

*Full Length Research Paper*

# Criteria for the selection of architects by first- time clients

Adedapo, Adewunmi Oluwatayo

Department of Architecture, Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State Nigeria (Postal Code:110001)

Received 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013; Accepted 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2014; Published 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**The purpose of the research is to answer two questions: Which factors do individual clients consider when selecting an architect for the first time? How does the importance attached to these factors vary with the procurement method? These questions are answered in a questionnaire survey of recent clients of architects who commissioned architects for residential projects in Lagos, Nigeria. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of certain criteria in their selection of architects. A principal component analysis of the variables investigated reveal that the factors that define the selection criteria used by these clients are responsiveness, perceived professional competence, personality and prominence of the architect. Other factors are acquaintance with the architect and the budget of the client. The most important factor for each procurement method was identified. Only the factors within the control of the architect are considered in this study. The study identified areas that are most important to clients, which architects could improve on to enhance their chances of reaping from the new housing market. The findings of this study suggested areas that architects could improve on to improve their chances of selection by clients in search of residential architectural services.**

**Key words:** Architectural Service, Individual Client, Nigeria, Residential Client, Service Provider Selection.

## Introduction

Customers and clients constantly make decisions as to which product or service to purchase respectively. The difference between a client and a customer, according to Bailey (2000) is that while a client is one to whom professional services are rendered; a customer is one who buys goods and services. With architects, the client is the owner of the project who requires the services of an architect. Like every other professional service, intangibility, heterogeneity and simultaneity of production and consumption often characterize architectural services (Kugyte and Sliburyte, 2005). This suggests that the client may not be able to assess the attributes of the

service before purchase as is possible with products. In addition, the prospective client may not be able to compare alternatives as alternatives are not easily identified, coupled with the fact that the criteria for evaluation are not easily determined. This is because clients of architects may be non-professionals, unfamiliar with construction works. The decision is even more complex when one considers that fact that clients may also depend on the architect to define the problem as well as advice. The choice of an architect is however of utmost importance because it often affects the outcome of a building project.

E-mail: [dapo.oluwatayo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:dapo.oluwatayo@covenantuniversity.edu.ng) Tel: +2348032487108

Author agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License

Architects provide services for both the public and the private sector. The public sector clients are usually more organized, using a given set of criteria, often documented, in selecting architects to provide services for them. This is because there are often written guidelines used in the selection of service providers. In addition, the public sector often invites persons who are knowledgeable in the service to be procured to participate in the selection process. In fact, scholars have suggested that the selection of service provider in the public sector is often based on a pre-qualification process, which is mostly based on the professional competence of the provider (Sporrong, 2011). Within the private sector, private organizations may also be more organized than their individual counterpart. The implication of this is that architects may be able to position themselves to attract commissions from the public and private organization sector because their requirements are known. There is however need to acquire knowledge on the criteria considered by individual clients when selecting their architects so as to enable the architect to rightly position to attract commissions from these clients.

When an individual client approaches an architect for the first time, it may be that such a client is embarking on a building project for the first time or the client had reasons to change architect. Whichever the case, the client is approaching a person whose capability cannot be judged from previous contact and experience. The case of individual clients who seek architects for residential projects presents an opportunity for this study. The reason for this is that housing is an essential need of man. As such, the growing housing supply deficit (UN-HABITAT, 2006) coupled with the ever-rising cost of rent, has led to the increasing craving for house ownership. Ownership of personal houses may however not be the only reason why clients may approach an architect for residential project services. Investments in rental properties, especially much sought after apartment buildings, also necessitate commissioning of architects. This, coupled with other anecdotal evidence suggests that this category of clients will constitute most of the clients that will approach the architect for the first time.

While it is a fact that these clients approach the architect, little is known about the factors considered in selecting such. An article by American Institute of Architects (2008) suggested that clients tend to select architects that they like and trust. This is coupled with the fact that scholars have also opined that private sector clients often start their selection of professional service provider, such as the architect, from the recommendation of friends and family (Duhan, Johnson, Wilcox and Harrell, 1997). This probably suggests that some relational and personality criteria may be important in helping a client choose which architect to work with. These were however opinions, not backed with empirical data. Literatures exist based on empirical data which investigated the criteria used by clients in selecting professional

service providers (Razzouk, Seitz and Webb, 2004; and Araloyin and Olatoye, 2011). There are also empirical studies carried out to determine the criteria used in selecting architects by real estate developer clients (Cheung, Kuen and Skitmore, (2002). Very little is however known about the factors which are considered when individual clients select their architects especially for residential projects. More important to this study are the factors that these individual clients will consider when they attempt to commission an architect they are working with for the first time. The study therefore aims at investigating the criteria used in selecting architects by first-time clients in search of architectural services for residential projects. This study answers two questions: First, which factors best describe the criteria used by first-time clients in selecting architects? Second, how does the importance attached to the factors differ with nature of service to be provided? The findings may indicate the major concerns of this category of clients, which may contribute to the teaching and practice of architecture and position the profession to reap from the ever-increasing housing market.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The process of selection of professional service providers often poses its own difficulty. This is because, compared with products, services are intangible, often involve the participation of clients and the clients are often inexperienced in the process of service production. The process of service provider selection however determines whether the architect acquires new clients or not. Knowledge of the factors considered may therefore be important for the sustenance of professions, as it will inform practice and education.

For an individual approaching an architect for the first time, there are different ways such an approach is made possible. This may be by the recommendation of mutual acquaintance or the client may personally know the architect. It is also possible that the prospective client had seen a likeable building prompting such clients to seek out the architect (Chappell and Willis, 2000). The architect that is commissioned to undertake a residential project may be involved in all aspects of the work including design and administration of the construction project. This may be because the client may have limited knowledge to execute the job. The level and scope of involvement of the architect in the administration of the construction may however differ. While some architects design and supervise, clients may request others to construct, raise funds, or even entirely manage the project, from resources to work force to schedule. The services required may therefore vary from design, design and construct, project management to renovation. One may therefore expect that the criteria that the client will use in selecting an architect will depend on the type of

service required. Such service- related criteria, which first- time clients consider, are however little documented.

There have been several studies on the criteria used in selecting professional service providers. In the context of clients of international accounting firms, Scott and Walt (1995) found that the most important selection criteria were accessibility to key staff, ability to offer personal service and reputation for fast and efficient service were the most important choice criteria given by respondents. Razzouk, Seitz and Webb, (2004) also found that clients rated reputation as well as the interpersonal skill of the physician high as criteria which influenced their selection of doctors. Reputation was also a major criterion in the selection of banks (Almossawi, 2001) and real estate agents in Lagos, Nigeria (Araloyin and Olatoye, 2011). In summary Kugyte and Sliburyte, (2005) listed three categories of service provider selection criteria which are used by clients of professional service firms and which are within the control of the service firms. These include pre-purchase knowledge (referred to as search- based criterion), experience/ relational aspects and credence criteria. The foregoing however suggests that the most important criteria may vary.

Within the construction industry, studies on clients selection of service providers have often been focused on contractor services (Zavadskas and Vilutiene, 2006; Holt, 2010). There are also some studies, which focused on the selection of architects. The criteria for selection of architects found in these studies were diverse. Day and Barksdale (2003) in their qualitative study found that the capability (likelihood that the service provider will conform to contractual agreements); chemistry (the providers' understanding of client needs and interest); and the perceived competence of the service provider influenced the choice of architectural and engineering service provider. The findings of the study by Cheung, Kuen and Skitmore (2002) also show that real estate developer clients in Hong Kong rated professional qualification/ experience of the architects and consultancy fees high as criteria for selection of architects. They however rated reputation of the architect low as a criterion. This probably suggests that within the construction industry, the pre-purchase knowledge and relational criteria are highly rated as criteria for selection of service provider. Cheung et al also found that the relative importance of the criteria varied with the project type. This suggests that project types should be the basis for the investigation of architect selection criteria. For this reason, this study considers only residential projects. Repeat clients may re-commission an architect for a new project because of their satisfaction with previous projects. When a client approaches an architect for the first time however, such clients may have had to compare architects on other factors other than their actual capabilities. It is also important to note that the ability to attract new clients may contribute to an architect's practice sustenance. This study therefore builds on previous studies by

investigating the criteria used by clients in selecting an architect that they have never commissioned before. The set of criteria that are important will give an idea of what is important to the clients. They also represent the clients' concerns for the particular project types.

For the profession of architecture, there have been attempts at defining the criteria used by clients in selecting architects. American Institute of Architects (AIA) (2008) for example identified the approaches used in the selection of architects. These include value- based; cost-based; qualification- based and direct hire approaches. Although clients may use a blend of the categories, it was noted that one criterion is likely to be more important to different categories of clients or for different services.

Previous literatures have mostly concentrated on Qualification- Based Selection (QBS) (Sporrong, 2011). This is probably because the public sector, which is more investigated mostly adopt this approach since there is often a written process. AIA suggested that the criteria that are considered for QBS are the competence of the architect in the project type, demonstrated by projects of similar scope and complexity, experience of the architect, reputation of the architect and understanding of client needs. Summarized in Kugyte and Sliburyte, (2005)'s terms, these are pre- purchase knowledge and credence criteria. This suggests that the relational criterion is played down in QBS. However, Sporrong (2011) noted that opponents of QBS have stated that its use is based on subjective criteria which prevent new firms with limited experience from obtaining contracts. It will appear that inexperienced clients will not use this criterion as AIA suggested that clients who have many projects use this approach. Another approach used by architecture clients is value- based selection. The requirements for value-based selection are often capacity of the architect for innovation, experience and commitment to the client's interest. This is because the client's predominant interest is in design. AIA suggested that this is the approach used by most in-experienced clients, who this study focuses on.

Cost-based selection has as criterion the cost of the service. According to AIA (2008), this is the approach mostly used by private sector clients. Projects that cost-based selection may be often used for commercial facilities and industries. This approach can be used with qualification approach, before or after cost has been considered. Sporrong was however of the opinion that once price is introduced as a criterion; the selection becomes biased in favour of lowest fee. It will also appear that a focus on value excluded cost- based selection as AIA noted that clients that rely on value are less likely to rely on cost- based selection. This is probably because clients who seek innovation have to be willing to pay for it. Direct hire on the other hand may be based on the reputation of the architect, previous professional relationship with architect, personal relationship and the recommendation of a friend, former client or

another architect. Little evidence exists on the empirical basis of these criteria. It may therefore be enlightening to examine the selection criteria as well as the importance attached to the criteria by architecture clients using empirical data. For this reason, this study explores the selection criteria used by first-time clients in the selection of architects for residential projects.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The sample survey approach was considered appropriate for this study since the aim is to gain an understanding of the factors considered by first-time clients in selecting architects for their residential projects. The study was carried out in this city between March and December 2011. Firms were used in generating client lists. This is because Nigeria has no register of clients of architects which may have constituted the sample frame for the study. However, architectural firms often keep a list of clients. As such, the clients is presumed to be more likely robust with firms of architects than with individual architects. At the time of the survey, around 44% of registered architectural firms in Nigeria were located in Lagos. From the list of architectural firms registered to practice in Nigeria (ARCON, 2010), 213 out of the 613 registered architectural firms were in Lagos. Using the formula derived by Frankfort-Nachimias and Nachimias (1992), a sample size of 137 was obtained. The 137 architectural firms were approached to provide their list of clients but only 44 agreed to participate out of the 137 approached. The other firms were skeptical about giving out a list of their clients. The firms were asked to give their first-time residential client list in the last two years. Four private individual clients who commissioned the architects for residential project for the first time were randomly selected from each client list. It is important to mention that obtaining clients list from the architectural firms ensured that only the owners of the building projects who had direct contact with the architects were chosen.

Quantitative data were used in this study. For this purpose a questionnaire was drafted with the aid of ten potential clients of architects. This was to ensure that issues that were important to clients who commission architects are considered. The questionnaire was preferred because it afforded the opportunity to have uniform criteria for measuring the subjective perceptions of the respondents. The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first included question on the nature of service for which the architect was commissioned. This gave an idea of the service procurement method used. The second part of the questionnaire measured the criteria used by the clients in selecting architects. To measure the subjective judgment of the respondents in the selection of architects, the respondents were asked to indicate the relative importance of the criteria in selecting architects on the scale of 1 (incompletely irrelevant) to 5 (very important).

This ensured that the respondents were able to weigh the factors and rate according to the relative importance attached to each. The questionnaire was based on only factors, which the architect can control to enhance chances of being selected.

In the survey proper, 176 clients drawn from the list of 44 architectural firms were sampled with the questionnaires administered to them. Forty-four of these clients declined to participate, leaving 132 participants in the survey. Due to the terrain of Lagos and wide areas covered, fifteen field assistants were used in the administration and retrieval of the questionnaires. However, 93 and 29 of the questionnaires were administered by physically and electronically through e-mail by the researchers, respectively. The electronic mail approach was adopted because some of the clients were out of Lagos State and it was easier to reach them by mail, while a few others, although within Lagos opted to fill the

questionnaires electronically. A total of 125 questionnaires representing about 94.70% of the distributed questionnaires were returned. This may have been so because the clients who declined to participate from the initial 176 were not approached with the questionnaires. Since the first aim of the study is to define the factors used by first-time clients in selecting architects for their residential projects, a principal component analysis was carried out. To determine how these factors varied with the nature of service obtained (procurement method), the overall ranking of the mean weights of the factors based on the procurement method was explored. This analysis was also adopted by Songer, Moleenar and Robinson (1996).

## RESULTS

From the results, most of the first-time clients (48%) engaged architects for just design services (Table 1). A slightly lower percentage (40%) engaged architects for design and construction project, while 7.2% of the clients engaged the architects for renovation services. Equal percentages of clients (2.4%) engaged the architect for project management and construction. To obtain the dimensions, which describe the selection criteria for architect, a factor analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). The principal component method of analysis was used, and the factors were rotated by varimax method. The factor analysis of the selection criteria variables shows that six (6) factors accounted for 72.5% of the variance in the result. The component loadings in Table 2 reveal the variables that the factors represented. The first factor which accounted for 14.0% of the variance in the data represented the responsiveness of the architect. This is because the variables, which loaded highly on this factor, indicate how much interest the architect takes in the clients. The variables were special attention the architect gives to the client, looking for the clients' best interest and friendliness of the architect. The variables, which loaded highly on the second factor and accounted for 13.8% of the variance in the data were the variety of services offered by the architect, the understanding of the architect and previous relationship. The variables appear to represent how much knowledge of the architect the clients had and represented the acquaintance with the architect.

The high loading variables on the third factor were the experience, competence and capacity of the architect for innovation as well as the quality of previous projects. These factors accounted for 12.9% of the variance in the data. They were termed as the perceived professional competence of the architect. Accounting for 11.3% of the variance in the data and loading most highly on personal relationship and pleasantness of the architect, the fourth factor represent the personality of the architect. The fifth factor accounting for 10.9% of the variance in the data was the budget of the client. The variables that loaded highly on the factor were the ability of the architect for timely delivery and the cost of the service. The last factor

**Table 1:** Project profiles

Measures	Items	Percentage (%)
Type of service received	design	48
	construction	2.4
	design and construction	40
	project management	2.4
	renovation	7.2

Source: Field Survey (2011)

**Table 2:** Dimensions of client selection criteria

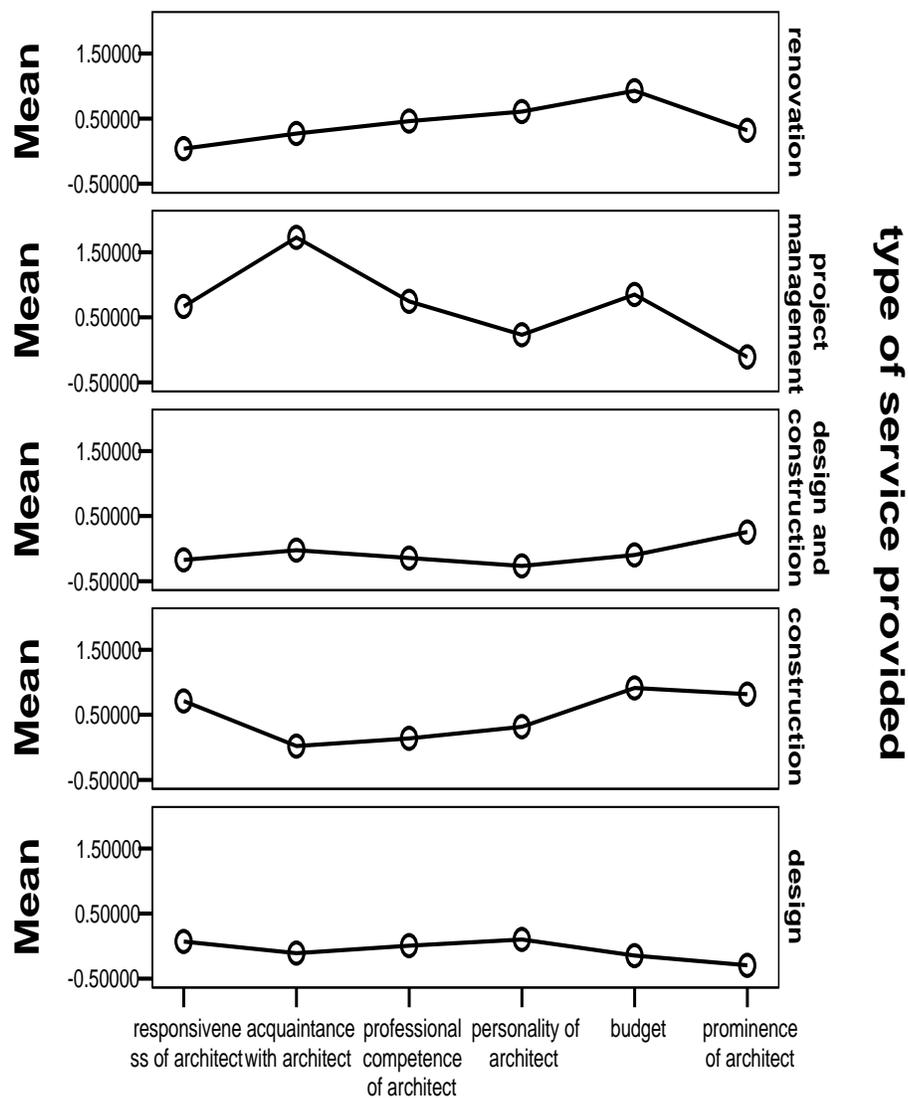
Factor (Percentage of variance)	Variables	Component Loadings
Responsiveness of architect (14.0%)	looks for my best interest	0.871
	special attention to my needs	0.787
	friendliness	0.592
Acquaintance with the architect (13.8%)	variety of services offered	0.797
	understanding	0.751
	previous relationship	0.674
Perceived professional competence of architect (12.9%)	competence in particular project areas	0.795
	capacity for innovation	0.770
	quality of previous projects	0.630
	experience in the industry	0.563
Personality of architect (11.3%)	personal relationship	0.823
	pleasantness of my service provider	0.802
Budget (10.9%)	ability for timely delivery	0.875
	cost of service	0.848
Prominence of architect (9.7%)	availability to attend to me	0.750
	reputation in my area of need	0.687
	popularity in the field	0.522

Source: Field Survey (2011)

as shown in Table 2 loaded highly on the availability, reputation and popularity of the architect. It appears that this factor has to do with the renown of the architect. It accounted for 9.7% of the variance in the data and was labeled the prominence of the architect. Cronbach's alphas were computed for the variables of each factor. The value ranged from 0.607 to 0.71, which is acceptable according to George and Mallery (2003). This suggested that the items were internally consistent in measuring the factors. These factors may however be confirmed in further studies as this is an exploratory study. This result suggests that the factor that best describe the criteria used by clients in selecting architects was the responsiveness of the architect. This was followed by the acquaintance with the architect.

To answer the second question of the study on the relative importance attached to the factors based on the

nature of service, the overall ranking based on the mean weight of the selection factors was computed by service type. The mean scores of each factor across the sample will be zero because factor scores are standardized during factor analysis. The building types were plotted against the mean weight attached to the selection factors (Figure 1). While personality and responsiveness of architect ranked highest as architect selection factor for design services, budget and prominence of architect were the highest ranked for construction services. Where the client however required design along with construction services, prominence and acquaintance with the architect were the highest ranked. Acquaintance with architect, followed by budget, were the highest ranked for project management services, while clients that sought renovation services ranked budget and personality of the architect highest.



**Figure 1:** Mean scores of clients on selection factors by the type of service required  
**Source:** Field Survey (2011).

## DISCUSSION

These results are similar to the findings of Day and Barksdale (2003) that buyers of architectural services select architects based on the chemistry between clients and the architects as well as perceived competence. This is because chemistry, which was defined as the provider's relationship and communication skill, is similar to the personality factor found in this study. Similarly, perceived competence appears to be the same as the perceived professional competence factor. A major finding of this study is that the responsiveness of and acquaintance with the architect best described the criteria used by private sector clients in selecting their architects. The fact that the responsiveness of the architect best described

the criteria for the selection of architects may be because of the fact that first-time clients are often highly dependent on the architect to work in their interest. This is because a first-time residential client may be carrying out construction work for the first time and may have little experience in the process. Such a client may therefore desire an architect who can be trusted to render services that place the interest of the client first. Next to the responsiveness of the architect, the acquaintance with the architect best defined the criteria used by clients in the selection of architects. This is probably because a first-time residential client may have few options to choose from, as their knowledge of architects may be limited. They may therefore base their selection of the architects they know by virtue of their contact with such

architects. The first-time clients in the study also based their selection of architects on the seeming ability of the architect to carry out the work. This may often be based on the contact of the client with the works of the architect. Personality of the architect was probably a factor considered in the selection of architects by first-time clients because such clients may have few options and since they have to be in personal contact with the architect, an agreeable person may be better to work with.

Although not a strong definer, budget in terms of cost and time was also found to be one of the factors considered by first-time clients in selecting architects. An explanation for this may be that building projects are often investments and the client needs to be sure that the architect can provide required service on time and at acceptable costs. Least defining the factors used in selecting architect by the first-time clients in the study was the prominence of the architect which represents the reputation of the architect. This appears to be a recurring factor in the selection of professional service providers. Reputation has been found to be an important factor used by clients in the selection of doctors (Razzouk et al., 2004); accountants (Scott and Walt, 1995); and banks (Almossawi, 2001). In addition, the three dimensions of selection criteria suggested by Kugyte and Sliburyte (2005) were found in the study. The responsiveness, acquaintance, professional competence and budget factor could be summarized as pre-purchase knowledge criteria. The prominence factor is similar to the credence dimension, while personality factor is similar to the relational dimension.

The survey shows that generally, responsiveness of the architect and the acquaintance with the architect were the best definers of the criteria used by first-time clients in the selection of architect. The results of the relative importance of these factors based on the nature of service rendered by the architect however show that acquaintance with the architect was scored highest as a selection criterion for only project management services. This probably suggests that although clients will generally identify these factors as best defining their selection of architects, the importance attached to them varied with the services. For design services, personality of the architect was scored highest. It is possible that personality will suffice as these clients may not be able to judge based on other attributes that may border on the capability of the architect. In addition, when a client receives just design services for residential building from an architect, such client may still seek second opinions before proceeding to construct the building. Being able to work with the architect on the basis personality may therefore be sufficient. Next to being able to work with the architect, this category of clients ranked the responsiveness of the architect, which represents how the architect is able to look out for the interest of the client. This is probably because these clients may not have

enough experience in the process to look out for themselves.

When an architect carries out a construction project, another architect may have carried out the design. The essence of construction is to enable the client to see the physical product of an architectural design. As such, during construction, clients may want to be sure that they are not incurring too much cost outside that which is necessary to put up the building. This is probably the reason why the budget was the most highly scored factor. Next highly scored was the prominence of the architect, which more or less gives the client confidence that since the architect is reputed to be good, the construction work will be probably well finished. This is likely to be because with construction works, more of the resources of the client are involved and the client may find it more convenient working with a reputable architect.

The prominence of the architect was also scored highest as a factor used in the selection of architects for design and construction services by the first-time clients in the study. This is probably because more of the resources of the client are involved. In addition, since the same person designs and constructs the building, the process may preclude the contributions of others. To ensure that the project is of the highest quality, the client may probably be more comfortable working with a reputable firm. The choice by this category of clients is also highly based on their acquaintance with the client. This suggests that familiarity with the architect is important to these clients. It is noteworthy that first-time clients who required project management services for residential projects also scored acquaintance highest. One would have expected that this category of clients would also score prominence of the architect highest. This expectation is because project management services imply that the architect is in charge of the project from the conceptual stage to the handing over stage. In other words, the client may completely hand off the project once the needs have been communicated to the architect. It was therefore expected that this category of clients would want to work with a reputable architect. Contrary to expectation however, prominence was scored lowest and acquaintance scored highest. This probably suggests that first-time clients that sought project management services based their selection of architects most on the familiarity with the architect. An explanation for this may be that the project management clients are more involved in the process than expected and as such would rather work with architects they are familiar with. It is also possible that this category of clients are trying to save money they would have paid to reputable architects by working with those they are familiar with who may engage other considerations in charging their professional fees. This can be inferred from the fact that the next factor that scored high in the selection of architects for project management services in the study was budget. Although project management

services are often procured for large and/ or complex projects, the residential clients are concerned about their budget. This is also probably because residential buildings are often investments on the part of the clients and though the project may be large and/ or complex, this category of clients still wants to watch their budget.

It is interesting that budget is also the most highly scored factor used in the selection of architects for renovation projects. It may be that since renovation services are often offered for projects, which exist and are probably inhabited. The service is not expected to increase the assets of the client, although, it may enhance the value of the property. The client may therefore be more interested in carrying out the work as fast as possible at the least possible cost. The next factor scored high in the selection of architects for renovation services is the personality of the architect. An explanation for this may be because the client needs to work closely with the architect to carry out necessary amendments even as the work progresses and may thus prefer to work with an agreeable architect.

The findings of this study suggest that the importance attached to architect selection criteria vary with the services that the clients sought. An interesting observation however is that budget was scored high as architect selection criteria for all service types except design services. It thus appears that the first- time clients in the study who procured design services rated other factors higher than cost when selecting their architects. In fact, the quality of relationship that they had with the architect was the most important. The fact that cost was scored high by first- time clients who desired other services probably suggest that cost is a popular criteria used by first- time clients in selecting architects except when design services are required. It is possible that the level of innovation often required during service has to be paid for. As such, design clients are willing to pay to get such innovation. AIA (2008) suggested that inexperienced clients will not use qualification- based- selection criteria which is based on the competence, experience, reputation and reputation displayed by the architect. This study however found that first- time clients who engage architects for residential projects considered the competence of the clients, although the level of importance to the selection process varied. In addition, AIA suggested that qualification- based- selection criterion is used with cost- based selection. The results of this study show that budget is considered before professional competence in the selection of architects for design and construction and project management services. However, although budget came first as a factor used by the first- time clients in the selection of architects for construction and renovation services, other factors were considered before professional competence. This probably suggests that although professional competence is important to the clients when selecting their architects, some other factors take precedence. It is also possible that with construction and renovation services, professional competence is assumed

and as such, is not highly rated as architect- selection criteria

## CONCLUSION

The results of the study extends understanding on client decision- making by providing better understanding of the factors used in selecting architects by first- time clients who engaged architects for residential projects and the relative importance attached to investigated factors based on the type of service required. The results generally show that the criteria used by the first- time clients in the study encompassed the pre-purchase knowledge (in terms of professional competence, pricing/ budget, as well as access to the architect); the relational and credibility aspects as suggested by previous authors. The variance in the importance attached to the factors based on the procurement methods also suggests that scholars should approach the decision- making process with consideration for the type of service rendered instead of a generic approach to professional service provider selection. Scholars have suggested that higher importance should be accorded to qualification and reputation rather than cost in the selection of professional service providers in order to reduce perceived risks of potential clients. The results of this study reveal that for first- time clients, budget is accorded higher importance than professional competence in the architect selection process except when design services are sought. There may therefore be a need for more indepth study on the ways this category of clients ensure quality service and reduce their risks in the process of procuring architectural services.

The fact that the importance attached to the factors used in the selection of architects by the first- time clients varied with the nature of service has implications for the practice of the profession. Architects could use the results of this study to improve on factors which will enhance their chances of being selected by potential clients. The training of architects should also include human relations as personality has been found to be an important factor that clients in this study based their selection on.

The results of this study may not be generalized as only first- time clients were considered. Further studies may therefore consider first-time clients with other building types. In addition, it may be worthwhile to compare the relative importance of the factors used by first- time clients with that used by repeat clients within the same context. The complexity of the project had not also been considered in this study. Further studies may take into consideration the complexities of projects. It should also be noted that only factors within the control of the architect were investigated in this study. Other characteristics of the clients may also determine the choice of clients. The architect may however not have any control on those factors.

## Conflict of Interests

The author have not declared any conflict of interests.

## REFERENCES

- Almossawi M (2001). 'Bank selection criteria employed by college students in Bahrain: an empirical analysis', *Int. J. Bank Market*. 19(3):115-125.
- American Institute of Architects (AIA) (2008). *The Architects' Handbook of Professional Practice* Demkin J. A. (Ed.) 14<sup>th</sup> Edition Wiley: USA.
- Araloyin FM, Olatoye O (2011). 'Factors Influencing the Selection of Real Estate Agents in Lagos Metropolis', *Nigeria, Br. J. Manage. Econ.* 1(1):33-41
- Architects Registration Council of Nigeria (ARCON) (2010). *Register of Architectural Firms Entitled to Practice in the Federal Republic of Nigeria*.
- Bailey JJ (2000). 'Students as Clients in a Professional/ Client Relationship' *J. Manage. Educ.* 24(1):353-365.
- Cheung FKT, Kuen JLF, Skitmore RM (2002). 'Multi-Criteria Evaluation Model for Selection of Architectural Consultants', *Construction Manage. Econ.* 20(7):569- 580
- Day E, Barksdale HC (2003). 'Selecting a professional service provider from the short list', *J. Bus. Ind. Market.* 18 (6/7):564-579.
- Duhan Dale F, Johnson Scott D, Wilcox James B, Harrell Gilbert D (1997). 'Influences on consumer use of word-of-mouth recommendation sources', *Acad. Market. Sci. J.* 25(4):283-295
- Frankfort- Nachimaias C, Nachmias D (1992). *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. (Fourth edition) Edward Arnold Ltd: Kent, England, pp.97-426.
- Holt GD (2010) 'Contractor selection innovation: examination of two decades' published research', *Construction Innov.* 10(3):304-328.
- Kugyte R, Sliburyte L (2005.). 'A standardized model of service provider selection criteria for different service types: a consumer-oriented approach'. *Eng. Econ.* 3(43):56-63.
- Razzouk N, Seitz V, Webb J (2004) 'What's Important in Choosing a Primary Care Physician: An Analysis of Consumer Response', *Int. J. Health Care Q. Assurance* 17(4):205-211.
- Scott D, Walt N (1995). 'Choice Criteria in the Selection of International Accounting Firms', *Eur. J. Market.* 29(1):27-39.
- Songer AD, Moleenar KR, Robinson GD (1996). 'Selection Factors and Success Criteria for Design Build in the U.S. and U.K.' *Int. J. Construction Procurement.* 12(6):47-53
- Sporrang J (2011). 'Criteria in Consultant Selection: Public Procurement of Architectural and Engineering Services'. *Austr. J. Costruction Econ. Building.* 11(4):59-76
- Zavadskas EK, Vilutiene TA (2006). 'Multi- Criteria Evaluation of Multi-Family Apartment Block's Maintenance Contractors: I- Model for Maintenance Contractor Evaluation and the Determination of its Selection Criteria'. *Building Environ.* 41(1):621-632