

# **MIDLANDS STATE UNIVERSITY**



## **FACULTY OF COMMERCE**

### **DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT**

#### **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PERSONAL SELLING ON COMPANY PERFORMANCE. A CASE OF C.T. BOLTS**

**STUDENT NUMBER: R145723C**

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A CASE OF C.T. BOLTS**

SUBMITTED BY R145723C IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF  
THE BACHELOR OF COMMERCE HONORS DEGREE IN MARKETING  
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*I appreciate your support, belief and patience. Thank you*

## **DECLARATION**

This research is dedicated to my Father David Chiwereva, my mother Winnie Fungai Chiwereva, my sisters Dagma and Dalma and Charles my little brother. I did this solely for you, I love you all.

## **ABSTRACT**

The research conducted was to investigate the effectiveness of personal selling on company performance of Zimplow Holdings ltd t/a C.T. Bolts. The company was facing a diminishing trend in its sales and hence management took a decision to refocus its efforts on personal selling so as to improve the firm's performance. Objectives of the study were to explore the effects of sales presentation on market share, to examine the effects of sales presentations on sales volume and to establish the effects of handling objections on customer loyalty. The study was conducted in Bulawayo on C.T. Bolts customers, employees and management. After adopting a sample size of 55 respondents, the researcher administered questionnaires and face to face interviews to the respective parties. The results of this study were presented using pie charts and bar graphs after the analysis of the data was done through SPSS and interpreted using mean and percentages. Findings in the study, were gathered and supported by primary and secondary data. The researcher obtained this data during the course of the research. Findings showed that prospecting has a positive effect on market share of the company. The research also uncovered that, sales presentations effective on increasing sales volume of the company, where sales persons adapt their presentation in order to convince customers to make a purchase. Lastly, handling objections results in customer loyalty because it involves communication and assistance to the customer, which provides a great sense of service quality. Therefore, the researcher recommended that C.T. Bolts may adopt training salespersons on adapting their presentations so as to conform to different selling situations. More so, management may also consider investing more time in prospecting as it increases the customer base. Lastly, the researcher suggested that salespersons address consumer queries quickly so as to maintain a positive perception on service quality.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **General Introduction**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter focuses on summarizing as well as introducing this research. The chapter introduces the background to the study, explaining the background of C.T. Bolts. Focus was also on the research objectives, questions, significance of the study, assumptions, delimitation of the study and limitations.

#### **1.1 Background to the study**

The main thrust of every company is to maximize profits, attain competitive advantage and establish market share. Personal selling is a marketing mix strategy can achieve this. Kotler and Keller (2012) define personal selling as face-to-face contact involving buyer and seller for the purpose of making presentations, asking questions and procuring orders. Harrison and Wicks (2013), highlight company performance variables, which are sales growth/volume, shareholder returns, profitability, market share, customer retention, supplier relations and reputation rankings. Mwita (2000) explains the key elements of performance meant to attain organisational objectives and to enhance performance of the organization, adopting personal selling can be the ideal strategy.

A lot of researches were done on personal selling. Evans et al (2012) highlight buyer and seller interaction as an under researched topic area in relation to sales performance. Furthermore, Rudain Othman Yousaif (2016) conducted a similar research titled “the impact of personal selling on the purchasing behavior towards clothes.” In that study the researcher identified the personal selling process stages as the independent variables. The research was mainly focused of retaining customers and influencing their buying decision which in turn would impact positively on the sales. Another researcher in Kenya, Murianki Morris Murithi (2015) further studied the effects of personal selling on sales, indicating factors to consider when conducting personal selling which include target audience, product life cycle and product characteristics. Smith et al

(2009) conducted a study on personal selling for forest products and this study took place in Virginia. The researchers identify the sales presentation process as a selling tool that can be the most productive in a firm if executed well.

Mbugua (2014) also undertook a research in Kenya titled, “personal selling strategies and performance of pharmaceutical firms in Nairobi, Kenya. His objectives included determining the influence of personal selling as a strategy on the performance of pharmaceutical firms. He further looked into personal selling being used by these pharmaceutical firms under study. He went on to recommend further study on the nature of personal selling itself in respect to individual firms for detailed analysis of its benefits to stakeholders.

Muchina and Okello (2016) carried out a research in Nairobi titled the impact of personal selling on the performance of retail brand shoe firms. Their study aimed at determining how the promotion of brand knowledge influences brand performance through personal selling, establishing how improved interaction during the personal selling process impacts on brand performance, to scrutinize how increased interaction time through personal selling results in brand performance and to assess how the formation of relationships via personal selling leads to positive brand performance. With these objectives the researchers found out that employment of adequate timing on personal selling results in positive brand performance. They further suggested that firms develop satisfactory and capable marketing administration and salespersons well-fortified in the practice of brand knowledge, possess communication skills, interaction and relationship building to all potential and existing customers in the organization.

Weitz and Bradford (2009) further posit that, there is need to research requirements to be directed towards determination when sales teams are appropriate, when they positively affect the productivity of the sales force and when they are inappropriate. These researchers similarly agree on the positive influence brought about through personal selling, however they were not elaborate enough for the researcher to conclude based on the researches. Therefore, this research attempts to fill the existing gap on personal selling, mainly looking at how the personal selling process can be executed and in turn its effectiveness on company performance.

C.T. Bolts is a fastener wholesaler and retailer operating in the two main cities of Zimbabwe which are Harare and Bulawayo. The company’s headquarters are in Bulawayo. Upon diminishing market share in recent years company performance has also been affected negatively

by the decline of company sales. Overall company sales of the year 2015 depicted below, contrasting sales of the year 2016:

**Table 1.0**

Quarter	Jan- March	April- June	July- September	October-December
Actual (2015)	163 009.96	173 901.13	174 556.26	178 189.01
Actual (2016)	162 962.60	154 758.39	151 085.33	149 638.77

Source: C.T. Bolts Sales & Marketing Reports (16 January, 2018)

At the end of the year 2016 company sales had declined by 2.15%. Management then decided to employ a sales team responsible for prospecting, selecting, presenting and post sales activities in attempt to increase the company's sales volumes, market share and overall, its profitability. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the impact of personal selling on the company's performance.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The figures above indicate a decline in company sales of 2.15% which has caused a decline in company performance. The emergence of new players in the market such as Tassburg, Glynn's bolts, Country Bolts Fasteners and BMA Shepco with stocks of a similar product line has also affected the firm's market share. To counter this decline in sales and market share, management introduced a marketing team to undertake personal selling to resuscitate the ailing performance of the firm. Therefore, what is the effectiveness of personal selling on company performance? This research attempted to answer that.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

- To explore the effects of prospecting on market share.
- To examine the effects of sales presentation on sales volume.
- To establish the effects of handling objections on customer loyalty.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

- Does prospecting affect the market share?
- What are the effects of presentation of goods on company sales?
- Does the handling of objections influence customer loyalty?
- Does' post-sales follow up lead to profitability?
- What are the effects of closing a sale on market share

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

### **1.5.1 To the company**

- Will help develop and execute the personal selling process that will benefit the marketing cause of the firm.
- C.T. Bolts will be able to build itself a large market share in the informal sector through personal relations created
- It will shed light to other strategy related problems that the firm may be facing

### **1.5.2 To the researcher**

- This research enhanced my knowledge on the strategic issue at hand
- Assisted the researcher to acquire research skills for further study purposes
- This research contributed to the fulfilment of the partial requirements of the researcher's Honors Marketing Management Degree with Midlands State University

### **1.5.3 To Midlands State University**

- Shed more light on personal selling and its significance in the industrial setup that can be further researched on

## **1.6 Assumptions**

- Management would provide information relevant and useful to this study
- All respondents gave off accurate responses on the questions posed to them
- The market environment remained constant throughout the research period

### **1.7 Delimitations**

- The research was carried out on the customers of the company
- The research was limited to Bulawayo only

### **1.8 Limitations**

- The research was limited to C.T. Bolts only and therefore the results may not represent the same mathematical perspective in another entity.
- The results of the research are limited to Bulawayo and are not a whole representation of the nation.

### **Definition of terms**

**Rapport:** A harmonious relationship where parties involved understand each other's feelings and ideas.

**Personal selling:** Two way communication involving a salesperson and a customer usually face-to-face, over the phone, conferencing and exhibitions

**Salesperson:** a salesperson is an individual who is responsible for achieving organizational objectives through to selling a firm's products and create positive image about the company at large. Sales force therefore represents group of salespersons that perform the function of a salesman. When salespeople are employed their role becomes to coordinate their activities with those of other departments in order to achieve harmony and avoid working at cross purposes with other parties.

## **1.9 Chapter summary**

This chapter gives an introduction of what the researcher attempts to achieve. It gives an indication of what the researcher focused on. The chapter introduced the research problem, the research questions and the various assumptions that prompted the researcher to conduct the investigation of the effectiveness of personal selling on company performance. This chapter also included the delimitations and limitations of the overall research study. The next chapter reviews relevant literature related to this study.

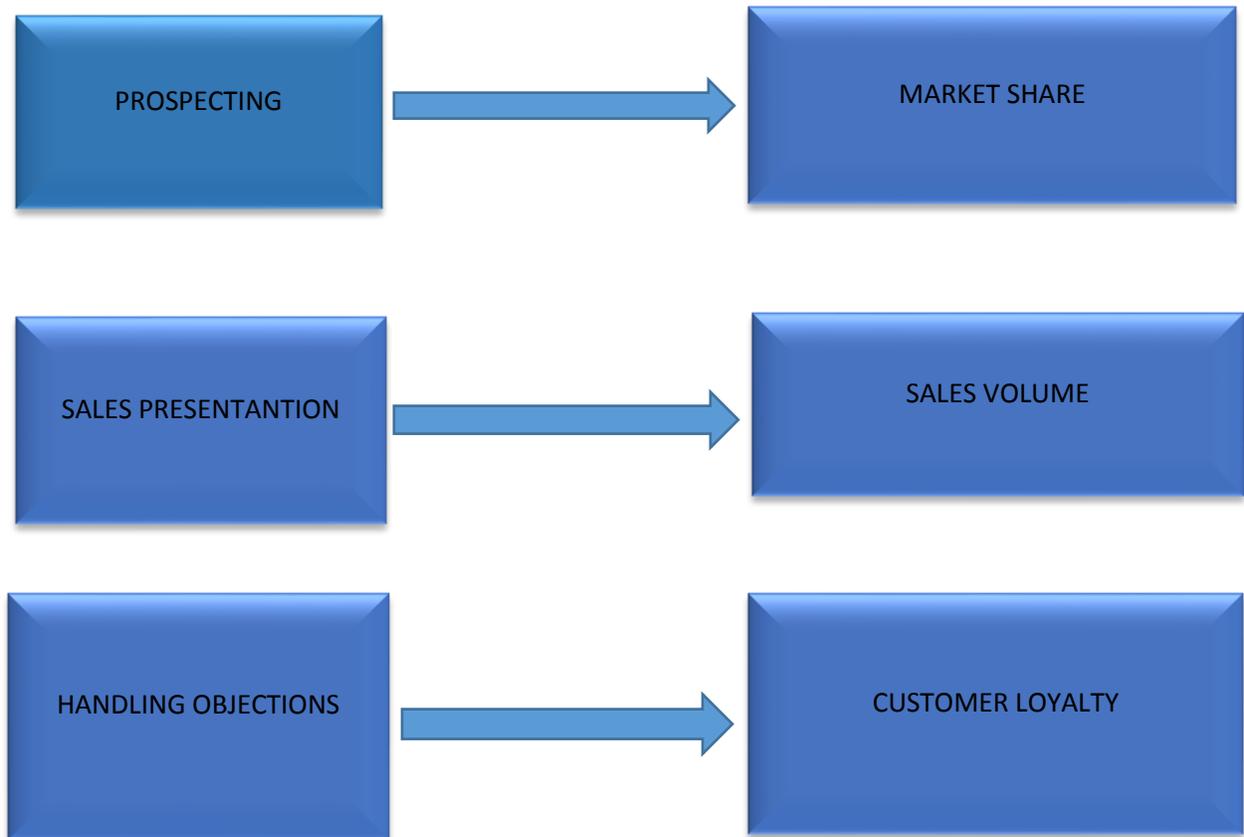
## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### 2.0 Introduction

The chapter aimed to source information from various scholars by comparing, contrasting and commenting on issues of interest. The researcher borrowed from various authorities by acknowledging what other scholars have known about the research under study. Different scholars have provided various definitions of prospecting, sales presentations, handling objections, market share, sales volume, customer loyalty and overall, company performance. According to Sharp et al (2016), literature review seeks to generate and perfect research ideas since it demonstrates upright knowledge of the research topic.

**Fig 2.1: Conceptual Framework**



## **2.1 Company Performance defined**

Many different ways to measure company performance have been identified. Ittner (2008), identifies a common division used to categorize company performance which is financial and non-financial performance. Financial performance measurement has traditionally involved sales growth, return on equity (ROE), earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT), and return on investment (ROI), Eldenburg et al (2010). They further state that such measurements look at the profitability of an organization.

However, other measures such as innovation performance, market share, and more operational key performance indicators (KPIs) are usually functional in measuring non-financial performance states Hyvönen (2007). Moreover, scholars have placed arguments that company performance should possess a broader scope inclusive of the triple bottom line, instead of only focusing on a single aspect of company performance, such as financial performance. Chen (2015) precisely mentions that, firm performance refers to ecological performance, social performance, economic performance, operational performance, and innovation performance.

These researchers therefore look into both financial and non-financial aspects of measuring company performance in which the researcher will include market share, sales volume and customer loyalty. Company performance has to do with the actual output or results of an organization as measured against its intended outcomes that is goals and objectives. Company performance encompasses firm's outcomes which includes financial performance (profits, return on investment and return on assets), and shareholder return (total shareholder return and economic value added) and product market performance (market share and sales).

Customer loyalty is directly linked to customer satisfaction and Kheng et al (2010) found out that an enhancement in a firm's service quality results in the loyalty of consumers. More so, customer loyalty possesses antecedents, which were highlighted by Rai and Medha (2013) as communication, trust, corporate image, commitment and switching costs. Furthermore, Diab et al (2015) investigated customer satisfaction and loyalty proving that empathy tangibility and assurance positively affect customer loyalty and in turn positively affect company performance. The researcher therefore understands the relationship that exists between market share, sales volume and customer loyalty with company performance.

## **2.2 Personal Selling defined**

Etzel et al (2007) asserts that personal selling is a direct interaction between a salesperson and one or more potential buyers in an attempt to encourage each other in a purchasing situation. Michael Bon once said, "If you frankly believe that "the customer is king," the next most significant individual in this kingdom needs to be the one who has a direct contact on a daily basis with the king. In other words, a salesperson is of great importance in a selling situation since selling is a universal human occupation.

Personal selling refers to the use of dialogue and delicate conviction to bring approximately some action on the part of another, Nagar (2013). A Salesperson is a participant performing the personal selling. Personal selling is a way of executing marketing programs and it is concerned with 'persuasive communication'. Nagar (2013) further states that, a salesperson in personal selling tries to encourage the potential customer so that a decision is made, to purchase the product. It is a major factor in creating sales volume. It involves a direct presentation of a product to a potential customer by a salesperson and it takes place face to face or over the telephone. It may be directed to an intermediary but in most prevalent cases, it is meant for the final consumer.

In reference to the study done to advance marketing & sales skills, Arabic Forum (2016), the importance of personal sale ascends as salespersons act like a linkage between the organization and its customers. Salespersons contribute to the creation of an excellent intellectual impression and a decent image for the firm among its consumers.

Besides the key role that personal selling has in the promotion program to implement marketing plans for the organization, use of personal sale by women groups largely affects the increase of merchandise sales. Moving from door to door, within markets, letting people know about their products and persuading them to buy results in the increase of sales. Murianki (2015) agrees that the public's knowledge of the product is further rises, and the product awareness is positively affected. More so, after peoples' awareness rises, an increase in sales is a due expectation, Murianki (2015).

In addition, personal selling is a very effective factor in the establishment of contact amongst salespersons and consumers in two directions. The customers can inquire and ask the salespersons questions face-to-face. Alsamydai & Yousif (2010) support that at the same time,

mentioning that a discussion takes place and once reaching a clear understanding, a proper buying decision is made and this encourages them repetitive purchasing.

Kotler (2013) further notes that personal selling is a largely useful communication tool with current and possible consumers. Personal selling involves the two-way movement of communication between a purchaser and seller often in a face-to-face encounter. It is meant to influence an individual or a group's buying decision. However, technological advancements have resulted in personal selling also taking place across different platforms such as, telephone, through video conferencing and interactive computer links amongst consumer and seller. However, personal selling still remains a highly human intensive activity despite the use of technology.

Kotler, (2013) also highlighted that personal selling serves three main roles in a firm's general marketing strength. Salespersons are the critical linkage that sits between the firm and its customers. They are the company in the consumer's eyes. Salespersons represent what a company is or challenges to be and are regularly the only personal contact a consumer has with the firm and personal selling plays a significant role in the domination of a firm's marketing program. Salespersons have the ability to generate consumer value in numerous ways. For instance, by being close to the customer, salespeople can identify creative solutions to customer problems. Personal selling assumes different forms based on the amount of selling done and the amount of creativity required in performing the sales task (Adebisi, 2006).

### **2.3 Prospecting on Market Share**

This is the first stage of the personal selling process, where the salesperson is creating qualified leads or searching for new openings amongst the present customer base. Keelan (2015) asserts that prospecting involves networking, seminars, marketing, tradeshow, and cold calls. Prospecting, or the ability to prospect, has been identified as one of the most critical success factors in sales performance by Dwyer, Hill, & Martin (2000) and arguably one of the more highly demanded skills.

Macintosh and Gentry (1999) found that higher performing salespeople are better able to focus on key characteristics of high quality prospects. Reflecting the importance of identifying potential customers is its positive effect on sales success as noted by Jolson and Woltruba

(2000). Kalashnikova (2011) identifies the results brought about by prospecting which are, greater forecast accuracy, faster detection and response to market trends, massively increased sales productivity and increased predictable reactions to market trends. These authors are therefore converging on the similar agreement that prospecting has a direct impact on sales volume, which the researcher understands, will in turn increase the firm's market share.

Furthermore, Alsamydai and Yousif (2010) went on to spot and grasp additional concerns about personal selling increasing sales volume. The perspective was derived from retail merchants to prospective consumers and the case study was for Alejawi Company, where a comparison is made between what was spent on personal selling and sales annually. Once the analysis, a sturdy relation with strong impact between accomplished sales quantity and personal sale for each year was found. The researcher has therefore found out that many authors validate that prospecting has an important role in increasing sales. This will in turn result in increased market share. Moncrief and Marshall (2005) obviate the fact that prospecting is solely done to expand a firm's customer base where Jolson and Woltruba (1992) add that it is done due to the fact that companies lose customers every single year.

On the contrary, Darmon (2016) asserts that prospecting will not necessarily increase market share or sales, however, plays a significant role in recruiting potential customers since it will increase the customer base thus if prospects commit to be part of the organisation as customers. Whereas Kim (2011) posited a unique view, mentioning prospective customers as more of potential customers at the disposal of the organization, which will be struck by the firm's flexibility to convert these prospects into customers. The two scholars agree and disagree at the same time but both accept that prospecting is the only way to gain customers who will become the organisation's customers and thus forming its sales and market share.

Ross (2016) advanced a unique case, mainly arguing that prospecting to a marketer may be a response to marketing stimulus hence they demand payment for that which ultimately increases sales costs without returns. Shar (2016) contradicted with this notion as the author submitted a case that business-to-business firms emphasise on sales, leading to prospecting due to uncertainty over the global economy and customer behavior. Biggs (2016) conjointly stressed that larger corporations in the developed world have modified their priorities from being sales oriented to generating business leads as their mainly favored sales and marketing priority shares

the same sentiments. Furthermore, the author points out that developing quality leads is difficult as only 49% of quality leads can generate a reasonable proportion of sales that may assist in developing customers.

Manju (2016) asserts that in most companies there is a lack of resources hence prospecting is not considered as a competitive advantage thus they tend to specialise on sales and likewise researchers are not additionally involved in determining the relationship between prospecting and market share. Hence, the view that it is of no significance to market share. The researcher also views the idea to separate prospecting from market share as impractical, due to this ordeal being the basis for generating sales leads. On this issue, competitive advantage emanates from the company's ability to have a thorough understanding of complementary or new high potential markets, Neisen (2016). Therefore, organisations may require external assistance to qualify leads thus company resources can focus on increasing the close ratio of new deals.

Bulte (2016) suggested that organisations compliment targeting with effective prospecting through analysis, research, administration and actual sales calls. On the other hand, Bjeke (2015) alerted that if organisations back themselves heavily on external services and consultants they may end up losing focus which could lead to following cycles and trends that may be unrelated to the actual work of prospecting. However, Bjorn (2016) said that although facing problems is inevitable, with prospecting, if consultants are to do their job properly after acquiring intelligence on the potential market and appropriate secondary information there is guarantee of greater rewards. Harvard Business journal (2016) also concurred by having the following statements "Companies are well advised to follow some vital steps before working with external consultants in sales leads generation/prospecting.

To understand your prospects, a necessity exists, to invest in business research or market analysis as it may be referred to. As mentioned, gathering databases from local chambers of commerce, newspapers, professional organizations, trade directories, associations and promotion bureaus is simply not enough. There is need to ensure the prospects are "warm" to your approach." Conway and Jones (2016) diverge from all the above researchers after they submitted that the most difficult job is the marketing of insurances. They found out that 55% of their respondents consider prospecting as the initial step towards purchase as it is their top trial. They went on to submit findings that prospecting is more effective than the need for insurance.

Additionally, to overcome challenges in the commercialisation of insurance products, one must bear in mind that there is no conventional way of prospecting but whichever way shows signs of progress, acquisition of new customers should be adopted, Dickson (2008). Furthermore, it opens up relationships. Therefore, prospecting becomes an art of opening new relationships, allowing an individual to possess the most important attribute, which is trust. Trust will lead to increase in sales and ultimately market share. Sonia (2008) concurred by adding that emergent business opportunities are prevalent from prospecting opportunities that later turn out to be sales, which makes prospecting a lifeblood of sales and sales are the determinants of market share. Stephen (2016) contributed to the arguments by adding that the initial step towards improving sales is only attainable through prospecting therefore, organisations need to acknowledge the importance of prospecting for they are bound to enjoy the benefits.

Munju (2016) agreed with Stephen (2016) adding that prospecting is an activity that requires ample time and energy on a daily basis. As mentioned above, there is no conventional way of prospecting and therefore it can take place over the weekend when shop is closed. The views are essential for this research since their submission highlights the importance of undertaking prospecting on a daily basis. Munju (2016) in agreement to this stated that actual time for prospecting does not necessarily exist but solely time to develop products or services that meet the requirements of a certain customer base by changing their voices into actual products or services.

Keriv and Dafna (2009) also suggested that a necessity exists to develop a weekly plan that provides ample time to prospect. New ideas that emerge in the market will always be there thus the company will not be affected by spontaneous emergence of new concepts but it will increase the company's chances of survival by increasing its market share overnight through sustained word of mouth and referrals. Schindehute (2010) concurred to the validity of prospecting to increasing market share. The researcher further defined prospecting as an activity of launching new relationships, a concept that has been mentioned above, however an additional view more of upgrading earlier versions when he submitted that the focus would not be on making new relationships but on the outcome of these new relationships. This submission teaches that in prospecting our efforts should be directed to opening new business relationships in order to identify potential new business opportunities. Schindehute (2010) then left summed up by saying

there are many ways of doing this and all of them are effective sometimes. This submission further clarified the concern of the research on the most appropriate way of prospecting which means a firm has to tailor-make its prospecting to come up with the ideal way of increasing market share in competitive environment.

In a related view Karande (2010) said for one to prospect well, it is of essence to focus time and energy on an activity that best suits the current situation, but this should not be exclusive. Schndehute (2010) advised on the need to focus on what works better when the author posited that organisations need to tailor-make what suit their situation. This therefore means if one is good in cold calling he or she should be assigned to do cold calling and this does not mean that particular firm or sales person should never use emailing, inbound marketing, networking, trade shows, conferencing and direct mail, referrals or social networking. One should therefore integrate all these activities to increase sales volumes simultaneously increasing market share.

Moncrief and Marshall (2005) carried out a study on the evolution of the personal selling process and their results showed how prospecting has evolved to customer retention and deletion, where emphasis was on the fact that retained consumers will aid in gaining prospects for the company through positive word of mouth.

### **2.3.1 Positive Word of Mouth on market share**

Chan and Ngolin (2011) defined positive word of mouth as an informal communication between persons regarding a brand, service or company. They suggest that this form communication takes place where a satisfied customer interacts with a prospect.

This concept diverts from the usual marketing perspective, as it takes a closer look at consumer-to-consumer relationships. It certainly adds positively to company performance, Cengiz and Yayla (2007). Kundu and Rajan (2017) developed multiple models depicting the relationships that exist between positive word of mouth, consumer satisfaction, perceived value and loyalty. Their study found that higher word of mouth chances prevail where consumers are satisfied with the product and/or service.

Taqhizadele et al (2013) in their research, add that satisfaction has a significant influence on an organisation's current and future performance. These researchers state that when a customer is

satisfied with a certain company and its services, they tend to be loyal. Loyal customers will then encourage prospective customers to engage in business with the company, Taqizadele et al (2013).

However, Charlertte et al (1995) highlighted the existence of negative word of mouth and its threat against retention of customers and recruitment of prospects. Their empirical study uncovered the underestimation of negative WOM by managers since their thought lies on customer complaints as indicators of dissatisfaction. These authors further mentioned that complaints lead to negative WOM, which will have adverse results upon company performance. Their findings on the other hand, indicated the effects of positive WOM exceeding negative WOM upon customers.

Christopher et al (1991) proposed a loyalty ladder, which documents the stages in which a prospective customer goes through until they reach the highest level of loyalty, which is a partner. These researchers proposed that positive word of mouth results in the conversion of a prospect to a customer, client, supporter, advocate and finally a partner. WOM has more influence due to its high credibility and relevance, Appl (2013). This author also adds that the power of WOM stems from trust that exists between consumers, which is more than the trust shared between consumers and companies.

Pauwels et al (2009) add by mentioning that word of mouth is a personal selling tool that possesses a strength greater than conventional promotional tools such as newspapers and magazines. The researcher borrows from these authors, who validate the positive influence which positive word of mouth achieves for a company's market share.

#### **2.4 Sales Presentation on sales volume**

This stage is the time to demonstrate to the decision maker that the company can really deliver the goods and ensure a win for both the customer and the salesperson. The goal of the presentation is to show the value of the proposition and push the customer to request the salesperson to submit a proposal Keelan (2011). Where this takes place a sale for the company is imminent. Peterson and Smith (1995) report that sales presentation skills are necessary for sales success.

Smith et al (2012) postulate the funnel approach is the single ordinarily used and verified technique for sales presentation. Although it may not be exactly suitable for your style, the overall principles are universal to sales and applicable to any sales presentation. The method can be divided into three areas: The information gathering stage, the benefits and features stage, and the closing stage.

Sales presentation skills have great value in a selling situation, Abdoval et al (2013). These authors validate the idea that ideal presentation lead a salesperson to better demonstration of the products, its use, applicability to the consumer. More so, salespersons and managers converge on the fact that skills for sales presentations are a necessity for sales to gain success. Marketers and trainers are investing heavily towards the improvement of presentation skills due to the perception that improved skill equates to improved performance in sales. Abdoval et al (2013) further state that the competency of a salesperson in conducting an effective presentation results in a performance of a higher magnitude. Therefore, the researcher captures that the attempts at the improvement of sales presentation skills may yield positive results because it is perceived that increased skills will lead to an increase in the performance of sales.

The business dictionary (2014) defines product knowledge as an interpretation of a service or a good after obtaining information pertaining to its utility, functionality support demands and features. Waters (2014) suggests that difficulties emerge in the attempt to effectively transact with consumers if a salesperson fails to indicate how a particular product will cater for the need of the consumer.

Adequate knowledge of the product additionally increases enthusiasm on top of confidence of the salesperson. More so, product knowledge encourages a salesperson to display and present with accuracy and further thwart any rising objections. This will then lead to sales, profitability, cross, multiple and up sales.

Johlke (2006) discovered the main individuality of a salesperson, which the author identified as sales experience. This researcher stated that it is the main factor contributing to sales presentation skills whilst sales training is the other factor in direct association with prospecting and adaptive presentation. The author further argued that , skills honed by a salesperson at using adaptive selling techniques have on closing of a sale are linked with company performance.

Rapp et al (2008) define adaptive selling as the ability/capacity of a salesperson to engage in a wide range of selling behaviors and activities in adjusting to situational considerations. This element is brought about in the sales presentation process by making adjustments. It includes shaping the content as well as the amount of information disseminated to a customer, Roman & Iacobucci (2009). The researcher understands that this concept stems from business acumen which refers to quick understanding of immediate business situations, discerning of the appropriate from the inappropriate and reacting in a manner that brings about positive results, Lot & Inks (2014).

Furthermore, Hunter & Perreault (2006) support the notion of adaptive selling stating that if sales people have precise information on the customer they will be more capable of practicing adaptive selling. The argument goes on where it is said that customer database systems and information provide opportunities to meticulously research customers and design their sales presentation according to their needs. Markus (2001) posits that individuals seeking knowledge possess dissimilar wants and expectations. This author further argues that it applies to the personal selling context where no single formula or approach can guarantee the success of a sales person. Therefore, the arguments brought forward by these authors indicate an existing relationship between sales presentation and sales volume and the researcher understands that there is need for integration of adaptive selling and sales presentation so as to bring about an increase in sales volume.

Shehryar and Moshavi (2012) postulate that minimum effort has been put towards studying the importance of a client/customer to a selling firm as a variable that can be influential to communication strategies that emanate from sales relationships. These authors state that a salesperson's commitment towards adjusting to a unique sales situation, is positively linked with a company's sales performance.

On the other hand, Roman and Iacobucci (2009) support the notion by highlighting that a single best way to sell is not existent and therefore, an excellent salesperson must be adaptive enough to suit the customer. These authors clearly approve that sales presentations result in sales especially if the salesperson is able to adapt to the customer since most researchers have erred that the sales presentation process is not standardized. Furthermore, there is need for salespersons to possess

the necessary sales presentation skill to be able to adapt to different customers and different sales situations.

A similar study done on personal selling indicates the very adaptive nature of personal selling in accordance with the dynamic industrial market environment. The researcher postulates that the focus of sales is changing as per the environment. Johlke (2006), undertook an examination of the relations between important sales presentation skills and salesperson job performance and found that salesperson experience, and to a lesser degree training, underlie sales presentation skills. Salesperson skills at using adaptive selling techniques and closing are related with increased performance.

Donaldsson (1998) suggests that evolution within the vast marketing divide has led to the alteration of the characteristics of personal selling. A range of ways to communicate with consumers have prevailed and Donaldsson (1998) identifies the main alteration as the use of modern technology. This has given rise to the occurrence of instantaneous interaction with any individual at any given time. The supercomputer on its own has given salespeople the leeway to attain knowledge, acquire important firm information, and to instantaneously conduct specialized sales presentations.

Nowadays, sales activities involve a lot of activities, representing a variety of consumer interaction positions that are inclusive of telephone sales, customer service, and technical advisers as well as traditional telesales. Sheth and Sharma (2008) suggest that the conventional way of selling is continuously evolving and will not cease to dramatically change in the future. The researcher mentions that an alteration in emphasis from goods to solutions and from products to service are meant to reduce the conventional product orientation of salespersons and in its place a rise customer orientation. This alteration has already shifted the character of the salesperson from a spokesperson for products to a consultant.

Moncrief and Marshall (2005) support the case of evolution of the personal selling process by pointing out that with time the selling steps have diverted from being sequential to being applicable where necessary or specific to an organization. More so, these researchers were adamant that the role of sales presentation has evolved to a more marketing oriented perspective. A sales presentation no longer stands as the primary function to compel consumer purchase since

customers can now obtain such information through company web pages, newspapers and other similar media.

Moutot and Bascol (2008) posited that the sales presentation role has evolved due to the emergence of new technology. The current era has seen the occurrence of salesforce automation. Their study identified different aspects in which salesforce automation has influence on company performance. The researcher's attention was mainly caught by their key findings, which indicate a positive relationship between salesforce automation and sales performance. These authors purported that salesforce access to information as well as customer's access to information have a positive influence on sales presentations, adaptive selling, sales forecasts, sales volumes and salespersons productivity.

John and Tijjani (2016) carried out an empirical study on selling styles and the effects on sales performance. The authors recommended that the need exists for firms to inform and educate their potential customers on their products through exhibition. The researcher deems these findings relevant for exhibition of products is a form of sales presentation that has a positive effect on sales volumes and indicated by John and Tijjani (2016).

The researcher realizes that a myriad of authors support the notion that sales presentations have a positive effect on sales volume. Despite sales presentations not having a definitive way of being executed, as mentioned by Moutut and Bascol (2008), the results are similar across each different sales encounter. More so, the salesperson involved in the presentation process should take up the adaptive role so as to be flexible and also to ensure success since customers are unpredictable and the only way to counter that unpredictability is to become adaptive within that selling situation.

## **2.5 Handling Objections on Customer Loyalty**

Stank et al (1999) define customer loyalty as attitudes customers display towards the service of the firm, further describing it as repetitive behavior that stems from a positive perspective about the product or service. In support, Jacoby and Kyner (1973) stated that consumer loyalty derives itself from the long-term experience of the customers. This clarifies that customer loyalty reduces costs whilst increasing profitability.

Customers at most always have objections during the presentation or when requested to place an order. The problem can be either rational or emotional and objections are often unspoken. In consumer objections, the sales person should use a positive approach, seek out hidden objections, ask the buyer to clarify any objections, take objections as openings for the provision of additional information, and convert the objections into reasons for buying. Every sales representative needs training in skills of handling objections Kotler and Armstrong (2006).

Bas and Taskin (2006) assert that along with other related data from other sources, objections indicate various important activities that needed to be done or corrected. The study they conducted identified that with the removal of these problem issues it is possible to reduce the marketing costs and increase firm gains such as market share and sales volume. Much benefit may be attained for more effective service to the consumers in terms of price, product, distribution and support, for consumer preservation, creation of loyal consumers, consumer satisfaction and other such similar benefits.

The ability to discern how to handle objections is essential for success as a sales person. When a salesperson demonstrates a product/service, customers may respond in negative sense, give excuses or otherwise, move away from sale point and this is referred to as objection. The counter response made by the salesperson is called handling of objections. Salespersons need to be adequately skillful to overcome such objections raised by the customer to escape or suspend the sales persuasion. Active handling of customer's objections fundamentally eradicates the prevailing problems to sales accomplishment. The consequence of these well managed objections reflects in the improved sales and thus, increased level of sales performance of salespersons. With lively and appropriate objection handling, a salesperson can convert anticipated sale in to definite sale.

Furthermore, Bas & Taskin (2006) uncovered that much benefit may be attained for more effective service to the consumers in terms of price, product, distribution and support, for consumer preservation, creation of loyal consumers, consumer satisfaction and other such similar benefits. The researcher understands that these mentioned benefits from handling objections impact on a customer's loyalty.

Eze and Nwaizugbo (2012) carried out a study in Nigeria on handling customer objections as an entrepreneurial function with their main focus hinging on the determination of the relationship

existing between consumer's objections and customer loyalty. These researchers also found a positive correlation between customer objections and the entrepreneurial function, emphasizing that the way these objections are handled will affect a high level of consumer satisfaction and also affect the long-term customer loyalty.

Adrika, Ebue and Nnolim (1996) highlighted price as an important element of the marketing mix. These researchers further posit that the customer is an underdog on the basis that the very consumer lacks enough information needed to make a decision on the appropriateness of the price for the product they consume. Eze and Nwaizugbo (2012) further add on this idea, stating that price objections are generally the most prevalent in a selling situation and the failure to handle these objections results in the loss of sales.

However, Fill (2002) argues that objections must not be regarded on the negative side or as having a negative effect stating that although they likely may cause problems, they are underlined by the fact that they bring about issues important to the buyer.

Singh et al (2017) add that customer queries are deliberate attempts to control the selling situation raising objections that address their decision uncertainty. They go on to say that at this point, the customer will pay close attention to whether the salesperson's response is relevant, meaningful and not biased towards the eagerness to close the sale. The efforts by the salesperson to resolve these queries are integral to retaining and building customer interest. Furthermore, the researcher understands that in this selling situation communication reduces customer's perceived risks and then relationships are formed between the salesman and the customer involved.

Handling objections involves more than just transmitting the appropriate information to the potential customer, Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri (2000). Marshall et al (2003) add that handling of objections requires listening skills that are key to overcome the objections. These

Campbell, Davis and Skinner (2015) carried out a research on rapport management during the exploration phase of the salesperson customer relationship where in their article Jap (2001:2) states that "the establishment of interpersonal trust has important benefits including customer satisfaction," where the researcher understands that this impacts as well on customer loyalty.

Blocker et al (2012) state that the prime objective of firms with the market as their focal point is to create satisfied and loyal customers. Their research went on to prove that highly satisfied

customers are linked to lowered costs, increased revenue, profitability and share holder value. These elements tend to positively affect the firm's performance.

However, on the other hand, Chandrashekar et al (2007) argue that there is existence of evidence where customers who report satisfaction still leave for competitors. Despite satisfaction with service, products and the existence of a relationship, customers may tend not to display loyalty. Salespeople are responsible for building trust, creating open sharing of information cater for customer need and foster value, Fing et al (2008). Trust then leads to increased satisfaction and loyalty, Blocker et al (2012).

Furthermore, Singh et al (2017) add that the handling of objections grows in importance as it assists in reducing decision uncertainty. It results in dyadic partnerships in which the researcher firmly understands leads to customer loyalty. These researchers further conceptualized elements of query handling which were identified as resolving, relating and emoting.

Zaidin (2009) carried out a study on the personal selling process and its implications on relationships. This researcher's findings showed a percentage of 91.8, which was loyalty resulting from effective personal selling. The researcher understands that handling of objections exerts a positive effect on customer loyalty and results in customer studies as supported by the study of Zaidin (2009). Furthermore, handling of objections takes the partnering role as indicated by Weitz and Bradford (2009). This means that relations are created through listening and paying attention to customer queries.

The query-handling context is inclusive of communication of information or evidence, exploration of different options and explanation of the solution. More so, the positive influence of resolving behaviors increases with the sales interaction. Loyalty takes place where the salesperson is able to offer better value to the customer. In addition, Seyyedini (2013) suggests that loyalty results in positive word of mouth, formation of obstacles against competitors, empowering the company against competitors, increasing sales and income and decreasing sensitivity to the marketing efforts of rivals. Therefore, the researcher understands that by perpetuating loyalty through handling consumer objections the company will improve on its performance and gain a competitive advantage.

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter reviewed literature relevant to this study. The chapter began at a general level by reviewing literature on personal selling. The chapter became more inclined to the study when it discussed personal selling. The next chapter will discuss the methodology used to carry out the study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides insight on how this research was carried out. The chapter is inclusive of research methods, data collection tools, sampling methods, sample size, target population, validity and reliability and the data analysis plan. The researcher applied different research methods influenced by the differing aspects of the research.

#### 3.1 Research design

Research design is a framework for conducting the study and it deals with the logical problem at hand. Polit et al (2001) define a research design as the researcher's overall for answering the research question or testing the research hypothesis. Therefore, the researcher will use questionnaires, interviews as well as observations.

##### 3.1.1 Exploratory Research Design

Is meant attain background information on the nature of the research problem. It is usually applied when research is looking into a new area or there is little known about that study area, Burns and Bush (2010). This research design gathers information in an informal and unstructured manner. It is not limited to qualitative or quantitative approaches and therefore the researcher applied this design because it helped to gain understanding of the topic. A further understanding of the topic at hand was achieved through the flexibility of the design and its ability to provide dissimilar views of the problem under study.

##### 3.1.2 Descriptive research design

Dawson (2009) asserted that descriptive design gathers data that describes events or situations as it enables the use of questionnaires and in-depth interviews to come up with qualitative and quantitative data from the respondents which allows the use of tables, graphs and pie charts for

presentation. This research design addresses questions like who, what, where, when and how with regards to the topic under study.

### **3.2 Target population**

Vonk (2017) defines target population as the entire group of people, possessing the information sought by the researcher. Selection of the population will be narrowed down to 55 people consisting of customers, employees and management.

### **3.3 Sampling methods and techniques**

Chambers and Skinner (2003) defined sampling as the process of selecting units from a population of interest so that by studying the sample, we may fairly generalize the results back to the population from which they were chosen. There are two types of sampling techniques which are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling involves the collection or gathering data from a known sample frame. This method has an advantage of being cheap as the researcher gathered data from respondents who were close to the researcher in terms of locality. Therefore, non-probability sampling was used on interviews and when distributing questionnaires. Probability sampling is one in which every unit in the population has a chance of being selected in the sample.

#### **3.3.1 Sampling frame**

The sampling frame is a comprehensive list of all the units or elements in the target population (Collins et al 2013). The elements of the sample for this study was identified by a comprehensive spread sheet compiled by C.T Bolts, comprising of all industrial customers by location in Bulawayo. The researcher perceived this sample to be representative of the whole population as the elements are located within Bulawayo, hence they are exposed to personal selling employed by the company.

#### **3.3.2 Non-Probability sampling technique**

Cooper et al (2005), postulates that non-probability sampling involves a situation where the probability of any particular subject of the population is unknown. It is a technique where some

elements of population have no chance of selection. Under this technique, the researcher used judgemental sampling.

### **3.3.3 Judgemental sampling**

Malhotra (1996), defined judgemental sampling as a non-probability based sampling technique where the selection of the units to be included in the sample is founded on their information and expert judgement. Customers out of Bulawayo will be included in the study based on the researcher's judgement that they are major consumers of fasteners.

### **3.3.4 Sample size**

The researcher approximated the sample size. Determination was based on consultation with the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. The formula presents the largest possible sample size for a population. These authors developed a sample size table with all possible sizes, deleting the need to calculate hence the researcher used convenience and judgemental sampling to select 48 respondents who are affected by personal selling and can provide useful data for the study.

TABLE 1  
*Table for Determining Sample Size from a Given Population*

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380

Note.—*N* is population size.  
*S* is sample size.

### 3.4 Data sources

The researcher made use of both primary and secondary data sources in order to acquire information relevant to the objectives.

### **3.4.1 Secondary data**

Secondary data was essential for carrying out the study. Saunders (1990) argues that secondary data is collected by individuals other than the researcher for other research work. The literature review of the study was done using secondary sources of data. The literature review was imperative in that it placed the research objectives in context of what is known about the study and the avenues for further investigation (Vierra and Pollock, 1988). It can also be said that secondary data had already provided answers to the research questions; however, to test these propositions from secondary data to the company situation, primary data had to be used.

Secondary data was also used as the basis for the collection of primary data. Cole (1996) defines secondary data as information available from published sources externally and from internal sources like company records. The sample studied was based on information collected by C.T Bolts (market leader in industrial fasteners) on all its Bulawayo customers.

### **3.4.2 Primary data**

This data that was collected by the researcher for the first time through field research. Primary data was specific to the field of study. The source saves as first-hand information by involving use of questionnaires and interviews both quantitative and qualitative data.

## **3.5 Research instruments**

The researcher used questionnaires and face to face interviews for data collection.

### **3.5.1 Questionnaire**

Kotler and Keller (2012), view a questionnaire as a set of questions presented to respondents. Because of its flexibility, it is by far the most common instrument used to collect primary data.

The questionnaire was an imperative tool in collecting data for this study. Kotler and Keller (2012) proceed to say that questionnaires are especially useful in exploratory research, where the researcher is looking for insight into how people think rather than measuring how many people think a certain way. This enabled the researcher to learn how marketers value personal selling in the industrial market.

The researcher took great care in the wording and ordering of questions to ensure that they are simple, direct and unbiased.

The questionnaires were administered physically to respondents using the random sampling technique and the judgemental sampling technique. Respondents responded to the questionnaires on their own time, thus the self-administered questionnaire awarded the respondents the convenience of responding to it on their own time and the time to think about their true responses before answering.

The questionnaire was critical in ensuring that the researcher covered a large number of respondents in a short interval of time.

### **3.5.2 Face-to-face interview**

This is a versatile method, which the researcher opted to use. It allows the interviewer to pose many questions whilst noting down extra remarks from the respondent, such as non-verbal cues and body language (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Personal interviews were critical for ensuring quick responses as compared to questionnaires, thus reducing the time constraints in carrying out the study. Furthermore, interviews fostered a high level of participation from the interviewees. The body language of respondents enabled the researcher, to provide clarification where necessary and allowed the researcher to probe the respondents for clearer explanations concerning the study.

Kotler and Keller (2012), note that face-to-face interviews are definitely expensive method, prone to some form of bias from the interviewer's perspective, and it demands additional clerical preparation and control. To avoid the costs of this exercise the researcher interviewed a minor sum of respondents. However, those interviewed were experienced individuals with vast knowledge on the study variables.

To deal with the issue of interviewee bias and distorted information, the researcher assured respondents a copy of the study's findings. Hence, averting the risk that respondents may feel uneasy thereby withholding information.

### **3.6 Data collection procedure and administration**

Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to customers and employees. The researcher made an appointment to meet employees. Questionnaires were distributed and collected within the same day to customers and a letter of introduction was provided. For the interviews the researcher made time to arrange and meet management and their answers were captured for examination.

### **3.7 Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity are important aspects of questionnaire design. According to Suskie (1996), a perfectly reliable questionnaire elicits consistent responses. Although difficult to develop, it is reasonable to design a questionnaire that approaches a consistent level of response. Leary (1995) offers seven guidelines for designing a useful questionnaire that were taken into consideration by the researcher to ensure reliability:

1. Utilise exact terms when phrasing the questions.
2. Write the questions in the simplest way possible and avoiding using difficult words, needless jargon, and awkward phrases.
3. Evade constructing unjustified expectations about the respondents.
4. Restrictive information should lead the main impression of the question.
5. Avoid use of double-barrelled questions. (questions that ask more than one question but provide the respondent with the opportunity for only one response)
6. Select a suitable response setup.
7. Pre-test the questionnaire.

A high reliability of response is achievable through provision of similar questions to all respondents. Validity is integrally problematic to come up with a singular statistical measure. Suskie (1996) reported that reliability and validity increase with careful scrutiny by the researcher:

Having individuals with various backgrounds and perspectives, analysis of the survey has to be performed before it is directed. This involves finding out if:

1. each item is clearly presented and easy to understand
2. interpretation of each is exactly as intended

3. the items have an intuitive relationship to the study's topic and goals, and
4. your intent behind each item is clear to colleagues knowledgeable about the subject"

Taking these principles into consideration, the researcher, sought guidance from his project supervisor who approved the questionnaire to be fit to collect the data.

### **3.8 Data analysis and presentation tools**

Marshall and Rossman (1999) refer to the analysis of qualitative data as concentration on information existing in the form of words. These authors state that analysis concerned with exists in a triple flow inclusive of the selection process, simplification, concentrating, conceptualisation and transformation of data. The display of data includes use of reduced data and presenting it in a standardized manner to allow room for easily drawing conclusions. Finally, a decision has to be made on the meaning, scrutiny of irregularities, designs, explanations, possible designs, spontaneous flows and points. More so, they suggested the application of with-in case exploration and cross-case exploration for qualitative data when conducting research studies. In this research, in referral to the problem statement and research objectives, the presentation of data is done solely in Chapter 4.

Analysis of data will consist of critically scrutinising the surveys for accuracy and extensiveness, coding and inputting data into a database in SPSS (Statistical Packaging for the Social Sciences). The SPSS system is made up of multiple runs of electronic commands, which allow the operator to analyse data from questionnaires, surveys and other sources. It manipulates data in a myriad of ways, producing vast of statistical examination and information, combined with documentation using tables for comparison.

### **3.9 Chapter summary**

The purpose of this chapter was to deliver a background on how the study was conducted. It describes the research methodology of this study, explains the sample selection, describes the procedure used in designing the instrument and collecting the data, and provides an explanation of the statistical procedures used to analyse the data.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

#### 4.0 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the methodology used to carry out the study. This chapter dissects research findings in line with answering research objectives. The chapter unveils the results of the study. It focuses on the presentation, discussion and analysis of research findings from both primary and secondary sources. SPSS was used to analyse the relevant statistics and research findings were presented in tables and a variety of graphs.

#### 4.1 Response rate

**Table 4.1 Response rates for questionnaires**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Questionnaires distributed</b>	<b>Questionnaires returned</b>	<b>Percentage response</b>
Customers	37	25	68 %
Sales employees	10	10	100 %

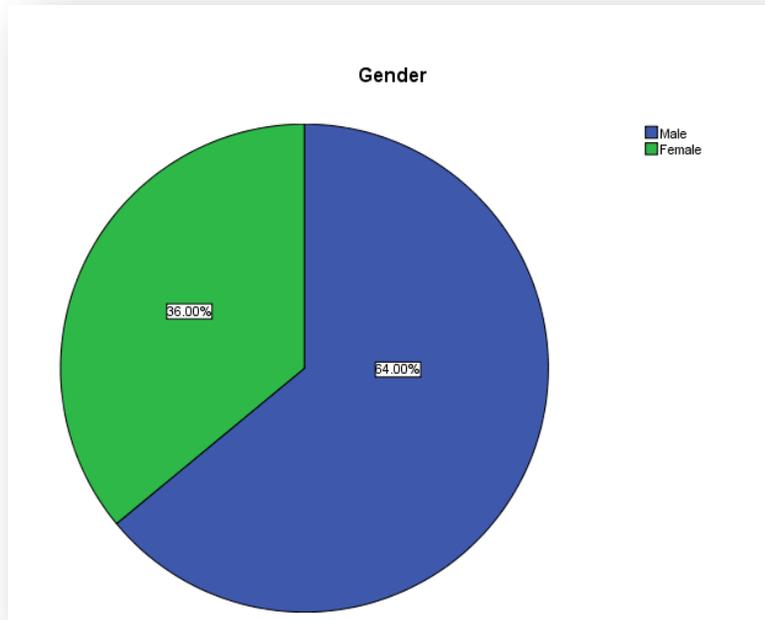
Source: Primary Data

A target population of 100 respondents was used for this study and a sample size of 47 was drawn. 37 questionnaires for customers and 10 for the sales employees were distributed. There were 25 questionnaires received from customers achieving a response rate of 68% and 100% rate for the employees. Management interviews were administered to two targeted managers and the researcher recorded all the information obtained during these face-to-face interviews.

#### 4.2 Demographics

The results collected in this section represent the gender and age of the respondents.

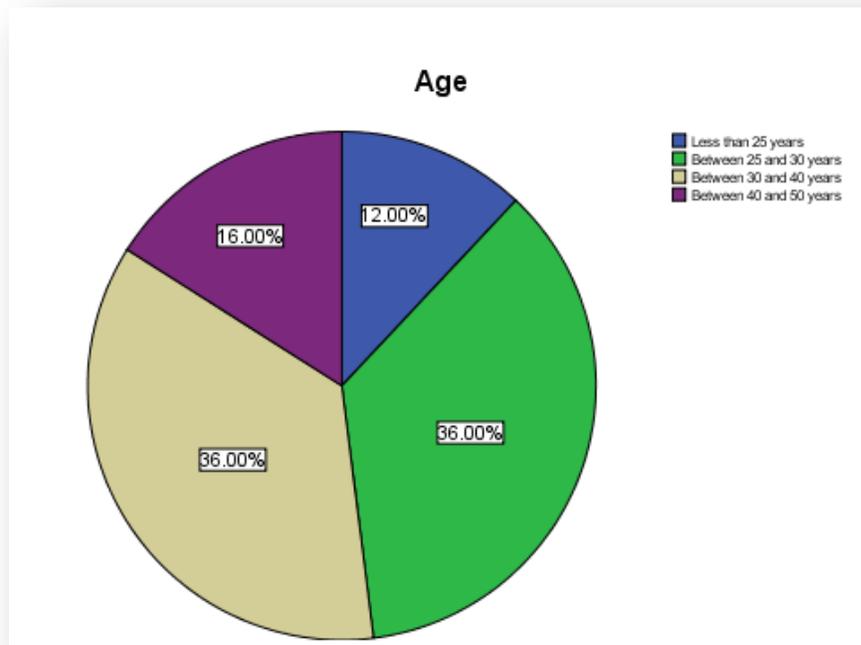
## 4.2.1 Gender



**Fig 4.1 Gender**

The above pie chart depicts the percentage of respondents' gender with 36% of the respondents female and 64% male.

## 4.2.2 Age

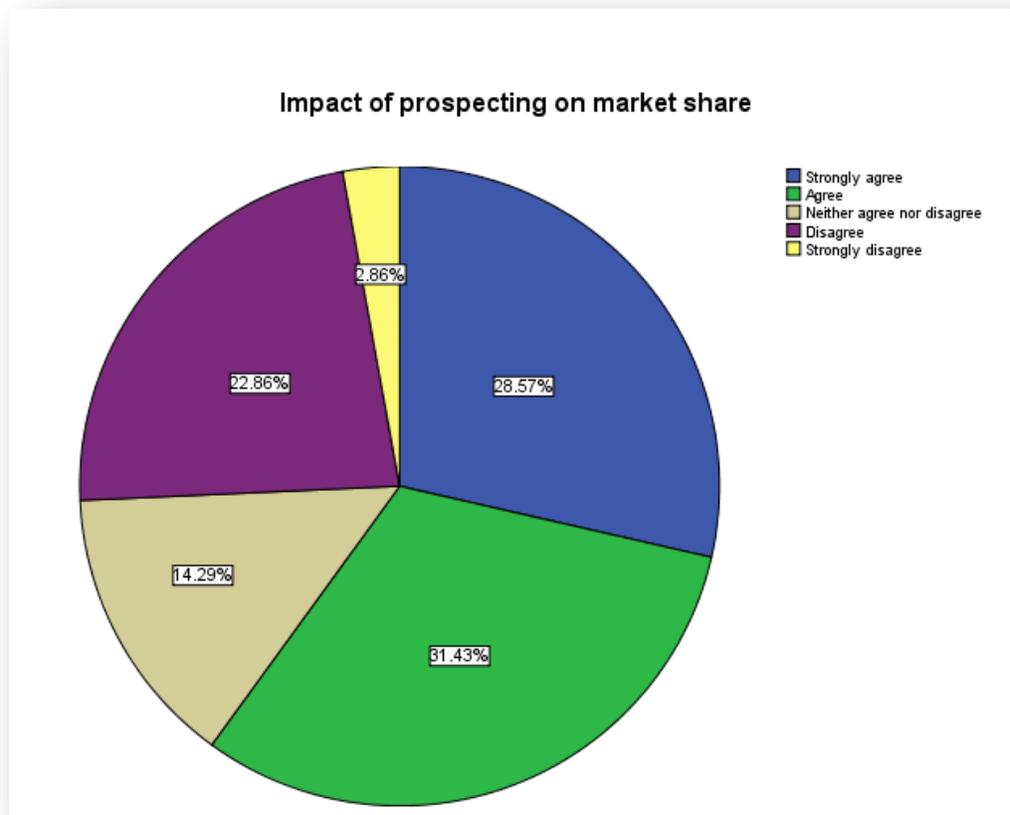


**Fig 4.2 Age**

The pie chart above indicates the age of respondents. 36% of the respondents were aged between 25 years and 40 years of age. 16% were less than 25 years old and the remaining 12% were between 40 and years old. This means that the majority of the respondents which is 36% have an understanding and experience operating in the industry and area under study

### 4.3 Impact of Prospecting on market share

The research was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of personal selling on company performance. The first objective was meant to explore the impact prospecting has on the market share of the company. The results were derived and moderated, from responses of customers and employees on the questionnaires. Aim was to find out whether prospective customers end up as customers or not and the results are depicted below



**Fig 4.3 Prospecting on market share**

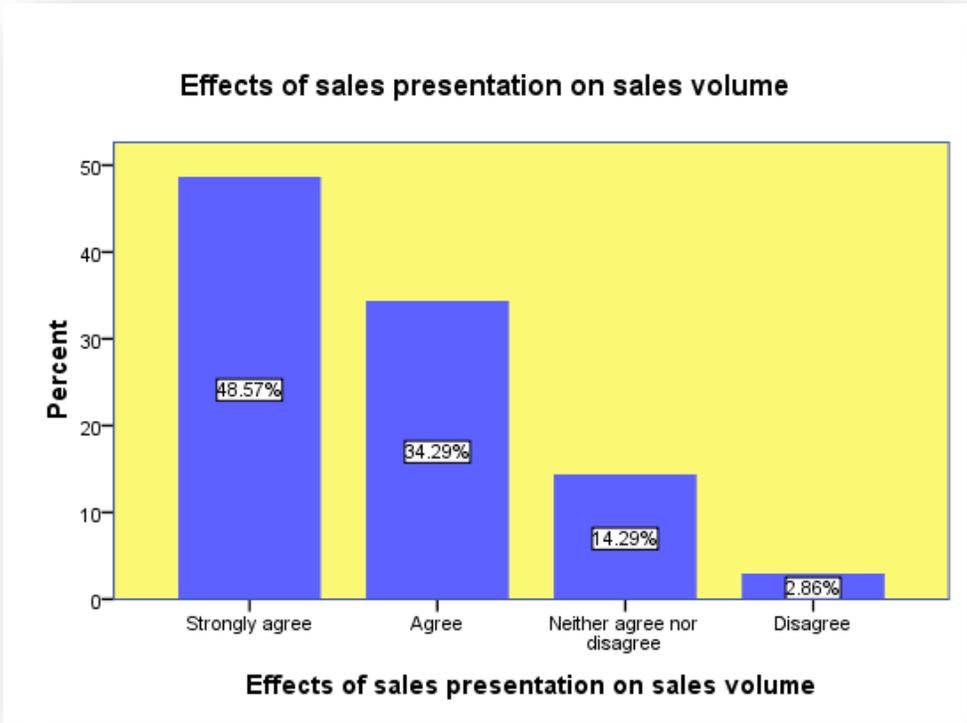
28.57% of the respondents fall under strongly agree. This means that this percentage of the firm's current customers are strongly inclined towards the perception that prospecting increases market.

The notion that prospects turn out to be future customers for the firm, is further supported by a higher 31.43% who also agree to prospects becoming customers whether they are contacted on the phone, at trade shows or through market visits. These results align to the ideology of Kim (2011) who is adamant that prospecting allows the firm to gain customers who form its sales and

market share. On the other hand a combined 25.72% of the respondents disagree. These responses may reflect a portion of customers who began purchasing at the firm without the influence of a salesperson.

#### 4.4 Effects of Presentation on sales volume

The research sought to find out the effects of presentation on sales volume and the results are



**Fig 4.4 Effects of Sales Presentation on Sales Volume**

The graph represents responses the effects of sales presentations on sales volume and 48.57% of the respondents are in strong agreement that sales volume will be positively affected as a good sales presentation tends to influence a customer to purchase the product. Furthermore, 34.29% of the respondents agree to sales presentations adding on to sales volumes as provision of alternative products allows the sales person to adapt their presentation and the customer to have multiple options which will turn out as a sale.

These findings concur with Waters (2014) notion that selling becomes difficult if the salesperson fails to uncover how the product can assist the customer's needs. The researcher therefore found and understood that sales presentations result in increased sales volumes if executed well.

More so, the success of a sales presentation does not lie on providing what you have but what the customer needs and also that which can best serve the customer's needs.

However, a collective of 17.15% of respondents were in disagreement that sales presentations prompt purchase. The researcher realised that these respondents disagree for they purchase out of will and need of the products and also they would not be interested in alternative items offered.

#### 4.5 Effects of handling objections on customer loyalty

This research was also meant to find out the effects of handling objections on customer loyalty.

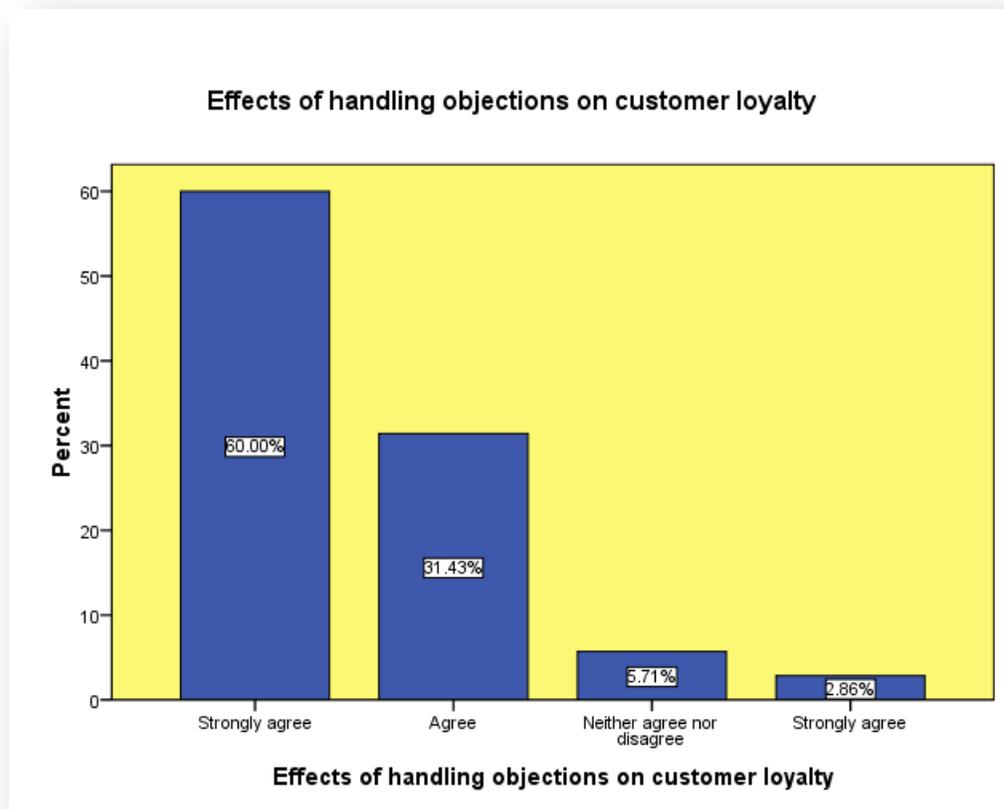


Fig 4.5 Handling objections on customer loyalty

In this section a total of 91.43% respondents agree to handling objections having a positive effect to customer loyalty. These results are supported by Eze and Nwaizugbo (2012) who also found that the handling of customer objections affects a high level of consumer satisfaction as well as their long-term satisfaction.

Management adds in support, mainly stating that handling of consumer objections results in customer loyalty due to a high occurrence of communication, help to the customer and service satisfaction that will have them coming back frequently to do business with you.

A low 8.57% of the respondents disagree with this notion. The researcher believes these consumers are indifferent of the issue that salespersons provide fitting solutions to their objections.

#### **4.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented and analysed the data that the researcher gathered in this study through questionnaires and interviews. The data gathered enabled the researcher to measure the effectiveness of personal selling on the company performance. The researcher found that prospecting and sales presentation improve both market share and sales volume. Furthermore, the handling of objection is effective in creating rapport with the target audience, hence enabling customer retention and customer loyalty. The next chapter will provide summaries, conclusions and recommendations based on the research findings.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Summary

The research conducted was to investigate the impact of personal selling on company performance of Zimplow Holdings Ltd t/a C.T. Bolts. The company was facing a diminishing trend in its sales and hence management took a decision to refocus its efforts on personal selling so as to improve the firm's performance. Therefore, the study involved investigating the impact of prospecting on market share, effects of sales presentations on sales volume and the effects of handling objections on customer loyalty.

Researchers on the global, continental and regional scale conducted studies on personal selling and its impact on different variables that it affects. Of the many, Mbugua (2014) conducted a research in Kenya titled, "personal selling strategies and performance of pharmaceutical firms in Nairobi, Kenya. The objectives included determining the influence of personal selling as a strategy on the performance of pharmaceutical firms. The researcher further looked into personal selling being used by these pharmaceuticals and went on to recommend further study on the nature of personal selling itself in respect to individual firms for detailed analysis of its benefits to stakeholders. This research borrowed from this recommendation and none which is similar was carried out in Zimbabwe.

The study was conducted in Bulawayo on C.T. Bolts customers, employees and management. After adopting a sample size of 37 respondents, the researcher administered questionnaires and face to face interviews to the respective parties. Findings in the study were gathered and supported by Primary and Secondary data which was amassed during the course of the research. Prospecting positively effects the market share of the company as primary data proved that prospects turn out to be customers be it the following day, in a weeks' time, months or even years. This is further supported by researchers, Kalashnikova (2011) positing that prospecting brings about performance related to better forecasting, improved responses to market trends and increased sales productivity which in turn affects market share positively.

The research also uncovered that sales presentations have a positive influence on sales volume of the company, where sales persons adapt their presentation in order to convince customers to make a purchase. Lastly, handling objections results in customer loyalty because it involves communication and assistance to the customer which provides a great sense of service quality. Further more as stated by Singh et al (2017) handling objections harnesses customers interests, reduces perceived risks and results in formation of relationships.

The results of this study were presented using pie charts and bar graphs after the analysis of the data was done through SPSS and interpreted using mean and percentages.

## **5.1 Conclusions**

Results obtained in this research allowed the researcher to make the following conclusions

### **5.1.1 Impact of Prospecting on market share**

Prospecting increases the market share of C.T. Bolts as shown in the results where collectively 60% of the respondents were in agreement that prospecting has a positive effect on market share of the company.

### **5.1.2 Effects of Sales presentations on sales volume**

Findings show that sales presentations also have a positive effect the sales volumes of the company where 82.86% of the results show affirmative responses.

### **5.1.3 Effects of Handling objections on customer loyalty**

The research comes to a conclusion that handling of customer objections results in customer loyalty, 91.43% of respondents in agreement that customers are more loyal when their queries are handled and they are given necessary assistance.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

With referral to the study conducted and results found, the researcher poses recommendations that will assist the company to address the issue of decline in sales and in turn improve company performance. Therefore, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The researcher suggests that the company's management continue prospecting in order to increase the market share as the results of the research have shown that the current customers were once prospective customers who were converted through calls, visits and trade shows such as MineEntra. Keelan (2015) in support mentions that prospecting involves networking, seminars, marketing, tradeshow, and cold calls which will develop a firm's market share.
2. C.T. Bolts may ensure that salespersons are trained on how to conduct their sales presentations so as to ensure a sale. This means that salespersons should be aware of how to adapt their presentation, be flexible when presenting and provide customers with multiple products to allow selection and compel the customer to make a purchase. Johlke (2006) shares the same sentiments, highlighting that preparation is connected to adaptive selling and that skills at applying adaptive selling are integral to increase in sales.
3. There is need for salespersons to focus their efforts on handling objections by customers as results show that this practice leads to customer loyalty. The main customer objection is always price oriented, however, salespersons need to be aware of the fact that it does not threaten close of a sale as stated by Singh et al (2017) that efforts of handling objections retain and build customer interest. This results in rapport which will further develop loyalty.
4. More so, the researcher recommends that salespersons ensure they address objections by customers in a speedy manner which will enhance the perceived quality of service and further result in the loyalty of consumers. Campbell, Davis and Skinner (2015) add that communication involved during handling of objections develops interpersonal trust which develops rapport and creates unique value to the customer's experience hence they display loyalty.

### **5.3 Area for further research**

Within the duration of conducting this research, the researcher discovered an area which exceeds the parameters of this research and that could be looked into which is the impact of post sales service on customer retention.

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## APPENDIX A: Questionnaire for C.T. Bolts customers

### Questionnaire for C.T. Bolts customers

My name is Darren Anesu Chiwereva, a student at Midlands State University studying BComm Marketing Management Honors degree. I am carrying out an academic research on: **INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL SELLING: A CASE OF C.T. BOLTS.** I kindly ask for your participation in completing the following questions. The information gathered is for academic purposes and will be kept confidential.

### Instructions

Kindly attempt all marked questions.

### SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. Gender (*please tick where appropriate*)

Male  Female

2. Age (*please tick where appropriate*)

Less than 25 years

Between 25 and 30 years

Between 30 and 40 years

Between 40 and 50 years

Above 50 years

**SECTION B: IMPACT OF PROSPECTING ON MARKET SHARE**

1. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on prospecting on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: 1= *Strongly agree*; 2= *Agree*; 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*; 4= *Disagree*; 5= *Strongly disagree*.

		1	2	3	4	5
<b>PMS1</b>	I was once a prospect for C.T. Bolts.					
<b>PMS2</b>	I began purchasing after being approached by the salesperson.					
<b>PMS3</b>	A sales call influenced my purchase.					
<b>PMS4</b>	A trade show influenced my purchase.					
<b>PMS5</b>	Salespersons played a major role in attracting your attention.					

**SECTION C: EFFECTS OF SALES PRESENTATION ON SALES VOLUME**

2. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on sales presentation on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: 1= *Strongly agree*; 2= *Agree*; 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*; 4= *Disagree*; 5= *Strongly disagree*.

		1	2	3	4	5
<b>SPSV1</b>	Salespersons present fasteners that suit your needs.					
<b>SPSV2</b>	Salespersons present alternative fasteners that motivate you to make a purchase.					
<b>SPSV3</b>	Salespersons present more than a single item allowing you room for selection.					
<b>SPSV4</b>	Salespersons are patient with you when presenting					

	products (fasteners)					
<b>SPSV5</b>	Salespersons are flexible enough when presenting the commodity					
<b>SPSV6</b>	A salesperson's way of presentation influences your purchase decision.					

**SECTION D: EFFECTS OF HANDLING OBJECTIONS ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

3. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on handling objections on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.*

		1	2	3	4	5
<b>HOCL1</b>	Salespersons listen carefully to your queries.					
<b>HOCL2</b>	Salespersons provide fitting solutions/alternatives upon price queries.					
<b>HOCL3</b>	Salespersons communicate in a way that encourages you to deal with them repeatedly					
<b>HOCL4</b>	Salespersons fulfil promises on product objections					

4. Any other information you may wish to provide.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire.**

**APPENDIX B: Questionnaire for C.T. Bolts customers**

**My name is Darren Anesu Chiwereva, a student at Midlands State University studying BComm Marketing Management Honors degree. I am carrying out an academic research on: INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF PERSONAL SELLING: A CASE OF C.T. BOLTS. I kindly ask for your participation in completing the following questions. The information gathered is for academic purposes and will be kept confidential.**

**Instructions**

**Kindly attempt all marked questions.**

**SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**3. Gender (*please tick where appropriate*)**

Male  Female

**4. Age (*please tick where appropriate*)**

Less than 25 years

Between 25 and 30 years

Between 30 and 40 years

Between 40 and 50 years

Above 50 years

**SECTION B: IMPACT OF PROSPECTING ON MARKET SHARE**

5. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on prospecting on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.*

		1	2	3	4	5
PMS1	Prospects always end up as customers.					
PMS2	Prospecting has increased the number of customers purchasing at C.T Bolts.					
PMS3	Telephone prospects turn out to purchase.					
PMS4	Trade show prospects turn out to purchase.					
PMS5	You play a major role in attracting all customers.					

**SECTION C: EFFECTS OF SALES PRESENTATION ON SALES VOLUME**

6. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on sales presentation on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: *1= Strongly agree; 2= Agree; 3= Neither agree nor disagree; 4= Disagree; 5= Strongly disagree.*

		1	2	3	4	5
SPSV1	When presenting to customers, they always make a purchase.					
SPSV2	You suggest the best alternatives during presentation.					
SPSV3	You provide multiple fasteners and allow the customer to select.					

**SECTION D: EFFECTS OF HANDLING OBJECTIONS ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY**

7. Indicate your response against each of the following questions on handling objections on a scale of 1-5 as highlighted below: 1= *Strongly agree*; 2= *Agree*; 3= *Neither agree nor disagree*; 4= *Disagree*; 5= *Strongly disagree*.

		1	2	3	4	5
HOCL1	Customers purchase despite price objections.					
HOCL2	Customers who object purchase repeatedly.					
HOCL3	You encourage customers to return if they have any doubts for clarification or change					

## **APPENDIX C: MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

### **MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### **Introduction**

The interviewer introduces himself and the purpose of the interview.

#### **Management Background**

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself?
- For how long have you been at C.T. Bolts?
- What managerial position do you hold and other positions you held before if any?
- What are the roles and responsibilities for your job?

#### **Questions**

1. Does prospecting affect the market share of the company?
2. How does prospecting influence market share?
3. Do sales presentations always result in a sale?
4. Are sales presentations an effective way of influencing customer purchase decisions?
5. Is handling customer objections the best way to achieve customer loyalty?
6. Do customer objections present a threat on repeat purchases?
7. How much has the personal selling strategy affected the company's performance?
8. Do you think personal selling is an expensive promotional method?
9. Do you think personal selling is profitable?