

Gordon Institute of Business Science

University of Pretoria

STUDENT NUMBER
26254868

A research project submitted to the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in International Business.

25 November 2024

Proposed title

An exploration of the strategic collaboration between Earthmoving Machinery OEMs, licensed dealers and independent local resellers in a dynamic market

Abstract

Customers are constantly seeking cost-effective, affordable, and reliable alternative solutions, while organisations are seeking to produce value-generating solutions that can generate profitable growth. This presents an opportunity to explore prospects for long-term collaborative innovation and strategic partnerships that can have financial benefits for all parties involved. This collaboration significantly influences the organisational decision-making processes and value creation for customers, making it necessary to explore how these relationships impact the overall market dynamics and customer benefits. This research seeks to address these gaps by exploring the impact of outsourcing and strategic partnerships on cost efficiency, profitability, and creating customer value. A qualitative, exploratory research approach was spent, with in-depth semi-structured interviews with senior management and executives that have extensive industry experience and responsibility for strategic decision-making. The perspectives of these managers provided valuable insights into the customer-centric solutions and strategic partnerships, creating a deeper understanding of organisational efficiency and value creation in a dynamic market.

Keywords

Original Equipment Manufacturer, Value creation, Resellers, Remanufacturing, Competitive Advantage

Declaration

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in International Business at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

Name & Surname

Signature

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE	1
1.1 Introduction and Description of the Problem	1
1.2 Purpose of Research	2
1.3 Research Problem	3
1.4 Conclusion	5
CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.1 Introduction	7
2.2 Understanding the competitive environment	7
2.3 Original equipment manufacturers and licensed dealers	9
2.4 Independent third party resellers	13
2.5 Customer value framework - willingness to pay	14
2.6 Global Strategy	18
2.7 Competitive advantage and cannibalisation	22
2.8 Resource-Based View of the firm	25
2.9 Conclusion	29
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS	30
3.1 Sub-questions	30
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN	32
4.1 Introduction	32
4.2 Research design	32
4.2.1 Purpose of the research	32
4.2.2 Philosophy	33
4.2.3 Approach selected	33
4.2.4 Strategy	34
4.2.5 Time horizon	34
4.3 Methodological choices	34
4.3.1 Population, sample, sampling frame and sampling criteria	34
4.3.2 Unit of analysis	35
4.3.3 Measurement instrument	36
4.3.4 Data gathering process	39
4.6 Analysis approach	39
4.7 Quality controls	40
4.8 Research Limitations	41
CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS	42
5.1 Introduction	42
5.2 Overview of the sample	42
5.2.1 Relevance of the sample	42
5.2.2 Adequacy of the sample	44
5.2.3 Alignment of the empirical data	44
5.3 Influence of Competitive Landscape on Multinational Decision-Making	45

5.3.1 Leveraging customer feedback.....	47
5.3.2 Technological evolution	47
5.3.3 Knowledgeable sales and product support.....	48
5.3.4 Navigating component sourcing and quality	49
5.3.5 Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics	49
5.3.6 Short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies	50
5.4 Factors Contributing to the Perceived Value of Supplier Products	52
5.4.1 Harmonising quality standards, reliability and cost.....	53
5.4.2 Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options	54
5.4.3 Ensuring reliability and peace of mind	54
5.4.4 Harmonising quality, reliability, and cost	56
5.4.5 Balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency	57
5.5 Identifying and Responding to Evolving Customer Needs	58
5.5.1 Customer feedback and strategic partnerships	60
5.5.2 Guideline Policies and Strategic Partnerships.....	60
5.5.3 Challenges in transparency and process integration	61
5.5.4 Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics.....	62
5.5.5 Performance metrics for operational value and reliability	62
5.6 Conclusion	64
CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION	65
6.1 Introduction	65
6.2 Discussion: Research Question 1	65
6.2.1 Leveraging customer feedback.....	66
6.2.2 Technological evolution	67
6.2.3 Knowledgeable sales and product support.....	68
6.2.4 Navigating component sourcing and quality	69
6.2.5 Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics	70
6.2.6 Short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies	71
6.3 Discussion: Research Question 2	72
6.3.1 Harmonising quality standards, reliability and cost.....	72
6.3.2 Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options	73
6.3.3 Ensuring reliability and peace of mind	74
6.3.4 Quality standards and oversight in product functioning	75
6.3.5 Balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency	76
6.4 Discussion: Research Question 3	77
6.4.1 Customer feedback and strategic partnerships	78
6.4.2 Building a Resilient Organisation.....	79
6.4.3 Challenges in transparency and process integration	79
6.4.4 Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics.....	80
6.4.5 Performance metrics for operational value and reliability	81
6.5 Conclusion of findings	82
6.6 Conclusion	85

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations	86
7.1 Introduction	86
7.2 Principal theoretical conclusions	86
7.2.1 Contribution to strategic decision-making.....	87
7.2.2 Effectiveness sourcing processes and product quality	87
7.2.3 Reliability and peace of mind	88
7.3 Recommendations for the OEM and Independent Reseller management	88
7.3.1 Product quality and warranty	88
7.3.2 Customer-centric solutions	88
7.3.3 Strategic partnerships	89
7.3.4 Decision-making in a dynamic market.....	89
7.5 Limitations for the research	89
7.6 Suggestions for future research	90
7.7 Conclusion	91
References.....	92
APPENDICES	102
Appendix A: Interview Schedule.....	102
Appendix B: Consistency Matrix.....	103
Appendix C: Relationship between OEM, Authorised Dealer and Third-Party Reseller	104
Appendix D: List of codes	106
Appendix E: Ethical Clearance	109
Appendix F: Letter of informed consent	110

CHAPTER 1: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction and Description of the Problem

Customers have unique concerns in terms of seeking efficient product offerings in the market, particularly when considering a choice between new and remanufactured products. When purchasing new products, their main concern is about the costs. However, customers perceive remanufactured products to have lower quality and reliability compared to new products (Duberg et al., 2023). This suggests that customers prioritise quality and reliability over price, which influences their willingness to pay (Sun et al., 2020). Customers may also have concerns about the availability of remanufactured products and the warranty and after-sales service provided for them (Duberg et al., 2023). Market awareness from a customer perspective plays an important role in determining preferences, as informed customers are more likely to make choices that align with their values and needs (Chen et al., 2020). Therefore, organisations should consider these factors from a customer perspective when making strategic decisions for growth in the market.

Business-to-business sales organisations are facing a growing number of complex challenges in their efforts to remain relevant and competitive in the global market. The need to adapt to evolving customer demands and trends in dynamic markets drives the challenges facing organisations (Lauzi et al., 2023). These include the implementation of digital transformation projects, developing agile supply chain processes, and refining the customer value proposition (Rodriguez et al., 2023). These challenges require a proactive approach and innovative solutions that are adaptable to dynamic markets and evolving customer needs.

Through rebuilding and remanufacturing used components, resellers can serve the same customer and offer a similar product, providing earthmoving machinery with a second life or an equal-to-new standard (Duberg et al., 2023). Original equipment manufacturers (OEM), licensed dealerships and local resellers, also known as rebuilders, have the potential to engage strategically in a competitive market. Rebuilding equipment components offers a cost-effective way to give machines a second life, restoring them to their original performance and appearance, and potentially providing a short-term warranty for the completed production work (Lv et al., 2023). Manufacturing industries are highly competitive because of their higher technology and learning demands, encouraging companies to develop new products and services to stay ahead of their competitors. This, in turn, should drive value-generating products and profitable growth (Wuttke, 2023).

Rebuilt products may serve as a low-cost and environmentally conscious alternative to a new product. This could have a strategic benefit for manufacturers, customers, and the environment, as rebuilding reduces the consumption of new parts, provides an additional source of revenue, and costs less than purchasing a new product (Li et al., 2024). There is an opportunity to explore the decision-making process for all suppliers considered in the study. Zhou et al. (2020) investigated the impact of secondary market competition on OEM and dealer authorisation decisions, as well as the conditions under which an OEM can authorise an independent third party. Collaboration can provide the firm with innovative ideas over the long run that will benefit both parties economically. While there are key strategic insights into the nature of cooperation for OEMs, dealers, and independent third parties, there are concerns about the competitive environment, and there should be a balance in terms of all interests (Jin et al., 2022).

1.2 Purpose of Research

The research seeks to understand the complex and multifaceted strategic collaboration between OEMs, licensed dealerships, and independent local resellers. This interaction significantly influences the value creation for customers, making it essential to explore how these relationships affect overall market dynamics and customer benefits. This research aims to address these gaps by examining the impact of outsourcing and strategic partnerships on cost efficiency, profitability, and generating customer value (Zhang et al., 2023).

The main considerations of the paper are centered around the following critical research aims, which will determine the strategic engagement of all parties involved. This includes understanding the customer value creation strategy of each business model and drivers of differentiation. The decision revolves around whether the reseller should collaborate with the OEM and dealer to market the remanufactured products to customers, serving as an extension of the manufacturer-dealer network. Fang et al. (2020) highlight that there is a knowledge gap in exploring decision-making processes and assessing the importance of perceived value in product selection across various categories.

Lastly, understanding the impact of cannibalisation or other market dynamics and how they influence the interactions and operational decisions for each business model (Zhang et al., 2021). The profit potential has attracted many local independent third-party resellers, and while this has led to strong competition, there is still a need to understand the empirical and behavioural impacts of authorising or collaborating with local third parties (Li, 2024). As a result

of the research, it will be possible to gain an understanding of how strategic decision-making impacts sustainable growth opportunities for firms with markets in Southern Africa. The research will also provide insights into how firms can use strategic decision-making to create competitive advantages and thrive in the competitive Southern African market.

According to Wu & Li (2022), to remain competitive in the market, firms must differentiate their products based on their quality. Customers frequently perceive new products as having more value than remanufactured products due to their perceived higher quality and assurance of reliability. However, there is an opportunity to explore whether remanufactured products are considered favourable alternatives due to their lower price point and environmental sustainability (Zhou et al., 2021) in the context of Southern African markets. In terms of the knowledge gap, there is an opportunity to understand whether the OEM would consider authorising and partnering with some or all the IRs (Jin et al., 2022). However, if partnership is not an option and OEMs are unable to completely deter independent third parties, they may consider adopting sustainable strategies to compete (Li et al., 2024). "If both the OEM and the third-party reseller are offering remanufactured items, the dynamics could be more complex" (Li et al., 2024. p1026) and may impact the perceived value and willingness to pay; this has been relatively unexplored in scholarly literature.

The research will consider activities within Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, and South Africa as the areas of interest for regional trade (African Union, 2024). With the global unbundling of production, countries can specialise in component and parts production, allowing firms in Southern Africa to join transnational value chains. This can help boost productivity and value-added services, upgrade exports, improve competitiveness, and access markets. However, intra-regional trade in Southern Africa is low, with 90% of total SADC trade remaining with countries outside the region. This lack of diversification and product differentiation in production and trade limits the scope for intra-regional trade with South Africa. Therefore, integrating into regional or global value chains can help boost productivity, competitiveness, and market access (Banga & Balchin, 2022). By understanding the current market trends, the research can help to identify potential strategies for each of the business models to take advantage of the opportunities in the region.

1.3 Research Problem

Building on the research concluded by Ahammad et al. (2021), the study will contribute further to the gap in global strategy literature by enhancing academic understanding of how strategic

agility and decision-making can support remanufacturing enterprises in Southern African markets to adapt to the international markets. According to Li et al. (2024), “current research tends to investigate decision factors and influencing factors separately, thus missing the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding, which is important for this complex decision-making.” Decision-making in the context of OEMs, authorised dealers, and independent third parties is complex and may lead to various decisions that could benefit consumers based on the regional expectations and influences (Lv et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2021) point out that the missing literature also relates to the insufficient understanding of interactions between OEMs and local resellers, particularly from perspectives of competitive advantage and re-marketing. The research on new and remanufactured items has predominantly concentrated on the Asian and North American markets. However, there is a research gap in the context of Southern Africa, which may face unique challenges due to its mixed economies and opportunities for economic and sustainable growth (Ajide & Dada, 2023). A consideration to explore is whether resellers would be able to offer additional value-adding services, and how this would affect the authorisation and operational global strategies of OEMs (Lv et al., 2023).

Based on these themes, the following unique knowledge gaps were identified and presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of identified knowledge gaps

Theme	Unique Knowledge Gap (KG)
Decision-making modes	KG 1: Scholars have extensively studied the modes of decision-making within firms. Zhou et al. (2020) investigated the impact of secondary market competition on OEM and dealer authorisation decisions, as well as the conditions under which an OEM can authorise an independent third party. Collaboration can provide the firm with innovative ideas over the long run that will benefit both parties economically. There is an opportunity to explore the decision-making process for all suppliers considered in the study. Fang et al. (2020) highlights the knowledge gap in exploring decision-making processes and assess the importance of perceived value in product selection across various categories.

Customer Value	KG 2: According to Wu & Li (2022), to remain competitive in the market, firms must differentiate their products based on their quality. Customers frequently perceive new products as having more value than remanufactured products due to their perceived higher quality and assurance of reliability. However, there is an opportunity to explore whether remanufactured products are considered favourable alternatives due to their lower price point and environmental sustainability (Zhou et al., 2021) in the context of Southern African markets.
Strategic growth strategy	KG 3: Given the competitive climate in which the OEM and independent resellers (IRs) operate, there is a knowledge gap about whether the OEM would consider authorising and partnering with some or all of the IRs, as well as the selection process (Jin et al., 2022). However, in cases where partnership is not an option and OEMs cannot completely deter independent third parties, they may consider sustainable strategies to contest the competition (Li et al., 2024). "If both the OEM and the third-party reseller are offering remanufactured items, the dynamics could be more complex" (Li et al., 2024. p1026) and may impact the perceived value and willingness to pay, this has been relatively unexplored in scholarly literature. In this regard, the regional context of Southern Africa should be examined.

1.4 Conclusion

The next chapters of the report are structured as follows based on the identified research problem and the gaps in knowledge that result. The following chapter provides a literature review on OEMs, dealers, unauthorised third parties, and the value they provide to customers and the market. Chapter 3 focuses on developing and mapping research questions to the relevant unique knowledge gaps identified in the literature review. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, the methodology and design of the research will be discussed. Chapter 5 presents the results of the in-depth interviews conducted with decision makers and technically experienced business leaders in the industry. In Chapter 6 the results of each research question are discussed in detail and compared to the literature review findings conducted in Chapter 2. Finally, in Chapter 7, the research will provide recommendations for how firms can use

strategic decision making to ensure their long-term success and the limitation of the research is considered with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review chapter presents an overview of existing research on OEMs, licensed dealerships, and independent third-party resellers and provides a rationale for the research. The chapter will offer a comprehensive analysis of the research gap, examining the customer value proposition and analysing opportunities that could lead to sustainable growth by leveraging decision-making modes and resource-based theory. This chapter identifies the key concepts and theories and how they are relevant to the study (Bryman, 2012). Addressing the research gap is crucial as it highlights areas that require further study, offering new avenues for exploration and innovation. By focusing on these gaps, the study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide insights that are essential for strategic decision-making. This, in turn, can help organisations develop competitive advantages and achieve long-term sustainability.

To provide context for the earthmoving industry, the competitive environment, supported by the theoretical definitions for the OEMs, their licensed dealerships, and independent third parties, will be discussed. Subsequently, the customer value framework will be discussed in the context of supporting customers operating across borders, requiring a global approach to business success and operations. Lastly, the chapter will explore the theoretical concept of competitive advantage and the resource-based view to gain a deeper understanding of how firms compete to achieve long-term growth.

2.2 Understanding the competitive environment

With the development of emerging economies, the private sector plays an increasingly significant role in economic growth and employment creation. This improves the disposable income of households, leading to the adoption and improvement of technology. Adapting to changing dynamics is crucial for firms in a modern competitive business environment to survive and potentially thrive. Organisational flexibility is essential for navigating the competitive and volatile business landscape (Anning-Dorson, 2021). Organisations should continuously innovate and adapt to evolving consumer demands, technological advancements, and regulatory changes. Additionally, they may face pressure from global competition, which could require organisations to maintain cost efficiency while delivering high-quality products and services. Balancing these demands can be challenging, especially as market volatility can quickly change the business landscape.

To understand the significance of the study, the first step is to understand the purpose of remanufacturing products and how remanufacturing firms operate. Remanufacturing is a cheap and sustainable method, in comparison to buying new (Zhou et al., 2021). It is a regulated industrial process that occurs within industrial settings, in which the cores of any machinery are restored to an as-new condition that will improve the product's performance (Russell & Nasr, 2023). This process may result in an 85% reduction in energy, water, and material usage, and it may lead to significant cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. Remanufacturing helps reduce waste by increasing the life cycle of products and decreasing the need for raw materials. It is also a means of conserving energy and resources in the manufacturing and repairing of products, as it often requires less energy than building new products from scratch. Additionally, remanufacturing should lead to a reduction in costs for both producers and consumers while supporting sustainable economic growth (Wu et al., 2021). The literature simplifies the remanufacturing process into key areas of "collecting used components, disassembling and assembling, testing, and painting" (Kanazawa et al., 2022, p.1). Most significantly, in emerging markets, remanufacturing operations can support environmental conservation, enhance consumer and social well-being, and foster socially responsible development (Cao et al., 2021).

In addition to environmental considerations, consumer preference is influenced by factors such as brands, quality, price, perceptions, and awareness. According to Chen et al. (2020), the customers' perceptions of quality may influence their preference for remanufactured goods or new products. Market awareness from a customer perspective plays an important role in determining preferences, as informed customers are more likely to make choices that align with their values and needs. When customers know the benefits and quality of remanufactured goods, they may be more inclined to choose these options over new products, as the decision may not be solely based on cost. Increased customer awareness may also generate higher acceptance and demand for sustainable products. A higher awareness rate may lead to key customers influencing market trends and encouraging more brands to adapt by adopting eco-friendly practices such as remanufacturing of products.

Kanazawa et al. (2022) suggest that local authorised dealers and independent remanufacturers, competing with the OEM, may operate remanufacturing businesses locally rather than globally, providing repair and rebuilding services. Unlike manufacturing, which typically operates on a global scale, rebuilding typically follows a local business model, with several third-party independent resellers strategically located near manufacturers or dealerships that stock surplus parts to meet demand (Wu & Zhou, 2016). Remanufactured

parts supply the construction and mining industries, which operate heavy earthmoving machinery for approximately 24 hours a day, throughout the year, from a distribution center usually near the operation site. This enables a quick turnaround time for parts availability on site and reduces the machinery downtime (Kanazawa et al., 2022).

Equipment and component rebuilding is an affordable alternative to providing a second life to used products; once rebuilt, they can perform and look brand new, and it is potentially offered with a short-term warranty for the production work completed (Fang et al., 2020). Remanufacturing may be initiated through various factors that may form part of economic, environmental, and policy-related activities (Duberg et al., 2023). The repair method is used for fixing a specific fault in the product or replacing defective components for full functionality per intended use (Russell & Nasr, 2023). The customer's decision-making on the preferred equipment solution may be determined by the budget, turnaround time of the process, and potentially the quality of the service provided.

According to Dixit et al. (2021), strategic thinking assists firms in solving unconventional problems and achieving improved performance. Strategic thinking necessitates the development of creative strategies, guided by the firm's vision and clear objectives that create value, and is crucial in establishing a competitive advantage for the firm. The competitive advantage for third-party resellers is their ability to remanufacture multiple competing brands and products with no license agreement and use a high percentage of OEM-supplied products in completing a rebuilt product (Zhou et al., 2021). As the operating models of the heavy equipment industry and the automotive industry are similar, the researcher will concentrate on academic literature on the remanufacturing of components and equipment in the automotive industry (Li et al., 2024; Lv et al., 2023 & Zhang et al., 2021).

2.3 Original equipment manufacturers and licensed dealers

According to the Corporate Finance Institute (2024), an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) is a manufacturing organisation that can sell products or parts of a product directly to the end user, or to a dealership network, which then retails the products to its customers. Many manufacturers rely on franchised local dealers to sell and service their products, as they have a significant impact on customer experience and perceptions of service quality, which impacts future sales and market share. The dealer network has experience and knowledge of the new local machine sales market, coordinates after-market services for customers, and allows the manufacturer the flexibility to compete globally (Golara et al., 2021). A licensed dealer may be considered a business that has the sole distribution agreement to buy and sell OEM products

and services within a specified area or territory. The dealer also provides local customers with technical support and other value-added services and alternatives (Jensen et al., 2019).

The ability to shift focus to remanufacturing signifies a significant change from conventional manufacturing to circular manufacturing. The changes may require readjustments in the organisational structure, which could impact management structures, the business model, as well as the supply chain and inventory management. However, the changes may be necessary to ensure that remanufacturing is a sustainable solution for OEMs and similar organisations such as resellers and authorised dealers (Kurilova-Palisaitiene et al., 2024). Furthermore, the OEM should consider the competitive implications of sourcing from collaborative competitor, as this may strengthen the competitor's position in the market if they manage to reduce their costs due to increased production volumes (Heese et al., 2021).

Research indicates that the overall after-sales and product support service quality can impact a manufacturer's market share, especially in highly competitive markets. Therefore, investing in after-sales services such as remanufacturing and component rebuilding can be a strategic decision for manufacturers determined to stay ahead of the competition (Golara et al., 2021). After-sales covers a variety of value-related services and products that occur after the initial sale of the equipment (Warren & Gibson, 2021). Product support is the OEM strategy to ensure that the product owner gets maximum value from the products purchased, as maintenance for high-value products is key for optimal uptime and productivity (Golara, 2021). A consideration for industries would be improving the overall after-sales service to increase profitability and their competitive advantage.

Emerging markets are important to global firms and their after-sales strategies as they offer significant growth potential and new customer bases. Firms should maximise the opportunities that are available in emerging markets and expand their reach and enhance customer satisfaction through offering localised services. Furthermore, localised and tailored after-sales services in new markets may build brand loyalty and drive long-term success (Ebrahimi et al., 2023). According to Cao et al. (2022) a third-party recycling platform and remanufacturers are needed to manage remanufacturing. Original manufacturers may manage the remanufacturing of components less effectively. Original manufacturers often lack the specialised infrastructure and expertise required for efficient remanufacturing processes. Additionally, their primary focus on producing new products can divert resources and attention away from remanufacturing efforts. The result may be lower-quality products and higher costs when compared to third-party resellers who do not produce new products but rather operate

in niche portions of the industry.

When OEMs integrate remanufacturing into their strategic decision-making, it significantly extends the product's usage and ensures maximum value retention by rebuilding the products for a second life. However, the changes may be necessary to ensure that remanufacturing is sustainable for OEMs and similar organisations, such as resellers and authorised resellers (Kurilova-Palisaitiene et al., 2024). To maintain a high standard of quality throughout the process, it would be necessary to source specialized skills locally. Local authorised dealers may face resistance to change within the organisation, as remanufacturing necessitates a departure from the traditional product offering, and the sales model must adapt to this restructured business model. In the OEM business model, the primary after-sales services include the sale of spare parts, maintenance, and diagnostics. The remanufacturing process is not a standard practice for many OEMs (Rebelo et al., 2021). Thus, there is an opportunity for collaboration with independent resellers.

From an OEM point of view, the strategy could be to close off the market to third-party resellers by pricing the new product equal to the cost of remanufacturing. While this strategy could be profitable in the short term, it could potentially lead to cannibalisation, as the new product could negatively impact the sales of the older and used products within the OEM's portfolio. In terms of the long-term strategy, the focus would be on a clearly defined pricing structure and product positioning. Alternatively, the OEM may consider achieving profits through the authorization of the third-party reseller under certain contractual conditions (Zhang et al., 2020) with clear product differentiation, preventing any direct competition with new and remanufactured products.

Various factors drive OEMs to remanufacture products, including complexity, variability, and uncertainty. There is extensive labour involved in the remanufacturing process; therefore, highly skilled workers are required, and it is important to consider labour access when choosing a location for a facility. Several factors go into the location selection of a remanufacturing facility, including economics, logistics, labour, government regulations, and proximity to transportation infrastructure (Ozdemir et al., 2023). When attempting to determine a suitable remanufacturing facility, proximity to suppliers and customers is an important factor to consider from a transportation, coverage, and cost perspective. A significant consideration may become the environmental impact of the chosen location and future sustainable growth for the firms and customers within the industry. It is also important to consider the social and economic impacts of the remanufacturing facility. Finally, the availability of a trained workforce

must be considered.

There are typically lower demand rates for remanufactured products than for manufacturing products, which makes achieving economies of scale more difficult. Remanufactured products are generally less expensive in comparison to new products, which makes them more competitive on the market. An analysis of historical sales data may be conducted to identify which OEM's products were most suitable for remanufacturing, and these may be integrated into the business model, focusing on clearly defined sales policies and differentiated warranties (Duberg et al., 2020). The sales policies would include remanufacturing-specific sales incentives, extended warranties, or satisfaction guarantees to build consumer trust and encourage purchases.

Due to the impact on sales of new products, OEMs may claim that third-party firms negatively impact their business model. In this case, OEMs may face a risk when pursuing an authorisation strategy with third parties. Authorised refurbished products lead to the cannibalisation of new products due to their perceived higher quality. Customers can find reliable refurbished products at bargain prices when they buy authorised refurbished products. It is likely that premium OEMs will face the biggest risks since customers may prefer to buy good-quality refurbished products from well-known brands at a lower price and with similar warranties as new ones (Kurdhi et al., 2023). As customers embrace the benefits of purchasing refurbished products, OEMs would also need to explore the expansion of their own refurbishment programs or develop new strategies to differentiate their new products. This may drive innovation and encourage OEMs and dealers to focus on sustainability and resource efficiency in their production processes.

Firms have recognised that remanufacturing is an effective strategy for fulfilling their environmental and social responsibilities and catering to consumers' increased awareness of the environment. Manufacturers can become more competitive through remanufacturing, which not only creates a new revenue channel but also maximises them. OEMs who produce both new and remanufactured products must manage the strategy for buyback prices, sales prices, and production planning concurrently to maximise profits, thereby mitigating the potential for cannibalisation (Ke & Yan, 2022). From a supply chain perspective, a significant advantage for the manufacturer is the potential to increase profits through direct sales of both new products and extended warranties for remanufactured products. However, the independent resellers may offer shorter extended warranties offered by a third-party insurer; this benefits the OEM, as customers may perceive their product as more reliable, as the extended warranty ensures peace of mind. (Zhou & Wang, 2022).

Previous research has studied whether independent resellers always harm OEMs, and they concluded that IRs may benefit OEMs, as well as the possibility of remanufactured products cannibalising the sales of new products (Chai et al., 2020). Overall, the results are mixed, with some studies showing the positive effects of IRs on OEMs while others show negative effects. Further research may be required to better understand the impact of independent resellers on the OEMs and the industry.

2.4 Independent third party resellers

The immense growth potential of the remanufacturing business has drawn numerous third-party remanufacturers, raising concerns among some original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) about its impact on the demand for new products (Li et al., 2024). Third-party resellers can be categorised into outsourced remanufacturing and authorised remanufacturing. Outsourced remanufacturing involves OEM outsourcing recycling and remanufacturing of used products, paying a fee, and selling the finished products. Authorised remanufacturing grants all rights to third parties and charges a patent fee (Zhang et al., 2020). In most cases, third parties compete directly with local dealers and retailers, since manufacturers usually sell remanufactured products through local networks. Third-party resellers have more flexibility as they are usually able to cover a wide range of industry configurations, with no OEM limitations, while developing their own pricing and quality models (Fang et al. 2020).

Resellers, also known as third-party rebuilders, are local businesses, either authorised or unauthorized, that primarily engage in the auction or retail sale of used equipment. They may include businesses engaged in supplying parts for equipment and engines, which are usually smaller than the dealership in terms of employees and capabilities. While several manufacturers find dealer services effective, others question the dealerships' relevance in light of changing consumer behavior and technological advancements (Golara et al., 2021). Third-party independent resellers capitalize on the market's segmentation into new products and remanufactured product customers by offering remanufactured products under a profit-driven mechanism. The overall perception of remanufactured products, however, is lower than that of new ones, both in terms of perceived quality and perceived reliability (Sun et al., 2020).

The customer's preferences and price-finding decisions are complex processes determined by various aspects, including the brand's legacy. With reference to the organisational strategy, the independent resellers can leverage the OEM's brand legacy, which can have a significant effect on consumers' pricing decisions (Baumert & de Obesso, 2021). This indicates that customers often perceive older brands as more reliable and trustworthy due to their long-

standing presence in the market. This perception may support the customer's willingness to pay higher prices for products from brands that are well established in the market. Furthermore, a brand's legacy can evoke nostalgia, further enhancing the brand's appeal and perceived value, which gives established OEMs an advantage in the market in comparison to independent resellers.

However, independent resellers tend to be agile and flexible in responding to the external environment and identifying new opportunities due to their smaller size, which is a quality that may be well perceived by customers looking to reduce their production downtime (Zucchella et al., 2023). Collaborating with multinational enterprises can benefit independent resellers by fostering business relationships and obtaining financial support. Furthermore, by placing sizable orders and ensuring timely payment, MNEs can also be viewed as customers and partners. Additionally, they can provide support for customer adoption of new concepts and ventures. Some of the opposing considerations that may be key barriers in collaborating with multinational firms include having limited bargaining power, difficulty in maintaining economically stable projects, and power imbalance. The speed of decision making can also be reduced significantly with more bureaucratic processes from MNE's (Zucchella et al., 2023). In essence, the success of collaborations between MNEs and domestic firms depends on overcoming such challenges, which requires effective strategies on both sides.

The establishment of inter-firm collaboration involves resource gathering and allocation. A joint feedback exchange and partnership investment can be used to motivate and facilitate collaboration between firms (Hall et al., 2022). This feedback helps firms to better understand their strengths and weaknesses and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Partnership investments help firms to build trust and create incentives to work together. Inter-firm collaboration enhances value co-creation and facilitates strategic decision-making, which positively impacts performance. Furthermore, researchers believe that fostering a culture of learning enhances the benefits of inter-firm collaboration by enhancing the firm's performance (Hall et al., 2022). However, there may be risk in collaboration due to technological resource imitation and even technological overlap between partners (Ryan-Charleton & Galavan, 2024). Therefore, the resource allocation needs to be rational and not only facilitate collaboration but also protect the firms from potential internal risks.

2.5 Customer value framework - willingness to pay

Emerging markets are a strategic opportunity for multinational enterprises in developed countries. However, there needs to be an understanding from MNEs that the middle-class

customers within the emerging markets have unique needs, including affordability, quality, and durability. However, MNEs must understand that the middle-class customers in emerging markets have unique needs, such as affordability, quality, and durability. Essentially, customers are willing to pay based on what the attached value of the product or service offers, as well as meeting their needs and wants. Four key values may influence customer brand decisions and product purchase preferences (Sharmelly & Klarin, 2021). The customer value creation framework describes four main types of values based on the following elements.

Firms aim to improve cost value by enhancing the product benefits while reducing costs throughout the product lifecycle, this effort may reduce the cost and risk related with purchasing products through increased operational efficiency (Sharmelly & Klarin, 2021). The functional value of a product focuses on achieving the desired characteristics, performance, and capabilities to add value to the customer (Wells & Tan, 2024). Firms may invest in new technology and product development to meet high standards of quality, durability, reliability, and effectiveness to ensure that they meet market expectations. Experiential value focuses on the emotions and experiences a product generates for customers (Nguyen & Nham, 2021). Firms may want to pay close attention to building strong customer relationships and conducting market research to offer customised products that include sensory and emotional aspects. Lastly, symbolic value focuses on the psychological meaning customers associate with a product, such as social status and self-expression. To develop this value further, firms may invest in marketing strategies and customer engagement activities (Sharmelly & Klarin, 2021).

Essentially, the customer value proposition of a firm highlights its commitment to delivering value to customers, which serves as an important component of the value creation process. This process influences the allocation of resources and the execution of marketing strategies throughout the organisation (Chaudhary & Kate, 2023). Therefore, it is important for firms to understand their customers' needs and value proposition to create a competitive advantage. Firms may consider assessing their value proposition on a regular basis to ensure it is relevant to evolving customer needs, particularly in emerging markets (Srivastava et al., 2024).

Value may result from the experienced outcomes of using a product or service; it may require collaborative efforts from various stakeholders and customers who share information and inputs that will elevate the offered solutions. Customers contribute to the co-creation process by providing feedback, sharing their preferences, and actively engaging with the service. Their input helps to create and refine the service offered, ensuring it meets the customer's needs

and expectations. This collaborative interaction may improve the overall value and satisfaction the customer receives from the service (Kolomoiets & Dickinger, 2023). However, firms should resist using feedback unilaterally without any further validation because different customers may have unique preferences in any given situation; therefore, a single customer's feedback does not apply across all customers (Abid et al., 2022).

Customers are inclined to appreciate the benefits of receiving optimal service quality, which includes open communication through transparency, convenience, and authenticity. Combining these factors may result in a willingness to pay, indicating a perceived value of the product or service and confidence in the brand (Chevrollier et al., 2023). Therefore, customers need access to information about service quality, as they frequently opt for the least expensive option or make decisions based on brand recognition. On the other hand, when customers have access to information about service quality, they tend to gravitate towards suppliers who provide the highest quality service. Customers place high importance on quality-of-service information, and the presentation of this information may influence their search and interpretation of the data. This evaluation of the service quality and added value helps customers find the best service provider, which impacts their decision-making (Blijlevens et al., 2024).

Customer value can be a measure of the customer's perceived benefits weighed against the costs and efforts incurred to acquire the product or service. A value proposition, which justifies how the product can improve the customer's situation or solve an existing problem, creates value. The value proposition should be the motivation to acquire the product from the firm (Andersson et al., 2020). Customer value propositions are the connection between the strategic and operational goals of the firm. They may take into account both the customer's and the firm's perspective, offering insight into the business considerations that contribute to the success of the offered service and product (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021). To retain customers over time, unconventional marketing strategies may be beneficial. Such strategies should include the value propositions customers seek in an offer and the touchpoints that marketing needs to engage to deliver these value propositions. In the current market environment, customers place more emphasis on customer experience, whether they are business-to-customer or business-to-business. The customer experience is a dynamic process that occurs before, during, and after the purchase of a brand. As such, literature indicates that a significant number of customers often switch to competitors despite being satisfied. This requires a granular understanding of the impact of the customer experience and value-added solutions in the decision-making process (Baidya et al., 2023).

Social and economic factors can influence the customer's perception of value, while cost-related factors or non-financial aspects can be associated with customer satisfaction (Zietsman et al., 2020). According to Coletta et al. (2020), there is alignment between the quality of service provided, relationship-building constructs such as trust, commitment, and loyalty, and the concept of customer value in business activities.

Furthermore, the assertion suggests that a larger firm's service quality may determine customer satisfaction, whereas smaller firms prioritize the reliability of their product and service. Trust impacts information sharing, process improvement, and supply chain performance. Modern business revolves around the concept of value creation, which may depend on the perceptions of various stakeholders within the value creation system. The organization should capture customers' subjective assessment of the positive and negative consequences of the service experience received and consider them in the value proposition design (Kolomojets & Dickinger, 2023). This can serve as an indication of perceived customer value, which will guide the firm's decision-making and strategy.

The perceived value of the product may require customer engagement, as it will determine the customer's decision-making on what they are willing to purchase. The positive experience of the customer may then lead to further engagements and willingness to make further business commitments (Gupta & Panday, 2021). The organisation has the responsibility of communicating their offering and managing the business around creating value for customers. Value propositions bring together employees and customers in an organisation, focusing the organisation's efforts and customer expectations on receiving valuable product offerings. Organisations may need to consider their competitive customer value proposition, as this provides strategic insights into customer behaviour and the decision-making process when purchasing products and services (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021).

As highlighted in Coletta et al. (2020), the in-depth understanding of customer value may influence customer satisfaction and loyalty. The view is that when organisations know their customer value, they can tailor products and services to meet customers' needs and expectations effectively. This may be leveraged as a competitive advantage as customers are more likely to return due to product and service satisfaction. It is worth noting that customer value may be difficult to measure as some of the factors are intangible, such as loyalty and customer satisfaction. There are other variables to consider, such as customer affordability and preferences that may occasionally shift, causing challenges in quantifying the accurate measures of success. An opposing view indicated in Marcos & Coelho (2022) is that the firm's

goal may be associated with customer satisfaction, but that doesn't necessarily translate into customer retention. Therefore, satisfaction with products and services does not guarantee loyalty. The focus would then shift to ensuring that the company provides value to customers by identifying their needs and providing products and services to meet the requirements, at any given time.

Local resellers may improve the perceived value of rebuilt machinery by obtaining authorisation from OEMs. The advantages of authorisation for a local reseller are evident, as they would have access to a larger customer base and optimum supply chain, and OEMs may additionally benefit by generating extra cash through charging authorisation fees (Lv et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the existence of authorised third-party products on the market also has competitive consequences (Sun et al., 2020). The overall effect of authorisation may not be clear, which can reduce interest from manufacturers. The considerations include understanding the economic situations where the benefits of the authorisation fee earnings for the original equipment manufacturer may potentially outweigh sales-generating potential (Li et al., 2024).

2.6 Global Strategy

Organisations need to consider various challenges that may arise when executing their strategies, such as technology and knowledge integration within the existing processes and the ability to create innovative business models to advance business growth. These challenges require them to develop new capabilities and organisational modes, such as creative and strategic thinking. In the modern competitive landscape, organisations may be required to develop business models that can adapt to dynamic, and continuous environmental changes (Radomska et al., 2020). Agility is considered to be a strategic approach that may afford organisations the opportunity to react quickly to shifts in market conditions and customer needs. This flexibility is key for maintaining competitiveness and taking advantage of new opportunities as they arise (Khan, 2020). By fostering an agile approach, organisations can better manage risks and ensure long-term growth and sustainability.

Strategic decisions are complicated, poorly defined by the organisation, and necessitate substantial financial commitments. During times of unexpected events, such as high inflation, an energy crisis, and ongoing conflicts, it becomes increasingly necessary for organisations to make strategic decisions that are both timely and effective (Shepherd et al., 2023). Decision-making quality and speed are critical to organisational performance. Firms must

make swift decisions to keep up with the rapid changes in the external environment. It is essential for firms to have a rapid decision-making capability, especially in dynamic environments. However, there is emerging research that suggests that the relationship between decision speed and quality is more complex than previously understood. In a climate of uncertainty, a team's capacity to rapidly formulate high-quality strategic decisions is crucial for a firm's survival. However, the understanding of how different decision processes and behaviours impact decision-making speed and how top managers can expedite high-quality strategic decisions remains incomplete (Shepherd et al., 2023).

Innovative solutions are required to address global sustainability challenges. The challenges and dilemmas involved in collaborations between multinational companies and small business ventures can be intriguing. However, when they are managed correctly, they can enhance reputations and innovation output for both parties. Zucchella et al., (2023) consider collaboration between various players to be essential to innovation processes, creating global interfirm networks that can leverage each other's strengths and compensate for each other's weaknesses. Some of the key elements that require strategic decisions on a global scale include the supply chain management processes. Customers value availability as much as quality and pricing when making purchase decisions. This is particularly important for remanufacturing and repairs as these usually lead to longer downtime due to inspections and testing. The literature in Cao et al. (2024) scrutinizes the recent disruptions in the procurement process and supply chain, which have been strained in the past few years due to global conflicts, increased fuel and material prices and the global pandemic. As a response to the supply chain disruptions, organisations should be able to develop dynamic capabilities such as collaboration capabilities and agility to effectively manage potential disruptions that may impact the availability of products.

According to Ali & Anwar (2021), the goals of an organisation should be to meet customer needs by creating products and adopting innovative solutions to meet those needs. Understanding customer feedback is necessary for improving products and services to better align with customer expectations. Feedback provides valuable insights into areas that require improvement and helps identify opportunities for innovation. When actively listening and engaging with customers, organisations can foster loyalty and enhance their market competitiveness.

In this context, multinational enterprises (MNEs) may benefit from designing product management that more aligns with the local preferences and values of customers in the

emerging markets, as well as addressing the five characteristics of emerging markets that make it difficult for MNEs to succeed in these markets (Sharmelly & Klarin, 2021). Emerging markets present a unique set of challenges for multinational enterprises. Heterogeneous environments require MNEs to understand diverse customer preferences, income levels, and cultural backgrounds to tailor their products and services accordingly (Schaumann & Tarnovskaya, 2023). These markets often face sociopolitical governance issues, including political uncertainty and government intervention, which can impact business operations and stability. Additionally, unbranded competition from local competitors and unknown brands offering low-cost alternatives can deter brand development for MNEs. Chronic shortages of resources, such as skilled labour, infrastructure, and financial investment, present obstacles to business expansion (Sharmelly & Klarin, 2021). Moreover, inadequate infrastructure, including transportation, communication and stable connectivity, results in significant challenges for firms operating in these markets (Bu et al., 2024). Addressing these issues requires an agile and resilient approach and strategic adaptability.

Leiblein et al. (2022) define the field of global strategy as a field of study that helps individuals better understand the “strategic-ness” of global decisions. According to Benito et al. (2022), global strategy is constantly evolving, offering new insights and theoretical advances. Furthermore, a clear distinction exists between strategic decisions, which are focused on long-term planning and organisational objectives, and global decisions, which consider international markets, cultural differences, and geopolitical factors. It underlines the importance of recognising the unique characteristics and considerations within each of these fields of investigation (Leiblein et al., 2022). Global strategy research focuses on long-term decisions, considering constantly changing contexts and attributes like economic, political, institutional, and resource accessibility in countries and markets. To make long-term decisions, global strategy research considers variables that are always changing, such as the availability of resources in different markets and countries as well as institutional, political, and economic circumstances (Larsen et al., 2023).

Ali & Anwar (2021) define strategy as the process of creating a unique position for the different business activities, leading to three distinct strategies: differentiation, cost leadership, and focus. Special features, brand name, technology, and distribution channels achieve differentiation. Producing goods at a lower cost is necessary for cost leadership. The focus strategy involves focusing on a specific target or market segment (Zairbani & Jaya Prakash, 2023). It is understood that firms must choose between being a differentiator and a cost leader, but it may not be possible to achieve both at the same time. In large, diverse, complicated,

and competitive emerging markets, brands must promote their brand to resellers (Shi et al., 2024). We must manage direct brand-reseller relationships efficiently to enable realistic information exchange. Involvement and engagement between resellers and brands should be a long-term commitment. Customers in emerging markets tend to be price-sensitive but also prefer purchasing foreign brands, often showing a preference for products originating from countries with higher income and education levels (Tsuchiya et al., 2021). Independent resellers face no challenges because the original products they refurbish, and repair come from emerging markets. Their challenge is to maintain market acceptance by providing excellent service and high-quality, like-new products

In terms of global value chains (GVC), these can include activities such as research and development, production, marketing, distribution, and all related services. One firm can carry out these activities, or multiple firms can divide them through various forms of coordination and collaboration. Cuervo-Cazurra & Pananond (2023) define global value chains as governance structures that integrate diverse relationships among actors dispersed across geographical space. Goswami et al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the factors that differentiate collaboration at various levels within firms in an emerging market. The factors explored include ownership structures, communication styles, and organisational structures. Firms operating in the Southern Africa market should investigate this aspect to determine if there are any similarities across different markets. The collaboration may also be strengthened, and innovation potential may be increased if both local resellers and manufacturers are motivated to innovate and create synergies, while dealerships are encouraged by continued business opportunities within a wider network (Modungwa et al., 2021).

Benefits of collaboration for independent resellers could include quick inventory turnover, access to OEM and authorised dealer after-sales support, and collaborative planning. Resellers can also act as brand advocates and provide valuable insights into customer needs and preferences (Wu et al., 2024). However, maintaining long-term reseller engagement can be challenging due to fluctuating market demands in emerging markets and competitive pressures with new entrants. Resellers may also face difficulties in aligning with the brand's evolving strategies and policies. Also, ensuring consistent communication and support can be resource-intensive for larger and more established organisations. All these challenges would require careful management, as well as proactive and responsive measures, to ensure successful reseller engagement (Gupta, 2022).

2.7 Competitive advantage and cannibalisation

Setting goals and measuring customer value propositions within a specific framework can achieve a competitive advantage. The process entails determining the type of value customers receive, the crucial value drivers, and the process of creating value during the customer experience (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021). According to Hossain et al. (2020), one can understand competitive advantage as the ability to identify unique opportunities that enhance the firm's market role. Competitive intelligence significantly contributes to organisational knowledge and practical experience by enhancing strategic flexibility beyond existing strategies. Decision-makers can leverage its valuable insights into market trends and emerging opportunities to make informed strategic decisions. Understanding the competitive landscape allows firms to foresee changes in the market and adapt their strategies accordingly. This proactive approach helps in reducing risks and expanding on potential benefits in a dynamic business environment.

Firms that manage uncertainties more effectively than their rivals possess a broader range of strategic options. They may be able to take a more proactive stance in competition. Building and further developing the advantage can be achieved by acquiring risks in which the company has a competitive advantage. Firms may concentrate on acquiring risks in markets where they already have a competitive advantage, allowing them to grow and expand that edge even further (Radomska et al., 2020). This proactive competitive approach may enable firms to anticipate market changes and respond promptly, staying ahead of their competitors. It also allows them to take advantage of new opportunities and the flexibility of creating innovative solutions, which further increases the expansion. Therefore, by being able to effectively manage risk and uncertainties, firms can build resilience and sustain their market leadership over time. Hillmann and Guenther (2020) offer a counterargument of the concept of organisational resilience, stating that it's vague and lacks a consistent definition, therefore reducing its practical and academic usefulness. Other concerns involve interrogations about its level of scalability and whether it focuses on collective or individual levels.

As previously mentioned, manufacturing firms seeking to gain a competitive edge focus on customer service and innovation. In such instances, researchers have found that formal planning can improve firms' capabilities and enable them to develop innovative services. However, small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) such as independent resellers lack the resources to achieve this level of competitive advantage. Therefore, they tend to depend on collaboration with customers and employees to integrate resources for service-oriented business (Chen & Liu, 2022). To compete effectively and win customers, companies need to

provide increasingly sophisticated products and services at lower prices during a time of innovation. A firm's core competitiveness is its ability to understand and meet the needs of its customers. The essential element of innovation is its ability to meet those needs. It is important to remember, however, that innovation is not just about the customers, but also about the stakeholders involved and the external conditions (Wang, 2021).

The co-creation perspective challenges the traditional view that firms only deliver value to customers; instead, it proposes that the customer value proposition is a collaborative effort. This approach gives emphasis to the mutual benefits exchanged between suppliers and customers, which is a significant effort in B2B markets (Srivastava et al., 2023). This approach shifts the focus away from firm to customer engagements, and instead puts emphasis on the importance of customer relationships. The focus is on understanding customer needs and building mutually beneficial partnerships, which requires taking feedback into consideration, potentially improving the decision-making process for business leaders.

In business-to-business markets (B2B), value co-creation not only involves customer collaboration but also information and expertise from external partners. However, not every collaboration strategy will be successful, as too much customer collaboration can weaken the benefits gained from other external partners. Collaborative efforts can negatively impact the performance of products if too much emphasis is placed on them. As part of the cocreation process, firms need to build a rapport with their customers and acknowledge the power of their feedback. In addition, firms need to integrate customer suggestions into their development processes (Tran & Vu, 2021); this allows customers to feel valued and part of the solutions created by firms. In B2B markets, value co-creation occurs through systems that assess all stakeholders' expectations. Customers may engage more in product and service collaborations if they sense that their contributions are valued by the firm. In addition, their suggestions are likely to be considered for updates and changes within the firm's processes. Continued collaboration with customers is increasingly acknowledged as a key factor for the success of a product and gaining a competitive edge, as the firm can receive instant feedback and input. Companies that encourage and effectively manage customer participation gain access to richer information from their clients (Srivastava et al., 2023).

This perspective explains that values can be shaped collaboratively with willing and experienced stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, and other external partners. Most importantly, the firm's consideration of co-creation along with customers may assist in getting new competencies, and so achieve a more competitive advantage (Tran & Vu, 2021). It is

important to acknowledge that customer behaviour is constantly adjusting due to increased and evolving competition and the availability of offerings (Abid et al.,2022). In the context of this research, there is an increase in OEMs entering the emerging market. This may also lead to an increase in resellers offering alternative products and services. The researcher also notes the theory of value destruction, which indicates that value is not always positive and can lead to negative outcomes when customers are not satisfied with the expected outcomes of the product or service offering. Value destruction therefore highlights the importance of considering customer experiences in value processes (Abid et al.,2022).

Competitiveness has emerged as an important management concept in comparison to traditional performance metrics, with the sustainable competitive advantage being critical for companies to distinguish themselves and maintain leadership in the market. A firm's capacity to establish a sustainable competitive advantage hinges on the distinctive resources, capabilities, and strategies it possesses, which pose significant challenges for competitors to replicate (Almalki & Al-Shammari, 2023). However, the dynamic nature of emerging markets necessitates the use of unique resources and capabilities, which many traditional manufacturers may find difficult to swiftly implement.

When a firm implements a differentiation strategy, it creates products with unique features that customers may highly prefer. This enables the firm to expect higher prices for its products, making it stand out from competitors (Kharub et al., 2022). However, implementing a differentiation strategy can be costly and time-consuming, as it often requires significant investment in research and development. Moreover, there is a risk that competitors may quickly imitate these unique features, reducing the firm's competitive advantage. Furthermore, the firm must ensure that the unique features will resonate with customers' preferences to justify the higher prices. As a source of improvement and sustainability of competitive advantage, firms should continuously invest in integrating and deploying resources to develop and improve their unique capabilities, including solutions and selling capabilities (Liu et al., 2023). This gives firms the opportunity to create value for customers and become more competitive in the global market. Also, it increases the ability to invest in future capabilities that can help firms stay ahead of the competition, creating a culture of agility and sustainable growth.

Pesce et al. (2024) acknowledge remanufacturing as one of the most successful circular solutions for sustainable production, citing its potential to create new business opportunities, reduce the use of raw materials and energy, and reduce waste. In Kurdhi et al. (2023),

cannibalisation effects have been considered as dependent on the customers' perceptions of both the brand's value and that of its competitors. The two types of cannibalisations are considered to be internal cannibalization and external cannibalisation (Pesce et al., 2024). This suggests that firms can compete in the market by offering both new products and products at a reduced price, such as refurbished products, to attract low-end and price-sensitive customer segments.

Literature suggests that OEMs with an established brand or name recognition should sell the remanufactured product version (Kurdhi et al., 2023), as the availability of remanufactured products in the market can negatively impact the market value and willingness to buy brand-new products that use established technology standards (Zheng et al., 2023). When focusing on technology, firms have realised that internal innovation is not sufficient to keep up with the market, and it is ideal to explore several approaches to achieve differentiation and innovation to remain relevant (Veríssimo et al., 2024).

The growth strategy should integrate the overall sales strategy, taking into account the effectiveness and efficiency of sales personnel. In a competitive business-to-business environment, the salespeople are an important element of the value proposition, as they not only establish relationships but are also able to articulate the various solutions to customers, which assists in limiting the cannibalisation aspects of the sales offer (Rodriguez et al., 2023). The salesperson's product knowledge can help determine the most suitable solutions, whether it's offering a new product or choosing a remanufactured one.

According to Kurdhi et al. (2023), OEMs with higher brand value might benefit from these perceptions, as consumers trust remanufactured products offered by well-known OEMs more than those offered by unknown third parties and are willing to pay more for refurbished products from strong OEM brands. Strong brands enjoy more remanufacturing opportunities than weaker brands, but they should be concerned about internal cannibalisation, which leads them to charge higher prices for their rebuilt products and increase their profit margins. This strategy helps them capture market share in competition with weaker brands.

2.8 Resource-Based View of the firm

To achieve a competitive edge over other organisations, resource-based theory allows organisations to leverage their unique internal capabilities. Several untapped resources exist in every organisation with the potential to make them superior to their competitors and boost their performance when used strategically (Oladimeji & Udosen, 2019). The firm's

performance is evaluated based on its ability to leverage its resources to maintain competitive advantages over rivals. The performance of the firm is essential to understanding the effectiveness of a firm's strategies and its ability to achieve its objectives in a dynamic market (Helfat et al., 2023). The theoretical perspective to be considered for the research is the resource-based view.

The resource-based view is valuable for determining an organisation's competitive advantage, which may support organisations in identifying their internal developmental areas and formulating effective long-term strategies. The resource-based view (RBV) can initiate strategic planning by comparing the organisation's performance metrics to industry standards, which can aid in the development or acquisition of critical resources that will provide an organisation with a competitive advantage (Malhotra et al., 2024). The focus on unique organisational resources and capabilities can encourage managers to consider internal resources and not just external market conditions. This has an impact on the organisation's decision-making process, as the improvement in overall performance will create a competitive edge.

According to Sultana et al. (2022, p. 2), "Resource Based View is considered one of the seminal theories concerning sustainable competitive advantage by harnessing strategic resources and building various capabilities." Situations where the resources in use are scarce, valuable, non-substitutable, and inimitable can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (Malhotra et al., 2024). In Barney et al. (2021, p. 12), the argument is that "if a firm's dynamic capabilities are not rare, other firms in the same environment will be able to duplicate them at low cost, and a firm with dynamic capabilities will not have any advantages." This implies that organisations need to quickly adapt to a dynamic environment through sustainable strategies and innovative solutions.

A more recent framework, the resource-based view, underlines the internal capabilities and resources of an organisation as opposed to its external activities (Utami & Alamanos, 2023). Some examples of capabilities are innovation, quality, customer service, and operational excellence. By analysing these aspects of the firm, the firm can determine how its resources and capabilities provide it with a sustained competitive advantage or a distinctive value that competitors would find difficult to replicate or substitute (Wu & Vahlne, 2020).

The RBV theory should be able to provide clarity on how the organisation can use its resources to maintain a competitive advantage in a dynamic business environment, as the theory

focuses on strategic decisions and increasing returns as the overarching goal (Malhotra et al., 2024). Taking into consideration the context of the Southern Africa market, where small and medium-sized enterprises are critical to the economic growth of the region (Weigel & Hiebl, 2023), organisations need to be able to adapt to challenges and uncertainty. Organisations should concentrate on developing internal capabilities and resources to sustain the enterprise's operations in a dynamic environment. This approach not only boosts the enterprise's competitive edge but also necessitates the local environment's maintenance (Huynh, 2022). A competitive market allows firms to determine their strategic approach to the growth of the business. Thus, the understanding of the competitive landscape may drive the development of business strategies to improve revenue growth and influence the overall performance of the firm (Nayak et al, 2023).

Research suggests that firms, as they establish dynamic relationships and collaborations, can use the resource-based view to study the tracking of value during the constant development and execution of solutions that will drive success over time. It is important to recognise that value creation always takes place through the integration of joint resources (Bischoff, 2023). In addition to changing customer requirements and variable competitive strategies, competition may also be an element that impacts environmental issues. The ability of businesses to develop competitive strategies and deal with uncertainty determines their success (Christian et al., 2021). Agility allows firms to rapidly react to changes in the market and remain ahead of competitors. Thus, firms that can pivot and innovate in response to new challenges tend to remain competitive and improve their growth potential. Hence, adopting a culture and environment of innovation and flexibility is a fundamental element of long-term success and building a sustainable growth strategy.

According to the resource-based perspective, partnerships emerge when firms find themselves strategically vulnerable and need to obtain resources through collaboration. Furthermore, partnerships may enable the capacity to have a competitive edge should the resources available be considered diverse and not easily transferable. In addition, partnerships can provide access to new markets and customers and an opportunity to leverage resources not available internally (Ozdemir et al., 2023). The resource-based view focuses on collaborations and their outcomes through the perspective of stakeholder resources, without considering the values, objectives, and interests of the stakeholders. This suggests that the resources of stakeholders alone may not be sufficient for the success of inter-organisational collaborations without the support of stakeholders with aligned interests (Ozdemir et al., 2023).

In addition to gaining access to information and knowledge, collaboration with stakeholders reduces costs and risks, and it provides organisations with better chances of developing new products and services. There may be multiple ways in which organisations collaborate with stakeholders on various innovations; however, there is no clear indication that the stakeholders have an impact on the outcome of the innovation's development (Ozdemir et al., 2023). This indicates that organisations may not necessarily consider innovations and improvements suggested by various stakeholders. Collaborations may introduce a certain level of risk and uncertainty, including differences in organisational cultures, misaligned business goals that could impact productivity, and the risk of compromising proprietary information.

The resource-based theory views customer and market orientation and leadership as intangible assets that support the customer value proposition implementation. They ensure the effective implementation of customer value propositions by providing the necessary resources, support, and collaboration. As a benefit, these intangible assets may also facilitate an environment of trust and understanding between customers and the organisation (Grimes-Rose et al., 2024). Therefore, establishing trust with customers can foster a perception of commitment to providing value through products and services, as well as a sense of value from the organisation.

Resource-based theory traditionally focused on how firms achieve competitive advantage. The theory has evolved to include employee retention as a performance indicator, in addition to financial and market results (Grimes-Rose et al., 2024). This directional adjustment from traditional resource-based theory to a more comprehensive approach to understanding organisational performance is essential for firms to maintain a competitive advantage and long-term success. An opposing theoretical perspective is the industrial organisation view, which focuses on external industry and market conditions as the key contributing factors to firm performance (Leiblein et al., 2022).

The theory argues that organisations should analyse the environment to separate the sources of competitive advantage (Nayak et al., 2023). This perspective highlights the impact of factors such as competition among firms, the bargaining power of suppliers and buyers, the threat of new entrants, and the threat of substitute products on a firm's competitive advantage and performance (Huynh, 2022). It also highlights the role of organisational culture and leadership in creating market flexibility, which in turn determines how well the firm will respond to competition, customer demand, and other external pressures (Anning-Dorson, 2021).

Overall, the researcher focuses on the resource-based theory, which recognises that resources and capabilities are focal points for firms that want to excel in performance. By considering the service-dominant logic for comparison, we view capabilities as the ability to identify, transform, and exploit resources effectively to achieve the required business objectives (Ghasempour Ganji & Kazemi, 2024). The resource-based theory emphasises the importance of resources, while the service-dominant logic emphasises the importance of capabilities. This can include partnership investments, which may be financial and non-financial assets. The partnership investments may lead to benefits for all firms, including improved profitability and mutual support (Hall et al., 2022). Both theories recognise that resources and capabilities are essential for achieving superior performances.

2.9 Conclusion

In addition to other market factors, the competitive landscape in the aftermarket must be considered because of its impact on the process of making strategic decisions (Kirkizoglu & Karaer, 2022). More study on the OEM, dealers, and third-party resellers' strategic alignment and decision-making efficacy for future growth and performance is prompted by the literature review's observations. This study would give new competitors information, especially in emerging markets (Zhou et al., 2021). In the consideration for collaboration, there are complex decisions regarding the authorisation models and the implications of cannibalisation in the market (Wu & Li, 2022).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In multinational firms, decision-making plays a critical role in determining whether to engage with local independent third-party resellers for collaboration and partnership to optimise revenue generation. Furthermore, complex market situations require a grasp of perceived customer value. Thus, this study will strive to obtain answers to the following research questions:

Primary research question:

What are the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery Original Equipment Manufacturers to collaborate with independent third-party resellers, and how does this impact all parties in a competitive market?

3.1 Sub-questions

In addition to the primary research question, three subordinate research questions will provide insight and understanding of the value proposition and the relationships between OEM firms, their dealers, and independent local third parties. The research also aims to understand how sustainable strategic planning contributes to growing firms' profitability.

Research question 1:

What role does the host country's competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms?

Research question 2:

What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for OEM customers in Southern African host countries?

Research question 3:

How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?

Table 1 presents the themes, associated research questions, and distinctive knowledge gaps:

Table 1: Mapping of Research Questions to Unique Knowledge Gaps

Research Questions (RQ)	Unique Knowledge Gap (KG)
RQ 1: What role does the host country's competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms?	Theme: Decision-making modes KG 2: Scholars have extensively studied the modes of decision-making within firms. Zhou et al. (2020) investigated the impact of secondary market competition on OEM and dealer authorisation decisions, as well as the conditions under which an OEM can authorise an independent third party. Collaboration can provide the firm with innovative ideas over the long run that will benefit both parties economically. There is an opportunity to explore the decision-making process for all suppliers considered in the study. Fang et al. (2020) highlights the knowledge gap in exploring decision-making processes and assess the importance of perceived value in product selection across various categories.
RQ 2: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for OEM customers in Southern African host countries?	Theme: Customer Value KG 1: According to Wu & Li (2022), to remain competitive in the market, firms must differentiate their products based on their quality. Customers frequently perceive new products as having more value than remanufactured products due to their perceived higher quality and assurance of reliability. However, there is an opportunity to explore whether remanufactured products are considered favourable alternatives due to their lower price point and environmental sustainability (Zhou et al., 2021) in the context of Southern African markets.
RQ 3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?	Theme: Sustainable growth strategy KG 3: Given the competitive climate in which the OEM and independent resellers (IRs) operate, there is a knowledge gap about whether the OEM would consider authorising and partnering with some or all of the IRs, as well as the selection process (Jin et al., 2022). However, in cases where partnership is not an option and OEMs cannot completely deter independent third parties, they may consider sustainable strategies to contest the competition (Li et al., 2024). "If both the OEM and the third-party reseller are offering remanufactured items, the dynamics could be more complex" (Li et al., 2024. p1026) and may impact the perceived value and willingness to pay, this has been relatively unexplored in scholarly literature. In this regard, the regional context of Southern Africa should be examined.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to outline the rationale for the research design and the methodology that was selected for this study. The overarching purpose of this study was to understand the decision-making process for strategic growth in remanufacturing and gain insights on the potential impact and benefits of remanufacturing for stakeholders. Lastly, the study aimed to unpack potential recommendations that could assist firms in making informed decisions regarding strategic growth (Jin et al., 2022). Considering the research questions presented in Chapter 3, the study employed a qualitative, exploratory methodology, with data being gathered via comprehensive, semi-structured interviews. The findings of the interviews were then analysed to identify the main themes and patterns. These themes were used to create a set of recommendations that could be employed by firms to help them make strategic decisions.

4.2 Research design

4.2.1 Purpose of the research

This interpretivism study was aimed at exploring and understanding through the obtaining of information from key participants within the OEM, dealer and reseller network, based on their experience and what they contribute to the repairing, rebuilding and holistic remanufacturing of machinery. The interpretive paradigm highlights the social sciences from a natural sciences perspective, through the focus on people and their social structures. Hence, investigating the social environment requires research methodology that may account for the differences between humans and the natural world. (Bryman, 2012). Social reality, according to interpretative approaches, consists of subjective components and originates from social interaction and the exchange of social meanings. Interpretivists' viewpoint is that the objective quantitative approaches of positivists do not take into consideration the importance of the human experience but rather focus on data points to reach conclusions on research (Monette et al., 2011).

According to Babbie (2007), "exploratory research is a type of research conducted to examine new areas that have not been studied and/or have not been clearly defined previously." This research approach may be adaptable and does not prioritise precise outcomes. Instead, it was aimed at recognising patterns, uncovering insights on a particular topic, and conducting an analysis that may inform future studies (Swedberg, 2020). For the study, an exploratory design

was ideal as it involves collecting new data using methods like interviews to ask critical questions that reveal insights into the study. According to Haile (2023. p581), exploratory studies may “involve collecting new data using different data collection strategies, including, but not limited to, surveys, interviews, focus groups, or simple observations”. Therefore, the primary research design was applied to this study, allowing the researcher to gain new insights into the data.

4.2.2 Philosophy

The researcher considered interpretivism a suitable epistemological perspective that uses qualitative research methods to gain access to subjective experiences rather than quantitative research methods that do not consider the social reality element as essential for research purposes. Through the application of interpretivist epistemology, various forms of knowledge were discussed, as well as their relationship to each other (Hathaway, 1995). Interpretivism also emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge, meaning that knowledge may be shaped by the individual's subjective experiences and social context (Monette et al., 2011). Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted using the interpretive methodology to collect qualitative data (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

4.2.3 Approach selected

Research was conducted through a qualitative method with a specific phenomenological focus on understanding the research problem from the perspectives of those who were involved in the study. To understand the attitudes, actions, and social context of certain contexts from a cultural perspective, qualitative research is very valuable (Hennink et al., 2011). The qualitative research was applied to understand the perceptions, expectations, and experiences of the participants regarding the research phenomena under investigation in this study (Merriam, 2014). The data was collected with a mono method approach, using a single technique for collection and analysis (Bhattacharjee, 2012). This was achieved through one-on-one interview sessions with respondents who have detailed knowledge of the research phenomena and managerial and decision-making experience within the selected manufacturer and dealership network. Key customers and third-party local resellers were also approached to provide an external perspective of other players in the OEM network. The overall sampling frame, rationale and sub-sample breakdown is provided in Section 4.3.1. A qualitative strategy focuses on words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. It leans towards a flexible approach to research with theories and concepts emerging as results of the research process (Bryman, 2012). As stated in Collingridge & Gantt (2019)

qualitative research may assist in exploring complex topics, such as human behaviour and decision-making, in more detail than quantitative research. Thus, the application of qualitative research methodology was suitable for the exploring of how individuals within organisations interact and make decisions.

4.2.4 Strategy

A phenomenological research strategy was used to investigate and collect data from participants in their specialized fields in understanding the OEM value chain, the competitive landscape and leadership experience in terms of decision making and strategic thinking. Hiller (2016) argues that phenomenology is a strategy which involves developing meaning over time through the study of limited encounters. Throughout this approach, the researcher had put aside their own experiences to better understand the research phenomena from the perspective of the participants in the study.

4.2.5 Time horizon

A cross-sectional study was carried out to accommodate the time restrictions that were associated with the completion of the research. Data was collected just once through semi-structured interviews before being analysed and interpreted (Bryman, 2012). This approach provided a snapshot of the current situation in order to understand the strategic decision-making considerations of OEMs and third parties in an emerging market context.

4.3 Methodological choices

4.3.1 Population, sample, sampling frame and sampling criteria

The sampled population included individual respondents within companies headquartered in European, African, and Asian regions. These respondents have a minimum of five years' operational and strategic planning knowledge in the earthmoving machinery industry. Given the limited time frame, twelve interviews were conducted, representing each of the sub-categories identified in Section 4.2.3. Saunders et al. (2023) indicates that a broad sample range of 12-30 is adequate for most qualitative studies. Creswell & Creswell (2018) suggest that a sample size as small as N=12 is sufficient for data saturation in phenomenological research designs. Therefore, twelve interviews were conducted to ensure data saturation and may be considered sufficient for providing meaningful results.

The participants were selected intentionally based on their propensity to provide insightful data

to the researcher (Berndt, 2020). The study initially used non-probability, purposive sampling. However, this method was combined with snowball sampling to obtain the 12 interviews conducted through the researcher's professional network due to limited time and participant availability. This enabled the selection of the key demographic characteristics that may have an impact on participants' perspectives of the topic (May, 2001). The data was collected from participants based in the Southern Africa region, with a focus in South Africa as the country may be considered a proxy for emerging markets, and mainly in the regions with a high population of heavy equipment in the mining and construction industry.

Many of the participants interviewed were in the Gauteng region, however, the experience and activities span across the multiple regions in the country and across Southern Africa. In terms of engagements with headquarters and decision makers within the OEM, the research covered participants based in Mozambique and Geneva, Switzerland. There were three primary sub-sample sets with the OEM and Dealers combined due to their close relationship. The customers and independent resellers were considered as separate sub-sample sets as the researcher intended to draw on their varying perspectives on the research phenomena which provided a diverse range of viewpoints. The sample represents a broad regional and industry knowledge and expertise with regards to the field of study which has assisted in formulating themes and assumptions as the sampling method requires a degree of generalizability and the ability to draw conclusions (Berndt, 2020). Table 2 represents the summary of the twelve interviews conducted.

Table 2: Information summary of interview sample

Company	Category	Subsidiary Location	Headquarters Location	Respondents	Level
Company 1	OEM	Switzerland	USA	1	Management
Company 2	OEM	Gauteng	China	1	Management
Company 3	OEM	Gauteng	USA	1	Technical
Company 4	OEM	Gauteng	Sweden	1	Management
Company 5	Dealer	Mozambique	South Africa	1	Technical
	Dealer	Gauteng	South Africa	1	Management
Company 7	Reseller	Gauteng	South Africa	1	Technical
Company 8	Reseller	Gauteng	South Africa	1	Management
Company 11	Customer	KZN	Australia	1	Management
Company 12	Customer	Polokwane	South Africa	1	Management
Company 13	Customer	Botswana	South Africa	1	Technical
Company 14	Customer	Gauteng	South Africa	1	Technical
Total				12	

4.3.2 Unit of analysis

In order to obtain as much data as possible from respondents, the researcher considered the

goal of the study while guiding the research, and the unit of analysis suggested a distinct focus for the investigation. The researcher weighed the pertinent units of analysis and chose the best options to use to respond to the research questions. Finally, the researcher considered the unit of analysis that provided the most relevant and comprehensive answers (Bengtsson, 2016). The unit of analysis included individual respondents with (a) technical knowledge of the manufacture, repair, maintenance and rebuilding of heavy earthmoving equipment, and (b) senior management or executives with experience of, and responsibility for, strategic decision making in their respective organisations. The level of analysis occurred at an organisational level for the purpose of this study. As such, the unit of analysis was positioned at the micro level, but inferences were drawn at the meso-level in the research analysis and discussion.

4.3.3 Measurement instrument

The research was completed through a semi-structured interview approach as participants were able to respond to the questions based on their knowledge and experiences, and the researcher had the opportunity to probe the responses accordingly. The participants were asked the same questions, in logical order, and the data was collected in a format that allows for comparison of respondents' inputs (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Table 3 demonstrates the theoretical alignment of the knowledge gaps identified in Chapters One and Two, the associated Research Questions described in Chapter Three and the Interview Questions that form part of the Interview Guide. The Interview Questions were differentiated between the three main sub-sample categories due to the shift in perspective between each group. However, each interview question addressed the same issue irrespective of category placement. The only exception was a specific additional question for Customers under the RQ2 chain of questions, and the removal of a question for the same category under RQ3.

Table 3: MAPPING OF KNOWLEDGE GAP TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Primary research question: What are the primary motivations for OEMs to collaborate with independent third-party resellers, and how does this impact all parties in a competitive market?

Unique Knowledge Gap	Subordinate Research Questions	Interview Questions: OEMs/Dealers	Interview Questions: Reseller	Interview Questions: Customer
Theme: Decision-making modes Scholars have extensively studied the modes of decision-making within firms. Zhou et al. (2020) investigated the impact of secondary market competition on OEM and dealer authorisation decisions, as well as the conditions under which an OEM can authorise an independent third party. Collaboration can provide the firm with innovative ideas over the long run that will benefit both parties economically. There is an opportunity to explore the decision-making process for all suppliers considered in the study. Fang et al. (2020) highlights the knowledge gap in exploring decision-making processes and assesses the importance of perceived value in product selection across various categories.	RQ 1: What role does the competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of multinational firms?	- How does your organisation balance the need to keep up with technical advances in the industry with the pragmatic choices faced by customers when they make OEM purchase decisions versus repair/rebuild? What impact does this have on decision making in your organisation? - To what extent does customer feedback and market research influence your strategic decisions? - To what extent do various stakeholder interests affect the strategic choice to compete or collaborate with resellers in the marketplace? Please elaborate.	- When comparing your company to your competitors, how does their performance affect your decision-making process? - To what extent does customer feedback and market research influence your strategic decisions? - To what extent do various stakeholder interests affect the strategic choice to compete or collaborate with OEMs in the marketplace? Please elaborate	- What consideration is given to supplier reputation and brand perception when your organisation makes OEM purchase decision versus repair/rebuild? Are there other factors that influence the decision? - What is the impact of the perceived expertise and product knowledge of dealers versus resellers in your decision to use their respective services? - At times your organisation may be a client of both OEM dealers and resellers at any given point. How has this affected your relationship with both parties in the short, medium and long term

Theme: Customer Value According to Wu & Li (2022), to remain competitive in the market, firms must differentiate their products based on their quality. Customers frequently perceive new products as having more value than remanufactured products due to their perceived higher quality and assurance of reliability. However, there is an opportunity to explore whether remanufactured products are considered favourable alternatives due to their lower price point and environmental sustainability (Zhou et al., 2021) in the context of Southern African markets.	RQ 2: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for customers??	• How would you describe the overall quality of your organisation's products and services, in comparison to Resellers? • What are the key benefits that make the OEM products stand out? • How does your organisation deal with customer perceptions of a quality versus cost and reliability trade-off when going to market?	• How would you describe the overall quality of your organisation's products, in comparison to OEMs? • What are the key benefits that differentiate your products in comparison to OEMs? • How does your organisation deal with customer perceptions of a quality versus cost and reliability trade-off when going to market?	• How would you compare the overall product quality and services offered by OEMs and Resellers? • What are the key benefits or differentiators that lead you to choose OEM or reseller products? • How does your organisation deal with perceived quality versus cost and reliability decisions in dealing with OEMs and Resellers?
Theme: Strategic growth strategy Given the competitive climate in which the OEM and independent resellers (IRs) operate, there is a knowledge gap about whether the OEM would consider authorising and partnering with some or all of the IRs, as well as the selection process (Jin et al., 2022). However, in cases where partnership is not an option and OEMs cannot completely deter independent third parties, they may consider sustainable strategies to contest the competition (Li et al., 2024). “If both the OEM and the third-party reseller are offering remanufactured items, the dynamics could be more complex” (Li et al., 2024. p1026) and may impact the perceived value and willingness to pay, this has been relatively unexplored in scholarly literature. In this regard, the regional context of Southern Africa should be examined.	RQ 3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?	• Based on your answers to the previous questions can you describe any short, medium or long-term partnerships or collaborations your organisation has established to better address changing customer needs? • What organisational or policy changes, if any, has your organisation made to better meet evolving customer needs? • How do you involve your customers in your business processes to ensure their needs are being met effectively? • What key performance indicators do you track to measure your success in addressing evolving customer needs?	• To what extent have OEMs and resellers collaborated, either on a temporary basis or longer-term, to offer you a product or service? What was the result? • To what extent have OEMs or resellers made noticeable organisational or policy changes to better accommodate your needs? What has been the result? • To what extent have OEMs or resellers attempted to integrate your organisation into their own business processes? What has been the result? • How has your organisation measured the effectiveness and impact of your relationship with OEMs and resellers over time?	

4.3.4 Data gathering process

The preferred data-collecting process for the researcher was face-to-face interviewing with semi-structured interview questions which rely on asking questions within a predetermined thematic framework (Bryman, 2012) but allowing for flexibility, allowing the interviewee to have a great deal of leeway in how to reply to the questions and an opportunity to elaborate and give in-depth responses (May, 2001). However, the questions followed the same sequence and with a logical flow (Bhattacharjee, 2012). Due to the high costs and time involved, a mixed-mode data gathering approach with virtual interviews (Alasuutari et al., 2008) was used in situations where the researcher and respondents were geographically separated. In the instance of virtual interviews, Microsoft Teams was the preferred tool, along with a digital recorder for audio capture with the recording and auto transcription completed with the Otter.ai application. Prior permission was granted by the participants for the recordings. These transcriptions were manually verified by the researcher against the field notes and audio recordings, to ensure accuracy and the key identifiers were removed to ensure confidentiality. In Chapter 5, the participants are referred to by their company categories, for the purpose of ensuring confidentiality.

4.6 Analysis approach

A thematic analysis technique was used to analyse the collected data, which involved searching, analysing, and reporting recurring patterns within a data collection (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Additionally, the data analysis was conducted through in vivo coding of verbatim quotations from the participants. Using this approach allowed the researcher to analyse the responses and identify codes that were aligned with themes based on the respondents' experiences. Thematic analysis is a useful analytical technique for comprehending experiences, ideas, or behaviours within a dataset (Sandelowski 2010). Despite the flexibility of thematic analysis, researchers who use it must explicitly state their paradigmatic orientations and assumptions to preserve the validity of their findings and interpretations (Kigar & Vapio, 2020). The researcher followed this prescription during the process of thematic aggregation. This ensured that the analytical procedure yielded credible results and enabled the comparison against the original theory base to obtain findings. An inductive approach was used for the coding process and linking themes that emerged from the data set. The ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software was used to support this thematic approach. The software enabled the researcher to identify and group related themes, codes, and categories from the qualitative data. This made it easier to identify patterns and draw conclusions

from the data. According to Kigar & Vapio (2020) this approach creates deeper understanding of the data and the identification of trends or patterns by providing an extensive analysis of data set.

4.7 Quality controls

It is crucial that the research findings prove to be valid and accurate, which necessitates the verification of their accuracy and credibility. The researcher was able to cross-validate the results and increase their credibility and quality of the data by using triangulation for cross checking findings with the use of more than one method or source of data (Bryman, 2012). This was demonstrated by the maximum variation sample described in Section 4.3.1 and the deconstruction of the sample into sub-sample groups. The distinction between technical-level and managerial employees provided sample stratification.

The reliability of the research is essential to ensure that the findings are consistent across different contexts or researchers (Alasuutari et al., 2008). In a qualitative research study, reliability looks at results of a study and considers if they are repeatable, especially concerning the proper methodologies used and how they were applied and implemented (Bryman, 2012). Research design is generally not perfect, however, some methods can be applied to reduce the limitations such as the use of neutral open-ended questions and triangulation to confirm the results of the data, as is indicated in this study. This enhanced the validity of research by comparing findings from different sources, evaluating consistency within the same methodology and helped to identify any gaps or inconsistencies in the research design (Rose & Johnson, 2020).

Choices made by the researcher such as decisions to include or exclude material during the study's development, which may have resulted in a systematic bias as a study limitation. Choices made by the researcher, such as decisions to include or exclude material during the development of the measurement instrument, may have introduced systemic bias into the research design (Alasuutari et al., 2008). This was mitigated by posing open-ended questions that avoided leading the respondent in a pre-determined direction. This was mitigated, at least in part, by the researcher making the theoretical assumptions of the study visible (as discussed in Section 4.6 and demonstrated in Table 3). Furthermore, the researcher was aware of the potential biases based on the industry familiarity and to mitigate the risk of received responses that would be deemed as favourable to the respondent, the purpose of the study was clearly articulated with the commitment to confidentiality which allowed the respondents provide authentic responses to the

questions.

4.8 Research Limitations

The research was limited in terms of the resultant data and prior research, which reduced the scope of analysis as the available research focused on component remanufacturing and technology-based OEMs. The findings of the study are not generalisable to other industries. The relatively small sample of respondents further limited the generalisability of the findings, although this is common to many qualitative studies. Future research could seek qualitative study to validate the findings through a diverse sample size, ensuring that the categories are represented proportionally.

A high response rate was the desirable outcome, however, the researcher had to overcome a low response rate, through snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012). The low response rate was due to the availability of senior executives and the apprehension from respondents on potentially sharing sensitive information. The ability to read body language and virtual cues was reduced without face-to-face interaction (de Villiers et al, 2022) with the respondents that could not be interviewed face to face. In addition, a longitudinal study could offer additional insights by incorporating multiple data points to establish longer-term trends. This would help to identify patterns and correlations that may not be apparent in a cross-sectional study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The research sought to explore the potential for strategic engagements between original equipment manufacturers (OEM), licensed dealerships and local resellers, which may also be referred to as rebuilders, within the Southern African market. Guiding the investigation was an overarching research question: *"What are the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery Original Equipment Manufacturers to collaborate with independent third-party resellers, and how does this impact all parties in a competitive market?"* with three sub-questions:

Research question 1: What role does the host country's competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms?

Research question 2: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for OEM customers in Southern African host countries?

Research question 3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?

This chapter presents the study's findings, starting with an overview of the sample, highlighting the participants' relevance, the sample's adequacy, and the alignment of the empirical data with the objectives.

5.2 Overview of the sample

5.2.1 Relevance of the sample

The interviewee profile in Table 4 allows an overview of all the participants with different specialities, job positions, and experiences that allow them to offer important perspectives in their fields and markets. The participants cover diverse job roles, including general management, operations, technical, and sales positions, which show both strategic and operational views.

Table 4: Demographic and Professional Profiles of Interviewees Across Industries and Regions

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Role	Experience	Education	Headquarters	Market	Industry
RPT1	M	45+	General Manager	+15 years	Masters	Australia	Southern Africa	Mining
RPT2	F	40+	Sales & Marketing Executive	+5 years	MBA	China	Southern Africa	OEM
RPT3	F	40+	Regional Aftermarket Manager	+10 years	MBA	Sweden	Sub Saharan Africa	OEM
RPT4	M	45+	Operations Director	+15 years	Diploma	South Africa	Southern Africa	Construction
RPT5	M	45+	Senior Plant Manager	+20 years	National Certificate	South Africa	Southern Africa	Construction
RPT6	M	45+	Regional Aftermarket Manager	+15 years	Masters	USA	EAME	OEM
RPT7	F	35+	Sales Execution Manager	+5 years	Diploma	South Africa	Southern Africa	Dealer
RPT8	M	40+	Country Manager	+15 years	MBA	South Africa	Mozambique	Dealer
RPT9	M	45+	Managing Director	+15 years	National Certificate	South Africa	South Africa	Mining
RPT10	M	40+	Managing Director	+10 years	Bachelors	South Africa	Southern Africa	Reseller
RPT11	F	35+	Key Account Manager	+10 years	National Certificate	South Africa	South Africa	Reseller
RPT12	F	40+	Technical Manager	+15 years	Postgraduate	USA	Southern Africa	OEM

Table 4 contains data for both genders, including males and females, who are dominantly in the 35-45 age group, which implies that this age group has worked for several years in the industry. These participants boast between five and over twenty years of professional work experience, but the majority of them have over ten years in their careers.

5.2.2 Adequacy of the sample

5.2.3 Alignment of the empirical data



This is evident in the dominant words OEM, customers, product, resellers, market, dealers, and quality. This aligned well with the study focused on the strategic engagements between OEM and licensed dealerships and local resellers, trying to understand the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery OEMS to collaborate with independent third-party resellers and how this impacts all parties in a competitive market.

The frequency of the codes was employed to establish the data saturation, this was achieved through the analysis of the number of new codes that appeared during the interviews. The number of new codes gradually decreased by the sixth interview conducted. This is indicated in Figure 2 with no new codes generated by interview 10, this is considered the point of saturation. The number of codes that emerged from the respondents was a total of 101, as listed in Appendix D.

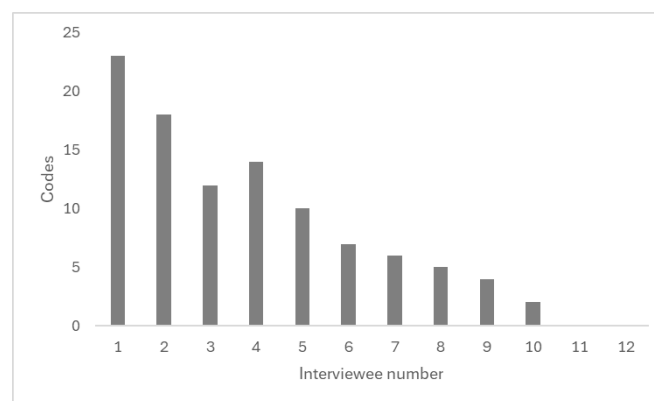


Figure 2: Number of new codes identified in the interview process

5.3 Influence of Competitive Landscape on Multinational Decision-Making

Research Question 1: What role does the competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of multinational firms?

This research question set out to assess and understand how the competitive environment influences the strategic choices made by multinational companies. More particularly, it aimed to determine the rival forces that make these companies, such as their customers, the market, technology and the stakeholders.

The findings emphasised the importance of the competition environment in the different strategies employed by multinational corporations. Participants were asked several open-ended questions to gauge a better understanding of the role that customer feedback, market trends, advancing technologies, and stakeholders' interests have in the decisions that are

made in the firm. The participants' insights provided certain themes, which are qualitatively analysed in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Influence of Competitive Landscape on Multinational Decision-Making

Codes	Subthemes	Theme
• Customer-centric approach and feedback integration • Customer feedback and adaptive strategy	Leveraging customer feedback for adaptive, customer-centric strategies	Influence of competitive landscape on multinational decision-making
• Asset connectivity and remote monitoring initiatives • Technological development and growth	Technological evolution in customer-centric industries	
• OEM-Dealer relationship • Knowledgeable sales and product support	Strengthening OEM-Dealer relationships through knowledgeable sales and product support	
• Component sourcing and quality • Market dynamics and service dependence	Navigating component sourcing and quality in response to market dynamics	
• Balancing collaboration and competition with OEMs • Reliance on resellers and strategic collaborations	Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics with OEMs and resellers	
• Short-term vs. long-term solutions and aftermarket relationships • Balanced procurement strategy and relationship management	Balancing short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies	

5.3.1 Leveraging customer feedback

Multinational corporations today operate in a highly competitive international environment, which is of great importance to their operations. One of the key factors of this process is taking into consideration customer feedback. The study showed that it was necessary to have representatives in the organisation who were responsible for capturing the voice of the customer. One of the participants said,

"We have more segmented reps. Their job is really getting the customer's voice, bringing it back to us, and designing the solutions and the offer that meets customer expectation"
[RPT6].

Solutions and offers that result from this feedback are addressed to the customer's expectations and allow the company to remain in business.

However, gathering feedback is not sufficient. Another participant observed that companies should also analyse such information and implement it with respect to the competition.

"You could have stood back and just continue to give them exactly what we used to do for valley, but that is not what the customers are searching the market for, and we could see it coming through the numbers. And the only way was to actually sit and listen to the customer. And obviously, they asked for a lot of things, but not exactly. They don't talk about the solutions. They just ask" [RPT8].

There is a danger of wanting to follow the same old practices, and this may not be an effective way of addressing customers' real needs in a competitive environment. By carefully observing the feedback and customer actions, organisations can detect trends and identify areas that need more focus.

5.3.2 Technological evolution

There is a continuous change in the technological environment in customer-driven sectors because the enhancement of customer experience and efficiency of operations must be improved. Participants provided information regarding how technology advancement is changing the way they strategise and operate.

One participant stressed the past few years in which the company has been taking steps to connect its assets and stated,

"Only now are we going through the journey of connecting assets, probably in the last three years. Only then did we start producing crashes that have any form of connectivity on them."
[RPT3].

This, in essence, confirms a transition towards the use of technology to enhance interactivity and intelligence in the products produced, which responds to the trends of smart products in the market.

Another Participant recalled the earlier struggles, saying,

"In terms of our previous focus around technology development, we have lagged as a dealer in Southern Africa versus some of the other dealers that we have seen in other territories"
[RPT7].

The recognition of falling behind other players in the industry in adopting new technologies strongly suggests that there is a need for proper planning to ensure that innovation is continuous in order to be competitive within the industry.

5.3.3 Knowledgeable sales and product support

The level of technical knowledge and expertise is of great importance when making strategic choices between dealers and resellers. It was observed that there are numerous factors that shape these decisions, especially relationships, contracts, and the support by salespeople.

As one of the participants commented,

"When we are making a decision between the resellers and the OEM, one of the things that we look at is the relationship between us and the OEMs and the dealers. How was our relationship with them? Remember, we have contracts with some of them. So, we also always want to either first honour the contract, if we can honour the contract, and because with the contractual terms, we also are bound by the agreement." [RPT1].

This insight clarifies how crucial it is not only to possess strong professional ties but also to fulfil legal obligations because both factors may considerably affect final choices.

Moreover, another participant stressed the importance of knowing the equipment and the assistance offered by the product support person:

"When you're buying equipment, you have to know what you want and what the product support is. At that time, your product support so-called salesman had the information to go for. You have to have somebody who has proper knowledge about the machinery." [RPT4].

This indeed brings to light the importance of the sales personnel in ensuring that the customers obtain the desired information, assistance, and, ultimately, the decision of which dealer or reseller to purchase from.

5.3.4 Navigating component sourcing and quality

The findings revealed the complexity of sourcing parts and maintaining product quality within the competitive landscape of the market, especially in the South African sphere.

The major challenge for organisations is the selection of component sources based on durability and product lifecycle needs. As one participant noted,

"For components, one depends on the midlife that you're doing on a machine, which will depend on where you get your parts from. Major components, such as brand precision, are generally what you get from the other. That's brand precision. And that's because it has lasting components and is not aftermarket. Aftermarket has a shorter lifetime" [RPT4].

This insight highlights a rather clear bias toward OEM parts in relation to aftermarket substitutes, especially for vital machine parts, as they are presumably of superior quality and durability that is needed in high-strain environments. The choice of preferring not to utilise aftermarket parts reflects an assessment that while such parts might be cheaper, their frequency of failure increases, and in effect, the overall cost of maintenance and, consequently, time lost due to repair is greater.

Furthermore, the competition prevailing in the South African market also affects brand allegiance and sourcing decisions. Even as there is a global trend toward competitive supplier ecosystems, some markets – South Africa in particular – do not possess extensive brand competition that may be attractive for companies who prefer to have a wider selection of brands. The absence of strong competition conditions in these markets in terms of sourcing and service dependence, as highlighted by one respondent:

"Oh, basically, it's a price. But I mean, you don't have competition in South Africa. If you look at the dealer, it doesn't have much competition in brand name acknowledgement. Where else can we go?" [RPT9].

This viewpoint illustrates the dilemma that companies have to contend with in the pursuit of fewer players in the market. The absence of rival sources perhaps forces organisations to focus on familiar brands, even at an extra cost or limited choices, to guarantee the brand's quality consistency and standing.

5.3.5 Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics

Stakeholder interests are major determinants of the competitive tendencies of companies seeking to enter into partnerships with resellers. The feedback provided by the research

participants illustrates the juggling that takes place on the side of the company to ensure its customers are well catered for.

As an example, one of the participants explained how the coexistence of OEMs and aftermarket occurs:

"There will always be a part or component in the aftermarket space that can't compete with OEM. As we would like to give our customers the best service possible, we would 'try' to collaborate with various OEMs so that we are able to service our customers with the best options possible. We balance the needs of the company and the customers when we decide whether to compete or collaborate with the OEMs. We make sure that our strategies are compliant and appropriate for achieving long-term goals" [RPT11].

In this regard, it becomes evident that decision-making incorporates not only the understanding of customer requirements but also the consideration of business sustainability in the process.

Another participant emphasised the reliance on resellers for their competitive advantages:

"I'd say that at this point, we're heavily reliant on the resellers. Our strategy is around definitely having more of these collaborations and partnerships because they have the scale, and they have the ability, and they also have the knowledge to do it at a far, far more competitive price than we can as we build" [RPT3].

This emphasises the need to utilise the capabilities of the resellers, particularly their scale, knowledge and competitive pricing in addition to the company's capabilities.

5.3.6 Short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies

Interacting with both original equipment manufacturers and resellers at the same time could be an interesting strategy for a firm. The participants also shed some light on such simultaneous engagements and what comes with them.

One participant explained their way of addressing the problems of several solicitors at once, including the suppliers of applications,

"When we get a short-term solution and go to the aftermarket kind of people and get it, get the machine running, and then wait for you to come with your pricing or your equipment or spares. So long-term, oh yeah, short-term aftermarket, the relationship between both seems

to be, I think, like the likes of specific resellers and all the way parts and whatever they understand that we did shorter. Relationships are not tarnished there" [RPT4].

This way of reasoning means that using aftermarket suppliers for other short-term requirements does not negatively impact long-term business relationships with OEMs. Rather, it provides an opportunity to solve issues in an effective manner without sacrificing overall business goals.

Another participant pointed out the uncompromising way in which brand manufacturers and aftermarket relationships are handled:

"We have relationships both with the OEMs and aftermarket suppliers, and I don't think it affects the relationship too much because of how we sort of handle our equipment, certain things we buy from OEM, certain things we buy off the markets" [RPT5].

Such a case highlights the lopsided scenario in which purchasing activities are properly managed considering the blend of OEM and aftermarket sources. Companies stand to improve their operations by risking their business with a single source supplier type by varying their sourcing tactics. Figure 2 summarises with a thematic map the Influence of the competitive landscape on multinational decision-making.

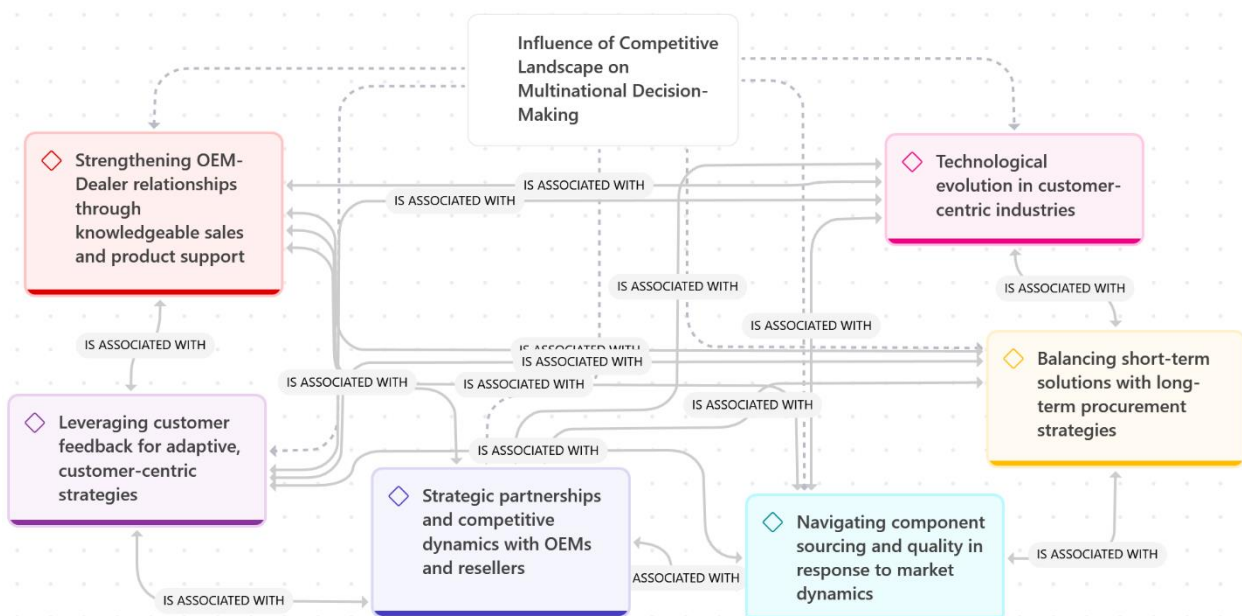


Figure 3: Influence of Competitive Landscape on Multinational Decision-Making

The findings revealed that are complex factors that influence the decision-making process of OEMs. These included leveraging customer feedback for adaptive, customer-centric strategies, helping to drive technological evolution in customer-centric industries and

strengthening OEM-Dealer relationships through knowledgeable sales and product support. This also aligned with navigating component sourcing and quality in response to market dynamics, developing strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics with OEMs and resellers, and balancing short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies.

5.4 Factors Contributing to the Perceived Value of Supplier Products

SRQ2: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for customers?

The research question aimed to explore elements perceived by customers as value in the offerings made by the suppliers. As a rigorous and detailed analysis unit, the study sought to determine how product quality, reliability, cost-effectiveness, and supplier support impact customer decisions and satisfaction. Such considerations inform buying decisions, indicate a preference for the OEM versus the aftermarket parts and underscore the trade-offs customers make between product quality and price.

The participant's insights revealed certain themes, which are qualitatively analysed in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products

Codes	Subthemes	Theme
- Quality standards gaps - Intense scrutiny vs. OEM oversight in product functioning	Quality standards and oversight in product functioning	Factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products
- OEM expertise and product quality - Aftermarket quality differentiation	Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options	
- OEM reliability, warranty, and support for critical components - Reliability, durability, warranty, and global availability of OEM products	Ensuring reliability and peace of mind	

• Emphasising quality and reliability in solution-driven products • Balancing quality and cost to cater to different customer segments	Harmonising quality, reliability, and cost in customer-centric solutions	
• Quality vs. cost trade-off in product selection • Efficiency and cost-saving	The strategic balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency	

5.4.1 Harmonising quality standards, reliability and cost

As explanations state, companies face two major challenges under the scope of quality standards and control over the product's performance — ensuring that their suppliers are provided with adequate training and attention to detail is exercised over the company's products. Participants' opinions provide some comprehension of the dynamics and the possibilities for the enhancement of the particular dimension of business processes.

One participant affirmed that while efforts aimed at meeting the quality standards with suppliers are positively made, there is still the issue of conducting proper audits:

"So obviously, we do hold the different suppliers. These are bought out to a certain quality standard. But I think there's still some work to be done in terms of auditing the facilities from which we procure. There's definitely room there. We don't do very well in that space."
[RPT3].

This explains some of the weaknesses of the present supplier and the potential of improving internal control systems on the quality of materials along the supply chain.

A different participant answered the question by comparing the level of attention directed towards their products with that of the existing OEMs:

"We are under much more intense scrutiny of how our product functions, of how our product works there, because the incumbent OEMs usually have vast teams working on those mine sites. We're under much more incredible scrutiny for that. So, anything that doesn't appear to be right, it's flagged immediately, whereas with other OEMs, it's kind of like swept under the carpet or washed away, just generally speaking " [RPT8].

This highlights the performance of some organisations, specifically, the strong focus on product functioning whereby any deviation in performance is information dealt with quickly and easily. On the other hand, the participant makes a point that the OEMs, perhaps don't always have that same level of granular inspection.

5.4.2 Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options

A controversy exists over the question of preference between OEM parts and aftermarket substitutes in the case of automotive spares. This is a question that looks at quality, cost and use.

"Product quality, I always say you will not know something better than the guy that created that. And the OEM has got a lot of R&D to do that in South Africa." [RPT1]

This quote explains how consumers regard OEM parts with a lot of trust because they have a lot of R&D associated with them. Original Equipment Manufacturers are said to be the first people who have knowledge about their products, and this is likely to be the case with them.

Nonetheless, the aftermarket sector has a number of alternatives that suit varying budgets and requirements. To supplement this observation, it has been stated:

"Now it's like you get kind of three grades of spares. You get the cheap, the medium, and the expensive." [RPT3]

This classification shows the different types of spare parts that are accessible aftermarket. Customers may opt for low-grade spares that will enable them to spend less at the initial stage, although they may be less able to withstand wear and tear. Medium-grade spares tend to be very popular because they provide savings without having to sacrifice too much on reliability. On the other hand, expensive aftermarket parts may sometimes be of equal quality to OEM parts since some third-party resellers emphasise performance and high quality.

5.4.3 Ensuring reliability and peace of mind

Insights from participants provided clarity regarding the aspects of the customers and what makes them continue to use OEMs regardless of the presence of other options from the aftermarket manufacturers and independent resellers, as customers desire reliability above all.

For instance, engines and hydraulic systems are critical components where reliability and durability matter and OEMs are at the top. As a participant noted,

"When it comes to essential components like an engine or hydraulic system, where reliability and longevity are paramount, you would typically choose the OEM." [RPT1]

This insight brings to the forefront the fact that customers, with regard to the operational performance of a component with extreme demands, always go for a product that is dependable and suitable for use over a long period of time.

The warranty that OEMs provide is yet another important factor that comes into consideration in customers' decision-making as it provides them with certainty and coverage of risks. To the participant, it was reported that,

"If we replace the entire component, we will look first at OEM, just from the aspect that it's plug and play, and we have warranty, guarantee and all that kind of stuff." [RPT5]

Such tranquillity is extremely beneficial in circumstances when an unforeseen failure arises, and customers are comfortable with the knowledge that any required repair or replacement will not involve any expenses, thereby eliminating business interruptions that are likely to happen otherwise.

Moreover, bringing about customer trust and satisfaction is the fact that the OEMs may be able to provide replacement parts and support in a timely manner. As the participant noted,

"When you are buying equipment, you have to know precisely what you want and what support comes with the products" [RPT4].

High costs are incurred in industries where there is a lot of downtime because of component failure. The ability of OEM to quickly ship replacements helps reduce these risks and ensure that operations continue without any disruptions.

The global accessibility of OEM products sustains this peace of mind and assurance for customers as they are able to get the parts much easier and with assurance. This is reiterated by another participant who observed that,

"Most of this OEM's products move around the world, which makes it very easy for customers to get them and buy them". [RPT12].

For companies or projects doing international operations or those located in far sites, such availability is critical because it cuts the time to get replacement parts and helps maintain and repair the operations without breaks.

Finally, it has been observed that OEMs frequently provide extended warranty coverage compared to the typical aftermarket parts. Two participants reiterated about this warranty aspect, for example, wisely stating that:

"In case of the warranties, the OEM will have the warranty" [RPT3]

"Which is an important part of the overall package of support that OEMs provide." [RPT6]

For these consumers who require dependability and constant high performance with only infrequent upkeep maintenance, this additional protection only serves to bolster their case even more in favour of the OEM unit costs.

5.4.4 Harmonising quality, reliability, and cost

What has emerged from the participants is an understanding that quality customers expect what price customers are ready to pay for such quality. It was noted that quality and dependability of goods are imperative for customer satisfaction and even loyalty, and such participants prefer to provide solutions that differentiate such attributes from just price. As one participant stated:

"By always selling solution-driven products, rather than focusing on price, we believe that customers value quality and reliability more than cost." [RPT12]

More so, participants feel that focusing on customer satisfaction from such a perspective is key to trust and loyalty. That certainly does not translate into neglecting the cost of following consumers, which does count in most instances. There's a general consensus that there are two sets of demanding customers, and each will always have its place in business contexts.

Quality awareness clearly does not; however, it ignores the price range of customers. It provides room for high-end and low-end options. Participants observed that in most cases, there are two categories of customers: customers whose main concern is quality and those whose primary concern is prices. As one other respondent broadens it:

"You will always have two different customers in the business. Quality and cost." [RPT11]

This dual perception helps the organisation target its goods in the market. It allows the deployment of strengthening solutions to those customers who need durable and quality products and makes sales for those customers on a low budget.

"We always try to sell quality over cost, but we try to keep a lower-level quality product for the customers that only believe in cost to cover both markets." [RPT11]

In this way, the company can target various customer groups while keeping a strong up-market image of quality and still penetrating the segment of customers who are price-conscious.

In every major campaign communicating its brand's promise, where the primary focus of promotion is domestic and export-oriented quality products, affordable options are also offered to broaden the market base.

"We communicate this value through transparent marketing campaigns that highlight the superior quality and long-term benefits of our OEM products." [RPT12].

The business promotes the benefits of making informed purchasing decisions, as they believe that real value for money should take precedence over the price.

5.4.5 Balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency

The participant's insights clearly show the way firms consider the costs of the products and the cost of internal capabilities in the end, seeking solutions that maximise value in the long run.

When making a decision to buy, firms assess the aftermarket against the OEM products based on both quality and price dimensions. A participant explained that even though the aftermarket product may be available cheaply, quality remains important:

"If the aftermarket product is of the same quality, or close to the same quality, but substantially less will go for the aftermarket, and we have had it, where the quality is definitely better from the OEM, at the high price, we would rather purchase that product." [RPT5].

This explanation shows the need for quality assurance as products under OEM are more acceptable when they are able to perform a specific function better than alternatives at a higher price.

On the organisational level, efficiency systems provide companies with a competitive cost advantage, allowing them to produce quality goods at reasonable prices. As another participant shared,

"Carrying that, I think that size of the 41,000 organisation, there's very, quite well-developed systems in the background to make sure that we remain efficient. And hence, we can pass that 30% efficiency down to the price that we can sell the materials to our customer." [RPT3]

This statement emphasises the role of extensive and reliable systems in increasing organisational effectiveness and lowering operational costs for the benefit of the clientele.

Figure 3 provides a thematic map that highlights the factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products.

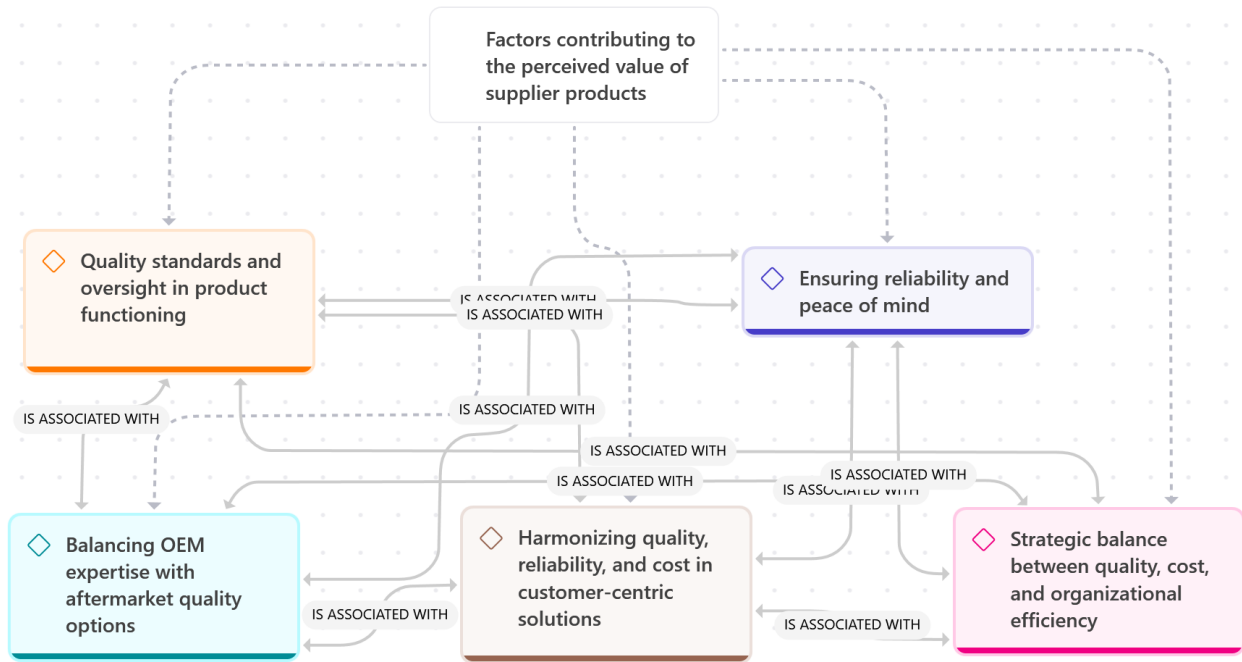


Figure 4: Factors Contributing to the Perceived Value of Supplier Products

The findings also provided insight into the quality standards and oversight in product functioning, balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options, and ensuring reliability and peace of mind. The other highlighted factors were the harmonising quality, reliability, and cost in customer-centric solutions and the strategic balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency.

5.5 Identifying and Responding to Evolving Customer Needs

SRQ3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?

This research question investigated how OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer requirements and expectations. It aimed to establish how these companies integrate customer insights into their strategic planning to ensure their products and services remain relevant and competitive. These findings emphasised the methods employed to identify customer needs and evaluate and meet these needs, as well as the peculiarities of OEMs' service and the necessity to measure performance from both customer and operational

perspectives. The participant's insights revealed certain subthemes, which are qualitatively analysed in Table 7 below:

Table 7: Identity and response to evolving customer needs

Codes	Subthemes	Theme
- Integration of customer feedback and collaborative product improvement - Expanding dealer networks and supplier partnerships	Enhancing product and service offerings through customer feedback and strategic partnerships	Identifying and responding to evolving customer needs
- Guideline policies - Strengthened organisational infrastructure through strategic partnerships	Building a resilient organisation through guideline policies and strategic partnerships	
- Lack of transparency in service policies from OEMs - Lack of process integration with partner organisations	Challenges in transparency and process integration with OEM partners	
- Revenue tracking - Customer feedback and retention metrics	Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics	
- Value-Based performance measurement - Equipment reliability and availability tracking	Performance metrics for operational value and reliability	

5.5.1 Customer feedback and strategic partnerships

For an organisation to survive and gain a competitive edge in the market, it is essential to constantly review and update its range of products and services. One effective approach to achieving this is by leveraging customer feedback and building strategic partnerships. This is best achieved through the integration of customer feedback into product offering processes. As one participant noted,

"When we receive customer feedback from customers, especially condition-based customers, we apply it to our systems, kits and databases to make sure we don't sell a product with a problem. We would also share the knowledge with the manufacturers to improve the products." [RPT11].

With this kind of attitude, it is certain that whenever a customer brings up an issue, it will be dealt with in a quick and effective manner, thus guaranteeing the delivery of quality products while eliminating repeat concerns.

Another necessary consideration is the directed funding towards a second level of dealers as well as the networking for strong suppliers and partners. The need to invest in these aspects was emphasised by a participant:

"Identifying and investing in second-level dealers to ensure on-the-ground and area coverage nearest to the customer. Developing a network of suppliers and partners to provide a more comprehensive range of products and service delivery." [RPT12]

This approach also guarantees that customers have access to the products and services anytime, regardless of their distance, increasing their overall satisfaction.

5.5.2 Guideline Policies and Strategic Partnerships

In today's volatile business environment, it is increasingly important to create an organisation that remains viable. The resilient nature of the organisation can be attributed to two factors: the existence of strong guideline policies and the policy of establishing partnerships. One participant cites the benefits of partnership with financial services in order to become an equity contributor as follows:

"It is not our goal to achieve it, but it sets in process the mechanisms that we have achieved.

So, bringing a financial service into the group as an equity partner in the business has assisted us in not collapsing under our growth trajectory. We have additional management structures in place. We have better financial planning in place. We have robust teams."

[RPT10].

This strategy has strengthened the company's financial base and allowed it to cope with challenges that come with fast growth. Due to the evolution of management structures and the increase of financial planning in the organisation, the organisation has been able to create strong teams ready to meet the challenges.

Additionally, another participant emphasised the role of policies in the operations of an organisation and its compliance as regards law:

"When we start looking at bringing external customers into support us from an internal perspective, there are policies in place to ensure that, obviously, we follow the right guidelines." [RPT7]

In this case, it is possible to say that the policies set the requirements for all actions undertaken to be consistent with the standards of the firm and the regulatory framework and that promotes sound business and good reputation.

5.5.3 Challenges in transparency and process integration

The manner in which the various stakeholders interact with the various OEM partners has a number of challenges, which are best described by issues of transparency and integration of processes and systems. These factors greatly affect operational efficiency and working relations. Participants brought out the issue of the OEM partners' service policies being vague as a major challenge. For example, one of the participants remarked,

"They don't share their policies on service, which is something that I believe that each and every company that is an OEM has to share their policy on service with so that we know right, that when I'm under pressure, these are the guidelines." [RPT9].

This undermining of the system leads to obstacles and underperformance, which goes against the set goals of an organisation. This gap is even a setback for quality customer service delivery.

Additionally, another interviewee remarked on the challenge of integrating processes with OEM associates such that

"I haven't seen anyone integrating their organisation into our own business processes, their organisation into their business processes." [RPT1].

Such non-integration may lead to the creation of silos, where every unit acts in isolation without a common objective or interlinking of processes. Such silos may result in inefficiency, lack of understanding, and slower reaction to changes in the market or to the requirements of customers.

5.5.4 Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics

In seeking to harmonise financial outcomes with customer target areas, organisations must balance revenue-focused objectives with customer satisfaction and retention metrics. Without this dual approach, it can still be perceived that the organisation's welfare to the customers is compromised, thereby ensuring the delivery of a viable customer-oriented business model.

One participant expresses the need to monitor revenue as an essential measure of success:

"I think the top metric is obviously the share of the wallet with a customised no-brainer, yeah. So, we track all the revenue." [RPT8].

Companies are able to measure how much they are dealing with each customer by looking at their shares of the wallets, and through this measurement, they will be able to find areas of how to increase the market share as well as the amount spent by each customer. This measure is useful because it gives an insight into the light and heavy spending clients a company has, as well as the revenue-generating capacity of that company.

In contrast, another participant underscores the importance of customer satisfaction and retention metrics:

"Customer satisfaction scores and customer retention rate. We also track customer feedback to identify areas of improvement." [RPT12].

These measures are crucial for appreciating how well the company meets customer expectations and retains their loyalty. Through analysing customer satisfaction statistics, companies control the quality of their customers, and the level of customer retention indicates the probability of customer return. Moreover, customer opinions are also important because they help recognise possible deficiencies, facilitating the company's ability to improve itself in line with the ever-changing requirements of the customers.

5.5.5 Performance metrics for operational value and reliability

The assessment of operational value and reliability through performance measures is important for any organisation's sustainability of efficiency and effectiveness. This way, by methodically measuring key performance indicators, organisations can be certain that their machinery and processes will continue to provide value and yield more over time.

An example of this concept was brought forward by one participant noting the pertinence of accurate measurements of the reliability and availability of equipment:

"You do measure them over time in terms of equipment, reliability and availability." [RPT1].

This understanding highlights the importance of frequent assessments in order to evaluate how effectively equipment operates and how many are functional at any one moment. Another participant emphasised the financial aspect of performance measurement:

"Our measurement is all based on the return of value. If you look after your machine, you get your money back. So those relationships are built because of that. It's because of the fact of the return." [RPT4].

This viewpoint brings out the importance of correct maintenance and its relation to returns. In order to improve machinery efficiency, companies invest in equipment maintenance, which prolongs the equipment's life span and eventually improves financial performance. Figure 4 provided a thematic map with summarise identifying and responding to evolving customer needs

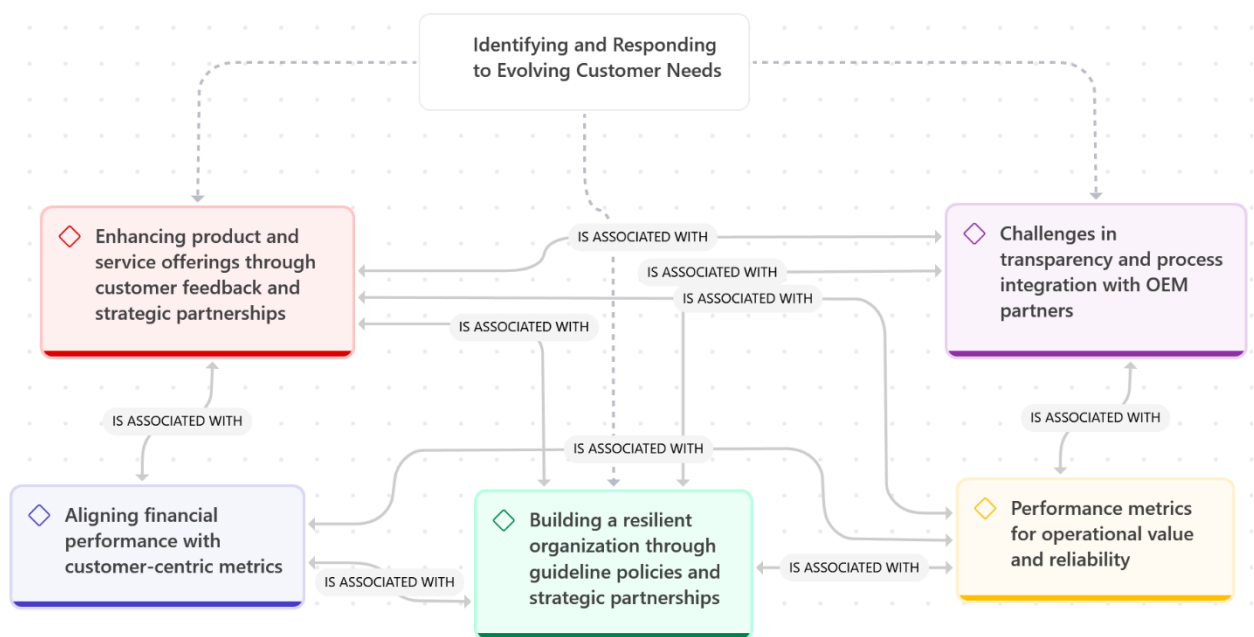


Figure 5: Identifying and Responding to Evolving Customer Needs

The key findings in relation to the research question focus on the evolving customer needs. This overarching finding is associated with the operational and financial performance of the organisation. The alignment to customer needs can be linked to the product performance and OEM partnerships that can build resilient organisations through incorporating customer feedback.

5.6 Conclusion

The research conducted 12 interviews to investigate the three research questions guided by the overarching question on the strategic engagements between OEM and licensed dealerships and local resellers. It tried to understand the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery OEMs to collaborate with independent third-party resellers and how this impacts all parties in a competitive market.

The findings revealed that the host country's competitive landscape plays several roles in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms. These included leveraging customer feedback for adaptive, customer-centric strategies, helping to drive technological evolution in customer-centric industries and strengthening OEM-Dealer relationships through knowledgeable sales and product support. It also assists with navigating component sourcing and quality in response to market dynamics, developing strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics with OEMs and resellers, and balancing short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies. The findings also provided insight into the factors that contribute to OEM customers' perceived value of supplier products in Southern African host countries. These were the quality standards and oversight in product functioning, balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options, and ensuring reliability and peace of mind. The other highlighted factors were the harmonising quality, reliability, and cost in customer-centric solutions and the strategic balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency.

The findings also provided insights into how OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process. These included enhancing product and service offerings through customer feedback and strategic partnerships, building a resilient organisation through guideline policies and strategic partnerships, and dealing with challenges in transparency and process integration with OEM partners.

Additionally, financial performance should be aligned with customer-centric metrics and performance metrics for operational value and reliability. The findings are discussed in chapter 6, with the limitations contextualised in the last chapter (chapter 7).

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the outcomes of the semi-structured interviews that were conducted based on the research questions articulated in Chapter 3. This chapter the results will be discussed in comparison to the literature review in Chapter 2, exploring and understanding the similarities and differences between existing research and the findings. The research was conducted to understand the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery Original Equipment Manufacturers to collaborate with independent third-party resellers, and the impact all parties in a competitive market. The interviewees were selected based on technical knowledge of the manufacture, repair, maintenance and rebuilding of heavy earth-moving equipment, and (b) senior management or executives with experience of, and responsibility for, strategic decision-making in their respective organisations.

6.2 Discussion: Research Question 1

What role does the host country's competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms?

This question sort to understand the understand how the competitive environment influences the strategic choices made by multinational enterprises. This includes the exploration of the conditions under which these firms can authorise an independent third-party. The interviewees were asked about the factors that contribute to their decision-making process. From the responses generated, the themes that emerged included customer centric strategies, technological evolution and quality in response to market dynamics.

6.2.1 Leveraging customer feedback

The first sub-theme emerging from the interviews is the concept of taking customer feedback into consideration for decision-making. This approach of listening to customers can help to formulate strategies that put the customer first and in order to create value. This supports the literature as highlighted in Kolomojets & Dickinger (2023), that customers contribute to the co-creation process by providing feedback and sharing their preferences with suppliers. Therefore, their input helps to create and refine the firm's service offering, ensuring it meets the customer's needs and expectations. This collaborative interaction may improve the overall value and satisfaction the customer receives from the service. Ali & Anwar (2021) argue that customer feedback is necessary for improving products and services to better align with customer expectations which entails that the voice of the customer can be applied in creating customer-centric strategies. Customer feedback provides valuable insights into areas that require improvement and helps identify opportunities for innovation. It also helps firms to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to identify opportunities for collaboration facilitates strategic decision-making (Hall et al., 2022).

According to Coletta et al. (2020), there is alignment between the quality of service provided, relationship building constructs such as trust, commitment and loyalty and the concept of customer value in business activities. In Gupta & Pandey (2022) customer satisfaction may not be very fruitful if the firm does not invest in various ways of reaching out to them, rewarding their reviews and keeping track of customers who may not be vocal of their viewpoint. As mentioned in Abid et al., (2022) different customers have different application patterns and methods, which result in different experiences. Therefore, the feedback provided cannot be applied across all customers in the industry and may be one of the significant factors that customers consider before making a purchase. As mentioned in Baidya et al. (2023) in today's world, customers have more options available in the market. They find it challenging to choose the best option, and experience is important in making decisions about which product to buy,

the specific reasons and the pricing. Firms should be aware of the impact of the customer experience on business performance as it is one of the major strategic issues that can impact various touchpoints.

6.2.2 Technological evolution

The interviewees highlighted the impact of technology in has an impact on the strategic decision-making of the firm and can impact future business. Technology can impact efficiency and productivity of customers in the industry. This supports the literature about the need for technological evolution for the advancement of products and services in the industry. According to Nayak et al. (2023) technology and strategy are inseparable, and each one has an impact on the other in the present and futuristic perspective. Organisations need to have a complete understanding of the technological environment to be able to gain a competitive advantage. Wuttke (2023) stated that manufacturing industries are highly competitive because of their higher technology and learning demands, encouraging companies to develop new products and services to stay ahead of their competitors. This, in turn, should drive value-generating products and profitable growth.

Furthermore, theory indicates that firms need to consider various challenges that may arise when executing their strategies, such as technology and knowledge integration within the existing processes, and the ability to create innovative business models to advance business growth (Radomska et al., 2020). The rapid changes in the business environment require organisations to develop their capabilities to meet the developments in the technology and competitive environments (Nayak et al., 2023).

Technology evolution impacts customer-centric industries by driving the need for continuous innovation to meet changing customer demands. In a fiercely competitive environment where product prices are falling sharply, technological evolution necessitates the creation of differentiated customer value through continuous innovation. This requires understanding and meeting customer needs, as well as coordinating with diverse stakeholders to create a complete user experience (Wang, 2021). Technology adoption and implementation have been found to have a great influence on organisational work processes, enabling organisations to develop a culture of treating technology and associated costs as a long-term investment that can generate returns. Veríssimo et al. (2024) indicates that open innovation enables technological innovation, but also promotes a more collaborative and inclusive approach to addressing market needs. This process may involve a wide range of stakeholders in that can enhance the development of technologies.

Resource based theory proposes that organisations gain a competitive advantage when they combine resources with skills, knowledge and technology. The competitive, regulatory and technological environment are critical factors influencing competitive advantage, and that knowledge, product innovation, culture, strategic agility and technology strategy are inevitable components of a competitive advantage plan (Nayak et al., 2023). Therefore, the fear indicated by the participants of falling behind other players in the industry in adopting new technologies strongly suggests that there is a need for proper planning to ensure that innovation is continuous in order to be competitive within the industry.

6.2.3 Knowledgeable sales and product support

Product support is viewed as services to support the customer after the sale of a high value purchase. Research indicates that the overall after-sales service quality can impact on a manufacturer's market share, especially in highly competitive markets. Therefore, investing in after-sales services such as remanufacturing and component rebuilding, can be a strategic decision for manufacturers determined to stay ahead of the competition (Golara et al., 2021). After-sales incorporates various value-related services and products that occur after the initial sale of the equipment (Warren & Gibson, 2021). A consideration for industries would be improving the overall after-sales service to increase profitability and their competitive advantage. Furthermore, localised and tailored after-sales services in new markets may build brand loyalty and drive long-term success (Ebrahimi et al., 2023). For independent resellers, benefits of collaboration may include access to the OEM and authorised dealer after-sales support (Gupta, 2022). In Golara (2021) it is confirmed that the biggest reason for OEM success is the distribution and product support. The benefit of ensuring that the aftersales service is efficient is ensuring customer loyalty as it is important to have optimal maintenance practices and products have limited downtime that can impact productivity and revenue growth.

To understand the factors that influence customers on their purchase decisions, in a competitive market, interviewees were asked probing questions about the impact that perceived expertise and product knowledge plays in their decision-making process. Interviewees indicated that there is value in engaging with sales personnel that are invested and capable of ensuring that customers obtain the desired information, support, and, ultimately, the decision of which OEM-dealer or reseller to purchase from. Customers are inclined to purchase from firms that can provide them with clear and consistent communication

and relationships built on trust and product knowledge.

This research provides additional insight into the relationship between salespeople's product knowledge, and its influence on the customer's decision-making process. Current studies refer to various indicators of sales performance, but there is limited empirical studies that have focused on the impact of the salesperson's product knowledge and its impact on the customer's decision-making process in business-to-business environments. This research provides additional insights into the influence of knowledgeable salesperson on the decisions of key players in the industry.

6.2.4 Navigating component sourcing and quality

The respondents indicated that the availability of parts and maintaining product quality is critical to success of businesses. The competitive landscape of the market allows for options to customers but there seems to be a clear preference for OEM parts, particularly when there is a level of complexity or high costs involved in the purchase of the parts. This confirms literature in Sharmelly & Klarin (2021) which indicates that the middle-class customers within the emerging markets have unique needs, including quality and durability. However, there is an opportunity to further develop an understanding of the various tiers and customer segments in terms of priorities and preferences when sourcing products in the after sales business.

Research indicates that the overall after-sales and product support service quality can impact on a manufacturer's market share, especially in highly competitive markets (Golara, 2021). This includes the quality of the parts purchased and the quality of the remanufacturing services. The literature in Wu et al. (2024) the assertion made is that the manufacturer considers the customer demands when making decisions about the procurement and assembly process. Fundamentally, customers prefer to buy where there is good availability and quality products without the need to repurchase the same product multiple times. OEMs perceive product support and an efficient distribution system to be at the core of their success and competitive advantage.

The challenge that stands out in the findings is the respondents' perception of not having sufficient alternatives in the market when it comes to purchasing products in the industry. There may be multiple service providers and competition in the market, however, there seems to be a need for quality products which impacts the customer's willingness to pay. As confirmed in Blijlevens et al. (2024), customers appreciate the receiving the best quality of product and service which impacts the willingness to pay which indicates that there is a

perceived product of service value. In the context of distribution in markets, manufactures should consider the competitive landscape for the effective distribution management as the after-sales services have a high impact on the market share of firms. Manufactures should invest in service centres near the operations of customer activities, this indicates the importance of dealers as they operate as parts and service centres. Through this strategy, firms can successfully manage distribution in dynamic markets and leverage the impact of dealer service quality on their market share. (Golar et al., 2021)

6.2.5 Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics

The interviewee feedback indicates that there are opportunities and potentially a competitive advantage for some OEMs to work with third-party independent resellers. This is an interesting insight for the researcher as there seems to be a need to utilise the capabilities of the resellers, particularly their scale, knowledge and competitive pricing in addition to the company's capabilities. While the assumption would be that OEMs have globally recognised brands and footprints in emerging countries. However, there seems to be an opportunity for partnerships and collaboration to assist firms develop their competitive advantage. Zhang et al. (2023) indicated that strategic collaboration between OEMs, licensed dealerships, and independent local resellers may be a complex and multifaceted interaction that has significant impact on the value creation for consumers.

This analysis is further supported by the resource-based perspective which indicates that partnerships form when firms are in a strategically vulnerable position and require access to resources obtained through collaboration. A further emphasis is placed on partnerships as they may create a competitive edge if the resources involved are diverse and not easily transferable. Partnerships can provide access to new markets and customers and an opportunity to leverage resources not available internally (Ozdemir et al., 2023). A joint feedback exchange and partnership investment can be used to motivate and facilitate collaboration between firms (Hall et al., 2022). Inter-firm collaboration enhances value co-creation and facilitates strategic decision-making, which positively impacts performance.

Strategic partnerships may increase the opportunity for alliance survival in a dynamic environment and the ability to work together in discovering challenges and executing solutions (Ryan-Charleton & Galavan, 2024). Partnerships are able to bridge the gap in the market by addressing regional challenges with more agility and flexibility (Zucchella et al., 2024). This collaboration is considered to have more capacity to manage regional challenges while also supplying mutually beneficial results for the strategic partners. The strategic partnership also

reduces the number of potential competitors (White et al., 2022). However, the risk of collaboration is technological resource imitation and even technological overlap between partners (Ryan-Charleton & Galavan, 2024). These challenges may impact smaller businesses as they have little bargaining power during negotiations and the imbalance may cause difficulties in adjusting to complex MNE business models (Zucchella et al., 2024).

6.2.6 Short-term solutions with long-term procurement strategies

The insights indicate that customers use various strategies and tactics to extract the most value from different suppliers. These strategies and decisions for procurement options seem to be informed by their short-term and long-term planning. To reiterate the findings, using aftermarket suppliers for other short-term requirements does not negatively impact long-term business relationships with OEMs. Rather, it provides an opportunity to solve issues in an effective manner without sacrificing overall business goals. For independent resellers, benefits of collaboration may include access to the OEM and authorised dealer after-sales support and quick inventory turnover as planning would be done collectively (Gupta, 2021). To make long-term decisions, global strategy research considers variables that are always changing, such as the availability of resources in different markets and countries as well as institutional, political, and economic circumstances (Larsen et al., 2023). From an OEM's strategic planning perspective, there is a clear distinction between strategic decisions, which are focused on long-term planning and organisational objectives, and global decisions, which consider international markets, cultural differences, and geopolitical factors (Leiblein et al., 2022).

In terms of the firm's long-term strategy OEMs may be squeezed for profit with the emergence of competitive suppliers (Hou et al., 2024). Additionally, the OEM should consider the competitive consequences of sourcing from collaborative competitor as this may strengthen the competitor in the market should they managed to reduce their costs due to an increase in production volumes (Heese et al., 2021). The challenges for the independent reseller's parts sourcing for the remanufacturing process includes the various component types available in the market, the complexity of the supply chain logistics for spare parts, and the difficulty in traceability due to the producers of spare parts often being in distant continents. This can impact the stock control strategies and forecasting for spare parts difficult, and the sourcing of spare parts from different brands and legacy parts may be considered a complex supply chain management process (Claudia et al., 2024).

Sourcing parts for remanufacturing may also include uncertainty about receiving core components. These could be returned by customers in inadequate condition and uncertain

quantities, and the timing of their arrival may also impact not only the supply chain but there may be cost implications (Wu et al., 2024). Furthermore, the complexity and unpredictability of the remanufacturing process makes mass production difficult to implement, leading to challenges managing volumes and higher product costs. Moreover, the decision to hold stock in a local facility also results in challenges when sourcing parts for remanufacturing (Duberg et al., 2020). This indicates that multinational enterprises have complex processes that require long-term planning and turnaround times. The decisions on productivity and sourcing by OEMs and independent resellers have a direct impact on the customer's decision-making process as the focus is on getting a satisfactory service within a prescribed period. Therefore, customers have a clear understanding of their short-term and long-term purchases, independent of the long-term relationships with service providers.

6.3 Discussion: Research Question 2

What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for customers?

The question sought to analyse and identify the factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products for customers. These questions probed to understand how OEMs and independent resellers differentiated themselves in the market and from the customer perspective the objective was to understand how customers compare and perceive quality and service of all the various parties. The perceived product quality, reliability and cost effectiveness impact the buying decisions of customers. The subthemes that emerged through the interviewee responses were focused on offering customers peace of mind and achieving a strategic balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency.

6.3.1 Harmonising quality standards, reliability and cost

The respondents indicated that there is an element of quality control that is required when collaborating with third parties and there may be gaps in the process in terms of ensuring that sufficient audits are executed to ensure that standards are maintained. The implications of poor quality and reliability in products can lead to reputational damage and loss of customer loyalty. This supports the literature in Blijlevens et al. (2024) that customers place high importance on the quality-of-service information, and the way this information is presented may influence how they search and interpret the data. The need for quality standards and improving the internal control systems, allowing for confidence in the final product for the customer. This supports research by Chen et al., (2020) in asserting that the customers'

perceptions of quality may influence their preference for remanufactured goods or new products. The customer's decision making on the preferred equipment solution may be determined by the budget, turnaround time of the process and potentially the quality of the service provided.

As highlighted by the interviewee's feedback, there is an indication of higher quality and reliability expectations from the OEMs. The responses indicate that there is a "strong focus on product functioning whereby any deviation in performance is information dealt with quickly and easily". This may be due to the higher cost of OEM products in comparison to the independent reseller products, therefore the cost increases the performance expectation. In instances whereby firms are not able to conduct audits and ensure quality standards from the independent resellers, the consideration should be as indicated by Zhang et al. (2023) for firms to invest in new technology and product development to meet high standards of quality, durability, reliability, and effectiveness, to meet market expectations. This is supported by the literature indicating that there have been extensive considerations on the outsourcing of production and the impact of decisions for dealers and OEMs concerning the impact on production costs and the impact on profitability and operational risks (Zhang et al., 2023). Thus, to ensure that the quality assurance processes are successfully executed with internal control systems in place to ensure that product reliability and costs are effectively managed.

There is value in putting together a comprehensive strategy for improving and optimizing the supply chain management with the goal of reducing overall costs and improving customer service. Lastly, the integration of an effective workforce management strategy is critical for ensuring quality standards and the firm's long-term success.

6.3.2 Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options

The interviewee feedback indicated that there are various options available in the market with different types of parts that are accessible aftermarket, through third party suppliers. This proves to be an affordable substitute to new products supplied through OEMs. Lv et al. (2023) supports this understanding that customers require affordable but quality solutions as the equipment and component rebuilding is perceived to be an affordable alternative to providing a second life to used products; once rebuilt, they can perform and look brand new, and it is potentially offered with a short-term warranty for the production work completed. The competitive advantage for third-party resellers is their ability to remanufacture multiple competing brands and products with no license agreement and use a high percentage of

OEM-supplied products in completing a rebuilt product (Zhou et al., 2021). Therefore, they are able to provide options, at different tiers of affordability and quality levels.

The customer's perception of product quality is impacted by their ability to observe the product's reliability. If the customers can determine that the product is not reliable, they will buy extended warranties for products with higher failure rates, signaling that they perceive higher value in the warranty for less reliable products (Zhou & Wang, 2021). The perception of aftermarket parts is that they can be used in remanufacturing to replace worn components with new ones, ensuring that the remanufactured products perform like new without the higher cost of using new OEM parts. However, aftermarket parts could lead to the cheaper and poor-quality versions of nonbranded parts, which could impact the quality and reliability of the remanufactured products. Therefore, the preference would be to use genuine parts and have the remanufactured products covered by a certified remanufacturer or approved by the OEM to ensure quality and consistency (Duberg et al., 2023).

However, it is evident in the feedback that often perceive OEM brands as more reliable and trustworthy due to their long-standing presence in the market. This perception may support the customer's willingness to pay higher prices for products from brands that are well established in the market. There is an opportunity to expand on the existing research to understand the nuanced perceptions of aftermarket parts and an understanding of the various product offering such as cheap, medium and expensive. As, indicated by the participants, expensive aftermarket parts may sometimes be of equal quality to OEM parts since some aftermarket manufacturers emphasise performance and high quality.

6.3.3 Ensuring reliability and peace of mind

The interviewee insights indicated that customers always go for a product that is dependable and suitable for use over a long period of time. The warranty that OEMs provide is yet another important factor that comes into consideration in customers' decision-making as it provides them with certainty and coverage of risks. The consideration of the heavy earthmoving machinery industry is that equipment is operated almost every day of the year, which requires a quick turnaround time for parts availability on site and reduced the machinery downtime (Kanazawa et al., 2022). Therefore, as indicated in the interview results, there is extreme demand for equipment in operations, and customers are inclined to always go for a product that is reliable and suitable for use over a long period of time.

The consideration for product reliability and peace of mind is supported by Sun et al. (2020) the overall perception of remanufactured products, however, is lower than that of new ones, both in terms of perceived quality and perceived reliability. Whilst quality and pricing have been deemed as key influences in purchase decisions, customers also value availability, which also highlights the importance of peace of mind. This is particularly important for remanufacturing and repairs as these usually lead to longer downtime due to inspections and testing (Cao et al., 2024). The advantage for independent resellers when it comes to providing quick turnaround time is that tend to be agile and flexible in responding to the external environment and identifying new opportunities due to their smaller size which is a quality that may be well perceived by customers looking to reduce their production downtime (Zucchella et al., 2023).

The concept of peace of mind is supported in the literature covered by Nguyen & Nham (2021) which states that experiential value focuses on the emotions and experiences a product generates for customers. And, supported in Wu et al. (2021) indicating that remanufacturing should lead to a reduction in costs for both producers and consumers while supporting sustainable economic growth, which further highlights the value of peace of mind. However, while reliability and quality of products are well covered in literature, the concept of offering customers peace of mind in the context of remanufactured products can be examined further to provide additional insights.

6.3.4 Quality standards and oversight in product functioning

The quality and dependability of products have emerged as imperative qualities for customer satisfaction and even loyalty, and such participants prefer to provide solutions that differentiate such attributes instead of focusing on the price. This highlights the assertion that customers are willing to pay for quality products despite the price, if there is a perceived value. The responses from the interviewees support the literature in Gupta & Panday (2021) that perceived value of the product may require customer engagement as it will determine the customer's decision making on what they are willing to purchase. The positive experience of the customer may then lead to further engagements and willingness to make further business commitments. Participants observed that in most cases, there are two categories of customers: customers whose main concern is quality and those whose primary concern is prices. Therefore, organisations may need to consider their competitive customer value proposition as this provides strategic insights to understanding customer behaviour and the decision-making process when purchasing products and services (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi,

2021).

Overall, the price and quality dual perception helps the organisation target its products in the market. It allows the deployment of strengthening solutions to those customers who need durable and quality products and makes sales for those customers on a low budget. Therefore, the customer value proposition of a firm may highlight its commitment to delivering value to customers, which serves as an important component of the value creation process. This process influences the allocation of resources and the execution of marketing strategies throughout the organisation (Chaudhary & Kate, 2023).

As indicated in the participant data, the firm can target various customer groups while keeping a strong up-market image of quality and still penetrating the segment of customers who are price-conscious. This supports the theory in Andersson et al. (2020) which focuses on value, as it is created with a value proposition that can justify how the product can improve the customer's situation or solve an existing problem. The value proposition should be the motivation to acquire the product from the firm. In the current market environment, customers place more emphasis on customer experience, whether they are business-to-customer or business-to-business. The customer experience is a dynamic process that occurs before, during and after purchase of a brand. As such, literature indicates that a significant number of customers often switch to competitors despite being satisfied. This requires a granular understanding of the impact of the customer experience and value-added solutions in the decision-making process (Baidya et al., 2023). Organisations may need to consider their competitive customer value proposition as this provides strategic insights to understanding customer behaviour and the decision-making process when purchasing products and services (Rintamaki & Saarijarvi, 2021).

Aligning to the specific industry view, research supports Chen et al. (2020), with the understanding that the customers' perceptions of quality may influence their preference for remanufactured goods or new products. Market awareness from a customer perspective plays an important role in determining preferences, as informed customers are more likely to make choices that align with their values and needs. When customers know the benefits and quality of remanufactured goods, they may be more inclined to choose these options over new products, as the decision may not be solely based on cost.

6.3.5 Balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency

The participant's insights indicate that customers look for solutions that extend value long-term. When customers are making purchase decisions, firms evaluate the aftermarket against the OEM products based on both quality and price factors. The balance between these considerations is supported in Zhang et al. (2020) focusing on the strategies applied in remanufacturing, the outsourced remanufacturing focuses on used products sourced at an OEM fee. On the other hand, authorised remanufacturing grants all rights to third parties, and charges a patent fee. This allows for flexibility in strategy when offering competitive solutions at different price points and offering value through organisational efficiency. Furthermore, as indicated in research, third-party resellers have more flexibility as they are usually able to cover a wide range of industry configurations, with no OEM limitations, while developing their own pricing and quality models (Fang et al. 2020). They are able to balance their operating costs and improve efficiency while offering solutions that provide the quality and affordability required by different customers in the industry.

Huynh (2022) highlights that factors such as productivity, location and cost management effectiveness may have positive impact on improving the performance particularly for small and medium firms. Therefore, efficient utilisation of resources and strategic decision-making for improving performance for emerging firms. According to (Kharub et al., 2022) to improve efficiency, the focus should be on quality and a rapid turnaround and service delivery which may provide a competitive advantage. The strategic focus should be on cost leadership and efficiency in remanufacturing processes to improve organisational efficiency.

6.4 Discussion: Research Question 3

How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?

The purpose of this research question was to understand how OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer requirements and expectations and how they integrate customer insights into their strategic planning to ensure their products and services competitive. The participants were asked about the potential of forming partnerships and collaborations to improve on the evolving customer needs. This was combined with questions that investigated the current impact of the current effectiveness of strategies employed to meet customer needs. The themes that emerged from the interviewee responses highlighted the opportunities and methods that assist to identify customer needs and evaluate if these needs are being met. The last consideration is the necessity to measure performance from both customer and operational perspectives for long term growth.

6.4.1 Customer feedback and strategic partnerships

The interview responses highlighted the importance of leveraging customer feedback and strategic partnerships in for business growth and maintaining a competitive edge in the market. The feedback insights support the literature in Kolomojets & Dickinger (2023) that customers contribute to the co-creation process by providing feedback and sharing their preferences. Their input helps to create and refine the service offered, ensuring it meets the customer's needs and expectations. Customer feedback may be the most important element for strategic decision-making and differentiation in the market. This finding supports Ali & Anwar (2021) that indicates that understanding customer feedback is necessary for improving products and services to better align with customer expectations and provides valuable insights into areas that require improvement. The significance of the interview responses upholds the literature that evaluates the need for firms to build a rapport with their customers and acknowledge the power of their feedback. In addition, firms need to integrate customer suggestions into their development processes (Tran & Vu, 2021).

The interviewees indicated that there is value in developing a network of suppliers and partners as they can assist in providing a variety of solutions and cover a comprehensive range of products and service delivery. This insight supports Kolomojets & Dickinger (2023) which highlights that collaborative interaction may improve the overall value and satisfaction the customer receives from the service. In Hall et al. (2022) collaboration involves resource gathering and allocation. For strategic partnerships, the two-way feedback exchange can be used to motivate and facilitate collaboration between firms. This feedback helps firms to better understand their strengths and weaknesses, and to identify opportunities for collaboration. Inter-firm collaboration enhances value co-creation and facilitates strategic decision-making, which positively impacts performance (Tran & Vu, 2021).

Effective communication and value co-creation with all customers is essential is critical for decision making on the best approaches for determining tailored solutions (Abid et al., 2022). It is significant to note that customer feedback is based on specific usage and may not necessarily provide a view of the complete experience or real value. Therefore, firms should consider and evaluate customer feedback to ensure that negative value for one customer does not determine the value for others. Furthermore, the responses indicate that firms should develop effective two-way communication and partnership with customers to obtain in-depth inputs and develop solutions for customers for solutions that may not be conventional in the industry (Gupta & Panday, 2022).

6.4.2 Building a Resilient Organisation

Agility and adaptability are factors that are critical to the long-term growth of resilient organisations, they need to be able to shift strategies quickly when the market calls for it (Khan, 2020). The interview data indicates that the participants recognised the value of creating strategic partnerships that can strengthen the competitive advantage. This data on reliance supports the understanding in literature that the firm's strategy should consider variables that are always changing, such as the availability of resources in different markets and countries as well as institutional, political, and economic circumstances (Larsen et al., 2023). Firms should maximise on the opportunities that are available in emerging markets and enhance customer satisfaction through offering localised services. In this instance, this would include strategic partnerships with financial service firms to provide the firm with leverage in the market. The localised and tailored such as finance partnership may build brand loyalty and drive long-term success (Ebrahimi et al., 2023) which supports the ability for the firm to withstand volatile changes in the market.

Firms can build resilience through adopting a culture of innovation and creating an environment that is responsive to change. These factors influence flexibility and allow the firm to withstand cycles of instability in the market. The ability to adapt gives the organisation the competitive edge required to adapt to environmental changes, external pressures and customer demands (Anning-Dorson, 2021). Agile operations are able to perceive changes in the market and respond quickly. The success of an agile firm includes the capacity through resources to manage change, adapt manufacturing and repairing lead times and customer service in dynamic markets (Cao et al., 2024).

As addressed in the theory, firms would need make decisions about adapting their sales policies (Duberg et al., 2020) which would include remanufacturing specific sales incentives, extended warranties, or satisfaction guarantees to build consumer trust and encourage purchases. As such, building on the firm's ability to adapt and grow is part of the long-term strategy.

6.4.3 Challenges in transparency and process integration

Based on the participants' perceptions, the firms are faced with challenges around transparency and effective communication with their stakeholders. This may result in process inefficiencies, misunderstanding, lack of trust and the inability to adapt quickly to changes in

the market or to the requirements of customers. These highlighted challenges support Blijlevens et al. (2024) which indicates that customers tend to appreciate the benefits of receiving optimal service quality which includes open communication through transparency, convenience and authenticity. There may be misunderstandings in the process if there is inconsistency in how stakeholder relations are managed and how feedback is integrated into the processes.

According to Chen & Liu (2022) the way information is presented by firms may influence how customers search and interpret the data. Firms depend on collaboration with customers and employees to integrate resources for service-oriented business. It is important to recognise that value creation always takes place through the integration of joint resources (Bischoff, 2023). Therefore, the lack of transparency may motivate customers to search for alternative suppliers in the market, as participants have indicated that they sometimes perceive service policies as being vague and inconsistent.

Organisational transparency can enhance the performance of the business by building trust and credibility among customers and stakeholders. Customers that have access to all the information and understand the organisation's practices, they are likely to develop confidence in the brand and can make informed buying decisions (Chevrollier et al., 2023). Transparency allows firms to be accountable to their customers through consistency and open communication. Employees are also empowered to share ideas and collaborate to find new ideas (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Organisational transparency does not just benefit customers but also contributes to a dynamic market where competition is driven by customer choices, which enhances the firm's performance. Transparency drives open communication and sharing different viewpoints, this may lead to improved decision-making as a result of diverse perspectives (Wang, 2021).

6.4.4 Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics

The interview responses indicate that firms prioritise financial performance when measuring success, however, this was also a moment of reflection for the participants as they perceived it to be a conventional approach. The customer participants, however, were more concerned with the value proposition and mutual benefits rather than financial performance. This supports the literature in Zietsman et al. (2020) that the customer's perception of value can be influenced by social and economic factors; while cost related factors or non-financial aspects can be associated with customer satisfaction. The theory has transformed to understanding

that the performance of an organisation would be measured not only by financial and market results, but this would also include employee retention as indicator of performance (Grimes-Rose et al., 2024). The participant responses additionally support Srivastava et al. (2023) that continued collaboration with customers is increasingly acknowledged as a key factor for the success of a product and gaining a competitive edge. Companies that encourage and effectively manage customer participation gain access to richer information from their customers. This can close any performance gaps that arise and manage the organisation for future growth rather than measuring financial performance indicators retrospectively.

The key performance metrics that determine the firm's profitability can be considered to be sustained competitive advantage, organisational and financial performance. These metrics apply in the context of the resource-based view theory to measure the firm's performance and competitive advantage (Malhotra et al., 2024). However, performance can also be measured through customer satisfaction, loyalty, knowledge sharing and the quality of the customer relationships (Coletta et al., 2020).

Financial performance can be measured based on a firm's ability to create economic value through the willingness of customers to pay for its products or services and the total cost of producing those products or services (Barney et al., 2021). Collaboration with partners can also contribute to the financial performance of business through the ability to streamline processes, increasing resource utilisation, which all leads to cost savings. In terms of business growth, collaborating with external partners or stakeholders can help a firm gain access to new markets, customers, or distribution channels, which can increase revenue growth and lead to an expansion of opportunities (Goswami et al., 2022).

6.4.5 Performance metrics for operational value and reliability

The insights from the respondents focus on the importance of value and reliability which in turn will eventually improve financial performance. The key underlying outcomes from the interviewee feedback is that the maintenance practices and ensuring optimum equipment uptime is the source of growth and decisions are based on what the best solution is to ensure that equipment is functioning at efficient productivity levels. This understanding supports the literature in Golara (2021) which underlines that the firm's strategy to ensure that the product owner gets maximum value from the products purchased as maintenance for high value products is key for optimal uptime and productivity.

Performance is considered in terms of the firm's ability to use its resources to maintain competitive advantages over rivals. The performance of the firm is essential to understanding the effectiveness of a firm's strategies and its ability to achieve its objectives in a dynamic market (Helfat et al., 2023). This encompasses strategic decision-making, and the development of distinctive organisational resources to compete in the market (Malhotra et al., 2024). Overall, the view of performance is used to determine the effectiveness of strategies in creating sustainable competitive advantages, market leadership and reaching long-term profitability (Huynh, 2022).

In Wells & Tan (2024) the description of functional value is that it focuses on achieving the desired characteristics, performance, and capabilities of a product to add value to the customer. Therefore, highlighting that the reliability and availability of the equipment is an important factor in the performance measurement of products. The consideration for firms is to continue assessing their value proposition on a regular basis to ensure it is relevant to evolving customer needs, particularly in emerging markets (Srivastava et al., 2024). The focus for firms should be building robust strategies that can mitigate the risks of changing customer needs and a dynamic business environment as this will be a proactive approach to ensuring consistency in value creation and building customer loyalty. In terms of remanufacturing reliability, the consideration is on the quality and condition of returned components, and end-of-use condition of components. The consideration is also on the extended warranty provided the cost ratios for remanufacturing and related reuse decisions (Mishra et al., 2023).

6.5 Conclusion of findings

The conclusion of the findings is presented in the context of the earthmoving industry, specifically in the Southern African market. Furthermore, the research is conducted from senior management and leadership level with the intent of understanding the decision-making processes for OEMs and independent third-party resellers and impact on all parties in a competitive market. The findings presented in this chapter confirm and add further distinctions to the findings presented in the literature review. The conclusion of the findings is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Conclusion of findings

Research question	Themes	Subthemes	Findings	Results in literature
-------------------	--------	-----------	----------	-----------------------

RQ:1 Influence of Competitive Landscape on Multinational Decision-Making	Influence of competitive landscape on multinational decision-making	Leveraging customer feedback for adaptive, customer-centric strategies	Customer feedback is an important consideration for decision-making and value co-creation in a competitive market.	Confirmed
		Technological evolution in customer-centric industries	Failure to adopt to new technologies strongly suggests that there is a need for proper planning to ensure that innovation is continuous to be competitive within the industry.	Confirmed
		Strengthening OEM-Dealer relationships through knowledgeable sales and product support	Technical knowledge and expertise are important when making strategic choices between dealers and resellers. Additionally, a knowledgeable salesperson has a significant impact on the decisions of key players.	Additional nuanced conceptual findings
		Navigating component sourcing and quality in response to market dynamics	The absence of strong competition is an opportunity for all parties. Customer's perception of quality is determined by multiple factors.	Additional nuanced conceptual findings
		Strategic partnerships and competitive dynamics with OEMs and resellers	Collaboration enhances value co-creation and facilitates strategic decision-making.	Confirmed
		Balancing short-term solutions with long-term procurement	Customers using resellers for short-term requirements does not	Confirmed

		strategies	negatively impact long-term business relationships with OEMs.	
RQ2: Factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products	Factors contributing to the perceived value of supplier products	Quality standards and oversight in product functioning	Customers are concerned about product and service quality standards and overall performance.	Confirmed
		Balancing OEM expertise with aftermarket quality options	Customers may opt for low-grade parts that will enable them to spend less at the initial stage. However, there is a strong focus on quality products.	Confirmed
		Ensuring reliability and peace of mind	Quality and pricing are perceived to be the key influences in purchase decisions, customers also value availability, which also highlights the importance of peace of mind.	Additional nuanced conceptual findings
		Harmonising quality, reliability, and cost in customer-centric solutions	Quality and dependability of goods are imperative for customer satisfaction and even loyalty.	Confirmed
		The strategic balance between quality, cost, and organisational efficiency	The focus should be on quality and a rapid turnaround and service delivery to improve efficiency, which may provide a competitive advantage	Confirmed
RQ3: Identity and	Identifying and responding to	Enhancing product and service offerings	For an organisation to survive and gain a	Confirmed

response to evolving customer needs	evolving customer needs	through customer feedback and strategic partnerships	competitive edge in the market, it is essential to constantly review and update its range of products and services.	
		Building a resilient organisation through guideline policies and strategic partnerships	The survival of an organisation in a competitive market requires strong policies and unconventional partnerships	Confirmed
		Challenges in transparency and process integration with OEM partners	Vague and inadequate policies may cause uncertainty and a lack of accountability which hinders partnership and business growth	Confirmed
		Aligning financial performance with customer-centric metrics	Organisations must balance revenue-focused objectives with customer satisfaction and retention metrics	Confirmed
		Performance metrics for operational value and reliability	Measuring key performance indicators, ensures that organisations are efficient and offer customers value adding products and services	Confirmed

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from Chapter 5 by relating the findings to the theory discovered in the literature review discussed in Chapter 2. The purpose of the research was to understand primary motivations for earthmoving machinery OEMs to collaborate with independent third-party resellers and how this impacts all parties in a competitive market. The

findings of each research question were confirmed by evidence in the literature review of chapter 2, with additional data to the findings relating to the identified themes and subthemes. The main findings of the research are reviewed and presented in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to gain a deeper understanding on the strategic engagements between OEM and licensed dealerships and local resellers. It tried to understand the primary motivations for earthmoving machinery OEMs to collaborate with independent third-party resellers and how this impacts all parties in a competitive market. The research conducted interviews with experienced decision-makers that have strategic, technical and operational experience in the earthmoving industry. This chapter submits the closing findings and commentary of the research through the theoretical conclusions and implications for the OEMs, their dealers and independent third-party resellers. Finally, the research limitations and the recommendations for future research will be presented.

7.2 Principal theoretical conclusions

In Chapter 6 the results of the research were compared to the outcomes in Chapter 5 and the theoretical contributions in the literature review in Chapter 2. The primary findings for each of

the research questions were confirmed or highlighted nuances of difference in relation to the literature, as summarised in Table 8.

7.2.1 Contribution to strategic decision-making

The research acknowledged there is value in engaging with sales personnel that are invested and capable of ensuring that customers obtain the desired information, support, and, ultimately, the decision of which OEM-dealer or reseller to purchase from. This indicates that the customer facing employees have a significant role to play in the growth of the organisation and the success of specific product offerings based on their experience and knowledge. As unpacked in the research outcomes, customers are inclined to purchase from organisations that can provide them with clear and consistent communication and relationships built on trust and product knowledge.

This research provides additional insight into the relationship between salespeople's product knowledge, and its influence on the customer's decision-making process. Current studies refer to various indicators of sales performance, but there is limited empirical studies that have focused on the impact of the salesperson's product knowledge and its impact on the customer's decision-making process in business-to-business environments. This research provides additional insights into the influence of knowledgeable salesperson on the decisions of key players in the industry.

7.2.2 Effectiveness sourcing processes and product quality

The outcome of the research highlights the importance of parts availability and maintaining product quality for the success of businesses. The competitive landscape of the market allows for options to customers but there seems to be a clear preference for OEM parts, particularly when there is a level of complexity or high costs involved in the purchase of the parts. The intriguing outcome of the research is the view that the customers are inclined to limited in terms of having alternatives in the market when it comes to purchasing second-life products in the industry. There may be multiple service providers and competition in the market, however, there seems to be a need for quality products which impacts the customer's willingness to pay. In the context of distribution and product sourcing, manufactures should consider can consider partnerships within competitive landscape for the effective distribution management as the after-sales services have a high impact on the market share of firms. Manufactures should invest in service centres near the operations of customer activities, this indicates the importance of dealers as they operate as parts and service centres. This

becomes a key differentiator for customers who prefer optimal uptime and quick service turnaround.

7.2.3 Reliability and peace of mind

The warranty that OEMs provide is an important factor that comes into consideration in customers' decision-making as it provides them with certainty and coverage of risks. This research outcome is significant knowledge as the initial assumption was that a second-life product does not necessarily require the same standards as a new product due to its previous use. However, it appears that customers are inclined to always go for a product that is reliable and suitable for use over a long period of time, granting them peace of mind and value for money. This seems to be a result of the market perception of remanufactured products being considered lower than that of new ones, with regards to perceived quality and perceived reliability. The value that remanufactured equipment should be viewed as a reduction in costs for both producers and customer while supporting sustainable economic growth, which further highlights the value of peace of mind.

7.3 Recommendations for the OEM and Independent Reseller management

This section presents some recommendations for business leaders with decision making capabilities in the remanufacturing industry. These factors are aimed at maximising profitability and maintain their competitive advantage in the market.

7.3.1 Product quality and warranty

Business management should consider providing sufficient warranty for remanufactured products to prove to customers that the products hold a high-quality standard and ensure customer peace of mind. Ensuring that remanufactured products are covered by a certified remanufacturer or approved by the OEM, can lead to an increase in sales volumes and an improvement on quality perceptions for remanufactured products. To re-emphasise the literature in Blijlevens et al. (2024), customers appreciate the receiving the best quality of product and service which impacts the willingness to pay which indicates that there is a perceived product of service value. Therefore, to convince customers on the product value, the quality standards should be a priority consideration, enhancing the value creation from a customer perspective.

7.3.2 Customer-centric solutions

The understanding is that customers have concerns about remanufactured products which include performance, durability, and quality. Also reflecting on the finding that these factors are important as influence customers' decisions when choosing between new and remanufactured products. Therefore, organisations should ensure that they are balancing profitability and offering remanufactured products that are equivalent to new products. They should also explore targeting new customer segments with remanufactured products, especially in markets where new products have not gained significant traction in the market due to their premium pricing. All organisations should conduct market research to understand customer perception of remanufactured products and any gaps to address in value creation.

7.3.3 Strategic partnerships

Long-term collaboration and partnerships with industry and unconventional firms can bring financial benefits to all parties. The partnerships can leverage on the skills and knowledge of all parties which will increase the quality and service delivery in remanufacturing. This can also incorporate collaboration with customers to enhance the communication and transparency channels from all perspectives. Firms are encouraged to acknowledge the power of their feedback. In addition, firms need to integrate customer suggestions into their development processes (Tran & Vu, 2021). This would allow the firms to continuously evaluate and adapt to changing customer perceptions of products and services.

7.3.4 Decision-making in a dynamic market

The OEM should be prepared to adapt its decision-making process based on changing customer demands and market conditions. It is critical to continuously monitor and adapt to changes in customer perceptions, production costs, and the challenge of competing with independent resellers that may become new entrants in the market, to maintain a competitive advantage in the remanufacturing industry. Decision-making quality and speed are critical to organisational performance. To match the pace of change in the external environment, decisions need to be made swiftly, and changes adopted into the organisation and its culture. It is essential for organisations to have a rapid decision-making capability in the management structures, especially in dynamic environments.

7.5 Limitations for the research

The results from this study cannot be generalised as the study was qualitative, and exploratory with a limited sample in the earthmoving machinery industry. The finding of the study reflects the researcher's interpretation of the viewpoints of the industry experts that participated in the

interviews. The findings do not represent the views of the organisations nor the views of the earthmoving industry within Southern Africa. Furthermore, the views of the business managers and technical managers are based on their experiences and perspectives and therefore, do not represent the views of the industry outside of this study.

The research was conducted with only two independent reseller experts, instead of the intended sample size of 4 participants per sub-sample. The low response rate was due to the availability of senior executives and the apprehension from respondents on potentially sharing sensitive information. The sample consisted of 12 industry experts with customers and independent resellers as a separate sub-sample sets as the researcher intended to draw on their perspectives as there are subtle differences in the business models from the OEM and dealer operations. However, the viewpoints were relatively similar than expected. Further research with a wider sample size and balanced representation to match the OEM and dealer participants may enhance the research conclusions. Berndt (2020) indicates that the sampling method should be precise to reduce the probability of errors and bias and to ensure good representation. The researcher was constantly aware of interviewer and response bias and attempted to continuously clarify the purpose of the study as an effort to manage the risk while conducting interviews (Saunders & Lewis, 2019).

7.6 Suggestions for future research

The research conclusions have revealed that there are some aspects of collaboration with customers that can be acknowledged as key factors for the success of products and gaining a competitive edge. Whilst quality and pricing have been determined in literature as key influences in purchase decisions, customers also value availability, which also highlights the importance of peace of mind. These factors can be further explored to understand the strategic approaches for long-term growth in a dynamic market.

- i. Future research could focus on the development of dual procurement strategies that address both short-term needs and long-term objectives in the remanufacturing industry. Studies could investigate the impact of these strategies on business growth and stability, as well as the role of resellers in providing quick solutions without compromising long-term relationships with OEMs.
- ii. There is an opportunity to delve into the dynamics of strategic partnerships between OEMs and resellers, examining how these collaborations influence value co-creation

and strategic decision-making. Investigating the competitive dynamics and potential benefits of partnerships, alliances and cooperative agreements can provide valuable insights for businesses.

- iii. Research could explore the development of flexible sourcing strategies that adapt to competitive landscape changes. Studies could focus on the factors that influence quality perception among customers and how strong supplier relationships can be leveraged to maintain a competitive advantage. focus on the development of dual-focus procurement strategies that address both short-term needs and long-term objectives.
- iv. Studies could investigate the impact of these strategies on business growth and stability, as well as the role of resellers in providing quick solutions without compromising long-term relationships with OEMs and how this connects with offering customers peace of mind in products and solutions offered. There may be influencing factors of consumers' willingness to pay varies for different characteristics of remanufactured products.
- v. The quality and dependability of products have emerged as imperative qualities for customer satisfaction and even loyalty. Thus, the impact of the entry of refurbished products into the market on new products and remanufactured products, and the decision-making process of consumers when facing new products, remanufactured products, and refurbished products should be investigated in consideration of the quality standards.

7.7 Conclusion

The study explored the motivations for earthmoving machinery OEMs to collaborate with independent third-party resellers and how this impacts all parties in a competitive market. The outcomes of the study provide an understanding of how the competitive landscape plays several roles in influencing the decision-making process of OEM multinational firms. The data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with individual respondents that have technical knowledge of the manufacture, repair, maintenance and rebuilding of heavy earth-moving equipment, and senior management or executives with experience of, and responsibility for, strategic decision-making in their respective organisations.

The research explored the complexities for remanufacturing organisations in navigating

competitive landscapes, highlighting the importance of leveraging customer feedback and adapting strategies in a complex industry, adopting continuous technological innovation, strengthening OEM-dealer relationships and strategic partnerships. It underscores the significance of focusing on adaptive, customer-centric strategies, and flexible sourcing as a strategy to ensure firms offer customers peace of mind when operating valuable assets. Organisations can create significant value for customers and maintain a competitive edge in dynamic market. The research provides insights to the significance of product and service quality with remanufactured products and the value of partnerships and collaborations for value co-creation and to offer customers peace of mind considering the option of purchasing second-life earthmoving equipment.

References

- Abid, M. F., Shamim, A., Khan, Z., & Khan, I. (2022). Value creation or value destruction: Conceptualizing the experiential nature of value-in-use. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 21(3), 583–601. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2033>
- African Union. (2024). Southern African Development Community. <https://au.int/en/recs/sadc>
- Ahammad, M. F., Basu, S., Munjal, S., Clegg, J. & Shoham, O. B. (2021). Strategic agility, v

environmental uncertainties and international performance: The perspective of Indian firms. *Journal of World Business* 56. www.elsevier.com/locate/jwb

Ajide, F. M. & Dada, J. T. (2023). Globalization and shadow economy: a panel analysis for Africa. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/2631-3561.htm>

Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., & Brannen, J. (2008). *The Sage Handbook of Social Research Methods*. Sage Publications Inc.

Ali, B. J., & Anwar, G. (2021). Porter's Generic Competitive Strategies and its influence on the Competitive Advantage. *International Journal of Advanced Engineering Management and Science*, 7(6), 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.22161/ijaems.76.5>

Almalki, M., & Al-Shammari, M. (2023). An investigation into knowledge management adoption and sustainable competitive advantage in an emerging market economy. *Global Knowledge, Memory and Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/GKMC-02-2023-0039>

Andersson, S., Awuah, G. B., Aagerup, U., & Wictor, I. (2020). How do mature born globals create customer value to achieve international growth? *International Marketing Review*, 37(2), 185–211. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-11-2018-0340>

Anning-Dorson, T. (2021). Organizational culture and leadership as antecedents to organizational flexibility: implications for SME competitiveness. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 13(5), 1309–1325. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-08-2020-0288>

Babbie, E. R. (2007). *The practice of social research* (11th ed.). Thomson Wadsworth

Baidya, M., Maity, B., & Goswami, S. (2023). A value-driven touchpoints strategy for managing the customer experience process. *Business Process Management Journal*, 29(7), 2147–2166. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BPMJ-02-2023-0093>

Banga, K. & Balchin, N. (2022). Linking Southern Africa to South Africa's exports: New opportunities for regional value chains. *World Econ.* 2023;46:346–362. wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/twec

Bayrak, A. E., McComb, C., Cagan, J., & Kotovsky, K. (2021). A strategic decision-making architecture toward hybrid teams for dynamic competitive problems. *Decision Support Systems*, 144. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2020.113490>

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus*, 2:8-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001>.

Benito, G.R.G., Cuervo-Cazurra, A., Mudambi, R., Pedersen, T., & Tallman, S. (2022). The future of global strategy. *Global Strategy Journal*.12:421–450. wileyonlinelibrary.com/journal/gsj

Berndt, A.E. (2020). Sampling methods. *Journal of Human Lactation*, Vol. 36(2) 224–226.

<https://journals-sagepub-com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0890334420906850>

Berssaneti, F. T., Berger, S., Saut, A. M., Vanalle, R. M., & Santana, J. C. C. (2019) Value generation of remanufactured products: multi-case study of third-party companies. Sustainability. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11030584>

Bhattacharjee, A. (2012). Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practices. 2nd Edition. University of South Florida

Bischoff, P. (2023). Customer value-in-use monitoring in business markets: An investigation into its determinants and consequences. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 112, 160–174. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2023.05.013>

Blijlevens, J., Chuah, S. H., Neelim, A., Prasch, J. E., & Skali, A. (2024). Not all about the money: Service quality information improves consumer decision-making. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 228. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2024.106769>

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual Res Psychol.* 3(2):77-101

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful Qualitative Research: A practical guide for beginners*. SAGE

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods* (4th Edition). Oxford University Press

Bu, J., Cuervo-Cazurra, A., Luo, Y., & Wang, S. L. (2024). Mitigating soft and hard infrastructure deficiencies in emerging markets. *Journal of World Business*, 59(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2024.101540>

Chai, Q., Xiao, Z., & Zhou, G. (2020). Competitive strategies for original equipment manufacturers considering carbon cap and trade. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 78. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.trd.2019.11.022>

Chaudhary, P., & Kate, N. (2023). The coalescence effect: Understanding the impact of customer value proposition, perceived benefits and climate change sensitivities on electric vehicle adoption in India. *Business Strategy and Development*, 6(4), 843–858. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bsd.2023.100000>

Chen, J., & Liu, L. (2022). Effectuation, SME service innovation, and business customers' value perception. *Service Industries Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02642069.2022.2143494>

Chevroliier, N., Argyrou, A., Ainiwaer, N., & Nijhof, A. (2023). On the encroachment of sustainable value propositions: Business model innovation for impact. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 382. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2022.135341>

Christian, I. O., Anning-Dorson, T., & Tackie, N. N. (2021). Customer loyalty and value anticipation: does perceived competition matter? *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 12(2), 321–335. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-09-2020-0443>

Coletta, L., Vainieri, M., Noto, G., & Murante, A. M. (2020). Assessing inter-organizational performance through customer value: a literature review. In *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (Vol. 36, Issue 13, pp. 1–13). Emerald Group Holdings Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-07-2020-0353>

Collingridge, D.S. & Gantt, E.E. (2019). The Quality of Qualitative Research. *American Journal of Medical Quality*, Vol. 34(5) 439–445. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1062860619873187>

Corporate Finance Institute. (2024). Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM). <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/valuation/original-equipment-manufacturer-oem/>

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Cuervo-Cazurra, A. & Pananond, P. (2023). The rise of emerging market lead firms in global value chains. *Journal of Business Research* 154. www.elsevier.com/locate/jbusres

De Villiers, C., Muhammad, B. F., & Molinari, M. (2022). Qualitative research interviews using online video technology – challenges and opportunities. *Meditari Accountancy Research*, 30(6), 1764-1782. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MEDAR-03-2021-1252>

Dixit, S., Singh, S., Dhir, S., & Dhir, S. (2021). Antecedents of strategic thinking and its impact on competitive advantage. *Journal of Indian Business Research*, 13(4), 437–458. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIBR-08-2020-0262>

Duberg, J. V., Kurilova-Palisaitiene, J., & Sundin, E. (2023). Areas investigated when initiating OEM remanufacturing – a case of robotic lawn mowers. *Procedia CIRP*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procir.2023.02.101>

Ebrahimi, A., Bakhshizadeh, P., & Varasteh, R. (2023). A predictive analytics approach to improve the dealers-manufacturer relationship in the after-sales service network; case study in the automotive industry. *International Journal of Management Science and Engineering Management*, 18(3), 225–235. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17509653.2022.2116733>

Fang, C., You, Z., Yang, Y., Chen, D., & Mukhopadhyay, S. (2020). Is third-party remanufacturing necessarily harmful to the original equipment manufacturer?. *Annals of Operations Research*. 291, 317–338. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10479-019-03445-2>

Ghasempour Ganji, S. F., & Kazemi, A. (2024). Improving international brand performance: the implications of marketing capabilities, brand orientation and customer value cocreation. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-03-2023-4399>

Golara, S., Dooley, K. J., & Mousavi, N. (2021). Are Dealers Still Relevant? How Dealer Service Quality Impacts Manufacturer Success. *Production and Operations Management*,

30(10), 3560–3578. <https://doi.org/10.1111/poms.13450>

Goswami, M., Chan, F. T. S., Ramkumar, M., Daultani, Y., Pratap, S., & Chhabra, A. (2023). A joint modeling and exploratory framework for intra-firm collaboration within construction and mining equipment industry. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 123(2), 451-491. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-06-2022-0372>

Grimes-Rose, M., Zboja, J. J., & Laird, M. D. (2024). An empirical examination of customer value proposition implementation. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 119, 15–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2024.04.002>

Guhl, D., Paetz, F., Wagner, U., & Wedel, M. (2024). Predicting and optimizing marketing performance in dynamic markets. In *OR Spectrum* (Vol. 46, Issue 1, pp. 1–27). Springer Science and Business Media Deutschland GmbH. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00291-024-00755-1>

Gupta, A., & Pandey, S. (2022). Should we engage variety seeking customers? *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, 16(6), 885–903. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JABS-12-2020-0483>

Gupta, S. (2022). Managing brand preferences of resellers. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 103, 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.01.019>

Haile, Z. T. (2023). Power Analysis and Exploratory Research. *Journal of Human Lactation*, 39(4) 579–583

Hall, L., Kristina, K., Qi, J. (Miracle), Richey, R. G., & Patil, R. K. (2022). Collaboration, feedback, and performance: Supply chain insights from service-dominant logic. *Journal of Business Research*, 146, 385–397. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.03.055>

Hathaway, R. S. (1995). Assumptions Underlying Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Implications for Institutional Research. *Research in Higher Education*, 36(5): 535-562.

Hennink, M. Hutter, I. & Bailey, A. (2011). *Qualitative Research Methods*. SAGE Publications

Hennink, M., & Kaiser, B. N. (2022). Sample Sizes for Saturation in Qualitative Research: A Systematic Review of Empirical Tests. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114523>

Hiller, J. (2016). Epistemological foundations of objectivist and interpretivist research. <https://ecommons.udayton.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=books>

Hillmann, J., & Guenther, E. (2020). Organizational resilience: a valuable construct for management research? *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 23(1), 7–44. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12239>

Hou, P., Liu, Z., Xie, L., & Zhang, S. (2024). To Transfer or Not? Analysis of the Original Equipment Manufacturer's Strategic Outsourcing Strategy in the Presence of the Supplier's

Innovation Effort. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 71, 7341–7352. <https://doi.org/10.1109/TEM.2023.3277016>

Huynh, T. N. (2022). Determinants of the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in emerging markets. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 71(8), 3160–3178. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJPPM-08-2020-0440>

Jensen, J. P., Prendeville, S. M., Bocken, N. M. P., & Peck, D. (2019). Creating sustainable value through remanufacturing: Three industry cases. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 218, 304e314. www.elsevier.com/locate/jclepro

Jin, M., Li, G., & Reimann, M. (2022). Team of rivals: How should original equipment manufacturers cooperate with independent remanufacturers via authorisation? *European Journal of Operational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejor.2021.04.014>

Ke, C., & Yan, B. (2022). Trade-in value effects of used products in remanufacturing with considering consumer purchase behavior. *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 73(3), 608–633. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01605682.2020.1848362>

Khan, H. (2020). Is marketing agility important for emerging market firms in advanced markets? *International Business Review*, 29(5). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101733>

Kharub, M., Mor, R. S., & Rana, S. (2022). Mediating role of manufacturing strategy in the competitive strategy and firm performance: evidence from SMEs. *Benchmarking*, 29(10), 3275–3301. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-05-2021-0257>

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*. 42(8): 846–854. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>

Kirkizoglu, Z & Karaer, Ö. (2022). After-sales service and warranty decisions of a durable goods manufacturer. www.elsevier.com/locate/omega

Kolomoyets, Y., & Dickinger, A. (2023). Understanding value perceptions and propositions: A machine learning approach. *Journal of Business Research*, 154, 113355. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2022.113355>

Kurdhi, N. A., Dabadghao, S. S., & Fransoo, J. C. (2023). Should I endorse a third party? Authorization strategies for brand manufacturers in a refurbishing market. *Flexible Services and Manufacturing Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10696-023-09519-5>

Kurilova-Palisaitiene, J., Matschewsky, J., & Sundin, E. (2024). Four Levels of Remanufacturing Maturity as a Circular Manufacturing Indicator: A Theoretical Framework and Practical Assessment Tool. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 211. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resconrec.2024.107899>

Larsen, M.M., Birkinshaw, J., Zhou, Y.M., & Benito, G.R.G. (2023). Complexity and multinationals. *Global Strategy Journal*. 13:535–551. DOI: 10.1002/gsj.1493

Lauzi, F., Westphal, J., Rangarajan, D., Schaefer, T., Parra-Merono, M. C., & De-Juan-Vigaray, M. D. (2023). Understanding sales enablement in complex B2B companies: Uncovering similarities and differences in a cross-functional and multi-level case study. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 108, 47–64. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2022.11.008>

Leiblein, M.J., Reuer, J.J., Larsen, M.M., & Pedersen, T. (2022). When are global decisions strategic? *Global Strategy Journal*. DOI: 10.1002/gsj.1451

Liao, R., He, Y., Zhang, J., Zheng, X., Zhang, A., & Zhang, W. (2023). Reliability proactive control approach based on product key reliability characteristics in manufacturing process. *Reliability Engineering and System Safety*, 237. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ress.2023.109374>

Li, H., Hilletofth, P., Eriksson, D., & Tate, W. (2024). Understanding the manufacturing reshoring decision-making content through the lens of the Eclectic Paradigm: a systematic literature review. *European Business Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb-10-2023-0300>

Li, W., Jin, M., & Galbreth, M. R. (2024). Should original equipment manufacturers authorize third-party remanufacturers? *European Journal of Operational Research* 314 1013–1028. www.elsevier.com/locate/eor

Liu, Y., Zhao, X., & Wang, T. (2023). Value-Based Selling Capability: Antecedents and Implications for B2B Sales Performance. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, 30(4), 395–418. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1051712X.2023.2272985>

Lv, S., Guo, M., Cheng, C., & Huang, D. (2023). Remanufacturing authorization strategies under consumer brand loyalty. *Journal of Cleaner Production* 388. www.elsevier.com/locate/jclepro

Malhotra, G., Dandotiya, G., Shaiwalini, S., Khan, A., & Homechaudhuri, S. (2024). Benchmarking for organisational competitiveness: a resource-based view perspective. *Benchmarking*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-09-2023-0668>

Marcos, A. M. B. de F., & Coelho, A. F. de M. (2022). Service quality, customer satisfaction and customer value: holistic determinants of loyalty and word-of-mouth in services. *TQM Journal*, 34(5), 957–978. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-10-2020-0236>

May, T. (2001). *Social Research: Issues, Methods & Process* (3rd Ed). McGraw-Hill.

McIntosh, M. J. & Morse, J. M. (2015). Situating and Constructing Diversity in Semi-Structured Interviews. *Global Qualitative Nursing Research*. Volume: 2. <https://journals-sagepub-com.uplib.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/2333393615597674>

Merriam S. B. (2014). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons

Modungwa, M., Rinke, M., Agigi, A., & Mocke, K. (2021). The role of strategic supplier relationships in enhancing supply chain innovation: A qualitative study in the South African automotive manufacturing industry. Department of Business Management, University of Pretoria, South Africa

Monette D. R, Sullivan T. J & Dejong C.R. (2011). *Applied Social Research. A Tool for the Human Services* (8th Ed). Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning

Nayak, B., Bhattacharyya, S. S., & Krishnamoorthy, B. (2023). Integrating the dialectic perspectives of resource-based view and industrial organization theory for competitive advantage – a review and research agenda. In *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (Vol. 38, Issue 3, pp. 656–679). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-06-2021-0306>

Nguyen, T. H. G., & Nham, P. T. (2021). Exploring The Role of Store Environment in Creating Customer's Perception, Emotion, Perceived Experiential Value and Behavioral Intentions. *Quality - Access to Success*, 22(185), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.47750/QAS/22.185.16>

Oladimeji, M. S., & Itohowo, U. (2019). The effect of diversification strategy on organizational performance. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 11(4), 120–131. <https://doi.org/10.7441/joc.2019.04.08>

Ozdemir, S., Carlos Fernandez de Arroyabe, J., Sena, V., & Gupta, S. (2023). Stakeholder diversity and collaborative innovation: Integrating the resource-based view with stakeholder theory. *Journal of Business Research*, 164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2023.113955>

Pesce, D., Franzè, C., & Paolucci, E. (2024). Meeting the closed-loop challenge: The “Who-What-How” strategic choices for a successful remanufacturing approach. *Business Strategy and the Environment*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3770>

Radomska, J., Wołczek, P., & Szpulak, A. (2021). Injecting courage into strategy: the perspective of competitive advantage. *European Business Review*, 33(3), 505–534. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-12-2019-0306>

Rebelo, C. G. S., Pereira, M. T., Silva, J. F. G., Ferreira, L. P., Sá, J. C., & Mota, A. M. (2021). After sales service: Key settings for improving profitability and customer satisfaction. *Procedia Manufacturing*, 55(C), 463–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.promfg.2021.10.063>

Rintamäki, T., & Saarijärvi, H. (2021). An integrative framework for managing customer value propositions. *Journal of Business Research*, 134, 754–764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.05.030>

Rodriguez, R., Høgevold, N. M., Otero-Neira, C., & Svensson, G. (2023). The direct effect of B2B sellers' skills on relative and absolute sales performance: a dual measurement approach. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 36(1), 64–85. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-03-2022-0083>

Ross, P. T., & Zaidi, N. L. B. (2020). Limited by our limitations. *Perspectives on Medical Education*, 8(4), 261–264. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40037-019-00530-x>

Russell, J. D., & Nasr, N. Z. (2023). Value-retained vs. impacts avoided: the differentiated contributions of remanufacturing, refurbishment, repair, and reuse within a circular economy. *Journal of Remanufacturing*, 13(1), 25–51. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13243-022-00119-4>

Ryan-Charleton, T., & Galavan, R. J. (2024). Multimarket contact between partners and strategic alliance survival. *Strategic Management Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3607>

Sandelowski, M. (2010). What's in a name? Qualitative description revisited. *Res Nurse Health*. 33(1):77–84.

Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2023). *Research methods for business students* (9th ed.). Pearson.

Schaumann, J. M., & Tarnovskaya, V. (2023). Market shaping MNCs in emerging markets - stakeholder engagement and the role of embeddedness. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 114, 64–79. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2023.06.015>

Sebele-Mpofu, F. Y. (2021). The Sampling Conundrum in Qualitative Research: Can Saturation Help Alleviate the Controversy and Alleged Subjectivity in Sampling? *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, 9(5), 11. <https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v9i5.5294>

Sharmelly, R., & Klarin, A. (2021). Customer Value Creation for the Emerging Market Middle Class: Perspectives from Case Studies in India. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 14(10). <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm14100455>

Shi, Y., Huang, L., Chen, M., Cai, Y., & Chu, L. K. (2024). Reselling or marketplace channel? A manufacturer's strategic decisions for differentiated brands considering channel's service level. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.elerap.2023.101353>

Srivastava, S., Iyer, P., Davari, A., Williams, W. A., & Parke, P. L. (2024). How much customer collaboration is too much? Implications for user entrepreneurship and product performance. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 39(5), 919–932. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-04-2022-0188>

Sultana, S., Akter, S., & Kyriazis, E. (2022). How data-driven innovation capability is shaping the future of market agility and competitive performance? *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 174, 121260. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121260>

Sun, X., Zhou, Y., Li, Y., Govindan, K., & Han, X. (2020) Differentiation competition between new and remanufactured products considering third-party remanufacturing, *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, 71:1, 161-180, DOI: 10.1080/01605682.2018.1512843

Swedberg, R. (2020). Exploratory research. In C. Elman, J. Mahoney, & J. Gerring (Eds.), *The*

production of knowledge: Enhancing progress in social science (pp. 17–41). *Cambridge University Press*. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108762519.002>

Tran, T. B. H., & Vu, A. D. (2021). From customer value co-creation behaviour to customer perceived value. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 37(9–10), 993–1026. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2021.1908398>

Tsuchiya, H., Fu, Y. M., & Huang, S. C. T. (2022). Customer value, purchase intentions and willingness to pay: the moderating effects of cultural/economic distance. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 34(2), 268–286. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-12-2019-0743>

Utami, H. & Alamanos, E. (2023). Resource-Based Theory: A review. In S. Papagiannidis (Ed), *Theory Hub Book*. <https://open.ncl.ac.uk> / ISBN: 9781739604400

Warren, A., & Gibson, C. (2021). The Commodity and Its Aftermarkets: Products as Unfinished Business. *Economic Geography*, 97(4), 338–365. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00130095.2021.1939007>

Weigel, C., & Hiebl, M. R. W. (2023). Accountants and small businesses: toward a resource-based view. In *Journal of Accounting and Organizational Change* (Vol. 19, Issue 5, pp. 642–666). Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JAOC-03-2022-0044>

Wells, J., & Tan, C. S. L. (2024). Examining the influence of functional value, social value and emotional value on purchase intention for tires in Japan. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*, 18(3), 593–608. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JABS-01-2023-0007>

Wu, Y., & Li, Y. (2022). Competition or Authorization—Manufacturers' Choice of Remanufacturing Strategies. *Sustainability*, 14, 12632. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912632>

Wu, J., & Vahlne, J. E. (2020). Dynamic capabilities of emerging market multinational enterprises and the Uppsala model. *Asian Business & Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41291-020-00111-5>

Wu, X., & Zhou, Y. (2016). Does the Entry of Third-Party Remanufacturers Always Hurt the Original Manufacturers? *Decision Sciences Institute*. Volume 47. Issue 4. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/deci.12194>

Zairbani, A., & Jaya Prakash, S. K. (2023). Competitive strategy and organizational performance: a systematic literature review. In *Benchmarking*. Emerald Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-04-2023-0225>

Zhang, Y., Chen, W., & Mi, Y. (2020). Third-party remanufacturing mode selection for competitive closed-loop supply chain based on evolutionary game theory. *Journal of Cleaner Production*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2020.121305>

Zhang, F., Chen, H., Xiong, Y., Yan, W., & Liu, M. (2021). Managing collecting or remarketing channels: different choice for realisation in remanufacturing outsourcing. *International Journal*

of Production Research.

59(19),5944–5959. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207543.2020.1797205>

Zhang, L. H., Li, W. J., Zhang, C., & Wang, S. (2023). Outsourcing strategy of an original equipment manufacturer in a sustainable supply chain: Whether and how should a contract manufacturer encroach? *Transportation Research. Part E, Logistics and Transportation Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tre.2023.103132>

Zheng, Y., Wang, Q., & Park, C. H. (2023). Friend or foe? The impact of refurbished products in markets with network effects and standards competition. *Journal of Operations Management*, 70(2), 224–242. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joom.1279>

Zhou, Q., Meng, C., & Yuen, K. F. (2021). Remanufacturing authorization strategy for competition among OEM, authorized remanufacturer, and unauthorized remanufacturer. *International Journal of Production Economics*. www.elsevier.com/locate/ijpe

Zhou, Q., Meng, C., Sheu, J. B., & Yuen, K. F. (2023). Remanufacturing mode and strategic decision: A game-theoretic approach. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 260, 108841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2023.108841>

Zhou, Q., & Wang, J. (2022). Product reliability and extended warranty in supply chains. *Naval Research Logistics*, 69(8), 1063–1079. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nav.22038>

Zietsman, M. L., Mostert, P., & Svensson, G. (2020). A multidimensional approach to the outcomes of perceived value in business relationships. *European Business Review*, 32(4), 709–729. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-10-2019-0258>

Zucchella, A., Sanguineti, F., & Contino, F. (2023). Collaborations between MNEs and entrepreneurial ventures. A study on Open Innovability in the energy sector. *International Business Review*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2023.102228>

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Schedule

Theme (T)	Research Questions (RQ)	Interview Schedule Questions (ISQ)
-----------	-------------------------	------------------------------------

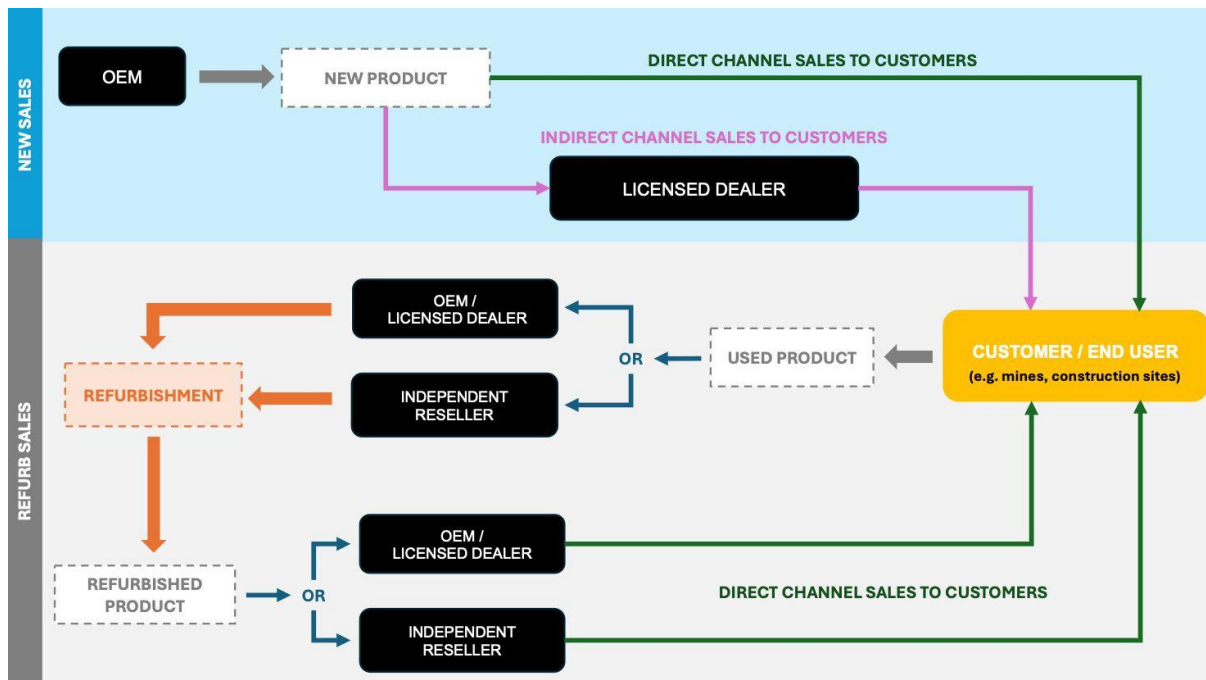
T: Customer Value	RQ 1: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for customers?	ISQ 1: How do identify and respond to evolving customers and preferences in your strategic planning process? ISQ 2: What are the key drivers of customer value in your firm?
T: Decision-making approaches	RQ 2: What role does the competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of multinational firms	ISQ 1: What factors influence the decision-making process of the firm deciding between competing or collaborating? ISQ 2: How does the firm assess and manage the risks and uncertainties associated with the decision-making process? ISQ 3: Do different stakeholder interests' impact the decision-making process for competition or collaboration in your firm? And to what extent?
T: Sustainable growth strategy and long-term performance	RQ 3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?	ISQ 1: What are the key factors that drive strategic thinking and planning for your firm? ISQ 2: How does the firm assess and prioritize strategic opportunities and risks? ISQ 3: What strategies do you employ to differentiate yourself from competitors and create a sustainable competitive advantage? ISQ 4: What are the long-term effects of competition versus collaboration on the overall profitability and sustainability in your business?

Appendix B: Consistency Matrix

Research Questions	Literature Review	Data Collection	Type of data	Tool Analysis
--------------------	-------------------	-----------------	--------------	---------------

RQ 1: What factors contribute to the perceived value of supplier products for customers?	Wu & Li (2022) Zhou et al., (2021)	Respondents in semi-structured Interviews	Qualitative data	Analyse and report repeated patterns, formulate conclusions.
RQ 2: What role does the competitive landscape play in influencing the decision-making process of multinational firms	Zhou et al. (2020) Fang et al. (2020)	Respondents in semi-structured Interviews	Qualitative data	Analyse and report repeated patterns, formulate conclusions.
RQ 3: How do OEM companies identify and respond to evolving customer needs and preferences in their strategic planning process?	Shaik & Dhir (2022) Jin et al. (2022) Li et al. (2024).	Respondents in semi-structured Interviews	Qualitative data	Analyse and report repeated patterns, formulate conclusions.

Appendix C: Relationship between OEM, Authorised Dealer and Third-Party Reseller



Appendix D: List of codes

1. OEM-Dealer relationship	2. Local Manufacturing and Custom Production Processes	3. Management Influence and Strategic Direction	4. Lack of Transparency in Service Policies from OEMs	5. Improvement and opportunity for growth
6. Reputation	7. Quality standards gaps	8. Customer-Centric Approach and Feedback Integration	9. Variable impact	10. Customer feedback
11. Cost and lead time	12. Efficiency and Cost Savings	13. Easy to finance	14. Alternative supplier choice	15. Reliability, Durability, Warranty, and Global Availability of OEM Products
16. OEM Expertise and Product Quality	17. Warranty-Influenced OEM Selection	18. Durability	19. Variable warranty service	20. Emphasising quality and reliability in solution-driven products
21. Reliability-Driven OEM Preference	22. Component Sourcing and Quality	23. Technological advancement is a differentiator	24. Insufficient Parts Availability and Impact on Customer Retention	25. Expanding Dealer Networks and Supplier Partnerships
26. Warranty-Influenced OEM Selection	27. Knowledgeable Sales and Product Support	28. Differences in OEM Approaches Based on Pricing and Premium Status	29. Customer Loyalty and Parts Availability Impact on Service Choices	30. Customer satisfaction and retention metrics
31. OEM backup support	32. Short-Term vs. Long-Term Solutions and Aftermarket Relationships	33. Transitioning to Digital Approaches and Diagnostic Tools	34. Price a determinant	35. Trend Analysis and Customer Insight

36. Durability	37. Cost-Effectiveness of Resellers vs. OEMs	38. Technological Development and Growth Focus in Southern Africa	39. Service delivery	40. Collaboration
41. Cashflow	42. Aftermarket Quality Differentiation	43. Incorporating Customer Feedback into Business Model	44. Quality and service	45. Trend analysis
46. Enhanced Service Delivery through Organisational Structuring	47. Market Responsiveness and Adaptation	48. Policy Implementation	49. Price and turnaround time	50. Innovation and flexibility
51. Lack of Process Integration with Partner Organisations	52. Value-Based Performance Measurement	53. Guideline policies	54. Job security	55. 3-pillar growth strategy
56. Equipment Reliability and Availability Tracking	57. Return on investment	58. Growth through Strategic Partnerships	59. Intense Scrutiny vs. OEM Oversight in Product Functioning	60. Ensuring High Standards Through Operational Control and Independence
61. Impact of Organisational Culture on Market Responsiveness	62. Availability and Pricing	63. Maintaining OEM Standards	64. Strengthened Organisational Infrastructure through Strategic Partnerships	65. Research and quality control
66. Emerging Influence and Market Acceptance of Chinese OEMs	67. Warranty	68. Warranty	69. Product Evaluation and Improvement	70. Reliance on Resellers and Strategic Collaborations
71. Research and design efforts	72. Distinction in Sourcing Major and Non-Major Components	73. Customer Feedback and Adaptive Strategy	74. Informal market intelligence	75. Cost Discrepancies Between OEM and Aftermarket Products

76. Collaborative Partnerships to Address Market Needs	77. Balanced Procurement Strategy and Relationship Management	78. Revenue tracking	79. Primary manufacturer and customer insights	80. Market Dynamics and Service Dependence
81. Shifting buying practices	82. Quality vs. cost trade-off in product selection	83. Activity tracking	84. Significant player	85. Rapid Integration of Customer Feedback into Product Development
86. Market Opportunity for Value Brands	87. Warranty-Influenced OEM Selection	88. Customer loyalty tracking	89. Balancing Collaboration and Competition with OEMs	90. Integration of Customer Feedback and Collaborative Product Improvement
91. Challenging Assumptions About Product Quality Based on Origin	92. Collaborative Issue Resolution	93. Informal research	94. Balancing Quality and Cost to Cater to Different Customer Segments	95. Conflict Between Stakeholder Satisfaction and Business Localisation Goals
96. Focus on Intermediate Production Processes and Productivity Management	97. Direct Procurement and Strong Relationships with OEMs	98. Leveraging Technology to Enhance Business Operations and Customer Support	99. Customer communication	100. Strict Policy on Component Rebuilds Favours OEM Parts
101. Asset Connectivity and Remote Monitoring Initiatives				

Appendix E: Ethical Clearance

**Gordon Institute
of Business Science**
University of Pretoria

**Ethical Clearance
Approved**

Dear Sivuyisiwe Potelwa,

Please be advised that your application for Ethical Clearance has been approved.

You are therefore allowed to continue collecting your data.

We wish you everything of the best for the rest of the project.

[Ethical Clearance Form](#)

Kind Regards

This email has been sent from an unmonitored email account. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the GIBS Research Admin team.

Appendix F: Letter of informed consent

Dear Madam/Sir

My name is Sivuyisiwe Potelwa. I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science and completing my research in partial fulfilment of a MPhil degree with a specialisation in International Business. I would sincerely appreciate your time and willingness to participate in this study.

My research project title is 'An exploration of the strategic collaboration between Earthmoving Machinery OEMs, licensed dealerships, and independent local resellers in a dynamic market'. Our interview is expected to last **45 – 60 minutes** and will help us understand '**the value proposition and the relationships between OEM firms, their dealers, and independent local third-party resellers**'. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time without penalty. By signing this letter, you are indicating that you have given permission for:

- The interview to be recorded;
- The recording to be transcribed, in need, by a third-party transcriber, who will be subject to a standard non-disclosure agreement;
- Verbatim quotations from the interview may be used in the report, provided they are not identified with your name or that of your organisation;
- The data to be used as part of a report that will be publicly available once the examination process has been completed; and
- All data to be reported and stored without identifiers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my supervisor or me. Our contact details are provided below.

Signature of participant: _____

Date: _____

Signature of researcher: _____

Date: _____

Researcher:

Sivuyisiwe Potelwa

Email: 26254868@mygibs.co.za

Contact number: 078 095 3809

Supervisor

Colin Rowley

Email: colinrowley@vodamail.co.za