further supporting interview extracts are listed in the appendix (see p. 204 ff.).

#### **4.5.1 Commitment**

The interview data revealed that first “commitment” is generally recognized by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The following interview extracts support this notion (further interview extracts see appendix). Obviously, commitment is considered as an antecedent of performance because it has high importance:

Interviewee 5: *“If you have good performance and matching personality this is good. Then you have already an excellent basis for professional relationships”.*

These evidences suggest that all project managers appreciate commitment as a shared value. Both, task and relationship oriented project managers and the self-employed consulting engineers recognise the importance of commitment in their relationship.

#### **4.5.2 Trust**

The second major theme that emerged from the interview results is the idea of trust in the context of professional relationships. The interview data revealed that “trust” is generally recognized by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The following interview extracts support this notion:

Interviewee 1: *“...for me I have trust in the task...if I am confident that the task is done and we get high performance than I have confidence in someone...otherwise I cannot trust because I think then there is a lack of capability...I am interested in the performance...therefore, the performance, which means the delivered outcome of the task is important...”.*



Interviewee 5: *".....performance is very important for me,....high performance is making good job...if you make a good job than everybody will trust in your skills...this doesn't mean I trust you but in your skills that you can do the job with high performance..."*

#### **4.5.3 Communication**

According to the interview results, communication is important in professional relationships:

Interviewee 5: *.....matching personalities is a basis for good relationship...and I can say things to my business partner right away...he knows what I want normally..."*

Interviewee 8: *"....it is not possible to understand the project managers if you don't have good communication....communication what you have done and what you want from the project managers is what I do every day in my job...."*

At the first glance there seems to be a friendship like or a small talk communication among the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, these appearances are deceptive on this:

Interviewee 5: *"....I say what I want right away....this is fast information exchange....not important to talk about other things but making good job is a good satisfaction for me..."*

Rather, it is evident that an informal communication channel is existent. A significant portion of the information sharing is through the informal communication channel:

Interviewee 8: *"....being in touch with the project managers is important for obtaining project information.....informal communication saves time and my performance is better because you can go ahead with your work when you have the information fast..."*.

From these results, there is no doubt that communication is appreciated by all participants. However, when it comes to the project managers attitudes, there is a difference existent between task and relationship oriented project managers:

Interviewee 9: *"....sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long.....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...."*.

From the interview extracts it is evident that the project managers are focused on the results and performance; they are task oriented. However, although an informal communication channel is appreciated, it does not increase the level of closeness to their business partners. This is slightly different when it comes to the relationship oriented project managers:

Interviewee 2: *"....if there is no commitment and information exchange this is not a good relationship for me.....how can I maintain a good business relationship if there is weak communication in the project?....doing the job is one thing but you have to bring the information I mean the results to the man.....everyday contact in the project is key if you want to share information....I can tell you good communication and information sharing leads to performance and successful working together"*.

Interviewee 10: *"... do you really believe in successful project without good communication?.....in my opinion good partners are good communicator.....performance can be reached in a good relationship..."*.

It is evident that the relationship oriented project managers are highly focused on the information sharing via the informal communication channel. It seems as if this informal construct make up the success of their relationship and leads to maintain high performance.

#### **4.5.4 Cooperation**

The interview results provide evidence for close cooperation which is supported by the following interview extract:

Interviewee 7: *"...project business requires cooperation....no cooperation means no successfully carrying out work packages which means low performance..."*.

The interview extract provides evidence for the importance of cooperative attitudes when working in a project assignment. Furthermore, cooperation is directly connected with high performance. It is evident that cooperation entails frequent communication and information sharing in order to achieve the overall project objectives.

#### **4.5.5 Closeness**

Closeness as an independent item cannot be identified in the interview data. However, it emerges in the context of commitment, communication and cooperation:

Interviewee 1: *“.....the closeness when I talk to self-employed engineers helps me to communicate easier....it is not a friendship what I mean but I can discuss my expectations easier....”*

#### **4.5.6 Sympathy**

Similar to closeness, sympathy does not play a role for itself; rather in the context of relationship commitment or communication it is of utmost importance. However, the interviewees who are task oriented see sympathy as more or less unimportant in doing business:

Interviewee 6: *“....I welcome certain amount of sympathy but generally it is not a ground for me to do business...”*

Interviewee 4: *“.....for me personally in my private environment sympathy is important but in my work life I don't do business with sympathy....as long as the performance is 100% the sympathy is not important....”*

#### **4.5.7 Empathy**

The evidence for the fact that empathy plays a role in professional relationships is provided in the context of close relationships. From the interview results it is to understand that empathy emerges when close cooperation between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is existent:

Interviewee 2: *“...when you work together with your business partner in a project normally you know what he wants....normally close working together means you sense the expectations...”*

Beside cooperation, the evidence for the role of empathy is provided by the existence of the informal communication channel, too. The evidences mentioned previously validate that empathy play a pivotal role in the form of knowing about the happenings surrounding the project and being prepared for making corrective measures.

#### **4.5.8 Fairness**

The idea of fairness is clearly expressed by the interviewees:

Interviewee 4: *"...I think fairness is important for me when you have a business partnership with a customer...it is not possible to work together in order to make good performance but on the other side there is no fairness, this is not good in my opinions...you have good cooperation, you have good relationship with your business partners than you have automatically fairness, because otherwise the relationship cannot functioning..."*

Interviewee 2: *"...what does fairness exactly mean?...I mean you know for me it means being pragmatic and making decisions based on facts is sufficient fairness...I don't care about character of someone, this is private I mean but facts, delivering results to reach project goals is important for everybody in the project...as long as the results are good enough than sticking to the project rules and conventions you know this is fairness..."* From the interview results, it is evident that relationship oriented interviewees set the focus on relational success, whereas task oriented interviewees underline the pragmatics.

#### **4.5.9 Flexibility**

Flexibility, according to the interview results, is predominantly emphasised by task oriented interviewees. However, although, according to the interview results, it is to expect that flexibility is an integral part of the attitudes of relationship oriented interviewees, it is evident that flexibility is not always present:

Interviewee 6: *"...sometimes you work with good people but you cannot use them for other assignments..."*.

Interviewee 3: *"...I had to learn that flexibility you cannot take as granted...we live and work in a constant changing world, the project has clear goals but managers, customers and other stakeholders I mean influence the project, so therefore you have to be open minded and be ready to adapt yourself to the happenings in the projects..."*.

#### **4.5.10 Consistency**

The idea of consistency plays a role in the context of commitment and trust:

Interviewee 4: *"....not only the good relationship with the engineers, it is important, too, to make good job. You must be committed to your job you are doing; this must be always the case...this means you are consistent in your job you are doing....consistent doing job is a signal for me that you are doing your job with commitment..."*.

Obviously, commitment or being commitment to the task or the business relationship over a long period of time is associated with consistency in completing the project tasks.

#### **4.5.11 Time orientation**

The evidence for time orientation is hidden in the interview responses. Both, relationship and task oriented interviewees refer indirectly to the role of time orientation in their professional relationship:

*Interviewee 2: "so...the characteristic of projects forces us simply spoken to be flexible because in a project you do something new in a time-limited period, you don't know what you face, so...from your experience you can foresee or assume..."*

#### **4.6 Discussion of the results from exploring the concept shared values**

This section discusses the concept of shared values which inform the objective 3 of this doctoral study. The objective 3 is the exploration and validation of the concept of shared values (figure 4, p. 60) from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The idea of the shared values developed from the first phase of the fieldwork is fully supported by the interview results. However, five further components emerge from the interview results which are important for the understanding of the shared values: communication, empathy, flexibility, consistency and time orientation. These five components were integrated to the conceptual model of shared values resulting in the following figure 11:

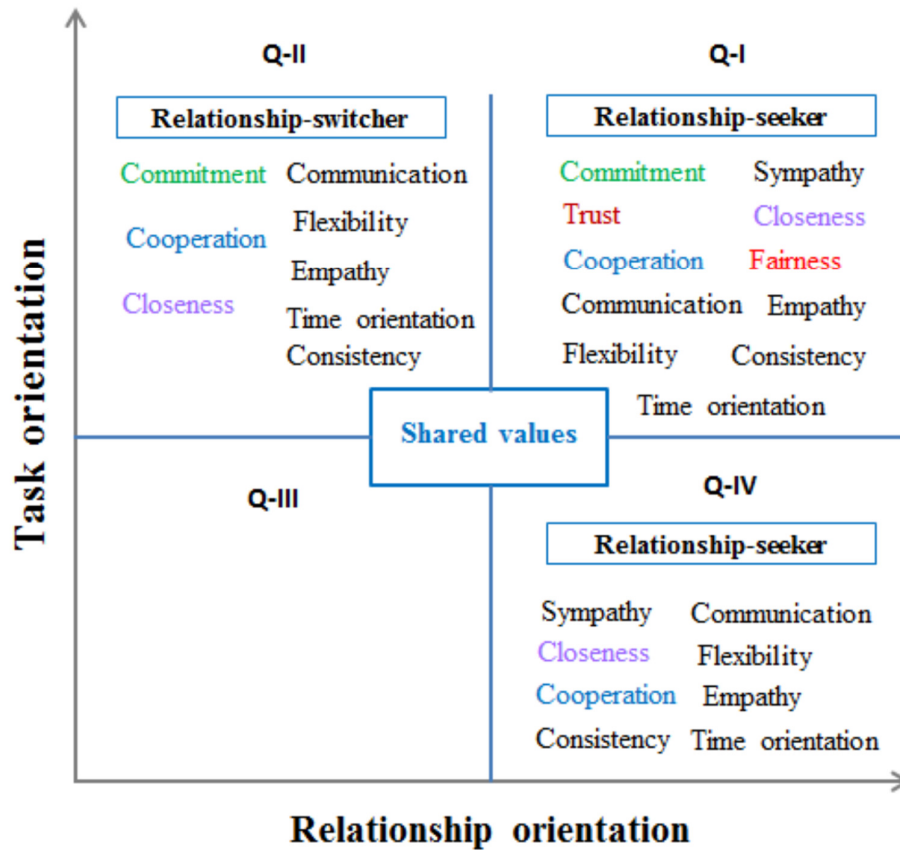


Figure 11 *Concept of shared values*

The previous mentioned further components were integrated to the conceptual model in figure 11 according their relevance for the understanding of the idea of the shared values. They are relevant in task and relationship oriented relationships alike because they contribute to the understanding of the idea of the shared values between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. For instance, communication is a key component because the information exchange is through an f2f informal communication channel. This allows an efficient exchange of information which influences positively the project performance. Therefore, the



conceptual model in figure 4 shown on page 60 was developed further with the five components resulting in figure 11.

Depending on the degree of task and relationship orientation, the components of the shared values have different influence on the relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The task orientation set the focus on the performance resulting from the successful task completion. A performance lack will ultimately lead to relationship breakdown. Relationship orientation, on the other hand, emphasizes the successful professional relationships which are beneficial for both business parties. However, it is to point-up that the shared values are intermingled, i.e. they can influence each other or can emerge separately. Furthermore, the idea of relationship seeker and switcher, also observed by Karantinou and Hogg (2005, p. 250), is fully supported by the research findings. However, a further perspective emerged from the exploration of the conceptual model. This perspective is the "performance perspective". From this perspective, two major themes were compiled from the research data: first commitment-performance, and second trust-performance. Throughout the following sections, the idea of commitment-performance and trust-performance are discussed.

#### **4.6.1 Commitment-performance relationship**

The literature review shows the importance of commitment for organizations because numerous research articles are available which explore commitment in the work place. However, little number of research articles captures the qualitative exploration of commitment in professional relationships between

the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. As the following conceptual model shows, the idea of commitment plays an important role in the professional relationships wherein the business partners are either task oriented or task and relationship oriented. In figure 12 these relevant quadrants are highlighted in red.

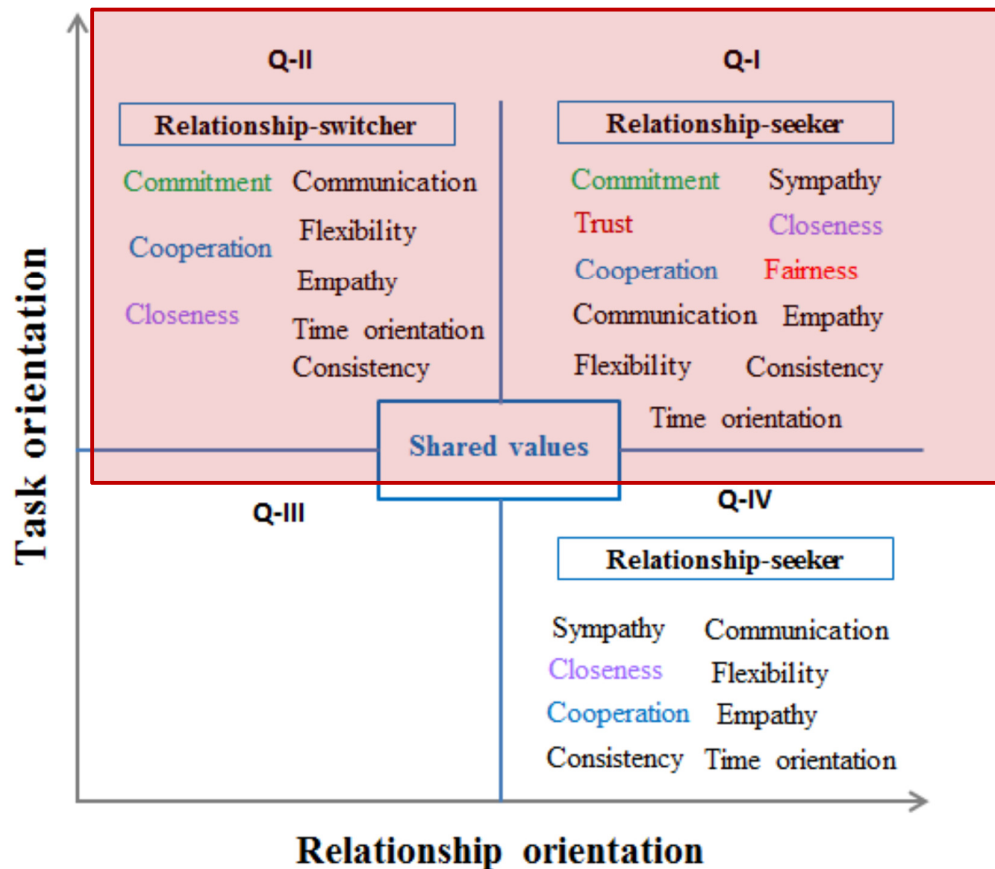


Figure 12 *Conceptual model of shared values*

In this context commitment leads to high performance and consistency in delivering business results. Therefore, the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers are willing to maintain their business relationship with committed business partners. The interview results underpin

the idea that the perceived risks and costs are associated with leaving the business relationship. This is in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 26). The authors provide evidence for a positive relationship between the termination costs and commitment. Drawing on the idea of Meyer and Allen (1991), it can be inferred that the calculative attitude of the relationship partners plays an important role in maintaining the relationship. Here, it can be argued that calculative attitude is associated with rationality rather than shared values. However, the interview results show the complexity of the relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. In fact, it is more sophisticated than a simple business transaction based on cost and benefit analysis.

The following figure 13 shows a simple depiction of the complex commitment-performance relationship within the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. It suggests two principal types of commitment leading to performance: first relationship commitment, and second task commitment.

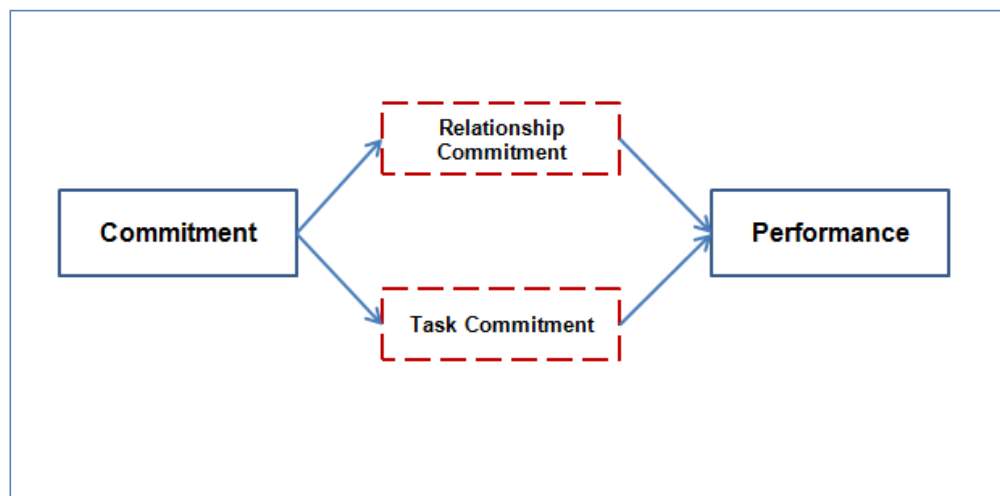


Figure 13 *Commitment-performance relationship*

From the commitment-performance relationship above, it is to assert that the performance requirements of the project managers (clients) drive the need for commitment. As a result commitment is grounded in the shared values; mutual values that are appreciated by project managers and self-employed consulting engineers alike.

#### **4.6.1.1 Relationship commitment**

This section evaluates and discusses the role, importance and the influence of the shared values on the perception of the relationship commitment and performance. The idea of relationship commitment sets the focus on the personalities of the business partners. Hence, the shared values explored in the conceptual model of this doctoral study play a pivotal role.

#### **Communication**

Communication describes well the closeness in business relationships; in the context of professional services it refers to the distance between business partners. From a social network' viewpoint, it is defined as the level of intimacy and/or frequency of communication (Wu et al 2008, p. 440). The level of intimacy can be neglected in the research settings of this doctoral study because it will cause probable conflict of interest among business partners. Consequently, it will result in the violation of corporate code of conduct of the client organisation. The frequency of communication possess a high relevance to the business practise because communication is important in delivering professional services due to the fact that services are intangible and need to be communicated to business partners.

From the interview results it is to understand that the communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is deformed because most of the information exchange takes place through brief 2f2 meetings. The interview results provide evidence for the efficiency of the aforementioned informal communication channel. Both, relationship and task oriented project managers appreciate this informal communication channel.

The informal exchange of information between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is different from the formal communication suggested by a project plan. While the formal communication involves all participants who work for the project, the informal communication channel between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is more or less personalized. It is simply a two way channel between the two parties. Therefore, it is to assent that a functioning communication channel is a construct that maintains the success of the business relationship among project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. This is also in line with the findings of Sharma and Patterson (1999, pp. 151-170). The authors found out that communication, viz. communication effectiveness, is an antecedent of relationship commitment. Furthermore, Thereon et al. (2008, p. 1007) also identify positive relationship between commitment and communication and suggest communication as an antecedent of commitment. Therefore, the authors suggest enhancing the level of communication in order to enhance the commitment in business relationships.

## **Cooperation**

The vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers in the context of this doctoral study is a project based cooperation wherein large capital projects are implemented with an investment value > €20 m. Therefore, it is to assent that the close cooperation is linked with commitment in order to achieve the project objectives. The interview results provide an evidence for the importance of the cooperative behaviour when working in a project assignment. The cooperation of the business partners and their commitment to the project task lead directly to high performance. It is also evident that cooperation entails frequent communication and information sharing in order to achieve the overall project objectives. However, the cooperation is not a friendship; rather an informal sharing of information reduces the distance between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. This is also in line with the findings of Laing and Lian (2005, pp. 116). The authors suggest that an informal way of communication is an evidence for a close cooperation. As a result, the velocity of information sharing among the business partners is accelerated whereby the project resources are used efficiently. Thus, close cooperation and informal way of communication has a positive influence on the project performance. Furthermore, close cooperation enables the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers to resolve emerging problems effectively.

The interview results of this doctoral study show strong interdependence between cooperation and communication which influences the project performance. Indeed, strong business relationships and interdependence

between cooperation, commitment and communication determine the level of the project performance. This is also supported by He et al. (2013, p. 608). The authors suggest that opening up communication channels leads to close cooperation in order to achieve the mutual objectives. This has a positive influence on the relationship performance. From the relationship committed business partners' viewpoint, cooperation, commitment and communication lead to successful business relationships because mutual project objectives are achieved. Therefore, the shared values cooperation, commitment and communication are supported by the interview results.

The importance of cooperation is also supported by the findings of Iglesias et al. (2011, p. 642). In their research the idea of cooperation is the efficient team work between the suppliers and customers. The idea of team work is a shared value with an exceptional influence on the implementation of relationship marketing (Iglesias et al. 2011, p. 642).

### **Closeness**

As outlined in the previous section, closeness emerges alongside the context of cooperation, commitment and communication. Generally, the idea of closeness facilitates the communication between the business partners. In the project management practise, the fast information exchange is necessary to warrant efficiency. Hence, it is to assent that the relationship closeness entails communication through an informal communication channel.

In fact within the project management an informal communication channel is of utmost importance because it provides a fast line for information exchange. The interpersonal effects of cooperation, communication and

closeness lead to the relationship commitment. Consequently, business partners are willing to maintain their business relationship. This is also in line with the idea of Dwyer et al. (1987), Goleman (1998) and Laing and Lian (2005) that relational closeness entails relationship commitment. They identify closeness in the business relationships as a key success factor. Collectively, it is to assert that the interplay between closeness, cooperation and communication is a precondition for the relationship commitment.

### **Sympathy**

Due to the fact that a business is driven by the benefit based on a win-win solution, the idea of sympathy seems to be unimportant. However, sympathy paves the way for easy communication and cooperation. However, task oriented interviewees consider sympathy more or less unimportant in doing business. The interview results are also in line with the idea of Sturmlechner (2003, p. 1). The author defines sympathy as a success factor for customer retention because it is positive related to the future buying decision of the customers (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 37). He argues that sympathy can even compensate customer dissatisfaction; when a high level of sympathy is given in a business relationship then dissatisfaction has less impact on the relationship (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 46). In contrast, an absence of sympathy leads to relational conflict or even in the worst case to the termination of the relationship (Sturmlechner 2003, p. 46). However, in my opinion sympathy can never be a warranty for the toleration of failures; rather it can be considered as a credit granted by the business partners which will be decreased by occurring dissatisfaction.



## **Empathy**

Empathy is an emotional capacity to perceive other people's expectations. Especially, when it comes to relationship oriented business partners, the emotional factor plays a pivotal role. It is simply expected that the business partner knows what is going around in the relationship. Therefore, perceiving the business partner's expectations is important. However, how can we perceive the business partner's expectations before they are expressed clearly?

It is scientifically proven that the human beings communicate over 90% nonverbal. Therefore, the body language tells much more than verbal expression. This idea is in line with the findings of Don-Jin and Wong (2001, p.56). They consider empathy as a necessary link between the business partners. According to the authors, by setting guanxi (close business relationships) the business partners look for perceived similarities between them. Once the similarities are identified than empathy is considered as given (Don-Jin and Wong 2001, p.56).

Furthermore, according to the interview results empathy emerges in the context of cooperation and communication. Empathy in the context of cooperation and communication can be described with the awareness of the business partners. It is the awareness of the business partners' to their needs and requirements without verbal communication. This idea is supported by the findings of Dwyer et al. (1987, p.15). They consider awareness as one of a number of stages wherein business relationships develop. The authors suggest that situational proximity in business relationship facilitates awareness.

However, Goleman (1998, p.1) associates awareness with knowledge about strength, weakness, emotions and their impact on others. This idea is transferable into the business case of this doctoral study. Both, project managers and self-employed consulting engineers are leaders; therefore self-awareness can be conducive to the success of their business relationship.

Collectively, is to assent that empathy is engendered by the relational closeness. The interplay between empathy, relational closeness and communication has a positive influence on the development of business relationships. High project performance is achieved through successful business relationships.

### **Fairness**

The role of fairness in the relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is well described by their cooperative behaviour. From the interview results it is evident that relationship oriented interviewees set the focus on the relationship success. Their commitment to the relationship and cooperative behaviour create a perception of fairness. The relationship committed business partners are generally aimed at achieving high level of performance. They consider fairness as given in functioning business relationships. This idea is supported by the findings of Patterson et al. (1997, p. 7). They found-out that fairness is positively related with customer satisfaction.

Collectively, it is to assent that the idea of fairness is a hidden shared value but of utmost importance because a lack of fairness would lead to violation of

the mutual values and ultimately to relationship breakdown. Therefore, fairness play a major hidden role in maintaining professional relationships. However, it is surprising that the role of perceived fairness in the context of professional relationships is less explored.

### **Flexibility**

The interview results provide evidence for high appreciation of flexibility by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The project managers who are concerned with the execution of the projects appreciate the flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers because they are able to adapt themselves quickly to changing client request and business environment. The flexibility is exactly the strength of the self-employed consulting engineers which make them sought after in the project businesses. However, although the interviewees perceive the high relevance and importance of flexibility in the project business, from the interview results it is evident that there is sometimes a lack of flexibility. Therefore, it is justified to argue that flexibility is a unique selling proposition of the self-employed consulting engineers. While the project managers appreciate flexibility, from the viewpoint of the self-employed consulting engineers flexibility entails independency. They are not strictly bounded to organisational structures which enable them to adapt rapidly to the changing business environment.

Collectively, it is to conclude that flexibility has a vast influence on the project performance and plays a pivotal role in the management of professional relationships.

## **Consistency**

Consistency in the context of professional relationships plays an important role because consistent commitment to the project tasks and business relationships entails trust. Therefore, it is to assent that trust emerges through consistent commitment to the business relationship. Obviously, the interplay between consistent commitment to the relationship and the time factor determines whether a business relationship turns into a relationship oriented partnership or remains a business transaction. Therefore, consistency from this viewpoint can be seen as the commitment to the business relationship over time wherein the project conventions are upheld and mutual values are lived. Thereby, the business partners perceive trustworthiness and are willing to maintain their business relationship. This idea is also in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22) because they define trust as a key which leads directly to cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of the business relationships.

## **Time orientation**

For the relationship oriented business partners, the time orientation refers to the longevity of their business relationship. The business relationship simply matures over time. During this maturity period both parties know their mutual expectations and needs. Exactly during this maturity period the components of the shared values emerge and become mutual values for the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, it is not warranted that all business transactions will succeed in relationship oriented partnerships; some remain business transactions, but some mature and

develop into professional relationships based on the shared values. Therefore, the time factor determines whether the business relationships turn into relationship oriented partnerships or remain simple business transactions.

## **Trust**

From the interview results it is to assent that trust is the willingness to rely on the business partners' capacities to complete successfully a task. This idea is in line with the findings of Moorman et al. (1993, p. 82). The authors define trust as the willingness to rely on the business partners in whom one has confidence. Therefore, for the task oriented interviewees the idea of trust is reduced to the successful completion of the project task. In contrast, for the relationship oriented business partners trust is entailed by behavioural intention. Here, behavioural intention is a conscious behaviour of relying on the business partners. Therefore, trust is more or less personified. The committed behaviour of the business partners determine whether a trustor trustee relationship develops. This idea is supported by existing knowledge. However, the behavioural intention is explored from diverse perspectives. In the social psychology, behavioural intention is explored from the motivation perspective (Hagger et al. 2006; Vallerand et al. 1992; Juarrero 2002). Baker-Eveleth and Stone (2008), Menash (2013), Jayasingh and Eze (2009), Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Parasuraman et al. (1991), on the other hand, explore the idea of behavioural intention in the context of the business organizations. Trust or the willingness to rely on the business partners

require time because solely enduring partnerships lead to trust. Hence, there is a positive relationship between trust and the time orientation.

The committed behaviour leads to perceiving trust, but the chief linkage between trust and commitment is the idea of consistency. Consistency entails commitment because it is a consistent attitude towards a task or/and relationship. For the relationship oriented business partners consistency refers to the commitment behaviour to the business relationship. All mutual values that both parties share and appreciate ought to be lived over time consistently in order to develop trustworthiness. However, trust or creating trust is not a static but a dynamic process. Once trust is developed; it does not mean that it is eternal. It is the consistency and committed behaviour towards the task and relationship that maintains the trustworthiness of a business relationship. These ideas are also supported by the research findings of Theron et al. (2008, p. 1004). Their research findings confirm trust as an antecedent of commitment. Consequently, the authors suggest focussing on trust in order enhance the relationship commitment.

#### **4.6.1.2 Task commitment**

This chapter evaluates and discusses the role, importance and influence of the shared values on task commitment and performance. Task commitment means showing committed behaviour while accomplishing a project task in order to achieve the project objectives. In the context of this doctoral study, task commitment emphasizes the importance of how the project tasks (work packages) are completed and what is its influence on the overall project performance.

## **Communication**

Similar to the discussion of the communication in relationship commitment, the idea of communication in task commitment refers generally to the frequency and formality of the information sharing. The interview results show evidences for the deformed communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, the communication in task commitment is different from the communication in relationship commitment because the communication in task commitment is reduced to the successful completion of the project task. Therefore, the results of the task execution and completion need to be shared through the informal communication channel. Furthermore, it is to assent that the frequency of the information sharing is not pre-defined because generally informal communication channel allows frequent and ad-hoc sharing of information. The frequency and informality of the communication is an evidence for a close cooperation of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, the distance between the business partners is shorter in informal communication channels. This notion is also in line with the findings of Laing and Lian (2005, p. 116). They conclude that the formality of communication characterises the relational closeness; the less formal the communication, the closer the relationship. In the project management practice, communication is highly ranked. It is the necessary link between all project participants (project team and stakeholders). However, the task committed business partners set the focus on the completion of the project task.

Unlike the information exchange among relationship oriented business partners, the communication between the task committed business partners through the informal communication channel is reduced to the information sharing about the structured completion of the project tasks which influences positively the project performance.

### **Cooperation**

As outlined in the previous section, the cooperation in task commitment is directly linked with the informal communication channel and the completion of the project task. In fact the informal communication channel is the chief linkage between task commitment and cooperation. The consistent delivery of the results while completing a project task and the sharing of these results through the f2f communication channel entails cooperation.

These results are also in line with the findings of Laing and Lian (2005, pp. 116). The authors found out that the informal communication is an evidence for close cooperation.

### **Closeness**

The idea of closeness in task commitment is well described by the informal communication channel between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. This closeness is of utmost important because it influences positively the project performance. Hence, closeness entails facile communication through the informal communication channel which leads automatically to cooperative behaviour. The cooperative behaviour, on the other hand, is conducive to the task commitment which influences positively



the overall project performance. This idea is also supported by the literature review. For instance, Laing and Lian (2005, p. 116) identify closeness in business relationships as a key success factor.

### **Sympathy**

Sympathy is not obvious in the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Unlike in relationship commitment, the idea of sympathy does not play any role in task commitment because the task oriented interviewees consider sympathy unimportant in doing business. Although common sense tells that a certain kind of sympathy is prevalent in any kind of functioning social interaction, from the interview results it is to conclude that sympathy is unimportant in task commitment and does not influence the project performance. Therefore, sympathy does not play any role in the task committed business partnerships.

### **Empathy**

Empathy is the capability of perceiving other people's expectations before expressed explicitly. However, it is to underline that empathy in the context of task commitment does not refer to the emotional capacities prevalent in the relationship committed business partnerships. Rather, it is reduced to the efficient completion of the project tasks. Since a project business is a cooperation the needs and requirements of the project partnerships are driven by the project objectives. This notion is supported by the following interview extract:

Interviewee 7: *“...cooperation is a must have skill...it is very important and in a project cooperation you have to know what is going on in advance...”*.

The task committed business partners set the focus on the completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives. According to the SMART technique the project objectives are clearly defined. Therefore, the business partners' expectations about the task completion must be clear. Therefore, it is to assent that empathy in the context of task commitment has a vast influence on the project performance through the successful completion of the project task.

### **Fairness**

The role of fairness in task commitment is hidden. It is not clear which role fairness plays. However, the task committed business partners consider upholding the project rules and conditions as a premise for fairness. Consequently, fairness is warranted when the project tasks are completed successfully and the project rules and conventions are upheld. Therefore, it is to assent that the idea of fairness is a hidden shared values, but of utmost importance. A lack of fairness would lead to violation of the mutual values and ultimately to relationship breakdown. Therefore, fairness plays a major hidden role in maintaining the professional relationships.

### **Flexibility**

The idea of flexibility in task commitment refers to the flexible behaviour while completing a project task. For instance, the technical engineering of a machine needs to be considered from a different angle which requires

cooperating with other or different technical disciplines. Therefore, flexibility in the project business is a must. This idea is supported by the findings of Hibbard et al. (2003, p. 378). They suggest that the relationship success is determined by the flexible respond to the future events, which means to the uncertainties. The volatile environment of the projects requires quick adaptation to the changing conditions. This is exactly the strength of the self-employed consulting engineers which make them sought after in the project business. Therefore, it is justified to argue that the flexibility is a USP of the self-employed consulting engineers.

Furthermore, Theron and Terblanche (2010, p. 394) identify the competence as a dimension of relationship marketing. Their research results show an outstanding influence of the competence because the relationship managers in the research sample consider the competence of the business partners as one of the important dimensions in establishing and managing long term relationships. The idea of competence can be associated with the flexibility because flexibility also describes the competence of the self-employed consulting engineers. The flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers allows performing specific and complex tasks. Therefore, the important role of the competence identified by Theron and Terblanche (2010, p. 394) supports the idea of flexibility in this doctoral study.

### **Consistency**

Consistency in task commitment refers to the consistent delivery of the project results while completing a project task. The consistency in delivering the project results, on the other hand, refers to the timely completion of the

project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives. Thereby, a high level of project performance is maintained which influences positively the success of the business relationships. This is underpinned by the following interview extract:

Interviewee 3: "...if you mean commitment like positive attitude towards performance, yes it is so...this is sort of consistency....".

Therefore, it is to assent that the high performance is entailed by the consistency in delivering the project results. Furthermore, consistency in the context of the professional relationships plays an important role because a consistent commitment to the project tasks entails trust.

### **Time orientation**

The evidence for the time orientation is hidden in the interview results. The task committed business partners refer indirectly to the role of the time orientation because they set the focus on the efficient completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives.

The projects are always a structured approach for implementing ideas or technical applications. Within the project management the structured approach is aimed at breaking down the project into doable work packages in order to warrant the completion within a set period of time (Verzuh 2008, p. 125). Exactly, the time period is the link from the work packages to the project objectives. The project managers and self-employed consulting engineers define and evaluate the project objectives whether they are doable within a pre-defined time period. Therefore, achieving the project objectives can be considered as a measure for their relationship performance.

Furthermore, the timely completion of the project tasks leads to consistency in delivering results which entails trust. Therefore, the time factor is crucial in the task commitment; a high level of performance can be maintained when the project task are completed on time.

## **Trust**

As indicated in the previous chapters, the idea of trust in the task commitment is entailed by the timely completion of the project tasks and the consistency in delivering the project results. Upholding the project conventions also entails trust. Therefore, for the task committed interviewees the idea of trust is reduced to the task respectively how the task is completed and what is its influence on the project performance. However, bad results do not necessarily lead to mistrust; rather the manner in which the task is completed counts. Sometimes the results of the completed tasks do not meet the expectations, but if it was completed with passion and structured way, than there is no reason for mistrust.

The importance of trust in the business relationships is in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22). They define trust as a key because it leads directly to the cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of the business relationships. Collectively, it is to assent that trust does not emerge automatically in the business relationships: Rather, in the context of the task commitment, the consistency of delivering the project results entails trust which influences positively the project performance.

#### **4.6.1.3 Summary of commitment-performance relationship**

In summary, relationship commitment in the context of the professional relationships is described by various shared values. Firstly communication is highly ranked within the project management practise. It is the necessary link between all project participants. However, when it comes to the communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers the communication is deformed. Mostly, the information exchange takes place f2f which is an evidence for an informal communication channel. This type of communication channel does not exist between the project managers and mid-sized engineering companies, but between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, it is to assent that a functioning communication channel is a construct that maintains the success of the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

Secondly, from the interview results it is evident that the relationship dyad between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is a close cooperation in order to achieve the project objectives. It enables both parties to resolve emerging problems efficiently. The result is a highly effective communication channel for sharing information at a high pace. Consequently, the project resources are used highly efficient, for instance fast problem solving without wasting time.

Thirdly, the relationship closeness emerges alongside the context of commitment, communication and cooperation. It facilitates the communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Hence, it is to assent that the relationship closeness entails

communication through the informal communication channel. In fact, within the project business the informal communication channels are of utmost importance because they provide a fast information exchange. Thereby, valuable project resources can be saved which results in high project performance. The information exchanges through the informal communication channels lead automatically to the cooperative behaviour. Thus, the business partners are willing to maintain their business relationship. Consequently, the interplay between cooperation, communication and closeness leads to the commitment which influences positively the overall project performance.

Fourthly, the idea of sympathy in the context of the professional relationship refers to the functioning interpersonal communication. Here, it can be seen as an evidence for matching personalities of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, from my viewpoint it is worth mentioning that sympathy can never be a warranty for a relationship success; rather it is a supporting construct that facilitates the interpersonal communication. Therefore, sympathy is not a key but a lack of sympathy will reduce the relationship to an ordinary business transaction.

Fifthly, the idea of empathy is an emotional capacity to perceive the business partners' hidden messages about their expectations. It is possible to tease-out the expectations before they are expressed because it is scientifically proven that human beings communicate over 90% nonverbal. This means being aware of the business partners 'needs and requirements without verbal communication. Not only perceiving the relationship partners' expectations, empathy is also associated with knowing about your own strength,

weakness, emotions and their influence on the others. From the self-employed consulting engineers' point of view, empathy is pivotal because at the end the project managers are the clients who drive the business. Therefore, having empathy, awareness and knowing about the success criteria of the professional relationships must be the drivers for the relationship commitment. From the project managers' viewpoint, on the other hand, relationship commitment must be appreciated in order to maintain high project performance.

Sixthly, in contrast to the aforementioned shared values, the idea of fairness is hidden in the interview results. Generally, the relationship commitment is aimed at achieving a high level of performance. The relationship oriented interviewees consider fairness as given in the functioning business relationships. Therefore, it is justified to assent that the idea of fairness is a hidden shared value, but play a major role in maintaining professional relationships. A lack of fairness would lead to the violation of the mutual values and ultimately to relationship breakdown.

Seventhly, flexibility in the project business is highly appreciated because the interview results provide evidence for the high appreciation of flexibility. The project managers who are concerned with the execution of the projects appreciate flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers. Flexible self-employed consulting engineers are able to adapt themselves quickly to the changing client request and business environment. The engineering companies, on the other hand, do not show flexibility because of their big size. This is exactly the strength of the self-employed consulting engineers which make them sought after in the project business.



Therefore, it is justified to argue that the flexibility is a USP of the self-employed consulting engineers. From the self-employed consulting engineers' point of view, the idea of flexibility entails independency because they are not strictly bounded to the organizational structures which enable them to adapt themselves rapidly to the changing business environment.

Eighthly, consistency in the context of the professional relationships plays an important role because the consistent commitment to the project tasks and business relationships entails trust. Consistency refers to the timely completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives. By delivering a consistent level of performance the perception of trust is developed.

Ninthly, the evidence for the time orientation is hidden in the interview results. Both, relationship and task oriented business partners refer indirectly to the role of the time orientation. The relationship oriented business partners associate the time orientation with the longevity of their business relationship. However, the task oriented business partners set the focus on the timely completion of the project tasks in order to attain the project objectives. Therefore, from the interview results it is evident that the time orientation is pivotal for the task and relationship oriented business partners alike.

Tenthly, similar to the other shared values, the perception of trust differs between task and relationship oriented interviewees. From the literature review it is clear that trust is the willingness to believe to the trustworthiness of the business partners. However, from the interview results it is to assent that the willingness to rely on the business partner refers to a general attitude that considers the performance of the project task. Therefore, for the task

oriented business partners the idea of trust is reduced to the task respectively how the task is completed, and what is its influence on the project performance. Upholding the project conventions by delivering high quality results entails trust. However, bad results do not necessarily lead to mistrust; rather the manner in which the project task is completed counts. Sometimes the results of the completed task do not meet the expectations, but if it was completed with passion and structured way, than there is no reason for mistrust. Therefore, it is to assent that for the task oriented business partners the perception of trust emerges when consistency in delivering the project results is given. The commitment to the task can also be linked with the behavioural intention to achieve the project objectives which also entails trust and the willingness to rely on the business partners.

#### **4.6.2 Trust-performance relationship**

The second major theme compiled from the interview results is the trust-performance. It is not surprising that trust plays a pivotal role in the context of professional relationships. Within the research domain of professional relationships the exploration of trust has long tradition. For instance, according to Laeequidinn (2010, p. 54), trust in the context of professional relationships has been explored from the psychologists or sociologists perspective. However, nowadays markets are changing and show certain dynamics which can lead to switching business relationships. I agree with the aforementioned argument but argue that the market dynamics do not lead necessarily to switching relationships or relationship breakdowns. Rather, I suggest that changing markets and their so called dynamics are enrichment

for the management of professional relationships. It motivates business partners to judge, reevaluate and maintain their business relationships. Hence, how can we understand the idea of trust-performance relationship in the context of professional relationships between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers? In order to find an understanding, first it is to clarify which part of the conceptual model of shared values is concerned. The following figure 14 shows the relevant quadrants of the conceptual model (red highlighted) for the understanding of the trust-performance relationship.

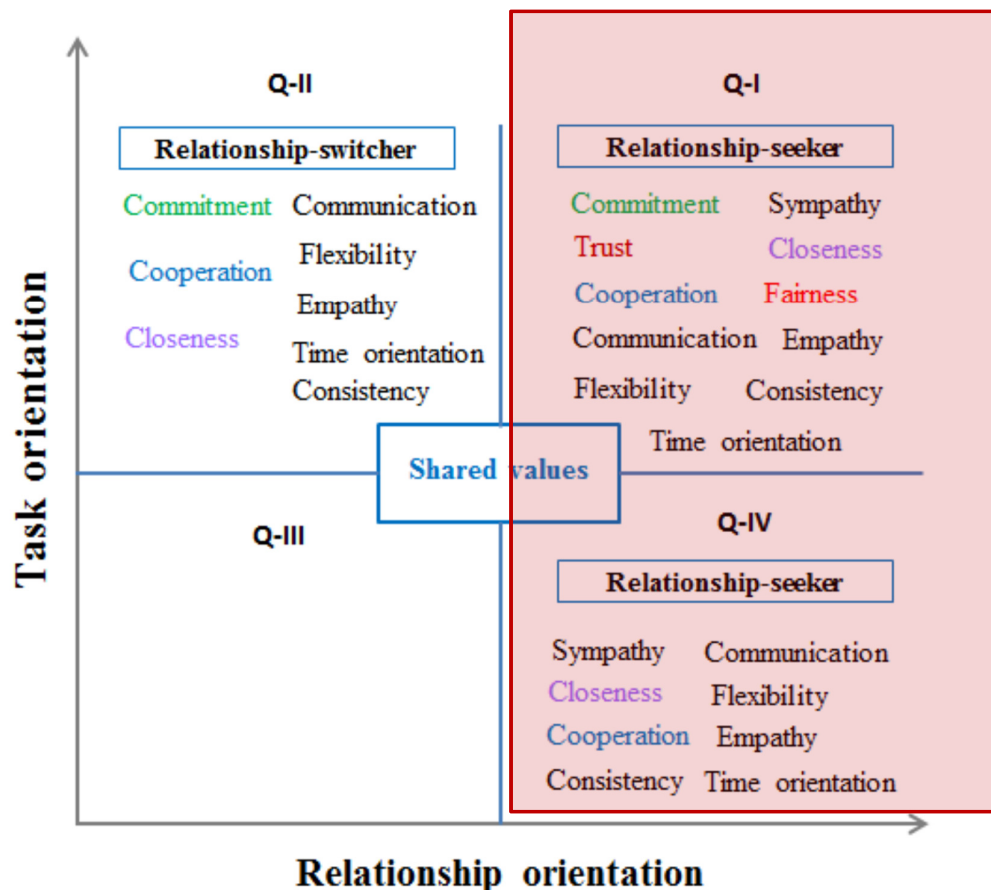


Figure 14 *Conceptual model of shared values*

As the conceptual model in figure 14 shows, the idea of trust plays an important role in professional relationships wherein the business partners are task- and relationship oriented. In order to understand the complex relationship between trust and performance, it needs to be split: first affective trust (relationship oriented trust) and second operational trust (task oriented trust). Both, affective and operational trust is the link between trust and performance. Figure 15 shows this complex relationship:

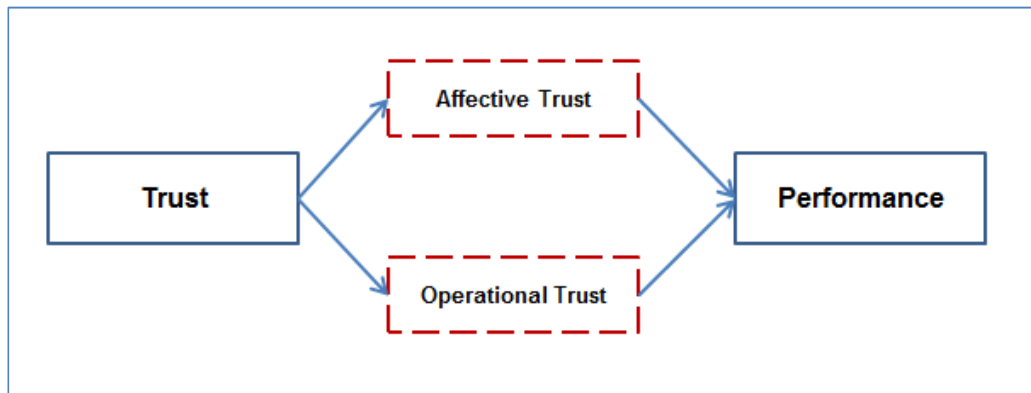


Figure 15 *Trust-performance relationship*

The term affective is used in the research article written by Allen and Meyer (1990) whereby different types of organizational commitment are described. This term is borrowed and used in the context of the trust-performance model discussed in this section. Here, the term affective refers to the perception of trust developed by the relationship orientation of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers, whereas the term operational describes the perception of trust developed by the efficient completion of the project tasks (task orientation) in order to achieve the project objectives. The achievement of the project objectives, on the other hand, provides an

indication for the performance; project performance and the performance of the business relationship.

#### **4.6.2.1 Affective trust**

This section evaluates and discusses the role, importance and influence of the shared values on the perception of affective trust and performance. Affective trust is an emotional state that emerges from the behaviour of the business partners. It is a kind of trust entailed by the commitment to the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The focus on the relationship, the appreciation of the shared values and the performance of the business relationship drives the development of affective trust.

#### **Communication**

Communication in the project management is important because projects are multidisciplinary constructs involving cross functional and cultural teams. In the project management practise, communication is highly ranked; it is the necessary link between all project participants. However, when it comes to the affective commitment in the business relationship the communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is bestowed with exceptional value. This is in line with Verzuh (1998, p. 297) who describes communication in the project management as a success factor leading to successful project completion. Furthermore, Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 25) highlight the importance of communication in developing trust.

The information sharing between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers takes place through an informal communication channel which is not part of a common communication plan written down in the ordinary project execution plans. It enables both parties to exchange timely the valuable project information.

This informal information exchange is an evidence for trustworthiness of the business relationships. However, the affective trust in the business relationship preconditions emotional attachment. Therefore, it is to assent that the commitment of the business partners to the completion of the project tasks entails affective trust. The business partners identify themselves with the project task and thereby they feel bounded to their business relationship. The affective completion of the project task leads to attaining the project objectives which influences positively the project performance. This idea is also in line by the findings of Roxenhall and Andrésen (2012, p. 88).

The relationship between communication and trust is also explored in different research domains. For instance, Theron et al. (2011, p. 201) identify a causal relationship between communication and trust. Their findings show that the level of communication increases the level of trust, as well. However, the perception of trust differs among the respondents in the research sample. While the clients confirm the importance of communication for the development of trust, the managers disconfirm. According to the authors the reason behind the disagreement between the clients and managers' perception of trust is caused by the infrequent communication.

This finding by Theron et al. (2011, p. 201) can be seen as a further evidence for the important role of the informal communication channel between the

project managers and self-employed consulting engineers because it increases the frequency of the communication. A frequent communication between the business partners increases the perception of trust.

### **Cooperation**

Cooperation in the context of affective trust is describes by the completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives. This is supported by the following interview extract:

Interviewee 1: *".....sometimes it is not possible to do a work, you have just people they sit and wait until others do the work.....but having cooperation is very important in my project daily work..."*.

According to the interview extracts the idea of cooperation is considered as necessary for the achievement of the mutual project objectives. It leads to high project performance because both business parties are involved in the completion of the project tasks. At this point cooperation entails frequent communication because the completion of the project tasks requires fast and frequent information sharing. Therefore, an informal communication channel between the project managers and the self-employed consulting engineers is existent. Hence, it is to assent that the strong interdependencies between cooperation and communication influences positively the overall project performance.

The interdependencies between communication channels and cooperation are also supported in different research settings. For instance, Friman et al. (2002, p. 406) demonstrate a positive influence of communication channels

on the cooperation. A lack of communication can lead to poor relationships (Friman et al. 2002, p. 406).

### **Closeness**

Closeness is the distance between the business partners. It describes the close cooperation of the business partners and the informal exchange of information. However, in the context of affective trust the idea of closeness goes beyond the boundaries of cooperation. It is simply the proactive participation in the business relationship. No matter task or relationship oriented business partners, a participatory way of structuring, shaping and decision making involves the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers to determine the success of their business relationship. This idea is underpinned by the following interview extract:

*Interviewee 8: "...it is not possible to trust without you know what he or she can...if you work with someone in a project than you normally have little bit trust in advance, but real trust comes when you work with someone for long time in projects..."*

It is clear that the idea of closeness is directly linked with the participation and both have a vast influence on the project performance. It commences with the participation of both business parties in setting the primary project objectives. This kind of participation enables the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers to shape the project objectives with their mutual values whereby the construct of the shared values emerges.



However, the close cooperation and participation entails also informal communication. It is sheer impossible to set the mutual project objectives based on the shared values without the informal communication. However, Friman et al. (2002, p. 406) identify that the development of communication channels reduces the distance between the business partners. Therefore, it is to assent that not solely the close cooperation entails communication, but communication entails close cooperation, as well.

Collectively, it is to assent that the close cooperation and participation entails affective commitment. The commitment to the business relationship enables the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers to work closely in order to set the mutual project objectives based on the shared values.

### **Sympathy**

Sympathy in the context of the professional relationships does not lead directly to the perception of trust. Rather, the informal sharing of information, close cooperation and participation of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers fosters the perception of sympathy. Hence, sympathy and trust are linked together through communication, close cooperation and participation. In a functioning business relationship wherein the business partners set the focus on the relationship success, the idea of sympathy is given.

However, it is important to point-up that sympathy does not directly engender the perception of trust. It always emerges alongside the context of communication, close cooperation and participation in setting the project objectives.

## **Empathy**

Empathy is of utmost importance to perceive the business partners' expectations. In the relationship commitment the focus is on functioning business relationship; its success is determined by achieving the mutual project objectives. Therefore, the idea of empathy plays an important role in the perception of the business partners' expectations before they are expressed explicitly.

From the interview results is to assent that achieving the project objectives is a result of close cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Both business parties contribute to the setting of the project objectives based on the shared values. This fosters empathy and leads to affective trust.

## **Fairness**

Fairness and trust are closely linked together in the context of trust-performance relationship. The chief linkage between fairness and trust is setting the mutual project objectives based on the shared values. It fosters the perception of fairness because both business parties participate and contribute with their ideas and expectations about the project objectives. This fosters the perception of fairness and entails affective trust. This notion is supported by the following interview extract:

*Interviewee 9: "...in Germany fair play has long tradition...fairness is doing business with win-win-solutions...you can have business without fairness I mean, but you have to know that without fairness you cannot have good business relationships..."*

This notion is also supported by the findings in the literature review. For instance, Patterson et al. (1997, p. 7) hypothesize a positive causal relationship between fairness and customer satisfaction which is supported by their research findings. Here, customer satisfaction is equal to a certain level of trust. The customers are satisfied, perceive trustworthiness and therefore are willing to maintain their relationship. Hence, the perception of fairness for the relationship oriented business partners engenders trust. However, it is worth mentioning that fairness does not determine the success of a business relationship; rather it is a necessary component for the relationship oriented business partners.

### **Flexibility**

Flexibility in the trust-performance relationship refers to the generation of affective trust entailed by quick adaptation to changing project requirements. For instance, late design changes of technical equipment require planning from a totally different point of view. This kind of late design changes are frequently encountered in the project business and pose a formidable challenge to the engineers. The key to cope with this kind of challenges is the quick adaptation to the changing conditions. Therefore, flexibility is of utmost importance. Furthermore, since the relationship oriented business partners set the focus on functioning relationships, it is to assent that the informal agreements between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers play a role in the generation of trust. Therefore, the chief linkage between trust and performance is upholding the informal agreements. For instance, if a problem occur and a project task needs to be analysed and

completed differently than the project manager and the self-employed consulting engineer set informal objectives in order to resolve the problem. The achievement of these informal objectives influences positively the project performance. This engenders the perception of trust.

### **Consistency**

Consistency entails affective trust because the consistent commitment to the business relationship fosters the perception of trust. This idea is in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22). The authors define trust as a key because it leads directly to cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of the business relationships. An effective cooperation, on the other hand, leads directly to the achievement of the project objectives. Therefore, consistent delivery of the results in the project cooperation has a positive influence on the project performance and entails thereby the perception of trust.

Therefore, it is to assent that affective trust emerges through consistent commitment of the business partners to their business relationship. The result is that both parties perceive trustworthiness and are willing to maintain their business relationship.

### **Time orientation**

The time orientation in business relationships refers to its duration. A long period of the project cooperation allows developing a business relationship based on the mutual values. Therefore, affective trust can be entailed when the business relationship lasts over a long period of time. During this maturity

period both parties know their mutual needs and expectations. Thereby, the mutual values of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers become important success factors of their business relationship.

### **Commitment**

From the interview results it is evident that the trustworthiness emerges when the business partners are committed to their business relationship. This means that consistency in delivering the project results is an evidence for commitment that entails affective trust. Therefore, the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers perceive trustworthiness and are willing to maintain their business relationship with the committed business partners. This idea is also in line with the literature review. The authors Morgan and Hunt (1994) identify a simultaneous emergence of trust and commitment in the context of professional relationships.

#### **4.6.2.2 Operational trust**

This section evaluates and discusses the role, importance and influence of the shared values on the perception of operational trust. The operational trust refers to the perception of trust entailed by the completion of the project tasks which leads to high project performance. Therefore, the operational trust emerges within the task oriented business relationships. The focus on the task completing is the source for the development of trust. This idea is also in line with the findings of Mujtaba and Alsua (2011, p. 3) because the structured approached whereby an entire project is developed and completed is the driver for the task orientation. The project objectives are pre-defined

and a plan is set to achieve these objectives (Mujtaba and Alsua 2011, p.3). Therefore, it is to assent that trust in the context of task orientation can be measured by setting the focus on the task completion and deadlines.

### **Communication**

The role of communication in the perception of operational trust is twofold. Firstly, the communication between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers starts while setting the project objectives. Both business parties are involved and contribute their ideas to setting the project objectives. Thereby a basis for trustful cooperation can be created because both business parties cooperate towards achieving their mutual objectives.

Secondly, the role of communication in generating operational trust becomes pivotal while the project tasks are completed because this requires a fast information sharing. Exactly, at this point the emergence of the informal communication channel wherein valuable project results are exchanged becomes the media for the generation of operational trust.

Furthermore, it is to assent that the timely sharing of information between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers contributes to the perception of operational trust. This timely information sharing is warranted by the informal communication channel wherein the information exchange takes place through brief f2f meetings. The aforementioned ideas are also in line with the literature review. For instance, Verzuh (1998, p. 297) describes communication in the project management as a success factor leading to successful project completion. The authors Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 25) even highlight the importance of communication in creating trust.

Collectively, communication in creating operational trust is about setting mutual project objectives and timely sharing of information through the informal communication channel. Therefore, I suggest the relevance of the SMART project objectives for creating operational trust. Furthermore, the timely completion of the project tasks will impede any deviation from the project schedule and negative influence on the project resources. Thereby high project performance can be maintained which influences the success of the business relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

### **Cooperation**

The role of cooperation in creating operational trust refers to the successful completion of the project task within pre-defined schedule. The existence of the cooperative behaviour in the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers fosters the perception of operational trust. Consequently, the business partners perceive trust and are willing to maintain their relationship. This idea is also in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22). The authors highlight the importance of trust by indicating its influence on cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of the business relationships. Therefore, cooperative behaviour is prevalent in any project team. Tzafir (2005, p. 1600), on the other hand, points-out that the repeated exchange of benefits between two business parties lead to the perception of trust. However, it is not necessarily monetary benefit; rather the contribution to the project performance and the enrichment of the business relationship are valuable.

The vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers in the context of this doctoral study is a project based cooperation wherein large capital projects are implemented. The interview results underpin the notion that this business relationship is a close cooperation. However, close cooperation does not mean a friendship; rather it refers to the informal communication through f2f meetings. This warrants a timely information exchange without wasting valuable project resources. Therefore, it is to assent that the close cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is a shared value that engenders cooperative behaviour.

This cooperative behaviour fosters the willingness to rely on the business partner which leads to the perception of operational trust. However, Friman et al. (2002, p. 407) found-out that the development of trust leads to a friendship between the business partners. This idea cannot be supported by the findings of this doctoral study. However, it is surprising that different research settings can alter the perception of trust.

### **Closeness**

The role of closeness in operational trust is mentioned in the previous section. Relationship closeness and cooperation are linked together because the timely completion of the project tasks and the information sharing through f2f meetings is an indication for the importance of the close cooperation. From the interview results it is clear that closeness is directly linked with the participation in the business relationship. This participation commences far before performing the project task. It starts with the close cooperation while



setting the project objectives. The involvement of both business parties warrants setting primary project objectives to achieve high project performance. Furthermore, the high project performance has a positive influence on the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

### **Sympathy**

Sympathy in the perception of operational trust does not play an important role because the operational trust is entailed by the timely completion of the project task. However, since the project objectives are set by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers it is to assent that these mutual objectives may lead to sympathetic behaviour. Therefore, sympathy can have a positive influence on the perception of trust, but it is not guaranteed. Collectively, it is to highlight that sympathy does not lead directly to the perception of operational trust, but it can have an influence because the completion of the tasks is driven by the mutual project objectives set by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

### **Empathy**

At the first glance it can be asserted that the idea of empathy cannot play an important role in perceiving operational trust because empathy is an emotional intelligence which allows understanding and feeling the expectations of the business partners. The operational trust, on the other hand, is entailed by the successful completion of the project tasks. Consequently, empathy is emotional driven, while the completion of the

project tasks is measured by objectives. Therefore, there is a contradiction between empathy and operational trust. The interview results prove the evidence for setting the focus on the successful completion of the project task. However, the project objectives are set by the business partners; therefore, it can be concluded that the expectations of the business partners are reduced to the achievement of the mutual project objectives by successful completion of the project tasks. This is the linkage between empathy and operational trust. Collectively, developing operational trust by empathy goes through setting the mutual objectives and successful completion of the project tasks. The completion of the project tasks becomes a key parameter for the project performance. Both parties are able to measure, judge and evaluate their performance which leads to operational trust. Thereby, the business partners are willing to maintain their business relationship.

### **Fairness**

Fairness in the perception of operational trust is considered as given when the project tasks are completed timely and successfully. In the task oriented business relationships wherein the completion of the project tasks is at the locus, the perception of fairness is entailed by successful completion of the project tasks. It determines whether the business partners are trustworthy or not. Consequently, fairness is warranted when the project tasks are completed successfully. It is to assent that the idea of fairness in the task oriented business relationships is of utmost importance because a lack of

fairness would lead to violation of the mutual values and ultimately to relationship breakdown.

### **Flexibility**

The role of flexibility in the perception of operational trust refers to the quick adaptation of the business partners to the changing project conditions. For instance, if the completion of a project task requires a change in technical design the business partners resolve this problem by fast information exchange through the informal communication channel. As a result, informal agreements are made whereby additional objectives are set in order to resolve the problem caused by the changing project conditions. This quick adaptation to the changing conditions and upholding the informal agreements drives the perception of operational trust. Consequently, the business partners perceive trustworthiness. Therefore, it is to assent that the idea of flexibility has a positive influence on the perception of operational trust which leads directly to high project performance.

### **Consistency**

Consistency in operational trust plays an important role because a consistent commitment to the completion of the project tasks and delivering results entail trust. This is also in line with the literature review. Trust is explored extensively in the domain of professional relationships. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p. 22) define trust as important because it leads directly to cooperative behaviour that is conducive to the maintenance of the business relationship. Moorman et al. (1993, p. 82), on the other hand, define trust as the

willingness to rely on the business partners in whom one has confidence. From the interview results it is evident that consistency, trust and commitment are intermingled because trust emerges when consistency in delivering the project results is given. It is evident that consistency, trust and commitment are intermingled. Consistency in delivering the project results is a metric for commitment; commitment on the other hand leads to trustworthiness. Therefore, consistency and commitment have a vast influence on the perception of operational trust which leads to high project performance.

### **Time orientation**

Time orientation in operational trust refers primary to the timely completion of the project tasks. The timely completion of the project tasks are expected from the business partners because the project tasks and the time period for their completion are pre-defined. This is the link from the project tasks to the project objectives. The timely completion of the project tasks leads directly to the achievement of the project objectives which fosters the perception of operational trust.

### **Commitment**

Commitment plays an important role in the perception of operational trust because from the interview results it is evident that trustworthiness emerges when the business partners are committed to the completion of the project tasks. Thereby, a high level of project performance can be maintained.

Commitment and trust always emerge alongside in the professional relationships. This is also in line with the findings of Morgan and Hunt (1994). In the research domain of professional relationships the idea of trust and commitment is usually explored simultaneously. Commitment leads to high performance and trustworthiness of the business partners. However, consistency in delivering results is an evidence for a committed behaviour in completing the project tasks which leads to high project performance. Therefore, project managers and self-employed consulting engineers are willing to maintain their business relationship with committed business partners.

#### **4.6.2.3 Summary of trust-performance relationship**

In summary, the trust-performance relationship is described by the shared values between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers which define the success of their business relationship. Firstly, since the business relationships are social interactions the idea of communication has a vast influence. In the domain of project management communication is pivotal because the projects are multidisciplinary constructs involving cross functional and cultural teams. Therefore, it is highly ranked within the domain of the project management. The interview results show evidence for an informal communication channel through which the project information is exchanged. It is the most efficient way of sharing information and is also an evidence for trust, because an informal exchange of information within a business partnership always results from trust.

Both constructs of trust, affective and operational trust are resulting from the informal exchange of project information.

Secondly, cooperation refers generally to the completion of the project tasks. Therefore, cooperative behaviour is prevalent in any kind of project teams. When it comes to the cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers, it is a close cooperation. It commences with setting the mutual project objectives; both parties participate in the objective setting and create thereby a denominator for the success of their business relationship. The completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives will measure the project performance and the success of the business relationship. The close cooperation is an evidence for trustworthiness of the business partners. It is a close cooperation based on the shared values that engenders trustworthiness. It is the willingness to rely on the business partner. Therefore, close cooperation entails trust which has an overall influence on the project performance.

Thirdly, closeness in the context of trust-performance emerges alongside the cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The close cooperation between the business parties warrants the successful completion of the project tasks which influences positively the project performance.

Fourthly, the idea of sympathy in the context of trust-performance relationships is relevant but does not lead directly to the perception of trust. Rather, the informal information sharing, close cooperation and participation in setting the project objectives fosters the perception of sympathy. Hence,

sympathy and trust are linked together through communication, close cooperation and participation.

Fifthly, empathy is an emotional intelligence that enables to perceive other people's expectations before expressed explicitly. Therefore, the influence of empathy on the success of the business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers goes through communication. The informal communication channel also enables to perceive the expectations of the business partners because the close cooperation and informal sharing of information provide an opportunity to make a picture from the body language and compartment of the business partners. From the interview results it is to assert that empathy, close cooperation and communication enables the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers to develop trust in their business relationship. Thereby, trust becomes a shared value between both parties; a denominator for the success of their business relationship.

Sixthly, fairness and trust are closely linked together because the perception of fairness in any kind of business relationship engenders trust. The business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is a close cooperation based on mutual values; both parties participate in setting the project objectives. Thereby, the foundation for fair project cooperation is laid because both business parties contribute with their values and expectation to the setting of the mutual project objectives. Once fairness is perceived the business partners perceive trustworthiness, as well. Consequently, fairness is warranted when the mutual project objectives are set which is also conducive to the development of trust.

However, it is worth mentioning that fairness does not determine the success of a business relationship, rather it is a necessary component for the relationship success.

Seventhly, it is evident that the flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers is a key. They are independent; they are not bounded to the organizational regulations which enable them to adapt themselves quickly to the changing business conditions. On the other hand, flexible project managers adapt themselves quickly to changing project requirements. Therefore, flexibility is appreciated by both business parties. It leads to the development of trust because it is simply expected in a functioning business relationship. Consequently, it is to assent that flexibility has a vast influence on the project performance and therefore on the success of the business relationships. Flexible business partners develop trust in their relationship which makes them willing to maintain their business relationship.

Eighthly, consistency in the context of professional relationships plays an important role because consistent commitment to the project tasks and business relationships entails trust. The evidence from the interviews shows interdependencies between consistency, commitment and trust. The project managers and self-employed consulting engineers show consistency in completing the project task in order to achieve their mutual project objectives. The result is that both parties perceive trustworthiness and are willing to maintain their business relationship.

Ninthly, the time orientation is always relevant for the development of business relationships because usually the business relationships mature over time. During this maturity period both parties know their mutual needs



and expectations. Therefore, it is to assent that consistent commitment to the business relationship over time entails trust. The time factor determines whether a business transaction turns into trustworthy business relationship or keep remain a business transaction.

Tenthly, the literature review shows the simultaneous emergence of trust and commitment in the context of professional relationships. Commitment leads to high performance and trustworthiness of the business partners. Consistency in delivering business results, on the other hand, is an evidence for commitment. Therefore, the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers are willing to maintain their business relationship with the committed business partners.

## Chapter 5

### **Conclusion and Implications:**

Three objectives were formulated in order to conduct this doctoral study:

Objective 1: exploration and evaluation of how project managers and self-employed consulting engineers understand the B2B market segment they are in.

Objective 2: understanding and critically assessment of why consulting engineers are hired for key posts like construction, engineering and project services management.

Objective 3: exploration and evaluation of the perception of shared values by the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

The section 5.1.1 addresses the objective 1. The findings from the interviews confirm the existence of a market segment for the self-employed consulting engineers. It is equivalent to an industrial sector; it is known but not recognised. Therefore, the section 5.1.1 suggests the management of the aforementioned market segment.

The section 5.1.2 addresses the objective 2. The findings from the interviews revealed that the key professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. Therefore, section 5.1.2 addresses flexibility, commitment and objective orientation of self-employed consulting engineers.

The section 5.1.3 addresses the objective 3. The exploration of the concept of the shared values from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers was the core of this doctoral study. Therefore, the section 5.1.3 suggests the knowledge generated from the exploration of the shared values.

Finally, the section 5.1.4 provides a conclusive summary of the implications of the findings of this doctoral study.

In this doctoral study I explore the management problem from my work place environment. I observe that relationships between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers terminate, project managers switching to other vendors and self-employed consulting engineers losing their contracts. The phenomenon of switching relationships is not confined to the research context of this doctoral study. Karantinou and Hogg (2006, p. 250), too, observe this phenomenon in other research settings.

The exploration of this management problem was conducted in two phases.

### **Phase 1**

In the first phase a comprehensive literature review was conducted. The literature shows a surge in the interest in science concerning the B2B sector. Within this Morgan and Hunt (1994) note a paradigm shift and develop a specific focus on the B2B professional relationships. The research conducted by Morgan and Hunt (1994) is outstanding because it covers the field of elements of professional relationships and B2B relationships. Both fields are pivotal for this doctoral study; the elements of professional relationships are at the heart centre of the doctoral study and B2B relationships form the context.

The key challenge from the literature review was to transform the findings from the previous research to the purposes of this doctoral study because the majority of the research articles draw on empirical data collected through survey questionnaires. Predominantly, quantitative research method is adopted which is aimed at identifying causal relationships between pre-defined variables. Hence, the numeric perspective is leading in the domain of the B2B professional relationships. Consequently, there is a lack of qualitative knowledge existent.

The key finding from the literature review in phase 1 (see figure 3) is the theoretical construct of shared values. The idea of the shared values covers a set of elements that define the success of the B2B professional relationships. Six elements were refined from the research articles that play a role in the context of the professional relationships: commitment, trust, cooperation, sympathy, closeness and fairness.

It was theorized that the shared values define the success of the professional relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Furthermore, the ties between the business partners are held together by these shared values. Therefore, it was to assent that any violation of the shared values leads to relationship breakdown.

In order to figure out the relevance of the construct of the shared values, it was piloted through a preliminary investigation. It was aimed at how the idea of the shared values is perceived by the interviewees. Four explorative interviews were conducted; the results supported the relevance of the shared values. As a result, the conceptual model was developed (see figure 4).

The conceptual model of shared values provides a new representation of the initial theoretical construct of shared values (figure 3) drawn from the literature review. The findings from the four explorative interviews supported the relevance of the shared values in the management of the project based relationships. However, the initial findings from the interviews went beyond the confirmation of the relevance of the shared values. The findings indicate that the interviewees show certain inclinations because the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees play an important role in their perception of the shared values. Consequently, the theoretical construct of the shared values was transformed to a four quadrant matrix showing the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees.

As a result from the four explorative interviews the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees were identified because some interviewees set the focus on the timely and efficient completion of the project task. This was not surprising because this phenomenon was in line with my work place experience. In the implementation of large and major capital projects in the manufacturing industry, the timely completion of the project tasks influences positively the quality of the project management. Furthermore, the relationship orientation of the interviews was indicated in the four explorative interviews because some interviewees highlighted the importance of the functioning relationship. The functioning project relationships influence positively the completion of the project task. The relationship orientation of the interviewees was indeed a new knowledge gained from the explorative interviewees because this was not fully in line with my work place experience. I was aware of the importance of the relationship management

and cooperative behaviour of the business partners while implementing a manufacturing project. However, the evident relationship orientation of the interviewees was a new value added to the pilot study and my experience, as well.

Collectively, the relevance of the shared values in the professional relationships and the indications about the task and relationship orientation of the interviewees were the motivation to develop the four quadrant matrix shown in figure 4. It was theorised that the degree of the task or relationship orientation of the business partners influences the perception of the shared values. For instance, task orientated business partners set the focus on the timely and efficient completion of the project task. Therefore, for the task oriented business partners commitment, cooperation and closeness are perceived as important for the success of their business relationships. A committed behaviour leads to close cooperation wherein the project tasks are completed efficiently. This is highly appreciated by the task oriented business partners. The relationship oriented business partners, on the other hand, set the focus on their business relationship. Therefore, the emotional component of the shared values is perceived as important. Consequently, sympathy, relationship closeness and cooperation are perceived as important for the success of their business relationship. The feeling of sympathy facilitates the development of trust which influences positively the generation of relationship closeness and cooperation.

However, usually the business practise encompasses both types of orientations. There are business partners who are task and relationship oriented because the project management practise requires soft and hard

skills in order to cope with the formidable challenges coming alongside with the implementation of the complex manufacturing projects. Therefore, it was theorised that the business partners who are task and relationship oriented perceive all components of the shared values as important.

## **Phase 2**

In the second phase the main field work was conducted. The conceptual model shown in figure 4 was explored. In total fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed. The results support the conceptual model; the shared values are fully supported by the interview outcome. However, a further perspective emerged from the interview data indicating that the performance is the centre of the happening. The idea of performance has long been explored in organisational context. For instance, Tzafir (2005, p. 1601) explore the causal relationship between the organizational trust and workforce performance and its impact on the organizational performance. However, in the settings of this doctoral study it is a further perspective because it did not occur in the first phase but in the main field study. Therefore, two major themes were derived from the conceptual model: commitment-performance (figure 13, p. 118) and trust-performance relationship (figure 15, p. 143).

The commitment-performance relationship shown in the figure 13 indicates that the performance requirements of the project drive the need for commitment. Commitment in this context is about showing committed behaviour in order to achieve the project objectives which influence positively the project performance. However, two forms of commitment are

distinguished: relationship commitment and task commitment. While the former set the focus on the personalities of the business partners, the latter emphasises the committed behaviour (task orientation) while accomplishing a project task. This idea is also in line with the findings of Mujtaba and Alsua (2011, p.3). The authors explain the task orientation by referring to the structured approach for achieving the pre-set project objectives. The project objectives are predefined and a plan is set to achieve these objectives (Mujtaba and Alsua 2011, p.3). Therefore, the quality measurement of the task commitment is highly focused on the task completion and deadlines.

The second theme derived from the conceptual model is trust-performance relationship shown in figure 15 on page 143. It comprises the quadrants Q-I and Q-IV of the conceptual model (figure 14, p. 142). Akin to the commitment-performance relationship, two forms of trust is distinguished: affective trust and operational trust. The term affective is used in the research article written by Allen and Meyer (1990) whereby different types of organizational commitment are described. This term is borrowed and used in the context of the trust-performance relationship. Here, the term affective refers to the perception of trust developed by the relationship orientation of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers, whereas the term operational describes the perception of trust developed by the efficient completion of the project tasks in order to achieve the project objectives. The achievement of the project objectives, on the other hand, influences positively the project performance and thereby the performance of the business relationship.



## **5.1 Implication of the findings**

The findings from the doctoral study show a major influence of the concept of shared values in managing the project based professional relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Specifically, the elements of B2B professional relationships “commitment” and “trust” embedded in the relationship performance show managerial implications. The following section outlines the managerial implications emerging from these findings.

### **5.1.1 Managing the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers**

The objective 1 of the doctoral study was to understand the market segment wherein the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers participate. The purpose was to explore the emergence of this market segment in order to understand why organisations hire self-employed consulting engineers. The outcome was that generally, two major aspects drive the emergence of the market segment for self-employed consulting engineers: organisational demand and complexity of manufacturing projects. The organisational demand refers to the lack of expertise of the client organisation. The client organisation represented by the project managers cannot provide fully the project expertise. The complexity of manufacturing projects, on the other hand, refers to know-how. The implementation of manufacturing projects requires certain technical know-how due to the fact that multiple technical disciplines are involved in implementing manufacturing projects, for instance process, piping and electrical engineering.

Therefore, the project teams are eclectic involving multiple disciplines which make the projects complex.

The findings from this doctoral study provide a practise based evidence for the existence of a self-created market segment for self-employed consulting engineers. It has an equivalent status to an industry sector; it is known but not recognised. At the first glance the business model of creating a market segment for self-employed consulting engineers seems to be an ordinary culture of outsourcing of non-core business activities. However, in reality the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers operate in a network of professional relationships which bestow their vendor client relationship with certain value. Therefore, the success of their business becomes central to the project performance. Consequently, the managerial implication is to focus on the aforementioned vendor client relationship in order to generate understanding and knowledge.

Furthermore, the findings from the doctoral study show positive relationship between the success of the professional relationships and project performance. Hence, generating knowledge from the management of the professional relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers will ultimately influence the performance of the manufacturing projects.

### **5.1.2 Understanding flexibility, commitment and objective orientation**

The objective 2 was the exploration why the self-employed consulting engineers are hired for the key posts. The interview results show evidence for the importance of three major aspects for hiring self-employed consulting engineers: flexibility, commitment and objective orientation. Firstly, the project managers who are concerned with the execution of the projects appreciate the flexibility of the self-employed consulting engineers because they are able to adapt themselves quickly to the changing client requests. The flexibility within the project management refers to the quick adaptation to the changing conditions while completing a project task. Since manufacturing projects are time and budget constraint, the implementation of the technical ideas face any type of contingencies.

Secondly, commitment is a criterion to hire self-employed consulting engineers because it entails trust, cooperative behaviour and consistency in delivering successful project results. The close cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers requires frequent communication. It refers to the closeness and cooperation in the business relationships in order to achieve the project objectives. The information sharing between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers is through an informal communication channel which warrants the communication efficiency. Since the project resources are constraint creating an informal communication channel with the business partners is highly efficient and contributes to maintaining high project performance.

Thirdly, the objective orientation refers to focussing on the completion of the project tasks. It is evident that there is a positive relationship between

commitment and objective orientation. The committed behaviour while completing the project task entails objective orientation because the project objectives are pre-set. Therefore, a structured approach within a business relationship needs to be adopted in order to achieve the project objectives. Hence, a functioning business relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers always preconditions objective orientation. Consequently, the managerial implication is to focus on the aforementioned characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. The generation of knowledge from the management of the professional relationships between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers will ultimately influence the performance of the manufacturing projects.

### **5.1.3 Knowledge about the concept of shared values**

Achieving the objective 3 was of utmost importance because it constitutes the core content of the doctoral study. It was aimed at exploring the elements of the professional relationships; mutual values between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. Here, the mutual values were labelled shared values. The exploration of the shared values from the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers revealed their perception of the shared values.

Even though the results of the doctoral study support the construct of shared values, a further perspective emerged. Commitment and trust do not emerge as the only components; rather they emerge alongside the context of performance. Here, performance refers to the project and relationship

performance of the professional relationship between project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. As a result two major themes were developed from the conceptual model: commitment-performance and trust-performance. Consequently, the performance requirements of the project managers (clients) drive the need for commitment and trust. Commitment and trust are grounded in the shared values. Therefore, the managerial implication is to focus on the two ideas: commitment-performance and trust-performance relationship because they influence the project and relationships performance. The development of knowledge from the concept of shared values will provide a quality measurement for the professional relationship; it will enable the business partners to control the success of their business relationship and the overall performance of the manufacturing projects.

### 5.1.4 Conclusive summary and overall implication

This section summarises the conclusion from the findings of this doctoral study. The table 1 shows the key findings against the objectives of this doctoral study:

1.	Self-created market segment for self-employed consulting engineers	objective 1
1.1	Organizational demand	objective 1
1.2	Complexity of manufacturing projects	objective 1
2.	Professional characteristics of self-employed consulting engineers	objective 2
2.1	Flexibility	objective 2
2.2	Commitment	objective 2
2.3	Objective orientation	objective 2
3.	Knowledge about the concept of shared values	objective 3
3.1	Commitment-performance relationship	objective 3
3.2	Trust-performance relationship	objective 3

Table 1 *Key findings vs. research objectives*

The key findings of this doctoral study revealed three major aspects for the management of professional relationships: first the aspect of the self-created market segment for self-employed consulting engineers. Second the organisational demand and complexity of the manufacturing projects and third the importance and influence of the shared values on the management of the professional relationships.

The market segment wherein the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers participate is created by the client organization. It has an equivalent status to an industry sector; it is known but not recognised. It is created due to the organisational demand and complexity of the manufacturing projects. The organisational demand refers to the lack of expertise of the client organisation, and the complexity refers to the eclectic project teams involving multi-disciplinary professionals. Therefore, the client organisation represented by the project managers cannot provide fully the project expertise required for the implementation of the manufacturing projects. The project teams are eclectic involving multiple disciplines which make the projects complex. As a consequence the self-employed consulting engineers are employed in order to close this knowledge gap resulting from the lack of expertise of the organisation.

From the employment of the self-employed consulting engineers a unique vendor client relationship emerges between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. However, this relationship is not an ordinary professional relationship but a relationship wherein the shared values determine its success. The shared values are the mutual values that are appreciated from both business parties. The project managers and self-employed consulting engineers operate in a network of professional relationships which bestow their vendor client relationship with value because the success of their professional relationship becomes central to the project performance. Appreciating the shared values has a positive influence on the project performance, but violation of these values has a negative influence on the project performance. Consequently, the overall implication of the

research findings is to focus on the success of the vendor client relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers in order to manage the project performance. The management of the project performance will ultimately influence positively the organisational performance.

## **5.2 Limitation of the findings**

This section describes the limitations of the findings from this doctoral study. Firstly, the findings from the doctoral study make theoretical and evidence based contributions to the role of the shared values in the management of the project based professional relationships. The context of the doctoral study limits the generalizability of the research findings because the conceptual model was explored in one particular client organisation. However, due to the fact that the project management practise in the western developed industries bases on the principles of the Project Management Institute (PMI), the findings of the doctoral study may have validity in all western industries. Nevertheless, only further exploration can confirm or disconfirm the aforementioned theorised idea. Furthermore, in this doctoral study the conceptual model was explored in one particular organisation in Germany; therefore the exploration was conducted in a developed industry. Hence, the replication of these findings in other cultural settings, for instance emerging countries, will be an enrichment of the “external” validity of this study. It will provide interesting information how the perception of the shared values alters in different cultural settings.



Secondly, similar to other qualitative research critiques would argue that the researcher takes influence on the research outcome during the interview sessions by intervening to the interviewees' responds, or during the data analysis by skewing the research findings. This critique cannot be contradicted fully, but my influence on the findings is reduced to a minimum by utilising the semi structured interviewing wherein the interviewees respond freely to the questions. Furthermore, the adoption of the step-by-step systematic method for the data analysis warranted that I bracket myself out in order to not skewing the research findings.

### **5.3 Contribution of the research findings**

This section outlines the contributions of the findings from the doctoral study to the management practise and academic knowledge. The section 5.3.1 describes the contribution to the management practise and section 5.3.2 describes the contribution to academic knowledge.

#### **5.3.1 Contribution to management practice**

This is a DBA; the key approach is the application of contemporary research driven theory to a management challenge. The expectations from the DBA programme is exploring a management challenge and solve problems in the business practise by using sound research methodologies and, at the same time, upholding academic rigour and conventions.

The management problem identified in the business case of this doctoral study is that self-employed consulting engineers losing their contracts and project managers switching to other vendors because they are unsatisfied with their business relationships. Therefore, the major contribution to the

management practise is shedding light on why the project managers are unsatisfied and seek to terminate or switch their business relationships. The research findings from this doctoral study provide practise based evidences that the idea of the shared values influences the success of the professional relationships. Consequently, the shared values contribute to the management of the project based professional business relationships.

The conceptual model synthesised from the research driven knowledge from the literature was explored and validated through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The findings from this study show the importance of the professional characteristics of the self-employed consulting engineers. Committed behaviour, flexibility and objective orientation of the self-employed consulting engineers influence positively the project performance because these professional characteristics allow that the project tasks can be completed successfully, and the emerging problems can be resolved efficiently without wasting valuable project resources. The result is a successful cooperation between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers.

Furthermore, the research findings provide evidence that the perception of the shared values can differ between the business partners. The task or relationship orientation of the business partners influences their perception of which or how the shared values are considered important. The task orientated business partners set the focus on the efficient completion of the project task; therefore commitment, time orientation, consistency in delivering results play an important role for the success of the business relationship.

The relationship orientated business partners, on the other hand, set the focus on the functioning relationship; therefore commitment to the relationship, trust, sympathy are the components of the shared values which play an important role for the success of their business relationship.

Collectively, it is to highlight that the perception of the shared values differs between the task and relationship oriented business partners. The practical implication is the knowledge about these two types of inclination within the project based professional relationships. Therefore, I suggest identifying the task and relationship orientation of the business partners in order to evaluate, judge and decide whether the business relationship is worth establishing. Otherwise, a business relationship based on the shared values cannot be established.

### **5.3.2 Contribution to academic knowledge**

The major contribution to the existing academic knowledge is the practise based evidence. The findings from the doctoral study underpin the relevance of the shared values to the management of the professional relationships. The construct of the shared values was conceptualised from the research driven knowledge and validated through the experience of the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. The following figure 16 shows the research phases of the conceptualisation and validation:

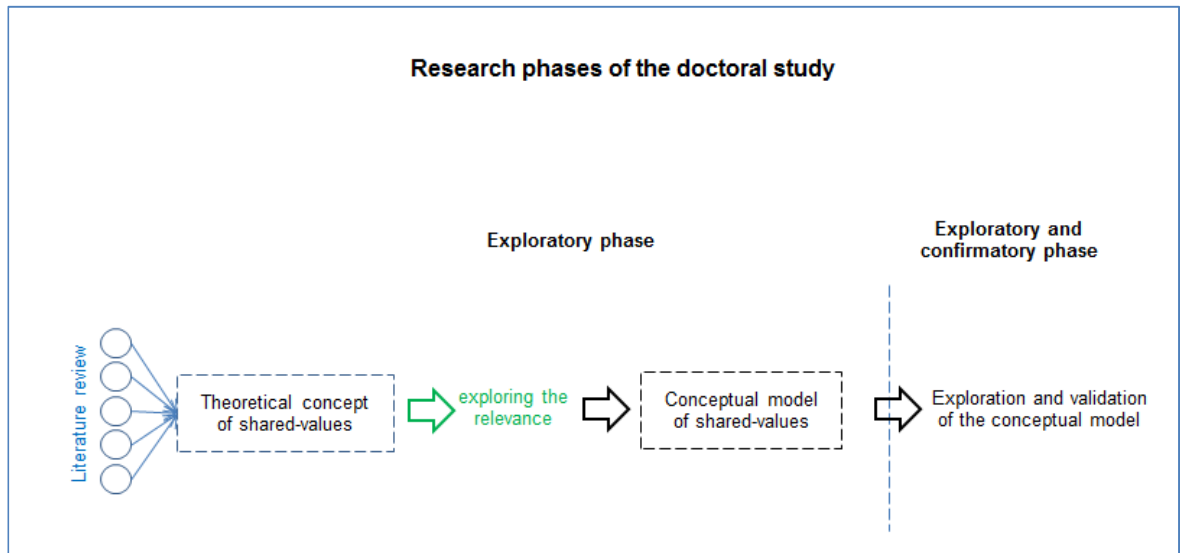


Figure 16 *Research phases*

First, previous research studies were explored in order to investigate the existing knowledge. As a result a theoretical construct of the shared values was synthesised. However, the literature review revealed that the research domain of the professional relationships is dominated by the numeric perspective because mostly quantitative research design is adopted to explore causal relationships between predefined variables. Therefore, there is a lack of qualitative evidence in this research domain of B2B professional relationships. Thus, this doctoral study provides a fresh eye on the existing academic research and practice based qualitative evidence.

Second, the theoretical construct of shared values was piloted in order to explore its relevance to the professional relationship between the project managers and self-employed consulting engineers. As a result a conceptual model was developed.

Third, the conceptual model was explored in the main field study and validated through the experience of the project managers and self-employed

consulting engineers. Hence, the findings from the doctoral study contribute to the existing academic knowledge by providing practise based evidence for the influence of the shared values on the management of B2B relationships.

#### **5.4 Self-reflection and outlook**

This section describes my self-reflection on this doctoral study and my future plans. Looking back to the first two years of the DBA program I understand the importance of the taught modules and mandatory assignments. I believe that the combination of both, taught modules and assignments, are the necessary link to the development of research skills. However, in my opinion the module 6 assignment was sort of breakthrough. It was a solid ground for conducting the doctoral study because it paved the way for an in depth critical literature review. The research articles were explored by evaluation and using research methods in the management practise. It enabled me to draw theoretical linkage between various findings from the research articles. This experience enabled me to synthesise the conceptual model of shared values later on. Now at the end of my doctoral study I feel like being part of the academic practitioners by using automatically qualitative methods in my daily business environment. It feels like being equipped with invisible sensory so I perceive hidden messages from oral expressed statements and compartments of the people surrounding me in my professional and private environment. However, I understand that the overall aim of the DBA programme is the translation of research into the management practise by solving management problems. The challenges coming along with the debates surrounding translating research into practise strengthen my position

as the necessary link between the academia and management practise. Throughout the DBA programme I have collected knowledge about research methodologies and methods that require academic rigour and structured procedure for conducting sound research.

In the doctoral study I applied contemporary research driven theory to a management challenge. Engaged with the management practise as self-employed consulting engineer I possess managerial sensitivity to observe and note phenomena that cause management problems. Furthermore, this close engagement enables me to judge the significance of the management problem and the contribution of its solution to the existing knowledge. However, it is of utmost importance to bear in mind that the management environment is full of different and eclectic realities; therefore asking colleagues or clients for consultancy about an observed phenomenon that may cause a management problem is recommendable. It strengthens my ties with the colleagues and clients and broadens my viewpoint on the focal phenomenon.

In summary, now I feel being the necessary link between the academia and the management practise to bridge both domains in order to transfer knowledge. It is not a one way transferal; rather practical knowledge can be transferred to the academia and vice versa. Both domains benefit from contribution to the existing knowledge. The benefit for me is attaining both, academic and practise based knowledge. Furthermore, the “knowledge” I gained so far and transferred to the managers I work with is highly appreciated. The managers are pleased by being informed about my research findings. This has also an influence on the management of my

professional relationship. I think that the exploration of the conceptual model in the context of the doctoral study opened a broader field wherefrom I was able to generate theoretical and practical knowledge.

Beside the contribution to the academic knowledge and management practise the DBA program has a vast contribution to my personal and professional development. Frankly spoken, I like being a bridge between the different knowledge domains. Therefore, from my personal viewpoint, there will be a post-doctoral scientific agenda, i.e. continuing with research and transferring knowledge between the academia and management practise or vice versa. This scientific agenda will be either a full-time or part-time research on management problems.

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## Appendix

### Additional quotations

#### Section 4.5.1 Commitment

Interviewee 2: *".....commitment is always related to high performance....."*

Interviewee 3: *"...if you mean commitment like positive attitude towards performance, yes it is so....."*; interviewee 5: *.....performance is very important for me,.....high performance is making good job..."*.

#### Section 4.5.2 Trust

Interviewee 4: *"...for me the performance is first...if I trust my business partners then I know that he can do the job..."* .

interviewee 8: *"....it is not possible to trust without you know what he or she can...if you work with someone in a project than you normally have little bit trust in advance, but real trust comes when you work with someone for long time in projects..."*;

interviewee 9: *"....normally if you have good communication skills that you know about trust...if you talk with you partners in a project than you can judge what he says and what he makes then you know if trusting or mistrusting..."*.

#### Section 4.5.4 Cooperation

Interviewee 3: *"....I always like cooperative behaviour in the project because cooperation is not just working together, it is working together to a specific goal I mean the project goals...."*

Interviewee 1: *".....sometimes it is not possible to do a work, you have just people they sit and wait until others do the work.....but having cooperation is very important in my project daily work....."*

#### Section 4.5.5 Closeness

Interviewee 8: *"....being in touch with the project managers is important for obtaining project information.....informal communication saves time and my performance is better because you can go ahead with your work when you have the information fast...";* interviewee 9: *"....sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long.....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...."*

#### Section for 4.5.7 Empathy

Interviewee 7: *"...cooperation is a must have skill...it is very important and in a project cooperation you have to know what is going on in advance..."*

Interviewee 8: *"....it is not possible to understand the project managers if you don't have good communication....communication what you have done and what you want from the project managers is what I do every day in my job...."*

#### Section 4.5.8 Fairness

interviewee 9: *"...in Germany fair play has long tradition...fairness is doing business with win-win-solutions...you can have business without fairness I mean, but you have to know that without fairness you cannot have good business relationships..."*

#### Section 4.5.9 Flexibility

Interviewee 7: *"...the project goals are set this is true, but I mean this is not just the only way to reach the project goals and complete the project successfully...sometimes you have to take other ways or directions to complete the project..."*

Interviewee 10: *"...the project team is a matrix organisation with people from different departments and different formations, so normally these are people with high flexibility so you can deal with complex issues and feel comfortable in unknown project environment..."*

Interviewee 4: *"...I worked with many self-employed engineers, so I can say you sometimes it was not a business relationship, it was just a transaction of information...but now over years I work together with self-employed engineers in a professional relationship, highly skilled people, so flexible and committed to their work and relationship..."*

#### Section 4.5.10 Consistency

Interviewee 3: *"...if you mean commitment like positive attitude towards performance, yes it is so...this is sort of consistency..."*

Interviewee 5: *"...performance is very important for me,....high performance is making good job..."*.

#### Section 4.5.11 Time orientation

interviewee 2: *"...I don't care about character of someone, this is private I mean but facts, delivering results to reach project goals is important for everybody in the project..."*; interviewee 10: *"...the project goals drives us when working together in a project..."*; interviewee 9: *"....sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long.....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak..."*; interviewee 2: *"...everyday contact in the project is key if you want to share information..."*.

#### Section 4.6.1.1 Relationship commitment

##### Communication

Interviewee 1: *"...it is not a friendship what I mean but I can discuss my expectations easier..."*.

Interviewee 5: *"....I say what I want right away....this is fast information exchange....not important to talk about other things but making good job is a good satisfaction for me..."*.

Interviewee 8: *"....being in touch with the project managers is important for obtaining project information.....informal communication saves time and my performance is better because you can go ahead with your work when you have the information fast..."*.

Interviewee 5: *"...performance is very important for me....the fast information exchange helps to do the job good and sticking to the facts..."*.

Interviewee 9: *"....sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...."*

#### Cooperation

Interviewee 7: *"...project business requires cooperation....no cooperation means no successfully carrying out work packages which means low performance..."*

Interviewee 3: *"....I always like cooperative behaviour in the project because cooperation is not just working together, it is working together to a specific goal I mean the project goals...."*

Interviewee 1: *".....sometimes it is not possible to do a work, you have just people they sit and wait until others do the work.....but having cooperation is very important in my project daily work...."*

#### Closeness

Interviewee 9: *"....sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...."*

#### Empathy

Interviewee 7: *"...cooperation is a must have skill...it is very important and in a project cooperation you have to know what is going on in advance..."*

Interviewee 5: *....matching personalities is a basis for good relationship...and I can say things to my business partner right away...he knows what I want normally..."*

Interviewee 8: *"....it is not possible to understand the project managers if you don't have good communication....communication what you have done and what you want from the project managers is what I do every day in my job...."*

#### Flexibility

interviewee 7: *"...the project goals are set this is true, but I mean this is not just the only way to reach the project goals and complete the project successfully...sometimes you have to take other ways or directions to complete the project..."*

Interviewee 10: *"...the project team is a matrix organisation with people from different departments and different formations, so normally these are people with high flexibility so you can deal with complex issues and feel comfortable in unknown project environment..."*

#### Consistency

Interviewee 4: *"....not only the good relationship with the engineers, it is important, too, to make good job. You must be committed to your job you are doing; this must be always the case...this means you are consistent in your job you are doing....consistent doing job is a signal for me that you are doing your job with commitment..."*

Interviewee 3: *."...if you mean commitment like positive attitude towards performance, yes it is so...this is sort of consistency...."*

Interviewee 5: "...performance is very important for me,....high performance is making good job...".

Time orientation

Interviewee 7: "...the project goals are set this is true, but I mean this is not just the only way to reach the project goals and complete the project successfully...sometimes you have to take other ways or directions to complete the project...".

Interviewee 2: "...I don't care about character of someone, this is private I mean but facts, delivering results to reach project goals is important for everybody in the project...".

Interviewee 10: "...the project goals drives us when working together in a project...".

Interviewee 9: "...sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...".

Interviewee 2: "...everyday contact in the project is key if you want to share information...".

interviewee 5: ".....performance is very important for me,....high performance is making good job...if you make a good job than everybody will trust in your skills...this doesn't mean I trust you but in your skills that you can do the job with high performance...".

## Trust

interviewee 9: *"...normally if you have good communication skills that you know about trust...if you talk with you partners in a project than you can judge what he says and what he makes then you know if trusting or mistrusting..."*

Interviewee 4: *"...not only the good relationship with the engineers, it is important, too, to make good job. You must be committed to your job you are doing; this must be always the case...this means you are consistent in your job you are doing....consistent doing job is a signal for me that you are doing your job with commitment..."*

Interviewee 3: *"...if you mean commitment like positive attitude towards performance, yes it is so...this is sort of consistency...."*; interviewee 5: *"...performance is very important for me,....high performance is making good job..."*

interviewee 7: *"...project business requires cooperation....no cooperation means no successfully carrying out work packages which means low performance..."*

Interviewee 3: *"....I always like cooperative behaviour in the project because cooperation is not just working together, it is working together to a specific goal I mean the project goals...."*

Interviewee 1: *".....sometimes it is not possible to do a work, you have just people they sit and wait until others do the work.....but having cooperation is very important in my project daily work....."*



#### Section 4.6.1.2 Task commitment

##### Trust

Interviewee 1: *"...it is not a friendship what I mean but I can discuss my expectations easier..."*

Interviewee 5: *"...I say what I want right away....this is fast information exchange....not important to talk about other things but making good job is a good satisfaction for me..."*

Interviewee 8: *"...being in touch with the project managers is important for obtaining project information.....informal communication saves time and my performance is better because you can go ahead with your work when you have the information fast..."*

Interviewee 5: *"...performance is very important for me....the fast information exchange helps to do the job good and sticking to the facts..."*; interviewee 9: *"...sometimes formal communication doesn't help because it last too long.....if you want to reach good performance than you need a short line to your partners so to speak...."*