

Proceedings
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FOREWORD

This 30th volume of the Proceedings from the National Conference in Sales Management contains articles and abstracts of presentations made at the 2015 Conference held April 16th-19th at the Hyatt Regency, Houston, TX. Each article was selected after a blind competitive review process and will be presented at the conference by at least one author. In addition, the three-day Conference devotes an entire day to The University Sales Center Alliance (USCA) sponsored session on Best Sales Teaching Innovation-methods. Based on the success of the Revising Paper Round Table this session is continued with this year's conference and expanded to include a doctoral paper session as well as three very interesting special session presentations/panel discussions. As always, the 2015 Conference continues to provide the outstanding socializing and networking opportunities that are hallmarks of the NCSM.

As interest in sales research and education has significantly expanded over the years, Conference attendance by both academics and practitioners continues to be strong. This year's record attendance exceeding **80 participants and 16 doctoral students** is evidence of this. This is possible only by the combined efforts of the PSE Staff, NCSM Executive Board, authors, reviewers, session chairs, sales professionals and special presenters who have contributed their time, effort and expertise to the Conference. Special recognition for this 2015 Conference goes to:

- Ann Devine, Executive Director of Pi Sigma Epsilon for her expert support and guidance throughout the conference planning process, Kristin Pearson of PSE for supporting the online access of the Proceedings, and all the staff of Pi Sigma Epsilon for all they do behind the scenes.
- The NCSM Executive Board - Concha Allan of Central Michigan University for her leadership and guidance as the Executive Director of the NCSM; Brian Rutherford of Kennesaw State University and Mick Andzulis of Louisiana State University for serving as Co-Chairs of the Doctoral Student Sales Research Program; Jay Mulki of Northeastern University for serving as Sales Education Track Coordinator; Lisa Simon of Cal State Polytech University for serving as Special Sessions Coordinator; David Fleming of Eastern Illinois University and Laura Serviere-Munoz of the University of Dallas for co-coordinating the Revising Roundtable sessions.
- All the paper reviewers (see list in separate document) for their constructive feedback to help authors advance their research.
- The University Sales Center Alliance for its continued support and sponsorship of the Best Sales Teaching Innovative Method award, and reception sponsor.
- Manfred Kraft, Editor of the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, for his continuing support of the Conference.
- Axxess Capon/Tanner, Honeycutt, and Erffmeyer, for continued sponsorship of the NCSM Best Paper Award.
- Our generous sponsors of evening networking events - Routledge Publishing, PSE National Education Foundation, MultiView, and USCA.
- Central Michigan University for sponsoring the doctoral student luncheon.

- The PSE National Education Foundation for sponsorship of doctoral student fellowships.
- And all of the contributors and supporters of the Conference who put their valuable time into making this Conference a success.

The goal of the National Conference in Sales Management is to serve as a forum for professionalizing selling and sales management by bringing together a broad spectrum of academics and practitioners. Thanks to the support and effort of everyone associated with this 30th event, this goal continues to be met.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMPETITIVE PAPERS	PAGE
USE OF ROLE-PLAY TO UNDERSTAND ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN A SELLING CONTEXT Jill S. Attaway & Jeri M. Beggs	7
REDUCING SALESPERSON TURNOVER: THE ROLES OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND GRIT David E. Fleming, Matthew A. Askew, Andrew B. Artis & Alex Milovic	18
A MORE NUANCED VIEW OF SALES MANAGER SUPPORT VERSUS PARTICIPATION David A. Gilliam & Steven W. Rayburn	22
WHAT YOU DON'T SAY MATTERS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONAL LISTENING SCALE IN SALES Emily A. Goad & Fernando Jaramillo	25
A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF WHAT THE INFORMED CUSTOMER AND THE ADAPTIVE SALESPERSON BRING TO A MODERN SALES INTERACTION Bryan W. Hochstein	29
INFLUENCING SALESPERSON PERCEPTIONS OF NEW PRODUCT INTRODUCTIONS: THE ROLE OF THE SALES MANAGER Gregory McAmis	34
ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: A SCALES TO MEASURE MILLENNIAL-AGE BUSINESS STUDENTS' INTENT TO PURSUE SALES CAREERS Carlin A. Nguyen, Ryan McCaffrey & Andrew B. Artis	38
PRICE SETTING PATTERNS IN DIRECT SELLING ORGANIZATIONS: INSHIGTS FROM NIGERIAN ORGANIZATIONS Uchenna Uzo & Chris Ogbechie	43
REAPING BENEFITS FROM INVESTING IN SOLUTION SELLING CAPABILITY: DO PRODUCT AND CUSTOMER CHARACTERISTICS MATTER? Nikolaos G. Panagopoulos & Adam A. Rapp	47
SALES TRAINING'S IMPACT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ELEARNING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SALES PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION Michael Rodriguez, Earl D. Honeycutt & Stefanie Boyer	49
SEQUENCING JOB SATISFACTION: ESTABLISHING ROBUSTNESS, GENERALIZABILITY, AND A NOMOLOGICAL NETWORK Brian N. Rutherford, Nathaniel N. Hartmann & JungKun Park	53
INFLUENCING THE SALESFORCE THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: THE ROLE OF SALESFORCE SOCIALIZATION AND PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ON SALESPERSON ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE Charles H. Schwepker	56

USE OF ROLE-PLAY TO UNDERSTAND ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN A SELLING CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

The use of role-play to understand ethical decision-making within a sales context is presented as a way to gain insight into the scripts or schemas individuals utilize that may reflect their moral philosophy or values. In addition, the incorporation of role-play within a laboratory setting may overcome some limitations related to scenario-based research and allow the examination or observation of actual behavior. A field experiment utilizing role-play was incorporated within two class settings – Principles of Marketing and Sales. The manuscript details how this method could be implemented within a marketing course, the techniques and materials utilized, and outcomes related to utilizing role-play scenarios in a buyer-seller context as a training mechanism to foster ethical behavior as well as identify individuals' underlying schemas. An experimental design was incorporated to randomly vary the scenarios to examine differences across three main variables: the business context (B2B vs. retail), likelihood of getting caught, and corporate ethical climate. The outcomes indicate participants incorporated both a teleological/utilitarian perspective and deontological/formalism perspective when responding to the unethical request. The role-play technique is very versatile allowing instructors to make changes to the ethical context and variables of interest to seamlessly integrate the examination of ethical schemas and behavior into the marketing curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

The study of ethics and ethical decision making has long been of interest to society as individuals and organizations have been encouraged to “do the right thing” since the beginning of time. Teaching students about ethics and enhancing their ability to make ethical decisions has been positively linked to ethical practices on the job (Granitz and Loewy 2007) and is a core competency sought by employers and required by the accrediting agency, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). An examination of the use of role-play as a method to gain insight into future business managers' ethical predispositions in a selling context is presented.

A sales context was utilized to examine ethical behavior since the sales field provides entry-level job opportunities for business graduates. Experts report that up to 80% of students majoring in marketing and 50% of finance majors will serve in a sales capacity at some time in their career (Bristow et al. 2006) and according to the statistics released by the US Department of Labor, 143,000 new sales jobs are predicted between 2008 and 2018 (US Department of Labor 2010 – 2011). Moreover, sales professionals are a particularly vulnerable group since they often work in autonomous settings, have minimal supervision, and are financially rewarded to achieve

sales goals and quotas. Thus, it's important for marketing educators to address issues related to the ethical or unethical behavior of sales representatives, discuss professional standards for ethical behavior, enable students to improve their skills in identifying ethical dilemmas, and create effective scripts or schemas individuals can apply to guide their behavior and make appropriate decisions. The purpose of the research is to explore the use of role play as a technique to understand students' ethical ideology and their frameworks for making ethical decisions. The research incorporates an experimental design to observe the effect of different factors on students' decisions. An overview is provided as to the conceptual background guiding the research, the techniques utilized, and outcomes related to utilizing role-play scenarios as a training mechanism to foster ethical behavior and identify individuals' ethical scripts or schemas.

BACKGROUND

Ethical Decision-Making

A moral issue or dilemma is present when an individual perceives that their actions have the potential to harm or benefit others while ethical decisions are those where the action is considered both legal and judged acceptable to the larger community (Jones 1991). One of the most pervasive models of ethical decision-making is the four component model (Rest 1986) which views moral decision-making as a sequence of stages or steps. The sequence of steps is that an individual recognizes the moral issue, makes a moral judgment, establishes moral intent, and engages in moral behavior. In a detailed review of descriptive ethics research between 1996 and 2003, O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) note that "Researchers have since proposed and tested a wide variety of constructs that influence this four-step process, generally supporting the usefulness of Rest's framework" (p. 375).

Other theoretical conceptualizations of ethical decision-making within a marketing context are consistent with Rest (1986) but expand the model by identifying other factors which may impact an individuals' decision. Ferrell and Gresham (1986) proposed a contingency framework speculating that both individual and organizational factors would affect ethical decisions. Individual factors might include knowledge, values, attitudes and intentions while organizational factors could include ethical climate as well as the existence and enforcement of ethical codes of conduct. Environmental factors such as cultural, industrial and organizational as well as personal experiences were proposed to influence whether individuals perceived an ethical problem, alternatives and consequences (Hunt and Vitell 1986). In addition, the Hunt and Vitell (1986) model established the notion that moral judgments would be influenced by both deontological and teleological considerations. Deontological considerations can be defined as an adherence to following rules and doing what is "right" based upon an individuals' value system or rules of behavior compared to teleological considerations which are based on an individuals' perceptions regarding the consequences of their actions (Rallapalli, Vitell and Barnes 1998). Kujala (2001) predicted that the teleological philosophy may be representative of business managers' decisions since they are more concerned with the bottom line and observed that the utilitarian factor was most frequently observed among Finnish managers who desired to maximize the greatest good for the greatest number of people.

Environmental factors (e.g. social, cultural, economic and organizational) are expected to affect whether or not an individual would recognize an ethical issue. If an ethical issue is

recognized, an individual could utilize deontological, teleological considerations or both in making an ethical judgment. Once a judgment is reached, the individual would establish an ethical intent which would lead to their behavior.

According to the ethical decision-making literature discussed, individuals must first recognize that an ethical issue is present. Next, if individuals recognized a decision as an ethical one, they would most likely employ a cognitive framework such as an ethical predisposition (Brady and Wheeler 1996). As discussed by Reynolds and Ceranic (2007), the moral philosophies or frameworks of deontology and teleology are believed to influence moral awareness and the ability of an individual to recognize a moral or ethical dilemma. Alternatively, a neurocognitive approach to ethical decision-making hypothesizes a two-stage process of “reflexive pattern matching and higher order conscious reasoning” (Reynolds 2006, p. 737). The reflexive pattern matching process involves the X-system of the brain which is associated with intuitive, unconscious and automatic processing. Sonenshein (2007) proposes that individuals’ intuitive responses to ethical dilemmas are based on their subconscious feelings or affect which lead them to act based on “whether something feels wrong or right” (p. 1032). Reynolds (2006) proposes that individuals engage in this non-conscious analysis of pattern matching to identify prototypical responses appropriate for the ethical situation. Therefore, individuals respond automatically to ethical dilemmas based upon the prototypes available to them and that their automatic responses may be based on their feelings or “gut” reactions to the issue.

These X-system-based prototypes may be further defined through script theory. Boyle (2000) and Ritter (2006) define script theory as a cognitive structure or organized memory containing an appropriate sequence of activities for a particular situation which individuals use to guide their behavior. These scripts or schemas can be employed by individuals when confronted with an ethical issue so they can easily make an appropriate ethical judgment and subsequent behavior. Script theory also incorporates environmental factors or situational factors since different contexts or situations may give rise to distinct scripts or schemas of behavior.

The second process or stage in the neurocognitive approach to ethical decision making is the consciousness or C-system where active processing or reasoning takes place (Reynolds 2006). If the ethical dilemma or decision an individual faces is novel or new to the individual, the C-system may be invoked since a schema or pattern for behavior may not be present. Alternatively, the C-system may be activated when the individual is asked to explain their decision or attempts to rationalize their judgment or behavior. Sonenshein (2007) includes this C-system processing in his model of ethical decision-making where individuals explain and justify their actions. He further believes that these explanations and justifications may include evidence of moral philosophies or predispositions since these moral philosophies are part of the normative fabric of American culture. Sonenshein (2007) states “Because intuitive judgments about an issue occur rapidly and without individuals’ awareness, individuals infer that they must have reasoned in some logical and rational way to reach their assessment of that issue – even if no such reasoning occurred” (p. 1034).

Therefore, we propose:

Proposition #1: An individual’s decision or behavior to an ethical dilemma will be based upon an unconscious, affective, and intuitive-based response to the stimulus or scenario. Further, when the individual reflects upon their behavior or is asked about their decision,

cognitive processing would include the use of ethical philosophies or predispositions to explain and justify their behavior.

Role-play Methods to Understand Ethical Decision Making

Role-play methodology is often referred to as an experiential learning technique which allows participants to improve their interpersonal communication skills (Cummins et al. 2013). Role-play methods can be utilized to provide a relatively standardized approach to measure observable social behavior such as selling skills or responses to unethical requests. As noted by Brown (1994), role-play provides advantages in the form of low levels of risk and high levels of interaction which can “capture the students’ imaginations and allow significant freedom of expression” (Brown 1994, p. 109). Role-play can be classified as a projective technique utilized to uncover an individual’s thoughts and feelings as well as to gain insight regarding the individual’s reflexive behavior (Donoghue 2000). In addition, role-play methodology yields data that is relatively free from social desirability bias (Donoghue 2000) which is especially helpful when gauging individuals’ reactions to scenarios in an ethics context where “doing the right thing” might be an expected outcome of their behavior. Role-play methodology provides benefits by enabling individuals to gain insight about their own attitudes, motivations and values which may lead to an opportunity to direct and change their future behavior (Chesler and Fox 1966).

Role-play methods are a common tool for training individuals in appropriate selling techniques and are utilized within collegiate environments to teach sales, sales management and business negotiation skills (Carroll 2006; Cummins et al. 2013; Widmier, Loe and Selden 2007) and can be easily implemented to uncover behavioral responses to ethical scenarios. Further testament to the value of role-play methodology with regard to ethical behavior is the dichotomy between ethical *reasoning* and ethical or moral *behavior* (c.f. Lund Dean and Beggs 2006, p. 20). As noted by Lund Dean and Beggs (2006, p. 20), “The great majority of work examines reasoning; the ability to empirically link such reasoning with subsequent behaviors and thus gain predictive power between reasoning and action appears to have eluded most researchers.” Likewise, it has eluded faculty when the majority of ethics education in business classes are taught using passive techniques such as lecture, class discussions and readings (Lund Dean, Beggs and Fornaciari 2007) which may increase moral reasoning but does not simulate actual behavior. Therefore, we propose:

Proposition #2: Role-play methodology can be usefully employed as a teaching tool for ethical decision making.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Design

The research utilized role-play techniques within an ethical context in two courses, Principles of Marketing and Personal Selling at a Midwestern university where students received extra-credit for their participation. The instructors referred to the activity as a “decision-making” exercise within a buyer-seller context rather than an “ethical” exercise so as to reduce any social desirability bias. As noted by Beggs (2011, p. 49) “ethics is different than other content areas in that it is a topic that is best learned when the student doesn’t know it’s being taught.” Therefore,

students were allowed to react naturally rather than being primed to act ethically. Students were informed that the exercise involved decision-making behavior between buyers and sellers. Student confederates who were senior-level students majoring in Professional Sales were recruited to play the role of the buyer and were trained as to the appropriate behavior and demeanor they should maintain throughout the role-plays. In total 110 students participated in the role-play activity and the sample included 58 percent male and 42 percent female participants. The sample was equally split between those enrolled in the Principles of Marketing or Personal Selling class. Role-play materials are available upon request from the authors.

Procedure

A 2 X 2 X 2 experimental design methodology was utilized incorporating three independent variables: sales context (B2B versus retail), likelihood of getting caught (high or low), corporate ethical climate (code of conduct – yes or no). Role-play participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight study conditions and entered a private office setting where they would act out the scenario playing the role of a salesperson meeting with a buyer (confederate). In short, the scenarios were based upon a buyer asking the sales representative (subject) to change the date on a sale in order to provide a “sale” or “discount price” to the buyer. Buyers were also trained to continue asking the sales representative to comply with their wishes through three appeals which were randomly given: buyer was sick and couldn’t take advantage of the original sale offer, an appeal based on friendship or relationship, and a threat to take their business elsewhere. The multiple conditions provided a more realistic scenario where it’s likely that buyers would continue to persuade a sales representative to achieve their goals.

Participants registered for 15-minute appointments to participate in the activity and reported to a conference room facility at their scheduled time over a 1-week time frame. Envelopes containing a packet of materials were prepared and student volunteers playing the role of “buyer” simply selected a random envelope that included the buyer instructions, role-play materials for the participant and follow-up survey. The confederate student provided the relevant information to the participant so they could prepare for the role-play. After the role-play activity, the participant completed a follow-up survey which included a set of six semantic differential items to assess respondents’ attitude toward their actions which were measured using a 7-point scale. Ten items were included to measure their feelings after completing the role-play using a 7-point scale. Participants were also asked to indicate on a scale from 0 to 100 percent how likely they would be to behave the same way in the future. Finally, participants were asked to provide the primary reasons that led to their behavior or decision.

After completing the post survey, respondents were provided with debriefing materials and a subsequent class session was held to discuss the role-play activity and decisions made by participants. The class debriefing sessions enabled the instructors to provide greater insight about ethical decision making and the role of ethical predispositions.

RESULTS

Only seven percent of respondents agreed to change the date of sale to allow the customer or buyer to receive the discount or sale price. Thus, the majority of participants displayed a high level of moral behavior in responding to the buyer’s unethical requests.

Analysis of variance was utilized to examine differences across the groups and detailed statistics are provided in the Table.

Comparisons regarding the employment context revealed one statistically significant difference related to feeling bad as a result of the role-play experiment. Although in both conditions, participants reported low levels of feeling bad, those assigned to the B2B condition scored higher (mean = 2.21) than those in the retail sales (mean = 1.71) condition. It is possible that participants felt worse about disappointing a customer in a B2B situation than a retail environment because of the higher expectations in terms of customer service, importance of maintaining relationships with clients, and potentially higher financial transactions.

In the ethical training condition where participants were provided with a code of ethical conduct in the “high” condition, two variables reached statistical significance – the manipulation check regarding the company encouraging its employees to maintain high levels of ethical practices (mean = 6.11 for the high condition versus 5.13 for the low condition) and feeling bad (mean = 2.24 for the low condition and 1.70 for the high condition). Again the numbers reported for feeling bad are low, but the respondents in the low condition, meaning no ethical code was provided, felt worse than the group that was provided the company code of ethics. It’s possible that the participants reacted this way because they felt like they had little guidance from the company. This result strengthens the reason or importance to have an articulated code of ethics.

Examination of relationships among variables of interest and subjects’ likelihood of getting caught revealed five statistically significant differences. First, participants assigned to the “low” condition regarding likelihood of getting caught reported a higher mean score on the item “culturally acceptable/culturally unacceptable” (mean = 2.26 versus 1.66). In addition, those participants assigned to the “low” condition reported higher levels of feelings of excitement (mean = 3.65 versus mean = 3.13) and happiness (mean = 4.61 versus 3.96). However, those assigned to the “high” likelihood of getting caught condition reported higher levels of nervous feelings (mean = 3.49 versus 2.84) and feelings of success (mean = 5.15 versus 5.02).

Respondents were confident in their decisions with a mean level of likelihood to respond similarly in the future an 87% with a standard deviation of 19.74. Twenty-five percent of participants reported they were 100% likely to respond similarly in the future while only 10% reported levels of 70% or below. No statistically significant differences were obtained based on gender of participant or class enrollment (principles of marketing versus personal selling).

The post-scenario survey also asked participants to provide the primary reasons that motivated their behavior during the role-play interaction. These comments were categorized as either teleological/utilitarian or deontological/formalism philosophy. Rationale supporting a teleological/utilitarian perspective related to students’ focus on consequences such as losing their job, negatively affecting their future employment or career, establishing a precedent with the customer, and other external sanctions. Example verbatim responses representing this perspective included the following:

- *I told the buyer I couldn’t give him the discount because it is unethical and will cost my job.*
- *If you give exception to one person, who knows how many more will result in the future?*
- *I enjoy my job and I would not ask my friends to do that for me. It wouldn’t be worth the risk of getting in trouble or even lose my job I enjoy.*

- *I did not want to risk being fired or going to jail. This could cause future employers to question my integrity.*
- *It was unethical and could hurt me professionally. I would also feel guilty and afraid every time I was at work thinking I would be caught and in trouble.*

Some participants exhibited a formalistic or deontological ethical framework where they tended to adhere to rules and policies that guided their behavior. Example verbatim responses representing this perspective included the following:

- *I told the buyer I couldn't give them the discount because it was against company policy for me to give discounts unless my supervisor gave me permission.*
- *I told them it was simply against company policy and this was something I just couldn't do.*
- *It is difficult to say no to a friend especially when they bring up good points and threaten to take their business elsewhere. But, I played the friend card too by saying that as a friend, she should not put me in a position where I could lose my job.*
- *I told the buyer I could not give them the discounted price because it is unfair to everyone else.*

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The use of a role-play activity enables students to utilize their decision making skills in an ethical context and gain insight as to their available ethical schemas or patterns. In addition, the research asked participants to reflect on their behavior and identify the motivations that guided their behavior. Thus, the research provided insight as to the cognitive framework utilized in rationalizing and justifying their behavior. It's not surprising that the justifications revealed dominant themes regarding ethical predisposition or moral philosophies. The post role play survey and subsequent in-class debriefing session provided additional insight regarding ethical decision making and assisted participants in connecting ethical theories to actual behavior. This teaching technique could be implemented as an in-class activity by dividing the class into two groups – those playing the role of “buyer” and those acting as the “sales representative”. The instructor could provide instructions to each group and then match students in teams of two to perform the role-play. The technique could also be modified by developing different scenarios to match classroom learning goals and/or manipulate different features of the scenario to vary students' exposure to factors which may influence their behavior.

Instructors wishing to utilize an extra-curricular approach could involve a higher-level marketing class such as students enrolled in Sales Management who could perform the role of “buyer” or the confederate in the role-play activity. Implementing this activity as an extra-curricular exercise can present some challenges due to coordinating student schedules and arranging conference rooms. However, it does provide greater realism and may enhance the level of learning or understanding.

The benefit of this technique is that it allows students to practice behavior rather than simply discuss concepts and theories. As mentioned earlier, most ethics education techniques focus on creating awareness of ethical dilemmas. However, awareness is not the same as being prepared to act, which takes practice. When participants were asked the likelihood of acting the same way in the future, 25% of the respondents reported a 100%. Students who have had the opportunity to practice this technique will be more confident and better prepared to handle

similar situations in the workplace. This technique also has external validity since Lund Dean, Beggs and Keane (2010) reported that the most common ethical issues faced in the workplace were pressure to do something the employee was uncomfortable with or to bend the rules.

Role-play enables participants to gauge their behavioral response in comparison to others and when utilized within a classroom setting, it provides insight as to their level of ethical reasoning. Since the method goes beyond merely discussing theories of ethical reasoning and places the student within an ethical context, the actual behavioral response is elicited. The feedback and debriefing session which incorporates discussion as to the appropriate behavior and useful responses can enhance students' probability of acting ethically in the future by encoding appropriate responses and creating patterns or schemas of appropriate behavior.

Several limitations deserve mention. First, the research was fielded in one university setting so little is known about how the composition of students, their experiences, or other differences might impact student learning. Second, while the exercise attempts to provide high levels of realism with respect to actual business decision-making, the contrived nature of the role-play activity within a classroom setting or extra-curricular setting limits the ability to truly generalize to a corporate setting. Third, the use of multiple appeals or requests from the buyer to continue to persuade the seller to change the date of sale could be considered a fourth experimental condition or manipulation which could confound the results. A larger sample size and more robust analytical techniques would be necessary to determine the impact of different appeals on the ethical responses of those individuals playing the role of the salesperson.

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TABLE - MAIN EFFECT DIFFERENCES

Item	Mean Scores					
	Employment Context		Ethical Code of Conduct		Likelihood to Get Caught	
	B2B (n=56)	Retail (n=54)	Low (n=53)	High (n=57)	Low (n=54)	High (n=53)
<i>Attitude statements 7-point Likert scale where “1” was strongly disagree and “7” strongly agree</i>						
If I had it to do over again, I would probably respond the same way.	6.09	6.27	6.06	6.29	6.20	6.16
I think my behavior was ethical.	6.50	6.45	6.40	6.54	6.42	6.53
The company described in the scenario encourages its employees to maintain high levels of ethical business practices.	5.70	5.58	5.13	6.11 ^a	5.41	5.86
<i>7-point semantic differential items where respondents were asked “My behavior was...”</i>						
Culturally Acceptable/Culturally Unacceptable	2.09	1.84	1.96	1.96	2.26	1.66 ^a
Unfair/Fair	6.07	5.95	5.87	6.14	6.00	6.02
Traditionally Acceptable/Traditionally Unacceptable	2.35	2.09	2.33	2.11	2.30	2.13
Morally Wrong/Morally Right	6.25	6.26	6.17	6.34	6.20	6.31
Just/Unjust	1.92	2.04	2.13	1.84	2.04	1.93
Unacceptable/Acceptable	6.16	6.16	6.09	6.21	6.07	6.24
<i>Feelings measured using 7-point scale where “1” indicated not at all and “7” very well where respondents were asked “After participating in the role play I feel...”</i>						
Calm	5.53	5.68	5.54	5.67	5.57	5.64
Embarrassed	2.62	2.35	2.73	2.26	2.57	2.40
Excited	3.49	3.29	3.63	3.17	3.65	3.13 ^b
Guilty	2.18	1.72	2.08	1.81	2.06	1.83
Happy	4.31	4.25	4.32	4.24	4.61	3.96 ^a
Nervous	3.39	2.96	3.46	2.91	2.84	3.49 ^b
Pleased	4.90	4.71	4.64	4.77	4.80	4.61
Bad	2.21	1.71 ^b	2.24	1.70 ^a	1.76	2.15
Successful	5.12	5.05	4.96	5.20	5.02	5.15 ^b
Worried	2.31	1.94	2.30	1.96	2.02	2.23
Using a 7-point scale where “1” is unethical and “7” is ethical, how do you view your behavior?	6.32	6.53	6.31	6.55	6.34	6.53
On a scale from 0% to 100%, how likely are you to respond the same way in the future if confronted with a similar situation?	88.04	86.02	83.80	89.78	84.93	89.00
^a significant $\leq .05$; ^b significant $\leq .10$						

REDUCING SALESPERSON TURNOVER: THE ROLES OF MARKET ORIENTATION AND GRIT

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Salesforce turnover is often a main concern of organizations, leading to lost sales and increased costs for firms (Darmon, 1990; Futrell & Parasuraman, 1984). Previous research shows that key role stressors—role conflict and role ambiguity—often lead to increased intentions to leave an organization (Lyons, 1971; Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Existing research show that market orientation leads to greater customer retention and employee satisfaction along with a better understanding of organizational goals and increased organizational communication (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kotler, 1988; Narver & Slater, 1990). Drawing on *job-demands resources theory* (Demerouti, et al. 2001) and *theory of conservation of resources* (Hobfoll, 1988), this study develops a model which posits that increased market orientation has positive internal consequences in terms of reduced role stressors (both conflict and ambiguity), increased job satisfaction, and reduced turnover intentions for salespeople who serve as the customer-facing contact point. Additionally, the authors examine the role that grit plays in moderating the relationship between satisfaction and turnover intentions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Narver & Slater (1990), market orientation consists of three major areas: *customer orientation*, *competitor orientation*, and *inter-functional orientation*. *Customer orientation* focuses on being knowledgeable enough about one's customers in order to continually create superior value for them. *Competitor orientation* emphasizes understanding every facet of current competitors and potential future competitors. *Inter-functional coordination* means employing all company resources in a manner that creates superior value for customers; this area of market orientation emphasizes that value can be created anywhere in the buyer's value chain and by any member of the selling organization. Role stressors—role conflict and role ambiguity—are obstacles employees may face with regards to their position within an organization. Role conflict, as defined by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), occurs when tasks expected of an employee are unpredictable or lacking consistency. Role ambiguity, on the other hand, occurs when employees do not have a complete understanding of what is expected of them within their role in the organization (Rizzo et al., 1970). Sales managers stand to benefit greatly by understanding which aspects of a job and a work environment contribute most to satisfaction or dissatisfaction of their employees (Churchill, Ford, Walker, 1974). This is in large part due to the fact that job satisfaction is a primary contributor to many job-related outcomes. Job satisfaction is essential to the managerial goal of retaining high-performing salespeople (Darmon, 2008). Employee job satisfaction is of great importance to market oriented companies as there has

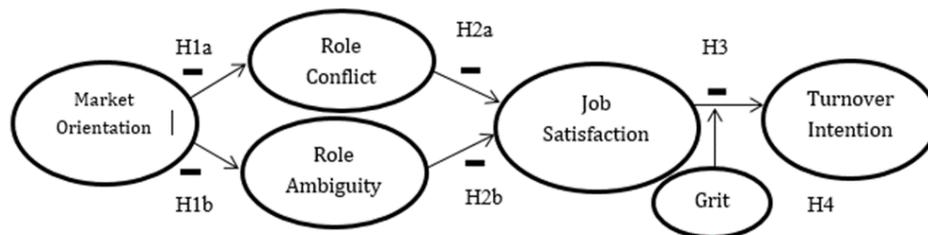
been evidence of a positive relationship existing between employee satisfaction and customer satisfaction (Homburg & Stock, 2004).

Grit is defined as dedication in enduring long-term goals (Duckworth et al., 2007). Duckworth et al. find two sub-components of grit, including working vigorously toward goals (perseverance of efforts) and maintaining discipline and interest over time regardless of past failures and current challenges (consistency of interests). Grit is a very similar construct to tenacity. Tenacity is referred to as possessing perseverance and resoluteness; it characterizes success through willpower (Avila & Fern, 1986). Results indicate that grit is the most important determinant of retention; for instance, Maddi et al., 2012 found that military cadets who were retained in the academy were twice as likely to have high grit scores versus cadets who were not retained (Maddi et al., 2012).

HYPOTHESES

In this study, the authors propose six hypotheses (as measured by regression analysis): higher levels of market orientation, as perceived by the salesperson, will lead to lower levels of role conflict (H1a – supported) and role ambiguity (H1b – supported); lower levels of role conflict (H2a – not supported) and role ambiguity (H2b – not supported) will lead to increased levels of job satisfaction; higher levels of job satisfaction will lead to decreased turnover intentions in salespeople (H3 – supported); and that salesperson grit will moderate the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention in such a way that salespeople with higher levels of grit show a weaker link between satisfaction and turnover than do those salespeople with lower levels of grit.

Figure 1: Hypotheses Model



METHODS

Scales used in the current study have each been tested for reliability and validity. The market orientation scale is a 14-item scale constructed by Narver & Slater (1990) and adapted from Hooley, Cox, Fahy, Shipley, Beracs, Fonfara, and Snoj (2000). Role conflict and ambiguity scales were taken from Rizzo et al. (1970). Job satisfaction was evaluated using a 5-item scale comprised by Hartline & Ferrel (1996). The grit component was measured according to a 12-item scale adapted from Duckworth et al. (2007). The scale is broken down into two 6-items constructs: grit–consistency of interests (CI) and grit – perseverance of efforts (PE). Finally, turnover intentions were assessed via a 6-item scale created by Bothma and Roodt (2013). Data was collected via a 66 question online survey. The targeted sample was boundary-spanning salespeople from a range of industries that

included logistics, insurance, and financial services (n=70). Survey responses were collected from business contacts of the researchers on LinkedIn. Simple regressions were employed due to a small sample size.

RESULTS

Regression Results: Paths between MO → RC and MO → RA were significant. Market orientation to role conflict presented a R^2 value of .064 meaning that market orientation accounts for 6.4% variance in role conflict of a boundary-spanning employee. Market orientation to role ambiguity produced an R^2 of .408 meaning that market orientation accounts for 40.8% variance in role ambiguity. Analysis also revealed a positive beta score between MO/RA ($\beta = .646$) due to the fact that the scale for RA is actually measuring perceptions of role clarity by the employee. The relationship between MO-RA was one of the most significant findings of this study and it reveals that market orientation can be a great way to minimize role ambiguity within a sales organization. There was a significant interaction amongst all three variables meaning grit-consistency of interests and grit-perseverance of efforts interact with JS in a way that moderates the link between job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Employee grit along with job satisfaction level account for 72% ($R^2 = 0.72$) variance on turnover intentions.

DISCUSSION

Role conflict and role ambiguity can be reduced by the presence of a market orientation (MO). This study indicates that there is a cost saving benefit that accrues to firms with a market orientation due to reduced salesperson turnover via the mechanisms found in role theory. Companies should understand this benefit of a market orientation and push for MO adoption in order to alleviate some key role stressors placed on their salespeople in addition to the already established benefits from external customers. In the case of either a moderating or direct effect of grit on TOI, HR managers must now learn to identify employees with high levels of both grit - consistency of interests and grit - perseverance of efforts in order to better minimize turnover intentions. This research marks the first time that grit has been introduced into the business literature, specifically the sales area. Grit is an interesting construct relating to sales research and the authors hope this research will aid its adoption into further research.

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A MORE NUANCED VIEW OF SALES MANAGER SUPPORT VERSUS PARTICIPATION

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INTRODUCTION

Researchers have examined various aspects of the sales manager-salesperson interaction. The sales manager as role model (Rich 1997), transformational leader (Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013), deliverer of bad news (Dubinsky, Kim, and Lee 2011), and provider of feedback (Jaworski and Kohli 1991) have all garnered attention. Digging deeper Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel, and Kennedy (2008) explored the characteristics of effective sales managers and found an important dichotomy between the views of sales managers and salespeople. While sales managers often viewed their role as that of participant, salespeople tended to view the sales manager's role as being a supporter of the sales effort. This divergence of opinions may thwart effective interactions between the sales manager and salesperson during the sales process.

LITERATURE

The literature on support and participation by the sales manager is rather piecemeal. Research thus far has tended to deal with individual aspects of support or participation rather than either one as a whole. No research has tried to offer a more nuanced examination of either aspect of the salesperson and sales manager relationship. Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel, and Kennedy (2008) called for inquiry into why the actors differed on what role the sales manager should play. In spite of the work done on the sales manager-salesperson interaction, a careful understanding of the distinction between support and participation is lacking and we know of no complete framework of the effects of support and participation on sales performance. We fill this void in part with an exploratory qualitative study of sales managers and salespeople juxtaposed with existing literature to build a model and formulate propositions. This model provides a more nuanced picture of support and participation.

STUDY

The authors take an exploratory approach to the subject area and qualitative inquiry is particularly useful for the generation of new knowledge and to explore under- or unexplored concepts (Creswell 2007). To develop understanding in this nascent research space, we asked specifically about managers' support and participation activities; we followed this with questions about what worked best for the individual salesperson and what contributed to the effectiveness of the various managerial styles. This provides an overview of what participation and support mean to sales people and what they feel is the "best" approach.

Figure 1 graphically depicts the detailed understanding of sales manager support (SMS) and sales manager participation (SMP) that emerged from the data. Participation and support are not one-dimensional concepts. They are made up of different types of participation and support

that managers can provide. The model starts with support archetypes and moves down into increasingly participatory management techniques. In the middle there are two “Directed” aspects of participation which reflect support mechanisms that involve the sales manager in the sales process. There appears to be a continuum of manager involvement in the selling process from pure support to over-participation. Support is viewed positively across the board by salespeople and is expected to result in positive sales process and relational outcomes. Directed participation is also positive, while the latter participation archetypes are seen as largely negative. Two additional aspects of the salesperson – sales manager relationship emerged in the data that pointed to potential moderation. Both “role knowledge” and “trust” were repeatedly mentioned as key in the success of the manager and salesperson relationship and of these individuals being able to effectively do their jobs. Role knowledge and trust are proposed to influence the effectiveness of each of the participation and support techniques at impacting relational and process outcomes.

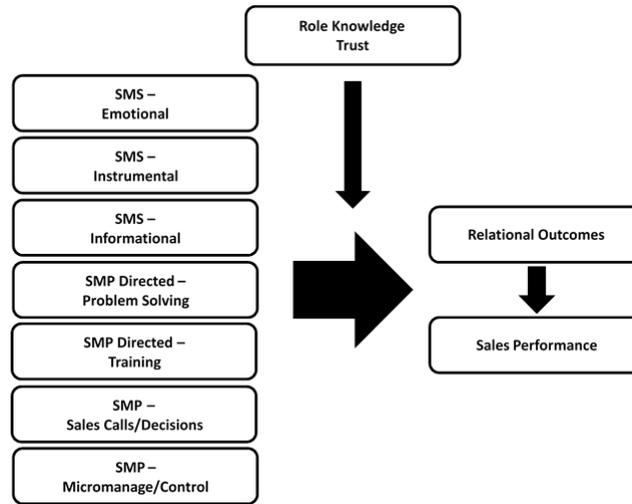
Having a more nuanced understanding now of sales manager support and participation, we offer general propositions of the impact of these on both sales manager and salesperson relationships and sales process outcomes. Based on the direct comments of salespeople in this study and supported by literature we propose the following related to the possible positives and negatives of sales manager support and sales manager participation.

- P1) Sales manager support will be positively related to salesperson and sales manager relational outcomes.
- P2) Sales manager participation directed will be positively related to salesperson and sales manager relational outcomes.
- P3) Sales manager participation will be negatively related to salesperson and sales manager relational outcomes.
- P4) Role knowledge and trust will moderate the above relationships. Higher level salesperson perceptions of managers “knowing their role” will enhance positive effects and attenuate negative effects. Higher levels of salesperson trust in the sales manager will also enhance positive effects and attenuate negative effects.

CONCLUSION

There is a long running interest in the support of the sales force by sales managers. Participation, though less widely explored, is a closely related and important activity of the sales manager as well. This exploratory study heeds the call of Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel, and Kennedy (2008) for a more thorough understanding of the impact these activities have on the sales manager-salesperson interaction. This is especially salient given the difference of opinion between sales managers and salespeople as to the appropriate mix of these behaviors. We have offered a more nuanced framework for considering the interaction of support and participation by juxtaposing information from sales professionals with prior literature. We have been sensitive to the variety of earlier conceptions of support and participation and sought to bring order to the constructs while still including a broad variety of related phenomena.

Figure 1 – Model



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WHAT YOU DON'T SAY MATTERS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RELATIONAL LISTENING SCALE IN SALES*

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Communication is inherent in the selling process and buyer-seller relationships. To effectively listen, one must put the emphasis on others, confining their selfishness. This difficult emphasis is likely why Ingram, Schwepker, and Hutson (1992) find that poor listening skills are the greatest contributor to salesperson failure resulting in decreased customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, as well as reduced salesperson performance (Aggarwal et al. 2005).

There are many types of listening such as interpersonal, relational, and active empathetic; with the latter type of listening frequently being referenced and investigated in sales research. Comer and Drollinger (1999) define active empathetic listening as “a process whereby the listener: receives verbal and nonverbal messages, processes them cognitively, responds to them verbally and nonverbally, and attempts to assess their underlying meaning intuitively by putting themselves in the customers’ place throughout,” (p. 18). Furthermore, these researchers build upon this conceptualization to establish a measure of active empathetic listening in sales (AEL). As the understanding of listening in sales progresses beyond the foundational research stream, it is evident that there are additional elements to the listening process that must be explored in order to continue the forward trajectory this stream of literature, with researchers positing that additional dimensions of listening should be studied (Pryor, Malshe, and Paradise 2013).

The focus of this research is on developing a measure of salesperson listening that encompasses the *entire* theoretical relational listening process (Halone and Pecchioni 2001). Specifically, research objectives are to: (1) develop measures to assess both the macro-and micro-level processes of relational listening; (2) provide an empirical assessment of the relational listening process in sales. A scale that captures the full listening process is necessary to more effectively assess this process in selling; furthermore, managers can benefit from understanding the entire process to evaluate their salespeople and develop their listening skills.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Relational communication scholars suggest that in order to properly understand listening, “scholars must conceptually frame listening as a relationally constituted process,” (Pecchioni and Halone 2000, p. 70). Based on this, these researchers propose a “grounded” theoretical model of relational listening that not only examines listening at the micro-level but also at the broader macro-level as a complete process of communication. This theory marries various literature streams on relational communication and listening. The present research utilizes the dimensions of the relational listening framework to develop a scale of relational listening. The following discussion outlines the theoretical macro- and micro- level processes of relational listening and their manifestation in the salesperson listening process.

Macro-level processes in relational listening occur across time. Specifically, Halone and Pecchioni (2001) identify three macro-level processes: pre-interaction, during interaction, and post-interaction. These three processes also map directly onto behaviors and processes in sales such as planning skills (pre-interaction), active empathetic listening (during interaction), and follow-up (post-interaction), to name a few.

The micro-level processes can be broken down into three specific processes that comprise the during interaction process: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Halone and Pecchioni 2001). It is evident from this research that relational partners have specific notions about what constitutes cognitive and affective processes. Specifically, relational partners indicate that in the cognitive process, listeners should have the ability to “understand,” “pay attention,” “interpret;” on the cognitive side, relational partners expect the listener: to “care,” be “empathetic,” and show “emotion,” on the affective side. While cognitions and affect are two separate processes, early listening research indicates that both are at play in active listening (Thomlison 1984).

METHODOLOGY

Academic and practitioner literature, along with existing scales, were first reviewed to generate items for the relational listening process. In addition, six in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants (sales researchers, sales managers, and salespeople). From the literature review and interviews of key informants, a list of 89 items was generated. Examples of initial items include: “generally, I come prepared to meetings with customers;” (pre-interaction), “typically I follow-up with my customers;” (post-interaction), “during interactions with my customers, I turn my body towards the customer(s) to show interest in the conversation” (non-verbal). Following item generation a preliminary assessment of the dimensionality of the items was conducted using expert judges. Following a similar to procedure as Saxe and Weitz (1982), 38 marketing academics at a national academic sales conference were surveyed. After the concept of salesperson listening was described, judges were given a sheet with 89 items and asked to rate each item as “clearly representative,” “somewhat representative,” or “not representative” of salesperson listening. Sixty-eight items, which at least 80% of judges rated as “somewhat representative,” were retained (Hardesty and Bearden 2004).

Study 1 was a survey of undergraduate students enrolled in an introductory marketing course at a university in the United States. The purpose of this study was to determine which pool of items represented effective listening from a customer’s perspective (Drollinger, Comer, and Warrington 2006). Participants responded to each of the 68 items by indicating how well the statements described if the salesperson was listening to them on a 7-point Likert type scale. After data was collected, exploratory factor analysis using SPSS 19 was used to purify the measure. From this, the item set was multidimensional, as expected, items were eliminated that produced dimensions that were not conceptually identified (Churchill 1979); all other items loaded on their proposed dimensions with a factor loading of 0.55 or greater.

In Study 2, the pool of items was assessed to determine if the items also reflected salespeople’s self-perceptions of listening to their customers; as well as to refine the item set. Similar to the procedure with the customer sample, an online survey was used to collect the data; 164 complete surveys were received. The salespeople participants responded to each of the 64 items for the relational listening process by indicating how well the statements described various ways they may act with their customers on a 7-point Likert type scale. In addition to the listening items, measures for empathy and customer orientation were also included as they are expected to correlate positively to the dimensions of the relational listening process (Drollinger, Comer, and Warrington 2006). Principal-components analysis with varimax rotation was utilized to examine the dimensionality of the relational listening set. Seven factors were identified that correspond to the underlying dimensions: pre-interaction, sensing, processing, responding–verbal, responding–

nonverbal, responding–technology, and post-interaction. Items that cross-loaded or had loadings less than 0.50 were eliminated. Using these cut-offs, the item set was reduced from 64 to 39.

Similar to Study 2 procedure, for Study 3 a sample of salespeople was used to collect the data; overall, 205 complete surveys were received. The survey for this study included the 39 items comprising the multidimensional relational listening process, as well as several additional constructs to use in confirming nomological validity. The constructs included for validation were customer orientation, behavioral job performance, and outcome job performance. After conducting exploratory factor analysis on the validation constructs, all relational listening process items were subjected to exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and then a structural model was run. Also, correlations with the validation constructs were assessed.

DISCUSSION

The focus of this research was on the development of a measure of salesperson listening that encompassed the complete relational listening process including dimensions at both macro- and micro- levels of processes. Three studies were presented in which items were developed, and refined in order to ensure dimensionality, reliability, and validity of the multidimensional scale. The results indicate reliability, as well as construct and nomological validity. Furthermore, with the third study, the full model of the relational listening process and outcomes were tested, with results indicating that the relational listening process does, in fact, occur in a sequential process, and that the responding dimension of listening is a higher order construct, and is the aspect of salesperson listening that has an impact on the next step in the relational listening process, post-interaction. This model also showed that the end result of the process, post-interaction, impacts both behavioral and outcome performance. This scale answers researchers' calls for a better understanding of the complete listening process (Pryor, Malshe, and Paradise 2013).

In addition, this scale development contributes significantly to listening theory, as it is the first research that examines the full process of listening, including macro- and micro- level processes. Moreover, this research is theory-driven as the scale is built upon relational listening theory from the communications field (Halone and Pecchioni 2001). Besides contributing to theory development, this scale provides the opportunity for researchers to further explore the impact of listening in a sales context.

In addition to the benefits of the scale to sales researchers and listening theory, there are many managerial implications. First, the structural model of the relational listening process shows that the post-interaction process has a significant impact on outcome variables. Thus, managers can use this information to encourage and train their salespeople to not neglect follow-up, and post-interaction. Furthermore, managers can easily assess whether a job candidate has a natural inclination or skill of post-interaction by their follow up with the manager. Even more so, research in education indicates that listening is a trainable skill (Costanzo 1992). Thus, managers can develop training to enhance the effectiveness of salespeople's relational listening process.

**This research also appeared, in part, within a dissertation.*

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A CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF WHAT THE INFORMED CUSTOMER AND THE ADAPTIVE SALESPERSON BRING TO A MODERN SALES INTERACTION

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According to many industry experts, the information age is on the verge of making Arthur Miller's famed story "Death of a Salesman" in need of a re-title to "Death of the Sales Profession." One marketing expert exclaims that "selling, as a profession and function, is slowly sinking like the Titanic because products are 'bought', not sold" (Ries and Ries 1998 pg. 5). Another predicts that the number of sales jobs in the United States will decrease 600% by the year 2020 (Gschwandtner 2011). On the other hand, different experts are confident that the sales profession is actually thriving and will *add* two million jobs by the year 2020 (Pink 2012). These conflicting claims in the popular press abound making the future of the sales profession uncertain. However, it is clear that because of the availability of information that *both* customers and salespeople that enter into a sales interaction are changing. Understanding how the roles of both parties in a sales interaction are changing based on information availability is very important, yet largely absent from the marketing literature. Therefore the purpose of this current conceptual research is to provide a picture of current understanding and suggest a picture of how sales interactions have changed.

It is no mystery that in many cases current day consumers can make buying decisions for non-complex products without the aid of a salesperson. For example, a recent study predicts that by the year 2017 that 10% of all U.S. sales will be made online (Rueter 2013). However, numerous scholarly studies have shown that salespeople are important for consumers buying complex products and services (i.e. automobiles, technology, business services, etc.) which require more specific information search. These complex buying decisions require consumers to increase situational product knowledge through external information search effort (i.e. Srinivasan 1990 ; Srinivasan and Ratchford 1991).

Historically for complex products, the sales interaction (where the customer interacts with the firm's salespeople and products) is where over 40% of information is gathered by the consumer during the external information search process (Beatty and Smith 1987). However, most research concerning external search considers the pre-internet era. This lack of current research likely contributes to the various conflicting claims concerning the future of the customer-salesperson interaction in complex product buying situations. Current research does suggest that external search is changing because of the internet which allows consumers easy, low-cost access to unprecedented amounts of information (Park, Chung, and Yoo 2009). For example, 83% of U.S. consumers use an average of 10.4 on-line information sources to research complex product purchases before interacting with the marketplace (Rueter 2012 ; Simonson and Rosen 2014). By nature, complex buying decisions require more than just information, they require synthesis of that information to the point of decision making. In fact, research has suggested that having more information can lead to information overload of the consumer which can reduce the consumer's ability to make a decision (Iyengar and Lepper 2000).

Traditionally, one aid for consumers to overcome this overload has been the salesperson. Given the past importance of the customer-salesperson interaction in complex buying decisions and the unknowns of how the internet has changed this importance, the current research offers

three important conceptual areas of inquiry. Research in these areas will help to provide an updated scholarly perspective of the role of the salesperson in complex purchase decisions in the information age.

The first conceptual area considered by this research concerns the customer who enters a sales interaction with a trained salesperson to purchase a complex product. In other words, what does the customer that walks into a car dealership, jewelry store, or furniture retailer “look like” in terms of information and ability? Theoretical perspectives are reviewed to update, clarify and provide a scholarly based basis for the “picture” of the internet-era customer. This updated “picture” will provide a better understanding of the internet era customer that interacts with a trained salesperson. Providing this basis for future empirical study is an important contribution to the marketing and sales literature because understanding the effects of the internet and the mindset of customers entering sales interactions for complex products is largely unstudied in the marketing or sales literature.

The second conceptual area considered by this research is the trained salesperson who enters into a sales interaction with an internet-era customer. Similar to the customer that enters a sales interaction, the salesperson in the interaction has also changed based on internet-era realities. In most cases, because of information availability, sales organizations are forced to replace the stereotypical “used car salesman” with trained and knowledgeable sales professionals. Yet, while the common notion is that the sales role is changing, the marketing literature does not provide a clear understanding of what the internet-era salesperson “looks like” as they enter the sales interaction. Finally, the current research considers the sales interaction and how traditional influence tactics interact with a highly informed customer. The research concludes with several propositions for future study and implications for scholars and practitioners.

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I BELIEVE IN LUCK, THEREFORE I SELL: THE ROLE OF SERENDIPITY IN INEXPERIENCED SALES PROFESSIONALS' PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Facing uncertainty and likely failure is part of young sales professionals' daily routine, especially in the exploration stage of their career (Cron and Slocum 1986; Dixon and Schertzer 2005; Dixon et al. 2005). Therefore, proper training and the feeling of personal accomplishment are critical to their motivation, job satisfaction, and also reduce turnover (Flaherty and Pappas 2002; Leach et al. 2005; Miao et al. 2009). Moreover, salespeople's learning experience, felt self-efficacy, and supervisors' support remain instrumental to their continuing engagement and success (Dixon et al. 2003; Jaramillo and Mulki 2008; Kholi et al. 1998; Sujana et al. 1994; Wang and Netemeyer 2002). This research investigates an unexplored area of the attribution theory which should help young salespeople, sales managers, and sales educators understand better the relationship between believing in luck and becoming successful.

The theory of attribution plays a major role in helping understand how sales professionals react to failure and bounce back (e.g., Dixon et al. 2001). The theory also is of particular importance in education to analyze how learners interpret performance and redirect effort (Weiner 1979). The attribution theory is concerned with individuals' search for causes of their failures and successes; a natural tendency to redirect effort on appropriate behavior en route to improved performance (Heider 1958; Kelley 1967). Three central causal dimensions have been discerned, namely stability, locus, and controllability (Weiner 1979). Stability refers to the extent to which the cause of failure or success is perceived as being stable (native ability or task difficulty), or unstable (effort or luck). Locus deals with one's perception of the location of the cause, namely internal (native ability or effort), or external (task difficulty or luck). Finally, controllability relates to individuals' perception of their ability to affect their achievement by controlling the cause (effort), or not (native ability, task difficulty, and luck). Consequently, the attribution theory considers luck as an unstable, external, and uncontrollable cause of individuals' achievement (Kelley 1967; Weiner 1979). Research on the instrumental impact of luck on sales outcomes is scarce, yet it is an essential topic since the very nature of the market environment, competitors, and customers, leave salespeople in the face of numberless instable, external, and uncontrollable sources of uncertainty and failure.

Since field intelligence gathering prepare salespeople see opportunities, we propose a model to capture the potential influence of accidental luck and provoked luck on young salespeople's performance (Le Bon 2014). We suggest that salespeople's effort as reflected in their activities influence sales opportunities. In turn, sales opportunities open fortuitous and auspicious situations leading respectively to accidental luck and provoked luck. Accidental luck and provoked luck are then hypothesized to provide positive outcomes such as sales performance. We control for regular sales process which also influences sales performance.

Results show that accidental luck and provoked luck impact sales performance, along with regular sales process. Specifically, salespeople's belief in luck increases sales performance through sales activities, sales opportunities, and provoked luck. Belief in luck also increases

accidental luck which impacts self-efficacy and performance, after controlling for regular sales process. Contributions reveal that luck, contrary to the attribution theory principles, operates complementarily to effort, and thus is instrumental to sales success.

To the best of our knowledge, this research is the first to separate luck into two dimensions—accidental and provoked—and examine its effect on sales performance. Although considered as an unstable, external, and uncontrollable cause in the attribution theory, luck should be viewed as a manageable determinant of personal achievement. Such findings call for a deeper understanding of how luck could be integrated into sales performance theories and reinforce salespeople's self-determination, motivation, and success.

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INFLUENCING SALESPERSON PERCEPTIONS OF NEW PRODUCT INTRODUCTIONS: THE ROLE OF THE SALES MANAGER

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For many firms, new product introductions are very important. For all the benefits of new product innovation, though, successfully introducing new products to the market can prove to be a difficult task to accomplish consistently. One critical element to successful new product introductions is the sales force. Hultink and Atuahene-Gima (2000) show that the adoption of a new product by the sales force can significantly increase the market performance of the innovation. One significant influence over salesperson behavior that has received limited attention with respect to new product adoption is the sales manager. Research indicates that sales managers can have a substantial influence over salesperson role fulfillment (e.g. Fang et al. 2005). It is therefore reasonable to consider they might also hold substantial sway over how salespeople handle new product introductions. The purpose of this paper is to expand on the existing literature by investigating some of the methods that sales management can employ to influence salesperson perceptions of new product introductions.

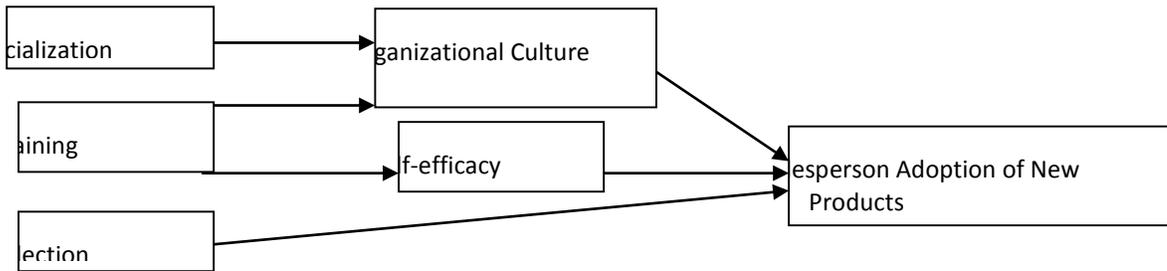
THEORY

According to social information processing (SIP) theory, individual employees do not make decisions about their employer and job function in a vacuum. Instead, they use the social environment and cues within the organization as a basis to help them form attitudes and expectations, particularly about ambiguous task characteristics (Salancik and Pfeffer 1978). New products often present an ambiguous situation for salespeople both in terms of organizational commitment to the new product and marketplace acceptance of the new product. The social context of the salesperson will influence salesperson decisions in these ambiguous new product situations. Although sales managers often do not enjoy a great deal of direct supervision of their salespeople, they still have a number of means at their disposal by which they can influence the social context of their salespeople. Figure 1 depicts the relationships between constructs proposed by the current research.

PROPOSITION DEVELOPMENT

The selection of employees is essentially the practice of predicting future success in a particular job function (Cron et al 2005). In order to predict the future success of salespeople, a number of assessment procedures have been devised: cognitive ability tests, personality tests, biodata, job skills/knowledge assessments, and special purpose sales assessments. Some of these can be especially useful in selecting salespeople more inclined to new product adoption.

Figure 1



Personality tests can assess a number of different personality traits in candidates for employment. One relevant personality trait, for example, is optimism. Higher levels of optimism throughout the sales force will tend to create a more positive social context regarding new product introductions. Biodata essentially uses historical information to predict future success (Cron et al 2005). This tool can easily include items that resemble personality test questions to pick up on the tendencies of candidates to perceive new products as a positive, thus creating a social context that more readily welcomes new product introductions.

P1: Selection methods that more heavily involve personality and biodata measurement over other assessment procedures will increase salesperson adoption of new products.

Research has shown that training is a significant factor in distinguishing successful from unsuccessful new product introductions (Di Benedetto 1999). The training for a new product can be used to increase the self-efficacy of the salespeople with regard to successfully selling that new product. In the context of selling a new product, self-efficacy will significantly influence the salesperson's perceptions of that product and willingness to embrace it.

There are a number of design decisions to be made when introducing a new training effort. Management can facilitate the development of self-efficacy by the sales force by incorporating certain elements into the new product training. For example, positive feedback plays a significant role in the development of self-efficacy (Karl et al 1993). In addition to feedback, Gist and Mitchell (1992) posit that modeling and experience can be effective training techniques for increasing self-efficacy.

P2: Training that includes positive feedback, modeling, and experience will increase salesperson adoption of new products through an increase in self-efficacy in the sales force.

The organizational culture also holds sway over the prescribed reactions to various developments within the organization. In addition, organizational culture influences how information is processed within the company (Moorman 1995). The manner in which information is processed dictates what decisions are made based on that information.

P3: Organizational culture significantly influences individual perceptions of new product innovations. In particular, an organizational culture that encourages new products will increase salesperson adoption of new products.

By effectively creating the correct culture, managers can influence how salespeople react to new product introductions. For firms that regularly introduce new products, sales force

training becomes the norm. Recent research posits that training is as much a social experience as it is about specific individual skills (Gallivan et al. 2005). Given the typically high autonomy of salespeople, training provides one of the few shared experiences common to the entire sales force. These shared experiences contribute to an overall organizational culture. Since history is another determinant of organizational culture, training should involve lessons from the present as well as lessons from the past. By bringing up these historical lessons in training, management is able to solidify these experiences and further the sense of a shared history amongst the members of the sales force.

P4: Training that involves a shared experience and historical lessons will contribute positively to an organizational culture that supports new product adoption.

While there are a number of dimensions that have been theorized as leading to different levels of socialization of employees, the dimension that seems to have yielded the most results is that of level of institutionalization (Kim et al 2005). In order to create a common history and learning experiences, some firms choose to engage in highly institutionalized socialization practices (Jones 1986). By doing this, firms can decrease the likelihood of unique experiences by the employees where an organizational culture other than the one promoted by management is learned. One of the main goals with these highly institutionalized socialization tactics is reducing uncertainty regarding some work functions (Kim et al 2005).

P5: The use of highly institutionalized socialization tactics will contribute positively to an organizational culture that supports new product adoption.

DISCUSSION

This research holds the potential for a number of contributions to sales research and practice. First, this is an under-researched yet important topic in the marketing literature. Research of the influence of the sales manager over the new product adoption process of salespeople is practically nonexistent. Second, this paper also explores the influence of the social context of the sales force. Although sales managers often do not have high levels of direct supervision over their sales employees, they can influence salesperson behavior by cultivating an appropriate social context in which salespeople make their behavior decisions. It is vital to understand the dynamics of this social influence over salesperson behavior and how to harness it to the accomplishment of the goals of the organization.

For practitioners, this research holds the potential for increased effectiveness of new product introductions. Since sales agents are vital for the success of new products, it is important to have their support for innovative new products. By understanding how to influence their perceptions of new products, these roll-outs can be made more effective and have higher prospective for success. In addition, this research can potentially increase the efficiency of sales managers. In establishing the most important influencers of salesperson perceptions, managers will be able to concentrate resources in the most effective way possible to garner the most impactful results.

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ENABLERS AND BARRIERS: A SCALE TO MEASURE MILLENNIAL-AGE BUSINESS STUDENTS' INTENT TO PURSUE SALES CAREERS

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Sales researchers repeatedly note four important observations when conducting research on college students' intent to pursue sales careers. First, we need more sales professionals. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. businesses will need to fill over 1.9 million sales positions between 2010 and 2020 (Lockard and Wolf 2012). Second, millennial-age workers are needed to fill those positions. The Brookings Institute forecasts that by 2025 millennial-age workers will hold 75% of all jobs (Winograd and Hais 2014). Third, business colleges have already begun to respond. More academic resources are being used to create sales centers, new selling courses and real-world experiences for students to prepare college graduates for professional sales careers (Weeks et al. 2014). Finally, millennial-age college students don't seem to care and continue to resist sales careers (e.g., Karakaya, Quigley, and Bingham 2011). Hence, if a remedy is not found there will be a shortage of college-educated sales professionals and academic resources squandered. Leaders within business and academia are calling for more research to better understand the resistance by millennial-age college students to pursue careers in sales, and to provide better solutions to instructors, recruiters and business leaders (e.g., Peltier et al. 2014).

Recent efforts have reported progress, and these research findings are being eagerly used to recalibrate sales education curriculum, but is this appropriate? A common approach used to investigate students' intent to pursue sales careers is for researchers to use the scales and items generated from earlier studies to test new relationships and to create new scales. This could be a potential problem because items and scales created for earlier generations (i.e., boomers and gen-xers) may not be suitable when applied to millennial-age college students. To address this problem this research starts from scratch, and uses qualitative data gathered from millennial-aged college students to create new items and scales to measure millennial-age college students' intent to pursue sales careers.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY

The overall objective was to generate items that reflect the reasons that millennial-age college students would and would not consider a career in professional selling based on responses collected from an online structured interview. Items were generated, refined, and tested in three separate studies. In study 1, respondents were asked to provide the top three reasons why they would and the top three reasons why they would not consider a career in professional selling. The responses were analyzed to generate an initial list of items that were

subsequently tested and refined in study 2. Finally, in study 3, we tested the reduced scale on a new sample.

Study 1: item generation and selection

Sample and Method. Two-hundred-and-four (204) undergraduate business students were recruited to develop the scale items in exchange for extra-credit. Respondents completed an on-line survey that asked them to provide the top three reasons why they would (enablers) and the top three reasons why they would not (barriers) consider a career in professional selling. A total of 612 enablers and 612 barriers were generated.

Atlas.ti was used to analyze the data. Items were generated using a two-step process. First, two members of the research team categorized the responses (barriers and enablers) into thematic categories. Second, items were created for each of the themes.

Results. The item selection process generated a pool of 112 items reflecting 23 themes. Specifically, 10 enablers and 13 barriers were produced. The following “enabler” themes were identified: 1. *Job flexibility* (I could work from home); 2. *Sales passion* (I could sell products I believe in); 3. *Interpersonal strengths* (I enjoy interacting with people); 4. *Income potential* ([Because] of the potential to earn an unlimited income); 5. *Travel opportunity* ([Because] of the opportunity to travel); 6. *Customer service* (I like making customers happy; I could help solve customer problems); 7. *Career opportunity* (There will always be a need for salespeople); 8. *Networking opportunity* (I would be able to meet new people); 9. *Mentally stimulating* (I could learn to persuade people; [because] of the opportunity to creatively solve problems), and 10. *entrepreneurship* (I would be my own boss).

The following “barrier” themes were identified: 1. *Social anxiety* (I would have to interact with people all day); 2. *Uncertainty* (There is too much competition from other companies; the turnover rate for salespeople is high); 3. *Stressful* (Pressure to meet quotas; [because] of burnout (i.e., working too much)); 4. *Mentally unstimulating* (I would be bored of selling the same product); 5. *Lack of career opportunity* (It is difficult to move up in the company); 6. *Work structure* (I want a career with a set schedule); 7. *Negative perception* (I do not want to be pushy; people would not respect me); 8. *Sales interest* (I would not enjoy selling); 9. *Personality* (I do not have an outgoing personality; I cannot handle rejection; I am shy); 10. *Income* (It takes time to earn a good living; I only get paid if I make a sale); 11. *Travel* ([Because] of the need to travel; I would be constantly on-the-go); 12. *Perception of selling abilities* (I do not have the selling skills); and 13. *Time* (It would force me to give up my weekends; it would force me to work long hours).

Study 2: scale assessment and dimensionality

Sample and Method. The subjects for the study were undergraduate business students that have never taken or were not currently enrolled in a professional sales course. The survey was

distributed on-line using Qualtrics. Subjects were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements that reflected possible reasons why they would and would not consider a professional selling career. A total of 246 respondents (49.2% male vs. 50.8% female) completed the survey for extra-credit. The mean age of the respondents was 24.4. 50% of the respondents were Caucasian, 21.5% were Hispanic, 13.4% were African-American, 10.2% were Asian, and 4.9% were “other.”

Results. Using Churchill’s (1979) recommendations, we conducted exploratory factor analysis (EFA), using principal axis factoring followed by a varimax rotation, to reduce the 112-item pool. The initial factor solution resulted in 25 factors with eigenvalues greater than one. The 25-factor solution accounted for 63.3% of the total variance. In order to purify the list, items with loadings of .30 or greater on more than one of the factors and with loadings less than .50 were eliminated (Hair, Jr. et al. 2010). Based on these criteria, we removed items one at a time resulting in an eight-factor structure, 39-item scale for further analysis. The scree in the scree plot at eight factors supported our hypothesized eight-factor model (Cattell 1966). Each of the factors had an eigen value above 1.0. The three “enablers” identified were: *personal development, sales passion, and job flexibility*. The five “barriers” identified were: *personality, unpredictable income, avoidance of conflict, time constraint, and mental stimulation*. Overall, the final eight-factor model explained 60.1% of the total variance. Based on Nunally (1978) and Fornell and Larcker (1981), tests for construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity passed.

Study 3: scale validation

Sample and Method. The subjects for the study were undergraduate business students. The survey was distributed on-line using Qualtrics with the same instructions given in study 2. A total of 460 respondents (45% male vs. 55% female) completed the survey for extra-credit. The mean age of the respondents was 22.6. 62.6% were Caucasian, 20.2% were Hispanic, 9.8% were Black, and 9.1% were Asian.

Results. First, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood to fit the model to the data. The overall model statistics showed that the CFA model fit the data ($\chi^2(670)=1313.36$, $p<.001$; CFI=.934; RMSEA=.046). Second, we used AMOS 20.0 to conduct structural equation modeling (SEM) to investigate the barriers and enablers to professional selling that respondents possessed and the impact of those barriers/enablers on intentions to enter a professional selling career. Our final model showed that undergraduate business students possessed two significant barriers (mental stimulation, unpredictable income) and one enabler (sales passion) to enter a career in professional selling ($\chi^2(115)=428.17$, $p<.001$; CFI=.933; RMSEA=.077).

DISCUSSION

Despite the career opportunities available and all the efforts made by business colleges, millennial-age students continue to resist sales careers. This paper attempts to address this by directly asking them why they would and would not consider a career in professional selling. The results revealed two barriers (*mental stimulation, unpredictable income*) and one enabler (*sales passion*). This suggests that undergraduate business students are more likely to enter a career in professional selling if the position is challenging and provides a stable (fixed) income.

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PRICE SETTING PATTERNS IN DIRECT SELLING ORGANIZATIONS: INSIGHTS FROM NIGERIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Direct selling has become a significant phenomenon occurring in advanced and emerging economies alike (Brodie et al, 2002; Roever, 2010, Wongtada, 2014). Extant research has defined the concept as the face to face selling that occurs away from a fixed retail location (Peterson and Wotruba, 1996, p. 2). The major consensus of studies on direct selling is that direct selling firms are not a homogenous crowd but rather have different tactics that facilitate their selling activities (Peterson and Wotruba, 1996). This insight has helped to arrive at a greater understanding of how direct selling firms organize their activities and also what sustains them in existence over time. Despite the theoretical advancements in the field of direct selling, few studies have investigated how variance in price setting arrangements might affect direct selling organizations. This is surprising because the process of setting a price and the actual price that is set for a product or service influences consumer buying choices (Bertini and Gourville 2012; Bryce et al. 2011). Moreover, we argue that a study of this nature would help to explain the organizational dynamics that shape direct selling activities before sellers actually engage with end-consumers. To address these gaps in the literature, *we ask why and how do price setting arrangements in direct selling organizations vary? We also ask: what are the implications of this variance in the focal organizations?* We answer these questions through an inductive qualitative study of four direct selling organizations in the fast moving consumer goods sector of Nigeria whose sales team actively sold products on the street. Nigeria was selected because it is an emerging economy as well as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural setting where more than 250 languages are spoken (Library of Congress 2008).

We selected the sampled four organizations from the list of 100 registered shops that sell fast moving consumer goods mainly through the use of street sellers. First, we chose 14 out of the 100 companies based on the accessibility of the owners and because they had been in business for at least three years. Second, we focused on an in-depth study of 4 out of the 14 organizations because these organizations provided the researchers with greater access to organizational information and also the opportunity to interview both internal and external informants. The organizations were Biodun Ice-cream Shop, Magic Sausage Stores, Pacific Waters Shop and Tunde Soft Drinks Mart. The data collected for this study included 73 semi-structured interviews of 13 to 42 minutes in length conducted over a period of three (3) months in 2014, 350 hours of field observations of daily activities within organizations in 2014 and a focus group discussion.

Furthermore, the data was also analyzed by using a multi-case inductive research design (Davis and Eisenhardt, 2011).

We unraveled two sets of findings from our analysis. The first focused on explaining the origin of variance in price setting arrangements for direct selling organizations while the second focused on the performance implications of this variance. First, we found that the nature of the

selection criteria for hiring sales employees shapes the price setting arrangements (i.e collective price bargaining and unilateral price bargaining) adopted by the organizations. Specifically, we found that selection criteria adopted by direct selling organizations for hiring its sales team influences the pricing setting arrangements adopted by the organizations such that: (1) organizations that hire their sales team based on relational criteria are more likely to involve their sales team in setting prices and credit terms , whereas (2) organizations that hire their sales team based on non-relational criteria are more likely to set prices and credit terms without the involvement of the sales team in the process. Our second set of findings explained how price setting arrangements (whether collective price bargaining or unilateral price setting) adopted by the organizations affected their relative sales performance in the industry. Specifically, we found that organizations that involve their sales team in setting prices and credit terms are more likely to perform above the industry average, whereas organizations that do not involve their sales team in setting prices and credit terms are more likely to perform below the industry average.

The findings from this study extend the direct selling research in multiple ways. To begin with, this study extends extant research studies on direct selling organizations that focused primarily on studying relationships between direct sellers and end consumers (Bhattacharya and Mehta 2000; Frenzen and Davis 1990; Grayson 2007). Thus, the study extends research beyond the “external aspects of direct selling” to understanding the internal organizational dynamics that make direct selling possible. Second, this study moves beyond the dominant view in the literature that suggests that prices are mainly set based on cost and value considerations to the organization (Bertini and Gourville 2012; Bryce et al. 2011) and introduces alternative considerations that are relevant to emerging economy settings. Specifically, it highlights how direct selling activities within an organization might be shaped by informal norms, customs and relationships based on ethnicity, family or religion. Finally, this study investigates direct selling in an informal economy setting and thus highlights the peculiar characteristics of organizations operating in such economies and why these peculiarities matter for direct selling.

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REAPING BENEFITS FROM INVESTING IN SOLUTION SELLING CAPABILITY: DO PRODUCT AND CUSTOMER CHARACTERISTICS MATTER?

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Acute global competition, ever-increasing product commoditization, and pressures to have a measurable impact on customers' bottom line have irreversibly changed the way firms create value in business markets. One result of these trends is a fundamental change in the way firms strive to differentiate themselves. The basis of differentiation has shifted from an emphasis on the exchange of goods/services, to one focused on the exchange of intangibles and specialized knowledge (Vargo and Lusch 2004), and most recently, to co-creating value with customers by offering integrated solutions (Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007). In fact, 63% of Fortune 100 firms such as Dell and General Electric advocate selling solutions as an integral part of their sales strategy (Sharma, Lucier, and Molloy 2002). Unfortunately, the reality of implementing a solution sales approach is less sanguine. Approximately 25% of Fortune 1000 firms actually lose money from solution selling (Stanley and Wojcik 2005).

In light of these figures, and given the large investments needed for offering and implementing solutions, it is clear that much remains to be learned about how firms can effectively implement solution selling. Unanswered questions abound. For example, how can firms develop solution selling capabilities among their salespeople? Does solution selling pay off for salespeople in the form of increasing sales revenues, profits, and margins? Is the effectiveness of solution selling bounded by certain conditions, such as product and customer characteristics? Answering these questions would provide valuable insight into whether and when selling solutions can generate rents, as well as the conditions under which investments in solution selling are destined to be more effective. Whereas the existing literature has largely overlooked these important questions, this study aims to fill these research gaps. We draw from the resource-based (RBT; Peteraf and Barney 2003) and dynamic capabilities theories (DCT; Teece, Pisano, and Shuen 1997) to develop a multilevel solution selling capability (SSC) framework. Using multisource data from a sample of 58 managers and 247 salespeople as well as secondary objective data across a variety of firms and industries, we test our framework using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND & MODEL

A central tenet of the RBT and its extension DCT is that firms are able to generate rents by leveraging unique resources and capabilities (Peteraf and Barney 2003). Dynamic capabilities refer to firm-embedded processes that allow firms to generate new, value-creating strategies by manipulating current resources and by combining available resources in new ways (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000; Teece et al. 1997). In a sales context, salespersons can draw on resources possessed by either the firm or themselves – such as unique product application knowledge or the capacity to learn customer needs – to design, offer and deploy solutions that have value for the customer. Drawing on conceptual developments in customer solutions research (Tuli et al. 2007), we define SSC as a set of relational processes through which salespeople actively acquire superior knowledge about customers and their

broader business needs, as well as improve, reconfigure, and combine this knowledge with other resources to deploy valuable offerings that solve customers' current and emerging problems. In the current study, we examine the link between SSC and salesperson performance, as well as the boundary conditions of this relationship.

MAJOR FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to engage in an initial investigation of what a solution selling capability is and whether it has a positive influence on salesperson performance. Another goal of this research was to capture a salesperson's ability to sell solutions and determine if the context in which the salesperson sells has an effect on the aforementioned relationship. Stated simply, the current study shows that SSC matters for firms. SSC has a positive influence on salesperson performance even after several covariates are included.

Beyond the linear effect identified in the model, we also uncovered multiple moderating effects. The first moderating effect found was the attenuating influence of product complexity on the SSC to performance relationship. Specifically, we see that as products become more complex the effect of a high SSC is not as strong as when products are not as complex. Speculating on this finding, it appears that salespeople may not be as effective generating solutions that impact performance in complex environments. Importantly, SSC still has a positive influence on performance just simply not as strong. This finding that higher levels of product complexity hamper the effectiveness of SSC signals that firms need to make product-related information available to salespeople in more actionable formats.

Next, we found that both a customer's solution orientation and portfolio heterogeneity had a positive moderating effect on SSC to performance. Regarding the latter finding first, it appears that the experiences and insight gained from interacting with a diverse customer set allows the salespeople to better leverage their solution selling ability. By examining the premises offered in network theory, it becomes more apparent that the characteristics of a salesperson's customer network can dramatically influence the relationship between a litany of capabilities and performance outcomes. Although some may argue that a heterogeneous customer network does not allow the creation of certain synergies and adds a level of difficulty to the sales process, our research suggests that some benefits may be apparent. Further research on this relationship should be conducted.

Our third moderating effect mentioned above, investigated the positive effect of a customer's solution orientation on the SSC to performance relationship. Not surprisingly, the highest level of salesperson performance is found when both SSC and a high solution orientation is present. However, what might be more interesting is that when there is even the slightest reduction in SSC, we see that the highest performance can be seen when the customer's solution orientation is low. In our opinion, this finding sheds more light on nuances of successful relationship development and the importance of aligning the sales approach with the customer's orientation. When a customer demands a solution approach but the salesperson does not have that capability, performance suffers dramatically. This finding suggests that when in doubt, the salesperson should always invest in learning the skills and behaviors required to develop an SSC.

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SALES TRAINING’S IMPACT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ELEARNING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SALES PERFORMANCE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

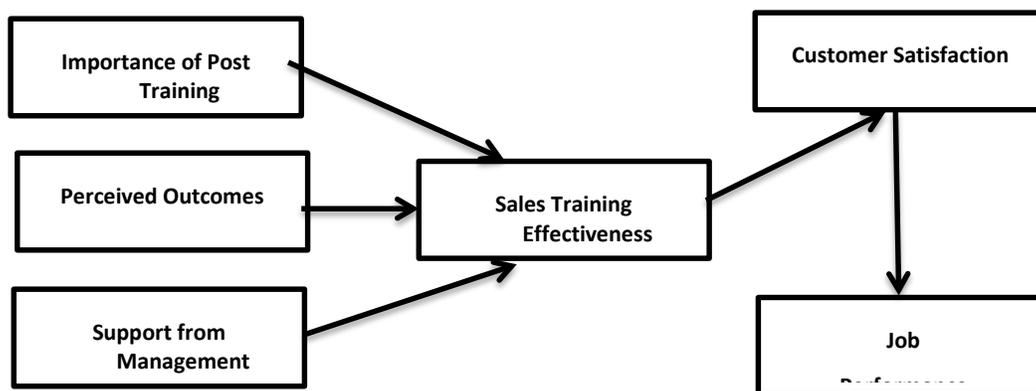
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INTRODUCTION

Sales training has been an important tool for organizations to both attract sales professionals and drive firm performance (Boehle 2010). With the growth of learning technologies, the delivery of sales training has changed from traditional methods (i.e. face to face) to e-learning methods supported by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as Webinars and online tutorials. Building off the Sales Training Evaluation Model (STEM) framework developed by Lupton, Weiss and Peterson (1999), this paper assesses eLearning sales training from sales professionals’ perspectives. We examine the drivers of sales training delivered online and its impact on two performance areas: Job Performance and Customer Satisfaction. Previous research efforts have focused on sales training content (Valentine 2009), attitudes of traditional forms of training (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor 2009), and challenges of sales training (Lassk et al. 2012). To date, there is little to no research that measures sales training’s impact on performance from both the sales professional’s perspective. Gaining an understanding of how eLearning tools impact today’s sales professionals is important for sales organizations.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF ELEARNING SALES TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS

Utilizing Kirkpatrick (1959) and Lupton, Weiss and Peterson’s (1999) research as the foundation, this study develops the following model to identify drivers of Sales Training Effectiveness and its impacts on performance from eLearning perspective.



Sales Training Effectiveness of eLearning - Advancements in technology have enabled sales organizations to deliver training over different media. Technological innovation enables training to be distributed in high quality to sales managers and sales professionals and as a result saves time and lowers costs. eLearning technology can deliver a Self Directed Learning approach and improve sales performance while at the same time reduce training costs related to travel (Boyer and Lambert 2008). Measuring training, specifically eLearning approaches to sales training is a challenge for both practitioners and researchers.

Support from Management - With any initiative, especially training and development, it is important that management supports sales training whether it is developed traditionally or eLearning approach. Senior management's involvement and commitment are crucial to the success of the deployment of eLearning sales training. Support from management plays an important part in ensuring an environment that encourages the use of technology within the firm (Campbell, 2003). One study conducted by Santos and Stuart (2003) found that SDL doubled when managers encouraged their employees to train. Therefore we propose:

H1: There is a positive relationship between importance of support from Management and Sales Training Effectiveness.

Importance of Post Training - The benefits of training are not realized until there is an opportunity to apply the techniques or until coaching and feedback are provided after training. Post training resources can include follow up meetings with managers, support from other colleagues, or an evaluation process that assesses the skills in practice. Feedback from managers is important in helping employees apply skills learned during training (Santos and Stuart 2003) and for future development (Koslowski et al. 2001). In supporting technology initiative such as eLearning programs, sales manager feedback is an important factor in ensuring success of the skill learned in training. Therefore we propose:

H2: There is a positive relationship between importance of post training support and Sales Training Effectiveness

Perceived Outcomes - Measuring the effectiveness of training can be extremely challenging due the differences in comparing perceived effectiveness of training vs. the impact of it on sales performance. "The measurement of learning surely ranks as one of the most perplexing and frustrating challenges confronting the trainer" (Erffmeyer, Russ and Hair, 1992, p. 131). Past empirical studies on measuring the impact of sales training is inconsistent and at times contradictory (Baker 1990; Chonko et. al 1993). One factor that seems to be consistent in impacting sales training is the participants' attitude on the perceived impact of training. Therefore we propose:

H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived outcome of training and Sales Training Effectiveness

Job Performance - Sales organizations invest in training in order to positively impact specific areas of performance: i.e. new revenue, client acquisition, shorter sales cycles, increased lead conversion, etc. The discussion on the impact of training on financial performance has been ongoing and raises the question of whether training has an impact on areas such as revenue. Due to the cost savings of training delivered in electronic format (eLearning), the investment of training can be justified. Using technology to deliver training in a self-directed learning (SDL) environment can be of benefit to an organization from a performance perspective (Boyer and Lambert 2008). Therefore we propose:

H4: There is a positive relationship between Sales Training Effectiveness and Job Performance.

Customer Satisfaction - Sales organizations deliver training to their sales professionals that potentially focus on key areas such as needs identification and presentation solution in order to deliver a customer oriented solution that increases customer satisfaction. Lassk et al.'s (2012) research on the future of training discusses the evolving service-oriented role of today's sales professional in increasing client retention. Training, in the form of eLearning may provide that opportunity to learn more about the importance of service and customer satisfaction and its impact on sales performance. Thus, we propose:

H5: There is a positive relationship between Sales Training Effectiveness and Customer Satisfaction

H6: There is a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Job Performance.

DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The goal of this study was to identify antecedents related to the effectiveness of online sales training (i.e. eLearning) and to analyze sales training's impact on both job performance and customer satisfaction. Our study found all relationships to be supported. Sales managers should understand the benefits of training--from both sales skill and performance perspectives. Sales training can lead to higher pay, advancement and improved job satisfaction. As part of the pre-support from management, potential benefits and outcomes should be communicated to participants prior to training. This will not only lead to greater commitment from the participants but increased overall value to the sales organization.

It is important to remember that sales training effectiveness is the ability to apply knowledge and skills learned during training. Training effectiveness is measured by relevance of the learning experience, development of specific skills, positive impact on sales behaviors, and increased value to the organization. As a result, training needs to be measured by its impact on job performance and customer satisfaction.

Effective sales training was also positively correlated with customer satisfaction. Sales training, in the form of eLearning can help sales professionals deliver customized solutions to customers by educating them on areas of product knowledge, market knowledge, and needs identification skills. By providing sales training in these areas, sales professionals are more confident. Increased knowledge and skills enables sales professionals to identify customers' specific needs and motivations. Our research also found that customer satisfaction was positively correlated to sales performance. Customers buy from salespersons that they are confident in and trust. Confidence and trust in the sales professional leads to customer satisfaction, which leads to increased sales performance.

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SEQUENCING JOB SATISFACTION: ESTABLISHING ROBUSTNESS, GENERALIZABILITY, AND A NOMOLOGICAL NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION AND STUDY DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this study is to examine the robustness and generalizability of the sequencing of the job satisfaction facets within the context of the existing sales literature. To accomplish this purpose, three research objectives are developed and examined. The first research objective pertains to the sequencing of the facets within the business-to-business sales context. The second research objective is to assess if the sequencing proposed by Friend et al. (2013) generalizes beyond the business-to-business sales context. The third research objective is to examine multi-faceted satisfaction in a nomological network. Rutherford et al. (2009) provide the foundation for the nomological network.

METHODOLOGY

Business-to-business and retail salespeople samples were used. Measures are based on established scales. Job satisfaction is assessed using the 28-item multi-faceted INDSALES scale developed by Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1974) and subsequently reduced (Comer, Machleit, and Lagace 1989; Lagace, Goolsby, and Gassenheimer 1993). Emotional exhaustion was assessed using 4-items of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) reduced by Rutherford et al. (2011). Affective organizational commitment was measured using 9-items from Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). Turnover intention was assessed using 6-items from Brashear, Manolis, and Brooks (2005). Respondents were also asked to report how long they were employed with their current organization. Organizational tenure was included as a control variable.

To analyze the data, multiple steps were required. For research objective one, the data from the business-to-business salespeople was examined using the two step approach (Anderson and Gerbing 1988) within AMOS 22. First, the reduced INDSALES scale items were assessed to insure the items properly reflected their facet. Next, facets were examined for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Then, the sequenced model was examined using structural equation modeling. The fit of both the measurement model and structural model are examined based on the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999). Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend a cutoff value close to .95, .06, and .08 for CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR, respectively.

To examine research objective two, the same approach used to examine research objective one was employed using the retail salesperson data. Research objective three included the addition of one antecedent (emotional exhaustion) and two outcome constructs (organizational commitment and turnover intention). Given the three additional constructs, the two step approach was repeated for both the business-to-business and retail data.

DISCUSSION

The first research objective was to examine the satisfaction facet sequencing proposed by Friend et al. (2013) and assess if the sequencing could be validated using another sample of business-to-business salespeople. The present study found that eight of the twelve examined paths were significant. In comparison, the Friend et al. (2013) study found support for nine of the twelve paths. Findings provide strong support for the Friend et al. (2013) sequencing being robust. Given this, research objective two is now examined. Research objective two examined if the Friend et al. (2013) model would generalize outside of a business-to-business context. The retail data found support for all twelve paths providing strong support that the model does generalize to other contexts. Research objective three sought to determine if the Friend et al. (2013) sequencing could be validated within the nomological network based on the Rutherford et al. (2009) model. Support is provided for this validation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study increases understanding of the sequencing of the job satisfaction facets in salespeople. Three contributions to the literature are offered. First, a large degree of support for the business-to-business salesperson satisfaction sequencing proposed by Friend et al. (2013) is provided. Second, the findings support the generalizability of the proposed satisfaction sequencing to a retail context. Third, the sequencing of the satisfaction facets is examined within a nomological network providing insight into how antecedents uniquely affect facets of job satisfaction, and how facets of job satisfaction uniquely affect outcomes. The findings offer scholars greater insight into why and how satisfaction with specific facets develops and affects outcomes thereby offering a foundation to advance multi-faceted job satisfaction research.

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INFLUENCING THE SALESFORCE THROUGH ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: THE ROLE OF SALESFORCE SOCIALIZATION AND PERSON-ORGANIZATION FIT ON SALESPERSON ETHICS AND PERFORMANCE

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In a nationwide U.S. survey, nine percent of employees indicated they felt an increase in pressure to compromise their company's ethical standards or policies, or even break the law (Ethics Resource Center 2014). At the same time, a world-wide study found that employees express little trust in their managers, believing they are not interested in their well-being, and fail to provide adequate guidance and inspire good work (Kwoh 2012).

Such statistics suggest a need for appropriate leadership to instill the necessary values and provide the proper guidance among employees to ensure ethical decision making and improve performance in the organization. McClaren (2013) suggests that future research should examine different types of leadership styles in relation to ethical behavior and job performance among salespeople. One style that has received little attention in the sales literature and which may help provide guidance to improve ethical decision making, instill trust among subordinates, convey managers' sense of well-being for their employees, and improve job performance is ethical leadership.

Ethical leadership is "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement and decision-making" (Brown, Trevino and Harrison 2005, p. 120). Honest, trustworthy and principled, the ethical leader cares about employees and makes fair and balanced decisions (Brown and Trevino 2006). Managers who implement ethical leadership behaviors can establish core values among employees (Brown and Trevino 2006), which is generally discussed as a typical leadership activity. This paper proposes that the ethical leader's values affect salespeople's perceived ethical values fit (i.e., person-organization fit) with the organization both directly, and indirectly through salesforce socialization, to ultimately influence ethical decision making (i.e., unethical intent) and salesperson performance.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

A model grounded in theories of marketing control (Jaworski 1988) and ethical decision making is developed. Ethical decision making theory suggests that significant others (i.e., managers and coworkers) can influence the ethical decision making of organizational members. Consequently, as significant others, sales managers have the ability to affect the attitudes, values and behaviors of their salespeople via their own attitudes, values and behaviors. Thus, sales leaders practicing ethical leadership behaviors have the opportunity to influence salesperson perceptions (i.e., person-organization fit) both directly and indirectly, via salesforce socialization practices (i.e., work group socialization and ethics training), that can affect salesperson intentions (i.e., unethical intent) and ultimately salesforce job outcomes (i.e., salesperson performance).

Marketing control is intertwined with ethical decision making to help support the hypothesized model. In an attempt to achieve desired outcomes, managers undertake initiatives to influence the behavior and activities of marketing personnel (Jaworski 1988). These

marketing controls are of two primary types: formal and informal. Formal controls encompass management initiated mechanisms that strive to influence employee behavior, while informal controls are worker-initiated directives that attempt to do the same (Jaworski 1988). In the study's model, ethics training would be considered a formal input control mechanism used as a means for achieving ethical selling behavior, while work-group socialization constitutes a type of informal professional/social control (Blau 1964).

Person-organization fit theory proposes that shared values between organizations and individuals lead to favorable outcomes toward achieving organizational goals (Chatman 1991). Thus, when salespeople's values are aligned with those of the organization, this should lead to improved performance. Likewise, when the individual's ethical values match that of the organization's, one would expect the salesperson to adhere to those values and be less inclined to behave unethically. Based on this theoretical foundation and support from the literature, the following hypotheses are developed and empirically tested:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between sales managers' use of ethical leadership behaviors and work-group socialization tactics.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between sales managers' use of ethical leadership behaviors and the implementation of ethics training.
- H3: There is a positive relationship between sales managers' use of ethical leadership behaviors and ethical values person-organization fit.
- H4: There is a positive relationship between work-group socialization and ethical values person-organization fit.
- H5: There is a positive relationship between ethics training and ethical values person organization fit.
- H6: There is a negative relationship between ethical values person-organization fit and unethical intent.
- H7: There is a positive relationship between ethical values person-organization fit and salesperson behavior performance.
- H8: There is a positive relationship between ethical values person-organization fit and salesperson outcome performance.
- H9: There is a positive relationship between salesperson behavior performance and salesperson outcome performance.
- H10: There is a negative relationship between unethical intent and salesperson behavior performance.

RESULTS AND IMPLICATIONS

A nationwide electronic mail survey of 408 business-to-business sales professionals was employed. Using structural equation modeling, support was found for each hypothesis. In general, the results of this research suggest that ethical leadership behaviors work through organizational socialization processes to improve ethical values person-organization fit, which leads to reduced unethical intent and improved salesperson performance. This provides us with a clearer understanding of the means by which leadership can affect significant salesperson outcomes (i.e., unethical intent and job performance). The findings support and extend extant research by indicating that ethical leadership can positively influence the ethical values fit

between salespeople and the organization. By providing ethics training, organizations will benefit by improving salesperson ethical values organization fit, which leads to less unethical intent and improved job performance. Peers, through their interaction and mentoring of one another, are able to positively influence ethical values person-organization fit, which in turn influences one's intent to act unethically. As such, opportunities (e.g., formal or informal gatherings; formal and informal mentoring) for such informal socialization processes to occur should be offered and encouraged. These findings support a positive relationship between ethics and sales performance and provide further evidence for the need to promote ethics in the salesforce. By promoting ethical values and setting the proper example, ethical leaders can positively influence salespeople's performance via ethical values person-organization fit.

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