The Role of Social Sustainability in Supplier Selection

by

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ABSTRACT

Focusing attention on sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) is becoming a necessity for firms and their wider supply chains. Social sustainability aspects specifically have been overlooked in many initiatives while economic feasibility and environmental impact have taken priority. Incorporating social sustainability factors into supplier selection decisions and achieving effective socially responsible purchasing (SRP) have accelerated in importance as a result of the potential risk to organisations’ reputation. Confusion around social sustainability as a concept and what behaviours should be demonstrated have been a cause of its slow adoption and are gaining debate.

The thesis develops an understanding of this important feature of sustainability through the framework that buyers use to establish a socially sustainable supply chain. This empirical work using organisational case studies investigates the role of supplier selection in the purchasing process. The results show that the social aspect of sustainability is embryonic in terms of development with buyers using both transactional and relational factors to achieve socially responsible purchasing. The framework developed in this thesis indicates that through the use of clear sustainability objectives, the buyer must be explicit about their expectations to the supplier, gather relevant information to make an informed decision and analyse the risk to operations and reputation that the supplier poses. Trust, transparency, willingness to engage through communication, collaboration, cooperation and commitment and development of knowledge transfer through education should all be demonstrated by the supplier for a positive selection decision.

This goes beyond traditional agency perspectives of the exchange to endorse suppliers as ‘stewards’ in the relationship. The research contributes to theory by providing a framework which moves social dimensions of sustainability to a definable domain that impacts on supply chain sustainability, delivering mutually beneficial outcomes for both buyers and suppliers. The research is timely in reflecting the role purchasing has on implementing a socially sustainable supply chain.
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis and the work to which it refers are the results of my own efforts. Any ideas, data, images or text resulting from the work of others (whether published or unpublished) are fully identified as such within the work and attributed to their originator in the text, bibliography or in footnotes. This thesis has not been submitted in whole or in part for any other academic degree or professional qualification. I agree that the University has the right to submit my work to the plagiarism detection service TurnitinUK for originality checks. Whether or not drafts have been so-assessed, the University reserves the right to require an electronic version of the final document (as submitted) for assessment as above.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. ii
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY ........................................................................................... iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .............................................................................................................. iv
LIST OF TABLES ...................................................................................................................... ix
LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................... xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................... xiii
ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................................................... xiv

## CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................................................... 1
1.1 Subject of thesis .................................................................................................................. 1
1.2 Research objectives .......................................................................................................... 5
1.3 Context and rationale for research ................................................................................... 6
1.4 Methodology ....................................................................................................................... 8
1.5 Limitations of scope and key assumptions ....................................................................... 9
1.6 Definitions ........................................................................................................................ 10
1.7 Thesis structure ................................................................................................................. 12

## CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW 1: Social Sustainability ................................................................. 14
2.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 14
2.2 Sustainability ..................................................................................................................... 15
2.2.1 The triple bottom line (TBL) ....................................................................................... 17
2.3 Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) ............................................................... 23
2.3.1 Green supply chain management (GSCM) ................................................................. 30
2.3.2 Socially sustainable supply chain management ......................................................... 32
2.4 Summary .......................................................................................................................... 45

## CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW 2: Supplier Selection ........................................................................ 47
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS Case 1: BevAware .................................................. 131
5.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 131
5.2 The case context ............................................................... 131
5.3 Social sustainability objectives .......................................... 131
5.4 Process of supplier selection .............................................. 132
5.5 Coding analysis and inter-rater reliability ............................ 133
5.6 Development of categories and themes ............................... 137
5.7 Testing of socially SSCM definition .................................... 144
5.8 Proposition development .................................................. 144
5.9 Validity and reliability of research ...................................... 147
5.10 Summary and adaptation for future cases .......................... 148

CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS Case 2: JustProduce ................................................ 149
6.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 149
6.2 The case context ............................................................... 149
6.3 Social sustainability objectives .......................................... 150
6.4 Process of supplier selection .............................................. 150
6.5 Coding analysis and inter-rater reliability ............................ 152
6.6 Development of categories and themes ............................... 153
6.7 Proposition development .................................................. 160
6.8 Validity and reliability of research ...................................... 163
6.9 Summary and adaptation for future cases .......................... 163

CHAPTER 7
FINDINGS Case 3: ApparelTrade .............................................. 165
7.1 Introduction ........................................................................ 165
7.2 The case context ............................................................... 165
7.3 Social sustainability objectives .......................................... 165
7.4 Process of supplier selection .............................................. 166
7.5 Coding analysis ............................................................... 167
CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSIONS, RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK ................................................................. 236

10.1 Thesis summary ............................................................................................................................................................................. 236
10.2 Theoretical contributions ................................................................................................................................................................... 238
10.3 Methodological contributions ........................................................................................................................................................ 243
10.4 Managerial implications .................................................................................................................................................................... 245
10.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research .......................................................................................................................... 247

REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 250

APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................................................................................... 268
Appendix A: Document sample ............................................................................................................................................................... 268
Appendix B: Interview participants (case and role) ............................................................................................................................ 269
Appendix C: Interview access email ..................................................................................................................................................... 270
Appendix D: Interview schedule ............................................................................................................................................................... 271
Appendix E: Coding sheet (first order codes) .................................................................................................................................... 274
Appendix F: Coding sheet (second order code definitions) .................................................................................................................. 275
Appendix G: Ethics form ........................................................................................................................................................................... 276

Word count 77,355
LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION
Table 1.1: Definitions of key terms ................................................................. 11

CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW 1: Social Sustainability
Table 2.1: Enablers and barriers to SSCM.......................................................... 28
Table 2.2: Sustainability frameworks ................................................................... 37
Table 2.3: The ten principles of the UN Global Compact ...................................... 41
Table 2.4: Review of practitioner framework criteria for supply chain social sustainability .... 44

CHAPTER 3  LITERATURE REVIEW 2: Supplier Selection
Table 3.1: The changing ranking of vendor selection criteria .................................. 53
Table 3.2: Review of 3PSP criteria for supply chain social sustainability ............... 69
Table 3.3: Review of all criteria for supply chain social sustainability (practitioner frameworks and 3PSP) ................................................................. 71

CHAPTER 4  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Table 4.1: Critical realism components ................................................................ 84
Table 4.2: Process of building theory from case study research ............................. 97
Table 4.3: Case study sample ............................................................................. 105
Table 4.4: 6 criteria for sampling strategies ....................................................... 108
Table 4.5: Number of documents and interviews ............................................... 111
Table 4.6: Checklist to ensure the quality and usefulness of analysing case studies in operations management research ..................................................... 118
Table 4.7: Data analysis components.................................................................... 120

CHAPTER 5  FINDINGS Case 1: BevAware
Table 5.1: Coding definitions derived from the data ........................................... 136
Table 5.2: Kappa coefficient statistics for inter-rater reliability (BevAware) ........... 137
Table 5.3: BevAware’s SRP supplier selection criteria ....................................... 145
CHAPTER 6   FINDINGS Case 2:  *JustProduce*
Table 6.1: Kappa coefficient statistics for inter-rater reliability (*JustProduce*).................153
Table 6.2: Repositioning of constructs (*JustProduce*)..........................................................154
Table 6.3: *JustProduce*’s SRP supplier selection criteria......................................................161

CHAPTER 7   FINDINGS Case 3: *ApparelTrade*
Table 7.1: Repositioning of constructs (*ApparelTrade*)......................................................168
Table 7.2: *ApparelTrade*’s SRP supplier selection criteria ....................................................176

CHAPTER 8   FINDINGS Cases 4 & 5: *InfoOrder & SociSense*
Table 8.1: Construct linkages .....................................................................................................188

CHAPTER 9   CROSS CASE DISCUSSION
Table 9.1: Research questions and proposition relationships ..................................................203
Table 9.2: Case contexts and sample data ..................................................................................204
Table 9.3: Coding similarities across all cases ..........................................................................207
Table 9.4: Critical realism application to validated model .........................................................208
Table 9.5: Consolidation of criteria for supply chain social sustainability (practioner frameworks, 3PSP and purchaser case studies) .................................................................213

APPENDICES
Table A: Documents coded.........................................................................................................268
Table B: Interview participants....................................................................................................269
Table E: Coding sheet................................................................................................................274
Table F: Second order coding definitions..................................................................................275
LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION
Figure 1.1: Process of supplier selection ................................................................. 7
Figure 1.2: Topics of thesis ......................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER 2  LITERATURE REVIEW 1: Social Sustainability
Figure 2.1: The triple bottom line .............................................................................. 18
Figure 2.2: SSCM theoretical framework .................................................................. 25
Figure 2.3: GRI basic framework ............................................................................. 39
Figure 2.4 UN Indicators of sustainable development .............................................. 40
Figure 2.5: Breakdown of the sub-criteria of the main social sustainability criterion .... 43

CHAPTER 3  LITERATURE REVIEW 2: Supplier Selection
Figure 3.1: Positioning of decision methods in supplier selection ......................... 49
Figure 3.2: The process of SRP ................................................................................. 62

CHAPTER 4  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Figure 4.1: The abductive research process ............................................................... 90
Figure 4.2: Abductive approach to primary data collection .................................... 106
Figure 4.3: Data analysis components .................................................................... 119
Figure 4.4: A streamlined code to theory model for qualitative inquiry ............... 123
Figure 4.5: CAQDAS Approach (simultaneous activities) ................................... 127

CHAPTER 5  FINDINGS Case 1: BevAware
Figure 5.1: BevAware’s supplier selection process ................................................. 133

CHAPTER 6  FINDINGS Case 2: JustProduce
Figure 6.1: JustProduce’s supplier selection process .............................................. 151

CHAPTER 7  FINDINGS Case 3: ApparelTrade
Figure 7.1 ApparelTrade’s supplier selection process ............................................ 167
Figure 7.2: High level critical realism conceptual model of transactional and relational factors affecting socially responsible purchasing ................................................................. 179

Figure 7.3: Detailed critical realism conceptual model of transactional and relational factors affecting socially responsible purchasing ................................................................. 180

CHAPTER 8 FINDINGS Cases 4 & 5: InfoOrder & SociSense

Figure 8.1: Coding development across organisational cases ............................................ 185

Figure 8.2: Facilitators of SRP and the role of the 3PSP ......................................................... 196

CHAPTER 9 CROSS CASE DISCUSSION

Figure 9.1: Strategy as the underlying mechanism for SRP .................................................... 209

Figure 9.2: The streamlined process of qualitative inquiry ................................................. 210

Figure 9.3: Revised consolidation of criteria for SRP .......................................................... 216

Figure 9.4: Position and role of 3PSP in buyer-supplier exchange ...................................... 219

Figure 9.5: Facilitators of SRP .......................................................................................... 223

Figure 9.6: Linking transactional and relational SRP facilitators with knowledge transfer .. 227

Figure 9.7: Schematic representation of propositions .......................................................... 230

Figure 9.8: Transition from agency to stewardship theory .................................................... 233
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>Third party service provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer aided qualitative data analysis software</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate social responsibility</td>
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<td>GRI</td>
<td>Global Reporting Initiative</td>
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<td>GSCM</td>
<td>Green supply chain management</td>
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<td>ISO</td>
<td>International Organisation for Standardisation</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCD</td>
<td>Quality, cost and delivery</td>
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<td>RQ</td>
<td>Research question</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAQ</td>
<td>Self-assessment questionnaire</td>
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<td>SCM</td>
<td>Supply chain management</td>
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<td>SEDEX</td>
<td>Supplier Ethical Data Exchange</td>
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<td>Sustainable supply chain management</td>
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<tr>
<td>TBL</td>
<td>Triple bottom line</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCE</td>
<td>Transaction cost economics</td>
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<td>TQM</td>
<td>Total quality management</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Subject of thesis
Sustainability objectives are growing in importance for organisations and the purchasing function is central to achieving these aims (Carter and Jennings, 2000, 2004; Carter, 2005; Krause et al., 2009; Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). Buyer-supplier relationships are consequently pivotal in improving sustainability performance (Leppelt et al., 2013). Actions of supply chain partners can have a significant effect on purchasing firms so organisations now need to be more responsible for the actions of their suppliers (Hartmann and Moeller, 2014; Touboulic et al., 2014) due to stakeholder pressures and longevity of business survival. For example, a Panorama exposé on Apple’s suppliers received much attention from stakeholders in December 2014, having been plagued for many years previously about the working conditions of the employees in their supply chain. Child labour and worker conditions of suppliers of Primark, BHS and Walmart have been reported in the media having negative effects on the exposed brand (Zorzini et al., 2015).

As well as a purchaser’s own actions, their suppliers can directly impact, both positively and negatively, the reputation and performance of a buyer’s supply chain. The potential consequences of supplier actions highlights the importance for businesses to clarify and deliver their sustainability objectives (Carter and Easton, 2011). These pressures have emphasised the need for firms to develop sustainable supply chain management (SSCM) approaches to minimise brand and financial damage (Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008; Lim and Phillips, 2008). Incorporating sustainability objectives into supplier selection decisions provides the opportunity for organisations to minimise risk in the supply chain, which has increased due to the inter-global nature of the networks (Finch, 2004).

SSCM is a rapidly developing area for both the academic and practitioner communities as they strive to understand and manage the potential issues that can arise from the supply base (Seuring and Gold, 2013). Research into the subject has historically been focused on the economic and environmental dimensions providing limited information or insights into the social aspects (Roberts, 2003; Brent and Labuschagne, 2007; Zhu et al., 2010; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Daugherty, 2011; Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012; Ashby et al., 2012; Miemzyck
et al., 2012; Genovese et al., 2013). In their 2012 systematic supply chain sustainability literature review, Ashby et al. (2012) found less than 18% of papers documented the social aspects compared to the environmental dimension. For example, scholars such as Adizes and Weston (1973), Alexander and Buchholz (1978), Davis (1973) and Keim (1978) did not consider social issues when conducting early environmental management research. In the past, other corporate social responsibility (CSR) researchers have argued that environmental issues are a subset of social issues (Graves and Waddock, 1994; Turban and Greening, 1997; Agle et al., 1999). The ambiguity in definition of social sustainability has led to a dearth of research in the area (Klassen and Vereecke, 2012). The subsequently reviewed literature does not find agreement on one universal definition and this thesis uses a self-penned definition of socially sustainable supply chain management as the “preservation and development of internal and external human and community structures and processes throughout the supply chain”. See Table 1.1 for relevant definitions.

The lack of clarity in the literature is reflected in the practice of organisations. For example, in the literature, social sustainability as a concept has emerged after economic and environmental have, and the same pattern is observed in practice. In the past, by considering green supply chain management (GSCM) practices and conforming to CSR standards, managers believe they have been covering all aspects of social responsibility and sustainability. In reality, social sustainability may not actually have been considered. Research has found that the challenges facing managers tasked with delivering a sustainable supply chain stem from the confusion caused by the interplay and misalignment between corporate sustainability and CSR policies (Storey et al., 2006). Hence, definitions and clarity of the concept are required to achieve more directly applicable and relevant results.

The development of standards to support the formation of a socially sustainable supply chain is at a nascent stage. Currently there are a multitude of guidelines that exist for firms to interpret the social SSCM dimension; these include the Global Reporting Initiative, United Nations Compact and International Organisation for Standardisation guidelines. These documents are a useful starting point however they do not provide specific enough measures to support businesses in establishing their socially sustainable supply chains. This has an effect on measuring social sustainability in the supply chain which cannot be achieved if the measures are not yet defined for benchmarking against.
This imbalance of research, on the premise that all three triple bottom line (TBL) dimensions of economic, environmental and social are of equal standing (Carter and Easton, 2011), is further exacerbated when the initial stages of forming the supply chain are considered. Academic and business literature on the mechanisms for establishing socially sustainable supply chains in terms of purchasing and supplier selection is very limited, yet the activities involved are the starting point for developing a platform for interdependent organisations to co-operate (Carter and Jennings, 2002). Organisations now need to consider the sustainability of their operations and decisions across the entire length of the supply chain, extending the scope of purchasing beyond the traditional remit of quality, cost and delivery (QCD) to include social considerations. Therefore the development of mechanisms to support its delivery and deployment of criteria to assess the abilities and capabilities of suppliers to conform to the needs of the buyer is required (Gimenez and Sierra, 2013). Measures such as food miles, carbon footprint and air quality have been established as metrics to support buyers in establishing a green supply chain. Equivalent measures in socially sustainable supply chains are more problematic due to the issue with measuring some aspects in relation to societal welfare such as ‘impact on community’.

Various stakeholders have an interest in improving social sustainability standards in supply chains, due to a likely benefit from the agenda. Socially SSCM is an important global issue and its improvement intends to make a significant difference to people’s lives; those both directly and indirectly related to supply chain. Suppliers benefit by providing the opportunity to demonstrate good behaviour, thus increasing their chance of selection by purchasers. As these criterions increasingly become a decision factor, suppliers must develop their operations in areas where they need to improve. As well as winning new business, the transparency of the suppliers’ behaviour leads to more sustainable business relationships between parties in the supply chain (Leppelt et al., 2013). Additionally, the local community of the supplier will benefit from better social sustainability behaviour as a result of the type of criteria being measured against. For example, ensuring a fair living wage and no forced labour means that the people in the local communities have the opportunity to improve their lives in line with global stakeholder expectations thus providing a better quality of life for this group of people. Purchasers benefit from an enhanced sustainability reputation as they will be able to demonstrate that their supply chain meets consumer expectations. Additionally, focal firms are reducing their reputational risk and supply chain disruption risk by mitigating against a social sustainability disaster occurring (Zsidisin and Ellram, 2003).
Finally, as explained by Zorzini et al. (2015), by protecting reputational risk, retailers are mitigating against risk to share prices of their business associated with negative press coverage.

Consumers, policy makers, shareholders and academics all benefit from social sustainability supplier selection research also. Some consumers demand more transparency associated with their purchases and will benefit from more freedom of information relating to the supply of these goods. Policy makers will benefit from the new insight into the supplier compliance behaviours in an area that is plagued by issues of measuring. For example, the GRI framework and UN Global Compact have not supplied metrics of their social sustainability criteria (which is broad in nature). Similarly, academics have struggled to catch up with the environmental metrics provided in the publishing pipeline; in 2014, Sarkis and Dhavale first suggested it could be attempted for social sustainability). Therefore, the research will contribute to an academic area which is underdeveloped in research on metrics and best practice (Zorzini et al., 2015). However, social sustainability initiatives will need some form of investment impacting economic bottom line figures scrutinised by stakeholders with a financial interest in the business. Nonetheless, arguably an approach to shared value whereby societal aspects are important because if you look after society, it will be better for your business is worth the outlay for higher returns (Porter and Kramer, 2011).

Engaging new vendors in the supply chain puts supplier selection decisions at the centre of purchasing activity. Organisations now need to be more responsible for the behaviour and actions of their suppliers due to stakeholder and potential investor pressures as well as the durability of business survival (Neef, 2004; Miemzyck et al., 2012). Therefore the implementation of corporate sustainability relies strongly on the purchasing function, for example through the use of socially responsible purchasing or sustainable sourcing (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). Consequently, examining the systemic issues at the interface of sustainability, purchasing and supply is an area that research needs to be addressed (Linton et al., 2007). Examining social sustainability through a supply chain lens provides the opportunity to investigate operational aspects of the phenomenon being practiced by businesses that are at the forefront of this initiative. By studying the social sustainability dimensions of purchasing, the mechanisms that are being developed are examined, therefore contributing to the emerging literature on SSCM. The aim of the thesis is to advance an understanding of the components that buyers are utilising to bridge the social
SSCM knowledge gap through the development of a conceptual framework that captures the approaches being deployed by the firms as they select and interact with suppliers. The model reflects the dualistic nature of supplier selection which is based on both relational (engagement factors) and transactional dimensions (either measurable criteria or observable processes).

As a result of these dual inputs to the decision, traditional organisational theory relating to the agency problem in buyer-supplier interactions is challenged at the end of the thesis. Agency theory focuses on the transactional side of the exchange by encouraging the use of mechanisms for aligning the interests of principals and agents (Eisenhardt, 1989b). Agency theory is a well-utilised theory applied to supply chain management (SCM) (Zsidisin and Ellram, 2003), but with the emergence of complex relational considerations it will be deemed outdated in current SSCM. The research provides evidence that the exchange between buyers and suppliers goes beyond traditional agency perspectives to endorse suppliers as ‘stewards’ in the relationship.

1.2 Research objectives

As social sustainability purchasing literature on the factors and criteria that businesses utilise in selecting suppliers to deliver the needs of stakeholders is in an early development stage, working research questions are developed at the end of the literature review. Through investigating the pre-relationship activities the study looks at supplier selection factors from a buyer perspective that leads to a decision to select or not select a vendor to help deliver the sustainability strategy of the organisation. Factors and selection criteria are different entities; a supplier must meet criteria to be selected but the factors refer to the influencing components of a positive selection and go beyond a criteria checklist. Through the socially responsible purchasing (SRP) approach the interaction between the buyer and supplier that leads to the selection (or not) within the context of social SSCM is examined.

The objectives of the study address the research problem of scarce attempts to develop SRP models for use in strategic and operational practice. Social sustainability criteria dimensions for use in a model are underdeveloped and haphazard in terms of their use for practitioners. Buyers need to know how their traditional purchasing models may need to change for their procurement to be classified as SRP; a key output of the study. In achieving this,
transactional and relational theoretical frameworks are challenged and alternative organisational theories of buyer-supplier relationships are adopted.

The research questions emerge from the thematic literature review and the gap in the academic research to date. As the research is intended to be exploratory in nature, the questions are broad, with the aim of developing propositions to demonstrate theory generation. However, an overall research objective for the thesis is as follows

**Explore the role of social sustainability in supplier selection**

This includes the selection process and resulting decision. Aspects to be investigated include:

1. how corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers
2. how social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser and
3. how SRP is effectively achieved through supplier selection.

Variations of these areas of interest (working questions) are used to develop propositions at the conclusion of the thesis. The focus is on pre-transactional activities from the buyer’s perspective (see Figure 1.1).

**1.3 Context and rationale for research**

The contribution of the research includes the insight into the novel perspective of the purchaser at the pre-supply chain stage. If that initial supplier selection, which includes pre-selection activities, is not carried out effectively then the supply chain managers who govern the day to day operations cannot perform their role effectively either. The supply chain managers are impacted by the purchasers’ previous decisions. Purchasing personnel activate the framework for the supply chain team to work with and so the importance of getting this first step precise is paramount (see pre-selection in Figure 1.1). The purchasing aspect is a primary focus because if that is inadequate then the rest of the process will consequently be challenging.
The topic was chosen by merging a personal area of expertise with an emerging subject in business and academic literature. Having previously worked as an operations and supply chain consultant at a professional services firm, supply chains were an appealing focus. However it was the challenge for firms of incorporating sustainability into this function that heightened the interest into SSCM. As sustainability is still a broad topic, this was narrowed down to social sustainability in supply chains specifically due to the limited attention it has received and thus the opportunity for an effective contribution to the field. Within SCM is the phenomenon of supplier selection and when selecting suppliers on a socially sustainable basis, socially responsible purchasing should occur. This is further shown in Figure 1.2.
1.4 Methodology

The research objective is achieved using a triangulated, qualitative data analysis methodology and a critical realist philosophy. An exploratory, case study approach is used to investigate organisations that were selected on the basis of having strong strategic objectives for improving social sustainability measures, particularly in the area of supplier selection. The three firms in the main study sample all use the supplier ethical data exchange tools (known as Sedex) as a way of assessing possible new suppliers. Interviews were conducted with buyers, ethical trade and responsible sourcing analysts and managers, and corporate sustainability managers within the firms. Two validation cases were also used, to support the findings of the three main cases. The validation cases are third party service provider (3PSP) organisations, who provide frameworks and guidelines for supplier self-assessment. Purchasers use these organisations to assist in the selection of suppliers by using them as an intermediary. 3PSPs collect information on organisations’ social credentials providing an approach for firms to replicate in assessing their suppliers (Wolf, 2014). In the 3PSPs, business development managers, stakeholder managers and business relationship officers were interviewed. Company documents were analysed for all cases. These documents
included organisational strategic objectives, sustainability strategies, responsible procurement strategies and supplier selection checklist criteria. The data was subject to coding analysis interpreted using NVivo and validation was achieved internally by sharing interview transcripts with participants to improve credibility. Transferability for large organisations using the Sedex tools is achieved through context-specific results. An abductive methodology ensured findings were revalidated.

A critical realism viewpoint was adopted because it comprises the positivist scientific approach towards social analysis, whilst considering the importance of individual meanings (Bhaskar, 1979). The research is based on the belief that there exists a real physical world beyond our knowledge and comprehension. Moreover, there also exists a social world that is being constructed, shaped and influenced by our life experiences, knowledge and desire. A critical realist approach is relevant to this research topic because it incorporates the consciousness of supply chain participants in deciding on their actions within their perceived reality of the supplier selection process and structure. Hence, the findings show a ‘process’ and ‘people’ element to the supplier selection decision.

1.5 Limitations of scope and key assumptions
As discussed later in the thesis in section 4.4, the cases were chosen on the basis that they were pursuing sustainability agendas, specifically through the purchasing function. This is because there are many factors that may come into a supplier selection decision and so in order to isolate this to social sustainability factors the firm had to rate this as important. Therefore a key assumption is that firms pursuing these additional ways to add competitive advantage have usually streamlined their supply chains and supplier selection criteria well by removing unnecessary costs and are now looking for other ways to add value and measure progress.

The critical realism philosophical perspective also restricts the findings to the explanations for these cases but will attempt to generalise both across industry and other sectors nevertheless. The empirical work and subsequent conclusions review the process and decision from the purchaser’s side exclusively. A beneficial extension to the research would be to analyse the experience of the SRP exchange from both sides (purchaser and supplier). The research does go some way to exploring another view through 3PSPs but it would be
valuable in the future to gain suppliers’ insights into self-assessment and the expectations and support from purchasers. So although arguably a limitation of the study, having a thorough view from one perspective increases validity through the more intense saturation for theory generating research.

1.6 Definitions
Defining key terms has been particularly important at the start of this research due to the lack of universal agreement on some of the key concepts being studied. For the supply chain social sustainability literature and practice, this has been such a hindrance to developing the concept that a new definition is proposed from the relevant literature reviewed. Although mostly referred to as purchasing; procurement, buying and sourcing are used interchangeably in the thesis to mean the same act of acquiring goods or services in the supply chain. Justifications for what definitions have been chosen and why are discussed in the literature review chapters but for initial clarity, the following definitions are the ones chosen for this thesis:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key terms</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Discussed on page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable development (used widely as the definition for sustainability)</td>
<td>Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.</td>
<td>WCED (1987)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate sustainability</td>
<td>The design and operation of human and industrial systems to ensure that humankind’s use of natural resources and cycles do not lead to diminished quality of life due either to losses in future economic opportunities or to adverse impacts on social conditions, human health and the environment.</td>
<td>Hutchins and Sutherland (2008)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM)</td>
<td>The creation of coordinated supply chains through the voluntary integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations with key inter-organisational business systems designed to efficiently and effectively manage the material, information, and capital flows associated with the procurement, production, and distribution of products or services in order to meet stakeholder requirements and improve the profitability, competitiveness, and resilience of the organisation over the short- and long-term.</td>
<td>Ahi and Searcy (2013)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially sustainable supply chain management</td>
<td>Preservation and development of internal and external human and community structures and processes throughout the supply chain.</td>
<td>Author’s own (2014)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially responsible purchasing (SRP)</td>
<td>Inclusion in purchasing decisions of the social issues advocated by organisational stakeholders.</td>
<td>Maignan et al. (2002)</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.1: Definitions of key terms*
1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis begins by reviewing the historical and current literature in a thematic way. As the research brings together social sustainability and supplier selection, which are important concepts on their own, the literature is split into two chapters, resulting in the development of important research questions to be investigated. Following this, the methodology explains the qualitative research approach designed to answer these questions. Four findings chapters present the main case study data and validation case study data. A discussion answers the research questions by offering propositions. Finally, a conclusion and focus for future research including testing the generated propositions is presented.

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduces the core research problem and presents some key definitions necessary for understanding the research. This introductory chapter discloses the path the thesis will take towards the overall conclusion.

Literature Reviews

Chapter 2 analyses the body of knowledge of sustainability developed during previous research and begins to describe the research problem in more detail. Its structure develops from the parent field to the specific field of research. That is, from the dimensions making up sustainability to the specific social dimension of focus in the research. It then looks at the integration of sustainability with supply chains. This chapter is a forerunner to the second literature review which defines scope in explicit detail.

Chapter 3 is designed as a second literature review with a specific focus within SSCM on supplier selection and SRP. Traditionally accepted organisational theories of buyer-supplier relationships are introduced before bringing the main themes from the review together to define the overall research objective and research questions to be answered by the research.

Methodology

Chapter 4 explains the rationale behind the research design and data analysis methods chosen. The methodological approach was designed to address the research objective and the underlying questions in an effective way. This chapter justifies the research approach
considering the methodological issues and debates in the research community. The chapter also considers the research sampling issues, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and research ethics.

**Findings**

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 present patterns of results from the three main case studies and analyses them for their relevance to the research questions. The findings from the document and interview analysis of the main cases are shown by introducing the context of the case studies including their supplier selection processes. Then the coding analysis and development of first and second order codes are presented for each case, clearly demonstrating how each category and theme builds from these constructs. Propositions are developed over the data collection process of the three main cases and tested in a methodological way.

Chapter 8 uses the validation case study results to support the findings from the three main case studies. The first part of the chapter introduces the context of the validation cases and their useful function in the overall research design. The coding analysis and validation of constructs, developed from the first case study through to the third case study, are then presented for the two validation cases. The way in which the cases support the SRP model and propositions is discussed prior to a more substantial cross case discussion in Chapter 9.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

Chapter 9 draws together the key findings across all cases to propose answers to the research questions leading to proposition generation and framework development. It links the findings from the empirical work to the current literature. Chapter 10 presents conclusions about the research problem based on the results of Chapters 5-8, including their place in the body of knowledge outlined previously in Chapters 2 and 3. The thesis concludes by proposing future recommendations for proposition testing and further research topics.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW 1: Social Sustainability

2.1 Introduction
A literature review has been conducted to find the historical background of the themes used in this research, the contemporary context and any theoretical underpinnings of the topic. It also reveals the gaps in the literature, popular methodologies used in this type of research and links between the theory and what is actually occurring in practice. Starting with the identification of key definitions, this chapter thematically focuses on the academic literature around the emerging importance of sustainability, from the earlier term of corporate social responsibility, how this relates to SCM with the emergence of SSCM and finally presents social sustainability as a focus, advancing as a concept from the triple bottom line (TBL). The frameworks for assessing social sustainability available to businesses will be analysed in this final section. Chapter 3 will expand the literature review to include the purchasing aspect of SSCM, including vendor selection criteria models and supplier self-assessment.

By demonstrating an understanding of the academic literature, an opportunity arises to find research opportunities and gaps and position the contribution of the thesis in the discipline. The literature review is split into two chapters to show the development of the focus from sustainability and supply chains (Chapter 2) to supplier relationships and selection decisions (Chapter 3). For example, SSCM is based on accountable partnerships (Teuscher et al., 2006) which are expected to support the management of risk and uphold firm’s reputations. Sustainability objectives are growing in importance in particular for large organisations (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Carter and Rogers, 2008; Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008; Carter and Easton, 2011) and the improvement of sustainability performance can be influenced by supply chain actions (Seuring and Gold, 2013). Chapter 3 (the second part of the literature review) then focuses on the fact that sustainability performance can be driven by supplier relationships (Leppelt et al., 2013) whereby supplier selection decisions are of key importance. Thus, organisations now need to be more responsible for the actions of their suppliers (Neef, 2004) due to stakeholder pressures and longevity of business survival. By the end of Chapter 3 the analysis results in research questions to be answered.
2.2 Sustainability

The term ‘sustainability’ and discussions of ‘sustainable development’ are rich areas for academic research. A widely accepted definition of sustainability, still used today is “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987). Linton et al. (2007:1075) commented on the future potential of sustainable supply chains when they were still in infancy as having the prospective capability “to affect future government policy, current production operations, and identify new business models”. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is seen as the umbrella under which more specific elements are found, such as corporate sustainability. The core characteristics of CSR are that “it is voluntary, involves internalising or managing externalities, encompassing a multiple stakeholder orientation, with alignment of social and economic responsibilities, includes both practices and values and goes beyond philanthropy” (Crane et al., 2008:7-8). Therefore, these two terms should not be used interchangeably or be regarded as the same concept. CSR is in fact a bigger initiative which houses a sustainability agenda. CSR has its own issues with differing definitions (Dahlsrud, 2008) as a result of it being socially constructed and context specific.

For the purpose of this research, CSR is viewed as a concept under which processes lie, contributing to social responsibility, meaning it is the robustness and longevity of the supply chain operation that is of more interest, as a process. CSR is about company values, morals and ethics across the organisation, but sustainability can be measurable in terms of social, environmental and economic performance and relate to specific areas such as the supply chain, as a contributing factor to the sustainability of the organisation as a whole. In terms of sustainable supply chains, CSR is the overarching concept with the sustainable supply chain being a process underneath which contributes to that.

On the other hand, it is not that CSR and corporate sustainability are entirely different. Current research shows that because of their shared environmental and social concerns, CSR and corporate sustainability are converging in some cases, despite their paradigmatic differences. Scholars such as Adizes and Weston (1973), Alexander and Buchholz (1978), Davis (1973) and Keim (1978) did not consider social issues when conducting original environmental management research but later with the emergence of CSR initiatives, environmental issues are seen as a subset of a broader social performance dimensions (Graves and Waddock, 1994; Turban and Greening, 1997; Agle et al., 1999). Garriga and
Melé (2004) tried to map the CSR territory ten years ago, and they listed ‘sustainable development’ as one of several theories and approaches used to conceptualise CSR. However to conceptualise sustainability in a business and supply chain context, Carter and Rogers (2008) definition is used:

“the strategic, transparent integration and achievement of an organisation’s social, environmental, and economic goals in the systemic coordination of key inter-organisational business processes for improving the long-term economic performance of the individual company and its supply chains” (p.368).

In the corporate sustainability field, the social dimension has become an increasingly important part of the sustainability paradigm. Modern organisations must address economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental integrity before they can lay claim to socially responsible behaviour or sustainable practices. Indeed, the conceptualisation of CSR that integrates economic, social, and environmental dimensions and the TBL conceptualisation of corporate sustainability, which comprises economic, social, and environmental dimensions, are very similar. Both show that firms must balance the three elements of the TBL to achieve long-term sustainability and social responsibility. However, despite using all three dimensions to originally conceptualise sustainability, much of the focus both in the academic literature and business initiatives has been on the environmental dimension of sustainability, and the pressures and desires to implement green technologies and employ processes which are less damaging to the environment. New (1997) followed by others such as Kärnä and Heiskanen (1998) and Sarkis (2001) are the first papers to integrate all three dimensions. Genovesi et al. (2013) have conducted research into green supplier selection criteria but recognises that the social element in selection practice should be investigated. All in all, it is evident that research is still largely dominated by environmental issues and the investigation into both social issues and all three together, is more rare.

It is important that researchers who are interested in integrative CSR and corporate sustainability approaches should determine whether the two constructs are equivalent or different and in which circumstances. For this research, CSR is seen as the umbrella under which the supply chain processes sit, which are both environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.
Porter and Kramer (2006, 2011) developed the concept of creating shared value by providing insights and relevant examples of companies that have developed deep links between their business strategies and CSR. The central premise behind creating shared value is that recognizing and capitalising on the connections between societal and economic progress will contribute to the next wave of growth and redefine capitalism. The main message is that competitiveness of a company and the health of the communities around it are mutually dependent. They believe that creating shared value is fundamentally different to CSR activities of the past, (although they share the same messages of ‘doing well by doing good’) because rather than look at how CSR appears to the external stakeholder, companies will take an internal focus by realising its limitations and try to restructure and pursue new market strategies that value both economic and societal development as they go hand in hand. Porter and Kramer (2011) are saying that social aspects are important whatever way you look at them as if you look after society, it will be better for your business. The triple bottom line is the chosen way of investigating sustainability in this thesis as it provides an opportunity to separate the different dimensions of sustainability so that a social focus can be taken and then reintroduced back in to integrate between all three.

2.2.1 The triple bottom line (TBL)

The TBL was developed by Elkington (1994) and incorporates the dimensions of economic, environmental and social dimensions to contribute to sustainability overall (see Figure 2.1). Sometimes referred to as profit, people, and the planet (Willard, 2009), the logic behind this is that the focus on all three elements of sustainability will result in the highest likelihood of business success. In order to validate the TBL as a worthy framework, the literature behind these supporting and disparaging arguments needs to be reviewed. In the following section, firstly issues with the language and lack of methodology of the TBL are addressed, followed by the major criticisms of the concept. Lastly, an argument is put forward as to why this is an appropriate framework to use for the study of supplier selection in a social sustainability context.
Definitions are important because the language used and the concepts they represent need to be clear to avoid confusion or misinterpretation. Using the TBL to conceptualise sustainability has many advantages. These include that the TBL provides a framework to use that can be developed (Carter and Easton, 2011) and that it covers an adequate enough range of public interests for stakeholders. It is an important framework for this doctoral research, yet some academics do not support it. Milne has produced a substantial amount of research from the early 1990s to the present day criticising the TBL. The concept is widely used in the business environment which frustrates some researchers even more (e.g. Greer and Bruno, 1996) because they believe that some businesses identify its flaws and use this to their advantage while not being any more sustainable. For example, organisations can falsely lead stakeholders into thinking they are doing ‘enough’. In some cases the organisations themselves are falsely led into thinking they are doing enough. Disadvantages to be reviewed in this section include its inadequacy with measurement (providing no means of measurement to quantitatively assess it), language (arguing that sustainability and the TBL are not the same thing) and it not being conducive to profits if the purpose of business is to increase profits (Friedman, 1962). Other debates are with its suitability as a reporting tool as there is no methodology for calculating a meaningful and comparable social bottom line. Thus, it is not fit for purpose (Milne et al., 2005).
Milne et al. (2005) produced an article partly titled ‘a critique of the TBL’. It strongly focused on issues with the definitions of sustainability and how the TBL does not promote sustainability. The authors do not support the term TBL being used interchangeably with sustainability and largely debate the definition of sustainability rather than offer a real critique to the TBL as the title of the article suggests. Milne et al. (2005) are concerned that firms use TBL reporting to promote their sustainable work, even though the narrow and confusing reporting practices of the TBL, while perhaps a necessary condition for sustainability, are not entirely sufficient. In fact, they are ‘soothing palliatives’ which actually lead to higher levels of un-sustainability. They see issues around socially constructing sustainability using the TBL and spend a lot of time concerned with the nature of the language.

As the take up of TBL reporting increases in businesses, Milne et al. (2005) are concerned that the concept seems to have created some uncertainty and that definitions and integration measures vary. There is some justified concern that the concept is fuzzy and allows for interpretation, but that is what makes the framework ideal for this doctoral research. With case study research based on separate firms and their strategies and variables, a flexible framework is needed. The TBL terminology originates from a reporting background (hence ‘bottom line’) and much of the criticisms of the concept are related to its lack of use and rigour as reporting tool. For example, it is argued that the TBL does not have a transparent reporting methodology. It is useful to look into this in more depth, even though the reporting function of the TBL is of less interest in the research. For example, some researchers do not accept that there are no measurable (and general) expectations of TBL reporting so that it is comparable between firms. Whereas the financial data between firms and year on year can be compared, for environmental and social elements there is a danger that “if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it” (Norman and Macdonald, 2004:243). As ethical business practices and social responsibility are important functions of corporate governance and management, then attempts to develop tools that make them more transparent to managers, shareholders and other stakeholders to show just how well a firm is doing in this regard should be well received (Norman and Macdonald, 2004). Thus, clear and transparent criteria for selecting suppliers would be welcomed in the field.

Norman and Macdonald (2004:256) argue that “it is impossible to develop a sound methodology for arriving at a meaningful social bottom line for a firm” due to fundamental philosophical grounds. The first reason for this is that weighting social impacts would be very
difficult because they are immeasurable, and this would require “a significant detour into the realm of moral epistemology”. Secondly, agreement to reach standards would not be reached in the same way that it is with accounting standards for example, due to the complex nature and subjectivity involved. They are concerned with the notion that social and environmental concerns should be assigned monetary values in practice to add to the main bottom line. Because this would not be possible, firms simply have to pay attention to these facts but not derive a real bottom line for them. They claim therefore that the TBL is actually “good old-fashioned single bottom line plus vague commitments to social and environmental concerns” (p.13) allowing firms to make no commitment at all. There would be no data to compare with competitors and nothing has to be calculated. Nor will comparisons be made year on year to show progress. Therefore, they argue that TBL reporting merely states that firms should report on some key parameters, of their own choosing, which might be relevant to some stakeholder groups. These can be changed year on year by the company to thwart compatibility or to make a better perceived impression. This is seen as a major disadvantage to the concept and has lacked development in the last two decades. The think tank and advisory services firm AccountAbility, describe environmental and social accounting as ‘embryonic’ and Elkington argued in 1994 that “the metrics are still evolving” (p.72) but that seems to still be the case today.

Despite the criticism that there are no social bottom line metrics, there are ways to measure some social impacts in a relatively objective way based on a set of standard indicators. These indicators can come from any number of standards and policies discussed later in this chapter. These data can be audited and reported and compared. Therefore, there is some defence against the critics of the TBL as a reporting tool. More importantly for this thesis, the TBL is not being used as a reporting tool, but as an approach that firms should take towards sustainability, taking financial, environmental, and social results into consideration in the development and implementation of a corporate business strategy (Mowat, 2002). It is going beyond the obligation of shareholder value and considering stakeholder value. Stakeholder theorists such as Freeman (1984) argue that it has never been satisfactory enough to just focus on the bottom line and no other stakeholder requirements. Therefore the TBL is a useful way to view sustainability but frustratingly, there are no metrics to it. In sum, despite dimensions of social sustainability being fragmented across different sources, analysis can be conducted to amalgamate the most common elements (shown later in Table 2.4 on page 42) even if
measurement will still be problematic. It is the dimensions that are needed for the supplier selection process to take place, with measurement more important post-event.

Both CSR and corporate sustainability have an economic dimension. Carroll (1979) who defined CSR, actually believed that firms have a responsibility to produce goods and services that society want at a profit and that social responsibility supplements this primary fundamental responsibility (of economic prosperity). Bansal (2005) explained that social, environmental, and economic responsibilities are actually complementary, and that firms need to integrate all three elements to achieve perfection, which she called sustainability. This supports the view of the three dimensions of the TBL coming together to determine sustainability. However the identically-sized, circular diagram suggests that all three circles should be given equal weighting in sustainability pursuit, but this is not something that has happened in the past as environmental and subsequently social sustainability have been introduced in that order, suggesting lower priority for the latter.

The reason that this topic is so fundamental is that a single-minded focus on economic sustainability can only succeed in the short run (Dylick and Hockerts, 2002). In the long run, sustainability requires all three dimensions to be satisfied simultaneously. In actual fact, as all three elements of the TBL are interrelated, they may influence each other in multiple ways. Nonetheless there are advantages to the three dimensions coming together to contribute to sustainability which include the ability to split them out to research them individually if applicable. Although not always advisable to look at something in isolation when it is a contributing factor, when the other two dimensions have received so much more attention it is advantageous to look at social sustainability in isolation to provide an opportunity to ‘catch up’ and then reintegrate it back in (Zorzini et al., 2015). More support from Zorzini et al. (2015) for separating out the social context is made with two more reasons for the approach. The rationale that social aspects have had less attention and by focusing on this it provides an opportunity to rebalance the landscape is another reason. Finally, the specific characteristics of a social focus may warrant its separation in some cases, for example because measurement is less straightforward.

Measuring social impacts helps improve social performance, and firms with better social performance tend to be more profitable in the long-run (Norman and MacDonald, 2004). By disclosing the information about how well it performs in these areas firms are fulfilling their
obligation to stakeholders and demonstrating transparency. Supporters of the TBL believe that social and environmental performance can be measured in fairly objective ways and that organisations should then use these results to improve their social and environmental performance. Reporting on these additional bottom lines, firms should be able to expect a better financial bottom line in the long run. Even those who are critical of the TBL (Greer and Bruno, 1996; Milne et al., 2005 due to measurement issues for example) have failed to come up with a more effective solution. Those concerned with the reporting function of the TBL and the lack of methodology around it are somewhat justified, and when looking for comparable, like for like reports on different companies, this can be a problem. However TBL reporting should also involve aspects such as assessing an entity’s values, strategies and practices and how these can be utilised to achieve economic, environmental and social objectives. These features do not include metrics either but do reaffirm the need for focus on these areas, which can be designed using a TBL approach.

A compelling reason why the TBL can therefore be classed as a useful conceptual framework for this empirical work is that the reporting function is not relevant for the vendor selection criteria development. It is useful however. Reporting is an activity to be done after the SRP event and better behaviour will show more favourable on a report pertaining to the TBL concept. Therefore, by using the concept for an activity to be done at the start of the process (selecting suppliers) then a better TBL report will be a positive output.

In summary, critics argue that you cannot quantify or calculate a TBL, the focus by firms on environmental and social aspects are not conducive to profits, and it is inadequate and misleading as there is no careful definition or methodology (Norman and MacDonald, 2004). In addition, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines are confusing and overall it is a “deeply problematic concept” (Milne et al., 2005:20). Despite these points, this section has answered each of these criticisms in turn. The TBL provides a suitable framework to use for this study because it has the ability to be developed in the context of supply chains (for example by developing criteria to use in supplier selection relating to one element of the TBL). It is not too rigid but instead provides a good basis for analysis. There is evidence that the TBL is conducive to profits and as a theory, is in the public interest by looking out for stakeholder needs. Lastly, many firms have adopted the TBL outlook and use this three-pronged approach in their reporting and sustainability agendas. Because it is so flexible, the
TBL approach does work and is implementable despite the metrics being fuzzy. This merely enables firms to use the position because it can be adapted.

2.3 Sustainable supply chain management (SSCM)

Having reviewed the literature on sustainability generally with a look to focusing on social sustainability in the next section, the context of supply chains needs to be further considered. Sustainability within the supply chain is of paramount importance as these production processes have the ability to make a positive or negative difference on the three integrated dimensions making up sustainability. It should be noted that “to be truly sustainable a supply chain would at worst do no net harm to natural or social systems while still producing a profit over an extended period of time; a truly sustainable supply chain could, customers willing, continue to do business forever” (Pagell and Wu, 2009:38). While this ideal does not wholly exist today, there are certainly some supply chains which are more sustainable than others in their relative industry. Therefore, the argument suggests that those businesses could survive for a longer period of time.

A widely accepted definition of SSCM is proposed by Seuring and Müller (2008) as

“the management of material, information and capital flows as well as cooperation among companies along the supply chain while taking goals from all three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e., economic, environmental and social, into account which are derived from customer and stakeholder requirements”.

Although the above definition is taken from a popular and heavily cited paper on SSCM, the topic is now advancing more swiftly in the academic literature and more recently, Ahi and Searcy (2013) analysed 12 definitions of SSCM which resulted in them proposing a new one from 13 characteristics. As their definition introduces the concept of procurement and supports long termism, it is used here to define SSCM:

“The creation of coordinated supply chains through the voluntary integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations with key inter-organisational business systems designed to efficiently and effectively manage the material, information, and capital flows associated with the procurement, production, and
distribution of products or services in order to meet stakeholder requirements and improve the profitability, competitiveness, and resilience of the organisation over the short- and long-term” (p.339).

This definition is a welcome development as it explicitly reflects the need for SSCM to adopt a long-term focus, a characteristic that was addressed in only 4 (33%) of the earlier definitions of SSCM (Carter and Rogers, 2008; Haake and Seuring, 2009; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Badurdeen et al., 2009).

As sustainability pursuits increase in importance for the supply chain, more academic research is being conducted in the area. Krause et al. (2009:18) conducted an editorial review of the Journal of Supply Chain Management and found that “a company is no more sustainable than its supply chain”. Carter is a key writer in the area of supply chain management and sustainability, and believes that the TBL is a good way to monitor the progress of organisations. Carter and Rogers (2008) have developed Elkington’s TBL diagram into a framework for SSCM. They clearly show that when all three elements of the TBL are integrated in a supply chain, the resulting notion is SSCM. Using the TBL to conceptualise sustainability allows the option to review social sustainability on its own or as an integrated part of sustainability. This is necessary because Genovese et al. (2013) found that research is still largely dominated by environmental and economic issues of sustainability and the investigation into social issues is rare. Therefore it can be useful to investigate a section in isolation which the TBL allows. Carter and Roger’s (2008) framework of SSCM is used, later developed by Carter and Easton (2011), with specific focus on social sustainability. It does not look at supplier selection specifically but will be accepted as a SSCM lens in which to view the supplier selection process.
Figure 2.2: SSCM theoretical framework (Carter and Rogers, 2008)

The themes of strategy, risk management, organisational culture and transparency are identified as facilitators of SSCM by Carter and Rogers (2008). These themes are crucial to this doctoral research and key areas of interest for inquiry. Strategy and transparency are of importance because the SSCM initiatives should align with the organisational sustainability strategy and transparency refers to having traceability and visibility of upstream and downstream supply chain operations. Risk and culture are important in sustaining a strong organisational reputation. Culture is a complex area of organisational study which should be approached with careful consideration should it be exposed as an influence of supplier selection. Figure 2.2 shows the overlaying of environmental and social aspects as simply ‘good’ is because “the SSCM perspective advocates that such undertakings would be socially irresponsible unless considered within the broader context of a firm’s overall strategic and financial objectives” (Carter and Rogers, 2008:369). It was mentioned previously that using the three circles to conceptualise sustainability implies that each circle should be given equal weight and this had not happened in the academic research, however SSCM is attempting to do that. All three elements were considered equal to develop the framework and SSCM as a
concept, but economic and environmental have been more commonly researched since. Research such as that conducted for the thesis is attempting to build up that social circle. Eventually, sustainability needs to be integrated into SCM to avoid being simply an add-on (Halldórsson et al., 2009:92) whereby the future involves all SCM research being SSCM research (Pagell and Shevchenko, 2014). Halldórsson et al. (2009:92) note that “sustainability will either be a vivid part of SCM, an add-on to SCM or a complete re-definition of SCM”. SSCM is redefining the domain as more companies adopt it.

Dyadic supplier relationships
Research into supply chains can involve studying a single firm section of the supply chain, a dyadic approach (buyer-supplier), the whole chain in the process, or the entire network. The dyadic approach will be examined in more detail as the empirical research of the thesis will look at the purchaser’s perspective only but in relation to the anticipatory exchange with suppliers. The supplier view can be conveyed to some extent by 3PSP organisations in the absence of the supplier. Individual supply relationships between pairs of organisations, sometimes called dyads, were originally addressed by economists such as Williamson (1975), although at this time were largely focused on transaction cost economics (TCE). They have become more popular to research as they can provide practical opportunities to study particular areas of interest. Supply chains can be largely complex and so taking a smaller section to investigate can make more practical sense. Walker et al. (2012) suggest that a dyadic approach is most suitable for researching supplier selection, particularly in the area of criteria.

However, it can also be more problematic and some scholars do not support research into these smaller sections of a larger entity. For example, an exchange in one relationship is likely to have consequences for exchange in another relationship, and so it is deemed important to study the larger network in which the relationship exists (Anderson et al., 1994; Iacobucci 1996; Levy and Grewal, 2000). Also, it is the case that in the event of an incident which exposes unsustainable behaviour, the entire supply chain is liable to stakeholders (Hartmann and Moeller, 2014). Using a dyadic relationship approach is problematic if they are not deemed useful in research. A risk could be that many supply chain initiatives fail if the improvement initiatives have been piecemeal rather than incorporating the whole system (Zaklad et al., 2004). Therefore, they could argue that to draw conclusions from this research is not achievable as a result of researching only dyadic relationships, because the whole
supply chain has not been studied. On the contrary, looking at individual dyadic relationships has proven popular with academics (Anderson et al., 1994; Walker et al., 2012) because of the practical advantages it provides. By looking at dyadic relationships, the researcher can get deeper insights into the nature of the association compared with studying the entire chain whereby the scale of the research loses valuable context.

As supply chains become more global in nature and competition develops, production processes can now be dispersed around the globe and the number of companies involved in a typical supply chain has greatly increased (Seuring and Müller, 2008). They suggest that “in line with the value of the product comes the environmental and social burden incurred during different stages of production” (p.1699). Focal companies are those companies that usually “(1) rule or govern the supply chain, (2) provide the direct contact to the customer, and (3) design the product or service offered” (Handfield and Nicholls, 1999). With regard to this, focal companies of supply chains might be held responsible for the environmental and social performance of their suppliers. For example, it is recognised that suppliers’ behaviour has an impact on the purchasing firm in terms of reputational associations (Graafland, 2002; Hartmann and Moeller, 2014). Purchasing firms now need to be more responsible for the actions of their suppliers and subcontractors. Carter and Jennings (2002) explain that this is especially the case for brand-owning companies, as they are likely to come under pressure from stakeholders such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Stakeholders request these firms to consider the environmental and social problems present in their entire supply chain. Roberts (2003) emphasises that action from NGOs, who can hold focal companies responsible for environmental and social problems at earlier stages of their supply chain, can lead to a reputation loss for the focal company. Seuring and Müller (2008) suggest that when the focal company is pressured, it usually passes this pressure on to suppliers as they can also have an effect on the purchaser’s reputation both directly and indirectly.

Drivers of SSCM

As SSCM is being increasingly recognised by leaders in their sectors, Walker and Jones (2012) conducted a study to investigate what factors influence SSCM by looking at enablers and barriers. They used seven cases of companies who were participating in the promotion of sustainability. Companies were assessed and classified as internal focusers, reserved players, external responders, and agenda setters. Following a literature review and their own research, Walker and Jones (2012:25) discovered that key enablers and barriers to SSCM were:
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Table 2.1: Enablers and barriers to SSCM (adapted from Walker and Jones, 2012:25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enablers to SSCM</th>
<th>Barriers to SSCM</th>
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<tr>
<td>• customer requirements,</td>
<td>• pressures to reduce costs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reputational risk,</td>
<td>• other organisational priorities,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• organisational factors including strategic, people and functional issues,</td>
<td>• the ability of buyers to tackle the subject,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• stakeholder involvement,</td>
<td>• accounting methods that focus on short term measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a procurement team’s ability to work with other areas of the company,</td>
<td>• limited resource,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• buyers’ abilities to embrace new skills,</td>
<td>• weak processes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the increasing role being played by the public sector,</td>
<td>• communication and knowledge deficiencies,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• academics and investors, and</td>
<td>• insufficient supplier commitment, and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• a desire for a whole industry to be adopting new practices</td>
<td>• cultural barriers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Having discovered that these factors influence the adoption of SSCM, it is important to reflect on how firms can implement it. Walker and Jones (2012) developed some useful suggestions for both academics and practitioners in this area. They believe that the area of supply is ripe for contributing to sustainability agendas. Training is important to ensure that communication is clear between supply chain partners and that collaboration is introduced. Most importantly, Walker and Jones (2012) found that the corporate strategy needs to be in alignment with the SSCM strategy for the best results. It is up to the supply department to ensure they have aligned their purchasing function with the corporate strategy relating to sustainability. However, they do conclude that an organisation’s approach to SSCM is dependent on the circumstances it faces and that there is no single best course of action. When Seuring and Müller (2008) identified the main pressures for sustainability in supply chains, these included (in this order of importance): legal demands and regulation; customer demands; response to stakeholders; competitive advantage; environmental and social pressure groups; and
reputation loss. However, reputation loss can occur as a result of not responding to the other five pressures and so to place it in isolation in sixth position projects an ambiguous view.

Walker and Jones (2012) suggest that more work should be done to investigate the organisational responses to SSCM and how this might vary between sectors and contexts. By using seven case studies of firms who are leading in SSCM, they fail to draw any conclusions about small firms or firms who do not have SSCM at the top of their strategic agenda which will also be a limitation of this empirical research as in order to study something that is emergent the sample needs to be of firms who are pursuing that emergent agenda. Therefore, this is a common problem for SSCM research as it is still in an exploratory phase.

Having previously discussed the stakeholder pressures of organisations pursuing social sustainability generally, SSCM specifically identifies the pressures and incentives for investing in this concept. For example, NGOs are increasingly commenting on company activities, demanding transparency and dialogue. Customers have increasingly complex buying preferences, and demonstrate power in their willingness to pay. Sustainable investment is on the increase and some employees seek sustainable companies, giving loyalty in return. The media are reporting negative as well as positive events which have consequences for the consumer facing brand. Other stakeholder considerations include government fiscal policies and legal regulation. Organisational drivers include company orientation and competitive differentiation. One way to ensure satisfaction is by ensuring the whole supply chain confirms to environmental and social standards. This could come from the supplier or buyer demand. However, the risk to a purchasing firm’s reputation as a result of poor practice by a supplier is because companies are now more vulnerable than ever to charges of ‘guilt by association’, for example, when suppliers are found to be guilty of poor environmental, product safety, or employment practices (Neef, 2004). This means that a company’s success is more dependent upon the performance of their suppliers than ever before.

Companies may fear that customers would boycott their products if environmental or social problems in their supply chain were reported, leading to a loss in reputation (Seuring and Müller, 2008). Focal companies increasingly ask their suppliers to perform according to the guidelines set by environmental and social standards, which might be documented by implementing related management systems for environmental (e.g. ISO 14000) and social
(ISO 26000) issues. Using the example of ISO 14001, Corbett and Kirsch (2001:339) provide evidence that this is “an important model for the spread of [such] management systems”. Policies of organisations can therefore give a good indication of how significant the area of sustainability is, but it is the management behind this policy which also holds key importance.

Knowledge and communication deficiencies are described by Walker and Jones (2012) as a barrier to SSCM. Knowledge management has been reviewed in different ways in the past making it a complex topic. For example, knowledge management has been studied from a number of perspectives (Baskerville and Dulipovici, 2006), e.g. organisational learning, knowledge organisation, learning organization. Knowledge management receives considerable attention from both academics and practitioners because managers and academics have recognised knowledge as a key source of competitive advantage (Grant, 1997). From a thorough review of knowledge management literature, García-Fernández (2015) proposes that knowledge management can be split into three dimensions. Firstly, knowledge creation which includes sub-dimensions of acquisition of information, dissemination of information and shared interpretation. Secondly, the knowledge transfer and storage. Thirdly, application and use of knowledge which is teamwork, empowerment and commitment to knowledge. It includes the process of applying and using knowledge, exploiting and exploring resources, adapting to and changing the environment, learning and developing learning so that it can be transformed into new knowledge. This can be valuable as it may be, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable, particularly if it has a tacit dimension.

**2.3.1 Green supply chain management (GSCM)**

The term green supply chain management (GSCM) refers to “integrating environment thinking into supply chain management, including product design, material sourcing and selection, manufacturing processes, delivery of the final product to the consumers, and end-of-life management of the product after its useful life” (Srivastava, 2007:55). The research community has placed more emphasis on GSCM than social sustainability in supply chains (Lehtonen, 2004; Genovese et al., 2013). This is due to a number of reasons such as quicker wins than social initiatives in terms of efficiencies, media pressures, metric capability and resource restrictions around focusing on too much at one time.
GSCM has also been investigated to discover whether better environmental performance results in better economic performance. Klassen and McLaughlin (1996) explored the relationship between environmental management and financial performance in their work, which discovers contrasting links of higher production costs of environmental management initiatives decreasing profitability; and increased efficiencies and stakeholder satisfaction. However, GSCM has been useful for both academic and firms alike, because in some instances, improving environmental supply has been seen as beneficial as it can reduce costs and improve organisational performance (Carter et al., 2000; Hervani et al., 2005), or enhance a firm’s reputation (Wycherley, 1999). Others have viewed environmental supply initiatives with more scepticism. For example, Porter and Van de Linde (1995) view it as reactive to government environmental regulation such as cutting down on waste, while some see it as a public relations exercise (Greer and Bruno 1996, for example). This could support the reasons behind the omission of the social dimension in academic research and firm policy as fewer laws exist around this and it is not in the press as much. However, many authors have looked at the reduced risks of operating a green supply chain (such as Min and Galle, 1997; Cousins et al., 2004; Rao and Holt, 2005 and Koplin et al., 2007). They argue it is these reduced risks which have driven the implementation of environmental management systems rather than the direct demand enforced by a legal act.

While GSCM is useful for this literature review as findings from GSCM can be taken and compared to a more complete view of sustainability (including the social dimension), there are other criticisms of GSCM as a whole. For example, much research has been conducted on drivers rather than barriers to GSCM (Walker et al., 2008). This is likely to be to focus more on the positive outcomes than the negative ones. Another drawback is the focus in management and operations to often centre on the selection and investment of green technologies (Klassen and Whybark, 1999) proving that in the 1990s the focus was on the environment mostly. However, Klassen and Whybark (1999) also suggest there are numerous studies linking a proactive stance toward the environment to efforts to become more sustainable, supporting its importance in the sustainable supply chain area of research. The vast amounts of contributions to the environmental operations literature since then demonstrates this.

GSCM evidences the use of taking one element of the triple bottom line in isolation. Zhu et al. (2008) present a model of the components of GSCM. Geneovese et al. (2013) and Noci
(1997) research green supplier selection and assessing vendors (or suppliers) on their environmental performance. By adding social dimensions to environmental work, the thesis contributes to forming an overall picture of sustainability in supplier selection.

2.3.2 Socially sustainable supply chain management
In the review of the literature, it was found that specific articles relating to social sustainability were rare, and linking this with supply chain practice was even more uncommon. It is clear that social sustainability both in isolation, and relating to SSCM is under-developed compared to other elements of sustainability such as economic and environmental dimensions (GSCM). Papers that considered two elements (environmental and social) or all three dimensions and those that did were mostly from 2002 onwards. Carter accounts for most of the papers on the social aspects in the early 2000s with more academics publishing in the area later in the decade. But it is evident that research is still largely dominated by environmental issues and the investigation into both social issues and all three together, are rare.

There is a concern that as a result of the limited academic research on this topic, that there is an increasing gap between what is going on in theory compared to practice in the business environment (although publishing pipelines could be largely to blame for this apparent ‘gap’). There is evidence to suggest that while most organisations were slow to include social sustainability elements, they are now including them in their decision making. Companies are certainly talking about sustainability, but what they have implemented to tackle this is less researched in an academic context. One reason why social sustainability research in a supply chain context has been left behind could be that historically, social issues research has “been grounded in CSR and environmental issues research in environmental management research” (Montiel, 2008). In practice, managers are confused. This is because CSR and corporate sustainability are both striving for a common future, which intends to balance economic responsibilities with social and environmental ones, despite that they evolved from different histories. By considering GSCM practices and conforming to CSR standards, managers may think they are covering all aspects of social responsibility and sustainability. For instance, Fairtrade is one example of how organisations can demonstrate a commitment to social sustainability in their supply chain (Karjalainen and Moxham, 2013). The thesis considers social sustainability as a whole and is therefore ‘bigger’ than Fairtrade on its own.
Unsurprisingly then, the academic literature fails to define social sustainability at all, not to mention in a supply chain context (Ashby et al., 2012). As a result a definition has been developed from the review of the literature by bringing together the possible and problematic ways to attempt to measure it which is covered in this section. Socially SSCM is defined in this thesis as the “preservation and development of internal and external human and community structures and processes throughout the supply chain”.

The preservation and development refers to the long term focus of maintaining and improving social elements in the supply chain (Carter and Rogers, 2008). Internal refers to the employment stability and health and safety in the workplace (Carter, 2005) and external refers to the external population which encompasses human (individual) and community (collective) capital (Klassen and Vereecke, 2012). Structures are the continued way partners work together and processes are generally fluid; often performance related where possible and require stakeholder approval (Beske and Seuring, 2014). The definition encompasses the entire length of the supply chain due to the association of risk throughout (Finch, 2004).

Winter and Knemyer (2013) believe that the social dimension of sustainability is ‘bipolar’ because it refers to both individuals and organisational levels. This demonstrates the complexity mentioned in the previous paragraphs. The complexity also arises from the key challenge in involving a wide range of stakeholders with different goals, demands, and opinions that may interpret the same situation differently (Hall and Matos, 2010). Although concrete material circumstances lie at the basis of the social dimension, the social phenomena themselves are immaterial and therefore difficult to analyse, especially quantitatively (Lehtonen, 2004).

Measuring social sustainability
An issue with social sustainability literature is that it does not yet specify how we should measure social sustainability. Sarkis and Dhavale (2014) recently confirmed that there is limited data related to sustainability performance measures in existence. The lack of formal, agreed upon measurement dimensions indicates that there are also no universal criteria developed to analyse whether an organisation is doing well or badly. As a result of underdeveloped definitions, exactly what social sustainability includes is also inchoate in
nature. This results in issues of what to measure and how to measure, as social elements are often unquantifiable. One reason why the thesis does not look at the performance of suppliers is because with such an elementary basis it would be difficult to gage performance (as a measurement), despite papers being written in social performance.

There have been attempts to develop indicators of social performance, which is unusual as performance should be measured against a target (criteria). Social performance is often cited in the literature even though measures are not defined. In order to gage performance the measures must first be established, to compare against. We are at the stage before being able to assess performance properly which causes difficulties for organisations keen to demonstrate successful metrics. In the literature for example, Hutchins and Sutherland (2008) describe indicators of social performance and suggest that the relationship between business actions and social impacts must be characterised. They propose labour equity, healthcare, safety and philanthropy which are common themes through the limited social sustainability literature. Their suggestions are all highly quantitative, based on measuring infant mortality and unemployment rates for example, as opposed to considering how all areas under the TBL work together and what supplier selection criteria should be for three dimensional sustainability.

Overall, there is a severe lack of qualitative data in the field despite the opportunity to add value. Hutchins and Sutherland (2008) have a number of findings related to supply chain decision making and what impacts should be considered when making those decisions. This is useful when developing the criteria needed because their focus is very narrow, on social sustainability. However, they do not mention using a specific set of criteria at all, despite describing mapping corporate inputs and outputs, measuring social performance, and social indicators. They claim to have contributed to discovering a “technique to integrate a variety of measures of social performance to form a single social sustainability metric for a company” (Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008:1697) but all in a quantitative measuring design. There is limited discussion on what to measure.

Hutchins and Sutherland (2008) had only just started to consider how we measure the social dimensions of the sustainable supply chain, from “identifying the critical variables, establishing the conditions under which the models are valid, to developing a process for weighting the indicators” (p.1697). They allude to the importance of the social dimension of
sustainability as they believe that only “through a better understanding of the linkages between business and society can we make progress on the path to sustainability” (p.1697). Their study did find that that an individual decision can have a major impact on the choices made and hence the consequences of that, thus affecting national measures of sustainability. A recent paper by Sarkis and Dhavale (2014) introduces methodological approaches to how to select suppliers using sustainability criteria using a Bayesian framework and Monte Carlo Markov Chain (MCMC) simulation, therefore only based on degrees of belief dependent on the current step and not previous parts of the process. As a result of the lack of common social sustainability measures they do this by using the criteria of individual firms and studying their weighting, therefore by their own self admission their findings cannot be generalised. They take the ‘what’ is being considered and look at how the decision is made but do not add anything to the overall picture of the ‘what’ on a universal scale.

It is clear that there is some way to go to creating more standards and metrics to measure social sustainability performance. By finding realistic, suitable criteria to select suppliers, the processes used will be made more transparent. This in turn aids the measuring of progress both over the years and between firms if this is desired. This progress will be fuelled by collaboration between firms as they navigate through the uncertain landscape, both in relation to focal firms developing initiatives together (even when in competition with one another) and between supply chain partners, vertically. In their review of the socially sustainable sourcing literature, Zorzini et al., (2015) identify that the need for transparency has been well researched but how this can be achieved in practice is still under-developed. They suggest the discipline needs more formal means of measuring sustainability including the effective use of codes of conduct and sustainability standards.

*Using Codes of Conduct and Standards Policies in social sustainability strategies*

Organisations’ sustainability strategies can be realised through performance measures. It has been established in the previous section that first we need to establish what the composition is and get consensus before measurement can be considered. For example, reporting after the event is a relatively ineffective transparency tool according to Zorzini et al., (2015) when compared to standards policies and codes of conducts used pre-event. Analysis is needed on what comprises social sustainability and what sources are being used by organisations, if firms are incorporating these into their strategy and then choosing suppliers based on this.
The need for criteria and measures specifically for social sustainability comes from an experienced shift in stakeholder pressures from environmental to social-related concerns. The social dimensions of the frameworks discussed aim to evaluate the company’s impacts on the social systems in which it operates, as well as the company’s relationship with its various stakeholders. In the rest of this section, the following frameworks listed in Table 2.2 are considered (later accepted or rejected for use in defining criteria).
## Framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Applicability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO Standards)</td>
<td>Useful as the standards focus on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• purchasing quality standards (ISO 9000) directly and then have standards on both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• environmental issues (ISO 14000) and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• social responsibility issues (ISO 26000) but not social sustainability specifically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• sustainable events (ISO 20121)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• risk management (ISO 31000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>So no social sustainability per se, but argue that following these standards leads to sustainable development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Framework.</td>
<td>Supports the TBL for business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social sustainability includes labour practices, human rights, product responsibility and society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Popular with organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The UN Global Compact</td>
<td>10 principles for businesses to voluntarily follow including human rights, labour, environment an anti-corruption.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2.2: Sustainability frameworks

### The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO Standards)

Firms can apply for an ISO quality standard which is recognised in the global marketplace. It is useful because clauses focus on the relationship between suppliers
and customers. By registering for ISO, suppliers can demonstrate certain capabilities outlined to meet quality requirements. There are 5 main types relevant to this topic:

1. ISO 9000 are quality standards. According to ISO 9000 standards, an organisation must have clearly defined its supplier selection criteria.
2. ISO 14000 are environmental standards outlining what is acceptable to gain status.
3. ISO 26000 are the standards relating to CSR. Although not sustainability directly, they do lead onto sustainable development.
4. ISO 20121 is relatively new and includes sustainable events.
5. ISO 31000 is for risk management.

There are seven clauses to sustainable development according to the ISO framework. The clauses develop from defining social responsibility, to understanding, recognising and integrating it. Therefore the framework is useful for a process perspective of achieving better sustainability behaviour. An advantage to implementing ISO 26000 successfully includes benefits such as competitive advantage, enhancement of reputation, ability to attract and retain workers or customers and maintenance of employees' morale, commitment and productivity (ISO, 2013). The views of investors, owners, donors, sponsors and the financial community are all considered and relationships with companies, governments, the media, suppliers, peers, customers and the community in which it operates are enhanced (ISO, 2013). It provides guidance on areas of social responsibility but more importantly for this study, assists organisations in contributing to sustainable development. In applying ISO 26000, it is advisable that an organisation takes into consideration societal, environmental, legal, cultural, political and organisational diversity, as well as differences in economic conditions, while being consistent with international norms of behaviour. These standards are a useful foundation for the types of criteria which could be used.

**The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Sustainability Reporting Framework**

The GRI group have a mission to make sustainability reporting standard practice for all organisations. The GRI sustainability reporting framework is the collection of reporting guidance materials from this non-profit organisation that works towards a sustainable global economy by providing sustainability reporting guidance. The GRI framework recognises the
social dimension of business performance but the guidelines represent a source of fundamental confusion over what constitutes sustainability. However, because they include financial and social criteria they do go beyond previous guidelines developed (Morhardt et al., 2002). Labuschagne et al. (2005) analysed a number of the upcoming frameworks and noted that not all aspects of sustainability at an operational level are duly considered.

![Image of the GRI basic framework](image.png)

*Figure 2.3: GRI basic framework (Labuschagne et al., 2005)*

A problem with the GRI Sustainability Reporting Framework is that it presents minimal standards that corporations should meet. No attempt is made to score companies on how far they exceed these minimal standards which are not very difficult to achieve, thus questioning the usefulness of the standards at all. Because no measurements are given, continual, measurable improvements cannot be made with any transparency. Nonetheless many organisations purport to using the GRI for guidance on their strategies.

**United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development Framework**
The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development Framework has a strong focus on developing countries and not so much on business as a whole. Nonetheless, the core
indicators of sustainable development are useful to review. The framework shows that there are a number of categories that come under social sustainable development. However it provides an external focus on social sustainability in relation to aspects such as healthcare and housing, rather than an internal focus on what suppliers might need to directly offer workers that purchasers can use as selection criteria.

Figure 2.4: UN Indicators of sustainable development (Labuschagne et al., 2005)

The UN Global Compact
The UN Global Compact is a strategic policy initiative comprising 10 principles for businesses that are committed to aligning their operations and strategies in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. In order to benefit economies and societies everywhere, the UN are involved in promoting these behaviours. Listed below are the 10 principles. Only one set refers to the environment as the others are more focused on a socially responsible business (UN, 2013).
### The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human Rights</th>
<th>Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labour; and Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges; Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-Corruption</td>
<td>Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 2.3: The ten principles of the UN Global Compact*

Labuschagne et al. (2005) studied a variety of frameworks in order to develop something incorporating the best parts from each. They specifically focused on social sustainability. Firstly, they built a comprehensive framework of sustainability criteria to be used to assess the sustainability of projects and technologies, as well as the overall corporate sustainability. Their study was specifically focused on the needs of the South African process industry, i.e. within a developing country context, and focused strongly on operational initiatives. They go on to break these down in detail. Therefore there are some elements which are useful but it should be recognised that
they were looking at a different context to this study. The most useful part of their study is how they propose operationalising social sustainability into four areas of internal human resources, external population, stakeholder participation and macro social performance. Within these four areas the authors then go on to divulge more detail about what criteria should include.
Figure 2.5: Breakdown of the sub-criteria of the main social sustainability criterion
(Labuschagne et al., 2005)
From the review conducted in this section it is apparent that there are many different ways to approach social sustainability priorities using different guidelines, none of which offer a complete solution to the complexity of the issue. This is one reason why the phenomenon should be investigated in an exploratory way. Labuschagne et al. (2005) offer a useful development of sub-criteria for social sustainability overall and consider operationalising it to realise sustainability objectives, however it is not specifically related to supply chains or supplier selection. To develop this work into supplier selection criteria, an analysis of the most useful frameworks has been conducted where the dimensions can be translated into supply chain supplier selection terms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Framework</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Framework</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)</td>
<td>Labour standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Global Compact</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.4: Review of practitioner framework criteria for supply chain social sustainability

Table 2.4 shows the areas covered by the practitioner frameworks deemed relevant to supply chains. It provides an overview of key areas of social sustainability as proposed by these...
groups which large purchasing organisations are using as guidance. A high level double dotted representation refers to the purchaser-facing documentation and obvious referral to an aspect. Single dots represent that the aspect was covered, but with the description of the framework composition. As a result of this overview, three prevalent streams are identified as labour standards, human rights and community/society. These categories should be compared with other offerings from 3PSPs and purchasers’ views. Hence, Table 2.4 will be developed throughout the thesis to provide a more applicable and practical supplier selection grid for purchasers to use as currently the literature, practitioner frameworks and 3PSP input have not been compared, analysed and amalgamated into a usable format. It should be noted that one of the global frameworks previously mentioned have been omitted from the consolidation of supply chain social sustainability measures. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development Framework is excluded because it focuses on developing countries in particular. This table is developed in the next chapter to refine the focus related to supplier selection.

2.4 Summary

This chapter has reviewed important literature on the topic of social sustainability in business, and particularly supply chains. It proposed the TBL as a way to conceptualise sustainability and introduced the concept of SSCM. It has analysed policies to ensure the two are merged in an effective way, and begun to identify areas within the literature that are rich for further academic enquiry. It is clear from the review that different firms behave in different ways and that the research topic is still very much in its infancy. In business, firms appear to behave somewhere along a continuum of pre-compliance, compliance, beyond compliance, integrated strategy onto an actual passion for the need.

If sustainability “is a licence to do business in the 21st century, […] then supply chain management can be seen as an integral component of this licence” (Carter and Easton, 2011:59). The first literature review has identified the wider context of the sustainability landscape as traditional supply chain management is evolving to meet the requirements of new stakeholder expectations. The ways in which supply chain managers are reacting to these changes are introduced in the second literature review (for example, through SRP or supplier development). Hence, now that the change in setting is established including reasons why sustainability is important, and what it comprises, the second literature review in the next chapter introduces purchasing as a way to realise sustainability objectives. Therefore, this first
literature review is an introduction to the context of the research problem and hence a forerunner to the second review of literature, which formally establishes the ways management are attempting to tackle the phenomenon.

The second literature review will propose that one way to ensure sustainability factors are achieved is by requiring suppliers meet certain criterion before a relationship is embarked upon. Supplier selection criteria are just one small component of the supplier selection process albeit an important one. This research will not suggest that quality or cost will necessarily ever be overlooked even in the most sustainable of businesses, but getting the right mix of criteria is of key importance to include a number of aspects of meeting business goals (related to strategy). The factors considered in supplier selection are going to be situation-specific and each company is likely to need to develop their own criteria, hence the reason for a case study approach. But more research needs to be done in the area to gain a better understanding of what key criteria are needed.

The literature review has been written to highlight possible research questions by identifying a gap and gain insights into previous work. This chapter has revealed some theoretical frameworks to use (Carter and Rogers, 2008) and gained insights into previous research strategies in SSCM research, highlighting opportunities for future work. This chapter has clearly identified a significant gap in the literature of the social element of TBL missing in sustainability agendas. This gap in the literature occurs because academics have not given as much attention to the social element of sustainability as they have to the environmental issues, when considering that the economic dimension underpins both. With this gap identified, the next chapter narrows the focus on the application of social sustainability criteria that suppliers need to meet to be selected by purchasers.
3.1 Introduction

This literature review has been conducted to find the historical background of the themes used in this research, the contemporary context and any theoretical underpinnings of the topic. Having critically analysed the contributions to SSCM with a specific focus on social sustainability, this chapter reviews the literature on supplier selection and SRP in order to achieve social sustainability objectives. This includes how supplier selection criteria have developed over time and the use of supplier self-assessment in the process. It also reveals the gaps in the literature and ends with the development of research objectives for the empirical study.

3.2 Supplier selection

In the previous chapter, the importance of supplier behaviour on the purchasing firm was confirmed. As a result of increasing pressure on companies, corporations now need to be more responsible for the actions of their suppliers (and subcontractors), “even when the corporations themselves have no direct role in governing those third-party business partners” (Neef, 2004:11). As a result, dependency on supplier relationships is increased showing a dramatic shift in responsibility up the supply chain as large and powerful corporations can be held responsible for the actions of their suppliers (Hartmann and Moeller, 2014). This has contributed to driving reform in both national and global business. So, despite seeing an effort to shift more and more responsibility to suppliers, companies have not been able to rid themselves of all the legal, ethical, and quality responsibilities that come with that process. This emphasises the importance of these relationships, and the need to understand that each firm’s behaviours in the supply chain can impact one another, even when suppliers are geographically very distant or organisationally and legally separate. Most worryingly, despite this increasing concern of consequence within the supply chain, the supplier-relations function for most companies actually changed very little up to the middle of the last decade. It is key to ensure that suppliers are not endangering corporate reputation through illegal or unethical social and environmental practices, but in reality, Neef (2004) suggests that the growing pressures to monitor and control supplier behaviour, have not been something that
supplier management functions have been able to keep up with. Lange and Washburn (2012) even argue that more has been achieved on preventing suppliers from being irresponsible than on actually being responsible.

There are a number of purchasing models that can be found in the literature. One such study still widely referred to today is Reck and Long (1988) who recommend a model for developing the role of purchasing. They describe 4 stages, which still occur today, from a pure price focus on materials (passive stage) to value orientation for the overall business success (integrative stage). Reck and Long found that the purchasing function would move up and down the scale depending on organisational goals and pressures from the external environment. This is a useful study because it indicates that a firm’s strategy will have a result on the role of the purchasing and supply team. For example, a passive or independent stage of purchasing development in a company places little importance on the purchasing role as it is something that just needs to be done (e.g. another department requests a purchase). The supportive stage is where top management appreciate purchasing as a key business function and the integrative stage is where the firm’s success depends on the successes of the purchasing team. Although this study was originally conducted over 2 decades ago, it is still relevant to purchasing behaviours today.

It is clear from the review of the literature that the supplier decision is critical to business success. Kannan and Tan (2002) suggest that the popularity of outsourcing is a key reason why firms have increased their reliance and dependence on suppliers. This means that effective supplier selection is absolutely critical to a firm’s business performance. Ensuring that this is related to the sustainability strategy and organisation’s wider goals will ensure that the organisation is meeting its aims. Kannan and Tan (2002) suggest that little evidence exists regarding the impact of supplier selection and assessment on a buying firm’s business performance and conduct a study describing the importance of supplier selection and assessment criteria of American manufacturing companies for items to be used in products already in production. This is a very specific area of interest, not related to the chosen sector for this research. But it does identify relationships between criteria and a buying firm’s business performance. Kannan and Tan (2002) found that three dimensions underlie supplier management. These are: (1) effective supplier selection, (2) innovative supplier development strategies and (3) meaningful supplier performance assessment mechanisms. Relating to the first point which is of most interest for this study, they found that “soft, non-quantifiable
selection criteria, such as a supplier’s strategic commitment to a buyer, have a greater impact on performance than hard, more quantifiable criteria such as supplier capability, yet are considered to be less important” (p.11). This shows that criteria is important when making the supplier selection decision. Kannan and Tan’s study is a heavily quantitative study though, failing to fully investigate these soft criteria.

Often research conducted in the field of operations management can be heavily quantitative and based on statistical survey analysis and mathematical modelling, although this is less so the case in SSCM research. Using a field investigation technique such as case studies can “make the individual researcher, and the field in general richer and better prepared to solve real operations management problems” (McCutcheon and Meredith, 1993). Qualitative research allows the opportunity to explore and better understand emerging, contemporary phenomena or issues in their real world settings (Flynn et al., 1990; Meredith, 1998). For the investigation into and the development of supplier selection criteria, qualitative tools can be more effective, as shown in de Boer et al.’s (2001) model (see Figure 3.1). The empirical study involves the selection factors to be considered rather than the system used to weight the importance of individual factors.

![Figure 3.1: Positioning of decision methods in supplier selection (de Boer et. al., 2001)]
According to de Boer and van der Wegen (2003), the selection decision is sometimes entirely qualitative. This is because supplier selection decision making is complex and also that some of the models that are developed (which are the next stage in the process after supplier criteria development) do not work as they are too restrictive and are being used less frequently by firms because they are “distant from the reality of the corporate world” (Bruno et al., 2012:168). A qualitative approach is often adopted when making selection decisions because the choice is a multi-criteria problem with a multi-dimensional methodology (Bruno et al., 2012).

The remit of this research and therefore review of the literature, is bounded around supplier selection in SRP. Therefore supplier performance evaluation (once those selection decisions based on criteria have been made) is not included. However, it is useful to note that as (and if) firms monitor the suppliers performance against their expectations and requirements, they could then convert the results into an assessment of the suppliers performance, complemented in some cases by paths towards improvements (Lysons and Gillingham, 2006). It is also recommended that as well as one-way recommended improvements, focal firms should request feedback on their own practices (Lysons and Gillingham, 2006).

Nonetheless, some organisations have experienced a change in decision making processes relating to supplier selection because the number of potential suppliers and factors relating to these selection decisions is increasing as the pace of market globalisation quickens (Cheraghi et al., 2004). England and Leenders (1975) found that the most important responsibly of purchasing was to get the supplier selection right as this can be used to increase the competitiveness of the entire supply chain. The criteria used to make this decision will therefore have a significant impact on the effectiveness of this task.

In supplier selection decisions, two issues are of particular significance. One is what criteria should be used in the process to assist in making the decision, and the other is the methods available which can be used to compare suppliers. Following these decisions, there is a need for continuous evaluation and assessment of performance. The interest of this doctoral research is the criteria and role it and the key concepts play in the selection of suppliers and less about the models used for evaluation or assessment. In this section, historically common vendor selection key criteria are examined, with an emphasis on how it has changed over the
years. For example, it was traditionally based on invoice cost, the supplier's ability to meet quality requirements and a flexible and reliable delivery schedule. Then, there was a significant focus on processes such as JIT during the late part of the last century. More recently SSCM as a concept has gained more emphasis and popularity in the criteria list but overall, we see a lack of focus on sustainability elements. Firstly, it is important to identify the key ‘general’ criteria influencing the supplier selection decision as identified by Dickson (1966) and later reviewed by Weber et al. (1991) and Cheraghi et al. (2004).

Some of the earliest academic research into vendor selection criteria was by Dickson (1966) who studied criteria in vendor selection decisions. He listed 23 elements that were the most important in supplier decision making and evaluation. His findings have provided a useful basis for suitable and effective criteria for many years. However, Dickson did not look at the service industry in his research (as this was not a prominent sector in the 1960s), which is a downfall in applying his work today. The service industry is of just as much importance in supply chain research and so his findings to be used as a basis for key criteria are an important limitation to consider. Also, Dickson claimed to have found and ranked what criteria is important in selection, but not specifically what the composition of the criteria was in detail.

His work has resulted in many reviews and updates to his ideas. Again, these have ranked importance of aspects, not specifically what the criteria should be comprised of within their categories. These components have been the focus of many practitioners and academics. In 1991, Weber et al. conducted a comprehensive literature review of all the work produced in this area since 1966 (74 articles). In Weber et al’s 1991 update to the review of the literature, they identify price, delivery and quality as the most critical aspects in the supplier selection process. Corporate sustainability was still not a criterion in any of the works they examined. They did find though, that there is a multi-objective nature of many vendor selection decisions (Weber et al., 1991). After Weber et al’s review, Cheraghi et al. conducted another update (by reviewing 110 papers) in 2004, to see how the criteria had changed. They found some significant changes in the criteria, but still there was a clear ommittance (demonstrating its insignificance at the time) of sustainability dimensions in the list.

These changes in the criteria in Cheraghi et al’s work included some elements which were no longer important, some new factors and a shift in the priority of others. The reason for the
ranking of aspects being altered was as a result of increased competition and globalisation of markets facilitated by internet-based technologies (Cheraghi et al., 2004). The changes in criteria in the process was based around the development of the top three elements of quality, price and delivery as well as three criteria of product design and development, flexibility, and relationship, which were mostly presented from the end of 1990s (Cheraghi et al., 2004). See Table 3.1 for previous work on supplier selection criteria.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most current ranking (Cheraghi et al., 2004)</th>
<th>Previous ranking (Weber et al., 1991)</th>
<th>Previous ranking (Dickson, 1966)</th>
<th>Factor</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Quality</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>Delivery</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Repair Service</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Technical Capability</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Production Facilities and Capacity</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Financial Position</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Management and Organisation</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>New</td>
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<td>Communication System</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Performance History</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Consistency</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Long-Term Relationship</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Impression</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Reciprocal Arrangements</td>
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<td>New</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Process Improvement</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Not included</td>
<td>Product Development</td>
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<td>New</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>New</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Reputation and Position in Industry</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Labour Relations Record</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Operating Controls</td>
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<tr>
<td>No longer relevant</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Packaging Ability</td>
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<td>No longer relevant</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Training Aids</td>
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<tr>
<td>No longer relevant</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Desire for Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer relevant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Amount of Past Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No longer relevant</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Warranties and Claims Policies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: The changing ranking of vendor selection criteria
(adapted from Cheraghi et al., 2004)
Reliability, flexibility, consistency, and long-term relationship are four significant new entrants into the list of critical success factors for supplier selection. On the contrary, warranties and claim policies, amount of past business, desire for business, and training aids are among the elements that have become redundant. Cheraghi et al. (2004) describe their study as reviewing criteria, but even against these measurable items there is no guidance for purchasers. The lack of specificity in their work is not something a firm can actually use in practical terms until they develop these into measurable benchmarks. Another large scale review of key considerations was conducted by Ha and Krishnan (2008) and they too found that the key criteria of QCD were and remain the most important contemplations to selecting suppliers. Ha and Krishnan (2008) propose some good ideas and analysis of models for selecting suppliers but lacks the qualitative dimension of the decision and does not discuss specific criteria.

Greater emphasis is now placed on the management of the buyer-supplier relationship with a longer-term perspective (Moeller et al., 2006). This may mean that the purely quantitative aspects of the relationship are no longer sufficient when compared with the qualitative aspects of the relationship. This is something that is of particular interest as the focus shifts from quantitative values or scores, to qualitative values and beliefs.

Environment issues started to be considered in the supplier selection process in the early 2000s (Zhu and Geng, 2001, Humphreys et al., 2003). These are not significant enough to make it into the key criteria though. Also concluded from this research is that “supplier selection criteria will continue to change based on an expanded definition of excellence to include traditional aspects of performance (quality, delivery, price, service) in addition to non-traditional, evolving ones” (Cheraghi et al., 2004:91). By this they meant criteria such as just-in-time communication and process improvements, although still did not mention sustainability components. Looking at the criteria that were included as recently as 2004 and 2008, sustainability is not explicitly mentioned. As we expect attention on sustainability to increase in importance, it is likely that a “further erosion of the ranking of price” in future research on supplier selection criteria is inevitable (Cheraghi et al., 2004:101).

Therefore, a staple from Dickson’s model that has not changed over time is that decisions largely revolve around cost efficiencies. Wisner et al. (2012:105) provide some guidelines to minimise the risks and promote ethical sourcing policies.
These include:

- In the case of a product firm, determine where all purchased goods are from and how they are made
- Knowing if suppliers promote basic workplace principles
- Use of ethical ratings for suppliers alongside other standard performance criteria
- Use of independent verification or vendor compliance
- Reporting of supplier compliance performance to shareholders
- Providing detailed ethical sourcing expectations to vendors

The benefits of doing this are reduced costs by avoiding use of noncompliant suppliers, management of risk by managing brand and reputation and building intangible assets for enhancing brand and reputation through social and environmental responsibility (Wisner et al., 2012). Policy issues include attributes that a buying organisation values in suppliers and wishes to foster or reward such as environmental advantages and compliance to socially responsible practice policy standards. In order to incorporate a policy factor into supplier measurements, it must be defined clearly including what constitutes compliance and how much the organisation values the issue i.e. to what extent. To define organisation values, the policy’s sponsors (usually general management), may need to be asked. When this has been determined and the standards that the focal company expects are decided, this can create a positive incentive for the supplier to comply (Wisner et al., 2012).

To be sustainable, environmental and social criteria would need to be included in a policy which determines supplier selection criteria. Therefore, writers such as Lamming and Hampson (1996), Min and Galle (2001) and Cousins et al. (2004) have suggested that from the focal company's perspective, this implies that environmental and social criteria for supplier evaluation guarantee that the supplier acts according to set standards. By using all three dimensions of sustainable development there must be a lot of cooperation among companies along the supply chain which are derived from customer and stakeholder requirements (Seuring and Müller, 2008). Much focus has been and still is given to the evaluation and assessment of performance after the supplier selection has taken place. This is very important, but if some key criteria are used to make that decision then the evaluation should be more straightforward.
For example, developing criteria relating to corporate sustainability, which suppliers must meet in order to win a contract, should be used in a preceding way to firms auditing their suppliers (performance monitoring) once they are in a relationship. It could prevent and therefore avoid litigation, negative publicity, and possible regulatory action, and assist firms in more effectively managing suppliers and the purchaser organisations’ own internal processes (Carter, 2006). The current use of supply chain social responsibility auditing is at an emergent stage, and guidelines and standards are needed to ensure that supply chain social responsibility audits are conducted consistently across organisations (Logsdon and Lewellyn, 2000). On the other hand, rather than the ‘checking up’ nature of an audit, firms could be evaluated and assessed on criteria relating to this and social sustainability before they enter into the relationship, and thus used to set expectations.

As social responsibility and the concept of sustainable practice has developed, firms are aware of its presence (or lack thereof) throughout the supply chain, and “need to ensure goods are sourced from suppliers that are fulfilling their codes of conduct and maintaining their own level of financial, environmental and social responsibility” (Blanchard, 2007:2). In order to protect its interest, potential suppliers general, financial and operational practices should be scrutinised. Blanchard (2007) also recommends that the chosen supplier could then be placed on probation for a given time frame and given periodic audits. This gives them the opportunity to prove themselves to be an ethical, conscientious and compliant vendor. By having a purchasing policy or code of conduct in place explaining expectations of supplier behaviour (sometimes called vendor codes of conducts or supplier compliance programs), businesses demonstrate their commitment to maintaining high ethical standards. In addition, once the relationship has been established and the partners are working together, supplier recognition programs and awards can be used for ongoing commitment and performance to meet that initiative.

Although concrete material circumstances lie at the basis of the social dimension, the social phenomena themselves are immaterial and therefore difficult to analyse, especially quantitatively (Lehtonen, 2004). To draw a comparison, Bruno et al. (2012) believe that for environmental criteria, attributes should be associated with a set of measurable characteristics and that defining attributes is not sufficient unless measurable characteristics are identified. This could pose a challenge for identifying social criteria as it is more difficult to find metrics for them. Nonetheless, as a QCD focus which was key to supplier selection decisions for
many years evolves, and firms eradicate avoidable costs in people, purchasing, and processes, a new emphasis toward institutionalising the behaviour of firms within the supply chain is required, while incrementally improving contributing factors at every opportunity. As costs and pricing become transparent to customers, something else will need to differentiate and add value to the process. This suggests that we are now likely to see new criteria infiltrating supplier selection decisions to align with other strategic goals.

**Challenges in developing supplier selection criteria**

We are seeing the need to adapt from quantitative supplier selection criteria to more subjective values and opinions on certain business issues. This changes the focus of vendor selection and its outcomes. For example, Trent (2010) is concerned with the use of restrictive quantitative criteria and computerised scorecards, which ignores ‘voices’ and the own personal evaluations of managers. This emphasises the importance of qualitative research and listening to the people who are involved in the relationship. He is also concerned with criteria treating all suppliers the same way when the ‘one size fits all’ doesn’t allow adjustments to the performance categories and their weights to reflect the realities of different supply requirements. This is a worthy point, along with the argument that large, successful companies may not be useful as a benchmark to a small enterprise, yet this is where Trent has conducted most of his research. Therefore, criticising a one size fits all approach when he has researched best practice firms is incongruous.

Additionally, Trent (2010) emphasises the importance of continuous improvement in supplier metric systems as a fundamental on-going challenge. He suggests some useful recommendations to do this, which are interesting to raise here. Firstly, he advocates the use of free text in supplier metric and criteria systems given that one size does not fit all. Secondly, he firmly suggests the need for internal customers to feedback and evaluate on the suppliers’ day to day performance as they have the most experience of working with them. This adds another dimension to getting the original vendor selection criteria correct, followed by measuring and weighting this when it comes to making the decisions, followed by on-going review.

The key to the required challenges in supplier selection decisions is around hard and soft criteria. Ellram (1990) describes hard criteria as quantifiable determinants such as price, delivery, quality, and service, which are routinely used for supplier selection and assessment
(Hahn et al., 1990). This is where a lot of the research on vendor selection criteria lies to date. But Ellram (1990) recognises that ‘soft’ criteria (namely those factors which are difficult to quantify) are also important. These might include values and beliefs on something, relationships, or behaviour. In the current global environment it is careless to just use these hard criteria to make decisions (due to a more competitive business environment and gaining a competitive advantage through more than just cost savings) and actually, to consider other suppliers who could offer some extra value in some way. From a SSCM perspective, firms could try to stimulate better performance and behaviour by introducing site visits, training, and using alternative suppliers (Krause et al., 1998). However, this would be done after the initial process of choosing the supplier based on some criteria.

Similarly, it is argued that it would be advisable to employ prescriptive rather than descriptive supplier selection processes and criteria. For example, a descriptive model is recounting actual practice and can address a wide range of issues. Early studies focused on identifying the criteria used by buyers to select suppliers (e.g. Dickson 1966; Lehmann and O’Shaughnessy, 1982; Timmerman, 1986; Soukup, 1987). However, a prescriptive process refers to a model of how suppliers should be selected, given a set of selection criteria (Gregory, 1986; Ellram, 1990; Nydich and Hill, 1992). This argument should be approached with some caution as it is not wise to generalise all supplier selection criteria and it must be tailored to the particular firm (Trent, 2010). Therefore, some level of prescription would be desirable, but too much is likely to be disadvantageous.

While a basic framework is required (Neef, 2004), it does not need to be restrictive, as there are influence factors that might not be taken into account in the decision making process (Vahdani et al., 2008). These might include additional qualitative criteria or incomplete information. It is important that criteria consider qualitative dimensions to improve the robustness of the process. Multiple criteria should be analysed (Donaldson and Davis, 1994; Swift, 1995), and it should be recognised that often many people help to make the decisions (de Boer and van der Wegen, 2003) and finally, there is uncertainty in practice so some flexibility is required. An increasing number of supplier decisions can be characterised as dynamic and unstructured (Vahdani et al., 2008). The Methodology chapter will justify further the need for more qualitative research in this area.
3.3 Socially responsible purchasing (SRP)

A changing role of the purchasing function is the recognition of the operational implication that it has expanded from strictly serving to ensure a lowest unit price to become more value chain oriented (van Weele, 2000). The purchasing function is therefore central for the work with social considerations as it is a way of realising social goals. It is here that a buying organisation develops, sets and puts into operation the standards and formulates the criteria that are used in the buyer–supplier relationship.

What we now consider as SRP has been known in the past as socially responsible organisational purchasing (Drumwright, 1994; Maignan and McAllister, 2003), corporate social responsibility in the supply chain (Maloni and Brown, 2006), socially responsible buying (Maignan et al., 2002), responsible procurement (Allen, 2006), SRP and disposal (Webb et al., 2008), ethical purchasing (Wells, 2004), socially and environmentally responsible procurement (SERP) (Hoejmose, and Adrien-Kirby, 2012) and socially responsible supplier selection (SRSS) (Thornton et al., 2013). SRP can be defined as the “inclusion in purchasing decisions of the social issues advocated by organisational stakeholders” (Maignan et al., 2002, p. 642). This is a useful definition because it highlights stakeholders as critical, however purchasing has a broader connotation than buying and therefore SRP will be used. Nonetheless, purchasing as a general term will be interchangeable with procurement, buying or sourcing for the thesis, as Miemczyk et al. did in their 2012 article. These varying names and definitions that are used to denote sustainable sourcing to include social, environmental and ethical notions blurs the exact scope of SRP. It will include the social sustainability dimensions for this research. While purchasing relates to the acquisition of external resources at the most favourable conditions, SRP adds social sustainability requirements to the pre-mentioned set of conditions. For example, Leire and Mont (2010) found that labour practices and working conditions, as well as child and forced labour, are main aspects addressed in SRP. Employment practices, labour and management relations, health and safety, employee training, discrimination, collective bargaining, community work, corruption prevention, legal compliance, product labelling or product declaration were also included in fewer cases.

Before SRP (which includes a social element to meet stakeholder requirements) green purchasing was adopted by many organisations (Min and Galle, 1997, 2001). Green purchasing was considered one of the most effective ways to tackle environmental problems.
by focusing on waste prevention and reduction of energy consumption. Min and Galle (1997) formulated a green purchasing strategy by evaluating the role of green purchasing on supplier selection, energy reduction, waste elimination and packaging. Moreover, they identified various obstacles to effective green purchasing, like high cost of environmental programs, uneconomical recycling, and uneconomical reuse. According to Min and Galle (1997), obstacles to effective green purchasing such as high cost of environmental programs, uneconomical recycling, and uneconomical reuse occur because of a lack of systematic methods to aid purchasing professionals in accurately measuring the benefits and costs of green purchasing. This is a problem now occurring in SRP 15 years later, indicating that a similar path is being followed to the implementation of GSCM.

Deploying an organisation’s social sustainability objectives through purchasing is challenged by the lack of selection standards and measures for the supply chain (Clarkson, 1995; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Ashby et al., 2012). The first step for buyers to address this critical business issue is to develop SRP criteria that captures and addresses matters such as human rights, child labour and health and safety issues (Carter 2005). Specifically, Carter (2004) found 5 main elements of human rights, safety, diversity, philanthropy and community whereby all hypotheses associated with these being important for SRP (or PSR in his case) were found to be proved. Other suggestions have included workers’ rights, wages, workforce issues related to disabled workers, racial equality, minorities, ethnicity and gender equality (Lobel, 2006) and compliance with equal opportunity standards, compensating workers fairly, good labour-management relations, benefits to support workers and their families, adoption of human rights standards, combat against human rights abuses and product safety and integrity (Park and Stoel, 2005). Other social issues related to purchasing and supply include human rights, worker rights, corruption, safety, and philanthropy (Maignan et al., 2002, 2003; Carter and Jennings, 2004; Maloni and Brown, 2006). Although some of the aspects that can be considered in SRP can also be relevant for green purchasing, the origins of criteria differ significantly for social sustainability. As already discovered in social sustainability measurements generally, there is confusion and no agreement on what should be included and any attempts come from the amalgamation of a variety of sources (Leire and Mont, 2010) such as direct research from organisations and global conventions as a starting point for developing social criteria for suppliers.
One of the objectives of the study will be to analyse the areas of social sustainability supplier selection criteria by evaluating frameworks, current criteria and organisational responses. Thus far, the literature is confusing and does not employ substantial logical thought to grouping the social sustainability criteria that could be used in SRP. The following list adapted from Zorzini et al.’s (2015) analysis is clearer, which can then be used as a basis for an analysis of the options available to purchasers. Suppliers should be considering the following areas:

- Labour conditions such as child and forced labour, discipline, working hours, living wages and other fair operating practices
- Health and safety including the provision by suppliers of safe working environments
- Human rights
- Community including charitable initiatives or the use of local suppliers
- Ethics and integrity such as ethical behaviour in sourcing decisions, including purchasing through the fair trade movement supporting pricing strategies that allow suppliers to avoid poverty and sustain business longevity, anti-corruption and anti-bribery
- Consumer issues including the social impact on customers, and product responsibility.

While these are all important social issues for SRP, Zorzini et al. (2015:70) argue that “priority is likely to be given to one or two categories of issues in the early stages of an initiative” and “further research into the relative importance of the various issues could provide valuable insights for practising managers”. However, these long lists of criteria for managers need to be identified into useable categories first. The elements above are linked to alternative parts of the supply chain (e.g. internal and external) and so more pre-selection clarification needs to be defined in the academic literature before prioritising issues which will need metrics against them.

Relevant SRP models

Two SRP models have been developed in the context of SSCM (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Leire and Mont, 2010). As purchasing is something that can tangibly realise sustainability strategy this is a low number and we would expect to see more development here due to the more measurable nature of this supply chain stage as it deals with tangible materials (Ashby et al, 2012). Leire and Mont’s (2010) SRP model reveals the five elementary steps that are
necessary in the implementation of systematic SRP practices: developing internal policies; setting purchasing criteria that regard social issues; applying assurance practices; managing supplier relations; and building internal capacity (on the left of Figure 3.2). The model is then developed in the paper to include the different activities in the process and their associated challenges. This is described by the authors as an ‘elaborated’ SRP process and is useful for positioning the area of interest for the thesis. Figure 3.2 shows the important steps related to pre-selection of suppliers as being developing criteria from organisational policies (e.g. their strategic goals). For a recap on the overall supplier selection process, see the Introduction chapter (Figure 1.1).

Figure 3.2: The process of SRP (adapted from Leire and Mont, 2010)
In 1994, Drumwright argued that it was important that the SRP is part of a deliberate corporate strategy. Carter and Jennings (2000) explained that senior management has an effect on the purchasing values of the firm, and that organisational culture has an effect on the purchasing values of the firm if it “embodies values including fairness and the desire to be a good corporate citizen” (p.401). Therefore, the senior management team are as key as supply managers in effecting supplier selection choices by not just “talking the talk” but also by “walking the walk” (p.401). One way they can do this is by developing a firm-wide sustainability strategy. While the strategy of the firm is of interest as this is a realisable driver of sustainability at the firm level, the senior management support and culture (reason why they choose to be sustainable) is considered a given for the thesis research as the sample consists of firms pursuing sustainability agendas.

Some organisations start with internal drivers for SRP, namely organisational values and concerns of employees for practices in supply chains. This demonstrates the shift from a risk management attitude to SRP to a value management attitude, whereby possibilities and opportunities, rather than problems and risks are identified. As the firms in the sample are pursuing this, they are likely to have senior level support and a supportive culture. The area of more interest is the transaction exchange between the buyer and supplier and what facilitates that decision, not the overall decision to pursue the agenda. In sum, various authors have pointed out the beneficial effects of SRP, but the operational aspects of integrating SRP elements into the daily routines of the purchasing function and of suppliers has not been answered yet (van Weele, 2000). This study therefore focuses on what SRP actually looks like in organisations and how this may develop over time.

Drivers of SRP include strategic synergies such as management leadership, organisational culture, employees’ individual values and governmental regulations (Carter and Jennings, 2004). More interestingly, barriers to SRP are the difficulties in coordinating various functions in the supply chain and the lack of supply of a product or service, which is more likely to emerge in the research as the drivers mentioned should all be in place due to the sample selected. Mont and Leire (2009) found that the main drivers for SRP in Sweden include stakeholder influence and organisational values, media and NGOs’ attention and employees’ concern, casting a wider view than the previous work done by Carter and Jennings. The main barriers are “a lack of resources for supplier audits, difficulties to ensure that all suppliers fulfil the code of conduct, differences in culture and management style, low
levels of social standards and high levels of corruption in some countries of supply, all of which makes assurance practices a very costly enterprise” (p.388) and SRP a multifarious function. Although complex, SRP initiatives have a direct positive impact on job satisfaction, employee motivation, and trust among stakeholders, improved stakeholder relationships, and potentially improved financial performance as well as on supplier performance by improved trust and cooperation (Carter and Jennings, 2002). At this level, Carter and Jennings (2002) test hypotheses of having commitment and trust in a buyer-supplier relationship rather than opportunistic behaviour and found that supplier performance is improved when this is present. This shows an incentive for engaging in SRP and indicates some of the factors that need to be present in the exchange but is less useful for defining the criteria or process needed.

In sum, the literature reveals the reasons for organisations to start developing, maintaining and advancing SRP is stakeholder pressure and hence managing risks. Mont and Leire (2009) found that a key external barrier to organisations and their suppliers adopting SRP was different levels of expectations with regard to social issues, indicating the importance of codes of conduct and clear expectations. The main internal barrier is lack of specified information and customised material for how an organisation can build a systematic way for incorporating and improving social aspects in supply chains. The theory and practice of SRP needs to be further developed by including studies on the collection of information on best practices that would help organisations who are lagging behind to learn how to initiate work on SRP. One way suppliers demonstrate a visible commitment to social sustainability is through the use of certification such as FairTrade (achieving better trading conditions) and Red Tractor (assurance in production standards). The degree of worth purchasers place on these certifications as a demonstration of sustainability behaviour will be investigated in the empirical research. For certification to be awarded there will be a baseline of minimal expected behaviour so “relying on (third-party) certificates can give retailers and corporations the legitimacy they seek under uncertainty” (Moxham and Kauppi, 2014:414). This reduces the decision-making uncertainty of purchasers which Gao et al., (2005) argue must be reduced.

The fragmented adoption of SRP is somewhat surprisingly low given the repeated literature on the advantages of sustainable sourcing have been highlighted repeatedly (e.g. Krause et al., 2009; Paulraj, 2011) and therefore the enthusiasm for corporate sustainability and the
purchasing function’s importance in its implementation. This gap between potential benefits and actual usage maybe attributed to two factors according to Schneider and Wallenburg, (2012). Firstly, some companies may simply not be aware that SRP constitutes an integral part of corporate sustainability and, as such, requires a systematic implementation. Secondly, others may already have recognised the central role of SRP for corporate sustainability, but lack the capabilities, instruments, or processes for its efficient introduction. Both scenarios point to purchasing lacking the necessary assertiveness or salience. Therefore, despite the fact that there are companies that already include social aspects in their policy, it is the translation of the policy statements into operational practices that seems to be the main obstacle.

Overall, the SRP literature has revealed that there are no standard criteria, no standard or agreed best practice process, or further advice on how it should be implemented. The literature largely focuses around the driver and barriers to SRP. This may be because of issues with context and so standards are not desirable. Hoejmose and Adrien-Kirby (2012) call for researchers in the field to contribute more to the development and testing of theory and exploring the complexity involved, rather than to the description of the phenomenon, which is an aim in this thesis work.

Green purchasing tends to focus not only on environmental aspects of production, but also on environmental features of products in their usage phase. Thus, SRP appears to be more focused on supplier performance and compliance compared to environmentally responsible purchasing that also gives substantial attention to product performance. In both cases, however, focal organisations develop certain criteria that suppliers need to fulfil if they want to sell their products to the organisation and this criteria then needs to be evidenced that it is being met through self-assessment or audits. As audits typically come at the evaluation stage (see Figure 1.1) once a decision has been made to ensure ongoing compliance, self-assessment will be reviewed in the next section. This is because it is a method often used at the pre-selection stage for suppliers to provide details of their behaviour to purchasers to aid in a selection decision. It is noted that audits can be used at preselection stage but as they are costly and time consuming, self-assessment tools such as self-assessment questionnaires (SAQs) are usually primarily used before auditing commences.
Self-assessment

As well as identifying which criteria should be included in supplier selection, managers need to decide how the process should be coordinated, as the elements can be difficult to measure. Currently, there is an increased reliance on self-assessment and collaborative practices for purchasing when working with new suppliers to reduce risk and maintain competitiveness. One form of this collaboration is self-assessment practice whereby suppliers self-assess against set criteria in order to provide the information organisations need to make a decision about whether to engage in a buyer-supplier relationship. Self-assessment has been used in quality management and risk practices for decades and there are lessons to be learned from this, in a new and rapidly developing context.

Jackson (1999) investigated the use of self-assessment and business excellence models in a healthcare context and found that there were both benefits and challenges associated with the process. Self-assessment tools added value by encouraging thought about matters that might not have been addressed otherwise. However following this analysis, the self-assessment tools ultimately suggested improvement in too many areas that were not possible to manage and then the failure to address all of these areas was demoralising for the healthcare teams. Using 519 different European organisations, Van der Wiele et al. (1996) demonstrated that the most important reasons for organisations to self-assess were to find opportunities for improvement, create a focus on a particular agenda, direct the improvement process, provide new motivation for the improvement process and as a management tool. These objectives all fit with the desire to become more socially sustainable in practice. However, subsequently Van der Wiele et al. (2000) discussed a need for some experience with the objectives, in this case total quality management (TQM), being able to use self-assessment effectively. This raises questions about suppliers being familiar with social sustainability objectives before they embark on the process.

There are many critiques of self-assessment offered in the context of business excellence models and TQM models. Richie and Dale (2000) provide a thorough analysis of the benefits and difficulties of using self-assessment in this context which can be generalised to using self-assessment in other settings. This is useful because many of the contexts that use the models do so because it is the best option they have, even though it comes with many disadvantages. Benefits of using the self-assessment process outlined by Richie and Dale (2000), which are relevant to this paper, include that it drives continuous improvement,
encourages involvement and ownership of parties involved, provides visibility in direction, raises understanding and awareness of issues, develops a common approach to improvement, develops a holistic approach to the issue, maintains a certain image, provides a link between customers and suppliers, provides a healthcheck of processes and operations, and encourages improvements in performance. Difficulties include the time consuming nature of the process, not knowing how to complete the tools, lack of resources to complete them, and a lack of integration with other processes in some cases. This demonstrates the challenging nature of the method.

3PSPs
Developing instruments to select, assess, monitor and to manage social issues are needed to counter the ambiguity of sustainability dimensions (Hall and Matos, 2009; Pagell and Wu, 2009; Rota et al., 2013). However, the lack of detailed and practical guidance for businesses on what and how to measure the social dimension of a sustainable supply chain has led to the marketplace developing an alternative solution through third party service providers (3PSP). These independent organisations have attempted to fill the knowledge gap through developing their own frameworks and guidelines, and who will manage this supplier self-assessment process for purchasers. Their role in the process is of interest. For example, their tools assist the information gathering from the suppliers but they appear to have a larger part to play in facilitating the overall supplier engagement beyond holding the information in a knowledge management system. 3PSPs include organisations such Sedex, Aim Progress, Ethical Trade Initiative, Maplecroft, Ecovardis, 2degrees and Sustainalytics (Surroca et al., 2010). The service provided to purchasing professionals range from assessing a firms’ policy, codes of conduct and standards to evaluate if organisations have social credentials (Wolf, 2014). They may also perform data collection services for buyers through the provision of self-assessment questionnaires for suppliers to complete. It has been established that Leire and Mont (2009, 2010) have conducted the most useful research on SRP to date, yet they mention self-assessment and 3PSPs just once in two papers. Wolf (2014) provides slightly more focus on 3PSPs, probably due to the later nature of the work and the increasing role they have to play.

It has been established that the challenges for purchasing management revolve around identifying which criteria should be included in supplier selection and how the process should be coordinated, as several of the elements can be difficult to measure. Whereas in Chapter 2
the criteria was largely around social sustainability measures generally, the 3PSPs are looking at supply chain behaviour specifically. Table 3.2 shows the 3PSP criteria. They include labour standards, health and safety and business integrity as main categories for consideration. Also, health and safety, living wages, working hours, forced labour and collective bargaining (fair operating practices), child labour, living conditions and non-discrimination and anti-corruption are specifically covered (Maignan et al., 2002; Wolf, 2014). Evaluating suppliers’ performance supports firms in aligning with the need of the stakeholders, therefore diminishing the risk of unethical or illegal activities of vendors (Pagell and Wu, 2009; Gimenez and Sierra, 2013).
3PSP Organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Labour standards</th>
<th>Health and safety</th>
<th>Fair operating practices</th>
<th>Living wage</th>
<th>Human rights</th>
<th>Community/Society</th>
<th>Business integrity</th>
<th>Consumer issues</th>
<th>Anti-corruption</th>
<th>Product responsibility</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sedex</td>
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<td>Aim Progress</td>
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<td>Ethical Trade Initiative</td>
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<td>Ecovadis</td>
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** covered in high level description (primary)  * covered in detailed description (secondary)

Table 3.2: Review of 3PSP criteria for supply chain social sustainability

Table 3.2 shows the social sustainability areas covered by 3PSPs. It provides an overview of key dimensions of social sustainability as proposed by these groups which large purchasing organisations are using as guidance. As a result of this overview, three main streams are identified as labour standards, health and safety and business integrity. Labour standards was also most frequently cited in the practitioner frameworks in Table 2.4, but health and safety and business integrity are more pertinent in the 3PSP documentation compared to human rights and community/society in the practitioner frameworks. This adds more foundation to the argument that social sustainability supplier selection criteria areas are perplexing for purchasers, especially as health and safety in the workplace may be viewed as a human right.

Three of the 3PSPs mentioned previously have been omitted from the consolidation. Maplecroft is excluded because they provide a risk based analysis which is not directly comparable to a sustainability focus. Sustainalytics is excluded because they are ethical investment consultants, not directly linked to supply chain sustainability. 2degrees is
excluded because their focus is not specifically the supply chain even though they do consider ethical business practices. Table 3.3 exhibits a proposed high level list of items that should be incorporated in SRP for firms who are looking to use criteria to assess suppliers against, as a result of the practitioner frameworks and 3PSPs who are offering direction in this area. It is developed from Tables 2.4 and 3.2 which compare similar and differing criteria measures for social sustainability. By merging the social sustainability dimensions of the global practitioner frameworks in Chapter 2 and the relevant 3PSP dimensions, a clearer picture is sought. The table shows that labour standards, human rights, health and safety and business integrity are referred to most frequently and dominantly in the sources that are available to purchasers to use to develop criteria (practioner frameworks and 3PSP guidance). Comparisons with empirical research into purchasers and establishing an order of importance or categorisation would be a logical next step to develop the table.
### Chapter 3: Literature Review

#### Table 3.3: Review of all criteria for supply chain social sustainability (practioner frameworks and 3PSP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Framework/3PSP Organisation</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Labour standards</td>
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<td>International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)</td>
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<td>Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)</td>
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<td>UN Global Compact</td>
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<td>Sedex</td>
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<td>Aim Progress</td>
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<td>Ecovadis</td>
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Examples from the academic literature:
- Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008; Park and Stoel, 2005
- Maloni and Brown, 2006; Kause et al., 2009
- Castka and Balzarova, 2008
- Mont and Leire, 2009
- Carter, 2005; Maloni and Brown, 2006; Castka and Balzarova, 2008; Klassen and Verbeke, 2012

** covered in high level description (primary)  * covered in detailed description (secondary)
Thus far, the literature has been reviewed to provide an overview of the sustainability landscape and its evolution in the business environment, particularly in the social domain. Sustainability frameworks that have a position in socially SSCM have been reviewed and traditional supplier selection criteria have been explained and positioned in the context of socially responsible purchasing which adds a new dimension of considerations to conventional benchmarks. As SRP brings a new complexity to the original supplier selection as purchasers are being asked to make decisions based on additional factors, the next step is to consider some of the behavioural aspects to the buyer-supplier exchange.

3.4 Organisational theory in buyer-supplier relationships

There is potential for organisational theory to be used to advance SSCM research. Carter and Easton (2011) found a lack of the use of theoretical lenses and the opportunity to employ them that has not yet been realised (Ketchen and Hult, 2007). This has been conducted more widely in environmental research. For social sustainability to become more mainstream in organisations, it needs to be studied with the same lenses that we use to study organisational behaviour in general, for example through organisational theories. Moxham and Kauppi (2014:414) define organisational theory as “a management insight that can help explain or describe organisational behaviours, designs, or structures” following the approach of Sarkis et al. (2011) focussing on the inter-organisational level. The way in which institutional mechanisms impact organisations’ social behaviours is an important consideration (Campbell, 2007). As there is an exchange between the buyer and supplier parties and because SSCM should have a long term focus, it is important to consider relationships in the literature, starting with traditional buyer-supplier perspectives.

The agency problem traditionally links buyers and suppliers competing interests in an exchange. It stems from TCE originally proposed by Coase (1937) and further developed by Williamson (1971, 1975, 2008). Agency theory covers this misalignment between objectives between parties whereby “rational individuals will favour alternatives that enhance their own utility” (Cuevas-Rodríguez et al., 2012:526). The principal-agent problem can be associated with many contexts, although was originally linked to an owner-manager scenario. The principal-agent relationship of agency theory is still relevant in the buyer-supplier relationship, whereby the buyer is the principal and the supplier is the agency due to the nature of the risk associated with the relationship. There is a risk related with supplier
association whereby such “an event could occur which may have a resulting detrimental consequence on the purchasing firm” (Zsidisin and Ellram, 2003:15). The risk comes from supplier behaviour and the reputational damage to the purchaser who in most cases is the customer facing brand. Agency theory encourages the use of mechanisms for aligning the interests of principals and agents (Eisenhardt, 1989b) and reducing opportunism. Opportunism includes such behaviours as lying, shirking, not fully disclosing information, cheating or violating the spirit of an agreement (Shapiro, 2005). It is described a ‘problem’ because opportunism increases transaction costs and hinders the development of trust and commitment (Gassenheimer et al., 1996; Joshi and Arnold, 1997). Trust can be “the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other party will perform a particular action important to the trustor” (Mayer et al., 1995:712) In social sustainability research into suppliers, Huq et al., (2014) found TCE a useful organisational theory to employ because the agency problem may arise in the buyer-supplier exchange, for example because the buyer must rely on “other actors in the supply chain for their expertise, access to raw materials, brokering of physical or temporal distance” (Shapiro, 2005:275). Where it is cost effective to outsource the supply, the buyer is also engaging in an agency relationship.

Behavioural theories of the firm are useful in the context of the buyer-supplier exchange as a result of the increasing occurrence of longer-term strategic, collaborative buyer-supplier relationships from one-off transactions which promoted opportunistic behaviour. In supplier selection, self-assessment tools can be used for the supplier to share information to demonstrate an alignment of buyer and supplier goals. If goals do not align, the supplier is often offered advice to improve. A large amount of trust is needed for self-assessment (otherwise the option would simply be auditing). An alternative theoretical perspective from behavioural sciences to describe circumstances under which honesty, loyalty, and trust in agents’ behaviours are possible and also the development of cooperative rather than contentious relationships are present and desirable is stewardship theory (Fox and Hamilton, 1994; Donaldson and Davis, 1994; Cuevas-Rodríguez et al., 2012). This approach argues that the adoption of organisational strategies based on both mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation are both feasible and desirable. Thus, the supplier behaves cooperatively (or collaboratively) because the supplier’s task is to see that the purchaser’s objectives are met, thus ensuring sustainability of the buying relationship which will lead to the supplier’s financial viability. Thus, the supplier gains greater utility when they develop a collaborative approach than when
they behave in a selfish and opportunistic way (Argyris, 1973). Therefore, beginning with an assumption of trust and viewing agents as ‘stewards’ of the organisation, motivated to act responsibly, may result in more desirable outcomes for both parties (Davis et al., 1997). However, this is not a theory that is utilised in the academic literature in traditional or environmentally charged buyer-supplier relationships. Shapiro’s (2005) paper on agency theory offers just one sentence to the stewardship perspective as an alternative to the agency approach.

Davis et al. (1997) began to investigate stewardship theory in the principal-agent relationship and while they found some major differences in the theories in the use of trust versus control systems to manage risk they did advocate the two being used together. They were not looking at this in the context of the buyer and supplier exchange and their propositions are all related to what type of people make stewards and therefore stewardship theory rather than the context of the organisation (e.g. a sustainable one). They do not see these aspects as being mutually exclusive. On the contrary, when the risk in a situation is greater than the trust, a control system can bridge the gap by lowering the perceived risk to a level that can be managed by trust. For example, in an organisation that has a culture of ‘open book management’ and transparency in numbers (a control system), the levels of perceived risk may be lower. The use of control systems is how agency theory proposes dealing with risk management, and this does not foster the development of trust. Davis et al. (1997) see stewardship behaviour as rational behaviour based on assumptions very different from those of agency theory. They suggest the need for more research to be conducted by examining the dynamic relationship between them, something which has not been successfully studied in the buyer-supplier realm.

In buyer–supplier dyads, governance is realised through both transactional and relational mechanisms (Aulakh et al., 1996; Jap and Ganesan, 2000). Transactional factors are manifested in stipulated contractual clauses to protect specific investments from opportunistic behaviour (Williamson, 2008). It stipulates the rights and obligations of both parties through formal rules, terms and procedures. It also explicitly states how various future situations will be handled (i.e. product responsibility, trading procedure, penalties for noncompliance, etc.) the contracting has a farsighted nature whereby parties look ahead, recognise hazards, and devise hazard mitigating responses to realise mutual gain. Relational factors are also
recognised as useful instruments to control opportunism and nourish cooperation in buyer-supplier channels (Heide and John, 1992; Gundlach et al., 1995; Kim, 2000).

Scholars have looked at the transactional and relational factors at play in inter-organisational exchanges such as supplier selection and there is scope for further research to be conducted (Heide and John, 1992; Lusch and Brown, 1996; Barclay and Brock, 1997; Jap and Ganesan, 2000; Poppo and Zenger, 2002; Jap and Anderson, 2003; Cavusgil et al., 2004; Wuyts and Geyskens, 2005). Liu et al. (2009) investigated buyer-supplier dyads and the different roles transactional and relational factors have in hindering opportunism and improving relationship performance in an emerging economy (China). They described transactional factors as “those that govern interparty exchanges, avoiding uncertainties through legal stipulations and economic incentive systems” (Liu et al., 2009:294). Transactional factors often focus on self-interest, protection, process, conflict and risk management and agreement. Relational factors are those that “emphasize inherent and moral control, governing exchanges through consistent goals and cooperative atmospheres” Liu et al. (2009:294). These focus as much on what you give than what you get, often promote mutual interest, understand the person in the process, evaluate the relationship, and resolve conflict. Their results showed that “transactional mechanisms are more effective in restraining opportunism while relational mechanisms are more powerful in improving relationship performance” (p.305). Overall, the exchange benefits the most when both contracts and relational norms are used jointly than when used separately. This means that agency theory is just one part of the approach and that social exchange theory or a relational perspective theory might be necessary organisational theories to see the fuller picture. These have been investigated in management literature with stewardship theory in SCM less so. In the socially SSCM literature review conducted by Zorzini et al. (2015), the stewardship perspective was not found to be a theory employed as yet.

Relational aspects govern buyer–supplier exchanges because the embeddedness of social connections generates standards of expected behaviour (Granovetter, 1985). These social bonds can lead to group norms that increase the commitment of the parties to maintaining a cooperative relationship (Seabright et al., 1992). Relational factors in inter-organisational cooperation encompass trust whereby trust is defined as the confidence or belief that the exchange partner possesses about the honesty and benevolence of other partners (Kumar et al., 1995). While studying supplier responsiveness, Handfield and Bechtel (2002) researched
managers working to create new relational forms that rely on trust to a greater extent within the relationship. However they still find the use of contracts are necessary, but need more trust for better results and hence greater success.

Relational norms support economic exchanges by establishing a socially constructed environment that promotes and nourishes relationship-specific opportunities. Transactional processes generally provide a legal and institutional framework within which relational structures can perform, while relational factors redress the deficiency of legal and institutional ordering in a socially confined economic structure (Liu et al., 2009). In the Chinese context of regular buyer-supplier relationships, they argue that there will be some complementary effect on mitigating opportunism and improving relational performance when both transactional and relational components are used together. Heide and John (1992:34) suggest that “relational exchange norms are based on the expectation of mutuality of interest, essentially prescribing stewardship behaviour, and are designed to enhance the wellbeing of the relationship as a whole”. They were looking in a marketing context and although mention stewardship this has not been developed substantially in the supply chain or buyer-supplier literature. For SSCM to occur it will need to gain prominence. Mutual goals encourage both mutuality of interest and stewardship behaviour that will lead to achieving the mutual goals in SSCM. This has further use in that it may be easier to measure the degree to which the buyers and suppliers share the same goals than it is to measures values and norms.

Heide and John (1992) propose a tripartite conceptualization of relational norms that features the flexibility, information exchange, and solidarity dimensions. Flexibility refers to the shared expectations that parties will be willing to modify the original terms of the contract to take into account changes in the contracting environment. Information exchange refers to shared expectations that parties will be willing to provide any information if it may be helpful to the partner, whether or not the party is contractually obliged to do so. Finally, solidarity refers to the bilateral expectations that parties will act in such a manner as to benefit each other (Heide and John, 1992). These characteristics promote a longer term orientation rather than just transaction based to realise the ongoing stream of rents (Joshi and Stump, 1999).

More support for researching both transactional and relational elements in an interfirm exchange is argued by Poppo and Zenger (2002) who found that firms should employ multiple mechanisms for governing inter-organisational relationships and that transactional
and relational factors act as complementary. Since the effectiveness of transactional and relational components is not context-free (Jap and Anderson, 2003), it is important to consider the case basis for each study. Because each has an advantage that brings something that outweighs the other on its own (e.g. contract signals distrust). There is some additional or synergetic effect of using relational and transactional factors together (Liu et al., 2009). For example, Gimenez and Tachizawa (2012) proposed that supplier assessment and collaboration must exist for most effective governance.

In previous studies, there is a strong emphasis on the importance of relationships, and especially collaboration, between supply chain partners to foster the achievement of sustainable goals in the supply chain (e.g. Seuring and Müller, 2008; Gold et al., 2010; Gimenez and Tachizawa, 2012). However, the concept of power should not be overlooked in the buyer-supplier exchange (Oliver, 1990; Cox, 2004; Touboulic et al., 2014). When a large focal company uses smaller suppliers by nature, power will have a part to play in the behaviour of both parties. However, by introducing power into the empirical study the remit will grow too large and uncontrollable and detriment the focus of social sustainability, strategy, criteria and facilitators of SRP too much. Nonetheless, the consideration of whose goals are being prioritised, a concern raised by Arthurs and Busenitz (2003), will be readdressed in the discussion.

3.5 Moving the literature forward

Having already identified that lesser attention has been given to social sustainability as a concept in Chapter 2, this chapter narrowed that observation down to the application of social sustainability criteria that suppliers need to meet to be selected by purchasers; also an area that is in its infancy. While there is research on purchasing and vendor selection from an economic perspective, SRP is a problematic area for purchasers as it is a difficult concept to measure, hence they find it difficult to attach criteria. Nonetheless there are attempts being made at this in practice and there is almost no recognition of this in the literature at all, other than a few articles who mention 3PSPs in their literature review but often not in their findings (e.g. Surroca et al., 2010; Huq et al., 2014; Wolf, 2014). Developing a purchasing model from the traditional QCD approach to incorporate other factors in socially sustainable supplier selection decisions will progress the literature. For example, similarly to trust and transparency issues in SAQs which occur across any self-assessment context, in the original
QCD approach to purchasing, transparency has been heavily researched in relation to supplier product quality. The challenge is to achieve similar results of supplier transparency to protect the purchaser from risk for sustainability indicators.

Additionally, considerations should also be given to the knowledge economy and how knowledge can be shared in supply chains and across industries for best practice (Paton and McLaughlin, 2008). This necessity of sharing information about supplier social sustainability behaviour is linked with the ‘know what’ approach. Garud (1997) explains that knowledge sharing such as that discussed, consist of three types; know-what, know-how and know-why. Organisational performance is leveraged by knowledge creation, whereby knowledge transfer and sharing is key (Garud, 1997). ‘Know what’ represents the appreciation of the kinds of phenomena worth pursuing (Garud, 1997) and identifies the gaps in social sustainability behaviour that might need to be addressed. The ‘know why’ represents the understanding of principles underlying the phenomena and the ‘know how’ represents the understanding of generative processes that constitute phenomena (Garud, 1997). Knowledge know-how has been considered in the past, especially between collaborating firms. In 1997, Simonin reported on the importance of collaborative know-how to move away from know-what or simplistic views of knowledge management. For example, findings showed that a firm’s experience must be transformed into know-how before it can improve performance. However, Simonin (1997) discussed collaborative know-how as knowing how to collaborate through the experience of collaborating, rather than offering deeper insights into the know-how transfer of complex information such as sustainability indicators. In order to clarify the best practice so that purchasing organisations can successfully start to reap the rewards of SRP, research should be open to knowledge transfer opportunities in this emerging area (Bessant et al., 2003). Knowledge may come from third parties, buyers or suppliers to add value to the chain as a whole.

3.6 Research objective and questions
Social sustainability purchasing literature on the factors and criteria that businesses utilise in selecting suppliers to deliver the needs of stakeholders is in an early development stage. Through investigating the pre-relationship activities the study looks at supplier selection factors from a buyer perspective that leads to a decision to select or not select a vendor to help deliver the sustainability strategy of the organisation. Through the SRP approach the
interaction between the buyer and supplier that leads to the selection (or not) within the context of the social SSCM will be examined. The thesis explores both the operational (including selection criteria) and the relational factors of supplier selection, through theory generation case studies, to address research objectives.

The research objectives emerge from the literature review and the gap in the academic research to date, which indicates problems that need to be addressed. As the research is intended to be exploratory in nature, the objectives are broad, directional interests with the aim of developing propositions to demonstrate theory generation. The literature is not yet advanced enough to be able to generate theory testing propositions at this early stage (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014). The research questions are composed of ‘how’ questions due to the explanatory nature of critical realism research whereby future prediction comes secondary to explaining phenomenon (Mingers, 2000).

The objectives of the research were to develop an understanding of the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. This includes the selection process and resulting decision. The literature review has shown that there is a lack of academic theory around the social part of SSCM and SRP. It would be useful to investigate more around this as companies seem to be trying to work towards this due to reputational risk. Therefore, questions that come directly out of the literature review include:

1. How do corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers?

2. How do social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser?

3. How is socially responsible purchasing effectively* achieved though supplier selection?

   *Effectively means the transaction goes ahead and the pursuit of a long term relationship is intended by both parties.

These are working questions which will evolve to produce propositions at the conclusion of the thesis. These objectives are focused around pre-transactional activities. The study looks at what factors from a buyer perspective lead to supplier selection or no selection in a social sustainability context. That is, the interaction between the buyer and supplier that leads to the
selection (or not) within the context of the social dimension of the TBL. Factors are separate from selection criteria as factors refer to the influencing components of a positive selection and augment a criteria checklist. The criteria are not the influencing factors themselves. The findings will be useful to purchasers pursuing social sustainability objectives by providing a conceptual framework for them to operationalise SRP, which fulfils a requirement for future research of sustainable purchasing by Walker et al. (2012) to focus research on how to practically achieve the goal.

3.7 Summary
The ways in which organisations identify social sustainability criteria for supplier selection to align with strategic goals is a developing research area (Krause et al., 2009). The challenges for management revolve around identifying which criteria should be included in supplier selection and how the process should be coordinated, as the elements can be difficult to measure. A lack of universal agreement on even a definition causes confusion and uncertainty in direction of pursuit. The literature review has identified that purchasing has changed from a largely quantitative exercise of reducing costs to a more qualitative one of recognising opportunities for adding value, such as in the area of sustainability. Currently, there is an increased reliance on self-assessment and collaborative practices for purchasing when working with new suppliers to reduce risk and maintain competitiveness. However the traditional view of buyer-supplier exchanges (principal and agent) would not support these behaviours.

Overall, to achieve SSCM and SRP there is a need for cooperation among a wider range of companies along the supply chain than is usually discussed in conventional supply chain management literature. Due to this cooperation the relationships between these players are more complex and the selection of new suppliers needs to be more considerate of a range of different factors that should work to complement one another. The next chapter introduces and justifies the methodological approach used to carry out the empirical research to meet the research objective and working research questions emerging from the literature review.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction
Chapters 2 and 3 focused on identifying a gap in the literature through thorough secondary research into current theories on incorporating social sustainability criteria into supplier selection models and the criteria used to make these decisions, taking a particular focus on SRP and organisational theories most commonly used in the buyer-supplier relationship. It also contributed to defining key terms around the topic. Following this review of the literature, qualitative case analysis whereby access to a dyadic part of the chain was concluded to be favourable.

The purpose of this chapter is to document the rationale behind the research design, data collection and data analysis methods chosen. The methodological approach was designed to address the research objective and the underlying questions in an effective way. This chapter justifies that the research approach considers the methodological issues and debates in the research community. It concludes that this subject having not been effectively researched in the past, presents a need to develop theory using an exploratory, abductive method, seen from a critical realist viewpoint. Secondly, the qualitative approaches needed to address the research questions are considered (in-depth interviews and document analysis using case study firms). The remainder of the chapter considers the research sampling issues, data collection methods, data analysis techniques and research ethics.

4.2 Research philosophy
In order to ensure that the research approach into organisations’ supplier selection criteria is appropriate, the relationship between research philosophies and research methods should be explored (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). The chosen philosophy (the way the researcher sees the world) and the methods are outlined subsequently. Firstly the debate of social science vs. natural science should be considered.
Blaikie (1993:2) describes the issues surrounding the argument that

“social life does not lend itself to any kind of scientific investigation; in contrast to natural phenomena, human beings have the capacity to make decisions about their actions and these decisions have a component of free will which undermines any attempt at explanation or prediction”.

This suggests that social science cannot be researched in the same way as natural science. However, Blaikie goes on to argue that scientific methods can be applied to social situations but there can be no one prescription of the scientific method. In the case of this research, abduction is used to explain observations and go on to develop theory providing an explanation of those observations in that situation.

4.2.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Two central concepts in the philosophy of science are ontology and epistemology. Ontology is the “science or study of being” which refers to the “claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality” (Blaikie, 1993:6). Therefore it is concerned with the nature of reality and whether social entities can (or should) be considered social constructions which have been built up from the perception and actions of social actors. Epistemology is “the grounds of knowledge” which refers to the “claims or assumptions made about the ways in which it is possible to gain knowledge of this reality, whatever it is understood to be; claims about how what exists may be known” (Blaikie, 1993:7). Therefore it provides the philosophical underpinning to a rigorous methodology. To ensure something can be justified as knowledge rather than beliefs, epistemology presents a view and justification for what can be known or regarded as knowledge and the criteria that such knowledge must satisfy in order to do this.

In terms of their ontological assumptions, approaches to social enquiry can be divided into two groups. The first is realist (positivism, critical rationalism and realism) which assumes that social reality is ordered, exists independently of the observer and that uniformities can be observed and explained (Blaikie, 1993). The second is constructivist (interpretivism, critical theory, structuration theory and feminism). This ontology assumes that social actors produce and reproduce social reality, for example it is an “intersubjective world of cultural objects,
meanings and social institutions” (1993:203). So, there may be multiple realities, which can be problematic in research. The decision that needs to be made by the researcher involves the ontological position (realist versus constructivist) and epistemological positions (inside versus outside).

Positivism and critical rationalism take the stance of completely detached and external. Any subjectivism is undesirable. Research is conducted from outside via a very specific framework. On the other hand, interpretivists stress the need for the researcher to immerse themselves in the participants’ world and place themselves in the participants’ shoes. Critical theory emphasises the need for communication and to help people transform their situations. The ontology chosen for this research is one which offers a link between positivism and interpretivism (Bhaskar, 1979). Critical realism comprises the positivist scientific approach towards social analysis, whilst considering the importance of individual meanings.

4.2.2 Critical realism
Critical realism views the world in terms of three components: the reality, the actual, and the empirical. According to Sayer (2000), the reality concerns that which exist regardless of whether we understand it or whether we have experience of it. The actual refers to what happens when the powers of the real are activated. The empirical refers to the domain of experience. The difference between this paradigm and positivism is that realists distinguish between the actual and the real as the actual is not a complete representation of the real. Although a real world exists, our knowledge of it is socially constructed and “the events we experience and wish to explain are causally generated by the structures of the underlying systems” (Mingers, 2000:1264). Therefore mechanisms exist in the real world and events are experienced as shown in Table 4.1.
Chapter 4: Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of Real Agencies independent of mind and society</th>
<th>Actual Events that take place</th>
<th>Empirical What is observed or sensed by human beings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanisms</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.1: Critical realism components*

There is also a fundamental difference between realism and critical realism. For example, Mingers (2000) explains that realism takes the view that certain types of entities exist in the world, separate from the human mind or subjectivity and that we can gain reliable knowledge of them. The philosophical view of knowledge that is critical realism, rejects this view as naïve and recognises the knowledge of the external world by critical reflection on perception. Therefore, critical realists maintain a modified naturalism that is not positivist and accept some differences between the natural and social worlds (Mingers 2000). The philosophy shows movement from experiences in the empirical world to possible structures in the real domain. Using abduction is one way to do this as the researcher goes back and forth to make sense of the observations. Mingers (2000:1262) explains that this does not necessarily “prove that the mechanism exists, and we may have competing explanations, so the next step is to work towards eliminating some explanations and supporting others”.

Ontologically, this means that the social structures being investigated are localised in both space and time unlike natural laws that are generally universal (Mingers, 2000) . Also, “the possibilities of measurement are very limited since intrinsically the phenomena are meaningful, and meanings cannot properly be measured and compared, only understood and described” (p.1263). The focus is on “a theory's explanatory rather than predictive power” (Mingers, 2000:1263). Once a validated model is developed the main purpose of using a critical realist approach goes beyond simply predicting what will occur, but aims to understand and learn about causal mechanisms and particular triggers or changes, if necessary (Mingers, 2000).
Chapter 4: Methodology

Therefore, critical realism as a research philosophy provides us with strong reasons to move beyond just a scientific approach to supply chain management. The advantage of critical realism includes the opportunity to investigate the causal-explanatory method which is more suited to the openness of the social world in general (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006). These authors state that “understanding the underlying processes which enable or constrain certain processes is far more important than the adoption of some form of scientific thinking in which outcome y is guaranteed through the implementation of x” (p.694). Therefore trying to understand causes gives us a richer understanding of the situation and the opportunity to consider possible changes outside of the actual conditions and theories that might be transferable to other situations (Mingers, 2006) which fits in well with a critical realism abductive approach.

Critical realism is often seen as pluralist as it legitimates and often promotes using mixed methods (Zachariadis et al., 2013). The planned empirical research does not employ a mixed method methodology which may be a limitation, but the in-depth investigation using the cases should provide sufficient data to draw critical realist perspectives. A key advantage of a critical realist approach is that “it maintains reality whilst still recognizing the inherent meaningfulness of social interaction” (Mingers 2006:1267). An exploratory approach, inductive in nature, may not suit the quantitative elements of mixed methods which need some additional foundation for research.

The ontological position of this study is that reality exists outside a researcher’s mind. This research is based on the belief that there exists a real physical world beyond our knowledge and comprehension. Moreover, there also exists a social world that is being constructed, shaped and influenced by our life experiences, knowledge, and desire. One can only understand reality to a limited extent and no one can obtain the entire picture of a studied phenomenon. Therefore, reality can be studied to a certain extent and generalisations can be made with a degree of probability. However context will feature heavily in analysis whereby one purchaser may experience what would normally be a similar incidence in a different way due to small contrasting, contextual details.

A critical realist approach is relevant to this research topic because it incorporates the consciousness of supply chain participants in deciding on their actions within their perceived reality of the supplier selection process and structure. Adamides et al. (2012) provide a
convincing argument for a critical realist research paradigm as they explain the transition from positivist, deductive approaches within the supply chain discipline to the more human and social side. Specifically, critical realism in the supply chain research context maintains that

“The behaviour of a supply chain is the emergent result of the behaviour of organisations participating in supply chain, which, in turn is caused by the behaviour of individuals in organisations, which, again, is the emergent result of their personality characteristics influenced by the geo-historical context of the individual and so on” (Adamides et al., 2012:909).

The critical realist philosophy is therefore closer to positivism than interpretivism, but a wholly positivist approach is unsuitable as the research design does not recommend the process of going through sequential stages such as proving a hypothesis or being deductive. Marshall and Rossman (1989:147) explain that

“Positivist notions of reliability assume an underlying universe where inquiry could, quite logically, be replicated. This assumption of an unchanging social world is in direct contrast to the qualitative/interpretative assumption that the social world is always changing and the concept of replication is itself problematic”.

Positivism can be simplistic due to this view that the social world is unchanging, and because of this the most interesting factors could be stripped out during the research. The main aim of the positivist researcher is to generalise the results to the larger population using a deductive approach. That would suggest that the theory would need to be generated and then tested. But in the case of this research there is limited theory to test. Hence positivism was rejected in preference of an approach that was more suited to theory-building and developing research.

4.2.3 Methodological practices

It is clear from the literature review in Chapters 2 and 3, that a case study approach is a less common way to research the supply chain generally, but it is gaining stature in the research in areas that are under-developed. As criteria for choosing suppliers is likely to be quite firm-
specific, a case study approach is a good way to contextualise the research. It is quantitative research that is more commonly used in supply chain research design, but incorporating the sustainability element into the supply chain management research (SSCM) is a topic which involves social desirability which also makes quantitative research less suitable. Where qualitative research has been used it has been beneficial in its contribution to the area due to the richness and focus of the data collection and analyses. Researchers should therefore be encouraged to use this less common approach. Carter (2004) explains that within supply chain research (including SRP), additional research methods are now needed to develop and complement the current quantitative surveys. Case studies are being used to investigate sustainability in supply chains which could add significantly to the studies already published. He believes of particular interest, is the decision making processes concerning purchasing social responsibility. Carter (2004) states that it would be beneficial to answer questions such as ‘How do managers decide when and which specific PSR activities to initiate?’ and ‘What are the trade-offs and specific criteria that managers consider when making these decisions?’ These are strongly related to the research questions for this study, demonstrating further support of the need for this type of investigation.

However, there have been some recent studies conducted which have criticised the lack of rigour, transparency and usefulness of some operations management case based research (Voss et al., 2002; da Mota Pedrosa et al., 2012). These authors develop frameworks for improving the quality of the result of this type of research which are explained and followed later in this Chapter (see section 4.5.3). Case based research can be particularly useful due to the opportunity to use triangulation in the approach where the resources are available.

4.3 Research approach

Now that the research philosophy is determined, the research approach can be developed. An abductive approach has been chosen for this research (sometimes called retroduction in critical realism literature e.g. Mingers, 2006) as the area is developmental and exploratory in nature as it is difficult to find a hypothesis to test (deductivism). However, it would be naïve to think that there would be a clean theoretical slate as there has been some research conducted in the area. Abduction, originally developed by Peirce et al. (1931) but defined by many others since (especially Kirkeby, 1994) has evolved as a middle ground between induction and deduction. It is similar to induction, as both generate theories. However, in
abduction there is a stronger reliance on theory and establishing relations with already known constructs (Kirkeby, 1994).

4.3.1 Theory building and abduction

Theory building or theory developing research means that there is no hypothesis to test, but there can be pre-conceived ideas, for example, emerging from the literature. Blaikie (1993:205) explains that “inductivism produces generalisations of relationships while deductivism produces a set of propositions which form an argument”. Critical realists would be concerned with this explanation, as the description given to induction would suggest that results are very descriptive and do not really explain anything as it does not uncover causes of generalisations, and deductivism because it suggests that hypothesis testing is more ideal than inducing theory from data. Abduction is an iterative process used in the generation of theory originating from a mistranslation; it should be called retroduction (Kovács and Spens, 2005). As this research aims to discover new things such as variables in the supplier selection decision, abduction is likely to be fruitful (Thiruchelvam and Tookey, 2011). Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) would be unsuitable for this research as there is some literature on the subject, even though it is underdeveloped. Therefore, the research would not be being conducted without ‘preconditions’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Instead, in an abductive approach, the theory is developed from previous research but it is not matured or substantial enough to warrant deductivism as the theories are not substantial enough to test a previous hypothesis.

As the topic of the research is such a new phenomenon in the supply chain domain, theory-developing abduction (whereby the researcher cultivates the theory from the data collected) can be used. The theory develops during the research work itself. For example, as a result of coding the interview transcript or using other data collected in terms of key concepts (Blaxter et al., 2010). Therefore the research will be grounded in “experience, observations and practice, probably in small samples and build up some theoretical concepts and hypothesis from there” (Wisker, 2001:187). In this research, the original framework will be modified both on theoretical insights and empirical findings gained in the process. This type of approach was chosen so that the theory used prior to the study can be extended in a creative and iterative way. It is a process largely embedded in induction but using pre-conceived ideas from the literature. The iterative approach is typical for an abductive study where the
Chapter 4: Methodology

researcher moves from pre-understanding to understanding during the process between theory and practice.

Using abduction and small samples on the other hand, can bring up questions about generalisability. For example, as there are limited cases to demonstrate the new theory and the rigorousness of the testing of the theory. However, Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue that it is classed as a scientific method of investigation which is derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. It can be verified using systematic data collection and analysis achieving results which are representative of the reality being researched, comprehensible to the persons being studied and specific to the phenomenon being studied. They also argue that if the validity of the theory being studied has been established well by the researcher, then induction (or abduction) is capable of providing generalisation.

As well as the potential downfalls of generalisability, another disadvantage of induction or abduction is that it “produces limited explanations based on immediate evidence” (Wisker, 2001:189). However, it is this desirability to extract concepts and theory out of current and emerging data that is of interest in this topic. The view that theory-developing is time consuming, intensive and requires much reflection is not seen as a pitfall, but an advantage by the research. Using an intensive case study example will provide a good grounding to test the theories which develop as empirical evidence will be used to “establish directly the variables, concepts and relationships which will be combined in the theory” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Having established what abduction is and why it is useful, it is important to explain why it has been chosen in this particular research, aside from other methods. As the phenomenon being researched is underdeveloped at this point, the chosen method of abduction can be justified by the fact that the research is exploratory work seeking to generate a direction for further work and build on existing ideas in the area. The findings will be grounded in reality and firmly understood by the research participants used. The research will suggest subsequent, “appropriate action specifically derived from events and circumstances of the setting in which the research was conducted” (Saunders et al., 1997:353-4).

The aim is to develop theory around the role of social sustainability relating to the supplier selection decision including the criteria that should be used and the components of effective
SRP. Abduction will enable the research to explore contextualised meanings from the case to help develop useful social sustainability criteria and issues surrounding the management of this selection process. As an emerging topic, the researcher will begin with a fresh perspective and some insights taken from literature research, and approach the data collection with a willingness to develop and change their views as the research produces new evidence and information which can feed into the developing theory. When something is constantly evolving, this method is suitable and will provide good grounding for future research. Ultimately the research process will demonstrate learning using the refined theoretical framework combined with the matching case. As discoveries cannot be planned in advance the researcher is forced to reconsider the original framework for adaptation (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1: The abductive research process (adapted from Kovács and Spens, 2005)

In section 4.6, the explanation of how the data will be analysed is given. Using an abductive approach, it will be clear that the analysis will be a continuous, iterative exercise as described in Figure 4.1. Therefore, these things happen in conjunction with one another and processes are repeated. Inductive and abductive arguments are more likely to be ‘probably true’ than true, and we cannot establish how probable that truth is as “it is not possible to be certain about the proportion of observation statements that are not consistent with the universal statement because all observations cannot be made” (Blaikie, 1993:140). There are also difficult judgement choices related to when the researcher should stop observing as they
should keep investigating until all possible observations are seen. If the social world is always changing, then this is suggesting that a piece of research would never be finished. In fact, relevant observations during a realistic time period are suitable to draw conclusions (theoretical saturation is often determined by time and money). Also, when it is deemed that there are diminishing returns from incremental cases or interviews then providing the research questions have been satisfactory addressed the research should draw to a close (Voss et al., 2002). Research carries a date and methodologies disclose time periods of research for this reason.

To research numerous observations of the phenomenon under investigation would be satisfactory for an inductivist (Blaikie, 1993). They believe that all science starts with observation and that observation is a “secure basis from which knowledge can be derived” (Chalmers, 1982:22). While there has been much criticism of this view because all observation is interpretation (Popper, 1961), on occasions where the previous research into a topic is limited, it proves to be a suitable method for deriving new theory or building on existing theory in an area that is underdeveloped.

4.3.2 The Researcher’s Role
Using an abductive approach requires the researcher to observe and interview participants within the supply chain, for example, those making the supplier selection decisions. By doing this from within the field, it will be impossible for the researcher to remain detached. Action research which is more closely aligned with consulting and implementation was briefly considered to implement useable processes for supplier selection. However, action research is not an outcome of this thesis for a variety of reasons. For example, there are a number of ethical issues involved in conducting action research by the very nature of the type of research. It can be difficult to change certain variables to test reactions in this context. If undertaking action research, the researcher can become embedded in the process (Coughlan and Coghlan, 2002). However, in this empirical study it is the intention to record the processes rather than influence them. It is therefore intended that there should be limited impact on the interviewees as a result of the researcher’s presence.

Current concerns which have been identified from reading the literature (and therefore potential limitations and criticism of this research) include the sensitive and potentially
damaging nature of the sustainability concept. For example, as a sustainability reputation can damage the overall reputation of a firm, this is a sensitive topic. In an interview and observation situation, managers and employees will be mindful of this, with the danger of rendering some of the research redundant if it is not clear that honest answers were found. As a very important issue and one whereby firms should be seen to be doing something about sustainability, there is a risk here.

Additionally, in conceptual research, Seuring and Müller (2008:1706) argue that the “knowledge, experience, and mindset of the researcher can have a strong impact on the results”. This is another aspect that would need careful consideration to mitigate significant challenges to the research. However, taking a realist stance means that some of the objectives achieved as result of this approach include:

- Participants were able to give an unbiased view on their current process as the researcher holds no threatening agenda
- The validity of the findings were checked by the parties involved (internal validation).

### 4.4 Research design

Research design is important to develop as a form of guidance for the collection and analysis of data and the critical link between the theory and argument that informed the research. The choice of research design “reflects decisions about the priority being given to a range of dimensions of the research process” (Bryman and Bell, 2007:40). It is therefore a ‘blueprint’ that enables researchers to find answers to the questions being studied. This section outlines the research design being adopted.

#### 4.4.1 Qualitative data

The qualitative research methods used in this research design are in depth interviews and document analysis within case studies. Qualitative research can be described as being “based on meanings expressed through words, [the] collection of results in non-standardised data requiring classification into categories, [and the] analysis conducted through use of conceptualisation” (Saunders et al., 1997:339). Robson (1993) explains that this type of
research is characterised by richness and fullness, based on the opportunity to explore a subject in as real a manner as is possible using the thick or thorough abstraction from qualitative data. Quantitative methods struggle to understand beliefs, meanings or experience so qualitative methods can be much more useful (Wisker, 2001).

The Research Onion tool developed by Lewis et al. (2007: 132) can assist a researcher in ensuring that they have made all of the decisions needed before pursuing their data collection plans. It covers the decisions the researcher needs to make and considers the time-frame possible, method choices, strategies available to them, research approaches and research philosophies. The research onion can be used to explain that the research is cross sectional in nature, using a mono-method, case study, abductive approach based on a critical realist philosophy.

4.4.2 Case study research

The case study, as a research method, is a common research strategy in the business discipline (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2002). The method is described by Robson (1993:52) as a “strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon into its real life context”. They are particularly useful when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 1994). Therefore, when the research aims are to explain organisational and social phenomena with an empirical focus, a case study method would be suitable. In addition to using specific examples, using an abductive approach will contribute to developing the theory in such an emerging area.

Yin (2003) describes some key characteristics which must be evident for the case study research to be valued. Firstly, for a case study to be ‘exemplary’, it must be significant. This means that the individual case or cases must be “unusual and of general public interest [whereby] the underlying issues are nationally important, either in theoretical terms or in policy or practical terms; or both of the preceding conditions have been met” (Yin, 2003:162). In addition to this, the case study must be complete, must consider alternative perspectives, must display sufficient evidence, and must be composed in an engaging manner (Yin, 2003).
Much of the focus on defining social sustainability criteria for organisations is likely to involve the decision making process which has occurred, in terms of the importance different aspects have. Schramm (1971) believes that case studies try to “illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and what the result was”. Yin (2009) is critical of this definition for being inadequate, it captures the essence of decisions as a major focus in case study analysis; something that is likely to have a key part to play in the choice and implementation of criteria. Schramm’s perspective goes beyond the idea that case studies are just used for collecting evidence to support a point, or test a theory, and that they attempt to illustrate or explain the decisions or motivations behind the observed processes. Therefore, Schramm’s perspective of case study analysis strongly relates to the purpose of this research.

There are many advantages associated with using case studies as a research tool. Case studies offer more in depth analysis that many other methods simply cannot offer (Remenyi et al., 1998) allowing for “the situation to be explored fully” (Wisker, 2001:190). Emory and Cooper (1991) support the view that a case study can be a worthwhile way of exploring existing theory or provide a source for new hypothesis, as will be the case here.

In addition to the simplistic argument of more in depth analysis being available to case study researchers, case studies provide the “rich multi-dimensional picture of the situation being studied, illustrating relationships, corporate political issues and other patterns of influence in the particular context” and that is advantageous (Remenyi et al., 1998:166). They are ideal for contemporary issues (as is the case here) as they use real time information in a fast changing world of business and management (Remenyi et al., 1998). The fast changing environment should be considered as an advantage to the research rather than a concern (relating to the research being rendered out of date too soon). This is because time boundaries can be helpful in determining the limits of the evidence collection and analysis. Time boundaries are clearly shown on the data collection (see Figure 4.2).

Despite the many advantages to case study research, certainly using an inductive or abductive approach for an emerging topic, there are disadvantages to using case studies as research tools. It is difficult to generalise from one case, so “either the case needs to be contextualised and carefully described and then others can consider its usefulness in other contexts, or can take a range of cases to establish a range of examples or interpretations of a situation”
(Wisker, 2001:190). Therefore it is important in this research, to ensure that people can use
the research by being able to transfer or translate it into their own context. It is useful to
remember that if research is too generalisable it lacks representativeness of any subsample of
the environment. For example, case studies, like experiments, can be “generalisable to
theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (Yin, 1994:10).

As well as recognising that case studies can lack scope for scientific generalisation, Yin
(2003) identifies that case studies can be criticised as having a lack of rigour, they take a long
time, the qualitative amounts of documentation produced can be unmanageable, and that bias
must be eradicated. However, bias can also creep into other research methods and is not
exclusive to case study research. In actual fact, the time allocations and documentation
production is what makes case studies so rich in their design. Yin (1994:4) suggests that the
researcher should consider three conditions to confirm the appropriateness of the case study
approach to their phenomenon (in this case, specific supplier selection criteria choices).
These are that firstly research questions are posed, secondly there is control over events (a
decision will be made) and thirdly the contemporary nature of the phenomenon (an emerging
area). The work will be highly iterative, linked to data and empirically valid which are all
outlined in Eisenhardt’s (1989a) process for inducting theory using case studies. Eisenhardt
describes a process of building theory from case study research which has been adapted in the
table below (1989:533). Case studies rely on analytical inference rather than building on
statistical inference (Thiruchelvam and Tookey, 2011). To succeed with this analytical
inference, logical coherence of the adequacy of the research procedure is important for
quality in case research. Eisenhardt (1989a) states that it is crucial to provide the reader with
full information to ensure evaluation of the adequacy of the research process and outcomes
can be conducted. Table 4.2 (overleaf) shows the way in which the empirical data collection
and analysis follows Eisenhardt's (1989a) process of theory building from case study
research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Evidence in empirical research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting started</td>
<td>Definition of research question</td>
<td>Focuses efforts</td>
<td>Research questions formulated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A priori constructs if applicable</td>
<td>Provides better grounding of construct measures</td>
<td>Not applicable due to lack of extant theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting cases</td>
<td>Specified population (select appropriate population to control variation and define limits for generalising of findings)</td>
<td>Constrains irrelevant variation and sharpens external validity. Focuses efforts in theoretically useful cases.</td>
<td>Cases chosen from Sedex member list. Companies demonstrate a commitment to social sustainability in their procurement functions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crafting instruments and protocols</td>
<td>Multiple data collection methods</td>
<td>Strengthens theory using triangulation</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews over a cycle and review of company documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering the field</td>
<td>Flexible and opportunistic data collection methods</td>
<td>Able to take advantage of emergent themes and unique case features</td>
<td>Semi structured interviews are flexible in both the questions asked and direction of themes emerging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing data</td>
<td>Within case analysis and cross-case pattern searching</td>
<td>Gains familiarity with data and preliminary theory generation then forced to look beyond initial impressions and see evidence through multiple lenses.</td>
<td>CAQDAS data display and reduction used for thorough coding opportunities demonstrated in individual cases and cross case discussion. Linkages and models developed using NVivo functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping hypotheses/ Propositions</td>
<td>Iterative tabulation of evidence for each construct</td>
<td>Sharpens construct definition, validity and measurability Confirms, extends and sharpens theory Builds internal validity</td>
<td>Simultaneous, iterative data collection and analysis as new theory emerges. Continuous internal validity sought through feedback from interviewees</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Between four and ten cases work well in order to benefit from the strengths which can be achieved from case study data for a theory-building approach (Eisenhardt, 1989a). These benefits include 1.) generation of novel theory 2.) emergent theory which can be tested with constructs that can be readily measured because you are not testing someone else’s theory because this theory has been developed as you go 3.) resultant theory is likely to be empirically valid. Nonetheless, there are challenges to this type of research. These include 1.) theory can be overly complex as a result of huge volumes of rich data 2.) danger of narrow and idiosyncratic theory making it difficult to raise generalisations.

The applicability of using case studies for this research topic is suitable because little is known about the phenomenon, certainly in academia. It is being suggested that there is a need for a new perspective as focus has moved on (from environmental to social importance). The point of the process is to develop (or at least begin to develop) a theory. Pfeffer (1982) proposed the tests of a good theory are parsimony and logical coherence. This means that it often emerges at the end, rather than the beginning of the study. Simply replicating past theory is a modest contribution when new insights can be gained from theory building research, a call made by Walker et al. (2012) and Hoejmose and Adrien-Kirby (2012) whereby they suggest that the development of models and conceptual frameworks than draw on sustainable purchasing practice to enhance understanding is needed.
Voss et al. (2002) provides a thorough framework for how case based operations management research should be conducted which has been reviewed in detail and followed in the thesis. To demonstrate transparency to ensure the quality and usefulness of analysing case studies in operations management research the checklist outlined by Barratt et al., (2011) is shown in Table 4.6 on page 118. Despite some criticism of case theory in operations management for lacking quality and consistency or transparency in design, some breakthrough concepts have been developed through case research in the field. These include lean production and manufacturing strategy. The exposure to real problems has a benefit to this type of research (Voss et al., 2002) and when there is uncertainty in the definition of constructs, cases are particularly useful (Mukherjee et al., 2000).

### 4.4.3 Research questions and propositions

Research questions have been developed to refine a research focus from the extant academic literature. If this is not done, there is a possibility that the study can lose this focus and be overwhelmed with the volume of data collected (Eisenhardt, 1989a). In order to answer the research questions which were developed in the previous chapter, a case study approach has been proven to be suitable for this type of study (where the questions are largely *what* and *how* questions). Often, research questions will evolve over time in abductive research so that constructs can be developed or modified and sometimes even abandoned during the course of the research. Propositions will be developed from the research questions once the data analysis commences.

To serve as a reminder, the research objective is to explore the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. The resulting questions from the literature review are:

1. How do corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers?

2. How do social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser?
3. How is socially responsible purchasing effectively achieved through supplier selection?

Propositions
As an abductive and exploratory approach is being used, pre-developed propositions are not as important as in a hypotheses-testing model. Both the literature reviewed and the empirical data analysis will see the development of propositions to be further tested in future work.

Logic linking data to propositions
As an abductive, theory-building approach is being used in this research, linking the data to the propositions (which need to be developed as the study progresses) is not something that can be discussed at this stage. The data will be continually compared to other incidences and then to emerging propositions as they are discovered.

Criteria for interpreting findings
There are ways in which qualitative researchers can validate their findings, even though this is seen as a more difficult task than for quantitative research. For example, in quantitative research, researchers can use large samples and can measure confidence levels in their findings. This is not possible in fully qualitative research as quantification is not a key goal of this type of research, but there is still a requirement for measuring accuracy. This validation can be done through confirmability, dependability, credibility and transferability measures, described later in section 4.6.2.

Justification for limited prior instrumentation
In the research design, a decision must be made regarding how much design and structure the instrumentation should have prior to going out into the field. In this type of qualitative, case study theory building research, the answer is minimal. Riege (2003:80) explains that

“the case study method is about theory construction and building, and is based on the need to understand a real-life phenomenon with researchers obtaining new holistic and in-depth understandings, explanations and interpretations about previously unknown practitioners’ rich experiences, which may stem from creative discovery as much as research design. That is, design tests are not the primary drivers of rigorous case study research and
even could suppress the discovery of new meaningful insights and as a result not maximise the quality of the research”.

The justification for limited prior instrumentation includes:

- Single or few cases do not need tools that lend themselves to economic comparable quantitative data.
- The context must be a consideration of the research. Prior instrumentation can be context stripped to allow for uniformity, comparability and universality.
- Structured instruments which have been predesigned can blind the researcher to the case, site or context. If something important was not in the instruments it may be overlooked.
- Not knowing exactly what you are looking for means you cannot predetermine everything in advance (unlike hypothesis testing in a quantitative study)
- Exploratory studies might not know the dynamics of a social setting with any certainty.

The validity in this research falls within the construct and contextual area. There are some issues with not following what other studies have done (comparison) and not having focused interview questions is problematic. Uninformed studies can be selective and skew information recorded making them unreliable and invalid. However, in this study the theory-building nature requires this type of approach.

### 4.4.4 Unit of analysis

Defining the unit of analysis is the most important issue in case analysis (Yin, 2003) and should be clearly defined in sustainable purchasing research (Walker et al., 2012). By doing this, the researcher limits the boundaries of the study and should relate to the way the initial research questions were defined. The research questions in this study look at the role of social sustainability in supplier selection and what factors influence this decision to select the most effective supplier from a socially sustainable viewpoint. Therefore the unit of analysis is defined as the dominant factors influencing the selection decision. Criteria will be fundamental in the decision (those of QCD and social aspects) but it is the influencing factors
that drive the socially sustainable aspect of the decision in addition to the criteria that is of importance and interest.

4.4.5 Sampling and case selections
This section will identify who the population are, who the sampling frame is and then what cases have been chosen. Sampling is “the selection of a fraction of the total number of units of interest to decision makers for the ultimate purpose of being able to draw general conclusions about the entire body of units” (Parasuraman, 2004:356). From the sample of the research population, a conclusion can be made to achieve the research objective, and it is therefore unnecessary to survey the entire population (and in most cases, unrealistic and not possible from a practical point of view).

Within case study research, probability sampling is often not possible or desirable as case studies are likely to be chosen for their suitability. For example, the case organisations need to have experience of SRP to be useful to the findings and within the cases studies, specific relevant individuals need to be targeted. Random sampling is not necessary or preferable in case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989a). Whereas hypothesis-testing studies should use statistical sampling so that they have firm evidence of distributions of variables within a population, theory building or refinement studies can use non-probability sampling because it involves identifying and questioning informants because you are interested in their individual roles, positions or background experience (Bryman, 2012). This sampling technique can be applied to a small number of particularly informative interviewees and makes it possible to gather relevant information and achieve the research aim more effectively in a qualitative study (Saunders et al., 1997). The two most useful non-probability sampling methods for this research are purposive and snowball sampling. Snowball sampling involves building up a sample through informants which is likely to happen in the research as relationships develop. However, to start with, it is purposive sampling whereby typical or interesting cases are handpicked (Blaxter et al., 2010) which will be implemented. This process of interest should be “transparently observable” (Pettigrew, 1990).

Purposive sampling is employed on two levels. Firstly, judgement will be used to select cases which will best enable the researcher to answer the research question and meet the objective (Saunders et al., 1997). It works particularly well when using small samples, such as case
study research and when select cases which are particularly informative are needed (Neuman, 1991), for example when using a theory building approach as with this research (Saunders et al., 1997). Secondly, suitable, informative, context-specific job roles will be sought for interview participants. This includes procurement and sustainability personnel specifically. Thus, for the interviews conducted by this study, a purposive sampling method was considered appropriate to achieve the research objective most effectively. (See Appendix B for job roles of interview participants).

As well as how to choose organisational cases and research participants, sampling is also used to determine the appropriate number of interviewees. In a qualitative study, the number of interviewees is not as critical as in a quantitative one. According to Patton (1990:184), “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources”. Additionally, “the validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information-richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capacities of the researcher than with sample size” (p.185). By using a non-probability purposive sampling technique it can be ensured that appropriate informants are selected, who can provide plentiful information which can be considered more important than the number of interviewees. Using this perspective, informants with sufficient knowledge and experience in the field of supply chain vendor selection decisions and social sustainability interests will be selected as appropriate interviewees for this study.

**Main case studies**

The sample consists of three organisations using a 3PSP (Sedex) to facilitate information collection from suppliers. Sedex is a not for profit membership organisation for businesses committed to continuous improvement of the ethical performance of their supply chains. One of the key aspects to their approach is a SAQ filled out by suppliers for purchasers to use to analyse supply chain behaviour. By being a member of this network and publicly disclosing on their own websites, the three case study organisations are demonstrating pursuit of a social sustainability agenda. Sedex have a vast member list and so the sample was reduced by selecting companies to be contacted who:

- were AB members
Sedex have different classifications of members. AB members can access suppliers’ information by viewing and running reports on suppliers’ ethical data such as self-assessments, audit reports, corrective action plans and certification. They can also manage information on their own facilities and share information with customers. AB membership also offers access to the Maplecroft Risk Assessment tool.

- had an outward consumer facing brand meaning reputational risk would be managed
- were in the FMCG (food and beverage only) or clothing retail sectors
  - Due to the nature of the global, complex supply chains in these sectors whereby suppliers tend to not have a monopoly of supply and there are many tiers of suppliers making transparency and auditing more difficult, the cases would be more suitable to study to determine how a purchasing model could be executed under more uncertainty.

No prior connection between the researcher and the case study firms existed meaning there was complete researcher impartiality. Contact was made through email and telephone communication outlined in the interview protocol section on page 112 and Appendix C. The three case organisations have been given pseudonyms of BevAware, JustProduce and ApparelTrade. BevAware is an alcoholic drinks manufacturer, JustProduce is a food producer and ApparelTrade is a fashion retailer. Detailed case context descriptions are given in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Each organisation has specific social sustainability issues that are unique to them (see Table 4.3) yet are challenged by the same universal issues as well. Should construct saturation not have been reached by the third case, more cases would have been introduced to refine the theory further.

Validation cases
Two other case study organisations were researched during the main case study field data collection to confirm construct saturation and ratify the theory that was being developed. These are two 3PSPs who facilitate ethical supply chains and supplier selection and engagement in particular. Therefore, they are not purchasers themselves, but they work with purchasers and suppliers as intermediaries who provide the tools for self-assessment of the supplier. They have been chosen for the research for two reasons. One reason is because they offer a different insight into the SRP process as they are positioned in the middle of the
exchange and so have a 360 degree view of the procedure, meaning they have unique insight into the emerging phenomenon and they can support or oppose the findings of the main cases in discussion. Secondly, their role in the process is of interest, both in terms of their current involvement, future involvement and impact on SRP generally. It would be careless to not consider the intermediary in the process when researching SRP. The 3PSP cases have pseudonyms of *InfoOrder* and *SociSense*.

*InfoOrder* is a large 3PSP who cover all three elements of the TBL in their approach. *SociSense* is a smaller 3PSP who specifically focus on social sustainability behaviours. Both 3PSPs provide their own SAQ tools for suppliers. The validation cases gave a supporting perspective as they have a lot of experience dealing with focal companies. The 3PSPs were interviewed and the research ideas to date were presented to them for views and feedback. This is a novel approach as it adds a level of complexity to the data collection process where it would have been satisfactory to saturate at the purchaser level. Using these additional cases demonstrates additional validity in the findings (see Chapter 8 for the full analysis).
Due to the abductive exploratory nature of the research whereby eventual findings are revalidated with the opening case, the process of data collection is clearly shown in Figure 4.2. Each case study builds on the previous one, with the validation cases both being informed by and continuing to inform the final case at the point of construct saturation. At this point, the final research ideas are taken back to the first case study to be validated back at the beginning of the process as the research will have advanced substantially since the first round of data collection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Social sustainability focus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>BevAware</td>
<td>Beverage manufacturer</td>
<td>Responsible drinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>JustProduce</td>
<td>Food manufacturer</td>
<td>Buying British</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>ApparelTrade</td>
<td>Fashion retailer</td>
<td>Worker conditions in Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>InfoOrder</td>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>[integrated]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>SociSense</td>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>[singular]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.3: Case study sample*
In a domain which is likely to be subject to change and dependant on many things, the non-standardised qualitative research will reflect reality when the data was collected. Marshall and Rossman (1989) believe that it is possible to defend this technique against critics who argue for a lack of reliability and validity in this method that using non-standardised methods might not be intended to be repeatable as circumstances can be complex and dynamic. Therefore the approach is a strength of the research, not a weakness.

Miles and Huberman (1994:34) propose a set of 6 criteria for sampling strategies. These are listed overleaf.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles and Huberman criteria</th>
<th>How to ensure that these are met in this research</th>
<th>Evidence from empirical research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research.</td>
<td>As the theory is being developed abductively, the choice and number of cases will be important.</td>
<td>Organisations chosen pursue a social sustainability agenda. Saturation begins in case 3, validated by further 2 cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The sample should be likely to generate rich information on the type of phenomena which need to be studied.</td>
<td>Ensuring the phenomena being studied will appear in the cases being studied e.g. meaning that sampling needs to be organised and not random.</td>
<td>People with specific job roles targeted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The sample should enhance the ‘generalisability’ of the findings.</td>
<td>Analytic generalisability (applied to wider theory on the basis of how selected cases) is more important here than statistical generalisability (but still need to make statements about a population on the basis of a sample).</td>
<td>Generalisation can be made to some extent for organisations pursuing a social sustainability agenda at risk from reputational damage from suppliers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The sample should produce believable descriptions/ explanations (in the sense of being true to real life).</td>
<td>The sample will be valid if it is representative of the population and if it provides a ‘convincing’ account of what is being observed, with a realistic and unbiased explanation.</td>
<td>Sample representative of people driving these agendas through. Vast amount of interview data collected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Is the sample strategy ethical?</td>
<td>Ensure the interviewees give informed consent, are clear about the benefits or risks associated with being selected as a participant and that they fully understand the role of the researcher in the process.</td>
<td>Interviewees gave informed consent to be interviewed but not permission for company or interview names to be used. The role of the researcher was explained fully.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4: Methodology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miles and Huberman criteria</th>
<th>How to ensure that these are met in this research</th>
<th>Evidence from empirical research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Is the sampling plan feasible?</td>
<td>In terms of time, money and access, ensure the research is doable.</td>
<td>Case study data collected over two years. Participants not paid for their contributions. Access sought directly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4.4: 6 criteria for sampling strategies*
(adapted from Miles and Huberman (1994:34))

Qualitative samples are often quite different to quantitative ones. For example, statistical probability is less common in qualitative samples as this is not a main aim of qualitative research, so instead purposive sampling is a better option. Samples are often small and studied intensively generating a large amount of information. The sample can grow or develop as a result of the snowball effect and iterations changing as a result of ongoing coding and analysis. The sample is conceptually driven because of theoretical framework or the evolving theory which is derived abductively from the data as the research proceeds.

Firstly, the target population should be identified, then the sampling frame and sampling method should be selected. Following this, the sample size is determined before data collection can begin (Lewis et al., 2007). In this research, organisations (three cases) were selected on the basis of having strong strategic objectives for improving sustainability measures, particularly in the area of supplier selection. This was confirmed by their inclusion in the Sedex member list providing assurance that the organisations chosen demonstrated good overall sustainability, a positive relationship with stakeholders, they uphold and support universal human rights and they ensure good supply chain labour standards. Organisations from fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) sectors such as food and beverage, and fashion were chosen because these sectors demonstrate first mover behaviour as a result of stakeholder expectations and it is vital that cases are rich in data from firms who are actively trying to incorporate social sustainability into their procurement agendas. The cases will be
current and not retrospective because it is important to look at current practices and procedures from the present, rather than historically.

Each case will be selected on the assumption that it will predict similar results (a literal replication) for the purpose of theory development. Thus, it is not desirable to produce contrary results to compare firms attempting a sustainability agenda and those that are not, but instead a theoretical replication is sought. Although useful in case based research, the aim is not to find polar types with sharply contrasting characteristics and compare them to highlight differences (as mentioned as an advantage by Miles and Huberman, 1994). Finding best practice or exceptional cases for others to learn from is more desirable with the hope that this will be a representative case in the future, by looking at similarities. Choosing the cases is important as with Pagell and Wu’s (2009) research, they found that it was possible to investigate what ‘successfully sustainable’ companies do that is unique (and therefore can inform others attempting the same path). Therefore, it is of key importance that organisations who do consider sustainability as a key business goal are focused upon within the research.

4.4.6 Ethical considerations

As the research plan is developed and commenced, ethical considerations emerge, which relate to “the appropriateness of your behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it” (Saunders et al., 1997:109). Silverman (2010) suggests that this can be done using the instructions regarding ethical research which have been provided by the British Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Originally using the 2010 version for the methodological considerations, the updated 2015 ESRC principles and expectations for ethical research also apply to the empirical research and are summarised below:

1. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.
2. Research staff and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what benefits and risks, if any, are involved.
3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.
4. Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion. Autonomy should be respected and appropriately protected.
5. Harm to research participants and researchers must be avoided in all instances. All potential risk and harm should be mitigated by robust precautions.
6. The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.

(Framework for Research Ethics, ESRC, 2015)

The empirical results will be shared with the participants as a motion of internal validity, but also to ensure that the researcher-researched roles are ethical in their disclosure. The University of Surrey does not require ethical consent for this research to commence. (See Appendix G for full ethical disclosure form).

### 4.5 Data collection

The data will be collected in the form of interviews and documentation from the case businesses. For example, to identify links between strategic focus and action, a review of documentation, followed by interviews (and in some cases followed by a revisit to the documents) will be completed. Using different types of evidence means that the benefits of triangulation can be experienced whereby a number of sources of data point in one direction of results. Eisenhardt (1989a) explains that triangulation can provide stronger substantiation of constructs. Often triangulating data sources can have a significant impact on the development of formal propositions or frameworks (Barratt et al., 2011) which adds value to the research. The following subsections outline these forms of data collection. Table 4.5 shows the number of documents that were coded and interviews carried out per case. The documents were split into five categories; policy, report, guidance, publicity and tool (See Appendix A for the breakdown of document analysis in different categories).
Table 4.5: Number of documents and interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Document Analysis</th>
<th>(Pages)</th>
<th>Interview Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BevAware</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(199)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JustProduce</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(139)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ApparelTrade</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(122)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InfoOrder</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(687)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SociSense</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(83)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>46</strong></td>
<td><strong>(1230)</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.5.1 Using a flexible research design
As a result of using an abductive research approach, the research design needs to remain flexible to allow changes in the process if needed, depending on what is found. The main objective of the case study research is to obtain evidence of factors affecting SRP and what criteria should be used for supplier selection from a social sustainability viewpoint. Using one case study in research can be difficult to justify against all of the argued disadvantages to using case studies, but can be used to establish existence of phenomenon which may be adequate in exploratory research. However, by using multiple cases, reliability and generalisability are improved. This is because each case will have differences. Therefore, if, under the varied circumstances of both cases, common conclusions can be drawn from both cases, the generalisability of the findings will be expanded (Yin, 2003).

Flexible research designs are intended to allow the informants as much freedom in the interview as possible as it is critical to ensure that the interviewer does not prejudice in any way the evidence that the informants will offer. Nonetheless, a list of possible discussion topics that the interviewer may use as an interview schedule was developed (see Appendix D). These topics are available to prompt the interview if the discussion requires some promoting or guidance. The key objective of this research is to explore factors for supplier selection decisions in terms of social sustainability (if any).
4.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

As research of an exploratory nature is being conducted, semi-structured, in-depth interviews are to be used to produce this non-standardised qualitative research, in order to reveal and understand not only the what and the how but also exploring the why. An interview is a purposeful discussion between two or more people (Kahn and Cannell, 1957). They help to gather reliable and valid information relevant to research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 1997). Exploratory research fits well with semi-structured or in-depth interviews as they are helpful to find out “what is happening and to seek new insights” (Robson, 1993:42). Each interview lasted between 40-120 minutes per participant. Topics discussed included sustainability generally, social sustainability including supplier selection criteria and measurement issues, the supplier selection process and self-assessment.

A semi-structured interview will still often employ an interview schedule, containing a protocol for the interview process, in order to ensure that certain areas are discussed during the interview (Roberts and Wilson, 2002). Then the interview schedule can be used as a checklist at the end of the interview to ensure that the relevant topics have been discussed. The interview schedule also ensures that consistency is maintained in each interview, however, the order of questions may be subject to change during the interview process to get the interviewee to talk freely. By using a non-standardised, informal and unstructured conversational technique, the order of the questions can be changed depending on the flow of the conversation using just a list of themes and in some cases, questions to be covered. It is classed as a “non-directive, informant interview since it is the interviewee’s perceptions which guide the conduct of the interview” (Saunders et al., 1997:212). See Appendix D for the interview schedule. The interview schedule appears quite structured for the reasons mentioned above such as a checklist of consistency, but the list was used in a flexible and open way, serving as a guide for the researcher.

In a fully unstructured interview (more like a conversation), the researcher comes to the interview with no predefined theoretical framework, and therefore has no hypotheses and questions about the social realities under investigation. As this is not a grounded theory approach, the interviews conducted were never fully unstructured, but there was flexibility for the interview to change direction (a semi-structured design). Zhang (2009:2) explains that the “intention of an unstructured interview is to expose the researcher to unanticipated themes and to help him or her to develop a better understanding of the interviewees’ social reality
from the interviewees’ perspectives”. With a semi-structured interview, the researcher will keep in mind the study’s purpose and the general scope of the issues that they would like to discuss in the interview (Fife, 2005). The researcher will try to encourage the interviewees to relate experiences and perspectives that are relevant to the problems of interest to the researcher (Burgess, 1982). If the interview was too structured, this will inhibit the interviewee’s responses and may cause an incomplete understanding of the phenomenon of interest.

Some disadvantages of the in depth interview include data quality issues related to reliability, forms of bias and validity and generalisability (Saunders et al., 1997:217). The lack of standardisation in the interview schedule leads to concerns about reliability (Robson, 1993) in terms of whether interviews done again would reveal similar information (Easterby-Smith and Lowe, 1991; Healey and Rawlinson, 1994). Hence the interview schedule shown in Appendix D provides themes of discussion with examples of specific questions should the researcher need it as a guide.

In order to eradicate interviewer forms of bias, the interviewer must ensure that they do not impose their own beliefs and frame of reference through questions asked and the way responses are interpreted (Easterby-Smith and Lowe, 1991). Additionally, forms of interviewee bias exist whereby “interviewees provide a partial picture of the situation which casts themselves in a socially desirable role, or the organisation which they work for in a positive or even negative fashion” (Saunders et al., 1997:218). Walker et al. (2012) include this as their primary concern for sustainable purchasing research. Therefore, very careful execution of the interview design and process need to be implemented to mitigate this. Triangulation methods and abductive means of returning to an organisation will also add additional dimensions, clarification and confirmation to the initial data collected. In addition, Patton (2002) suggests that quite a lot of time is needed to collect the information, especially when the researcher first enters the field and knows little about the setting. It takes time to gain trust, develop rapport, and gain access to interviewees. Another challenge for the researcher when they are discovering the setting is to know whether to follow a certain discussion and risk losing continuity, or to stay on the major theme and risk missing additional useful information (Patton, 2002). The researcher must ensure they direct and control the conversation enough, without missing out on anything useful. This can be a
challenge in exploratory data collection where no a priori codes have been developed due to the concern of being restricted in the pursuit of real data in an uncertain domain.

Most of the (richest) case data was collected from on-site interviews. Going to the company premises meant that participants were more likely to make time for the research, but also allowed observation and collection of company documents to be obtained. Zhang (2006) outlines some steps for conducting an interview successfully:

- **Step 1:** Getting access when the researcher is an outsider. The researcher also has to take into consideration the possible political, legal, and bureaucratic barriers that may arise during the process of gaining access to the setting (Lofland et al., 2006).
- **Step 2:** Understanding the language and culture of the interviewees.
- **Step 3:** Deciding on how to present oneself as the quality of the conversation is influenced, to a great extent, by how the interviewer represents themselves. The role (influencer or observer) should be clarified.
- **Step 4:** Locating an informant who is suitable for the study.
- **Step 5:** Gaining trust and establishing rapport as that there is enough trust to share honest experiences and views.
- **Step 6:** Capturing the data. In this case it was via digital voice recorder and note taking, writing up more detailed notes immediately after each interview (Fontana and Frey, 2005, Lofland, et al., 2006).

The interview process improved the rigour of qualitative information, by using a structured process but with developing unstructured interview direction or content. Questions were asked about:

- Current criteria used in supplier selection decision making
- Corporate view on sustainability
- Corporate strategy initiatives relating to social sustainability
- Supplier selection policies
- Factors driving supplier choices

Interviewees were asked to elaborate on the factors influencing the choices they make regarding supplier selection, particularly in relation to any social sustainability measures.
Participants were requested to provide their own insights into the decision making and criteria fixing/design, as well as those adopted by the company. These interviews could not be completely unstructured as it is a very specific area within vendor selection criteria that is being investigated and it would be a risk to divulge too much from the topic. As the research was exploratory with a lack of a priori constructs it was important to allow the data to evolve with minimal restrictions. So the interviews were more general in nature for BevAware and more targeted to areas of interest in JustProduce and ApparelTrade.

**Interview Process**

Each of the interviews were conducted as follows:

- Email communication with named contact using standard template (see Appendix C)
- Email or telephone confirmation follow up
- Interviews conducted at interviewee’s business site. Recorded interview on digital recorder.
- Interviews transcribed.
- Standard letter of thanks and transcript sent to interviewee. Confirmation requested that transcripts were a true representation of the encounter.
- Interview transcripts were transcribed and coded following each event, before the next one happened (where time allowed), thus allowing for generation of new codes, theory and development of new questions.
- Theoretical model, concepts and propositions developed between each case as a result of previous experience.

**4.5.3 Documentation review**

Using secondary data in the form of documents can help set the context. They can be used as a tool to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources. It is important for the researcher to challenge the information and seek other sources of data to clarify the information (Voss et al., 2002). For example, they might provide specific details which can help support verbal accounts of informants. Documentation via company literature, website information and annual reports was collected (see Appendix A). The documents were categorised into policies, reports, guidance, publicity and tools (SAQs). The importance of
the document collection and analysis was particularly key when looking at the link between social sustainability strategic objectives and information needed from suppliers to assist in making a purchasing decision. It was also important in the discovery of sustainability goals and the reality between what is being done, and that which is claimed. Documents might not accurately reflect the situation as they have not been written for the purpose of the research, but for some other function. Therefore documentation should be used with some critical judgement as they can be subject to selective deposit and control. One way of doing this is by categorising the documents. For example those classed as website information are written for a different audience as some internal company literature.

Having explained the research approach in detail, the checklist from Barratt et al’s (2011) work was applied to ensure the quality and usefulness of the work would be sufficient. The table shows the checklist that Barratt et al., (2011) used when analysing the case studies in operations management research (as previously discussed in section 2.4).
## Measured items for methodological issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Justification for case research</th>
<th>Rating scales and rationale</th>
<th>Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the reasoning for using a case research method provided? If so, how well was the reasoning?</td>
<td>‘Yes’—A statement of why the case method was adopted appeared in the research together with a clear explanation of why the case research method is appropriate. For example, if ‘an exploratory study’ was used as the justification of the case method, the research provided a clear explanation of the gaps in the literature to validate the ‘exploratory’ claim.</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Partial’—A statement of why case method was used (for example, an exploratory study) appeared in the research but there was no or only limited explanation of the rationale to validate the initial ‘exploratory’ claim</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘No’—No attempt of defending the choice of case method appeared in the research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of analysis</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was the unit of analysis explicitly stated?</td>
<td>‘Clearly stated’—The research provided an explicit statement of the unit of analysis</td>
<td>CLEARLY STATED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Not clearly stated’—No explicit statement of the unit of analysis was provided in the research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theory vs, phenomenon the research grounded in existing theory or phenomenon?</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Theory’—The research was framed by existing theory such as Transaction Cost Economics, Resource-based View, etc.</td>
<td>PHENOMENON</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Phenomenon’—The research was framed by an existing stream of literature such as Inventory Management or Project Management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Neither’—The research was not framed by existing theory nor existing literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling strategy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How did the researcher(s) decide on which case(s) to choose?</td>
<td>‘Theoretical’—Cases(s) were selected for theoretical purposes, for example, to select polar extremes where cases exhibited extremely high or extremely low value on the constructs of interests</td>
<td>THEORETICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Convenience’—Case(s) were selected out of convenience of the researchers, for example, the case companies were located within close geographical proximity of the researchers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Random’—Case(s) were randomly chosen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

117
### Measured items for methodological issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measured Item</th>
<th>Rating scales and rationale</th>
<th>Thesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measured items for methodological issues</td>
<td>‘No logic offered’—No discussion appeared in the research regarding how the case(s) was/were selected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cases</td>
<td>Barratt et al. (2011) noted the number of cases examined in each research article and then grouped them in 5 categories: 1, 2, 3, 4–10 and greater than 10. The range of 4–10 was drawn from the recommendation by Eisenhardt (1989a)</td>
<td>3 main cases and 2 validation cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many cases were examined in the research?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulated data sources</td>
<td>‘Yes’—More than one source of data was collected and used to validate the findings, for example, company documentation was reviewed in addition to interviews with key informants</td>
<td>YES Triangulation between interviews and company documentation conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there more than one source of data used to validate the research findings?</td>
<td>‘No’—Only one source of data was collected and used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data analysis</td>
<td>‘Not stated’—No discussion of the data sources appeared in the research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Within and Cross-case’—Both within and cross-case analyses were provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>WITHIN AND CROSS CASE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Within-case’—Only within case analysis was provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Cross-case’—Only cross case comparison was provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘None’—No within or cross case analysis was provided</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Checklist to ensure the quality and usefulness of analysing case studies in operations management research (adapted from Barratt et al., 2011:340)

### 4.6 Data analysis

Lofland and Lofland (1984) propose that research which exploits analysis and data collection concurrently is a productive scheme to adopt. Coding data as it is analysed between interviews is one way to do this. Coding is described by Corbin and Strauss (2008:65) as “deriving and developing concepts from data”. The coding developed as the study progressed. Open-coding (using codes induced from the data) were used to identify concepts...
about information-related activities that were of particular interest. Eisenhardt (1989a) argues that *a priori* specification of constructs is valuable because “It permits researchers to measure constructs more accurately. If these constructs prove important, then researchers have a firmer empirical grounding for the emergent theory”. However, when attempting to generate theory where the context is novel and unfamiliar, selecting a priori codes through which the main research objective is examined may create undue bias toward being theoretically conservative and may direct attention to empirical observations that can be couched in the pre-selected theory (Martin and Eisenhardt, 2010). As the pre-selected theory is underdeveloped, the premise in theory-generating case research is that in the context of the specific research questions and empirical setting, explanation (theory) derives from exploration (analysis) (Ketokivi and Choi, 2014). It is also important to become familiar with each case, giving the researcher the depth needed for cross case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989a).

The analysis of data involves concurrent flows of activity whereby analysis is interwoven before, during and after data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994). It is a continuous, iterative exercise (see Figure 4.3).

![Figure 4.3: Data analysis components (Miles and Huberman, 1984:23)](image)
The following table shows the data analysis components.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data reduction</th>
<th>Selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming raw data. This can start with anticipatory data. Methods include coding.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Data display</td>
<td>Organised assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action taking. Helps to understand what is happening and to do further analysis based on that understanding. Methods include narrative text, matrix development and graphical forms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Happens during data collection and afterwards. To start with, researcher should maintain openness and scepticism. Start developing quite vague conclusions and then get more explicit and grounded. Verification occurs as analysis develops. For example, meanings emerging from data must be tested for plausibility, sturdiness and validity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Data analysis components (adapted from Miles and Huberman, 1984:21-22)

Therefore, these things happen in conjunction with one another and processes are repeated. For example, Figure 4.3 shows how the components of data analysis interact as mentioned previously.

So far it has been established that using an abductive approach means that qualitative data will be explored using some predetermined theory, but that the purpose of the research is to develop on the limited theory in the field. Therefore, a large amount of qualitative data will be produced, which must be managed (Yin, 2003). Using meaningful and related categories to disaggregate the mass of qualitative data will allow systematic rearrangement and rigorous analysis of the data (Saunders et al., 1997:340). The basic steps of the research design are as follows:

- Comprehend and manage it
- Merge related data drawn from different transcripts and notes
- Identify key themes or patterns from it for further exploration
• Develop and/or test hypotheses based on these apparent patterns or relationships
• Draw and verify conclusions

More specifically, the activities needed, advised by Saunders et al., (1997:340-4) include the ability to:

• Meaningfully categorise the data. A coherent set will provide the researcher with a well-structured analytical framework to pursue the analysis.
• Unitise the data once the categories have been established (putting data into categories). This will done using the software programme NVivo which offers a coding tool for qualitative findings.
• Recognise relationships and develop categories to facilitate this. Categories may need to be refined and new categories developed (hence the advantage of flexibility in induction). Note there must always be clear definitions and consistency when categorising.
• Develop and test hypotheses or propositions to reach conclusions. This is done to a basic level at the theory generating stage with the intention to test the hypotheses which inductively emerge from the data by seeking alternative explanations and negative examples which do not conform to the pattern or relationship being tested (Marshall and Rossman, 1989) in the future.

4.6.1 Coding
Strauss (1987:27) stated that “any researcher who wishes to become proficient at doing qualitative analysis must learn to code well and easily. The excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding”. The objective of the cyclical process the researcher goes through is to refine the analysis each time, recoding the qualitative data to generate patterns, categories, constructs, themes, and concepts, grasping meaning, and building theory. This section will describe that process.

Firstly, a code in qualitative inquiry is a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, and salient, attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data to capture the essence of the content. In this research the data will consist of interview transcripts and documents. Decoding will be conducted when a passage of data is reflected upon to decipher
its core meaning. Encoding will occur when the appropriate code is determined and it is labelled. Coding will be conducted both during and after data collection as a way not only to label, but to link the content. Open coding is a crucial aspect of the analytic process but will become more defined as the research progresses through the cases. Nonetheless, new codes will have the opportunity to emerge should that be necessary, by maintaining flexibility in research design.

Secondly, patterns develop as data cannot always be precisely and discretely bounded and in fact, there are ‘fuzzy’ boundaries (Tesch, 1990:135). Patterns of codes (which then lead onto categories and themes) are likely to be varying forms rather than stable regularities. A pattern can be characterised by:

- similarity (things happen the same way)
- difference (they happen in predictably different ways)
- frequency (they happen often or seldom)
- sequence (they happen in a certain order)
- correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events)
- causation (one appears to cause another) (Tesch, 1990:155).

The data analysis process uses these patterns to develop the theory. Firstly, from codes and patterns, categories are developed. The difference is that “with categories we impute meanings, with coding we compute them” (Dey, 1999:95). Issues emerge when the term code and category are used interchangeably when they are two separate components of data analysis. Codes develop into categories by collecting and organising them together by similarity or regularity (a pattern) and the categories arise from their connections. For example, this can be linked to a pile of bones forming a working skeleton (Charmaz, 2006:45). Classification reasoning and tacit and intuitive senses should determine how codes develop into categories. This axial coding links categories in a rational manner (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Finally selective coding links core categories to develop themes and concepts to new theory. The term first order codes in the research are interchangeably called constructs, under which second order codes lay.

The ‘reality of data’ can be seen when categories are compared with each other. There is a progression towards the thematic, conceptual and theoretical outcomes. Richards and Morse (2007) explain that the coding, construct and category progression is “how we get up to more
general, higher-level, and more abstract constructs” (p.157). The ability to show how these themes and concepts systematically interrelate lead toward the development of theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). A theme is an outcome of coding, categorization, and analytic reflection. It is not itself coded. For example, think of “a category as a word or phrase describing some segment of your data that is explicit, whereas a theme is a phrase or sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes” (Rossman and Rallis, 2003:282).

Figure 4.4 shows the process described, of getting to theory building from coding, although in reality this is much more complex than illustrated.

![Figure 4.4: A streamlined code to theory model for qualitative inquiry (Saldaña, 2009)](image)

A record of emergent codes will be kept in a codebook (a compilation of the codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example for reference). Codes can accumulate quickly and change as analysis progresses and the NVivo will keep a record of this to show the
evolving nature of the data analysis. Maintaining this list provides an analytic opportunity to organize and reorganise the codes into major categories and subcategories. See Appendix E for the original first order codes (referred to as constructs in the thesis) and Appendix F for final second order codes under first order constructs. These codes are categorised to develop the themes of the theory.

Murphy et al. (1998) argue that a degree of transparency in the analytic coding process is desirable. This rigour is often found in the healthcare sector where a number of articles have been published clearly showing how to test for inter-rata reliability. This is to ensure there is not poor consistency between codes and Thompson et al. (2004) stress the importance of explaining in detail how discrepancies were found and dealt with rather than simply stating that a consensus was reached between researchers, which is vague and unhelpful to others trying to use the research. The use of the Kappa coefficient offers a measurement of agreement which could not be expected by chance alone, thus going beyond simple percentage agreement (Cohen, 1960). This measure has advantages in increasing reliability measures of qualitative research using transparent and documented processes.

Inter-rater reliability using the Kappa coefficient could be determined using NVivo when “equally capable coders operating in isolation from each other select the same code for the same unit of text” (Krippendorff, 2004:217). The system calculates the Kappa coefficient based on the coding exercises completed by different coders; two in this case. Firstly, the coding agreement could be visually evaluated using coding stripes against each document and transcript by the two coders once coding had been completed. This provided the opportunity to visually observe any major differences between the first and second coder to analyse intercoder agreement (reconciling coding discrepancies through discussion from the same unit of text). Where this occurred the differences in interpretations were discussed and the codes were either changed or left as they were. Using NVivo, a coding comparison query could be run to calculate the Kappa agreement between the two coders to analyse intercoder agreement. Kappa statistics represent the proportion of joint judgments of fractions in which there is agreement, after chance agreement has been excluded (Cohen, 1960). The upper value, or perfect agreement, is 1.00 (Cohen, 1960). Generally a Kappa between 0.61 and 0.80 represents substantial agreement, and a Kappa between 0.81 and 1 indicates nearly perfect agreement (Landis and Koch, 1977). Discussions between coders to reconcile discrepancies
will occur for any Kappa coefficient under 0.7 to demonstrate rigor. The second coder used for the research was a business academic with no involvement in the research.

Using CAQDAS

Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) are tools used by researchers to help organise and code their data and have been used since the early 1980s. In 1984, Becker et al. (p. 32) claimed that “we have reached the stage of hardware and software development where a well-conceived computer assisted strategy can expedite and enhance each step of the qualitative research process”. The words’ enhance’ and ‘expedite’ imply a positive development in the field of analysing qualitative data. However, there is some criticism of CAQDAS programmes, including NVivo, which is the CAQDAS of choice for this research. There are a variety of advantages and criticisms of using this software for the study, which will be explained.

Firstly, an advantage of using CAQDAS is that it significantly helps the researcher to organise their data. Therefore, it is useful on large scale studies, often where many researchers are involved. The data is stored on a database which is portable and can be accessed by many. This was useful for second coder activities as the database recognises the user and attributes their work to them. By using software for the more mechanical parts of the process, the researcher is able to devote more energy to analytic and interpretive work (Conrad and Shulamit, 1984). For data analysis, the software can facilitate systematic coding and quicker data reduction. However, Coffey et al. (1996) and Lonkila (1995) argue that there is a risk that researchers may confuse coding with analysis, and neglect interpretation. So while it is an advantage that the software can take some subjectivity out of coding and make it more of an objective process, it should not remove subjectivity and interpretation altogether. The introduction of CAQDAS can be seen as an attempt to introduce an element of scientific objectivity into what is often regarded as purely subjective interpretation (Catterall and Maclaran, 1998).

As well as the confusion between coding and analysis, additionally, the software could mean that researchers become so alienated from their work that they cannot link the codes and interpretation into coherent arguments. However rather than see CAQDAS as a simple cut and paste technology that removes data from its context, actually a coded segment can be clearly and immediately seen within the context of the whole interview (Webb, 1999).
Providing codes are not used in isolation from the data, the researcher can avoid ‘a tail that wags the dog’ situation. Nonetheless, all this data recorded on the software provides traceability of the data that is harder to account for in manual coding, making the use of a CAQDAS highly advantageous as part of the approach.

Therefore much of the criticism of CAQDAS is for using it as the only approach of data analysis. Roberts and Wilson (2002) claim that the ease and flexibility of software assisted coding may encourage the creation of too many codes and consequent loss of understanding of the overall picture. They argue that computing aspects are limited to the mechanical tasks and do not extend to the interpretive aspects. Although their research was based on market research rather than academic data reduction, Rettie et al. (2008) reported that it was “a perception that CAQDAS distances the researcher from the data, leading to a mechanical, superficial analysis” (p.77) but that instead it is actually a process facilitating data access, not intuitive analysis. As Mason (1999) argued before them, the ideal solution is therefore to combine both manual and software coding. For example, segments under a particular code can be printed and re-examined for further insights. The software assists the management and retrieval of data, but does not replace the intuitive, interpretive aspects of analysis. It has been noted that many researchers may only use CAQDAS for the coding stage and then go back to manual methods for the 'theory building' stage (Lee and Fielding 1996), thus using the software when it is useful and not being dominated by it.

Some of the strong criticisms with CAQDAS appear unsubstantial because the same occurs in manual coding. For example, Bong (2002) contends that CAQDAS encourages a focus on de-contextualised segments. Strangely enough, this is actually a large criticism of manual coding as researchers go through transcripts one at a time and can struggle to see the big picture. The software actually allows for this. Additionally, misconstruing the nuances of language and meaning could happen with the use of either method.

Therefore, providing the CAQDAS is used as a tool and it does not take over then it can be very useful for researchers. Rettie et al. (2008) suggest it should be used as a supplement tool rather than an alternative to regular (manual) forms of coding and analysis. Manually coding the data first is a good way to ensure the researcher is involved with his or her data. This also means that the researcher should have experience of coding manually in the first place. Using both manual and CAQDAS means that your data reduction has developed as it is important to
code “the moving picture as well as the snapshots” (Catterall and Maclaran, 1997:1). Pike and Thompson (1995) warn that software will be seen as a substitution for “the experience, analytic intuition and creative flair of the researcher”. Using both approaches will mitigate this. Firstly the transcript will be reviewed on paper and manually coded to draw some initial meanings from the narrative without the use of the software. This provides the researcher with some initial understanding of the information, which also occurs as a result of conducting the interview. Secondly the coding will be completed on NVivo and more rigorous modelling such as multiple coding analyses can verify the initial understanding.

Despite some strong criticisms of CAQDAS, NVivo has been chosen as a data analysis approach to assist with coding (as well as initial manual coding) for speed, organisation of data and the advantage of linking transcripts up to show the big picture. CAQDAS is highly useful for inductive or abductive theory building or developing, because it assists with the nodes which emerge as a result of the induction and you really get to look at your data and see what it is saying. It is actually not so useful for proper hypothesis testing (Kelle, 1997) as in a deductive approach the hypothesis must be tested to support general ideas, the nodes are predetermined.

![Figure 4.5: CAQDAS Approach (simultaneous activities)](image)

*Figure 4.5: CAQDAS Approach (simultaneous activities)*
Chapter 4: Methodology

Whether using CAQDAs or manual coding, or a combination of both, the qualitative research process can be separated into key stages. These stages often happen simultaneously but have discreet periods of analysis as well (see Figure 4.5). Before the data collection even occurs, often there is some anticipatory preparation of a priori codes which will change and develop as the data collection and reduction continues. Davidson and Skinner (2010) describe the process. Usually after the initial stage of data assembly or collection of information, there is a shift to data reduction. This involves organising and structuring the data and using codes to break the data down into meaningful and referenced sections. Data display then enables conclusions to be drawn which may be further supported by data verification, where alternative explanations are sought through additional data or theories, the latter often being a continuous process throughout the research project (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). The role of the qualitative researcher is therefore quite diverse and multi-tasking.

4.6.2 Validation of findings
Qualitative data can be highly valid. Miles and Huberman (1994:277) provide a list of 50 questions which a researcher should be able to address if the results are to be validated. These questions can be broadly grouped into 4 sections. For qualitative data specifically, Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest the following four terms.

1.) Confirmability
Miles and Huberman (1994) were concerned that researcher bias should be disclosed and avoided. As the results in this research are shared with the relevant participants, they can verify that researcher bias has not influenced the results. Within each case study, the method applied is transparent to ensure that the same method is being applied throughout the study. This will lead to higher chances of construct validity which is the extent to which correct operational measures can be established (Voss et al., 2002). Discriminant validity is where the constructed can be differentiated from other constructs (Leonard-Barton, 1990). Using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), validity can be tested to see whether predictions made about relationships to other variables are confirmed (construct validity); or if it can be differentiated (discriminant validity).
Chapter 4: Methodology

2.) Dependability
Questions about the researcher’s thought processes are raised which is another reason why it is imperative for the researcher to state their position in a study. This gives the reader information about any biases they may have. Visibility of the theoretical framework and research questions also mean that the research can be audited and depended upon as transparency is clear from the start. These two actions make the dependability of the study stronger.

3.) Credibility
This theme is related to the plausibility of the findings. Eisenhardt (1989a) suggests that tying emergent theory to existing literature enhances internal validity, generalisability, and theoretical level of theory building from case study research. This is particularly crucial in theory building research because findings will rest on limited number of cases. Any further corroboration of internal validity or generalisability is an important improvement and will be done in this case by checking with the participants involved increasing their internal validity, authenticity and credibility.

4.) Transferability
Following the importance of internal validity, it is also essential to ensure that the wider applicability and comparison to other cases is both possible and visible. The aim is to ensure that comparative studies could be conducted on the basis of this research. This is done by being clear about the types of cases used including industry, sample size, roles within the business and when interviews took place. Another method is to seek and ensure validation with academics. This was done by regular presentation of the thesis work at national and international conferences such as the British Academy of Management conferences, Logistics Research Network conferences, and European Operations Management Association conference and forum, and included two-way dialogue about the methodology, research conducted and theoretical findings.

4.7 Summary
This chapter explained the methodology chosen to discover the information needed to meet the research objectives. The case study approach has been shown to be suitable for exploratory supply chain research of a qualitative nature. The data will be analysed using an
abductive approach and coded using NVivo software. The iterative nature of the induction will ensure that internal validity is ensured in the findings, while external validity can be achieved through feedback sessions and discussions with academic peers.

The cases outlined in the proceeding chapters were conducted and subjected to the methodology outlined. However, as is the nature of an abductive approach, some modifications to both data collection and analysis instruments occurred as the focus was advanced. For example, new codes and relations emerged. The basic methodology remained the same and any small changes to it are disclosed in the next chapters.
CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS

CASE 1: BevAware

5.1 Introduction
The previous chapter explained the methodology applied in this research, which is a sequence of three case studies of purchasing organisations, and two validation cases of 3PSPs (all given pseudonyms). The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the document and interview analysis of the first main case. To achieve this aim, the chapter is organised to show the development of the findings from the data collection in a logical order. The first part of the chapter introduces the context of the case including social sustainability objectives and the process of this purchaser’s supplier selection. This is important as each case differs, regardless of their analogous pursuit of better social sustainability performance. Then the coding analysis and development of first and second order codes are presented for the case, clearly demonstrating how each category and theme builds from these constructs. At the end of the chapter, adaptations to the research process for the next case are offered. This is due to the inductive nature of the research. Propositions are developed over the data collection process of the three main cases and tested in a methodological way.

5.2 The case context
BevAware is a UK multinational beverage manufacturer listed in the FTSE4Good index that uses both 3PSPs and their own processes to select suppliers to ensure alignment with their sustainability goals. The organisation pursues a public sustainability agenda relating to environmental (E) and social (S) issues. BevAware uses approximately 30,000 direct suppliers from more than 100 countries in their brands. Many of those direct suppliers then have an extensive supply chain, connecting BevAware with thousands of two-tier and three-tier suppliers.

5.3 Social sustainability objectives
The terminology BevAware uses is ‘sustainability and responsibility strategy’ and within this they focus on alcohol and society (S), water and the environment (E), communities (S),
people (S), governance and ethics (S), and their value chain (E/S). From this assortment of attention, it is clear that social sustainability is a key focus due to the nature of the areas they report on. More specifically their key areas of engagement with suppliers are listed as ethical business practices (S), the protection of human rights (S), health and safety standards (S), the reduction of environmental impact through the supply chains of which they are a part (E) and working with suppliers to create a more positive role for alcohol in society (S). Thus, context specific issues for the organisation include the promotion of the responsible drinking of alcohol.

*BevAware* publicly claim to be committed to working with suppliers, industry partners, and trade associations to drive higher standards in business ethics and sustainability. Responsible sourcing is listed as one of three key focuses for supplier selection related to the sustainability agenda. The other two are sustainable agriculture and local sourcing; and carbon reduction, sustainable packaging, and environmental management, which are classified as having a more environmental focus. Therefore the first of the three key impact areas in their supply chain is of interest. Responsible sourcing refers to the management of social and ethical risks of procurement. This risk is managed by a clear set of standards and guidelines as well as a defined process for managing social and ethical risks throughout the supply chain. This is outlined in a specially designed document for suppliers provided by the purchaser (categorised as the Purchasing Policy). The direct term ‘code of conduct’ is avoided in the analysis because the practitioner frameworks explained in section 2.3.2 can be described as codes of conduct. Purchasing policy refers to the code of conduct developed for suppliers by purchasers to set out expectations.

### 5.4 Process of supplier selection

*BevAware* have a publicly available standards documents for suppliers which sets out the minimum social and environmental compliance standards required by suppliers as part of their contract, as well as aspirations for their long-term ‘partners’ (suppliers) to work towards. There is a four-stage process which must be followed for identifying, assessing and managing the social and ethical risk in the supply chain. The rationale behind the process includes the ability to study areas of greatest risk and greatest potential benefit and the opportunity to work cooperatively with suppliers to mitigate this risk and maximise the
benefits. The four stages are screening, pre-qualification, qualification (3PSP SAQ) and audit, outlined in Figure 5.1.

This is a risk-based approach to supplier selection with high-risk suppliers needing to be more transparent in the process. The purchaser uses both their in-house questionnaire and the tools of the 3PSP to ensure they are exposed to the information they need both from their own context-specific perspective and that of the industry (general criteria on the 3PSP SAQ). This is a fairly complex process needing a number of iterations of risk analysis. BevAware do use audits to ensure suppliers are meeting requirements. This can be done in the pre-selection stage and occurs on an on-going basis once the supplier is contracted. Figure 5.1 shows that the responsibility for different parts of the process before selection is shared between the buyer and supplier in different ways at different stages. For example, the buyer screens first to avoid any unnecessary effort of information sharing by the supplier, then the supplier must meet SAQ criteria before the buyer makes a decision, sometimes by seeking more information themselves through audit.

5.5 Coding analysis and inter-rater reliability

Data was collected as outlined in the Methodology section 4.5. Approximately 12 hours of interviews were conducted with sustainability managers (some of whom had risk, compliance
and performance expertise specifically) supplier performance managers and a range of procurement managers. Most of these roles were of a global nature. See Appendix B for a full list of interviewees. Ten documents were selected on the basis that they were related to the sustainability of the firm’s supply chain. These included policy documents, sustainability reports, guidance on the initiative and publicity documents.

The data analysis included several steps. Firstly, the documents and interviews were coded using an open coding technique. These codes emerged and developed from the narrative. In order to validate the coding exercise, a second coder was asked to code the interview transcripts and documents using a coding sheet (see Appendix E). The second coder had the definitions of the codes to hand. These definitions were derived from the data rather than the literature so that they could be context specific to social sustainability (not the case specifically). In BevAware, 18 main constructs emerged. Other codes were listed within the 18 constructs (see Appendix F). These were not included in the coding sheet which defined the scope of the constructs. Text sections could be coded to more than one code, allowing for analysis of links to be conducted.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>Organisations who provide services to gather and share sustainability information of potential suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>Sharing features or attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Meeting with specified standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>The payment of value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Receiving or giving systematic instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement behaviour</td>
<td>The way in which a person or organisation acts or conducts itself, especially towards others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Make the current situation better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Outcome/The result of carrying out a task or function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing Policy</td>
<td>The code of conduct provided for suppliers outlining expectations of the purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>A situation involving exposure to danger, harm or loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5: Findings (BevAware)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their own needs, incorporating economic, environmental and social dimensions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Clarity and disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence or investigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Coding definitions derived from the data

Inter-rater reliability using the Kappa coefficient could be determined using NVivo. This requires that “two or more equally capable coders operating in isolation from each other select the same code for the same unit of text” (Krippendorff, 2004:217). Firstly, coding stripes were visually analysed against each document and transcript by the two coders once coding had been completed. This provided the opportunity to visually observe any major differences between the first and second coder to analyse intercoder agreement (reconciling coding discrepancies through discussion from the same unit of text). Where this occurred the differences in interpretations were discussed and the codes was either changed or left as they were. Using NVivo, a coding comparison query could be run to calculate the Kappa agreement between the two coders to analyse intercoder agreement. Kappa statistics represent the proportion of joint judgments of fractions in which there is agreement, after chance agreement has been excluded (Cohen, 1960). The upper value, or perfect agreement, is 1.00 (Cohen, 1960). As explained in the methodology, generally a Kappa between 0.61 and 0.80 represents substantial agreement, and a Kappa between 0.81 and 1 indicates nearly perfect agreement (Landis and Koch, 1977). The weakest inter-rater reliability constructs are performance, engagement behaviour, strategy and transparency, although all still above 0.7. Coding conversations with the second coder revealed that this is because these needed to be defined more clearly for better acknowledgment.

Inter-rater reliability is evidenced on the Table 5.2 (overleaf). The table shows the 18 constructs developed from BevAware.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Kappa Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>0.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>0.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>0.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement behaviour</td>
<td>0.754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>0.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>0.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering process</td>
<td>0.916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing policy</td>
<td>0.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>0.790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk management</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>0.711</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>0.880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>0.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>0.744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.833</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5.2: Kappa coefficient statistics for inter-rater reliability (BevAware)*

### 5.6 Development of categories and themes

The 18 constructs were built up in the first case with second order codes underneath. Appendix E shows the definitions of the 18 main constructs and demonstrates the information available to the second coder on the coding sheet. The 18 constructs were identified by the coders as having significance in the data because they were themes that were cited frequently. Risk management was referred to most frequently in all interviews for BevAware and is the most common construct of the analysis. The mitigation of risk is described as the overall reason for SRP, SSCM and social sustainability pursuit.
The Global Sustainability Manager, Procurement explained

“We are a company of brands and we live and die by our brands. It’s the number one priority and it’s all around brand reputation. Our brands have been around a long time. It takes a long time to build up that brand and they can easily be knocked down. It’s a real reason and a real force why we need to do this [sustainability]. When we talk about procurement and connecting the overall strategy in the business it’s for brand building. People in whatever function you’re in get that we need to protect our brands”.

This risk constitutes both financial future viability in the long term by ensuring resources are managed, and protection from sudden events in the supply chain that damage the brand and could result in failure to have longevity in a business environment (reputational risk). Therefore the cost of a disruption to the supply chain and management of the probability of this risk is important.

“Most decisions are driven by cost. Quality, services and sustainability are factors but cost drives the business case”

(Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement).

But there is also a cost of pursuing sustainability agendas in terms of a more complicated supplier selection process and the limitation of not going with the most cost-effective supplier if they do not meet the requirements in this area. Strategy was described as a driver behind the social sustainability decisions:

We have a sustainability strategy that we make clear to the public and our suppliers. It drives an element of our procurement decisions as well as risk”

(Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement).

Whereas risk was the reason why the organisation considers these elements, it was then the development and performance measurement against a social sustainability strategy that was the driving force behind the actions.
“We aim to achieve unrivalled performance in our supply chains through developing mutually rewarding relationships with suppliers who deliver excellent service, consistently achieve our quality standards, manage business risks, drive out cost and innovate to increase value”

(Policy document: BevAware’s Standards of Business Ethics and Sustainability for Suppliers).

 “[Social sustainability] is core. In many ways it can have a stronger place than the other two because people can really connect to that. Any issues around the social side, any issues to explore around ethical practices people can connect to it. People don’t like to see environmental pollution or this that and the other but if they see issues with workers being treated poorly they can really connect to them”

(GLOBAL Sustainability Manager, Procurement).

The strategy is made even more realisable through purchasing policies that are made visible to suppliers to define expectations. BevAware has a number of complex categories and their policies include Codes of Business Conduct, Standards of Business Ethics and Sustainability for Suppliers, Shaping Our Industries Future, Marketing Code, Occupational Health and Safety Global Policy, Transparency in Supply Chains and Human Rights and Anti-discrimination Global Policy. Firms in similar industries, such as FMCGs are working closely to overcome some of the issues with implementing a social sustainability strategy, such as measurement but the commonality of the overall goals is a motivator for the organisations who are keen to be leaders in this space. It was noted that there are many context specific issues, such as responsible consumption of alcohol in BevAware, to be considered though.

“Most of the industry is working towards the same goals and so although competitors in the marketplace, consumer goods companies collaborate, and industry associations provides effective ways to improving practice in our supply chain and in the industry as a whole. It quite incestuous”

(Sustainability and Responsibility Performance Manager).

“We need help to steer us in the right direction and we want to learn from one another in the industry”

(Global Sustainability Assistant, Procurement).
“We are a different business to those other FMCGs. Ours is a sustainability strategy and the challenges we face and the spotlight we get means that the core focus for us in terms of sustainability and responsibility is around responsible drinking and that takes a lot of our focus and that diverts a lot of focus and a lot of attention away from other areas. [...] For us in procurement, when we talk about being a good corporate citizenship business, our focus of that is responsible sourcing and that’s where we are with a lot of our activity and so when we talk about sustainable procurement the majority of our work and our focus to date has been responsible sourcing and we’ve started to engage suppliers in other areas such as carbon”

(Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement).

The process of information gathering in supplier selection is made more complicated by introducing social sustainability criteria. This is because (1) this is another dimension of factors to consider and (2) there are difficulties with the measurement of the performance of suppliers to make a fair decision.

“It can be difficult to measure social sustainability and some companies are doing better than us. But I think you can so I think you can count the metrics as you go through the process and track it”

(Sustainability and Responsibility Performance Manager).

“We have our own process and that’s what we’re doing at the moment. It includes using [3PSP]. I am working through this with some of the team because we’ve had this process for some time and so we are asking is there a way to refine it and is it driving us to the right focus? It not an absolute process and it’s not black and white but it helps to guide our buyers through the process”

(Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement).

3PSPs were mentioned in both the interviews and documents as part of the process for information sharing and data collecting but that there are risks associated with it.
The Global Sustainability Manager, (Procurement) states:

“My concern is, and I’m sure other companies will say this, is that [3PSP] can be the solution rather than the process. If you’re not careful you can have ‘have you got that supplier on [3PSP]? Have they completed their questionnaire?’ And it focuses on that. And it can lose focus that that is just a process of what you’re trying to get to understand the risk. And I do have concerns that it can become tick box. For me the fundamental thing is that it’s a self-assessment and self-assessments are just that. It depends how you use the process”

Interview participants described a lack of consensus on social sustainability criterion, although not that social sustainability is an overall goal. For example, BevAware as an organisation refers to many similar companies pursuing similar sustainability goals and learning from each other but explains that the narrower focus on how to measure different aspects and what these aspects should be is problematic for the industry. It is explained that there are also lots of sources of information to refer to in terms of published guidelines (namely GRI) but that they turn to 3PSPs to define it more specifically. Self-assessment of the suppliers is useful for the purchasers to make a decision and having a standard format for this, but the chosen 3PSP is welcomed for like for like comparisons of suppliers. Suppliers need to demonstrate that they can meet minimal requirements, described as **compliance** in the first instance.

“Compliance and responsible sourcing always takes priority. So when you talk about the environmental and social side, the social side always take precedence over the environmental side for us because its risk management of the reputational brand damage”

(GLOBAL Sustainability Manager, Procurement).

However as social sustainability is a developing aspiring phenomenon, it is the striving for **improvement** of both the buyer and supplier through the supplier behaviour by **educating** the supplier in the experience that is most welcomed.

“The audits can become the outputs rather than the process for improvement”

(Supplier Performance Manager).
“[Suppliers] should be improving their questionable areas. They need to know how to do this and show the procurers that it is being done”

(Supplier Performance Manager).

“People need to know what to do and how to do it. I fear we focus too much on simply a solution – this isn’t about finding a solution, it is about changing the landscape and that might take time whereby we need to develop a way to do it”

(Global Sustainability Manager, Procurement).

*BevAware* describes suppliers who embrace corrective action (usually recommended in a 3PSP report) as being attractive vendors. Often it is up to the purchaser, who is bigger than its suppliers in this case, to educate the suppliers. The purchasers get guidance from 3PSPs in terms of what should be improved. Suppliers can demonstrate transparency in their conduct to assure the purchaser of their behaviour. Another pursuit of the purchaser is longer term relationships whereby transparency and improvement measures will be demonstrated because mutually beneficial goals will be pursued by both supplier and purchaser. In the *BevAware* purchasing policy document, the organisation communicates the desire to work with suppliers who “have a positive attitude to human rights and labour rights”. The Global Procurement Programme Manager explains that this is because relationships can be built with suppliers pursuing similar objectives and once those relationships are established they can be very rewarding:

“While we engage with suppliers throughout our supply chain, our main focus is on working with those with whom we have the most immediate relationships”

(Global Procurement Programme Manager).

“Our suppliers should be committed to openness and transparency in its dealings with stakeholders, including clear and accurate reporting”

(Sustainability and Responsibility Report 2013).

Triangulation between reporting and policy documents and interview narrative is demonstrated by their consistent messages which strengthens the quality of the information being conveyed. The engagement behaviour of the supplier is referred to regularly in the
interviews as the risk management aspect of the SRP is heightened or reduced depending on this behaviour. The supplier’s positive engagement behaviour with the purchaser is a driver for selection as described by the Global Sustainability Assistant (Procurement):

“The process is an engagement process with suppliers and you can’t do everything and you need to decide where your risk is [...] We certainly want to be a good corporate citizen and be a responsible part of the communities that we operate in and that filters down right through the business and through the supply chain. We want our suppliers to behave in the same way”.

Along with some social sustainability criteria, relationships can be difficult to measure as they are subjective and by definition incorporate high levels of trust.

 “[The process] is not that subjective at the start such as operating in a high risk country but after that we do ask if there have been any issues around collective bargaining and that is more subjective and part of self-assessment. I’m reviewing both of those at the moment to make sure they are effective and to ask what are we doing with the data”

(Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement).

“We give ourselves and our suppliers the freedom to succeed – we trust each other, we are open to and seek challenge, and we respond quickly to the opportunity this creates. The company places its trust in employees to act in a way which is not only compliant but which supports our values, purpose and business principles and we expect our suppliers to do the same”

(Code of Business Conduct).

The key findings from BevAware focus on the issues with the process, risk management and the measurement of success of social sustainability with a lack of universal agreement, complex networks and difficulty monitoring suppliers’ behaviour. Despite being an industry leader, the organisation refers often to competitive key players working together to achieve success in the social sustainability arena and this extends to supplier behaviour. They have a rigid supplier selection process in place both of their own design and they use a 3PSP for information gathering on suppliers. However as they believe that their suppliers carry so
much risk for them they refer to long term relationships between purchasers and suppliers as also being key to having an impact on the decision.

5.7 Testing of socially SSCM definition
The definition of socially SSCM developed at the start of the thesis was presented to BevAware interview participants during interviews to test its veracity. The terms preservation and development were supported because they incorporate both what is occurring now by sustaining any achievements thus far, and the intent to keep improving through development. They were also favourable to the dual aspect of an individual and collective element due to the nature of their products and the effects that alcohol can have on society, particularly externally. They were keen to improve both processes and structures with suppliers to mitigate risk and improve performance. Therefore, the definition was approved by the practical experts working on socially SSCM at BevAware.

5.8 Proposition development
The propositions are developed inductively from the exploratory data collection which was originally sought using the original research objective which was to explore the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. BevAware provides evidence of strong links to strategy using policies to ensure this. They use a basic prescreening programme before asking suppliers to use the Sedex system of self-assessment of sustainability behaviour. Social sustainability is particularly problematic due to a lack of universal guidelines on what is required and expected. BevAware work with competitors to move this initiative forward. The results of the supplier SAQ are analysed by the purchaser with a focus on social sustainability sections due to the high risk to brand reputation perceived here, indicating that BevAware are using the criteria set out by the 3PSP to reduce risk. This empirical evidence allows two initial propositions to be developed from the first two research questions.

Firstly, RQ1 asks how do corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers? BevAware rely heavily on a clear sustainability strategy to guide SRP selection of suppliers to ensure they are directing attention toward certain behaviours such as ethical business practices in the context of alcohol and society, human rights and health and safety.
Therefore, the first proposition is developed as:

**Proposition 1:** A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing.

Secondly, RQ2 asks how do social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser? BevAware use a dual screening process using their own criteria and that of a 3PSP. They use the strategy to help define relevant criteria in advance of selecting suppliers and use these criteria to mitigate risk because they are assessing against issues that are deemed precarious to them. Table 5.3 shows the supplier selection criteria used by BevAware in SRP. The categories are those found in the literature review and the dominance of each was expressed in interview and document analysis.

**Table 5.3: BevAware’s SRP supplier selection criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical case</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BevAware</td>
<td>Labour standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** covered in sustainability strategy  * covered in purchasing policy

**BevAware** expressed reputational risk as a result of supplier’s behaviours heavily in the interview discussions and found that supplier selection criteria covering all the proposed areas was needed but with particular focus on business integrity and people in communities and society.
This leads to a second proposition of:

**Proposition 2: Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place.**

The propositions were developed during the data collection process simultaneously as their answers were generated. This is because the nature of theory building research is often iterative and flexible rather than rigidly logical and forward flowing. The first proposition refers to the necessary existence of sustainability objectives on the purchasers’ side of the relationship to achieve SRP. This is because purchasers need to know where to focus their attention in a murky, poorly defined buying environment. The second proposition refers to the need for criteria to assess suppliers against following the literature review findings that guidelines were multifarious and confusing. So far from analysis of the first case, it is also becoming clear that there are two dimensional influences affecting the success of SRP when selecting suppliers. From the codes generated, a selection can be attributed to the process of the SRP (i.e. information gathering, having purchasing policy in place and the management of risk) and a selection exhibit relational aspects of the exchange (such as trust and engagement behaviour). The organisation is using a 3PSP to help define criteria for suppliers to report on in the information gathering process. This suggests that firms require social sustainability criteria to assess suppliers against to mitigate the risk to their reputation. BevAware demonstrated a strong desire to establish social sustainability criteria to assess suppliers against to mitigate the risk to their reputation. These criteria give them indications of where they should be heading in terms of future aspirations for a socially sustainable supply chain. It also provides the purchasers with some assurance should reputational damage be a risk following an event, which is a key concern for purchasers and driver of SSCM (Walker and Jones, 2012). Despite large purchasing organisations in similar industries being fiercely competitive, these firms demonstrate much collaboration working together, as well as with suppliers, to achieve wider-scale results. BevAware specifically refer to working with competitors in industry forums such as Aim Progress and the Ethical Trade Initiative. More investigation into these aspects in the next cases is appropriate.
5.9 Validity and reliability of research

The document and interview data collection was performed by following the protocol in the methodology (see section 4.5). It follows Yin’s (1994) three principles of data collection for case studies by (1) using multiple sources of data (interviews and documents) (2) creating a case study database (on Nvivo) and (3) maintaining a chain of evidence (using Nvivo). Using multiple sources of data (triangulation of evidence) increased the reliability of the data and the process of gathering it by corroborating the data gathered from each sources. For example, some of the documents are publicity documents and so these need to be considered with a view to who the intended reader is. By comparing policy documents and interview narrative against these publicity documents, a more valid oversight is achieved. Nvivo has been useful in holding data, ordering data and generating reports and models.

As the first case, BevAware had an important role to play in the validation of the coding exercises and interpretation of the data. Transcripts were shared with the interview participants to ensure accuracy and an example of a coded document was discussed with the Global Sustainability Manager (Procurement) to avoid misinterpretation. As the results in this research are shared with the relevant participants, they can verify that researcher bias has not influenced the results. As already discussed, this coding was subject to second coder authentication to ensure confirmability. This will lead to higher chances of construct validity which is the extent to which correct operational measures can be established (Voss et al. 2002). This also avoids researcher bias, a concern raised by Miles and Huberman (1994). Confirmability is also increased as a result of the triangulation method employed. Using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), validity can be tested to see whether predictions made about relationships to other variables are confirmed (construct validity).

Credibility is further confirmed in Chapter 9 when the discussion ties the findings back to literature. Transferability is further defined in the next case as similarities with companies pursuing similar social sustainability agendas will either be shown to be doing the same things with similar challenges or not. After the three main cases are presented, the validation cases are also presented to show verification of the findings, from a different perspective. Finally, BevAware has a particular role to play in the overall validation of the research as the abductive nature of the process means that this case was revisited with the final results to check. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.
5.10 Summary and adaptation for future cases

The BevAware case provided an insightful opportunity to analyse important supplier selection behaviours in the context of socially SSCM. Having a sustainability strategy in place which guides criteria development of supplier selection was imperative for the organisation and led to the development of two propositions. The next case will be coded using the 18 constructs as a guide, but it is expected that some constructs may appear less important and others will become more prevalent. Further analysis on the constitution of the main constructs will be completed to investigate in more detail what factors affect the selection of a supplier. Inter-rater reliability measures will continue to be used to ensure a reliable coding process has been undertaken. The next cases in the process will continue to answer the research questions (including more evidence on the third question about effectively achieving SRP) and seek to find evidence or not for the first two propositions. Further propositions will be developed from the main research objective with an aim of answering RQ3 more fully.
CHAPTER 6
FINDINGS
CASE 2: JustProduce

6.1 Introduction
The previous chapter introduced BevAware as the first of three purchasing organisations being investigated in the research. The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the document and interview analysis of the second main case (JustProduce). The findings build on the discoveries from BevAware. For example, 18 constructs were developed as being key to supplier selection in SSCM in BevAware. These constructs need to be validated and developed using the second case. To achieve this aim, the chapter is organised to show the development of the findings from the data collection in a logical order. The first part of the chapter introduces the context of the case including social sustainability objectives and the process of this purchaser’s supplier selection. This is important as each case differs, regardless of their analogous pursuit of better social sustainability performance. Then the coding analysis and development of constructs from BevAware are presented for the case, clearly demonstrating how each category and theme is confirmed. At the end of the chapter, adaptations to the research process for the next case are offered. This is due to the inductive nature of the research. Proposition 1 from Chapter 5 is retested and new propositions are developed and tested over the data collection process of this case, and the third case, in a methodological way.

6.2 The case context
JustProduce is a UK supplier of grocery products listed in the FTSE4Good who uses both 3PSPs and their own processes to select suppliers to ensure alignment with their sustainability goals. They also trade and manufacture internationally. The organisation pursues a public sustainability agenda relating to environmental (E) and social (S) issues. JustProduce is currently trying to reduce its number of suppliers from over 3,000, reportedly to achieve a supplier base built on long term strategic relationships rather than superficial transactions. They have a complex supply chain whereby direct suppliers connect JustProduce with further two-tier and three-tier suppliers.
6.3 Social sustainability objectives
The terminology *JustProduce* use is ‘sustainability strategy’ and within this they focus on people (S), buying responsibly (S), community involvement (S), sustainable manufacturing (E), governance and reporting (S), and diet and health (S). From this assortment of attention, it is clear that social sustainability is a key focus due to the nature of the areas they report on. Context specific issues for the organisation include the promotion of using British suppliers to reduce the global nature of their (logistics) supply chain and to support the local economy and community.

*JustProduce* publicly claim to be committed to working with suppliers and growing their sustainability efforts year on year. Buying responsibly is listed as one of their key performance indicators for 2013-2014 and involves “acquiring goods and services that meet our current and future needs and deliver long-term value for money while maximising the social and economic benefits involved, minimising the associated environmental impact” (KPIs, 2013). *JustProduce* boast a health and safety record around ten times higher than the food industry average.

6.4 Process of supplier selection
*JustProduce* declare a ‘risk-based approach’ to buying responsibly. This means that they use 3PSPs to assist with their information gathering on suppliers’ sustainability performance. They are keen to get more of their suppliers on the database but will use suppliers who are not currently registered. Approximately 60% of their suppliers are registered with their chosen 3PSP as at 2014. A strategic aim of *JustProduce* is to attract investment from ethically motivated investors as these grow in number and so they understand that their supplier base needs to reflect this. They are keen for suppliers to mirror many of their own aspirations which include maintaining employee loyalty and motivation by treating people fairly, ensuring a safe working place, offering employees the opportunity for personal development, enhancing trust in their business by fostering good relations and being transparent in their activities.

*JustProduce* screen supplier risk associated with country of origin, human rights and labour practices and materials used using their own mechanisms and specific 3PSPs who aid in mapping the global associations of suppliers. *JustProduce* provide standard terms and
conditions for the purchase of goods and services to suppliers publically on their website (categorised as the Purchasing Policy). Figure 6.1 shows that the responsible action within the pre-selection process starts with the buyer and transfers to the supplier for further information.

Figure 6.1: JustProduce’s supplier selection process

In addition, JustProduce have put in place an Ethical Trading Policy and each supplier must endeavor to comply with this and with all relevant local and national laws and regulations, particularly with regard to:

- Minimum age of employment
- Freely chosen employment
- Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining
- No discrimination
- Health and Safety
- Working hours
- Discipline
- Rates of pay and
- Terms of employment.

Therefore, the organisation provides a degree of guidance on their expectations of suppliers.
6.5 Coding analysis and inter-rater reliability

Data was collected as outlined in the Methodology section 4.5. Approximately 10 hours of interviews were conducted with sustainability, procurement and category management personnel. See Appendix B for a full list of interviewees. 16 documents were selected on the basis that they were related to the sustainability of the firm’s supply chain. These included policy documents, sustainability reports, guidance on the initiative and publicity documents.

The data analysis included several steps. Firstly, the documents and interviews were coded using previously established codes from BevAware which had emerged and developed from the narrative. The 18 constructs from BevAware were used as a guide to code JustProduce. In order to validate the coding exercise, a second coder was asked to code the interview transcripts and documents using a coding sheet (see Appendix E). Therefore, the second coder had the definitions of the codes to hand.

In JustProduce, the 18 constructs were reduced to ten as eight of these were now deemed less integral to the research. They were absorbed into the first order codes and became second order codes to the original ones from BevAware. Text sections could be coded to more than one code, allowing for analysis of links to be conducted. Using NVivo, a coding comparison query could be run to calculate the Kappa statistics to analyse intercoder agreement. Kappa statistics represent the proportion of joint judgments of fractions in which there is agreement, after chance agreement has been excluded (Cohen, 1960). The upper value, or perfect agreement, is 1.00 (Cohen, 1960). As explained in the methodology, generally, a Kappa between 0.61 and 0.80 represents substantial agreement, and a Kappa between 0.81 and 1 indicates nearly perfect agreement (Landis and Koch, 1977). The strongest inter-rater reliability constructs are sustainability strategy, 3PSP and education. The weakest remain as behaviour, relationship and engagement but are stronger than in BevAware with an average percentage agreement of 91% and a mean Kappa of 0.79.

Inter-rater reliability is evidenced on the following table, which also shows the ten constructs emerging in JustProduce.
Chapter 6: Findings (JustProduce)

### Table 6.1: Kappa coefficient statistics for inter-rater reliability (JustProduce)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Kappa Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>0.944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>0.692</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement behaviour</td>
<td>0.693</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering process</td>
<td>0.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing policy</td>
<td>0.819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>0.822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk management</td>
<td>0.763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability strategy</td>
<td>0.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>0.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.785</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kappa coefficient has shown consistently high intercoder agreement in BevAware (0.80) and JustProduce (0.77) so the necessity of a second coder in future is deemed unnecessary for the remaining of the case analyses, as supported by Hruschka et al. (2004).

#### 6.6 Development of categories and themes

The constructs have reduced from 18 in BevAware to ten in JustProduce. Constructs which have been absorbed elsewhere are shown on Table 6.2 overleaf.
Chapter 6: Findings (JustProduce)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct from BevAware (not present in JustProduce)</th>
<th>New position</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Sustainability Strategy</td>
<td>Investigating the overall corporate strategy and the separate sustainability strategy was unnecessary. Interpretation on sustainability can be found in an organisation’s sustainability strategy. <strong>Result: constructs merged.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Education &gt; Improvement</td>
<td>Improvement appearing across many constructs but is referred to as a way to progress in the social sustainability area, usually with some guidance. <strong>Result: absorbed into education.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Sustainability Strategy &gt; Context</td>
<td>The context of the organisation is considered and reflected in the sustainability strategy they pursue. <strong>Result: context absorbed into sustainability strategy.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Risk &gt; Cost</td>
<td>The cost of the transaction or the negative cost of a supply chain disruption is linked to risk management. <strong>Result: cost absorbed into risk.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Compliance &gt; Transparency*</td>
<td>Transparency considered as a possible result of compliance. <strong>Result: transparency absorbed into compliance.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Risk &gt; Performance</td>
<td>Performance has a direct impact on risk, whether this is positive or negative. <strong>Result: performance is absorbed into risk.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Relationship &gt; Subjective</td>
<td>The intangible influence of personal feelings affects the relationship potential. <strong>Result: subjective absorbed into relationship.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>Sustainability Strategy &gt; Commonality</td>
<td>Commonality refers to sharing goals (usually with the aim to reap mutual benefits). <strong>Result: commonality is absorbed into sustainability strategy.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*to be changed again in the next iteration

**Table 6.2: Repositioning of constructs (JustProduce)**
The constructs that were absorbed into other first order codes and hence became second order codes were improvement, context, cost, transparency, performance, subjective and commonality. The first coder proposed that these codes were more suited to supporting a first order construct and were indirectly contributing to social sustainability in supplier selection through another more prominent construct. The second coder agreed to the reduced selection. Sustainability and strategy were overlapping significantly and it was decided that the strategy being referred to was the sustainability strategy rather than the overall corporate objectives as a whole and therefore the two constructs should be merged together. The ten constructs were identified by the coders as having significance in the data because they were themes that were frequently cited as important. The eight that were absorbed were interpreted to be less significant and could be reduced to second order codes.

Risk management remains the most frequent code to be observed. The mitigation of risk is described as the overall reason the organisation engages in SRP, SSCM and the pursuit of social sustainability goals. *JustProduce* plans to mitigate risk by reducing their supplier base and inviting suppliers to invest in the purchaser’s supply chain to show commitment and collaborative inferences to the relationship.

50% of our category’s now have sustainability assessments as part of that category risk assessment. That didn’t used to be included as it used to be that risk assessments were based around currency fluctuations, geopolitical issues and that kind of thing but we built in sustainability into that assessment”

(Group Head of Sustainability).

“We have a risk based approach to ethical supply chain, so it’s not about auditing everything because we firmly believe that auditing is not the answer”

(Sustainability Analyst, Procurement).

Sustainability strategy was described as a driver behind the social sustainability decisions.

“Sustainability is one of the four pillars of our overall strategy and the way that I position that is not so much as a pillar but if you imagine it as a foundation underpinning the delivery of the other three pillars, which sits below that and
drives the rest of the strategy. Because obviously it's got to be sustainability across the whole strategy it's not just a standalone pillar that's bolted onto the side, it needs to be embedded with that business strategy and core business activities and so that's how I kind of position it within the business”

(Grupo Head of Sustainability).

“We have changed the language we use from CSR to sustainability. I think it's partly because when we looked at the strategy we had a new management team and we revisited the strategy and very much wanted sustainability as a pillar of that strategy. It was felt that the language corporate social responsibility actually informed what we were meant to achieve and so when we talk about sustainability in everything that we do it's about sustainable financial metrics as well and a sustainable business model and not just sustainability in regards to what CSR talks about. And sustainability could then be used wider within the business”

(Grupo Head of Sustainability).

Whereas risk was the reason why the organisation considers these elements, it was the sustainability strategy that drives the SRP behaviour of the purchaser and the socially responsible behaviour of the supplier needed to mitigate the risk. As this organisation is not a direct retailer but supplies to retailers, they had some interesting insights about purchasers further up the supply chain and some of the ‘unreasonable’ terms being placed on them which are not cost effective for them as suppliers, despite all parties pursuing better ethical practice. Certification is mentioned for the first time in this case as a way for suppliers to demonstrate their behaviour which is not governed by the purchaser. The Sustainability Analyst in Procurement explains:

“We do place value on certification for things like milk and sugar. This is something the supplier can achieve, not just for us but for their cooperatives”

JustProduce also state that the information gathering process of supplier selection is made more complicated by introducing social sustainability criteria. This is because (1) this is another dimension of factors to consider and (2) there are difficulties with the measurement of the performance of suppliers to make a fair decision.
“In regards to scoring suppliers we don’t have a system in place to score suppliers, we manage that through the process of the risk based approach I’ve just described including these risk assessments within the category sourcing plans and using [3PSPs] to gather the information we need on suppliers”

(Group Head of Sustainability).

3PSPs were mentioned in both the interviews and documents as part of the process for information sharing and data collecting.

“We set a target that all our suppliers must be registered with the [3PSP] by 2014 and over 60% are now registered”

(KPIs 2013).

“We are very happy to use the [3PSP] as a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to driving improvements in ethical and responsible business practice in global supply chains through the sharing of ethical supply chain data. They provide us with the guidance that we might not be able to steer ourselves”

(Category Group Project Manager).

JustProduce value this data to a high degree. JustProduce turn to 3PSPs to provide the social sustainability criteria and hence what questions they should be asking. The organisation is keen on the use of self-assessment of suppliers but not of audits as they are not cost effective. They like 3PSP tools as it is a standard format which can be used for like for like comparisons of suppliers.

Suppliers need to demonstrate that they can meet minimal requirements, described as compliance in the first instance.

“At the moment we don’t benchmark suppliers but in the categories where we buy a lot such as wheat or milk we like them to be certified. And if they lost their certification, the quota that they have within the cooperative that they have, they would lose. So they are basically de-listed and we do that kind of thing, but in regards to having any kind of structured approach to benchmarking suppliers or rating suppliers we simply don’t do”
Chapter 6: Findings (JustProduce)

(Sustainability Analyst, Procurement).

However, as social sustainability is a developing aspiring phenomenon, it is the striving for improvement and educating each other in the experience that is most welcomed.

“We have established an Ethical Supply Chain Working Group which is in place to identify and focus on the ethical issues that are material to our business. This group develops, and implements, a risk based ethical supply chain strategy which meets the needs of our business whilst ensuring that bought goods are produced under generally accepted, and internationally recognised, human rights law including the conventions of the International Labour Organisation”

(Policy document: Ethical Supply Chain).

This policy was presented to interviewees with JustProduce’s own company code of conduct to achieve clarity using triangulation. The company code of conduct explains that the purchaser will “comply with relevant employment laws and set minimum ethical standards which must be met both at our sites and within our supply chain”. This was chosen as an example for clarification because terms such as ‘comply’ suggest minimal effort rather than the expectation that both purchaser and supplier will exceed basic expectations. Yet the Ethical Supply Chain Working Group demonstrates additional focus on this area. The interviewees questioned on this document explained that this is usual for policy documents where minimal requirements are often set out for compliance purposes but that they enhance this behaviour with specific initiatives such as the Working Group. This is an example of where triangulation between documents and clarification through the implementers of these documents adds value to the research process.

Another pursuit of the purchaser is longer term relationships whereby transparency and improvement measures will be demonstrated because mutually beneficial goals will be pursued by both supplier and purchaser.

“It needs to be worth it to enter into these long term relationships with suppliers. We plan to achieve this by reducing our supplier base but relationships cost time and sometimes a transactional approach can be ok. For example, to date, we have
Chapter 6: Findings (JustProduce)

focused on entering into long term strategic relationships with those suppliers simply because of the volume of what we use [example given]

(Sustainability Analyst, Procurement).

The supplier’s positive engagement behaviour with the purchaser is a resulting effect.

“We don’t have an active supplier engagement programme around sustainability. It’s something that we’re looking to trial but it’s not something that we’ve done. What we want to do and develop in our own supplier engagement program is to try to ensure that it’s absolutely value adding for both parties and is not just a tick box exercise but that it actually adds value for both ourselves and for our suppliers and that’s quite a balancing act really. You can make an industry around these types of initiatives which don’t add value to anybody. You kind of question what are we trying to achieve? And so what we are going to do is turn a small pilot with a just a small number of suppliers to start with to make sure we get the balance right between the effort we are asking our suppliers to put in to it and the cost as there is a cost in all these things, and the value that they take from it and that’s really the piece of work we want to do with suppliers”

(Group Head of Sustainability).

Along with some social sustainability criteria, relationships can be difficult to measure as they are subjective and by definition incorporate high levels of trust which is on the whole, incalculable.

“We have many suppliers and there has to be some element of security. Saying that, we are looking to massively reduce this number of suppliers”

(Procurement Buyer).

The key findings from JustProduce focus on the issues with complex supply chains and incorporating sustainability measures into these. JustProduce relies heavily on 3PSPs to gather the information required from suppliers and to advise on measures in this area. The organisation are trying to find more cost-effective ways of selecting suppliers and outsource the responsibility of sustainability observation to 3PSPs whereby they strongly believe that self-assessment is simply a way to achieve this information requirement and certification is
useful for suppliers to have. They discuss long term partnerships with suppliers and working towards similar strategies but only where there is an obvious reward. The process of supplier selection is less rigid than BevAware due to the complex nature of the organisation and the type of raw materials it needs to source. They have even suggested suppliers now pay them, as a form of investment, to ensure committed relationships.

6.7 Proposition development

The propositions were developed during the data collection process simultaneously as their answers were generated. This is because the nature of theory building research is often iterative and flexible rather than rigidly logical and forward flowing. BevAware exposed the foundations of the overall findings in terms of the importance of a sustainability strategy and criteria for selecting suppliers. It began to define factors affecting SRP which needed to be developed in the investigation into JustProduce. JustProduce has confirmed these findings for propositions 1 and 2 and enabled development of the answer to the third research question.

Testing of Proposition 1

Proposition 1: A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing

JustProduce have a specific sustainability strategy as part of their overall corporation strategy. For environmental aspects, this outlines targets and KPIs for carbon emissions and for social aspects the objective includes that a specified percentage of suppliers must be linked with their chosen 3PSP, placing a lot of value on this organisation to protect them against the risks associated with sustainability in the supply chain. JustProduce have spent some time redeveloping the language they use around sustainability so that it is clear what the strategy is aiming to achieve. Without the strategic direction documented the business would be too complex to manage this area as they have a number of categories and brands.

Testing of Proposition 2

Proposition 2: Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place
The interview participants in JustProduce strongly agree that it is useful to have published guidance on acceptable standards. They support certification and believe this not only mitigates the risk to their reputation but enhances their reputation as a point of positive publicity. JustProduce strongly support the use of 3PSPs to outsource part of their process. JustProduce particularly welcome the corrective action reporting and education of suppliers to improve and strive to obtain better sustainability goals. JustProduce discuss collaboration with their suppliers more so than collaboration with other industry players. The areas of focus outlined in Table 6.3 are derived from interview narrative and company documents. Similarly to BevAware, the wider community and business integrity is of most importance, demonstrated by a strong Buy British initiative, along with health and safety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Labour standards</th>
<th>Health and safety</th>
<th>Fair operating practices</th>
<th>Living wage</th>
<th>Human rights</th>
<th>Community/Society</th>
<th>Business integrity</th>
<th>Consumer issues</th>
<th>Anti-corruption</th>
<th>Product responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JustProduce</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** covered in sustainability strategy  * covered in purchasing policy

Table 6.3: JustProduce’s SRP supplier selection criteria

Development of Propositions 3 and 4

Both BevAware and JustProduce have now confirmed that a transactional process remains crucial in the supplier selection procedure in order for a relationship to be embarked upon. Both purchasers and suppliers must engage with the process, whether this is an audit or self-assessment in order to move to the next stage. The transactional process of the supplier selection remains fundamental to a positive decision outcome. Suppliers must engage with
Chapter 6: Findings (*JustProduce*)

the process fully to be considered. This has resulted in the development of proposition 3 in answer to RQ3 ‘How is socially responsible purchasing effectively achieved through supplier selection?’

**Proposition 3: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors**

*JustProduce* are putting a lot of focus on establishing long term relationships with fewer suppliers rather than having many transaction-based approach contracts. They are looking for relational factors that must supplement the transactional process for a transaction to occur and relationship to be embarked upon. *JustProduce* are focusing on rationalising their supplier base and getting more commitment from suppliers. Suppliers must demonstrate specific engagement traits to be considered for selection. These include a willingness to be transparent in their operation and disclose this to 3PSP. The level of engagement is important and commitment is key as *JustProduce* are now asking suppliers to make an investment payment to them. This has resulted in the development of proposition 4 in answer to RQ3 ‘How is socially responsible purchasing effectively achieved through supplier selection?’

**Proposition 4: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors**

Relational factors which include engagement behaviour must supplement the transactional process for a positive selection decision. Suppliers must demonstrate these engagement traits to be considered for selection and these traits are beginning to become more defined as further cases are investigated. *JustProduce* describes commitment and cooperation in pursuing common goals. They are keen for their suppliers to be more communicative using the 3PSP tools such as self-assessment.

The critical realist perspective of the research is strongly evident as the propositions are developed. The sustainability strategy of the purchaser has emerged as the mechanism in the domain of the real whereby this underlying structure exists independent of the mind. The event of socially responsible purchasing is resulting from this as organisations aim to achieve their strategic goals. However the experiences that buyers are having in the realm of socially responsible purchasing is complex and multidimensional in nature, incorporating process
focused transactional exchanges and relational dimensions. There is also evidence being presented of suppliers needing to demonstrate even more commitment and action to the social sustainability initiatives through the education construct before selection takes place. Suppliers need to exhibit improvements in the pre-selection stage by initiating action on areas of weakness exposed in the information gathering process, going beyond simply recognising what they are, but actually executing actions improve them. Further examination will be conducted on this finding in the next case.

6.8 Validity and reliability of research

*JustProduce* follows the same execution set out in the methodology (see section 4.5) as *BevAware* demonstrating transparency. Transcripts were shared with the interview participants to ensure accuracy. As the results in this research are shared with the relevant participants, they can verify that researcher bias has not influenced the results. As already discussed, this coding was subject to second coder authentication to ensure confirmability. This will lead to higher chances of construct validity which is the extent to which correct operational measures can be established (Voss et al., 2002). This also avoids researcher bias, a concern raised by Miles and Huberman (1994). Confirmability is also increased as a result of the triangulation method employed, especially as conflicting messages were challenged by the researcher in this case. Using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), validity can be tested to see whether predictions made about relationships to other variables are confirmed (construct validity). The case study database was updated on Nvivo to maintain the chain of evidence and utilise the functionality of the software.

Credibility is further confirmed in Chapter 9 when the discussion ties the findings back to literature. Transferability is further defined in the next case as see similarities with companies pursuing similar social sustainability agendas will either be shown to be doing the same things with similar challenges or not. After the three main cases are presented, the validation cases are also presented to show verification of the findings, from a different perspective.

6.9 Summary and adaptation for future cases

The next case will be coded using the ten constructs as a guide, but it is expected that some constructs may appear less important and others will become more prevalent. Further analysis
on the constitution of the main constructs will be completed to move closer to a framework development and useful proposition construction. Inter-rater reliability measures will no longer be carried out due to the high degree of agreement thus far. Propositions 1 and 2 will be revalidated using the third case and propositions 3 and 4 will be retested using ApparelTrade. Links between the third and fourth propositions will be explored and further investigation will be developed using organisational theory as a lens to view what is occurring in practice.
7.1 Introduction
The aim of this chapter is to present the findings from the document and interview analysis of the third main case (ApparelTrade). The findings build on the discoveries from BevAware and Just Produce in the previous two chapters and convey a fifth proposition. Thus far, 18 constructs have been reorganised into ten as being key to supplier selection in SSCM and four propositions have been developed. The first part of the chapter introduces the context of this clothing case including social sustainability objectives and the process of this purchaser’s supplier selection procedure. Then the coding analysis and validation of constructs, originally developed from BevAware and Just Produce, are presented to clearly demonstrate how each category and theme is confirmed and ordered. Evidence of support for four propositions is developed further and a fifth proposition is proposed. A model of transactional and relational factors affecting supplier selection decisions in a social sustainability is presented, which is derived from the critical realism philosophy.

7.2 The case context
ApparelTrade is a branded UK fashion retailer who uses both 3PSPs and their own processes to select suppliers to ensure alignment with their sustainability goals. They also trade and manufacture internationally. The organisation pursues a fairly public sustainability agenda relating to environmental (E) and social (S) issues. ApparelTrade is currently trying to increase its number of suppliers to better manage risk and meet growth expectations. The global nature of the supply of apparel from Asia means they have a complex supply chain whereby direct suppliers connect ApparelTrade with other two-tier and three-tier suppliers.

7.3 Social sustainability objectives
The terminology ApparelTrade use is ‘corporate social responsibility’ and more recently ‘sustainability strategy’. Within this they focus on working with suppliers (S), engaging communities (S), attracting and retaining the best staff (S) and reducing environmental
impact to broaden business benefits to all stakeholders (E). From this assortment of attention, it is clear that social sustainability is a key focus due to the nature of the areas they report on. The organisation has a sustainability team responsible for delivering all work streams associated with their environmental and ethical trading policies. This team collaborates with key areas of the business to identify opportunities to act in a more sustainable manner. Context specific issues for the organisation include factory conditions in their associated garment workshops. In 2013 the organisation made improvements in supporting supplier factories through the assessment and monitoring programme which led to a decrease in audit issues in key sourcing countries. They also supported the delivery of a multi-supplier capability improvement workshop in China which provided factories with assistance and guidance on improving conditions for workers and they increased their in-country visits to work with suppliers on both country specific and industry-wide issues.

7.4 Process of supplier selection

ApparelTrade rely on strong relationships with suppliers as they have vast geographical distances to consider. Where possible, they often use current suppliers for the development of new garments due to the risky nature of the apparel business in the public eye. ApparelTrade use 3PSPs to assist with their information gathering on suppliers’ sustainability performance and conduct their own audits. Interestingly, the ethical trading team are consulted once the sourcing team have started negotiating a deal with a new supplier. Figure 7.1 shows that the responsible action within the pre-selection process starts with the buyer and transfers to the supplier for further information.
7.5 Coding analysis
Data was collected as outlined in the Methodology section 4.5. Approximately 10 hours of interviews were conducted with sustainability, ethical trade and supply chain managers and buyers. See Appendix B for a full list of interviewees. Although only two documents were suitable for review, these totaled 122 pages and consisted of a report and policy document on sustainable and responsible operations.

The data analysis included several steps. Firstly, the documents and interviews were coded using ten previously established codes from BevAware and JustProduce which had emerged and developed from the narrative. There was no second coder used in the ApparelTrade analysis as the Kappa coefficient scores had shown substantial and near perfect agreement in the previous cases, as suggested by Hruschka et al. (2004).

7.6 Development of categories and themes
As the constructs become more defined throughout the cases, often achieved by increasing the number of second order codes underneath which comprise the constructs, developments are reported in a logical way. The transactional side of the supplier selection decision which is largely process focused has been clearly separated from the relational side and the two are...
now more clearly defined by the additional work completed in ApparelTrade. Constructs which have been absorbed elsewhere are shown in Table 7.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct from previous case (JustProduce)</th>
<th>New position</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Compliance                                | Transparency > Compliance | Transparency was present in BevAware and was absorbed into compliance for JustProduce. However transparency is demonstratively more important for social sustainability than compliance.  
**Result:** Compliance is absorbed into transparency. |
| Engagement behaviour                       | Engagement behaviour > Communication  
Engagement behaviour > Collaboration  
Engagement behaviour > Cooperation  
Engagement behaviour > Commitment | Engagement between buyers and suppliers is complex and is split out four ways.  
**Result:** new second order constructs under engagement behaviour. |
| 3PSP                                      | Information gathering process > 3PSP | The 3PSPs are confirmed as an instrument in the supplier selection process.  
**Result:** 3PSP absorbed into information gathering process. |
| Relationship                               | Risk management > Relationship | Relationship attributes need to be present for SRP to mitigate risk.  
**Result:** relationship absorbed into risk management. |

*Table 7.1: Repositioning of constructs (ApparelTrade)*
Compliance and transparency were codes that emerged from BevAware, but in JustProduce transparency was absorbed into compliance as a second order code. This is because transparency was simply a ‘nice to have’ in addition to compliance which was a necessity. However, on further investigation across all three cases it became more suitable to absorb compliance into transparency as transparency is actually the factor that purchasers want to observe in order to facilitate their SRP, whereas compliance is a tick box exercise of minimal requirements needed for any transaction.

The constructs that were absorbed into other first order codes and hence became second order codes were 3PSP and relationship. These codes were more suited to supporting a first order construct and were indirectly contributing to social sustainability in supplier selection through another more prominent construct. 3PSPs are mentioned often in all three cases. Although 3PSPs are facilitating the process they are not necessary in all cases of SRP in a general context and are actually an instrument to assist in the process. 3PSPs have an interesting role in that they facilitate both the process and relational side of the SRP but they are not something that a supplier demonstrates. The way in which the supplier interacts with the facilitating factors is more important. Therefore 3PSPs as a code was absorbed into the process construct. ‘Relational factors’ have become pivotal to the investigation but relationship as a construct is better suited within risk management.

The term ‘engagement’ was too broad for the meaning it was implied to represent. Engagement largely constitutes an action which shows the relationship between the buyer and supplier. This comprises collaboration, commitment, communication and cooperation.

Collaboration – refers to the degree that the supplier actively engages with the buyer to achieve mutual goals of social sustainability. An example of this is both buyer and supplier joining the Ethical Trade Initiative and working on joint projects together.

Commitment – refers to the long term relational aspect of the agreement. It is demonstrated by open communication and evidence of cooperation which might be shown through investing in areas suggested by the education construct, such as corrective action.

Communication – refers to the level that the supplier engages with the buyer with their sharing of information. It is linked to transparency, but is not the same as transparency. Transparency is the level of disclosure of information offered by the supplier, whereas communication is the open channel of information from supplier to buyer both forthcoming and requested. It is linked to cooperation.
Chapter 8: Findings (InfoOrder and SociSense)

Cooperation – refers to the degree that the supplier is willing to engage with the buyer in terms of requests and expectations. This is linked to education as cooperation would be high if the supplier was keen to use the corrective action reports to improve their behaviour in certain areas deemed important to the buyer.

Examples of the eight main constructs are evidenced next. They are supported by key quotes or statements from JustProduce as an example of a section that was coded to this construct or as a useful demonstration of the context of the case. As with the previous two case study investigations, risk management is the reason behind the sustainability behaviour of the purchasing organisation. ApparelTrade recognises this risk and believes that supplier behaviour is also key to this:

“One of the risks mentioned in our annual report is the failure to ensure compliance in the supplier base to ethical trading policy. There is potential for the organisation to suffer negative customer and stakeholder sentiment with associated impact on customer and investor appeal if this happens. We are an active member of [3PSP] and we actively engage with our supply base and expect suppliers to operate in accordance with its ethical trading code of practice. We will ensure this before we embark on a relationship. We assess the status of operating practices through a schedule of focused audits and company visits, where necessary, working with suppliers on improvement plans”

(Corporate Sustainability Manager).

“Corporate sustainability has changed massively in ten years – from a peripheral concern for large companies to a key risk and opportunity across industries”

(Ethical Supply Chain Manager).

“We have a risk rating system. The head of sourcing does all of the deals. Basically, he's very much in charge of the relationships with the suppliers once production orders are placed. And he will visit factories and he will say, "Oh, we're not sure about this one" before we actually start working with them. [...] However, if they get to a point where they deal with us, for one season, for example, and their performance in ethical is extremely poor, then they might get a red rating. A red rating would automatically constitute orders being stopped immediately”
A sustainability strategy is put in place, which includes policies for suppliers to follow (purchasing policies). The information gathering process is still complex in ApparelTrade as they deal with overseas suppliers in high risk locations. In addition to this there is some disjointedness between the sustainability personnel and the buyers who do not work as closely as they could:

“I think there is definitely room for improvement in the way that ethical trading and sourcing talk to each other, and at what point we actually get involved in that. And at what point do we actually raise questions around capacity and number of orders placed. Or price and minimum wage increases. That kind of stuff. But at this stage the three departments operate relatively separately. We’re used as more of a consultation department”

(Ethical Trading Manager).

3PSPs are used but the practise of self-assessment is questioned in relation to its transparency. This results in ApparelTrade performing many audits (albeit they are trying to get away from this):

“We aren’t keen on self-assessment. In my opinion self-reported information is not valuable. Mainly because they just want you to buy their product. They want to look good. And I think that's the primary reason. I mean, self-assessment may be useful if you've got a ginormous supply chain and you need to start prioritising it. I can imagine that is quite useful. Our supply chain is comparatively small, so we can actually start working with the suppliers and visiting them if we have any concerns. So the [3PSPs] are adding less and less value to us, not more”

(Ethical Trading Manager).

ApparelTrade invest in their suppliers as for reasons of continuity of supply, working with factories they have used before is important to them. They disclose that a supplier will not have their contract immediately terminated if they breach agreements but corrective action will be put in place. They are looking for engagement behaviour from the supplier. The status monitoring means they hope this will not occur.
“You don’t want to get to the point where you drop a supplier. Ideally you would want to work with them to improve. And I think that’s something that is quite a difficult thing to manage. At what point do you say:  "That's it"? And I think you can say 'that's it' when there is an instance of child labour. You would expect none of our existing suppliers that we have been working with for a number of years, and who know our requirements, would have child labour. Because they have been repeatedly audited, they have been repeatedly visited. The number of conversations with them. If they have child labour at that stage it's quite a 'hidden face'. But a new supplier who doesn't know our requirements, necessarily, as well; they have child labour, they remediate it. You can continue working with them as long as they prove that they have actually put the measures in place to actually look after the child and ensure that they don't do it again”

(Ethical Trading Manager).

“We tend to have more of an input into supplier behaviour improvement because we can actually. We meet with sourcing on a monthly basis, provide them with any concerns or any escalation points, and there is a hope that that actually feeds into their decision of making processes and whether to use a supplier”.

(Ethical Supply Chain Manager).

The different dimensions of engagement behaviour are further exacerbated when identifying the reasons for working with current, proven suppliers, who in turn will reduce risk dimensions due to their track record. It would be difficult for new suppliers to prove some attributes which the purchaser is looking for:

“The Design team may want to bring a new supplier on. But sourcing are very, very much in control of the suppliers that they're working with. So, if a product can be done with an existing supplier, design will be told: "Go to that existing supplier and not to bring anyone on, usually because they've already shown commitment to us. They cooperate with us well, proven by their track record"”

(Assistant Buyer).
The relationship between the buyers and suppliers is critical to ApparelTrade. Trust is an element that must be built for the exchange to occur. The Assistant Buyer goes on to say:

“If we trust our supplier we're more likely to be more flexible with that supplier than a supplier that has obviously lied to us over a number of years. We're going to try and keep to the book with those guys until they can prove that they can be trusted again. That kind of thing. So it is a qualitative process”.

ApparelTrade supports the training and education of suppliers in order to mitigate their own risk and increase their own sustainability performance. For example they discuss the multi-supplier capability improvement workshop in China which provided factories with assistance and guidance on improving conditions for workers in both their reporting documents and interview narrative (confirmation through triangulation) as something the company are proud to be doing to enhance their social contribution. However, they call for some more formal measures to be employed by the industry or government to improve the area of social sustainability in the supply chain.

“It’s not a formal thing. It's very much on a case by case basis. With existing suppliers that we've been working with for a number of years on a number of seasons, we may, for example, for a supplier if they are not playing ball with the ethical trading process, on the technical process we may reduce the number of orders they've got. And then if they reduce the number of orders they've got, they'll hopefully realise that they've got a reduction of orders because they haven't been performing to our requirements. If they want an increase in orders they will have to perform to our requirements and we can help them”

(Ethical Trading Manager).

The key findings from ApparelTrade focus on the collaborative relationships between the buyer and suppliers and educating suppliers in better ethical trading practices. There is a strong focus on collaboration rather than compliance, which is seen as a language and concept they are trying to move away from. For example, ApparelTrade do not place high value on certification which is key difference from JustProduce. In this apparel context, it is stated by the Ethical Trading Manager that
“Certification is limited in that it tells factories that can either pass or they fail an order. And that's not what it's about. It's not about passing and failing. It's about identifying the risks and the issues and where they can improve. So, I think certification can almost put blinkers on people's eyes. You think: "Oh, they've got SA8000 Great. They've got no risks".

ApparelTrade do however, adopt the use of audits to a high degree, on the contrary to JustProduce. The closing comments from the Corporate Sustainability Manager consider the future of the phenomenon as an integrated dimension rather than warranting separate and discreet focus as it does today:

“I wonder whether what is called sustainability today will just be considered part of good practice operations and strategy in another ten years or whether it will still warrant a separate title”.

Social sustainability is being researched in isolation because economic and environmental have been ahead. The next step is to integrate all three elements so that they might be of equal weighting in the future (as the TBL circles suggest) and then will be absorbed into day to day operations altogether, without specific initiatives focusing on them. The Corporate Sustainability Manager is suggesting it will be part of the culture of modern business.

7.7 Proposition development

The propositions were developed during the data collection process simultaneously as their answers were generated. This is because the nature of theory building research is often iterative and flexible rather than rigidly logical and forward flowing. The first four propositions developed in BevAware and JustProduce are tested against the findings from ApparelTrade. Proposition 5 is also added.

Testing of Proposition 1

Proposition 1: A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing
The constructs have been reduced and reformed to a saturated extent by this point. Codes form a model that shows what is happening in practice. Risk is the overall driver for social sustainability pursuit of purchasers and the management of this risk is the main cause of the investment into this area. The danger of risk forces a social sustainability strategy to be developed to protect the organisation. One significant way to realise this strategy is through SRP of which a process needs to be followed and behaviour of suppliers analysed. Within this behaviour realm, there should be a demonstration of traits by the supplier with a forward, longer term focus.

Testing of Proposition 2

Proposition 2: Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place

The interview participants in ApparelTrade strongly agree with participants from the other two cases that it is useful to have published guidance on acceptable standards which can be translated into social sustainability criteria. However, they do not value certification to a high extent. This is interesting as JustProduce (food industry) valued it highly. ApparelTrade particularly welcome the opportunity to work with suppliers to improve their social sustainability behaviour, even stating that they would not immediately end a relationship with a supplier using child labour if they could correct it. This in itself is a high risk strategy from a reputational risk perspective. They strongly use the advice and guidelines of 3PSPs in their working practices but place less value on self-assessment than BevAware and JustProduce. Table 7.2 shows a heavier focus on labour standards, health and safety, fair operating practices and the living wage. These are all heavily publicised in the fashion industry and relate to internal human rights factors. Impacts on the community and society are also revealed as a key consideration for ApparelTrade which has an external human rights focus as it includes aspects such as housing and health. The product impact was still important in the decision but less so than the human rights focus. A clear division between internal and external focuses are emerging in the criteria.
Chapter 8: Findings (InfoOrder and SociSense)

Testing of Proposition 3

**Proposition 3:** Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors

All three cases confirmed that a transactional process remains crucial in the supplier selection procedure in order for a relationship to be embarked upon. Both purchasers and suppliers must engage with the process, whether this is an audit or self-assessment in order to move to the next stage. The transactional process of the supplier selection remains fundamental to a positive decision outcome. Suppliers must engage with the process fully to be considered. Purchasers develop a purchasing policy for suppliers to follow and request information about social sustainability behaviour from suppliers. This is usually done via an audit or self-assessment in order to move to the next stage. The purchasers then analyse this information against their own risk assessment frameworks to decide whether a supplier is a possible vendor or not. In some cases such as ApparelTrade, even where suppliers fall short of the requirements, they may invest time and education (corrective action advice) to allow suppliers to demonstrate a willingness to improve to be selected.

Table 7.2: ApparelTrade’s SRP supplier selection criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empirical case</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ApparelTrade</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** covered in sustainability strategy  * covered in purchasing policy
Testing of Proposition 4

**Proposition 4:** Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors

In addition to JustProduce, ApparelTrade are putting a lot of focus on establishing long term relationships with fewer suppliers rather than having many transaction-based approach contracts. They are looking for relational factors that must supplement the transactional process for a transaction to occur and relationship to be embarked upon. Suppliers must demonstrate specific engagement traits to be considered for selection. These include a willingness to be transparent in their operation and disclose information in audits (which are more common than self-assessment; a difference with JustProduce who do not support audits and prefer self-assessments). Relational factors which include engagement behaviour must supplement the transactional process for a positive selection decision. Suppliers must demonstrate these engagement traits (collaboration, commitment, cooperation and communication) to be considered for selection. This can be difficult to do in advance but suppliers can achieve it by engaging with the process and demonstrating willingness to meet the purchasers’ criteria including education and corrective action.

**Proposition 5**

ApparelTrade works closely with suppliers to support the suppliers’ development in terms of their socially sustainable behaviour. Allowing suppliers the opportunity to correct under par behaviour means that the supplier has a higher chance of being selected and the purchaser has witnessed the engagement of the supplier, especially in terms of their willingness to be educated and act on the corrective action advice. BevAware and JustProduce also required suppliers to demonstrate these behaviours (hence where the education construct emerged) before the transaction takes place and post-selelction.

Therefore, proposition 5 can be explained as:

**Proposition 5:** Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing information asymmetry is negated by know-how transfer

This proposition demonstrates that simply identifying areas of improvement through the suggestions of corrective action reports are inadequate (know-what information). It is the
action to improve (using know-how information) and demonstrating some operation to change behaviours or processes that is being valued by the purchaser. It links the transactional side of the exchange where the weakness is identified, to the relational aspects by supporting this list of vulnerabilities with suppliers’ commitment to develop and improve through education. It also shows suppliers as taking more stewardship of the supply chain to achieve mutually beneficial goals.

7.8 Conceptual model of transactional and relational factors affecting socially responsible purchasing

The findings can now start to be presented in a diagrammatical way to show how SRP is being executed in practice. Firstly, the link between the social sustainability objectives and the buying event is demonstrated using Bhasker’s (1979) critical realism model. This identifies the strategy as the mechanism which triggers the event in the domain of the actual, the socially sustainable purchasing as the event which is observed in the empirical domain and the conditions affecting the decision (transactional and relational factors) as the experience or underlying structure as they enable and constrain events.
Proposition 3 and 4 show the two facilitating experiences needed to carry out SRP (transactional and relational). The details of the experiences are shown in Figure 7.3.
The SRP event is facilitated by two different types of experiences from the perspective of the buyer. One is the transactional side (the process) and one is the relational side (demonstration of supplier behaviour). Transactional factors include the information sharing and gathering between buyer and supplier. This might be done using SAQ or audits and different parties can be responsible for these. For example, the case chapters have outlined the supplier selection processes and who is actioned with each part of the process. A 3PSP can be used at this stage. All cases have a purchasing policy for suppliers to review and this is common in organisations pursuing a corporate social sustainability agenda. The three cases investigated do not use 3PSPs to analyse the information for them, they just use them to assist in what information they should be looking at from a socially sustainable viewpoint. The relational attributes needed to facilitate the experience of SRP include demonstration of trust,
transparency, engagement and willingness to develop (education). Engagement behaviour should be demonstrated through actions of communication, collaboration, cooperation and commitment.

7.9 Validity and reliability of research
ApparelTrade follows the same execution as BevAware and JustProduce demonstrating transparency, validity and reliability. Transcripts were shared with the interview participants to ensure accuracy. As the results in this research are shared with the relevant participants, they can verify that researcher bias has not influenced the results. Confirmability is increased as a result of the triangulation method between document and interview analysis. Using multiple sources of evidence (triangulation), validity can be tested to see whether predictions made about relationships to other variables are confirmed (construct validity). Having data collected from three cases in a logical order, similarities and differences emerge as a result of cross-case triangulation. Credibility is further confirmed in Chapter 9 when the discussion ties the findings back to literature. The validation cases presented in the next chapter show the verification of the findings, from a different perspective.

7.10 Summary and adaptation for validation cases
Three main case study organisations have been investigated to reaching a suitable level of theoretical saturation with the coding developments and model construction. Five propositions have been developed to answer the overall research question. Two validation cases will next be presented to gain further insight into the SRP phenomenon. These two cases are used to further test and develop the model and linkages between the concepts. As 3PSPs they offer more in depth insight into the processes being followed by industries and key players in the social sustainability field. These validation cases test all five propositions.
8.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to corroborate the findings from the three main cases using an additional two case study organisations who are involved in the process of supplier selection but have a different viewpoint and role. 3PSPs attempt to support purchasers in their quest of being more socially sustainable by providing expertise in social sustainability dimensions and a platform for assessing supplier behaviour. Although approached as case studies, the findings from these cases are used to validate the main case studies rather than raise new knowledge. Thus far, eight constructs have been discovered as being key to supplier selection in SSCM and five propositions have been developed. The chapter is organised to show the data collection from the final two validation cases and how it corroborates the previous findings of the other cases. The first part of the chapter introduces the context of the validation cases and why they are useful. Then the coding analysis and validation of constructs, now developed from BevAware through to ApparelTrade are presented for InfoOrder and SociSense. The way in which the cases support the engagement model and propositions is discussed prior to a more substantial cross case discussion in Chapter 9.

8.2 The case contexts and role of 3PSP

InfoOrder is a UK based, not for profit membership organisation. They facilitate improvements in responsible and ethical business practices in global supply chains by providing a collaborative platform for sharing ethical supply chain data. InfoOrder have over 33,000 members. They aim to assist in the supplier selection decision by being the one-stop-shop for both purchasers and suppliers to share sustainability information to make decision making more straightforward. This eases the burden on suppliers facing multiple audits, questionnaires and certifications. For purchasers, they aim to help reduce risk, protect the company reputation and improve supply chain practices by holding the data from suppliers needed to make an informed decision. All three main cases use InfoOrder as a 3PSP to facilitate in their selection decisions. InfoOrder have a large SAQ covering all three elements.
of sustainability across various industries. They also offer corrective action plans for suppliers who wish to improve their position.

SociSense is a UK based not for profit organisation who provide a self-assessment tool that enables organisations to assess their current strengths and weaknesses, or those of their supply chain and supply chain management. It can be used by suppliers (in addition to or instead of the tool provided by InfoOrder) to demonstrate social sustainability behaviour. SociSense specifically focuses on social sustainability, a useful aspect to validate against BevAware, JustProduce and ApparelTrade. SociSense aim that with a full and accurate measure of the potential and risk within the organisation or supply chain, organisations will have a clear understanding of where the gaps are in achieving an ethical and sustainable business along with an optimally productive workforce with a much higher worker engagement. They also provide corrective action information as a result of weaknesses in the SAQ.

InfoOrder and SociSense are used as an instrument in the supplier selection decision by BevAware, JustProduce, and ApparelTrade. They are part of the information gathering process which comes under the transactional factors facilitating SRP. They provide no analysis of the data such as scorecards or risk levels although there are other 3PSPs that can do this. They are also not a sourcing platform whereby a procurement team looking for a supplier who they could use for a particular raw material can search through the database. However they do provide an insight into buyer and suppliers’ behaviour in the context of the social sustainability landscape and have a wider view of the progress and future directions. They are particularly useful in commentating on the information being used from the SAQs where no universal set standards for social sustainability exist.

8.3 Testing of socially SSCM definition across cases
All case organisations were asked to review the definition of socially SSCM developed at the start of the thesis to confirm its suitability. The definition was accepted as being fit for purpose by all five cases. The terms *preservation and development* were supported due to the inclusion of a current and future focus. Most popular proved the *internal and external* focus of the definition. The social sustainability criteria development can be used to evidence this. For example, the criteria began to show a hierarchical order in that human rights and business
integrity represented internal and external aspects of the supply chain respectively. Within human rights, there was then an internal and external focus of labour standards and its incorporating criteria and a community/society element respectively. These also incorporate different aspects of individual and collective focus, as per the definition. Processes and structures with suppliers to mitigate risk and improve performance were confirmed as a practical way to achieve socially SSCM.

8.4 Theoretical saturation of case study data

Data was collected as outlined in the Methodology section 4.5. Approximately 10 hours of interviews were conducted across the two validation cases, with stakeholder managers, supplier engagement managers, business development managers and business relationship managers. See Appendix B for a full list of interviewees. 18 documents including policies, guidance, publicity and SAQ tools were reviewed across the two 3PSPs. The aim of this data collection was to augment the findings from the purchasing case studies.

When theory building from case study research, saturation occurs when the data collected generates nothing new, there are fewer surprises and there are no more emergent patterns in the data (Gaskell, 2000). In this investigation it signals the point of reaching closure. Once the constructs were narrowed down and confirmed as eight, it was suspected that construct saturation had occurred. These constructs generate the theory and thus theoretical saturation is reached. The validation cases will assist in confirming this premise. Figure 8.1 shows the reduction of constructs across the cases.
8.5 Construct linkages

The final eight constructs that generated the conceptual model showed patterns between one another rather than being stable regularities. These patterns were characterised by their similarity (things happen the same way), their frequency (they happen often), their correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events) and in some cases their causation (one appears to cause another, such as the dimension of risk causing the need for strategies and criteria). These patterns defined by Tesch (1990) were covered in more detail in the Methodology chapter (see section 4.6.1). For the design of the conceptual model, the constructs were derived through similarity and frequency patterns. Their link to one another
(correspondence) from the perspective of the purchaser is outlined on Table 8.1. Overall the constructs show that these eight factors are crucial in achieving SRP and have corresponding relationships with one another. Where they are missing from the exchange, it will impact the effectiveness of SRP or stop it occurring altogether, particularly through a ‘no exchange’ decision. Anecdotal evidence from InfoOrder and SociSense in particular support the need for some evidence of each relational construct to be present for a positive selection to be made by the purchaser. As a result of the abductive approach which saw BevAware review the conceptual model, the purchasing and sustainability team also confirmed the need for each of the components to be present.

Table 8.1 demonstrates that each construct has a relationship with each other construct. The sustainability strategy of the purchaser has an overarching role to play in SRP. By defining and sharing the corporation’s sustainability objectives, the purchaser’s expectations are made clear to suppliers who disclose their behaviour against the purchaser’s strategy requirements. Thus by providing some guidance on what needs to be disclosed by the supplier in the information gathering process, the data volumes become more manageable for analysis. Nevertheless excessive amounts of information provided in SAQs were still viewed as overwhelming by all three purchasing cases, signifying that there is still more work to be done here in refining the priorities. The reason for the purchasing policy is to communicate the purchaser’s expectations of the supplier to minimise risk. It goes beyond the sustainability objectives and relates to suppliers specifically. The relevance of the information relating to the sustainability strategy of the purchaser and more specifically the purchasing policy, consequently needs to be collected for proper risk analysis to take place. Further, the supplier must fill out the SAQ truthfully for this to have any worth. By being engaged with the process and communicating the information, the supplier is demonstrating commitment and cooperation with the process and to the purchaser’s strategy. The supplier must recognise and be willing to act to improve any areas of the purchaser’s strategy that they do not currently meet, either immediately or in the future.

The SAQ or information gathering process has an important role to play in SRP. Using the purchasing policy, suppliers can assess whether they can meet the purchaser’s requirements or not. This disclosure of information demonstrates trust and transparency as there is a risk associated with sharing information. By partaking in the process of information sharing, suppliers are demonstrating engagement behaviour, particularly where there is room for
improvement identified. In terms of transparency, the purchasing policy clearly shows suppliers what is expected of them. Suppliers’ demonstrate engagement behaviour through their willingness to cooperate with and commit to the policy and follow the requirements. Where on-going monitoring is not continuous, for example for cost reasons, then the supplier must demonstrate their trustworthiness that they are adhering to the policy. Purchasers must also trust that what is being disclosed in the SAQ is true. Suppliers can show evidence of education by planning to commit beyond the purchasing policy with aspirational improvement plans. The purchaser’s trust is also needed to accredit that the supplier intends to develop and implement these plans in the future for the benefit of the chain. Clear corrective action plans show current state and development areas and evince willingness of the supplier to improve, often because this represents a cost investment by the supplier where rewards will be reaped in the end by both parties. Future buy-in to improvement plans involves engagement through commitment by the supplier.

The transactional constructs of information gathering, risk management and the purchasing policy are agency components. Relational constructs of trust, transparency, engagement and education mitigate risk by enforcing behaviour not governed by contracts or documents. Table 8.1 provides evidence of support for all five propositions as the propositions were developed from the constructs. Therefore the relationships between the constructs corroborate their theory generation. Proposition 5 which relates to a positive supplier selection decision in the context of information asymmetry being reduced could, in particular, be tested further in the future in the theory testing stage, by exploring these linkages in more detail.
Chapter 8: Findings (*InfoOrder and SociSense*)

### Table 8.1: Construct linkages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability Strategy (of the purchaser)</th>
<th>Risk Management</th>
<th>Information gathering process</th>
<th>Purchasing Policy</th>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Engagement behaviour</th>
<th>Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The sustainability strategy exists to mitigate risk to the buyer</td>
<td>The relevance of the information being sought is linked to the strategy to avoid wasting time on less important data</td>
<td>Expectations outlined to suppliers must match the buyer’s strategy</td>
<td>Trust is needed to guarantee suitable behaviour for joint goal alignment</td>
<td>A clear, understandable strategy of the buyer must be in place for both parties to be able to follow</td>
<td>Purchaser needs commitment from the supplier to realise the sustainability strategy</td>
<td>The sustainability strategy should encourage and facilitate improvement and development of the supplier for the future by showing aspirations of the purchaser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk management</strong></td>
<td>The right type and amount of information needs to be collected for proper risk analysis to take place</td>
<td>Purchaser’s expectations of their suppliers are in place to mitigate risk</td>
<td>Trust reduces risk. Deciding on the balance of levels of trust and levels of contracts is important</td>
<td>Risk is easier to measure and manage with more transparency</td>
<td>Willingness to engage can reduce risk e.g. collaboration implies mutual goals, reducing agency behaviour</td>
<td>Forward thinking improvement and development plans for the supplier to mitigate risk to the purchaser in the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information gathering process</strong></td>
<td>Suppliers assess whether they can meet the purchaser’s requirements or not</td>
<td>Trust is needed to ensure suppliers fill in the SAQ honestly</td>
<td>Suppliers demonstrate transparency by disclosing information</td>
<td>Risk associated with disclosure.</td>
<td>Willingness to engage in the process e.g. communication and cooperation of filling out SAQ</td>
<td>Identifies gaps to see where the areas for improvement lie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchasing policy</strong></td>
<td>Trust is needed for assurance that the supplier is following the policy when they are not being monitored</td>
<td>Clear purchasing policy so suppliers know what is expected of them</td>
<td>Suppliers’ willingness to cooperate and commit to the policy and follow the requirements</td>
<td>Purchasers’ expectations are evaluated against suppliers behaviours which shows current and aspirational areas for improvement and development for suppliers.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Purchasers must trust that what is being disclosed in SAQ is true</td>
<td>Commitment requires trust where contracts are not used</td>
<td>Trust that suppliers are actioning what they say and plan to in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparency</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrating transparency exhibits engagement behaviour of suppliers</td>
<td>Clear corrective action plans. Shows current state and development areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to improve because this often costs money even though rewards will be reaped in the end by both parties. Future buy-in involves commitment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
8.6 Testing and validation of propositions 1 - 5

*InfoOrder* and *SociSense* were subject to the same triangulation methods as *BevAware*, *JustProduce* and *ApparelTrade*. Relevant documents and interview transcripts were coded using the eight first order codes from the theoretical saturation demonstrated in *ApparelTrade* and the second order constructs. This evidenced further saturation as the codes were confirmed. By the end of Chapter 7, five propositions had been developed from the findings. These related to the need for a sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation, the need for clearly defined selection criteria to mitigate risk and the transactional and relational factors affecting SRP. Using data collected from the validation cases, these will now be further authenticated. Previously evidence has been structured per construct. The evidence will now be attributed to the building of theory through the propositions.

**Proposition 1: A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing**

The SRP conceptual framework developed shows the buyer’s sustainability strategy as the mechanism leading to the event of SRP. This is evidenced in the validation cases as they support the need for organisations to define social sustainability and understand what they mean by it. For example, once there is a full picture under the information gathering process and risk analysis, the organisation can see where efforts need to be prioritised. This is linked to the educational construct as its about improvement and development. It is not until the purchasing organisation have their goals defined that they can then ask suppliers to join them in their task and to find mutually beneficial, realistic aims. Additionally, the role of the purchaser has changed under the social sustainability landscape and the complexity of language can be a challenge also.

“Lots of different companies would use different types of terminology even to describe their approach to sustainability. So usually we will either use sustainability or responsible sourcing. We used to say ethical but we felt that that didn’t properly encompass the other areas like environmental and business ethics issues. Responsible we feel is a better overarching term and broader so it can include a lot of those different themes. And increasingly sustainability is the
word of choice because that can go even further. So you know social sustainability I think it very much more encompasses issues like human rights and labour standards only covers for example a very small, well eight working conditions elements of social sustainability. So I think it’s a broader term and because of that there is more of a challenge and companies need to set out what they actually mean by that and what their priorities are. Whereas, your economic sustainability, I think is fairly well understood and environmental is quite clear. So I think that might be one of the main challenges.

(Head of Stakeholder Relations, InfoOrder)

“So one of the challenges that we are coming across is that different companies might have a different idea around what that means [...] So what social sustainability means to different companies is basically down to their maturity of where they are in their own journey with sustainability”.

(Stakeholder Manager, InfoOrder)

“Social sustainability is overtaking environmental in terms of priority for the companies we mostly work with. I speak very sweepingly there as it completely depends on the company and what their supply chain looks like. But many of the companies that we deal with their highest priority will be that their workers and their supply chains are healthy and safe”.

(Stakeholder Manager, InfoOrder)

“Increasingly so nowadays the procurement people will also be looking at the sustainability factors. Around ten years ago it was more that you’d have one person who was a CSR person working in the team and the procurement team wouldn’t be using the system. But what we’re seeing is that more and more sustainability decisions come into procurement decisions. So they’ll be looking at many different factors. Part of that will be [3PSP] data and their supplier’s performance on closing off non-compliances, the issues that are found on site and their improvements. But there will also be other factors to do with quality etc. I think sustainability comes in as part of the decision making but it very much depends on the company, what their priorities are.
But I don’t think it ever necessarily gets rid of that personal relationship that you will have or things like [3PSP] and the data you see there just helps companies to better understand where they need to prioritise their efforts”.

(Head of Stakeholder Relations, InfoOrder)

“Our SAQ can crudely provide organisations with a set of industry and country relevant pound signs and if we can then make the connections of those pound signs with the areas of risk that the workers are highlighting, as I said, at the board level, it drives it a lot quicker”

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

“The organisations we work with are very much driven by process in their sustainability strategies and their drive for improvement. That makes it easier for them to report on what they’re doing”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

InfoOrder and SociSense exhibit a desire to see sustainability strategies evolving and being kept updated. They have noticed ‘resurgences’ in certain aspects and this can be dependent on world events. A common example often used is the Rana Plaza disaster in 2013:

“So especially in the wake of Rana Plaza actually there’s been resurgence in the importance of health and safety. And in some of the research in the past year we are seeing that you know, recurring issues in fire safety that are not being resolved over time. And in terms of labour standards there are some areas where things are very much improving like wages and working hours. But a lot of the record keeping type elements remain huge challenges in parts of the world. What we do see though is that … and especially Rana Plaza is a really good example of this, is that issue areas do have resurgences. So at the moment we’re seeing huge focus again on health and safety because I think unfortunately some of these tragedies remind people that we haven’t got there yet, you know the job isn’t done”.

(Stakeholder Manager, InfoOrder)
These quotes demonstrate the need of a strategy to drive the SRP as well as buy-in at a board level. The strategy is in place to mitigate against the risk that can be done to the company reputation through disruptions in the supply chain or customer perception.

**Proposition 2: Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place**

The 3PSPs provide a set of criteria for suppliers to disclose against. However, these are very broad and not industry specific at this time. It is up to the purchaser to extract the information that is most important to them in relation to their strategy and hence their risk management. The analysis can then be performed to inform the supplier selection decision. There is scope for confusion with the SAQs as the Stakeholder Manager at *InfoOrder* reports:

> “We find a complete varying ways that people use our information and that is partly why we exist. We are a flexible tool. Companies don’t sign up to using it in a particular way, there is no rule of thumb of how to use our tool”.

However this flexibility which the 3PSPs see as an advantage is not helping the purchasing organisations reported as saying that the tools are too broad and not prescriptive enough. The Business Development Manager at *SociSense* states that they see different companies using different sets of standards from the database indicating that the drive for set standards is still some way off.

> “I think most organisations are happy to be free from too many rigorous standards but there is definitely a desire to have some more directional support – which is why we find competitors working so closely together. I think if there were some kind of set standards, we could maybe work in a more cohesive way and maybe achieve something quicker”.

*(Business Development Manager, SociSense)*
“If there were set social sustainability standards it would be compliance again. It would be compliance again if we set those standards and that is something we’re very much trying to move away from but then a question that has come to us before, what makes the process you’re doing not be compliant? But we see it as taking that step above and beyond what we’re supposed to be doing but if then we put a standard on it... We want people to constantly be aspiring to something better and making changes within their organisations and going above and beyond. But then if the standards acknowledge what should be done and encompass that then maybe it’s a good thing”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

“We explored potentially weighting the questions but decided against it because we feel that all of the questions are just as important as the others. There is a slight separation within our questions. They are split into two categories, base and aspire”.

(Project Manager, SociSense)

“I would be very wary to say that environmental issues are being more successfully tackled than social issues, even though a green agenda appeared to come first. I think it’s also much more difficult to assess the impact you’re having with social sustainability because a lot of it is, you know is there discrimination at the workplace and how do you measure that”.

(Stakeholder Manager, InfoOrder)

**Proposition 3: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors**

Interview participants from InfoOrder and SociSense strongly support the need for the transactional nature of the buying decision. This is because they facilitate this part of the process in particular by providing the self-assessment tools for suppliers to disclose
information and buyers to analyse this data to see if it fits with their overall goals in order to mitigate their risk. *InfoOrder* and *SociSense* see evidence of buying firm’s purchasing policies as part of their sustainability strategy as was found in the main three cases. These policies are a subset of overall sustainability objectives and provide suppliers with expectations and requirements of the buying firm. Therefore, evidence from the validation cases supports proposition 3: *Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors*, in the following way.

“The purpose of our tool is really to make this whole process more efficient. Instead of those suppliers getting reaudited and reaudited and reaudited via us they can have one single place where they can share their SAQ information. So the self-assessed information across labour standards help with safety, business ethics and environment. And audit information in one place shared at multiple times so that they don’t have to have that duplication”.

(Stakeholder Manager, *InfoOrder*)

“I’ve been through some [3PSPs] SAQs and it made my head spin. I’ve been into dozens and dozens of suppliers that all have the same view of the SAQs that ‘Why is this relevant to me? In this day and age, why is this relevant?’ There are such huge aspects of some SAQs that are just not taken into account. The way we’ve moved on, and size of organisations and processes within organisations and it’s a very much blanket tick, tick, tick, whether it’s irrelevant to you or not and it’s impossible for you to actually tick that either way, you still need to do it and you still need to give us access to that”.

(Business Development Manager, *SociSense*)

“The use of the SAQ helps companies to be able to respond to their own particular challenges but have a common system that makes sense. It also
allows them to collaborate with other companies and reduce that duplication on their suppliers. Well that’s the feedback we get anyway”.

(Head of Stakeholder Relations, InfoOrder)

“There are issues with SAQs. It's a tick box. We know that there are some suppliers very invested in the social side but there are some that feel so pressured and feel so overwhelmed with everything going on that if they’re inundated with 50 assessments and audits a year, how can they start to make the change?”

(Business Relationship Manager, SociSense)

These quotes show both the advantages and disadvantages of the information gathering process being facilitated by SAQs. For example, all the information is held in one place but there are so many questions to answer and so much information to give that the process can be overwhelming and daunting for suppliers. In some cases, this can actually hinder the education aspect in relation to improving because the current process is so laborious. Suppliers are spending so much time completing SAQs that education can be compromised as there is a time trade off. However, what does become apparent is the link to the engagement behaviour construct. This is because the 3PSPs are facilitating the information gathering process for the purchasers because they encourage the supplier to fill out the SAQ and engage with the process, and this results in the supplier demonstrating relational aspects. The 3PSPs facilitate the supplier demonstrating trust (through self-assessment), transparency, engagement behaviour such as cooperation, communication and commitment and education through the corrective action reports. This adds a dimension to the SRP conceptual framework to demonstrate the 3PSPs’ position, which sits more on the transactional side than relational and is an option for purchasers to use as an intermediary.
The buyer and supplier exchange can choose whether or not to use a 3PSP as part of the overall process. If they do choose to use a 3PSP, then the 3PSP can facilitate with mostly transactional factors but does have an impact on relational factors as well. The information gathering process is complex due to differing views of social sustainability. Firms must extract the relevant information they desire. They decide this information from the sustainability strategy and by analysing their risk to decide what levels they will tolerate. The purchasing policy which is a code of conduct for suppliers to follow is also developed as a result of this.

“It’s difficult to measure when there are so many factors that come into it. And the things you are trying to measure are quality of life for workers. You
get different answers from workers and managers. How can that be measured if the validity of it is questionable?”

(Business Relationship Manager, SociSense)

“The chickens will come home to roost at some point so the sooner you deal with it, the better for the people working for you and the people within the supply chain, and for an organisation. Both on a, which is very important for them, reputational level but also on a financial level as well. The sooner they deal with it, the sooner they’ll reap the benefits”.

(Business Relationship Manager, SociSense)

**Proposition 4: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors**

Having discovered the importance of the transactional factors in the supplier selection process in SRP, the relational factors which also drive the decision are next to be investigated. The fourth proposition is: Suppliers are selected when the socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors. These relational factors include trust, transparency, engagement behaviour and education.

The trust construct is supported by the need for all participants in the supply chain from supplier to end customer to believe in the origin of the product and to believe in the information being disclosed to them (horse meat scandal). Self-assessment raises its own issues of trust but as would be expected, the 3PSPs support the use of self-assessment as a good method to collect the data in the most effective way.

“The consumers want to know where the products they’re putting in their baskets are coming from and the journey that they’ve made and how they’ve been produced. Organisations who are pursuing a sustainability agenda are also keen for this awareness to be raised but there is an element of trust involved both for the customer and further down the supply chain”.

(Business Relationship Manager, SociSense)
Transparency is described in detail by the validation cases as the overall purpose of the self-assessment tools is to make information available. Thus it is closely linked with the information gathering process. SociSense explain that by analysing your current situation using the tools, you will be in a better place to improve that position. Thus this construct is also demonstrating a link to education.

“It’s about making that end to end change for us. It’s a journey from where are you and lets you get where you need to be. Not being scared to identify what those problems are, I think it’s a big issue. People can’t, retailers and the suppliers can’t be afraid of the truth anymore. Ignorance isn’t bliss. You have to identify those scary problems and you have to be brave, and you have to try and get some transparency going throughout the supply chain. It’s not going to be easy but you can’t fix it if you don’t know what the problem is”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

The validation cases talk about the need for collaboration ad learning from one another. Hence they touch on the concept of synergies. Using a strong sustainability strategy to help guide you and with the right attitude (engagement behaviour) from suppliers, then SRP will be facilitated.

“Mainly it is a lack of cohesiveness around what we’re trying to do and you can’t achieve anything without a plan. You can’t achieve anything without a clear direction where you’re going and maybe we need to take stock of that and maybe take a few steps back and again, I keep saying it, it’s naive to think we can do anything on our own when everybody is trying to get to the same place. If everyone collaboratively decided exactly what it is that needs to be done and the direction in which to go in, not that it’s going to happen immediately but collective action and shared responsibility is better than doing it on your own and to me, that is the indicator of the state of where we are and that lack of transparency across what we’re trying to achieve potentially”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)
“If there can be any silver lining that’s been taken from a tragedy as huge as Rana Plaza, people are waking up and it has been a catalyst for change. It’s obviously been ongoing on the social side, not as much as it should be but over the last five years, there has been continued growth by NGOs and government and the big corporates, it is on their agenda. It’s growing every year and they’re doing more work. They have these beasts of ethical teams embedded in them now. People ask, “Who do you deal with in a retailer? Is it HR? Is it procurement?” And it’s like, “No, it’s the ethical team,” and people are kind of aghast, ‘What’s an ethical team?’ And there’s an increased pressure on them to take responsibility for their supply chain. We know it’s not going to be easy, the supply chains are spanning the globe and convoluted and murky and twisted, but they have to take responsibility for their suppliers. I think it’s only through a collaborative effort with their suppliers that that’s going to be achieved and it has to be something that’s scalable with the tens of thousands of suppliers that one retailer can have. There has to be a way of their working collaboratively with their suppliers but for them to do that, there has to be an incentive for the suppliers to want to do it. They can’t just be pointing the finger and pushing the orders down the line; there has to be some kind of incentive from both sides for change”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

The 3PSPs are facilitating the forward thinking necessity of social sustainability. They do this in two ways. Firstly, by identifying social sustainability gaps a supplier has and showing where they need to improve. Secondly, by offering corrective action reports for areas that are important to buyers (which can be identified from their purchasing policy). Although corrective action was seen as important to purchasers, hence the emergence of an ‘education’ construct, it was most strongly discussed by 3PSPs. The construct of education is therefore confirmed by the data collected in the validation cases:

“We ask the types of questions that suppliers might be asked in an audit or something similar but it’s basically to help them understand and help us to
understand where they are. It’s also an educational tool. You might have suppliers that are joining because the [purchaser] has required but they’ve never had an audit before so they might not know what is required. So it’s partly an educational tool. We ask the questions for some of the things that they should be putting in place on their site. And there are links to guidance on what these aspects mean and corrective action reports to improve”.

(Supplier Engagement Manager, InfoOrder)

“Organisations are actually using us as a vehicle not only to identify the areas of risk alongside areas of excellence sometimes, but also as a communication vehicle. As I said, we very much feel that our toolkit is one of our USPs. It is a way of educating. We’re very much trying to move away from ‘I’m coming in, I’m pointing out an area of risk and leaving you high and dry’ because you might not even know what that means, let alone know how to identify what the problems are and how to go about fixing them. We like to see ours as an end to end programme. We lead them from the beginning, from the training to understand what it means right through to I suppose, handholding them to the start of that journey of making those positive changes”.

(Business Development Manager, SociSense)

**Proposition 5: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing information asymmetry is negated by know-how transfer**

The fifth proposition which developed as a result of the transactional and relational facilitators becoming more clearly defined relates to the need for suppliers to engage in the education construct to address vulnerabilities in the supply chain relating to social sustainability. By taking stewardship of the supply chain, actioning the corrective action reports benefits all parties through the enhanced social sustainability behaviour. In particular the 3PSPs are observing the importance of the education construct as more collaboration occurs. The construct is designed to represent a factor that should be demonstrated by the supplier for selection to occur. However, know-how knowledge transfer has emerged as a link between the transactional and relational parts of the framework because the information gathering exposes weak areas of supplier behaviour
and the corrections demonstrate a relational commitment to improvement through education of how to improve. The diffusion of technology to develop knowledge management systems was not discussed as part of the research, despite the complexity of managing knowledge and trust in virtual teams. The 3PSP database is a knowledge management system in itself but the technology capabilities were not focused upon as part of the remit.

8.7 Abductive reasoning
The propositions construct explanations of what is occurring in practice. The abductive nature of the research requires BevAware to review the conclusions of the findings of all cases so that in light of accumulated evidence, seeking patterns and forming theory to explain what is seen, the organisation can confirm the validity of the overall propositions. Four of the original interview sample for BevAware were presented with the conceptual model and propositions for review. They were particularly interested in the other cases as they work closely with competitors for industry wide change. Comments were made regarding the more defined transactional and relational final facilitating factors of SRP and what was considered a direct impact and what was indirect or secondary to the exchange going ahead, albeit recognising the importance of all. BevAware were keen to work with the amalgamated criteria being used to gage supplier behaviour in social sustainability context. Between the two visits, BevAware have spent some time investigating more involvement with 3PSPs to analyse the data from SAQs but are yet to outsource this risk management.

8.8 Summary
The findings chapters (5-8) analysed the data collected from the case study firms, including the validation cases and abductive approach taken when revisiting BevAware. The purpose of this penultimate thesis chapter is to discuss and summarise the key empirical results from the findings in an integrated and holistic way to enable conclusions to be drawn. The methodological triangulation has enabled an extensive and in-depth view of social sustainability in supplier selection.
CHAPTER 9
CROSS CASE DISCUSSION

9.1 Introduction
This chapter draws together the key findings across all cases to propose answers to the research questions leading to proposition generation. These questions included the role of a sustainability strategy and selection criteria in SRP, and overall how SRP can be achieved effectively through supplier selection. The explorative approach of this research was utilised to develop an understanding of the mechanisms that purchasing professionals are deploying to establish socially SSCM to meet the demands of their stakeholders and mitigate risk. Through the data gathered and analysed, an understanding of the transactional and relational factors that support the buyers in delivering the organisational sustainability strategy and SRP objectives were achieved. The proposed framework and explanation of how SRP operates is a core contribution and output of this thesis. With these results, SRP can then be used as a source of competitive advantage that will help to guide the future generation of sustainability criteria and effective socially sustainable supplier selection.

9.2 Research questions and propositions
To serve as a reminder, the research objective was to explore the role of social sustainability in supplier selection to answer specific research questions. The propositions are a product of the original research questions developed from the findings:
Chapter 9: Cross Case Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Proposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.) How do corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers?</td>
<td>1.) A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.) How do social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser?</td>
<td>2.) Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.) How is socially responsible purchasing effectively achieved through supplier selection?</td>
<td>3.) Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.) Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.) Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing information asymmetry is negated by know-how transfer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: Research questions and proposition relationships

9.3 The case contexts

The abductive approach to the case study research meant that constructs were developed through open coding and verified or altered as each case was investigated. Therefore, it was the similarities between the cases that drew interest in terms of their social sustainability agenda and behaviour. Despite being in beverage, food and the apparel industries, the cases reported hardly any differences in their key social sustainability challenges. For example, grower working conditions in the food sector would equate to factory conditions in the apparel sector (labour standards and the workplace). Similarly, the motivation behind the drive of social sustainability purchasing agendas was risk management for all three cases. The validation cases provided final confirmation that theoretical saturation had been reached as no new constructs were emerging, instead the developed frameworks and constructs were confirmed by the 3PSPs who made up the validation cases. Table 9.1 serves as a reminder of
the case contexts including their main, specific social sustainability focus of each organisation. 

*InfoOrder* is a 3PSP who manages data corresponding to all three elements of the TBL and *SociSense* is a 3PSP who focus specifically on social sustainability aspects which was a useful progression in the data collection. The number of documents analysed and interview participants are shown.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Social sustainability focus</th>
<th>Document Analysis # (pages)</th>
<th>Interview Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>BevAware</td>
<td>Beverage manufacturer</td>
<td><em>Responsible drinking</em></td>
<td>10 (199)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td>JustProduce</td>
<td>Food manufacturer</td>
<td><em>Buying British</em></td>
<td>16 (139)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td>ApparelTrade</td>
<td>Fashion retailer</td>
<td><em>Worker conditions in Asia</em></td>
<td>2 (122)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V1</td>
<td>InfoOrder</td>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>[integrated]</td>
<td>13 (687)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>SociSense</td>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>[singular]</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46 (1230) 31

*Table 9.2: Case contexts and sample data*

The research is context specific to organisations pursuing social sustainability agendas. While it can be assumed that the theory generated works for other businesses in the same context, the critical realism approach taken means that even small causation differences lead to alternate social interactions affecting the supplier selection decision. This is likely, as there is a highly subjective element to the supplier selection decision because measuring behaviour can be challenging. Ontologically, the social structures that were investigated are localised in both space and time unlike natural laws that are generally universal (Mingers, 2000), hence the research is relevant to these contexts. The focus of the critical realism approach was on the “theory's explanatory rather than predictive power” (Mingers, 2000:1263) so once the validated model was developed the main purpose of using a critical realist approach goes
beyond simply predicting what will occur, but aims to understand and learn about causal mechanisms and particular triggers which may or may not occur in other situations.

The cases in the research were all practicing Ahi and Searcy’s (2013:339) definition of SSCM outlined in the literature review. There was evidence of the “creation of coordinated supply chains through the voluntary integration of economic, environmental, and social considerations” by the engagement of suppliers to meet and exceed expectations of purchasers for mutually beneficial goals. The second part of Ahi and Searcy’s (2013:339) definition of “key inter-organisational business systems designed to efficiently and effectively manage the material, information, and capital flows associated with the procurement [...] of products or services in order to meet stakeholder requirements and improve the profitability, competitiveness, and resilience of the organisation over the short- and long-term” is demonstrated by the risk management in the supplier selection process and the pursuit of rewarding relationships. This definition incorporates procurement, long termism, commercial importance, integration and competiveness; all aspects considered important by the purchasers practicing SRP in the sample. Investigating the buyer-supplier dyad from the purchasers’ perspective provided a practical opportunity to study SRP specifically. Using criteria for this selection is a good way for suppliers to know what is required of them (Lamming and Hampson, 1996; Min and Galle, 2001 and Cousins et al., 2004). By looking at dyadic relationships, deeper insights into the nature of the buyer-supplier association were accomplished where studying the entire chain could have resulted in the scale of the research losing valuable context. Studying the focal purchasing company, all who had brand reputation to protect (Carter and Jennings, 2002) meant that rich data was collected.

The socially SSCM definition developed at the start of this thesis as the “preservation and development of internal and external human and community structures and processes throughout the supply chain” was tested against the cases and confirmed as a legitimate, fit for purpose approach. The long term nature of the terms ‘preservation’ and ‘development’ were supported by strategic alignment and know-how improvements. The organisations studied confirmed that internal, external, individual and collective human aspects were important. This was particularly evident in the final criteria model, notably through the individual and collective internal human rights considerations and the external collective dimension of business integrity. Successful socially SSCM is achieved by clear structures of
ongoing purchaser requirement of suppliers to engage and improve behaviour and assessed processes in the supply chain to promote durable survival.

9.4 Overview of coding analysis and development of propositions

In the research findings, each case informed the next, shaping the direction of questioning. The constructs reduced from 18 in the first case (BevAware) to ten in the second case (JustProduce) to eight in the third case (ApparelTrade). These final eight constructs were then validated with the 3PSPs (InfoOrder and SociSense) as being a true representation of what is occurring in practice. BevAware was revisited with the final construct model and they too, supported the findings of the research, validating the reduction from 18 to eventually eight.

Table 9.2 displays an overview of the construct presence across all five cases. The findings chapters detail how constructs were reduced and if they were no longer deemed important enough to be first order constructs (greyed), where they then fitted within the coding framework (see previous Tables 5.2, 6.2 and 7.1). Table 9.3 displays what constructs are and are not at play across each case.
The data was meaningfully categorised providing a coherent set of first order codes and second order constructs to unitise the data into categories. These categories were refined and new categories developed which is an advantage of flexibility in induction. Relationships of similarity, frequency, sequence and correspondence were established between the constructs which developed into themes and overall theory generation. Propositions were developed which inductively emerged from the data. The research has confirmed that “the underlying processes which enable or constrain certain processes is important” (Hesketh and Fleetwood, 2006:694) by looking in more detail at SRP. A key advantage of a critical realist approach is that “it maintains reality whilst still recognizing the inherent meaningfulness of social interaction” (Mingers, 2006:1267). The conceptual model achieves this by positioning the sustainability strategy of the purchaser as the ‘real’ (mechanism) behind the SRP. The ‘actual’ (event) is the SRP and the ‘empirical’ (experiences) include the socially constructed transactional and relational facilitating of the actual which achieves the real (Table 9.4).
Chapter 9: Cross Case Discussion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain of Real Agencies</th>
<th>Actual Events that take place</th>
<th>Empirical What is observed or sensed by human beings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent of mind and society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanisms (strategy)</th>
<th>Sustainability strategy exists as a formal document</th>
<th>SRP occurs when a purchaser transacts with a supplier</th>
<th>SRP occurs when a purchaser transacts with a supplier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Events (buying)</td>
<td>SRP occurs when a purchaser transacts with a supplier</td>
<td>SRP occurs when a purchaser transacts with a supplier</td>
<td>SRP occurs when a purchaser transacts with a supplier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences (facilitators)</td>
<td>Transactional and relational behaviour between the purchaser and supplier are present</td>
<td>Transactional processes occur</td>
<td>Relational behaviours are sensed by human beings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.4: Critical realism application to validated model

This critical realism configuration serves as the basis for the final proposed conceptual framework where transactional and relational factors are specified in more detail. Figure 9.1 shows the foundation of that framework.
Figure 9.1: Strategy as the underlying mechanism for SRP

Figure 9.2 shows a schematic of the coding process resulting in the key themes and conceptual model of the thesis. The schematic used Saldaña’s (2009) methodological approach as outlined in the methodology chapter and can be seen in brief by the grey boxes at the top. The eight first order constructs are shown with their second order contents linked. One of the first order constructs (engagement behaviour) was split into sub constructs. Although the four sub constructs are second order codes that form the engagement construct, they are primary in representing the composition of engagement behaviour. This is because engagement behaviour is too broad to be particularly useful on its own and needed specific behavioural traits to define it in an explicit way. Therefore the sub constructs were deemed important enough to have visibility in the final theoretical model within engagement behaviour as a relational facilitator. The final eight constructs emerging from the data were categorised into relational or transactional factors and theory was developed from the themes of the research.
Figure 9.2: The streamlined process of qualitative inquiry (adapted from Saldaña, 2009)
Chapter 9: Cross Case Discussion

9.5 RQ1: How do corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers? (P1)

SRP can be used to realise a socially sustainable supply chain (Schneider and Wallenburg, 2012). In order to do this, purchasers need some guidelines on what they are trying to achieve. This can be accomplished through a sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation, which will often take into account stakeholders needs (Norman and Macdonald, 2004). Purchasers then use these areas of importance to gather relevant information from suppliers; otherwise the information gathering would be too overwhelming. Due to the lack of agreed, coherent information available to purchasers, they use their own strategies to guide them. There is evidence that what is going on in practice is ahead of the SSCM academic research because when practitioners turn to the literature there lacks common consensus. The lack of academic input causes the purchaser’s to develop their own sustainability strategies. This led to the development of the first proposition:

**Proposition 1: A sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports socially responsible purchasing**

The strategy guiding the purchasers helps them to work out what they need to appraise against for supplier selection (see proposition 2). The empirical research did uncover the issues with differing and inconsistent language around sustainability and recognised the fast moving nature of the concept. The strategies are in place to mitigate against risk and as evidence of a firm pursuing a more sustainable supply chain. Risk to reputation was sixth in Seuring and Müller’s (2008) analysis of pressures for sustainability in supply chains. But the empirical research exposed reputational risk as the main reason for sustainability pursuit as a response to customer demands and stakeholder considerations. For example, the reputation damage caused by news that the supply chain was not following legal requirements or if the media reported an unfavourable story to stakeholders was feared by all cases. Drumwright (1994) highlighted the importance of SRP being part of a deliberate strategy which was found in the empirical research. As well as sustainability strategy, each organisation either had purchasing explicitly in the strategy and/or had supplier documents as an offshoot from the strategy detailing the ‘partnership’ expectations with suppliers they were trading with.

Therefore corporate social sustainability objectives of the purchaser affect the selection of suppliers. It is a key construct driving the final SRP model as the underlying structure for
SRP to occur (Figure 9.1). This result links with Carter and Easton’s (2011) framework for SSCM whereby strategy is key for SSCM generally and hence why Carter and Easton’s developed model of the TBL into a SSCM framework was used as a lens to view supplier selection in SSCM. Purchasers need to ensure that they have a sustainability strategy in place so that the firm is pursuing these overall goals, and ideally that there is more explicit links to sourcing, procurement or purchasing within this wider strategy. This is an important contribution to the pursuit of SRP as the strategy leads on to the other events and experiences of the phenomenon.

9.6 RQ2: How do social sustainability supplier selection criteria impact the risk to the purchaser? (P2)

Selecting the correct criteria to assess potential suppliers is important to mitigate the risk to the reputation of the buying firm. Purchasing personnel need to identify the social dimensions which are critical in the selection of suitable partners to develop a collaborative supply chain. Developing an ecological-reputation for an environmentally sustainable supply chain can enhance a firm’s reputation, reduce risk and increase managers’ ability to reap longer-term benefits for the supply chain (Wycherley, 1999; Carter et al., 2000; Hervani et al., 2005). Similar aspirations were found with the case study firms in terms of the social dimension. In view of the analysis of supplier capabilities and careful evaluation of their qualities through the information gathering, buyers have the opportunity to enhance reputation and minimise risk (Foerstl et al., 2010). To achieve a positive social reputation the buyers emphasised the need to be clear on the criteria that they would select, deploy and use for future monitoring. Understanding what to measure provides the purchasers with some assurance to minimise any potential reputational damage and cost risk. Reducing the exposure to risk of suppliers once the exchange has been established can be through enforcement of policies through contracts. However this research was focused on the start of a new supply chain partnership rather than the ongoing monitoring exercises. Clearly defined socially sustainable criteria were viewed as critical in minimising any potential new risks. Table 9.5 shows the amalgamation of the social sustainability supplier selection criteria from the practioner frameworks and 3PSPs from the literature review, and the criteria of the three main case studies.
Table 9.5: Consolidation of criteria for supply chain social sustainability (practioner frameworks, 3PSP and purchaser case studies)

Human rights and business integrity have been bolded in the table to represent their significance as they were deemed important across the sources. Human rights are linked to the internal element of the supply chain and business integrity to the external supply chain.
Human rights could then be split into internal and external human rights. For example, community/society (also bolded) is linked to external human rights relating to the supplier. Labour standards, health and safety, fair operating practices and the living wage are internal human rights issues for the supplier. Labour standards can encompass the other three practices and so is bolded. The table shows that health and safety was also heavily discussed in the criteria analysis but it has been placed within labour standards as there is an expectation of health and safety within labour standards in the workplace. Hutchins and Sutherland (2008) also embed health and safety within labour practices in their research.

Unsurprisingly, the analysis does not show that the practitioner frameworks are incorrect, but in terms of supply chains the design needs to be re-modelled. The external human rights were not found to be contrasting to Labuschagne et al.’s (2005) approach in Figure 2.4 as the UN Indicators of Sustainable Development (equity, health, education, housing, security, population). The UN Global Compact use human rights, labour and anti-corruption as three out of four of their main principles but relating to supplier selection, the empirical findings support that labour is better viewed as a part of internal human rights. In Figure 2.3, Labuschagne et al. (2005) showed product responsibility as primary in the GRI framework. The empirical findings place it under the topic of business integrity. The GRI framework also listed human rights, labour practices and society separately. These remain separate and primary in Figure 9.3. However, labour standards and society are now concomitant groupings of internal and external human rights. The 3PSPs emphasised similar aspects to purchasers which is expected as they work for purchasers. But the development of this criterion into something more useable is desirable. By developing criteria to assess against, the purchasers are mitigating risk to their reputation by attempting to make themselves aware of possible areas of issues for stakeholders. This led to the development of the second proposition:

**Proposition 2: Risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place**

Defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria is problematic for purchasers due to the lack of universal agreement, and in particular measurement frameworks, of what should be required to develop a socially sustainable supply chain. 3PSPs provide a holistic set of criteria and facilitate the information gathering from the suppliers which they hold in a data exchange. The 3PSPs to this point have not been analysing the data against risk metrics; this
is a task the purchasers have to do. Therefore the 3PSPs are simply an instrument in the process. The purchasers must extract the information they require which is specified in the sustainability strategy of the purchaser, hence the need for this to be in place to achieve SRP. Purchasers provided evidence of wanting more universal standards (although not regulation) through their abundant use of collaborative forums and industry events sharing best practice.

In the literature review, an initial analysis of the suggestive ways to conceptualise social sustainability using the academic literature, practioner frameworks and the 3PSPs was completed, resulting in main areas of focus. This analysis was tested with the case study organisations who confirmed priority areas for socially sustainable supplier selection (bolded in Table 9.5). Secondary criteria were then proposed from the amalgamation of all the original sources from Chapters 2 and 3 (literature reviews) and the empirical data. The empirical results show that this is a suitable selection of criteria incorporating generalisability. A new triadic criteria area of know-how knowledge transfer is developed from the investigation into the education construct and the evidence that suppliers are taking on stewardship roles in the supply chain.
Know-how knowledge transfer represents the need of suppliers to meet requirements in further improvements and development in their socially sustainable behaviour. In the literature this was rarely mentioned as a key factor to positive selection. Walker and Jones (2012) had suggested that in the private sector training is important to ensure that communication is clear between supply chain partners and that collaboration is introduced. Sarkis et al. (2010) also found that training, as a component of knowledge management activities in a firm, plays an important role on improving environmental performance, an area not yet researched in the social dimension. In the empirical research, education was exposed
as a very important aspect of supplier selection and purchasers were keen to uncover whether a supplier was willing to take corrective action to meet the purchasers’ requirements. Buyers and 3PSPs offer guidance of ‘what’ to address through their corrective action reports following self-assessment. A two way knowledge transfer occurs to address the know-how aspect to reach a development plan amenable to both parties. This goes beyond Walker and Jones’ suggestion of training across the partnership to work together collaboratively through effective communication, because it specifically addresses the suppliers willingness to improve and develop their behaviour. Know-how transfer can be performed using training. There has been mixed results in research on training in SRP. Firstly, in general supplier selection, training was 22nd on Dickson’s order of criteria in 1966, then increased to 13th on Weber et al.’s in 1991. By 2004 it was removed completely from Cheraghi et al.’s analysis. In another cyclical turn, training as a way of educating in social sustainability is increasing in importance according to the empirical study. Secondly, Carter et al. (1998) discussed training for know-how knowledge in environmental sustainability initiatives but only for the purchasers; their study did not remark on training for suppliers. In the same year, Krause et al. (1998) suggested training could be used to observe performance improvement in SSCM. It was not until 2012 that Walker et al. suggested that supplier training was necessary in sustainability practices. ApparelTrade in particular, and the 3PSPs discussed training of suppliers at length regarding the know-how knowledge transfer theme.

The future prospects of the exchange through education is important due to development and improvement being key to sustainability generally. The research showed that know-how knowledge transfer was needed to improve the criteria areas but needed to be measured as a criterion also. For example, labour standards should be kept up to date and targets should be continuously excelling, improving human rights should include finding better ways of working and business integrity should include quick response through feedback. Interestingly, the improvement and development aspect would usually be considered in post selection (Sancha et al., 2014, 2015), but the suppliers clearly had a requirement from purchasers to demonstrate this in the pre-selection stage. This finding is a key contribution of the thesis as it serves to realign post-selection activities to pre-selection events.

Furthermore, Spence and Bourlakis (2009) discussed the buyer and supplier coming up with the supply chain responsibility targets and criteria to be met together. This was not found to be the case in the empirical study as the suppliers have limited involvement with the
purchasing policy or criteria set by 3PSPs. Thus the power is still with large buyers in terms of what to assess, but suppliers have the opportunity to develop stewardship traits as members of the chain. To put this into context, there are nearly always areas of non-compliance in an audit report, the issue is how significant they are to the selection decision and impending relationship and importantly how the suppliers then act to correct these. Purchasers provide suppliers the opportunity to correct these even before selection takes place. For example, suppliers are not de-listed as a result of initial non-compliance but a programme of corrective action is agreed and monitored. There is a move simply away from compliance and auditing, to engaging with suppliers to tackle the issues with managing business risks in a way that is sustainable, has the least burden on suppliers and where mutual benefits can be recognised. Figure 9.3 shows the importance of know-how knowledge transfer (through education) as a criterion across all three arms of social sustainability.

The revised model can be used by firms pursuing a socially sustainable supply chain agenda as guidance on what to collect data on during their supplier selection process. Identifying how to measure some of these aspects is still ongoing and the issues with self-assessment as a method for collecting this data has its downfalls, but the model provides a foundation for purchasers in terms of what to be considering in supplier behaviour. This is an important contribution to the literature as there are no consolidated efforts to do this using academic literature, practitioner frameworks and empirical research. The model is useful because some level of prescription is desirable but it is open enough to be used for varied contexts (Trent, 2010).

Gathering information from suppliers has proven to be both challenging and complex. Designing a system which can bring together information which is timely as well as reflective of the actions of a broad base of suppliers has been frustrating for buyers. The lack of clear business, industry or governmental guidance on how to measure social sustainability (Hutchins and Sutherland, 2008) that can meet internal and external stakeholder needs has meant that 3PSP’s have flourished to fill the void (Wolf, 2014). These 3PSP organisations can provide information which buyers can use to assess potential vendors. The 3PSPs largely facilitate the transactional side of the exchange, but do inadvertently provide suppliers with the opportunity to show relational behaviour in the form of transparency (through the sharing of information), trust (through self-assessment integrity), engagement (through the willingness to complete the onerous SAQs) and education (through the implementation of
corrective action agreements). See Figure 9.4 for 3PSP positioning in the process, whereby buyers can choose to use their services or not (hence the dotted line). 3PSPs aid more with the transactional side of the exchange than the relational side in the information gathering activity.

![Diagram showing the position and role of 3PSP in buyer-supplier exchange](image)

*Figure 9.4: Position and role of 3PSP in buyer-supplier exchange*

There are a number of reasons for using the 3PSPs to facilitate supplier selection. Firstly, they provide expertise in an uncertain and relatively new business environment in terms of their self-assessment content, although this is vast and complex with limited customisation. The expertise they provide helps to reduce the risk to the purchasing organisation. Evidence from the three main cases shows that often having a 3PSP name (such as the Ethical Trade Initiative) against initiatives can also have benefits to the reputation of the purchaser. Additionally, 3PSPs can make the process easier for the purchasers who are ultimately outsourcing the responsibility where in some cases they may not have the knowledge to do it themselves, particularly in aspects internal to the supply chain. The criteria analysis showed more focus on the internal elements of the internal supply chain (labour standards aspects) compared with the external supply chain (business integrity aspects).
On some occasions it can be cheaper for purchasers to use 3PSPs than assessing in-house. However, equally there are instances of past members of 3PSPs bringing the process back in-house rather than relying on the third party. This was discussed as a possibility by ApparelTrade, indicating that as purchasers become more confident they could be likely to regain responsibility for this activity as a result of knowledge acquisition, cost benefits and issues with further agency problems as 3PSPs are ultimately another agent. For example, Shapiro (2005) discussed issues with groups such as third parties also acting in agency relationships. This is because they are working for the principal primarily as the organisation is member driven. Internal or external auditors, compliance officers, government regulators and 3PSP rating agencies— are monitors acting on behalf of principals. Shapiro asks “in an escalating cycle of agents overseeing agents, who monitors the monitors?” (2005:280). This could pose issues if the 3PSPs are working in the buyers’ interest and is an area for future inquiry, to further reflect on the actors in the process of SRP.

It is clear that there is a changing nature of criteria for selecting suppliers from the traditional QCD approach. Kannan and Tan (2002) identified the need for using criteria in supplier selection and the importance of “soft criteria” which they did not go on to define in detail. However their limited explanations of soft criteria, such as strategic commitment, relate closely to the relational factors identified in the empirical research. Ellram (1990) suggested a move from hard to soft criteria and evidence suggests that a qualitative rigid decision making model is no longer desirable as additional factors (such as similar ambitions linked to improvement and development in the education construct) may add value in some way. While a basic framework is required (Neef, 2004), it does not need to be restrictive, as there are influence factors that might not be taken into account in the decision making process (Vahdani et al., 2008). These might include additional qualitative criteria or incomplete information. It is important that criteria consider qualitative dimensions to improve the robustness of the process. Multiple criteria should be analysed (Donaldson and Davis, 1994; Swift, 1995), and as there is uncertainty in practice, some flexibility is required. An increasing number of supplier decisions can be characterised as dynamic and unstructured (Vahdani et al., 2008) as found with the relational approach to SRP. The cases also show that applicability to specific contexts is still required with any tool or framework that is developed.
9.7 RQ3: How is socially responsible purchasing effectively achieved though supplier selection? (P3, P4, P5)

The first two propositions highlight the need for strategy and criteria to achieve SRP. The final three propositions look into the exchange in more detail. The strategy is the underlying mechanism for the event to occur. It was then found that two sets of factors facilitated effective SRP, where effective means the transaction goes ahead and the pursuit of a long term relationship is intended by both parties. Firstly, the transactional side consisting of a purchasing policy, information gathering process and management of risk were necessary structural considerations for the exchange to occur. But the empirical research showed that it was necessary to go beyond just a contractual, transaction cost economics focus because in order to achieve SRP there are relational factors that must also be present. From the purchasers’ perspective, these are trust, evidence of transparency, engagement behaviour and willingness to be educated to improve and develop as the need requires.

**Transactional factors**

The case study firms’ purchasing personnel were found to have established policies for potential new suppliers. These documents were embodied in the purchasing policy and served as guidelines for supplier selection decisions and expectations for future behaviour traits. The purchasing policy as a corroborative document of the overall corporate sustainability strategy was viewed as a critical step in delivering the organisations sustainability strategy requirements. The information gathering process, proven to be both challenging and complex must occur to discover the suitability of the supplier. 3PSPs assist in this process but the purchasing team still have to decide on what transactional factors are important in assessing and deciding upon new supply chain members, for example by developing their own purchasing policies and tolerances of risk. This has led to the development of the third proposition:

**Proposition 3: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional factors.**

These transactional factors are therefore purchasing policy, information gathering process and risk management. This supports the first part of Leire and Mont’s (2010) SRP model which also included developing internal policies and setting purchasing criteria that regard
social issues as necessary in the implementation of systematic SRP practices. The remaining three aspects of their model of applying assurance practices; managing supplier relations; and building internal capacity are more focused to the post-exchange events not covered in this thesis. The two papers on SRP by Leire and Mont (2009, 2010) do not conceptualise a model beyond transactional factors, moving the purchasing literature on minimally. The empirical research in this thesis develops the literature by incorporating relational factors into the operational model and by making preliminary investigations into linkages between the constructs. It also investigates third party involvement, social sustainability criteria and suitable organisational theory. Thus the contribution is substantial compared to the work seen in SRP to date.

Relational factors

The transactional dimensions of supplier selection are pivotal in engaging with a new vendor. However the nascent nature of socially sustainable supply chain development necessitated the growth of several relational factors in delivering the strategies of the case study firms. Mayer et al.’s (1995) concept of trust based on vulnerabilities, expectations and actions was deemed to be important to the researched organisations when engaging new suppliers. Irrespective of their ability to control and monitor suppliers, the buyers espoused that a demonstration of trust and willingness to show transparency, in information and actions, was critical to selection. Engagement via bi-lateral communications and a commitment to being socially sustainable was important to reach a positive selection outcome. Willingness for collaboration and cooperation were also imperative for the exchange to go ahead. All three purchasing cases described their buyer-supplier relationships as either a partnership or relationship rather than a transaction. As a result of the strong desire for suppliers to engage in forward thinking and improvement measures, it becomes apparent that there is another criteria measure that should be considered for SRP. Developing an education process that supported both parties in understanding what best practice in social sustainability means was highlighted as a major step.

These relational aspects were viewed as being significant, along with the transactional dimensions, in a positive selection decision. Suppliers must demonstrate these traits to be considered for selection. This can be difficult to do in advance but suppliers can do it by engaging with the process and demonstrating willingness to meet the purchasers’ criteria including partaking in education and corrective action. SRP explicitly recognises that
businesses’ social responsibility extends to and depends upon supplier relationships (Roberts 2003). Integrating relational criteria into the purchasing process was found to be aligned with pro-activeness for SRP initiatives (Maignan et al., 2002). This has led to the development of the fourth proposition:

**Proposition 4: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by relational factors**

This combination of transactional and relational factors facilitates SRP. The following framework is proposed as a model for effective SRP. Linkages between the constructs are documented in Chapter 8 (see table 8.4).

![Figure 9.5: Facilitators of SRP](image)

*Figure 9.5: Facilitators of SRP*
The transactional and relational facilitators should be employed together for the highest chance of a new trading relationship as the empirical cases all agreed that it is mixture of these aspects that is necessary. Therefore the exchange benefits the most when both contracts and relational norms are used jointly than when used separately (Liu et al., 2009). Poppo and Zenger (2002) found that firms should employ multiple dimensions for governing inter-organisational relationships such as those between buyers and suppliers because the transactional and relational factors act as complementary. This is supported by the empirical findings as the synergetic effect of using relational and transactional factors together leads to more effective supplier selection according to the purchasers. For example, the SAQs identify vulnerabilities and the engagement by addressing these risks results in a more likely chance of exchange with on-going potential.

The propositions demonstrate a need for both transactional and relational dimensions in SRP, a call made by Childerhouse et al. (2005) relating to SCM generally. The transactional process of the supplier selection remains fundamental to a positive decision outcome. However, with the early development stage of socially sustainable supply chain practices it was found that the buyers have had to engage actively with the relational aspects as well as 3PSPs. The multi-faceted nature of socially SSCM has resulted in the development of mechanisms that harness information and knowledge from an array of sources. Purchasing policies can be derived internally however the delivery of the sustainability strategy requires an inter-organisational coordination and development approach that flows up and down the supply chain.

The model provides a conceptual approach to successfully engage in SRP from the purchaser’s perspective. Ensuring a sustainability strategy is in place to help define criteria is important. When this is in place, the SRP is enhanced by purchasers’ expectations of suppliers set out in a purchasing policy, information gathering and analysis of this to mitigate risk, and the demonstration by the supplier of trust, transparency, engagement behaviour involving collaboration, commitment, cooperation and communication and willingness to be educated further. Theoretically, this extends the previous SRP models in the literature by Carter and Jennings (2002) and Leire and Mont (2010) because they lack structures that go beyond transactional attributes. While partly useful, SRP is more complex than traditional purchasing which is heavily reliant on transactional factors so the model developed in the
thesis is more useful to understand the academic theory behind the importance of relational behaviours

Know-how knowledge transfer

This research resulted in identifying a link between the transactional and relational components of SRP which should be investigated further. Support for researching both transactional and relational elements in an interfirm exchange is clear (Poppo and Zenger, 2002; Liu et al., 2009). The two way link between the two facilitators is exposed as knowledge transfer. Within relational dimensions, the education construct is proposed as a key attachment between the two due to its knowledge transfer capability. This necessity of sharing information about supplier social sustainability behaviour is linked with the ‘know what’ approach. The suppliers gain additional instruction and assistance using corrective action reports to tackle issues that are deemed risky. The findings suggest that the information transfer between the buyer and supplier is shared knowledge transfer, or ‘know-what’ aspects. It is the education of the suppliers to improve their weakest areas which constitutes the ‘know how’ and ‘know why’. By going beyond knowledge creation and storage (know-what) the buyer-suppliers exchange in SRP, through the education construct and link between transactional and relational factors can nurture the application and use of knowledge (know-how) it includes understanding “as a process of applying and using knowledge, exploiting and exploring resources, adapting to and changing the environment, learning and developing learning so that it can be transformed into new knowledge” (García-Fernández, 2015). Purchasers no longer make decisions based on a checklist. Relational elements must be demonstrated to have a positive effect on the decision. For example, the supplier firstly engages in the (transactional) information sharing self-assessment exercise in the process and then demonstrates educational improvements of their performance (relational). Interestingly, whereas this has traits of a supplier development programme traditionally implemented once the exchange begins, in SRP this is occurring in the pre-engagement stages to help the purchaser make a selection decision. For example, the willingness and engagement of the supplier is assessed by the purchaser as being committed or cooperative. The conceptual SRP model labels the factor as education.

Usually, relationships build up over time but because of the reputational risk attached to the whole process, purchasers force it immediately by starting the education straight away due to
the benefits of inter-organisational improving and learning, defined by Goh (2002:23) as “when knowledge in one part of an organisation is transferred effectively to other parts and used to solve problems there or to provide new and creative insights”. This is because it would be too risky to wait until trade has begun to uncover a social problem. Corrective action starts from the beginning. If the product was found to be tainted once it had been bought it could be too late to rectify, so the environment is assessed before the supply begins.

The final input into the effective achievement of SRP through supplier selection is made through the fifth proposition. It was developed by firstly identifying the willingness of suppliers to develop and improve their sustainability behaviour and knowledge transfer with the purchaser through the education construct from proposition 4, and secondly by the stewardship behaviour the supplier is thus demonstrating as a result of this requirement.

**Proposition 5: Suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing information asymmetry is negated by know-how transfer.**

Stewardship theory is a suitable lens to view the exchange because the supplier gains greater rewards in the long term as a result of collaboration with purchasers than when they are purely driven by self-interest. The information sharing now reaches a new level whereby purchasers and suppliers are keen to discover how they can improve. “Developing a high level of trust is a prerequisite for developing a collaborative culture. Trust will increase the propensity of employees and teams to share relevant knowledge and information” (Goh, 2002:30). There is a transition from ‘know what’ to ‘know how’ and ‘know why’, using education through the use of corrective action reports to work together to ameliorate social sustainability behaviour. Purchasers now want to see this done both prior to engagement and in an ongoing way.

Figure 9.6 shows that suppliers are selected when information asymmetry in SRP is negated by know-how transfer. After suppliers have shared the information about their social sustainability behaviour through information transfer on the transactional side, suppliers are assisted by purchasers to identify gaps in their social sustainability behaviour, often using corrective action reports. So, it goes beyond simply recording the behaviour (information transfer = know what) to putting actionable development plans in place (educational
knowledge transfer = know how). It is a two way communication and can be used both upstream and downstream in the supply chain.

![Figure 9.6: Linking transactional and relational SRP facilitators with knowledge transfer](image)

This is not the first time knowledge transfer in the supply chain context between buyer and supplier has been acknowledged (Sancha et al., 2014). Supplier development is also about knowledge transfer. However, supplier development is usually looked at once the relationship has started (post engagement) so normally it would not be considered in supplier selection, although supplier evaluation benchmarks can be reversed to be used as selection criteria. The findings show that the social dimension in supplier selection and supplier development is intrinsically linked. For instance, if the supplier does not agree to be developed they will not be selected. Historically there have been supplier initiatives to sign up once the exchange has begun to demonstrate commitment, e.g. regarding continuous improvement or to reduce the carbon footprint, but the findings for social SSCM show that purchasers will not work with suppliers unless they agree to work on aspects in advance. It is part of pre-engagement and
engagement, not post engagement. Thus in socially SSCM the supplier development concept is being moved along the process to a different position. This has practical implications in terms of expectations of supplier and purchasing personnel changing the way they work e.g. pre-selection team working with established supplier development teams in a large organisation. Collaborative and other knowledge-based networks have potential to contribute to long-term economic development as “shared knowledge can be a rapidly expandable resource and may show increasing rather than diminishing economic returns” (Miles and Snow, 2007:461). The topic of knowledge management, transfer and systems is a considerably researched area and largely goes beyond the remit of the thesis. However, the findings do show that SRP needs to go beyond simply storing knowledge and must facilitate the flow of this knowledge between buyers and suppliers. By creating shared context, a focus on the future improvements and development of the chain rather than past or present achievements can be realised.

The opportunity to incorporate technological advances in knowledge management systems will be a consideration to develop the SRP model, by considering more than just knowledge creation and transfer but also the application and use of knowledge described by García-Fernández (2015). Additionally, a next step would be to apply infrastructure and process capabilities to knowledge transfer in the buyer-supplier exchange. For example, in infrastructure with the use of technology, cultural capability (organisations attitudes toward learning and knowledge transfer) and organisational structure to allow collaboration and sharing of knowledge across internal organisational boundaries (Gold et al., 2001). For process capability, improvement acquisition (obtaining knowledge), conversion (making existing knowledge useful), application (use of knowledge) and protection (preservation of competitive advantage) (Gold et al., 2001) should be reviewed in this context.

The educational construct of the SRP model and the knowledge transfer finding has an important theoretical contribution to the academic literature. Firstly, the findings augment the supplier development work by Sanche et al. (2014, 2015) by applying it to the start of the exchange (pre-selection). Those authors only consider post-exchange evaluation but the SRP model shows the theory being used in an alternative part of the transaction, and more importantly before the point at which Sanche et al. (2014, 2015) suggest it comes into play. Secondly, the relationships developed for ongoing application and use of knowledge resembling more stewardship theory than agency theory, develops the theory by Fox and
Hamilton (1994), Donaldson and Davis (1994) and Davis et al. (1997) significantly. This is because since the 1990s when this was vaguely popular with the few authors adopting it, it has been underdeveloped since in the operations and sustainability academic literature. However, using Davis et al’s (1997) original ideas of stewardship theory outlined in the literature review, the empirical study finds evidence for it in 2015 in buyer-supplier relationships, despite a reduction in the use of the theory in this discipline since.

9.8 Schematic representation of propositions

Figure 9.7 diagrammatically represents the way in which the propositions were developed from the theory building conceptual model of SRP in SSCM. Walker et al. (2012) and Hoejmose and Adrien-Kirby (2012) have previously suggested that the development of models and conceptual frameworks that draw on sustainable purchasing practice to enhance understanding is needed. Propositions one, two and three show similar supplier selection process requirements for SRP as regular purchasing in the past. However, these purchasing requirements are now more complex than they were historically. For example, having strategies and criteria in place at the supplier selection stage, which might have included low cost in the past, are now multifaceted and manifold to include specific goal alignment with strategic sustainability objectives of the buying firm. These first three propositions are not enough in SRP to lead to a positive selection decision. The first three propositions must be supplemented by the final two to lead to a positive selection decision. The unit of analysis of the study as the dominant factors influencing the selection decision has uncovered an advancement of typical purchasing processes in a socially SSCM context.
Chapter 9: Cross Case Discussion

Figure 9.7: Schematic representation of propositions
9.9 Implications for organisational theory

The empirical results revealed evidence of a transition between behavioural theories of the firm which look at decision making in buyer-supplier relationships in SSCM. Buyer-supplier relationships continue to evolve, originally grounded on transaction processes based on arm's-length agreements to collaborative processes based on trust and information sharing (Hoyt and Huq, 2000). But the transactional and relational factors being used together in SRP shows a clear change in the nature of the relationships between buyers and suppliers; a movement from agency theory whereby one party will act in their own best interests, to stewardship theory whereby the course of action benefits the chain as a whole.

Studying behavioural theories of the firm are useful in the SSCM context as a result of the increasing occurrence of longer-term strategic, collaborative buyer-supplier relationships from one-off transactions which promoted opportunistic behaviour. Huq et al. (2014:616) called for more studies to use theory to “interpret and improve understanding of empirical evidence”; an opportunity echoed by Zorzini et al. (2015) in their transaction cost approach to socially responsible sourcing. The principal-agent relationship of agency theory is still relevant in the buyer-supplier relationship, whereby the buyer is the principal and the supplier is the agent due to the nature of the risk analogous with the supplier association. SRP is a circumstance under which specific demonstrations of suppliers’ engagement behaviours are possible and the development of cooperative rather than contentious relationships are present and preferred. Nonetheless, the research shows that improved information sharing using self-assessments, monitoring the progress and actions of suppliers with annual re-examination, and closer relationships with suppliers to address information asymmetry are still important to mitigate risk and all features suggested by Ellram (2011). These approaches also reduce the purchasing firm’s risk of moral hazard (lack of supplier effort) and adverse selection (inaccurate assessment of supplier abilities), as discussed in agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989b). Thus a transition rather than an emphatic switch is occurring.

The transition to stewardship theory argues that the adoption of organisational strategies based on both mutual trust and a spirit of cooperation are both feasible and desirable (Donaldson and Davis, 1994). Thus, the supplier behaves cooperatively (or collaboratively) because the supplier’s task is to see that the purchaser’s objectives are met, thus ensuring longevity of the buying relationship which will lead to the supplier’s financial viability. In economic terms, the suppliers maximise their wealth by ensuring the feasibility of the
purchaser. Thus, the supplier gains greater utility in the long term when they develop a collaborative approach than when they behave in a selfish and opportunistic way (Argyris, 1973). Therefore, beginning with an assumption of trust and viewing agents as ‘stewards’ of the organisation, motivated to act responsibly, may result in more desirable outcomes for both parties (Schoorman et al., 2007). This was the finding of the study, challenging the idea that the steward subdues his or her self-interest in order to serve the interests of the principal (Arthurs and Busenitz, 2003).

The research demonstrates collaborative relationships aiming to achieve mutual goals, therefore, demonstrating qualities of stewardship theory. There is a movement towards better aligned sustainability goals between buyer and supplier but still only partial alignment, as the use of contracts is necessary, which is why we do not see a complete transition to stewardship theory. Conflicts of interest will still arise within sustainable supply chains, however the empirical evidence suggests that firms want to move away from monitoring and auditing (agency) as it is costly and where possible would like to utilise trust instead (stewardship). Figure 9.8 displays the agency and stewardship characteristics behind the transition.
Therefore, in the context of SRP, a movement toward a stewardship relationship is evident from the research because we are seeing a convergence of goals based on trust. Suppliers’ behaviour is becoming more collaborative as they identify with the purchasing organisations mission and objectives and they become stewards of the supply chain. The agent now becomes the steward. In socially SSCM, the assumption that the agent will only work in their own interest is challenged as they evolve to become the steward of the exchange, placing trust on that party rather than scepticism. However, some of the instruments and processes of agency theory to ensure complete goal alignment are still necessary. For example, certification may be used as a method to control the agency problem. If agency refers to the transactional angle and stewardship to the relational side, this mirrors scholarly work where...
buyer-supplier performance was improved more significantly when both contracts and relational norms are used jointly than when used separately (Liu et al., 2009). In the cases, it emerged that suppliers who used the purchasing policy (transactional factor) to identify the purchaser’s requirements and demonstrated commitment and cooperation (relational factors) through transparently disclosing improvement plans and future targets were more likely to be selected as vendors. The purchasing organisation requires a structure that allows harmonisation to be achieved. In terms of insights for SRP, the space and opportunity to allow the transactional and relational factors to be demonstrated is influential.

9.10 Summary
This chapter has explored and summarised the key empirical findings from the research in a holistic and integrated way. It has discussed the key findings from each of the three research questions which in turn have been developed into five propositions. These findings have been compared and contrasted to the existing SSCM and SRP literature highlighting the gap between theory and practice and a conceptual model is proposed. This has enabled a final assessment of the key similarities and disparities in the existing body of knowledge and has drawn together the key findings across all five cases of the research to propose key facilitators needed for SRP and a universal set of socially SSCM criteria for selecting suppliers.

The findings from the case studies highlight the early stage development of socially sustainable supply chain practices. The data suggests that the evolution of this approach to sustainability is dependent on multiple stakeholders believing in the positive benefits of operating together to achieve the goal of socially SSCM. The components that businesses are utilising to achieve this objective is shown in Figure 9.5 where delivering socially sustainable purchasing, therefore the sustainability strategy, is facilitated by relational and transactional factors that support both the buyer and supplier in the establishment of a socially sustainable supply chain. These factors are linked through knowledge transfer. Examining the inter-organisational level, a transition from agency theory to stewardship theory is developing in the context of purchasing to meet social sustainability objectives (Figure 9.8). The methodological triangulation described in each case chapter has enabled a contextual and in-depth view of SSCM for companies pursuing SRP and enhanced the researcher’s knowledge and confidence in the empirical findings, assertions and recommendations. Chapter 10 will
now go on to summarise the main contributions of this thesis, the impact of these contributions on the existing body of knowledge and discuss the key implications for practitioners and academics. Future work will be recommended to test the robustness of the propositions.
10.1 Thesis summary
The purpose of the thesis has been to explore the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. This was achieved by investigating the link between social sustainability objectives and the supplier selection decision, examining the use of criteria in the selection process and reviewing the most effective way to achieve SRP taking into account both transactional and relational elements. The subject is important as purchasing becomes ever more effective as a way of operationalising and realising sustainability for a firm, and new research has been called for to demonstrate the most convincing and practical way of achieving this (Walker et al., 2012). The thesis demonstrates the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research of a quality to extend the forefront of the discipline. Additionally, it exhibits the ability to conceptualise, design and implement a research project for the generation of new knowledge and shows a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry. This chapter concludes the thesis by summarising the main theoretical and methodological contributions of this research along with an assessment of the managerial implications, research limitations and suggestions for future research.

SRP models for purchasers to use are scant in the academic literature. A key contribution of the empirical work is that it provides insight into the factors affecting supplier selection decisions in a social sustainability context. The results suggest that developing a sustainable supply chain that includes a social sustainability dimension requires both transactional (using selection criteria or observable processes) and relational criteria (behavioural factors) to be present in purchasing’s vendor selection process. The study contributes to the literature by providing a better understanding of the role of purchasing and the challenges that it faces in implementing a socially sustainable supply chain. Understanding what is needed to facilitate the supplier selection decision has significant implications for managing and achieving the organisational objectives of SRP.

It was found that to achieve effective SRP, transactional activities must occur in conjunction with relational factors that need to be demonstrated by the supplier. Through the use of clear
Chapter 10: Conclusions, Research Contributions and Recommendations for Further Work

sustainability objectives, the buyer must be explicit about their expectations to the supplier, gather relevant information to make an informed decision and analyse the risk to operations and reputation that the supplier poses. Trust, transparency, willingness to engage through communication, collaboration, cooperation and commitment and development through education should all be demonstrated by the supplier for a positive selection decision.

The transactional and relational aspects complement one another as they bring different qualities to the exchange. For example, ‘what you get’ (transactional) and ‘what you give’ (relational) are considered; staying in touch (transactional) and keeping informed (relational) are important; judging the results (transactional) yet evaluating the relationship (relational) is recommended; and winning conflicts (transactional) can even be replaced by resolving conflicts (relational). The two-way transfer of knowledge between the buyer and supplier joins these two parts of SRP. The findings require a shift in traditional organisational theory from the transactional side of self-interest (agency perspective) to mutual interest (stewardship perspective). Finally, the proposed knowledge transfer link between the transactional and relational SRP facilitators was considered using the purchasers’ perspective to demonstrate the importance of education for improvement and development in socially sustainable supply chains.

The thesis has successfully achieved the research objective of exploring the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. While QCD remain key criteria for selecting suppliers, organisations are increasingly using other non-traditional and ‘softer’ criteria to impact decisions, with a longer term focus on sustainable relationships. It is clear that firms are recognising the importance of ensuring the social sustainability within their supply chain, both from stakeholder pressure and certainty of supply. Following the explosion of environmental focus on supply chains in the last 20 years, with lesser notice of social elements, the academic literature is attempting to catch up. Organisations have noticed this need ahead of the literature publishing pipelines and ‘gone it alone’. The academic literature is advancing now, using practice to report on phenomena.

The thesis has important theoretical, methodological and managerial implications. As theory building research it offers preliminary generation of new theory in the realm of SRP. Methodologically, SSCM research is interesting because it can incorporate the traditionally quantifiable SCM techniques yet also lends itself to rich qualitative smaller scale studies of
best practice organisations. Therefore the thesis can contribute to the SSCM literature in the latter way. Finally, with a background in consulting it has been imperative that the empirical research has useful, applicable findings for managers to use to improve their pursuit of socially SSCM. Managers have been provided with a set of high level supplier selection criteria to use as a guide, been made aware of the importance of strong strategic objectives at the start of the process and been educated in key facilitators to enable their successful quest for socially sustainable supplier selection. Suppliers acting as stewards of the exchange rather than opportunistic agents, and demonstrating this pre-selection will also contribute to the success of being selected. The research addresses an anticipatory need made by Huq et al. (2014) and Zorzini et al. (2015) for more SRP studies to use theory for interpretation and improvement of understanding of empirical evidence.

10.2 Theoretical contributions

The research provides a number of theoretical contributions with its theory generating motive. By investigating companies that are pursuing a social sustainability agenda, insight is gained into the operations of vanguard firms. A definition of socially SSCM is developed leading to five propositions about the role of social sustainability in supplier selection. These establish the link between strategy and sustainability, criteria being used in the decision making and a model for effective SRP. Insight into the role of the 3PSP is gained and evidence is presented that shows evolution from an agency perspective of the traditional buyer-supplier relationship, to involving more elements of stewardship theory in SRP.

Operational insight into leading organisations

As reputational risk is a key driver for ensuring that all players in the supply chain meet certain expectations, it is not surprising that organisations are keen to publicly announce their sustainability efforts. Therefore it is relatively unproblematic to find a population sample. Despite this, some organisations are reluctant to consider themselves at the forefront of the development as the path is relatively unchartered and the lack of leadership in industry puts pressure on managers to achieve results. Therefore, gaining insight into the three cases whereby specialist individuals were interviewed has provided a valuable insight into the challenges and processes the organisations are facing. Additionally, access to the 3PSP organisations provided an overview of three perspectives, that of their own, the purchaser and the supplier and that insight was useful to the overall model showing what needs to be present
for SRP to occur. The thesis offers a theoretical framework for operationalising SRP which develops already scant areas of know-what knowledge transfer (e.g. Leire and Mont only offer the process of SRP and they remain the main authors in the area with just two papers), to know-how ability to develop and move SRP forward. The role of the 3PSP has been developed due to the marketplace failing to achieve detailed and practical guidance for businesses on what and how to measure the social dimension of a sustainable supply chain. These independent organisations have attempted to fill the knowledge gap through developing their own frameworks and guidelines of know-what to include for socially sustainable development.

**Socially SSCM definition and proposition development**

Due to the lack of a universal definition of socially SSCM, a new definition was derived from the literature but was also tested with all five case studies who confirmed its suitability. It was defined in this thesis as the ‘preservation and development of internal and external human and community structures and processes throughout the supply chain’. Social sustainability as a concept is multifarious in nature and so incorporating the supply chain context only adds to that complexity, resulting in a broad and encompassing definition requirement. The definition includes characteristics of onward continuation, individual and collective aspects and has an internal and external focus; all facets found in the research. Structures and processes support socially SSCM to mitigate risk and secure the longevity of the network.

Five theoretical propositions were generated from the data analyses that are true for the case studies researched. The theory proposes that a sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation supports SRP; that risk to the purchaser is mitigated by defining social sustainability supplier selection criteria before selection takes place; and that for effective SRP to take place, suppliers are selected when socially responsible purchasing has been facilitated by transactional and relational factors and information asymmetry has been negated by know-how transfer. These propositions now need to be tested in a wider context to further support or disprove the theory. Some testing has occurred through the abductive nature of the methodological design and through construct saturation the propositions are robust in these contexts. The propositions should now be tested in a different situation exploring other sectors or under alternative conditions and further insight should be sought into the relationships between each factor.
**Impact of organisation sustainability strategy on selection of suppliers**

The sustainability strategy of the purchasing organisation has a direct impact on the selection of suppliers. This contribution to the theory and field should encourage organisations to have visible sustainability objectives and influence suppliers to demonstrate alignment to these for positive selection. Further, specific information aimed at suppliers about responsible purchasing enable SRP to occur as it puts the sustainability objectives in the purchasing context. The link between corporation strategy and purchasing objectives may not be novel, but the way in which the organisations sustainability strategy feeds into the final model for SRP is previously underdeveloped.

**Impact of social sustainability criteria on selection of suppliers**

Purchasing personnel need to identify the social dimensions which are critical in the selection of suitable partners to develop a collaborative supply chain and mitigate the risk to the reputation of the buying firm. Specific social sustainability criteria are used to assess suppliers before the selection has taken place, but this criterion comes from a variety of sources including 3PSP SAQs and in-house tools. To achieve a positive social reputation, buyers need to be clear on the criteria that they would select, deploy and use for future monitoring. Understanding ‘what’ to measure provides the purchasers with some assurance to minimise any potential reputational damage and cost risk, yet the ‘how’ to measure is still an emerging area as some social sustainability aspects can be difficult to quantify (e.g. community impact which might be subjective in nature). In terms of the criteria used to select suppliers, even the ‘what’ element was imprecise so determining the ‘how’ has previously been problematic. By determining the ‘what’ in the thesis, the ‘how’ can be and has started to be progressed also.

The analysis on the social sustainability supply chain criteria advances the academic literature by consolidating the range found in the literature review (see table 3.3) and confirming the amalgamation and advancing this to include knowledge transfer of suppliers; something which managers and suppliers should be aware of from the development of this academic theory. The theory generated by this research sets out human rights, labour standards and the workplace, community and society, and business integrity as the main areas of social sustainability. It is useful to have a more universal vision as a starting point as there is some significant work still to be completed on judging measurement. The research furthers the
traditional QCD approach to supplier selection to include irresolute and soft criteria and the decreasing desire for rigid decision making models. These qualitative dimensions improve the robustness of the process. The empirical work also contributes to the self-assessment evaluations by supporting their use (to a certain extent) in favour of monitoring and auditing.

Achieving SRP effectively

A framework based on the critical realism philosophy has been developed to show the buyer-supplier exchange at the supplier selection level. The purchaser is driven by the sustainability strategy for their organisation to engage in the SRP event. For effective SRP, transactional activities need to occur and relational factors need to be demonstrated by the supplier. Within the model 3PSPs have a role to play mostly by facilitating the information gathering process. They also enable the supplier to demonstrate certain activities such as transparency, communication and commitment through the use of their SAQ tool. Insight into the pre-selection stage of suppliers and what behaviours should be demonstrated by them, are important theoretical outcomes of the research. Previous SRP models by Carter and Jennings (2002) and Leire and Mont (2010) did not place emphasis on behaviours that needed to be demonstrated. This empirical research moves the literature forward both in terms of identifying that traditional purchasing models are too simplistic and one dimensional for SRP, and that important, more complex areas of focus (more than just the transactional part of purchasing). Carter and Jennings (2002) and Leire and Mont (2010) identified that purchasing was changing but failed to explain how. This research covers this.

Where a supplier is demonstrating willingness to take on a stewardship role, the selection decision is more likely to be positive. Finally, the knowledge transfer link between the transactional and relational SRP facilitators that emerged was investigated to demonstrate the importance of educating suppliers to ameliorate their sustainability behaviour and become stewards in the supply chain. Purchasers require demonstrations of commitment before a selection decision has been made through the implementation of corrective action reports and a shift in post-exchange supplier development programmes to pre-selection demonstration of behaviour is evident. This extends the supplier development literature such as that by Sancha et al. (2014, 2015) who have not yet identified this movement in the process.

New theory has been developed to address the suggestion from Walker et al. (2012) and Hoejmose and Adrien-Kirby (2012) that the development of models and conceptual
frameworks that draw on sustainable purchasing practice to enhance understanding is needed. Traditional purchasing models are still important and relevant as a foundation for SRP, for example propositions one, two and three show similar supplier selection process requirements for SRP as regular purchasing in the past. However, these purchasing requirements are now more complex than they were historically. For example, having strategies and criteria in place at the supplier selection stage are now multifaceted and manifold to include specific goal alignment with strategic sustainability objectives of the buying firm, rather than simply low cost. The first three propositions must be supplemented by the final two to lead to a positive selection decision. The theory thus extends work previously carried out by Carter and Jennings (2002) and Leire and Mont (2010) (SRP models) and Davis and his various co-authors (1994, 1997) who identified stewardship attributes where the agency problem had previously existed.

Organisational theory development

New theoretical insights are apparent in the exchange between the buyer and supplier as a clear move away from a transactional focus to a more relational, long term approach. Therefore stewardship theory is more suited to this type of supplier selection, where mutually beneficial goals are desirable. The transition to stewardship theory has been evidenced by specific demonstrations of suppliers’ engagement behaviours which apply to the moral hazard and adverse selection of agency theory. The theory is being advanced to go beyond a traditional agency approach beginning with evidence of trust and viewing agents (suppliers) as ‘stewards’ of the organisation and wider supply chain, motivated to act responsibly. The research demonstrates collaborative relationships aiming to achieve mutual goals, demonstrating qualities of stewardship theory. Hence, in the context of SRP, a movement toward a stewardship relationship is evident from the research because we are seeing a convergence of goals based on trust. By increasing the trust, transparency and engagement between the buying and supplying parties, the probability of the know-how transfer supported by the education construct is likely to increase. When this is evidenced a positive selection decision is more likely to ensue. Therefore by transitioning from the supplier as an agent to the supplier as a steward, the supply chain is benefitted through enhanced exchanges. Using original ideas of stewardship theory by authors such as Fox and Hamilton (1994), Donaldson and Davis (1994) and Davis et al. (1997), the organisational theory developed in this empirical study finds evidence of stewardship attributes in buyer-supplier relationships in
SRP. Thus the research finds a new context where this theory is relevant, useful and beneficial to parties involved.

Overall, the research has made a timely contribution to an emerging field, as “there is increasing interest from scholars and practitioners as to how to operationalise social sustainability in SCM” (Moxham and Kauppi, 2014:417). Carter and Rogers (2008) developed a framework for SSCM generally and this research has narrowed some of these themes of transparency, risk management and strategy to social sustainability specifically and in light of the purchasing function. The literature has been advanced through the empirical work by further analysing the role of purchasing in operationalising social sustainability objectives and providing practical guidance on achieving these objectives by selecting a suitable supplier base. The ability to focus on social sustainability specifically has been a key advantage as it needed more attention than economic and environmental sustainability which are still ahead in the academic research. Therefore, the TBL is confirmed as a useful way to view sustainability as it provides the opportunity to magnify one area but reminds us that it is just one component in an area of three which may include synergies or trade-offs with other aspects.

10.3 Methodological contributions
It was previously established that much supply chain research is of a quantitative nature, but where there is a requirement to build and extend theories, qualitative data collection provides a better opportunity for exploration in real world settings (Flynn et. al., 1990; Meredith, 1998). Case studies have been revealed as the most popular method in SSCM research (Seuring and Müller, 2008) and this empirical work was completed on that case study basis to gain valuable insight because relatively speaking, little is known about the phenomenon, certainly in the academic literature. There is a need for a new perspective in SSCM as focus has moved on from environmental interests to recognising the social importance more. The process began to develop new SRP theory as the study progressed. Simply replicating past theory in this instance would be challenging as this is limited and is a modest contribution when new insights can be gained from theory building research. The issues of inconsistency and poor quality prevalent in case study methods described by Barratt et al. (2011) was managed by thorough demonstration of sample selection, record keeping, and consistent coding analysis.
Chapter 10: Conclusions, Research Contributions and Recommendations for Further Work

The research further supports the view that rich case study data is highly valuable in situations where there is uncertainty or gaps in the academic literature. The in-depth nature of the access to the organisations meant that interviews were conducted onsite, gaining access to additional internal documents, internal processes and supply chain managers in their natural working environment. These aspects all enhanced the triangulated results. Using an abductive approach which included revisiting BevAware to discuss final results meant that an insight into further theory development could ensue from the theory generated in the first visit. Having the opportunity to discuss the overall results and receive confirmation that the developments of the research were agreed by the first case who were more exploratory than the other cases has added significant insight into the final results endorsing abduction as an effective method to employ. Additionally, the transparent and therefore replicable nature of the data collection is useful for those wishing to follow a similar methodological design.

The use of the validation cases is a novel and pragmatic approach to check the validity, legitimacy and reliability of the purchaser’s perspective, by offering a viewpoint on that perspective. When discussing issues that could have reputational consequences, the legitimacy of the interview participants could be questioned and confirming their approach with a related party gives the research more credibility. Forms of interviewee bias exist whereby “interviewees provide a partial picture of the situation which casts themselves in a socially desirable role, or the organisation which they work for in a positive or even negative fashion” (Saunders et al., 1997:218). This is a particular concern of Walker et al. (2012) in sustainable purchasing. However, the validation cases added another value dimension not often seen in general organisation case study research and bring another form of triangulation to the study. The validation cases were considered appropriate by using Yin’s three conditions to confirm this. Research questions were posed, there was control over events (purchasers making decisions) and the phenomenon is contemporary in nature as it is an emerging field. The work was highly iterative, linked to data and empirically valid which are all outlined in Eisenhardt’s (1989a) process for inducting theory using case studies.

Another advantage of using the validation cases was to increase the generalisability of the findings. Using three cases and a critical realism approach which looks at specific explanation for that firm in the sample, is a limitation of the methodology. But the validation cases with their overarching insight provide additional eminence to the proposed frameworks,
making them more likely to be applicable to other organisations pursuing SRP. The small sample can be generalised by suggesting how far the findings relate to other firms in the same industry and to other firms beyond the research environment. Firstly, providing other firms in the same industry are pursuing social sustainability as one of their strategic objectives in their purchasing function, then it is possible that similar findings will ensue. Although building theory through a critical realism approach does aim to explain, rather than necessarily predict, by beginning to understand causal mechanisms some replication and generalisation to other organisations can be possible. Through construct validity, some predictive powers were won to be applicable for other firms. Table 4.3 outlined the main social sustainability issues for each case which are likely to be similar for firms in the same industry (e.g. responsible drinking in the alcohol beverage sector). Secondly, the usefulness of the research for firms extending beyond the three sectors reviewed is more difficult to surmise. However, the effective SRP model and criteria model is general enough that it can be applied in a number of contexts, a benefit of it not being too specific. This would be a manager’s prerogative and that of the strategic view of the organisation.

10.4 Managerial implications

Managers can benefit from the way in which the research has contributed to the theory and hence, academic literature, discussed in section 10.2. As organisations seek more competitive advantages in the marketplace, relationship building between buyers and suppliers becomes increasingly critical (Liu et al., 2009). It is concluded that the companies are driven by both commercial and social objectives in terms of how suppliers are selected. Findings from this research have significant relevance for purchasing professionals who are striving to comprehend the complexity and challenges that establishing a socially sustainable supply chain entails. The framework that is proposed provides a platform for practitioners to develop and implement their own supplier selection decisions to meet the needs of stakeholders and reduce the risk to their reputation. In particular the interplay between supplier process and behavioural dimensions of selection provide insights into the dynamics of the environment that they operate within.

Where information asymmetry exists, such as in the buyer-supplier exchange, costs increase because organisations are structured to minimise opportunism. The transactional factors are developed for this reason. But where buyers use suppliers or 3PSPs as agents for their
knowledge or competencies, they must allow them to contribute this knowledge rather than keeping them at arm’s length or imposing rule and processes. Incorporating social sustainability into purchasing practice means that this two way knowledge transfer occurs to synergise the overall knowledge and capabilities of the dyadic exchange and in some cases, the whole chain. The purchasers specifically demonstrated the desire to include the suppliers in the progression and development of the initiative. Therefore novice purchasers in the adoption of sustainability practices who are looking to mimic successful organisations in the area of socially SSCM, should consider the benefits of embedding suppliers more extensively in initiatives. The managerial implications of the research go further than just suggesting actions for purchasers, but also suppliers can learn best practice behaviour (what areas to show commitment to and how to demonstrate ongoing behaviours) to result in a higher chance of being selected, by adopting a stewardship role.

Insight into the pre-selection stage of suppliers and what behaviours should be demonstrated by them, as well as firmer social sustainability criteria for consideration are outcomes of the thesis that managers will find useful. For example, the demonstration of a supplier’s commitment before a selection decision has been made through the implementation of corrective action reports and a shift in post-exchange supplier development programmes to pre-selection is evident, and these are a significant discovery for purchasers. Before purchasers embark on the process, a clear set of strategic objectives is also highly recommended for the supplier selection activity to be most effective. For ongoing success, investing in the know-how knowledge transfer between the buyer and supplier to perform well and improve in social sustainability areas is advocated.

The collaborative endeavours of buyers and suppliers are a key recommendation from the thesis that managers should consider. However the collaborative willingness of competitors to work together and share information and progress in the area of social sustainability is also observed and supported as good practice. All cases discuss other firms’ progress and forums where they gather and share achievements to learn from one another. Sustainability and supply chain managers should continue to persevere with this joint approach when the landscape is otherwise difficult to navigate on an individual company basis.

The research provides a timely contribution to managers who are progressing, largely unguided, through sustainable sourcing initiatives often using 3PSPs for some direction. As
the thesis does consider the role of the 3PSP, the advantages and disadvantages of their contribution and how this could be developed, managers can make informed decisions about how they might like to use them in the future. 3PSPs have a current role to play in the supplier selection process and may have an increased or decreased role in the future. In current practice they support the transactional side of the exchange by collecting information, but how the supply chain is developing sustainably needs to be supported by relational factors. The role of the 3PSP may be decreased as in an evolutionary twist, firms may decide they can gather the data themselves making the 3PSP redundant, or there may be opportunities to provide more sourcing platform services or assistance offering analysis of the data collected depending on risk indices. Currently most 3PSPs are not providing either of these services to a significant level. If they did, they would have more of an active role in the supplier selection processes outlined in Figures 5.1, 6.1 and 7.1 with a more complex technological knowledge management system. Self-assessment is uncovered as a largely effective way to review supplier’s sustainability behaviour which managers may find encouraging.

10.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research
Research limitations of the study exist, and in doing so indicate areas for future research directions. Although the conceptual framework can be generalised to purchasers pursuing a social sustainability agenda it requires further validation through theory testing to define acceptable groupings, drivers or dominance of the transactional and relational elements. The links between each of the constructs could be explored further in the future by developing Table 8.4 (construct linkages) with supplementary research. Proposition 5 goes some way to generating the theory behind the information asymmetry and knowledge management issues whereby the relationships between the constructs corroborated the theory generation. However, by testing the model further, more depth can be explored of knowledge management as an association; thus additional insights on the role of this knowledge transfer could enhance the academic literature and benefit purchasers. For example, infrastructure and process capabilities (Gold, 2001) could be applied to the knowledge transfer in the buyer-supplier exchange to realise the benefits from using the knowledge to make improvements (know-how), rather than simply storing it (García-Fernández, 2015).
The empirical work and subsequent conclusions review the process and decision from the purchaser’s side. Ideally it would be beneficial to look at the exchange from both sides as the supplier’s voice is suppressed other than the perspective from the 3PSP (validation cases). Huq et al. (2014) have called for more research into the supplier perspective and beyond the thesis, the suppliers’ views on self-assessment and their treatment and expectations from purchasers would be a valuable insight currently not sought. Additionally, more insight into the supplier voice would be beneficial to the study as where pre-selection commitment of the suppliers is being required, (a pressure which could prove too strenuous for small vendors due to time and cost restraints), their views, workarounds and experiences would add value to the scenario. Nonetheless the value in the purchaser’s perspective in this research does provide the scope to have contributed a thorough view from one side of the exchange; that of the purchaser.

The research identifies the need for further investigation into the departures from existing assumptions about traditional buyer-supplier relationships. The findings highlight a movement from a transactional based exchange to longer term, collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships to support SSCM. The benefits of collaboration in supply chains has been a popular topic of research previously, but further research into stewardship theory as the framework for investigating social SSCM is particularly interesting. Viewing suppliers as stewards of the chain rather than agents requires further investigation.

Social sustainability was reviewed in moderate isolation for this study due to its lack of exposure in previous works. A key assumption to researching social sustainability criteria for supplier selection in isolation is that organisations have removed as many costs associated with price, delivery and optimum quantities as possible and are looking to add value in their selection elsewhere. In order to get this specific viewpoint a dyadic approach was taken from the purchaser upstream to the supplier. However, more of a network approach could be used to gain fuller insight incorporating more perspectives in the future.

The research summarises the SRP criteria for purchasers provided by the literature, practioner frameworks and empirical research, but as Seow et al. (2014:571) point out, “responsibility is a temporal rather than a fixed concept and is very much dependent on context and timeframe—today’s notions of responsibility may alter in the future”. Therefore these criteria measures need to be regularly revalidated, particularly because the way in which this criteria
is measured is still a challenge; more so than that of economic or environmental performance. Purchasing decisions need to be inclusive of all three TBL dimensions; therefore the proposed SSCM framework should be integrated with the other important drivers of sustainability in a specific context to improve its impact for buyers.
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References


References


References


Appendix A: Document sample

Table 4.5 in the main thesis shows how many documents were coded per case. Table A below shows the breakdown of document analysis in different categories. The documents were split into five categories; policy, report, guidance, publicity and tool. The table shows the number of documents and the number of pages available for coding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Number of separate documents</th>
<th>(Pages)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>15</td>
<td>(125)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(267)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(691)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicity</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(84)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tool</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>(63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>(1230)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table A: Documents coded*
Appendices

Appendix B: Interview participants (case and role)

Table B shows the job role of each person interviewed for each case. It confirms that judgement was used in the sampling to ensure that the individuals that were interviewed were the people responsible for formulating strategic objectives, making the supplier selection decisions and identifying criteria related to social sustainability behaviour. Each person has been identified as having a focus on either procurement, sustainability or both. This specific sample means that a relatively small number of people needed to be interviewed for theoretical saturation as it is a niche, specialised area (Patton, 1990).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Job description</th>
<th>Job role focus (Procurement/ Sustainability/ Both)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BevAware</td>
<td>1 Global Sustainability Manager, Procurement</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Sustainability, Risk and Compliance Manager, Procurement</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Sustainability Manager and Responsibility Performance Manager</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 Supplier Performance Manager</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 Supplier Performance Manager</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 Global Sustainability Assistant, Procurement</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 Global Procurement Programme Manager</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 Global Procurement Category Manager</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JustProduce</td>
<td>9 Group Head of Sustainability</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 Sustainability Analyst, Procurement</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 Sustainability Analyst, Procurement</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Purchasing Manager</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 Procurement Buyer</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 Procurement Buyer</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 Category Group Project Manager</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16 Category Group Project Manager</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ApparelTrade</td>
<td>17 Ethical Trading Manager</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 Corporate Sustainability Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 Ethical Supply Chain Manager</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 Assistant Buyer</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 Assistant Buyer</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22 Fashion Product Analyst</td>
<td>Procurement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>InfoOrder</td>
<td>23 Head of Stakeholder Relations</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24 Stakeholder Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 Stakeholder Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26 Supplier Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27 Supplier Engagement Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SociSense</td>
<td>28 Business Development Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29 Business Relationship Officer</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 Business Relationship Officer</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31 Project Manager</td>
<td>Sustainability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Procurement focus = 10; Sustainability focus = 11; Joint focus = 10

Table B: Interview participants
Appendix C: Interview access email

Appendix C shows the email correspondence used to request access to organisational members using the Supplier Ethical Data Exchange.

Subject: PhD Research on sustainable supply chain management

Dear [target participant name]

I am a doctoral researcher with the University of Surrey conducting research on sustainable supply chain management, namely in relation to supplier selection with an interest in social sustainability. I see that you personally, and [organisation] are active in supply chain development and that the sustainability agenda features highly. I have read your [policy document] with interest.

I am writing to you to see if you would be interested in being an interview participant for me regarding [organisation’s] progress in the arena of supply chains and supplier selection, with a sustainability focus.

I do hope you will be interested in taking part in this piece of academic research. To start with it would be a short conversation, taking up no more than 50 minutes of your time. If you think you might then be more seriously interested, we could discuss your involvement in the research more substantially. It would be a good way to showcase your progress as a company, although could be anonymous if preferred. I present at national academic conferences (as I see you do on the business side) to showcase the research and business practice.

My background is with Deloitte Consulting in London, in the area of portfolio management, operations and supply chain management. I am now a University Lecturer at the University of Roehampton in London, doing doctoral work with The University of Surrey in Guildford. For more information, feel free to look me up on linkedin https://uk.linkedin.com/in/rosannacole

I do hope you will meet with me at your convenience for a short interview, or even allow me to arrange a short telephone interview if you would prefer. Alternatively, I would be happy to speak with any of your team in addition to or instead of yourself if you feel you cannot give the time. I am happy to work entirely around you in terms of times and dates.

Kind regards

Rosanna Cole
contact information]
Appendices

Appendix D: Interview schedule

The introduction and questions used in the field interviews are documented below. These were semi structured interviews and so these questions should be used as a guide only.

**Introduction (5 minutes)** - Explain what the research is about

*PhD Research*  
For contribution to PhD research, which includes publications of conference papers and journal articles about large firm’s sustainability behaviour in the first instance.

*What it is about*  
The research problem links supplier selection decisions with the notion of corporate sustainability. Specifically, the research investigates the use of social sustainability factors in supplier selection criteria, and the extent to which these aspects impact sourcing decisions for firms who are seeking to address a corporate sustainability agenda.  
The focus is on pre-transactional activities rather than on-going management of the supplier.

*Why it is important in academia*  
This topic is important because academic research is well developed in the areas of economic and environmental sustainability, but investigation into measurable social sustainability factors is very limited, especially in relation to supplier selection decisions.  
There is a gap in the literature where academic research has struggled to develop social sustainability criteria for firms to follow to make socially sustainable sourcing decisions. This research aims to build on the supplier selection theory to discover whether these criteria can and should be developed.

*What the problem is*  
Firms today have largely been successful at removing avoidable costs in purchasing, people and processes which places a new emphasis toward institutionalising the behaviour of firms within the supply chain to incrementally improve contributing factors at every opportunity. As costs and pricing become transparent to customers, something else is needed to differentiate and add value to the process. For supply management, this includes sourcing decisions. This includes socially responsible purchasing as this is an area where supply chain managers can be seen to be ‘doing’ something, rather than just talking about it. However, universal agreement on what should be incorporated in supplier selection decisions is far from being reached. Investigation into best practice firms will be conducted to discover whether suitable criteria that suppliers should be expected to meet can be developed.

*How I can help you*  
More research needs to be done on responsible trade and showcasing organisations who are either assisting in it or purchasers who are showing best practice.  
We want to write about best practice and what is actually being done.

**Questions (40 minutes)** – covers general sustainability, supplier selection process, supplier self-assessment and social sustainability criteria

*Sustainability Questions*

What is sustainability?
Appendices

What is social sustainability?

Do you support the triple bottom line approach to sustainability (environmental, economic and social)?

Do you believe that the focus on all three elements on sustainability will result in the highest likelihood of business success?

Are there different challenges associated with the concept of social sustainability that economic or environmental do not have?

Why was the development of social sustainability so far behind environmental?

How can social sustainability be achieved? How do you measure or compare progress and results?

What is sustainability in the context of purchasing?

Supplier Selection Process Questions

What language do you use and why (responsible sourcing/ethical trading etc.)

To what extent is the supplier selection decision made as a result of the process, and as a part of the individual? (People versus process).

What is the association to strategic objectives at this decision point?

Do you see issues with different people being involved in the overall corporation strategy and those doing the socially responsible purchasing?

How important is it for suppliers to have accreditation/certification?

In what ways do relationships come into the final supplier selection decision?

To what extent do you work with competitors to get a sector wide approach to what is important in the criteria? Or is important that each organisation tailors individually? How that is possible with a one size fits all approach (3PSP SAQ)?

To what extent do you think 3PSPs listens when members want things changed? Does more than one group need to request it? Who has the power/influence here?

Self-assessment Questions

What do you think are the issues with self-assessment? What are the benefits?

Have you experienced misunderstandings in self-assessment?

Do you think there are issues with training the suppliers to fill out the questionnaire?

Social Sustainability Criteria Questions

Is it difficult to have no universal/set standards or does the industry like it like this? I.e. more freedom?
Appendices

How do you decide on the social sustainability and supplier selection criteria? Is it ranked?

Are the measures still maturing?

Do the criteria have any weighting at all or is it one of a series of measures?

Do you think the decision making is largely qualitative (subjective) or quantitative (objective)?

If there is a qualitative weighting – is the qualitative weighting a measurable one? Subjective?

How involved are you in the role of [insert] in the social measures? Are there any measures you are using which are generic to the industry or measures which are specific to you- or are they all still maturing?

If is developing, have there been ‘frustrations’ and ‘gaps’?

Why are you using 3PSPs? Are different industries using the same information out of that exchange? Are you extracting relevant sections? What do you use as a gage? How are you using it – do you use it after selecting suppliers as an on-going monitoring tool?

Closing comments (5 minutes)

Is sustainability reporting simply a ‘public relations tool’?

Why do firms do it? Do you really think people will stop buying because of an ethical dilemma? Discuss evidence.

Do firms just sign up to look good?

What is your feedback to the 3PSPs?

Additional questions for validation cases (third party organisations)

To what extent do you work with competitor third party service providers to get a universal approach to what is important in social sustainability criteria? Do you ensure your goals are aligned? Or is important that each tailors individually to target a different part of the market? What do the member organisations prefer?

Do you believe purchasers welcome set standards or does the industry like the ambiguity?

You use the outlined standards of [insert] to develop your tool, why did you choose these and how did you decide what to pick out of the standard?

Why are organisations using your tool? Are different organisations/ industries using the same information out of that database? Are they extracting relevant parts? What do they use as a gage? How are they using it? Do they use it before selection or after as an on-going monitoring tool?
Appendix E: Coding sheet (first order codes)

Table E represents the coding sheet given to the second coder from case 1 (BevAware) and for each case thereafter. The definitions are derived from the data and provide clarity to the second coder regarding what each construct means, in order to secure higher agreement between the two interpreters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Definition (derived from data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3PSP</td>
<td>Organisations who provide services to gather and share sustainability information of potential suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality</td>
<td>Sharing features or attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Meeting with specified standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>The circumstances that form the setting for an event, statement, or idea, and in terms of which it can be fully understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>The payment of value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Receiving or giving systematic instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement behaviour</td>
<td>The way in which a person or organisation acts or conducts itself, especially towards others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>Make the current situation better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information gathering</td>
<td>A series of actions or steps taken in order to achieve a particular end process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance</td>
<td>Outcome/The result of carrying out a task or function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing Policy</td>
<td>The code of conduct provided for suppliers outlining expectations of the purchaser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>The way in which two or more people or things are connected, or the state of being connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>A situation involving exposure to danger, harm or loss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjective</td>
<td>Based on or influenced by personal feelings, tastes, or opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, incorporating economic, environmental and social dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td>Clarity and disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Acceptance of the truth of a statement without evidence or investigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table E: Coding sheet
### Appendix F: Coding sheet (second order code definitions)

Table F shows the second order codes under their first order construct. A definition of the second order codes is provided, derived from the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First order construct</th>
<th>Second order codes</th>
<th>Definition (derived from data)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability strategy</strong></td>
<td>Commonality, Context, Sustainability objectives, Legitimacy</td>
<td>Similarities between buyer and supplier, Specific to that organisation, Goals relating to sustainability of organisation, Validity of sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk management</strong></td>
<td>Performance, Relationship, Cost, Association, Analysis</td>
<td>Level of success, Dependency and connection between parties, Value associated with something, Positive or negative link, Reasoning for decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information gathering process</strong></td>
<td>Tool, 3PSP</td>
<td>Means of collecting information (e.g. SAQ), A third party service provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purchasing policy</strong></td>
<td>Expectation, Requirement</td>
<td>Preferable exhibition of behaviour, Demand for behaviour achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trust</strong></td>
<td>Disclosure</td>
<td>Revealing of relevant, useful and honest information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transparency</strong></td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Meeting agreed objectives and following predefined guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engagement behaviour</strong></td>
<td>Commitment, Communication, Cooperation, Collaboration</td>
<td>Willingness to engage in long term agreement, Willingness to engage in open channel of information, Willingness to engage in terms of requests and expectations of purchaser, Willingness to engage to achieve mutual goals of social sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Development, Improvement</td>
<td>Changing behaviour for long term goal achievement, Changing behaviour in a positive way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table F: Second order coding definitions*
Appendix G: Ethics form

Ethical Issues in Research for PGR Students

Please complete this form in discussion with your Supervisors and sign where indicated. Your Principal Supervisor must countersign the form. If ethical approval is required, please contact the Chair of the FBEL Ethics’ Committee for instructions on how to obtain ethical approval and guidance on the required documentation. Once complete send the completed form to the Faculty’s PGR students’ administrator who will place it on your file.

YOU MAY NOT COLLECT DATA BEFORE IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED THAT ETHICAL APPROVAL IS NOT REQUIRED, OR UNTIL A FAVOURABLE ETHICAL OPINION IS OBTAINED.

If data are collected without required ethical approval, you could be asked to destroy the data or, if already submitted, that your work will not be marked. If you change your method or sample, a new form must be completed.

Name of student: ROSANNA COLE
School: SBS

Principal Supervisor: DR. JAMES AITKEN
2nd Supervisor: PROF. GAVIN HILSON

Thesis title: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN SUPPLIER SELECTION

Please answer Yes or No to the following questions. If you answer yes to any question, ethical approval will be required for your study either from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Law (FBEL) Ethics’ Committee or the University Ethics’ Committee (UEC).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the study, or may the study, involve undergraduate students either in FBEL or across the University?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does, or may, the study, involve access to records of personal or sensitive confidential information?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does, or may, the study, involve Faculty of Business, Economics and Law staff as subjects, investigating their working or professional practices?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does, or may, the study involve staff across the University of Surrey, investigating their working or professional practices?</td>
<td>Seek approval from University Ethics’ Committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the study involve vulnerable groups (e.g. children under 16 years, over 16’s who are unable to give informed consent, prisoners or young offenders)?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the respondents receive payment (including in kind or involvement in prize draws)?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could questioning – in questionnaire or in interview – or other methods used, cause offence, be distressing or be deeply personal for the target group?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the study involve any risk to a participant’s health (e.g. invasive physiological or psychological procedures)?</td>
<td>Seek approval from University Ethics’ Committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the research involve donation of bodily materials, organs and the recently deceased?</td>
<td>Seek approval from University Ethics’ Committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the research require participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (e.g. covert observations)?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the research involve activities where the safety of the researcher may be in question?</td>
<td>Seek approval from FBEL Ethics’ committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does your research study involve staff or patients from the NHS or a Health Service overseas?</td>
<td>Seek approval from Health Service Research Ethics’ Committee AND University Ethics’ Committee</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Principal Supervisor’s comments:
Confirmation that Ethics approval is not necessary from Dr Ayse Saka-Helmhout (email sent 21/01/2013)

Student’s signature Date 21/01/2013
Principal Supervisor’s signature Dr. James Aitken Date 21/01/2013