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Intraorganizational Adaptiveness: Conceptual And Empirical Examination Of Salespeople's Adaptation Within Their Firms

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INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTIVENESS: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL

EXAMINATION OF SALESPEOPLE'S ADAPTATION WITHIN THEIR FIRMS

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DEDICATION

To my loving parents, my amazing wife, and my generous daughter—my family

INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTIVENESS: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL

EXAMINATION OF SALESPEOPLE'S ADAPTATION WITHIN THEIR FIRMS

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Marketing and Management

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

as professor and director of the PhD program. I also thank Mr. Michael Garcia and the Mike

Loya Center for Innovation and Commerce for supporting my research.

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ABSTRACT

The role of salespeople in their firms has evolved drastically in the past two decades, especially in the amount of knowledge and skill required to contribute to their firms' success in the contemporary B2B marketplace. Salespeople are increasingly considered as strategic employees who can provide a competitive advantage for their firms by providing intelligence gathered from their deep engagement in the marketplace. Modern salespeople act as consultants, relationship managers, and solution specialists, among many other roles. Due to the marked changes in the roles carried out by salespeople today, this investigation sets out to examine the most current developments in sales research focused on sales performance, which is considered a vital metric because it provides a practical measure of a firm's performance. In particular, this manuscript examines one of the most novel research streams in the sales literature today. While still in its infancy, and even though researchers have subtly advocated for its relevance for more than twenty years, the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) is fast becoming difficult to ignore. This dissertation contributes to the current exploration of the IDSR by proposing a new construct labeled intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA). Intraorganizational adaptiveness is supported by our current understanding of adaptive selling and market orientation. It leverages the novel scientific knowledge about IDSR to examine the adaptive-type behaviors that salespeople enact inside their firms to offer superior customer value.

This manuscript employs four essays to provide academicians and practitioners with an in-depth understanding of this emerging marketing phenomenon. The first essay conducts a comprehensive and exhaustive inspection of the marketing literature that emphasizes sales performance. A sample of more than 9,000 peer-reviewed articles published in academic business journals in the past 119 years was analyzed based on their bibliographic data. The result from this analysis revealed a nuanced depiction of scholarly efforts, which includes the most

prolific authors, most influential articles, and the evolution of topics addressed by authors. In addition, a network analysis uncovered the conceptual, intellectual, and social structures that have produced the current body of knowledge on sales performance. Lastly, a main path analysis leveraging an advanced technique outlines the main artery of scientific knowledge devoted to the study of sales performance. This main path exposed six clusters comprised of twenty-six milestone papers that trace the development of topics and research interests within the sales performance literature. The underlying themes embodied by these six clusters include (1) salesperson satisfaction, (2) job stress and turnover, (3) sales control systems, (4) relationship selling, (5) customer orientation and leadership support, and (6) internal selling and salespeople's influence.

The second essay concentrates its scientific inquiry on cluster number six and aims to execute a systematic literature review to inform how IA manifests itself in salespeople's roles inside their firms, the factors, variables, and constructs that exert influence on the relationship between IA and sales performance. A systematic literature review will provide a comprehensive, objective, and reliable overview of salient scientific knowledge by reviewing academic articles using a rigorous approach that closely follows the scientific method. In doing so, researcher biases are minimized, and an auditable trail of all of the researcher's decisions is described to offer unequivocal transparency (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003). The results of this systematic literature review identify the key contributions to the sales literature, allowing its intellectual landscape to be portrayed thematically. As such, this essay should serve to stimulate academic curiosity, promoting research endeavors that extend our current comprehension of salespeople's adaptations inside their firms pertaining to the IDSR, as well as its relationship to sales performance.

The third essay builds on the findings of essay number two by proposing a novel construct that conveys the power encapsulated by the IDSR, which is posited to be a significant determinant of sales performance. The proposed construct, labeled as intraorganizational adaptiveness, merges adaptive selling with the IDSR within the market orientation framework to produce a construct that clearly explains what is occurring within sales-driven organizations in the modern B2B sales environment. Intraorganizational adaptiveness is described as a market-oriented selling behavior that increases the effectiveness of salespeople's efforts to advocate for their customers' success inside their firm, which can ultimately result in enhanced customer satisfaction and superior sales performance. This newly-developed construct is operationalized using a multi-stage procedure to establish a theoretically-sound marketing measure with robust nomological validity. Moreover, the effect of intraorganizational adaptiveness on two managerially-relevant variables (customer relationship quality and sales performance) is assessed.

Essay number four evaluates salespeople's performance leveraging a benchmarking technique that identifies improvement opportunities, maximizing individual level efficiency (Boles, Donthu, and Lothia 1995). More specifically, salespeople's efficiency while engaging in intraorganizational adaptiveness is studied using a non-parametric method called data envelopment analysis (DEA) (Charnes et al. 1978). The results from this study provide academics and practitioners with actionable recommendations to improve salespeople's productivity while ensuring customers' success. The focus of this study is shifted from *doing the right things* (i.e., effectiveness) to *doing the things right* (i.e., efficiency).

Holistically, this assemblage of essays provides an in-depth examination of one of the most promising marketing phenomena as it relates to personal selling and sales management—

salespeople's enactment of behaviors inside their firms to proactively adapt to the ever-increasing demands and complexities in the marketplace in order to enhance their customers' successes. Collectively, the findings reveal that practitioners' renewed interest in findings ways to enhance individual level sales performance, while simultaneously improving customer outcomes has motivated academicians to increase their research efforts on this subject. Additionally, this re-invigorated interest in customer-focused sales performance has led to the exploration of *non-traditional* sales roles and activities that occur outside of the regular salesperson-customer interaction. In conclusion, this investigation provides evidence that IA is a relevant selling behavior that improves managerially-relevant outcomes, such as increasing the quality of customer relationships and enhancing sales performance. Furthermore, IA is a behavior that facilitates the internal coordination of sales resources inside selling firms that results in efficiency gains, empowering firms to *produce more with less.*

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Sales performance has remained a research priority among scholars for almost a century, mainly due to its relevance in contributing to a firm's performance. Despite the extensive knowledge describing the factors that can enhance salespeople's sales performance, limited advances have been made in explaining a substantial amount of variance in sales performance variables (Plouffe, Hulland, and Wachner 2009). One possible explanation for this undesirable outcome is that previous research centers predominantly on externally directed sales efforts and perhaps has inadvertently ignored the importance of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role. An examination of how salespeople's actions within their firms impact external sales outcomes represents an innovative research perspective that can increase the amount of explained variance in sales performance, especially if it is objectively measured (Plouffe 2018).

The current investigation aims to increase the amount of explained variance in sales performance and enhance both academics and practitioners' understanding of the unexplored role of salespeople's intraorganizational dimension, while providing actionable implications that stimulate further examination of salespeople's internal selling environment. Therefore, a newly-developed construct that joins two streams of literature—adaptive selling and the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role, encapsulated within the market orientation framework—is proposed. The new construct, intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA), is presented as a market-oriented selling behavior that facilitates salespeople's adaptation and functioning inside their firms to ensure their customers' successes, ultimately resulting in improved sales performance. Specifically, IA is defined as a generalized selling behavior that is directed inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and

champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and fulfillment of the firm's offering(s).

The increased complexity in the B2B marketplace creates added demands on salespeople, who must rely on other intraorganizational partners' expertise to find appropriate solutions based on customers' requirements. Therefore, salespeople must effectively adapt their behaviors to successfully provide value for their customers and enlist co-workers' support inside their firm to guarantee their customers' success. In addition, salespeople must be adept at navigating within their firms to identify valuable resources and personnel that can help them accomplish essential goals on behalf of their customers (Plouffe and Grégoire 2007). Therefore, this investigation adopts a wide-ranging approach that begins with a macro-level examination of the sales performance literature to identify the most germane developments that have occurred in the past twelve decades, progressively narrowing the scope until reaching a micro-level perspective, that of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (one of the newest research streams in marketing).

A collection of four essays underscores the relevance of intraorganizational adaptiveness to the modern sales environment, which is characterized by an increase in complexity driven by product customization requirements, market trends, and increased responsibilities in salespeople's boundary-spanning roles (Schmitz and Ganesan 2014). The first essay conducts a longitudinal assessment of sales performance research from 1900 to 2019, providing a detailed description of the major advances and the principal themes which comprise the backbone of scientific knowledge on this topic. This essay's findings reveal that marketing research has drastically shifted from examining the salesperson-customer interaction as the main contributor

to sales performance to the activities and behaviors that salespeople conduct inside their firms to offer enhanced customer value.

Essay two complements the previous study's findings by conducting a rigorous and systematic review of the literature to provide conclusive evidence of the positive relationship between the salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation and sales performance. This systematic literature review formally defines a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation as the amalgamation of personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general disposition to exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment, which consequently improves the execution of a salesperson's behaviors and the results of those behaviors to the achievement of organizational, individual, and customer goals.

The third essay in this investigation develops a psychometrically-sound measure of intraorganizational adaptiveness and tests its impact on a set of managerially-relevant outcome variables. The findings reveal that IA is a germane selling behavior for the improvement of individual sales performance by ensuring that salespeople mobilize resources inside their firms to offer superior value by proactively focusing on their customers' successes. Finally, the fourth essay evaluates salespeople's efficiency whilst engaging in IA and provides practical guidance on maximizing sales productivity. The findings provide evidence that IA promotes salespeople's efficiency by maximizing sales outputs (e.g., internal coordination) while reducing inputs (e.g., salesperson's effort and time investments) to improve customers' relationships and sales performance. In sum, this investigation offers both scholars and managers a re-conceptualization of the classic construct of adaptive selling by offering a modern version that is more closely aligned with the reality of the contemporary selling environment.

CHAPTER TWO

A LONGITUDINAL REVIEW OF THE SALES PERFORMANCE LITERATURE: A

BIBLIOMETRIC AND MAIN PATH ANALYSIS

The investigation of sales performance has remained highly relevant in business research due to its close association with multiple performance outcomes, including firm performance. This study examines almost 120 years of research focused on sales performance by analyzing a sample of 9,594 peer-reviewed articles from business journals indexed in the Web of Science database, provides a nuanced understanding of sales performance research, and maps out the trajectory of current knowledge. The bibliometric analysis revealed the most prolific authors, countries, institutions, and the most influential works produced during almost twelve decades of research. A network analysis revealed the conceptual, intellectual, and social structures of sales performance knowledge. Furthermore, the findings from a main path analysis uncovered twenty-six milestone articles that comprise six distinct clusters outlining the evolution and development of sales performance knowledge. The cluster's underlying themes include (1) salesperson satisfaction and sales performance, (2) job stress and turnover, (3) sales control systems, (4) relationship selling, (5) customer orientation and leadership support, (6) internal selling and salespeople's influence. The findings suggest that a fundamental shift is taking place in sales research, from focusing on salespeople's external selling environment to the internal equivalent, as the activities undertaken internally have been shown to influence sales performance to a greater extent than do external activities.

Keywords: sales performance, literature review, bibliometric analysis, main path analysis, social network analysis

INTRODUCTION

Firms must successfully sell their offerings in the marketplace to remain in business (Jolson 1988). Thus, monitoring the performance of its sales force remains vital to firms' success (Behrman and Perrault 1982). Managers consider sales performance a key metric to appraise whether the organization is meeting its goals or not (Rich et al. 1999). Marketing scholars have devoted countless hours to examining the factors that influence sales performance, and despite the scintillating research findings, limited advances have been made to increase the amount of explained variance in this important outcome variable (Plouffe, Sridhara, and Barclay 2010). A review of the accumulated knowledge in the sales performance literature can reveal the current knowledge about this topic, the research gaps, and emerging trends that can guide future research endeavors (Williams and Plouffe 2007).

This investigation examines 9,594 peer-reviewed articles from 1900 to 2019 to assess the state of sales performance research using a bibliometric approach. Bibliometric analysis uses citations and co-citations to produce network structures that describe the content and the development of scientific knowledge that improves academic strategic decision-making by shedding light on unexplored research areas (Silva, Ablanedo-Rosas, and Rosetto 2018). The relevance of citations in a bibliometric analysis is that what are considered to be *important* documents are the most frequently cited, and thus, most influential on the growth of the scientific discipline (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro). Co-citation analysis measures the frequency with which two papers are cited in a third document. This co-citation occurrence can be interpreted as an indication that the papers are exploring a topic in common, thus meaning that they support a particular scientific idea (Small 1973).

To extend the contribution of bibliometric analysis, the data was subjected to a network analysis to identify patterns in social structures. Network analyses are analytic techniques that

permit graphic portrayals of relationships among various network actors including: authors, countries, institutions, and journals. The analysis presented provides insightful revelations about the scientific community by clarifying the relationships between the network actors (Stangor 2004). Furthermore, a main path analysis was used to examine the bibliometric data in its entirety. Main path analysis is an unbiased and systematic approach that uncovers the backbone of scientific knowledge (Hummond and Doreian 1989). Rather than using citations and co-citations, main path analysis inspects the content of papers based on their keywords and abstracts, mapping the flow of knowledge across a set of papers by identifying the foundational ideas contained within milestone articles (Lucio-Arias and Leydesdorff 2008). Therefore, the resulting main path represents the medullar structure of sales performance research from 1900 to 2019.

The findings show that research productivity has increased every year, and the last decade (2010-2019) marks an explosion in publications that account for 66% of all publications since 1900. The most prolific authors of the time interval under examination include Michael Ahearne, Adam Rapp, and V. Kumar. Inspecting research productivity at the country-level reveals that the United States is the Mecca of sales performance publications. The network analysis reveals that the main topics of discussion in the sales performance literature are *business strategy* and *managerial factors*. The focus on business strategy stems from the key role that sales performance plays for overall firm success. While the emphasis on managerial factors includes the discussion of factors under management control (e.g., compensation, incentives, leadership support), that can influence sales performance (Cravens et al. 1993; Oliver and Anderson 1994). In addition, the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *Industrial Marketing Management* cite each

other with greater frequency than do any other combination of journals. The most prolific

collaborations appear to be between Ahearne and Rapp, Homburg and Wieseke, Moncrief and

Marshall, Kumar and Sharma, and Evans and Palmatier, who collectively have exerted the

strongest influence on the sales performance literature. Collaboration between countries occurs

mostly between Western European countries and the United States, while China appears to

publish in isolation. Moreover, six clusters compose the main path of sales performance

knowledge. These clusters include (1) salesperson satisfaction and sales performance, (2) job

stress and turnover, (3) sales control systems, (4) relationship selling, (5) customer orientation

and leadership support, and (6) internal selling and salespeople's influence. Collectively, these

clusters represent the foundational knowledge structure from which sales performance research

builds.

This investigation contributes to marketing scholarship by extensively reviewing the sales

performance literature to provide a more nuanced picture of the current state of published work

in this area. In doing so, the literature is explored and organized to identify the main trends in

sales performance knowledge. This analysis informs academicians about research areas with a

high density, such as those discussing salespeople's individual characteristics, leadership

support, and organizational structures among others that impact sales performance. In addition,

research examining salespeople's internal selling environment is identified as an area with

limited publications. Academics can use the findings from this investigation to understand the

development of sales performance research, along with improving research quality by adopting

more rigorous methods, as demonstrated by the latest empirical studies. The following sections

describe the methods followed to identify, collect, and analyze the data. Conclusions from the

current research, point to a fundamental shift in sales performance research from exclusively

examining the interaction between salespeople and customers, to an extended examination that includes salespeople's internal activities within their firm as determining factors for enhanced sales performance.

STUDY 1: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS
METHOD

Search Procedure

In order to obtain an assessment of the current state of scientific research focused on sales performance, a systematic search for relevant papers was conducted in November 2019. The Web of Science (WebOS) database was selected as an appropriate source to retrieve the sample of papers due to its comprehensiveness (Li et al. 2010). Furthermore, the Scopus database was consulted, and the search results were compared to the ones obtained from the Web of Science, showing that there was no significant difference between the two databases. Moreover, prior studies have demonstrated that Scopus and Web of Science share approximately 460 million records in common, making the search results obtained from any of the two bibliographic databases fairly similar (Waltman et al. 2018).

The Web of Science Core Collection was employed to search for relevant papers based on their topic (i.e., sales performance), which examines abstracts, titles, and keywords to identify all of the papers on sales performance indexed in the database. Several iterations of search results were studied in an effort to select the search terms that captured the most appropriate and largest portion of articles. Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR, NOT) and wildcards (e.g., *, $, ?) were used to construct the search queries. Wildcards are used to broaden the search frame by enabling the inclusion of related terms. For example, by using the term sale*, the search query includes terms such as sales, salesperson, and salespeople. Quotation marks were not used to search exact phrases to avoid making the search too restrictive and failing to identify relevant papers. For

example, if "salespeople performance" was queried, only phrases exactly in that order would be included in the results, and phrases such as "salespeople satisfaction and performance" would be ignored. The search terms in this investigation include: (1) TS = (frontline AND employee* AND performance AND sale), (2) TS = (sell* AND performance), (3) TS = (sale* AND performance), and (4) TS = #(1) OR #(2) OR #(3). This initial search returned 20,966 results from the year 1900 to 2019.

Sales performance literature related to frontline employees was included because salespeople are often referred to as such (Gonzalez, Claro, and Palmatier 2014). Effectiveness and efficiency were not searched for in the query because both of these terms are different from performance, and their inclusion would provide a biased sample of articles. More concretely, effectiveness refers to the evaluation of the results of performance, and it includes factors outside of the control of the salesperson. On the other hand, efficiency is the ratio of effectiveness obtained given a certain level of cost to generate an effectiveness level; in other words, it is the ratio of outputs to inputs (Campbell et al. 1993).

After filtering English-language papers, the results were reduced to 20,364 articles. Only peer-reviewed academic papers were included because they are considered certifiable knowledge that has endured scrutiny from the scientific community acknowledging its contribution as valuable to the marketing field (Ramos-Rodriguez and Ruiz-Navarro 2004). This initial filtered search returned 16,052 papers. The balance of papers was further refined by including papers exclusively from the disciplines of business, management, economics, operations and supply chain research, and applied psychology. The final sample used for the analysis was 9,594 published, peer-reviewed academic articles (see Figure 1).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Bibliometric Analysis

Bibliometric analysis is a research technique used to study bibliographic content in a quantitative manner in order to identify trends in a particular area of research (Bonilla, Merigó, and Torres-Abad 2015). Bibliometric analysis is useful to quantify the total number of publications in a particular time period, rank authors based on the number of publications, track the number of citations that an article receives, and identify the countries with the largest number of publications, among other available analyses. The bibliometric data retrieved from the WebOS was analyzed using the package 'bibliometrix' in R, which is a language and environment for statistical computing and graphics (Aria and Cuccurullu 2017).

RESULTS

Publication Growth

Research examining sales performance observed a marked increase at the turn of the century, with 88 articles published in 2000, followed by 98 articles in 2001. Before this boom in scientific production, the average number of publications from 1900 to 1980 was close to one article per year. In the period from 1981 to 2000, the number of publications rose to 28 articles per year, representing a 2,700 percent increase.

The number of publications has steadily increased, with 2018 being the most prolific year thus far, with a total of 547 articles. Since the data collection process occurred several weeks prior to the end of 2019, the number of published articles in 2019 could surpass the number of publications in 2018. It is relevant to mention that the last ten years (2010 to 2019) have a combined 6,389 articles, which account for 66.6 percent of the total scientific production on sales performance since 1900 (see Table 1). The growth in publications indicates an increase in

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the importance that sales performance holds for both scholars and practitioners, and it underscores the need for additional explorations of the topic.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Leading Authors and Production by Country

Pertaining to authorship, the four most prolific authors across the time interval from 1900 to 2019 are Ahearne with 30 articles, Agnihotri with 24, and both V. Kumar and Rapp with 23. The following authors occupy ranks five through ten accordingly: Rap, Sharma, Jaramillo, Dubinsky, Homburg, Cravens, and Jones. The complete list of the top 30 authors is shown in Table 2. Together, these fifty authors account for almost ten percent of the total publications in the area, with 688 articles. It is noteworthy to mention that these four top authors have a combined total of 61,692 citations, which provides evidence for the great influence that they have had on the academic community. In addition, these top authors exclusively hold affiliations with universities in the United States, establishing it as one of the epicenters of sales performance research.

The United States leads the list of top-producing countries with 5,176 published articles, the U.K. with 902, and China with 805. The United States dominates sales performance research, with 45.3 percent of the total published articles. When countries are grouped by continents, North America is in the forefront with 5,606 articles, Europe follows with 3,276 articles, and Asia ranks third with 1,893. It is remarkable to state that ten European countries appear on the list of top 20 producers of sales performance research (see Table 3).

[Insert Table 2 about here]

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[Insert Table 3 about here]

Production by Affiliations

The ranking of the top twenty research-producing universities in terms of sales performance is dominated by seventeen universities in the United States with a combined total of 1,065 articles, which represents 16.7 percent of the total research produced in the world from 1900 to 2019 (see Table 4). These top twenty universities account for 20 percent of the total publications, with a combined total of 1,268 articles. The top three universities include the University of North Carolina (USA), the University of Houston (USA), and Erasmus University (The Netherlands). The only Asian university on the list is Hong Kong Polytechnic University, which is in the fourth position, with 74 published articles.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Leading Journals

Since this investigation is concerned with business-related research, only journals across the top five business-related disciplines were considered for the analysis (see Figure 1). The bibliometric analysis revealed that the top journal with respect to the number of publications is *Industrial Marketing Management* with 226 articles, followed by the *Journal of Business Research* with 173, the *International Journal of Production Economics* with 162, the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* with 151, and *Management Science* with 115 (see Table 5). Taken together, the top 20 journals in terms of the total number of publications account for

nearly 30 percent of the total number of published articles in the entire sample from 1900 to 2019.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Keywords Frequency

To gain an idea of the most frequently used keywords, the search parameter was specified to include *Keywords PLUS*, which relies on an algorithm to search for words in an article's references. As such *Keywords PLUS* captures an article's content with greater depth and variety (Garfield 1993). The most frequently used keywords in the sampled articles include *performance*, appearing 1,952 times, *impact* with 790 instances, *model* with 633, *management* with 556, and *sales* with 481 occurrences. The complete list of the top 20 keywords is shown in Table 6.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Trending Topics

The five topics most frequently specified by authors include *market* with 304 occurrences in 2013, *industry* with 230 occurrences in 2012, *firm* with 176 mentions in 2013, *demand* with 161 occurrences in 2014, and *competitive advantage*, which was mentioned 144 times in 2012. The complete list of the top fifty trending topics is shown in Table 7. This list shows that 49 out of the 50 trending topics occurred from 2009 to 2018, which represents the most prolific period in terms of the number of publications as indicated above. The sole exception to this result is that of the keyword *meta-analysis*, which was popular in 2001 with 33 instances. Additionally, the focus on *performance* demonstrates a significant increase in the number of published sales

articles beginning in 1990, with a notable increase in 2002 that far exceeds the growth rate of any other topic from the list. Topics related to *impact* and *management* also have experienced pronounced growth beginning around 2004 (see Figure 2).

[Insert Table 7 about here]

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Most Cited Works

Article citations can be measured either locally or globally. Global citations measure an article's impact on the entire bibliographic database. Therefore, a substantial portion of global citations may come from fields outside of the main area of investigation. In contrast, local citations measure the number of citations a document receives from other documents included in the same collection, indicating the paper's impact on its field (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). The three most cited articles are "Learning orientation, working smart, and effective selling" (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994), "Behavior-based and outcome-based sales force control system" (Cravens, Ingram, and LaForge 1993), and "An empirical test of the consequences of behavior-an outcome-based sales control systems" (Oliver and Anderson 1994). These three papers were all published in the *Journal of Marketing*. From examining the top ten most cited works, most of them were published between 1993 and 1998, except for Franke and Park (2006) with their paper "Salesperson adaptive selling behavior and customer orientation: a meta-analysis" and Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal (2011) with their paper "Drivers of sales

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performance: a contemporary meta-analysis, have salespeople become knowledge brokers?" The complete list of the top fifty most cited works is depicted in Table 8.

[Insert Table 8 about here]

Most Cited Sources

The three most cited sources are the *Journal of Marketing* with 13,621 citations, the *Journal of Marketing Research* with 8,853 citations, and *Strategic Management Journal* with 6,606 citations (see Table 9). However, the three journals with the largest rate of increase in citations are *Industrial Marketing Management*, the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, and the *Journal of Business Research* (see Figure 3). Top journals such as the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Strategic Management Journal* are considered as sources of high-quality academic research. Therefore, authors frequently cite these journals to justify their conceptual development and methodological approaches, but their work is more frequently published in other sources such as *Industrial Marketing Management*, the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, and the *Journal of Business Research*. The rigorous review process, generalizability of findings to a broad audience, and strict research quality requirements demanded by top journals resulting in elevated rejection rates can help to explain the increased scientific activity in other academic sources.

[Insert Table 9 about here]

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

Most Cited References

The most referenced articles by sales performance publications are Fornell and Larcker (1981) with 522 citations, Podsakoff, Mackenzie, and Lee (2003) with 404 citations, and Armstrong and Overton (1977) with 333 citations. It is noteworthy to mention that these articles are mostly methodologically oriented papers. In particular, Fornell and Larcker (1981) is frequently cited in articles to establish discriminant validity using confirmatory factor analysis. Podsakoff, Mackenzie, and Lee (2003) and Armstrong and Overton (1977) provide insights into methodological issues faced by sales researchers, who tend to rely on survey research methods to conduct their studies, given their unit of analysis. The fifty most frequently cited references are listed in Table 10.

[Insert Table 10 about here]

STUDY 2: NETWORK ANALYSIS

Network analysis originates from graph theory, which studies mathematical structures using symmetric matrices to model pair-wise relationships between objects (Peters et al. 1991). Network graphs are comprised of nodes, which are connected by links. Nodes represent co-occurrences among bibliometric data. The node's size is proportional to the frequency with which articles are co-cited. The links joining nearby nodes represent the strength of association between them. A node that is more centrally located than other peripheral nodes is more important because it has more connections with other nodes in the network. Also, a link that is noticeably shorter and thicker than other nearby links denotes that the two joined nodes are more closely associated and that their position is more central to the network relative to other more peripheral positions (Peters et al. 1991). Additionally, neighboring nodes can be grouped into

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clusters based on the strength of their association. Each cluster can be studied to detect commonalities among the nodes and identify underlying themes.

Network analysis of bibliometric data can provide insights into the knowledge structure of sales performance research by revealing the connections within the dynamic system of sales performance knowledge (Small 1997). Three main levels of analysis can be conducted: (1) conceptual, (2) intellectual, and (3) social. At the conceptual level, main themes and trending topics can be identified by examining the relationships among the concepts included in published articles (Otte et al. 2002). The intellectual level describes an article's influence on the scientific knowledge structure by examining the co-citation network (Wasserman and Faust 1994). The social level demonstrates the interactions among authors, institutions, and countries that have generated the currently established knowledge structure. An important type of social structure is the co-authorship network, which shows the collaborative relationships between authors (Peters et al. 1991).

METHOD

The package 'bibliometrix' was implemented in the 3.5.1 version of the R environment used to generate networks representing the aforementioned levels of the literature's intellectual structure (Aria and Cuccurullo 2017). *Bibliometrix*'s network options, which include an automatic layout feature, created the networks. This automatic layout feature chooses the best layout in terms of graph interpretability (Holten et al. 2009). Jaccard's index was used as the normalization measure based on similarities among nodes (van Eck et al. 2009). Normalization measures such as Jaccard's index are useful because they facilitate the visualization of bibliometric data that is organized in symmetric and asymmetric matrices (Small 1973). Louvain was selected as the clustering algorithm due to its precision in differentiating neighboring

clusters, which is important when nodes are highly interconnected, and visualization of cluster

membership can be complex (Lancichinetti et al. 2009). Then, the software VOSviewer was

employed to produce an enhanced visualization of each network and to improve its readability

(Van Eck and Waltman 2014).

RESULTS

CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURE

Main Keywords

A network analysis using the articles' keywords was conducted. Specifically, *Keywords*

PLUS was used in order to gain a deeper understanding of the main topics addressed in the

sampled 9,594 articles (Garfield 1993). Analyzing keywords is important because doing so can

display how the core content of articles is related to the network of sales performance research

(Silva, Ablanedo-Rosas, and Rossetto 2018).

The top 50 keywords were analyzed, and five clusters were uncovered (see Figure 4). The

first cluster includes 17 keywords, with the largest node represented by the keyword

management. Additional nodes include *strategy*, *competitive advantage*, and *market orientation*,

among others. The underlying theme of the first cluster based on the interpretation of the

keywords seems to be *business strategy* and *managerial factors*. The second cluster contains the

network's largest node, represented by the keyword *performance*. Also, this node holds the most

central position in the network, suggesting that all other nodes are connected to it, thus making

performance the most important node in this network. In addition, the second cluster has ten

keywords as its members, including *returns*, *investment*, *governance*, and *market*. The

underlying theme in the second cluster based on the included keywords appears to be *financial*

outcomes and *firm performance*. The third cluster has nine keywords, with the largest node being

defined by *behavior*. Other keywords in this cluster include *salespeople*, *consequences*, *satisfaction*, and *work*. The underlying theme of the third cluster seems to be *salespeople's activities* and *job performance*. The fourth cluster contains eight keywords, and the largest node is *impact*. Other keywords in the cluster include *competition*, *demand, quality*, and *sales*. The underlying theme of the fourth cluster seems to be *market factors*. The fifth cluster is encapsulated by six keywords, and the largest node is *buyer-seller relationships*. The other keywords are *commitment*, *trust*, *determinants*, *perspective*, and *organization*. The underlying theme of this cluster appears to be *buyer-seller relationships*.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

INTELLECTUAL STRUCTURE

Co-Citation Network

The top 50 authors in terms of co-citation occurrences were analyzed to identify the intellectual structure of the sales performance literature. The intellectual structure reveals the relationships between nodes (i.e., references), which can be used to detect changes in schools of thought. For example, the more closely related that a group of authors are in the co-citation network, the more tightly intertwined their ideas are, thus indicating that these authors are like-minded. Four clusters constitute the co-citation network (see Figure 5). Node size, which indicates the weight of each author in the cluster based on the number of times the author was cited, was used to identify the most influential authors. The first cluster contains 15 authors, and the most influential authors in this cluster include Barney, Eisenhardt, Porter, Days, Pfeffer, and Kotler. Fifteen authors comprise the second cluster, and the most influential authors are

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Anderson, Morgan, Heide, Dwyer, and Moorman. The third cluster contains 13 authors, with the most influential being Bagozzi, Churchill, Homburg, Weitz, Ahearne, Jaworski, and Kohli. The fourth cluster consists of seven authors, and the most influential authors in this cluster are Podsakoff, Fornell, Armstrong, Nunally, and Hair.

[Insert Figure 5 about here]

Inter-Journal Citation Network

Journals tended to cite other journals that contained related content or that contained content from a closely related field. The inter-journal citation network maps out the structure of how journals are citing each other. Three clusters emerged from the analysis of the 25 most frequently cited sources: (1) Marketing, (2) Management, and (3) Finance and Economics (see Figure 6). The first cluster has 11 journals emphasizing marketing; its main nodes are the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *Industrial Marketing Management*. The second cluster is mainly management-focused, with eight journals as its members, and the main nodes are the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Strategic Management Journal*, and the *Journal of Management*. The third cluster is composed of six journals mainly focused on finance and economics, and the main nodes are the *Journal of Finance*, the *Journal of Financial Economics*, *Econometrica*, and *Management Science*.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

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SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Author Collaboration

The social structure of the authors in sales performance was analyzed to reveal their

collaboration network, thus, revealing the most frequent working relationships. Four clusters

were identified in the data (see Figure 7). The first cluster includes ten authors, where the most

frequent collaboration occurs between Ahearne and Rapp. The second most frequent

collaboration in this cluster is between Homburg and Wieseke. The balance of authors in this

cluster are Bolander, Agnihotri, Dubinsky, Jones, and Kim. Cluster number two has seven

authors among its members. The most frequent working relationship occurs between Moncrief

and Marshall, and ranked in second is the collaboration between Katsikeas and Leonidou, as

demonstrated by the size of the corresponding links between them (i.e., number of collaborative

events between the authors). The remaining authors in this cluster are Cravens, Menguc, and

Panagopoulus. The third cluster consists of five authors. The most recurrent collaboration is the

one between Jaramillo and Mulki, followed by the collaboration of Friend and Rutherford. The

fifth author in this cluster is Boles. Four authors comprise the fourth cluster in this network,

where the most recurring collaboration occurs between Kumar and Sharma, followed by the

partnership between Evans and Palmatier.

[Insert Figure 7 about here]

Institutional Collaboration

This social structure displays how institutions with a record of accomplishment in sales

performance research relate to each other. A network analysis of the top 30 institutions revealed

that five main clusters are present in the data (see Figure 8). Nine institutions integrate the largest cluster. This cluster also appears to hold the most central position in the network, and the three main institutions in ranked order include the *University of North Carolina*, *Cornell University*, and *Pennsylvania State University*. The second cluster has seven members, and the most prominent are *Michigan State University*, *Northeastern University*, and the *University of Texas Arlington*. The third cluster has six institutions, and the top representatives are the *University of Houston*, the *University of Georgia*, and *Texas Christian University*. Cluster number four has four institutions, *City University of Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Polytechnic University*, *Chinese University of Hong Kong*, and the *University of Texas Dallas*. The fifth cluster has four members, which include *Georgia State University*, the *University of Pennsylvania*, *Harvard University*, and *Purdue University*.

[Insert Figure 8 about here]

Country Collaboration

The ten most active countries in sales performance research were analyzed to uncover how countries work with each other. Two main clusters emerged, revealing the structure in which countries work together to advance scientific knowledge (see Figure 9). The first cluster is mainly composed of western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, France, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands. The second cluster can be classified as eastern, with China as its sole member. Altogether, the United States appears to be the country (i.e., node) with which most other countries team up with to produce scientific knowledge related to sales performance.

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STUDY 3: MAIN PATH ANALYSIS

Hummond and Doreian introduced main path analysis in 1989 as a quantitative technique that focuses on the links between the cited and citing papers instead of the paper's citation count. The linkage between two articles traces the flow of knowledge, and the accumulation of linkages forms a network indicating the dissemination of knowledge (Liu et al. 2013). Main path analysis aims to outline the flow of knowledge represented by the most traversed path in the citation network.

The citation network is directional, meaning that source papers provide the basis for new ideas in other papers, thus mapping the flow of scientific knowledge. Prior research on network analysis has indicated that networks are composed of four elements: (1) sources, (2) sinks, (3) intermediate points, and (4) isolate points (Liang et al. 2015). Sources are papers that demarcate the starting points of knowledge; other papers only cite them. Sinks are the opposite of source papers, as they are the endpoints of knowledge. Intermediate papers cite other papers and are also cited by other papers. In contrast, isolate papers are not connected to other papers; they rarely occur.

A global main path is generated by including the highest weighted paths in the citation network, which represent the main knowledge structure. The weight of each path indicates the importance of the citation linkage as denoted by the traversal count. The traversal count keeps track of the frequency with which a citation link has been traversed (Jiang, Zhu, and Chen 2019). The search path count (SPC) is recognized as an appropriate approach to compute the transversal

count (Batagelj 2003). The global main path is obtained when the path with the greatest SPC value is identified (see Figure 10).

[Insert Figure 10 about here]

In order to provide a more accurate depiction of the flow of knowledge, the global main path can be generated with the consideration of key routes—which refer to significant links that are not included in the global main path because they possess a lower search path count (see Figure 11). While the global main path represents the backbone of knowledge, several sub-themes can be neglected because their paths are not traversed as frequently as the 'main path.' The global main path is like a major highway where most of the knowledge in a particular domain travels (i.e., transversal count), while the key routes represent secondary roads that branch out from the highway. Therefore, incorporating key routes into the global main path adds important sub-paths that would have been ignored otherwise. This enriches the representativeness of the knowledge structure and provides a more holistic and accurate map of scientific development—how articles draw information from other articles and add new ideas that advance scientific knowledge (Nooy, Mrvar, and Batagelj 2018).

Main path analysis overcomes the limitations inherent in other techniques by considering both direct and indirect sources, thus accurately revealing the core structure of the sales performance literature. Most notably, the analysis minimizes researcher bias and provides a better estimation of knowledge flow, as well as the themes addressed by scholars across time.

[Insert Figure 11]

METHOD

Main path analysis was used to gauge the development of research focused on sales performance in the past 119 years. This technique is used to identify a research stream's milestone papers, which represent the main publications related to sales performance (Silva, Ablanedo-Rosas, and Rosetto 2018). The network analysis software Pajek 5.0.1 (De Noov, et al. 2011) was used to generate a network that was used as an input file for the visualization software VOSviewer 1.6.5 (Van Eck and Waltman 2014) to enhance the quality of the main path's depiction.

RESULTS

Scientific knowledge tends to build on prior findings in order to support new ideas; therefore, a network representing the concatenation of these ideas can be developed. The main path represents the flow of knowledge that includes the most relevant papers, and it contains key intellectual developments in a particular field (Silva, Ablanedo-Rosas, and Rosetto 2018). However, the inclusion of a paper on the main path is not dependent on how frequently a paper is cited by other papers, and the most-cited paper may not be part of the main path because the ideas contained in this paper are not included in the main artery of research development (i.e., ideas that describe the advancement of scientific knowledge) in sales performance research (Liu and Lu 2012).

The current investigation identified a total of 26 milestone papers using the key-route search technique, which includes the most important sub-paths of the global main path to produce an improved depiction of the sales performance literature. Six clusters emerged from the milestone papers, and the underlying themes in each cluster were extracted after carefully reviewing each paper (see Figure 12). The six clusters include (1) salesperson satisfaction and sales performance, (2) job stress and turnover, (3) sales control systems, (4) relationship selling,

(5) customer orientation and leadership support, and (6) internal selling and salespeople's influence (see Table 11). These six clusters map the trajectory of sales performance research by presenting the topics addressed by scholars in a sequential manner. This provides a parsimonious view of where sales performance research began, where it has been, and where it seems to be heading.

[Insert Figure 12 about here]

[Insert Table 11 about here]

Cluster 1—Satisfaction and Sales Performance

The underlying theme in this cluster appears to be salespeople's satisfaction and sales performance. Salespeople's satisfaction refers to specific reactions toward the sales job as the object of examination (Bagozzi 1980a). Understanding salespeople's satisfaction is relevant because it is associated with beneficial consequences such as organizational commitment and sales performance. Still, some evidence shows that sales performance and satisfaction share a weak causal relationship at best, and that their covariation could be the result of a spurious effect (Brown and Peterson 1993). The process through which satisfaction and sales performance are associated may not be fully understood, and multiple factors may play a role in this relationship. However, salespeople's satisfaction can produce some desirable effects. For example, salespeople who regard themselves as highly competent in their work tend to perform better than salespeople who do not feel as competent (Motowidlo 1982). This high level of perceived competence carries with it an expectation of higher pay. As such, salespeople that see themselves as highly competent may be less satisfied with their current pay level (Motowidlo 1982).

Salespeople's self-esteem is a determinant of competence and ability. Notwithstanding salespeople's high levels of competence in their job, positive results may not accrue unless salespeople are motivated to succeed (Bagozzi 1980a). Motivation increases salespeople's job satisfaction (Bagozzi, 1980a), and salespeople who are satisfied with their work exhibit greater organizational commitment, and a reduced propensity to leave their jobs (Brown and Peterson 1993). It appears that salespeople are mainly motivated by the anticipated satisfaction that comes with performance rather than by performance itself (Bagozzi, 1980b).

In summary, the relationship between the effects of salespeople's satisfaction on sales performance is not conclusive (Behrman and Perrault 1984; Brown and Peterson 1993). Nevertheless, it appears that satisfaction antecedes performance and not the converse. The deleterious impact of salespeople's voluntary turnover can be minimized by increasing organizational commitment, which in turn can originate from salespeople's level of satisfaction. Therefore, even though the linkage between satisfaction and performance may not be so clear, the reduction in turnover associated with having a satisfied sales force may still prove advantageous for firms, as well as legitimize managerial efforts to increase satisfaction levels.

Cluster 2—Job Stress and Turnover

The theme in this cluster seems to be salespeople's job stress and turnover. Job stress can manifest in the form of role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity refers to salespeople's uncertainty about the expectations of their role, while role conflict refers to conflicting expectations in their sales role (Chandrashekaran et al. 2000). Role conflict is particularly damaging to the performance of boundary-spanning employees, such as salespeople, because it hinders their ability to complete tasks due to opposing demands. For example, a salesperson may want to spend additional time explaining a product's benefits to improve her customer's satisfaction, while her boss may demand that she keeps customer interactions brief to maximize

the number of visits to customers in a day. Role ambiguity and role conflict can reduce the amount of effort exerted by salespeople, thus, hindering performance and satisfaction (Brown and Peterson 1994). Salespeople that are not satisfied and that only achieve mediocre performance are more likely to quit their jobs (Mackenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne 1998). Furthermore, organizational commitment that stems from salespeople's emotions, meaning that salespeople are committed to their organization due to emotional attachment, does not appear to influence salespeople's turnover (Chandrashekaran et al. 2000). However, continuance commitment, which refers to an economic attachment to the organization, creates a need to stay and decreases salespeople's turnover (Chandrashekaran et al. 2000).

Continuing the discussion on cluster 1 about satisfaction and performance, this cluster indicates that satisfaction does not result from performance, but rather from salespeople's involvement in their work (Brown and Peterson 1994). Salespeople's involvement in their work is related to the amount of effort dedicated by salespeople to work itself. Salespeople's effort provides a feeling of fulfillment and contributes to job satisfaction independently of the performance outcomes obtained (Brown and Peterson 1994). Salespeople satisfied with their jobs are more likely to engage in extra-role behaviors (e.g., pro-social behaviors, organizational citizenship behaviors) to demonstrate their gratitude to the organization, resulting in improved sales performance (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne 1998). In addition, job satisfaction and organizational commitment may lead salespeople to engage in customer-oriented behaviors with the purpose of satisfying customer needs (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne 1998). For example, salespeople satisfied with their job and with a sense of commitment to their organization tend to provide advice to customers, even when such actions are not directly compensated by their employers.

In summary, salespeople's role conflict and role ambiguity negatively impact their satisfaction, exertion of effort, and their performance. Role stress reduces the effect of organizational commitment on turnover, such that when role stress is high, salespeople experience a reduced sense of organizational commitment, and their proclivity to leave their job increases.

Cluster 3—Sales Control Systems

Sales control systems are the underlying theme in this cluster. Cravens, Woodruff, and Stamper (1972) mention that salespeople's performance is influenced by relevant past experience, training, skills, and quantity and quality of effort. Additionally, exerting managerial control over salespeople and their selling activities can generate positive sales outcomes (Cravens et al. 1993). A sales control system can be defined as an organization's procedures used to manage its sales force (Oliver and Anderson 1994). Under a behavior-based control system, salespeople's activities are closely monitored, performance is subjectively evaluated, and compensation is usually fixed to a specific amount. In contrast, outcome-based control systems involve little monitoring of salespeople's activities, objective measures are used to evaluate performance, and compensation is linked to the attainment of sales objectives (e.g., sales quotas) (Cravens et al. 1993).

Salespeople operating under a behavior-based control system perceive more encouragement to invest time in training and learning, whereas salespeople under an outcome-based control system may avoid non-selling activities due to potential reductions in compensation because non-selling activities are perceived of as non-revenue generating (Oliver and Anderson 1994). Behavior-based control systems may foster customer-oriented behaviors, while outcome-based controls may result in more selling-oriented behaviors (Cravens et al.

1993). Customer-oriented behaviors refer to salespeople's activities that aim to achieve beneficial outcomes for the customer. Selling-oriented behaviors aim to close a sale, sometimes at the expense of customer satisfaction. Despite behavioral-controls being more closely associated with customer-oriented behaviors, outcome-based controls can empower salespeople with a sense of autonomy to make day-to-day decisions that facilitate satisfying customer needs (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). The effective application of sales control systems depends on a unified internal marketing effort from management to sell organizational goals to the sales force, and thus, improve sales performance (Atuehene-Gima 1997).

In summary, sales control systems are important to monitor, guide, and evaluate salespeople's activities. Behavioral-based and outcome-based control systems offer a different set of advantages. Sales managers must consider their organizational goals to determine which of the two control systems is more beneficial, or if a combination of both control systems should be employed to attain high levels of sales performance. While salespeople's individual characteristics such as ability, competence, experience, and training level are important drivers of sales performance, management strongly influences the realization of positive sales outcomes through the appropriate application of sales control systems.

Cluster 4—Relationship Selling

This cluster addresses some important sales topics, but the main theme is relationship selling. Relationship selling, which derives from relationship marketing, encompasses both internal and external relationships, but the latter has received much more attention from researchers than the former. Salespeople's internal relationships with their managers build trust that consequently increases salespeople's satisfaction with their jobs (Brashear et al. 2003). Additionally, managers that treat their salespeople well can motivate salespeople to *pay* such

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treatment *forward* to their customers by exhibiting genuine care and engaging in actions that customers appreciate (Jaramillo et al. 2013). Furthermore, salespeople with greater ability are capable of recognizing that long-term relationships with their customers can provide them with favorable outcomes such as customer satisfaction and increased patronage (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor 2007).

Knowledge is a prerequisite of relationship selling to satisfy customers' requirements and form long-term relationships (Harris, Mowen, and Brown 2005). For many customers, salespeople have two roles: a business partner and a second as a social acquaintance (Homburg, Müller, and Klarmann 2011). Salespeople that establish relationships with their customers can enjoy increased customer loyalty when such a relationship is aimed at helping the customer make satisfactory purchase decisions (Homburg, Müller, and Klarmann 2011). Salespeople that practice relationship selling can increase their customers' satisfaction, resulting in enhanced sales performance. In order to be effective at relationship selling, salespeople must possess relevant knowledge about their customers to provide customized solutions. In sum, relationship selling can produce higher levels of success for both salespeople and their organization (Jaramillo et al. 2013).

Cluster 5—Customer Orientation and Leadership Support

Customer orientation and leadership support emerged as the underlying theme in this cluster. Customer orientation can be regarded as a manifestation of the marketing concept at the individual employee level, while market orientation represents a manifestation at the firm level (Kohli and Jaworski 1991; Zablah et al. 2012). Customer orientation can be understood in one of two ways; as a set of employee behaviors carried out to satisfy customer needs, known as the behavioral perspective, or as a psychological factor that motivates the enactment of behaviors to

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satisfy customer needs, called the psychological perspective (Zablah et al. 2012). In sharp contrast to customer orientation, a firm maintaining a sales orientation draws on customer-directed influence tactics that seek to close immediate sales. A sales orientation could be classified as a passive behavior because it does not result in the firm gathering relevant knowledge about customers' needs. It is considered maladaptive because the organization's lack of knowledge inhibits salespeople from customizing offerings to satisfy customers' unique requirements (Boichuk et al. 2014). Customer-oriented salespeople depend on their perceptual accuracy to extract valid information from customers. When inaccurate customer information is obtained, salespeople may engage in suboptimal behaviors that can disrupt the firm's success (Mullins et al. 2014).

Leadership support is vital for salespeople's achievement. Managers that adopt a transformational leadership style, characterized by articulating a vision, leading by example, and fostering acceptance of group goals, can alleviate the negative effects of failed attempts to close a deal (Boichuk et al. 2014). Moreover, firms that promote a value-based vision can take advantage of a transformational leadership style to motivate salespeople to raise their level of customer orientation to one desired by management (Mullins and Syam 2014). In summary, a firm's customer orientation originates from enacting the marketing concept, and its purpose is to satisfy customer needs. When salespeople have the proper leadership support to engage in customer-oriented behaviors, their positive effect on sales performance can be enhanced.

Cluster 6—Internal Selling and Salespeople's Influence

The underlying themes suggested by this cluster of milestone papers revolve around internal selling and salespeople's influence. Salespeople's judgments about their customers can facilitate the appropriate use of sales strategies, thus, enhancing the effects of adaptive selling

and customer-oriented behaviors on sales performance (Hall, Ahearne, and Sujan 2015).

Salespeople can become more influential in customers' purchase decisions if they possess

perceptual ambidexterity; that is, they are skillful at making both intuitive and deliberative

judgments (Hall, Ahearne, and Sujan 2015). Additionally, skilled salespeople can match their

customer's willingness-to-pay intentions with an appropriate price, thus obtaining positive

business agreements for both the selling firm and the customer (Alavi, Wieseke, and Guba

2016). The practice of adaptive selling is aligned with customer orientation and the marketing

concept, and it can be developed through training, motivation, and leadership support

(McFarland 2019).

While the vast majority of research has been devoted to examining externally-directed

sales efforts, the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role has gained attention recently due

to its positive impact on objectively-measured sales performance (Plouffe 2018). Moreover, this

focus on salespeople's internal selling environment indicates that resources inside the selling

firm are strong determinants of a salesperson's performance. Consequently, salespeople can

influence supporting staff and supervisors inside their firms to gain access to valuable resources;

this practice is consistent with the concept of adaptive selling (Plouffe 2018). Furthermore, the

articles in this cluster state the importance of improving sales research by establishing stronger

causal inferences and minimizing common method variance issues through the combined use of

objective and subjective data, multiple sources of data (e.g., matched responses from salespeople

and sales managers), and, whenever possible, adopting longitudinal research designs (Bolander,

Dugan, and Jones 2017).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Research on sales performance has grown substantially in the past 120 years. Practitioners and researchers alike have demonstrated an increased interest in further understanding the factors that can affect sales performance. After the year 2000, the number of published articles on the topic has increased by more than 2,000 percent. It is logical to think that with the advances in technology, computing power, and availability of data, sales performance research would experience near-exponential growth. It is noteworthy to recognize that approximately 66 percent of the total number of academic articles examining sales performance was published in the last decade, from 2010 to 2019.

Academics around the world have contributed to the increase in article output; the top producing country is the United States, and two American universities, the University of North Carolina and the University of Houston, hold the top two positions with respect to the quantity of published articles. In addition, the most prolific authors in the time interval examined are Ahearne, followed by Raj Agnihotri V. Kumar, and Rapp.

Industrial Marketing Management and the *Journal of Business Research* lead the list of journals with the greatest number of published articles, as well as being two of the three journals with the greatest growth in article publications in recent years, joined by the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*. However, the most cited journals when it comes to sales performance are the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Strategic Management Journal*. Overall, this macro view provides valuable insight into the increased production in article publications and the historical dominance of the U.S. as a top producer of research dedicated to the exploration of sales performance.

Inspecting the sales performance literature from a closer perspective, the findings of the main path analysis revealed six main clusters, including (1) satisfaction and sales performance, (2) job stress and turnover, (3) sales control systems, (4) relationship selling, (5) customer orientation and leadership support, and (6) internal selling and salespeople's influence. These six clusters represent the backbone of sales performance literature, and the ideas presented by the milestone papers contained in each cluster can be considered the most important and foundational scientific developments in the domain.

The main structure of sales performance knowledge begins with the examination of salespeople's satisfaction and its relationship to job performance. Salespeople's motivation was established as an important antecedent of both satisfaction and sales performance (Brown and Peterson 1993). However, evidence suggested that performance does not increase satisfaction, but in fact, satisfaction actually exhibits a positive relationship with performance in some cases (Bagozzi 1980a). The importance of having a satisfied sales force, apart from the potential increase in performance, is the positive impact that satisfaction has on salespeople's organizational commitment and turnover reduction (Brown and Peterson 1993, 1994). Therefore, salespeople that are satisfied are prone to perform well and express favorable behaviors toward their firm and customers. Furthermore, satisfied salespeople appear to cope better with role conflict and role ambiguity because they tend to exert more effort in their activities and be more motivated while performing their jobs, which are vital to mitigate the negative effects of job-related stress (Brown and Peterson 1994). As such, they are less likely to engage in voluntary turnover because of job-related stress (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne 1998).

Once the growing body of research had provided enough answers about how to increase salespeople's satisfaction, the examination of how to effectively manage salespeople became the

focus of interest. Therefore, sales control systems, classified as either behavior-based or outcome-based controls, emerged in the literature. The benefits of outcome-based control include the transfer of discretionary power to salespeople with regards to making their day-to-day choices, instilling them with a sense of accountability for their sales goals (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Under an outcome-based control system, salespeople are primarily compensated through commissions, while behavior-based control systems use fixed compensation schemes.

Behavior-based control systems promote salespeople's learning and training, providing sales managers with more control over the specific activities carried out by their sales force (Oliver and Anderson 1994). However, salespeople may not feel the obligation of achieving high levels of sales results due to the type of compensation received (i.e., fixed salary). For this reason, sales managers are recommended to employ a combination of both behavioral-based and outcome-based sales controls to obtain an optimal level of performance. However, control systems should be specifically tailored to organizational goals, as it may behoove a firm to favor one control system over the other in some situations. For example, in the case of new products being introduced to the market, emphasizing an outcome-based control system can provide more benefits to firms than focusing primarily on behavioral aspects of the sales process because salespeople will be incentivized to achieve tangible results (i.e., make the sale) in order to increase their compensation (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Control systems are commonly aligned by managers to reflect the transformation in the selling environment from one-time exchange transactions to long-term exchange relationships.

With the rise of relationship marketing in the literature, relationship selling emerged as an attractive and promising area of research related to sales performance. Relationship selling's

attractiveness to the field was fueled by the concern of igniting long-term customer relationships to produce increased profitability (cf., Jolson 1997). The vast majority of sales performance research has centered on examining salespeople's relationships with external business partners and customers, however, there are some minor indications that salespeople's relationships with their co-workers and their managers could play a major role in their performance (e.g., Brashear 2003). In addition, relationship selling paved the way for the recognition of salespeople's customer orientation and adaptive selling as important antecedents of sales performance because both of these concepts aim to increase value for the customer; potentially increasing actual purchases.

Sales performance research continued with the full-blown investigation of customer orientation and related constructs. Two schools of thought positioned customer orientation as either a behavior or a belief. The behavioral perspective regards customer orientation as an action with the purpose of satisfying customer needs. When customer orientation is treated as a belief, it is considered emanating from a psychological perspective that promotes customer-centric behaviors (Zablah et al. 2012). Regardless of the preferred view of customer orientation, its positive effects on sales outcomes are generally supported (Franke and Park 2006). In addition, once more, the notion that factors inside salespeople's firms played an important role subtly appeared with the acknowledgment that leadership support facilitated and promoted salespeople's practice of customer orientation (e.g., Mullins and Syam 2014).

In complete alignment with the tenants of customer orientation, sales performance research developed into the exploration of salespeople's ability to accurately perceive customer needs, which in turn provides salespeople with valuable information to adapt their selling approach (Hall, Ahearne, and Sujan 2015). Moreover, the study of salespeople's internal selling

environments, such as salespeople's networking and influence behaviors with co-workers, is formally addressed. For example, consider that salespeople who can accurately read their customer's emotions can adapt their selling approach to match their customer's profile, thus becoming more persuasive. In sum, research that alters its perspective to consider the internal sales environment can uncover opportunities for enhanced sales performance (Plouffe 2018).

Collectively, the findings of the main path delineate the evolution of sales performance with the inclusion of the main ideas contained in the domain's milestone papers. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that the focus has shifted from examining the external sales environment to exploring the internal environment in an attempt to provide additional insights into the factors that exert an influence on sales performance (Plouffe 2018). Also, a formal call for the implementation of more rigorous research designs was made, and as seen in recently published works, sales researchers are increasingly using more robust techniques and higher-quality data sets to test their hypothesized models (Bolander, Dugan, and Jones 2017).

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This investigation not only provides academics with a comprehensive map of the historical trajectory of sales performance knowledge, but it also delineates trending areas that could benefit from more research activity. For example, the dynamic nature of the sales environment requires that phenomena be studied using longitudinal approaches instead of traditional cross-sectional designs. This can help strengthen the validity of past findings and uncover new meaningful relationships that have remained obscure due to limitations in research designs and analytical techniques. Furthermore, objectively measured data enables research to extend the conventional wisdom drawn from subjective assessments of sales performance in the past (cf., Bolander, Dugan, and Jones 2017).

The astonishing increase in the number of publications can in part be attributed to advances in technology that facilitate the examination of sales performance data. Also, given that technology has increased world connectivity, sales performance has been reinvigorated by the need to explore new contexts and cultures. Moreover, the arrival of artificial intelligence and sales automation must be explored to expand the frontiers of sales performance knowledge. In addition, the main path generated by this investigation describes the shift in the focus of sales performance research from the external aspects of the selling environment to the internal ones, placing this topic at the vanguard of sales performance scientific inquiry. Future research should add to the examination internal aspects of the sales roles to uncover new insights.

Another promising area of research includes the study of the plethora of sales functions that are emerging because the modern sales environment is replete with non-traditional selling actors. Interestingly, the appearance of jobs related to sales, but that have some explicit deviations from the traditional notion of selling are becoming more pervasive. For example, the introduction of chief revenue officers and customer success managers are increasingly appearing in practitioner's sources. In conclusion, this investigation can be considered a roadmap of what has been done, where, when, and by whom, thus, facilitating the advancement of new research endeavors by providing normative guidance about the origins of sales performance knowledge.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTRAORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE SALES ROLE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

An emerging area of interest in marketing research is the examination of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role, which refers to the factors, activities, and processes that occur inside a salesperson's selling environment that can potentially impact external sales outcomes. Salespeople's adaptations inside their firms, which are encapsulated inside the sales role's intraorganizational dimension, can improve customer value and sales performance. This investigation leverages a rigorous and scientific approach to systematically collect, review, analyze, and synthesize academic articles focused on salespeople's adaptive-type behaviors within the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role. The findings reveal that salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation may underlie many of the behaviors that salespeople engage in inside their firms. Furthermore, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation strengthens salespeople's ability to succeed in their sales environment and improves sales performance. More importantly, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation can be developed through training, coaching, and supportive leadership to ensure that it leads to high-quality relationships with customers and contributes to the overall success of seller firms.

Keywords: sales; intraorganizational; sales management; systematic literature review

INTRODUCTION

The modern B2B sales environment is highly complex, and many products are no longer quickly transacted between sellers and buyers, mainly because the exchange involves a group of professionals from both sides, each with diverse stakeholders (Geiger and Guenzi 2009). Salespeople's activities have evolved in response to this environmental change, and previously standardized products have now become more customized. In order for salespeople to satisfy customers' needs in this specialized environment, they have adopted an integrated and collaborative approach. The expertise, knowledge, and operational efficiency required to deliver value to customers requires that salespeople find resources and collaborate with other personnel inside their firms (Steward et al. 2010).

Modern salespeople are compelled to interact with more internal actors in their firms than they had in the past (Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003). Salespeople's roles have expanded, and their contributions to their firms' overall success are increasing, as they are taking part in many intraorganizational activities (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). Thus, the emergence of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role is being recognized by both academics and practitioners as an important facet of the contemporary sales environment (Plouffe 2018). However, limited research has been conducted to elucidate the phenomenon of salespeople's adaptive behaviors inside their firms and their effects on vital sales outcomes, such as sales performance. For this reason, this investigation thoroughly examines a collection of academic articles using a systematic literature review procedure to provide a nuanced understanding of how salespeople's adaptation manifests itself in the intraorganizational sales environment and the factors that impact its relationship with sales performance.

Systematic literature reviews rigorously follow the scientific method and are considered a research study in their own right, where a sample of articles are initially analyzed individually, followed by a collective analysis to generate an aggregate view of academic knowledge to answer pre-specified research questions (Margaray 2001). This research attempts to make sense of the accumulated scientific knowledge to reveal the extent to which the existing literature informs us about the adaptive-type behaviors that salespeople engage in inside their firms and their effects on sales performance. In doing so, this study overcomes some of the shortcomings of traditional literature reviews, such as limited investigatory rigor and a tendency to produce unilateral views of marketing-related phenomena (Palmatier, Houston, and Hulland 2018). In addition, this review provides a comprehensive, objective, and reliable overview of the literature with an audit trail that ensures transparency and replicability (Danyer and Tranfield 2009). The research findings reveal that a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation can be defined as the amalgamation of personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general disposition to exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment, which consequently improves the execution of a salesperson's behaviors and the results of those behaviors to the achievement of organizational, individual, and customer goals.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION AND CONTEXT

Change is ubiquitous in the selling environment as firms adjust to dynamic market trends and ever-changing demands in an effort to remain relevant and competitive (Ahearne et al. 2010). Salespeople, as boundary-spanning employees (Agnihotri et al. 2014), have transitioned from a mere operational role in which they were exclusively responsible for revenue-generating activities to an enhanced strategic position (Plouffe et al. 2016) in which they acquire, interpret, and disseminate market intelligence among intraorganizational associates to produce competitive advantages for their firms (Ahearne et al. 2013; Claro and Ramos 2018; Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011).

The complexity engulfing the modern selling environment requires salespeople to be flexible to changing business conditions. Flexibility entails interacting with an increased number of organizational actors to successfully meet customers' demands (Steward et al. 2010). In today's dynamic selling environment, salespeople's adaptability is vital for success, where they must be versatile in highly uncertain situations (Ahearne et al. 2010). Salespeople's adaptability can be considered a conglomerate of individual characteristics that promote the engagement in specific behaviors, which enables them to succeed in their work environments (Jones et al. 2005). An adaptive salesperson has a pronounced proclivity to be resilient, versatile, and willing to proactively exert change in his or her selling environment (cf., Ulaga and Kohli 2018). Salespeople's adaptations can be proactive or reactive, depending on factors in the selling environment. For example, salespeople can volitionally change themselves or their environments to meet their job demands. In addition, salespeople can modify their behaviors due to pressing environmental demands, such as a customer's complaint.

Salespeople's adaptability is not fixed, and it can develop, grow, and adjust over time through training, experience, and learning (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Furthermore, given that change is inevitable, adaptable salespeople are in a unique position to produce enhanced performance outcomes for themselves and their firms (Plouffe et al. 2016). Sales performance has been a central research topic in the marketing literature for decades (cf., Churchill et al. 1985). Academics have approached the study of sales performance from diverse perspectives to uncover the factors that impact sales performance (cf., Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). Numerous research findings indicate that there is no universal approach to improve individual sales performance, and no single factor by itself accounts for a large portion of the variation in sales performance outcome variables (Churchill et al. 1985). However, what is becoming clear based on recent research findings is that the activities, behaviors, and factors inside salespeople's selling environment can positively impact externally-directed sales performance outcomes such as customer satisfaction, customer acquisition and retention, and sales quota attainment (Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016; Weitz and Bradford 1999). This investigation adopts a broad definition of sales performance to account for the multiple ways in which scholars and practitioners have operationalized sales performance. Thus, for the purpose of this systematic literature review, sales performance is defined as the execution of a salesperson's behaviors and the results of those behaviors to the achievement of organizational, individual, and customer-related goals (cf., Ford, Churchill, and Walker 1985).

The exploration of salespeople's adaptive behaviors is not new in the marketing field, where relevant findings provide strong evidence that salespeople's adaptation during interactions with customers can drive sales performance (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986; McFarland 2019). Notwithstanding, this external perspective of salespeople's adaptive behaviors limits our

understanding of how superior sales performance can be generated, especially given that modern salespeople spend more and more time inside their firms in order to *quarterback* their customers' solutions than in the past (Moncrief, Marshall, and Lassk 2006; Steward et al. 2010). Therefore, the current investigation aims to sift through the extant literature to explore salespeople's adaptive behaviors inside their firms, in other words, their intraorganizational adaptations that are undertaken to help them succeed in their selling environment and produce favorable sales performance outcomes. In particular, the research objectives are (1) to define salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation based on the available literature, (2) describe the manifested behaviors that emanate from salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation, and (3) identify the factors that influence the relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation and sales performance.

METHOD

This investigation aims to review the literature, while adhering to the scientific method. Systematic literature reviews synthesize research according to an explicit and reproducible method (Greenhalgh 1997). The evidence-based approach used in systematic literature reviews offers notable advantages over traditional literature reviews by reducing researcher bias and enhancing objectivity. The procedure followed to conduct this review is described by Denyer and Tranfield (2009).

Systematic Literature Review

Systematic literature reviews originated in the medical field with the Cochrane Collaboration in 1992. This method later migrated to the social sciences to address concerns of biasing effects derived from an unmethodical consultation of the literature, which can compromise the validity and reliability of research findings. Namely, traditional literature

reviews often examine a collection of studies conveniently selected to support the author's line of argumentation (Denyer and Tranfield 2003). On the other hand, systematic literature reviews limit systematic bias and offer a more accurate representation of the literature (Suppatvech, Godsell, and Day 2019). This can be accomplished by meticulously identifying, appraising, and synthesizing relevant studies that illuminate gaps in the literature and, thus, promising future research directions (Petticrew and Roberts 2008).

One clear distinction between a traditional literature review and a systematic review of the literature is that the latter sets out to answer a specific question and not merely provide an overview of published articles. Furthermore, systematic literature reviews use accountable methods that inform the reader of all of the steps followed to produce the concluding statements (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012). Replicability and transparency are of utmost importance to expound on the researcher's decisions and rationale at each stage of the review process, providing an audit trail for readers to scrutinize (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003).

In conducting a systematic literature review, the researcher establishes the methods *a priori* and follows precise guidelines (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003). Three key requirements when using this method are to develop a review protocol, establish an effective search strategy, and conduct quality assurance evaluations in order to minimize potential biases. These elements are embedded into the five-step procedure introduced by Denyer and Tranfield (2009) (see Figure 1). The five-step procedure involves: (1) formulating the research question to be addressed, (2) locating the studies needed to answer the research question, (3) selecting the studies that meet a set of specific quality and inclusion criteria, (4) analyzing and synthesizing the studies in the sample, and (5) reporting the results (Denyer and Tranfield 2009).

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Formulating the research question

The first step in conducting a systematic literature review is to design and establish a review protocol (see Appendix 1). The protocol is a plan that ensures objectivity by providing an exact recipe for all of the steps to be taken when conducting the review (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003). In addition, the protocol states the specific question addressed by the review, the search strategy for the identification of relevant studies, and the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for selecting studies (Davies and Crombie 1998).

The review question is a critical component as it drives all other activities (Trudel and Cotte 2009). An answerable and well-formulated review question should be developed. This question defines which studies will be included and what data needs to be extracted from each (Counsell 1997). The review question delineates the review's scope and ensures that the focus is feasible for all of the related literature to be identified (Margarey et al. 2001). The research questions addressed in this investigation are the following:

RQ1: What is "salesperson intraorganizational adaptation" inside a salesperson's own firm?

RQ2: How, and to what extent (if at all), does the existing literature inform us about salesperson intraorganizational adaptation given the salesperson's own internal work environment?

RQ3: What factors, variables, and constructs impact the relationship between salesperson intraorganizational adaptation and sales performance?

Locating studies

The objective of the literature search is not to retrieve everything, instead, it is to retrieve everything relevant to the review question while excluding irrelevant studies (Petticrew and

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Roberts 2008). To this end, a set of search string were developed. Next, A panel of four

university professors in Marketing and Management examined the search strings for relevance

and appropriateness to answer the review question. The Web of Science (WebOS) Core

Collection was consulted to search for relevant articles. The Core Collection in WebOS

examines abstracts, titles, and keywords to identify all of the papers indexed in the database that

meet the search query criteria. Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR, NOT) and wildcards (e.g., *,

$) were used to construct the search queries. The search strings in this investigation include: (1)

TS = (sale* AND adapt*), (2) TS = (sale* OR sell* AND frontline* AND employe*), (3) TS =

(sale* AND internal*), and (4) TS = (sale* AND intra*), and (5) TS = #(1) OR #(2) OR #(3) OR

#(4). This initial search returned 8,934 results from the year 1900 to 2019. The keyword

"fontline employees" was included because salespeople are often referred to as such in the sales

and marketing literature (Gonzalez, Claro, and Palmatier 2014). This initial search was filtered

by English-language papers, peer-reviewed academic papers, and papers from the marketing

discipline, returning a total of 947 articles.

To address the concern of relevant literature not being included in the review, an issue-

by-issue search of articles published in the *Journal of Marketing* (*JM*), *Journal of the Academy

of Marketing Science* (*JAMS*), *Journal of Marketing Research* (*JMR*), *Journal of Business

Research* (*JBR*), *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* (*JPSSM*), and *Industrial

Marketing Management* (*IMM*) from 1980 to 2019 was performed (cf., Petticrew and Roberts

2008). The journals mentioned above were deemed appropriate because, based on the

bibliometric analysis findings obtained in this dissertation's first essay, the journals with the

highest publication growth in sales and sales performance topics are *IMM*, *JPSSM*, and *JBR*.

Whereas the most cited articles focused on sales and sales performance are found in *JM*, *JMR*,

and *JAMS*. Additionally, the time frame considered for the issue-by-issue search, starting in 1980, is appropriate because it captures most of the seminal papers related to sales performance as well as the developing focus on salespeople's evolving roles inside their selling environment (cf., Hochstein et al. 2021). This search led to the inclusion of 17 additional papers. The papers retrieved were organized in EndNote X9 to ensure that each article was adequately managed, minimizing human error while sifting through the volumes of data and creating an audit trail of inclusion/exclusion decisions (Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart 2003).

Study Selection and Evaluation

The papers identified in the previous search were evaluated to determine whether they should be considered for inclusion in the review. First, the 964 papers in the sample were scanned using the package 'pdfsearch' in R (LeBeau 2019). This package scans pdf files in their entirety, searching for researcher-specified keywords and providing the exact location of the word in the document (i.e., line number and page number), enabling the researcher to examine the context in which the article's authors are using the keyword. This exercise resulted in the exclusion of 232 papers. The remaining 732 papers were then evaluated by critically appraising the studies and determining their appropriateness to answer the review questions (Petticrew and Roberts 2008). Critical appraisal is defined as the process of systematically examining candidate research studies to evaluate their trustworthiness, value, and relevance to a particular context (Burls 2009). The inclusion criteria set the boundaries on which research studies should be reviewed. This investigation considers studies as eligible if they: (1) examine intraorganizational behaviors and/or activities, (2) include some form of sales performance (objective or subjective) as an outcome variable, (3) are either empirical or conceptual, (4) are written in the English language, and (5) are peer-reviewed.

The title, keywords, abstract, and in some cases, portions of the introduction section of all of the 732 papers in the sample were carefully read. Additionally, where applicable (i.e., empirical studies), each study was assessed based on its overall quality. In this regard, the review examined each study's internal validity (i.e., source of bias, measurement reliability and validity), external validity (i.e., sample representativeness and response rate), appropriateness of data analysis (i.e., statistical power, fit indices, and effect size), and interpretation of findings based on the analysis. In some cases, what have been deemed high-quality studies may not necessarily be fit for a particular systematic review and thus may be excluded (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012). Based on the inclusion criteria, 376 articles were excluded because they did not focus on intraorganizational aspects of the sales environment. An additional 162 papers were removed because they did not discuss sales performance anywhere in the article's content, and 124 papers were excluded as well because they did not include any content related to the salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation-sales performance relationship. The final sample consists of 70 papers that met the inclusion criteria.

Analysis and Synthesis

The analysis's main objective is to separate studies into their constituent parts and describe how each one relates to the other (Denyer and Tranfield 2009). To synthesize the studies, associations were formed between the individual studies in order to reveal new insights that were not discernable from examining each study in isolation (Denyer and Tranfield 2009). A synthesis does not involve merely generating a list of study attributes. It involves transforming data from the primary studies to build a connected whole (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012).

Descriptive and thematic analyses were conducted to examine the sampled studies. In the descriptive analysis, the studies were classified according to the type of article, their topic, data

collection method, research design, and data analytic method (Willias and Ploufffe 2007). In contrast, the thematic analysis examined the studies to find similarities and differences between them to construct cohesive knowledge units and generate a narrative synthesis (Serovich et al. 2008). A narrative synthesis describes the new knowledge coalescing from research studies' amalgamation (Gough, Oliver, and Thomas 2012). The creation of a narrative synthesis involves (1) organizing the studies' description into logical categories, (2) analyzing the findings within each category, and (3) combining the findings across the entire collection of studies (Petticrew and Roberts 2008). It is essential to organize the findings into meaningful categories to generate a parsimonious review (Trudel and Cotte 2009). The outcome of this synthesis procedure is a narrative that tells a trustworthy story, answers the review question, and explicates the meaning of the findings (Popay et al. 2006).

RESULTS

The results of this review highlight academician's acknowledgment that salespeople's adaptations inside their firms are a strong predictor of sales performance outcomes. Descriptively, the papers analyzed demonstrate diversity in terms of research designs, samples, and analytical techniques (see Table 26). It is noteworthy to state that authors define and operationalizes sales performance differently and from distinct perspectives (e.g., managerial evaluations, peer evaluations, salesperson self-assessments). Based on the variety of sales performance outcomes observed in the sampled articles, this review defines sales performance as the execution of a salesperson's behaviors and the results of those behaviors to the achievement of organizational, individual, and customer goals (cf., Ford, Churchill, and Walker 1985). Furthermore, this investigation defines a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation as the amalgamation of personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general

disposition to exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment (cf., Giancobbi 2000; Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013).

(Insert Table 26 about here)

Adopting a *bird's eye view* the 70 peer-reviewed papers were categorized into seven cohesive clusters based on their thematic content. The first and largest cluster includes 20 papers examining salespeople's individual-level traits and characteristics associated with their level of intraorganizational adaptation, such as their learning orientation, organizational commitment, motivation, competitiveness, navigation, and initiative. Thus, this first cluster is labeled as *salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness traits and characteristics*. The second cluster includes 16 papers focused on salespeople's internal networking, intra-functional coordination, and cross-functional collaboration. Therefore, this cluster is labeled as *salesperson's intraorganizational networking and connectedness*. The third cluster is comprised of ten papers centered around sales managers' influence on salespeople, sales controls, supervisory feedback, and leadership styles, among many others. Thus, this cluster is labeled as *managerial and leadership influences on salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation*. The fourth cluster includes seven papers emphasizing salespeople's sales-service ambidexterity, creativity and problem-solving skills. Hence, this cluster is labeled as *salesperson's ambidexterity and creativity*. The fifth cluster is composed of seven articles focused on salespeople's acceptance and adoption of sales technology, salesforce automation, customer relationship management software, and social media technology. Therefore, this cluster is labeled as *salesperson's technology orientation*. The sixth cluster includes six papers that examine salespeople's organizational environment, organizational climate, and support. Thus, this cluster is labeled as *salesperson's organizational selling environment*. The seventh and final cluster is comprised of

four papers centered on salespeople's felt stress and counterproductive workplace behaviors that are negatively related to sales performance. Consequently, this cluster is labeled as *salesperson's stressors and counterproductive workplace behaviors*.

Cluster 1: Salesperson's Intraorganizational Adaptiveness Traits and Characteristics

Salespeople experience continuous changes in their selling environment, thus, salespeople who can adapt to change while maintaining and improving their performance become indispensable for their customers and their own firm (Ahearne et al. 2010). Salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation represents a behavior resulting from an amalgamation of personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general disposition to exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment (cf., Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013).

Salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation can manifest during periods of organizational change such as mergers and acquisitions, requiring salespeople to become integrated into new organizational cultures (cf., Ahearne et al. 2010). During the initial stages of change, efficacious salespeople proactively adapt by decoding the novel situation, acquiring relevant information, locating and developing strategies, and choosing appropriate courses of action (Ahearne et al. 2010). A salesperson's goal orientation can be a strong determinant of adaptation success, especially in the long term. Learning-oriented salespeople undergo a more disruptive decline in their performance during the adaptation process's initial stages than performance-oriented salespeople, who are unwilling to invest time and effort to learn if this interferes with their selling tasks (Ahearne et al. 2010). However, during the later stages of adaptation, learning-oriented salespeople increase their sales performance faster and later stabilize their performance at a much higher level than their performance-oriented counterparts.

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Performance-oriented salespeople possess a short-term perspective on their adaptation process and invest minimal time in learning because they are concerned about a performance decline. In sharp contrast, learning-oriented salespeople invest a considerable amount of time learning to adapt to change, which leads to superior sales performance in the long run (Ahearne et al. 2010).

Learning-oriented salespeople, characterized by a propensity to embrace challenges and enjoy discovering ways to improve their skills, have been known to effectively adopt their firms' strategic implementation (Johnshon and Sohi 2017). Salespeople must be responsive and promptly respond to the requests of stakeholders, as well as allocate sufficient effort to achieve successful strategic implementations (e.g., the introduction of new products in the marketplace) and boost sales performance (Johnshon and Sohi 2017). Adaptive salespeople accept and internalize the organizational goals associated with new products and how achieving such goals can increase performance (Atuahene-Gima 1997). The more pronounced that salespeople's adoption of new products is, the greater that customers' adoption of new products will be, thus, positively impacting sales performance (Atuahene-Gima 1997).

Since it is impossible for salespeople to have complete knowledge of all the products and solutions in their portfolio, they engage in internal knowledge brokering to exchange knowledge with their colleagues (van den Berg et al. 2014). Leveraging relevant knowledge existing within the confines of their internal selling environment, salespeople can conceptualize customer problems and market new products more effectively (van den Berg et al. 2014). Some salespeople seem to possess specific genetic attributes linked to an increased proclivity to engage in internal knowledge brokering, adaptive behaviors, and enhanced social functioning, which positively affects the selling performance of new products (van den Berg et al. 2014).

Salespeople's adoption of new products is affected by their level of commitment and effort. Commitment is an attitudinal component that entails salespeople's compromise to make the new product successful (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Effort refers to salespeople's energy, persistence, and intensity in activities to achieve desired results (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). Salespeople's effort without commitment cannot be considered conducive to new product adoption. Thus, when both effort and commitment are present in salespeople's behaviors directed toward selling new products, sales performance increases (Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000). In addition, salespeople's commitment to their organization, which involves the degree to which salespeople attach themselves to their firm, positively affects sales performance (Altintas et al. 2017). This is especially true when salespeople possess a customer mindset, exemplified by the belief that understanding and satisfying internal and external customer needs is vital for personal and organizational success (Johlke and Iyer 2017). Salespeople with customer-oriented mindsets exhibit more significant levels of work engagement and organizational commitment that translate into increased sales performance (Johlke and Iyer 2017).

Salespeople's learning orientation and performance orientation are not opposite sides of a continuum. Instead, these two orientations represent two different constructs that can be activated simultaneously at matching levels, and based on particular circumstances, one orientation may be more salient than the other (Atuahene-Gima 1997). In addition, goals can be activated by external (e.g., assigned by the supervisor) or internal factors (e.g., self-set goals). The characteristics of the goals such as intensity (i.e., intensity invoked by the goal) and content (i.e., structural characteristics of the goal itself) can paradoxically affect various sales behaviors (Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2012). For example, when goals are difficult, salespeople's planning behavior improves, but simultaneously their ability to engage in adaptive selling can weaken

(Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2012). The level of proficiency needed to attain a particular outcome (i.e., goal difficulty) and the extent to which a goal is clearly stated (i.e., goal specificity) can promote salespeople's translation of resources into action, also known as planning behavior (Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2012). The act of planning forces salespeople to *rehearse* different scenarios, which improves the allocation of time and resources and increases sales efforts' effectiveness. Thus, when salespeople perceive goals to be difficult, they can adapt their effort levels and plan their daily routines to obtain higher sales performance (Barker 1999; Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2012).

Salespeople consistently interact internally with co-workers and engage in non-customer-directed behaviors such as exploratory navigation and proactive workplace behaviors (cf., Plouffe and Grégoire 2011), which can produce positive sales performance outcomes (Plouffe 2018). These non-customer-directed selling behaviors are encompassed in what is now known as the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role, which includes salespeople's skills and behaviors and factors inside the selling firm that can positively impact the effectiveness of externally-directed sales performance outcomes (Plouffe 2018). Exploratory navigation entails salespeople's purposeful exploration inside their organizations to identify intraorganizational personnel who may have valuable resources that can influence salespeople's success (Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010). Proactive workplace behaviors can be defined as anticipatory actions that salespeople take to modify themselves and their sales environments (Grant and Ashford 2018). Intraorganizational employee navigation is a proactive workplace behavior that allows salespeople to identify salient work resources (e.g., co-workers, technology, tools) that can help attain task-related outcomes (Plouffe 2018; Plouffe and Grégoire 2011). While salespeople's engagement in navigation behaviors can help obtain needed resources or

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circumvent constraints that can lead to increased sales performance, excessive reliance on this behavior may indicate a dysfunctional and inefficient sales organization (Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010).

Successful salespeople share a desire to become engaged in their work, be proactive problem-solvers, and display a disposition to work alongside colleagues and customers (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). Furthermore, salespeople have become agents of change inside their firms, and their personal initiative encourages them to improve their current work environment, which can ultimately result in increased sales performance (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). However, to generate performance gains, salespeople must have the motivation to engage in job behaviors that make goal achievement possible. Salespeople's motivation can be described as their choices to initiate an action, expend effort on the chosen activity, and maintain a persistent effort over a period of time on the activity (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Salespeople's motivation is associated with their personal initiative, which refers to their capacity to begin working toward specific goals in a self-directed manner (Jaramillo et al. 2007). Salespeople with elevated levels of personal initiative can engage in *working smart* behaviors (e.g., adaptive selling and planning) and focus their effort on strategies envisioned to help overcome obstacles and provide superior sales performance outcomes (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Moreover, salespeople's personal initiative encourages the proactive formulation of alternative methods to complete tasks better, strengthening the positive effect of selling behaviors on sales performance (Jaramillo et al. 2007).

The complexity of the contemporary selling environment requires salespeople to engage in intraorganizational behaviors to exploit knowledge and expertise from their internal selling environment to meet customers' demands (Kimura, Bande, and Fernandez-Fermin 2019).

Salespeople's understanding of co-workers and the use of this insight to influence fellow employees is known as political skill (Kimura, Bande, and Fernandez-Ferrin 2019). Salespeople are fundamentally responsible for influencing other intraorganizational members to support their boundary-spanning roles and thus to create superior customer value in the process (Kalra et al. 2017). Politically-skilled salespeople gain greater access to intraorganizational resources, which may be marshalled to produce favorable performance outcomes (Li, Sun, and Cheng 2017).

High-performing salespeople exhibit prominent engagement in adaptive behaviors, such as task proactivity and task adaptivity. Task adaptivity entails salespeople's reactive adaptation to changes that have already occurred, while task proactivity describes salespeople's initiative to behave proactively to achieve high levels of effectiveness while performing a specific task (Kimuda, Bande, and Fernandez-Fermin 2019). Nevertheless, proactivity stems from salespeople's intrinsic motivation. Therefore, politically-skilled but intrinsically unmotivated salespeople may adapt to change out of necessity, preventing them from achieving high performance levels in their core tasks because they lack the persistence to maintain intense levels of effort work-related tasks (Kimuda, Bande, and Fernandez-Fermin 2019). Task adaptivity helps salespeople cope with their new core tasks, but it does little to promote better ways to perform a particular task (Kalra et al. 2017). Task adaptivity is individual-centered, and peers often perceive salespeople that request co-workers' help to adjust to changes in their core tasks (e.g., learning new procedures) out of necessity as self-serving and manipulative. These self-serving motivations can attenuate the positive effect of salespeople's political skill on customer satisfaction and eventually outcome-based sales performance (Kalra et al. 2017).

Salespeople can augment the positive effects of intraorganizational adaptiveness when they are willing to learn from more knowledgeable and experienced intraorganizational

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personnel, welcome feedback to improve their sales performance (Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013). Salesperson coachability is defined as the extent to which salespeople actively seek and receptively accept information from external sources that provide feedback and encouragement to improve sales performance (Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013). Sales coaching is a collaborative exercise, and salespeople must be willing to act on the feedback they receive to bring forth fruitful results (Shannahan, Shannahan, and Bush 2011). Coachable salespeople enjoy learning, have positive attitudes towards feedback, appreciate working with colleagues, trust and respect their managers, cope well with constructive criticism, and display incremental improvement in effort following coaching sessions (Shannahan, Shannahan, and Bush 2011). Salespeople's coachability is positively related to sales performance, especially when salespeople receive feedback from managers with transformational leadership qualities (Shannahan, Shannahan, and Bush 2011).

Salespeople's ability to alter dysfunctional beliefs is necessary for learning to take place, allowing them to change their own behaviors and the nature of their environment (Panagopoulus and Oglivie 2015). In order for salespeople to alter their beliefs, they must be able to obtain meaningful information from their social environment. Thus, salespeople who are adept at interpreting social cues will collect salient information that allows them to self-regulate their behaviors (Panagopoulus and Oglivie 2015). Namely, salespeople who engage in self-monitoring behaviors characterized by effectively reading social cues and altering self-presentation demonstrate increased ability to adapt to environmental demands and meet their customers' needs as well as their own organizations' goals (Panagopoulus and Oglivie 2015). Salespeople's self-monitoring is positively related to their self-efficacy (i.e., salespeople's confidence to

achieve favorable sales outcomes), which is consequently linked to improved sales performance (Panagopoulus and Oglivie 2015).

Cluster 2: Salesperson's intraorganizational networking and connectedness

Salespeople rely on other intraorganizational members' assistance to create superior customer value (Steward et al. 2010). Salespeople undergo an adaptive process in which they identify and align intraorganizational resources to meet customers' demands (Steward et al. 2010). This process entails salespeople's identification of specialists who can help coordinate, develop, and deliver customer solutions (Steward et al. 2010). Salespeople's coordination of resources hinges on the diversity and strength of internal relationships from which salespeople can draw relevant expertise (Steward et al. 2010). Salespeople's effective coordination of internal resources is associated with higher-quality relationships which expand revenues, thereby improving sales performance (Bradford et al. 2019).

Internal coordination success can be augmented by developing stronger working relationships with co-workers through voluntary helping behaviors aimed to help co-workers with work-related problems (Bradford et al. 2019). By spending time and effort to help co-workers, salespeople can prevent and solve work-related problems. However, salespeople must be cognizant of the potentially detrimental effects of sustained investments in helping behaviors that may preclude them from completing their selling tasks (van der Borg, de Jong, and Nijssen 2019). Thus, salespeople who proactively build intraorganizational networks by helping their co-workers while engaging in effective time management are more likely to benefit from internal support because co-workers are more willing to reciprocate the help received (Bradford et al. 2019). Internal support is expressed in the form of knowledge, skills, time, and attention of personnel inside the salesperson's firm (Bradford et al. 2019). Salespeople seek

intraorganizational members' support when customer needs exceed the resources that they have

at their disposal to solve customer problems (Bradford et al. 2019). Additionally, salespeople that

operate in highly-volatile internal environments, characterized by constant organizational

changes in structures, rules, personnel, and procedures, tend to depend on co-workers to provide

guidance and support to complete their sales-related tasks (Nowlin, Walker, and Anaza 2018). In

volatile environments marked by sudden administrative changes, salespeople can generate

superior performance gains when their firms exhibit high levels of cross-functional integration

and connectedness between departments (Nowlin, Walker, and Anaza 2018).

Coordination is improved when it fosters cross-functional integration, defined as the

extent to which complementary functions carry out activities in support of sales-related goals

(Arndt, Karande, and Landry 2011). Consequently, cross-functional integration creates dense

connections between intra-firm departments that improve customer-related communications,

leading to higher customer satisfaction (Parente, Pegels, and Sureh 2002). Communication is an

integral piece of effective cross-functional integration and quality, rather than the frequency of

communication, that assists in creating unified group goals (Arndt, Karande, and Landry 2011).

Excessive communication frequency may lead to information overload and reduce coordination

effectiveness (Arndt, Karande, and Landry 2011). Salespeople's communication quality is a

function of comprehensiveness, accuracy, reliability, timeliness, and relevance of the information

exchanged (Arndt, Karande, and Landry 2011).

Effective cross-functional integration is essential to acquire, disseminate, and utilize

market information to anticipate customers' needs and cultivate strong relationships with

customers (Claro and Ramos 2018). When salespeople interact with personnel in other functional

areas in a collaborative approach, they can develop superior customer solutions and enhance

sales performance by becoming better informed about customer needs and locating suitable offerings to satisfy those needs (Claro and Ramos 2018). Sales collaboration involves the transfer of specific knowledge between salespeople and other intraorganizational members to address customers' problems, satisfy their needs, and certify their success while using the sellers' products or services (Claro and Ramos 2018). Salespeople's interactions with co-workers and personnel from other functional areas can create conflicts that may inhibit the benefits of coordination and collaboration (Chakrabarty, Brown, and Winding 2013). However, unlike dysfunctional conflict, which limits the generation of consensual solutions to customer problems, functional conflict can benefit salespeople by exposing problems and deriving solutions that encourage salespeople to adapt and develop integrative solutions that encompass stakeholders' concerns (Chakrabarty, Brown, and Winding 2013). Functional conflict promotes cross-functional goal compatibility, which refers to the synchronization of multiple functional areas' goals to arrive at mutually acceptable outcomes (Kadic-Maglajiclic, Boso, and Mcevski 2018), which can result in enhanced sales performance (Chakrabarty, Brown, and Winding 2013).

Salespeople located in central positions in their intraorganizational network have greater access to information than salespeople located in the network's periphery (Ahearne et al. 2013). Network centrality, described as the extent to which a salesperson is central in a network, endows said salesperson with greater access to information and influence (Carboni and Ehrlich 2013). Central network positions expose salespeople to diverse information sources that can enhance sales planning and stimulate creative problem solving, leading to superior sales performance through functional actions (Ahearne et al. 2013; Carboni and Ehrlich 2013). Salespeople in a central network position and that receive information from multiple sources can devise flexible alternatives to customer problems to guarantee that customers' demands are met

(Gonzalez and Claro 2017; Micevski et al. 2019). However, the diversity of information can create informational noise that reduces the credibility of the information, affecting information usage (Ahearne et al. 2013). Salespeople that maintain high-quality working relationships with their managers, co-workers, and administrative personnel (Park and Dietz 2006) can corroborate the validity and adequacy of information to ensure that it will lead to superior sales performance (Ahearne et al. 2013). Valid and reliable market information enables salespeople to gain a *bird's eye view* (Plouffe and Barclay 2007) and align their firms' offerings to customers' needs to provide superior customer value (Claro and Ramos 2018).

Salespeople's roles are evolving, and these roles require salespeople to access and mobilize intraorganizational resources to fulfill their customers' requirements (Üstener and Iacobucci 2012). Salespeople benefit from their network ties to capitalize on customer knowledge during the identification and delivery of sales opportunities (Üstener and Iacobucci 2012). Salespeople's social ties help drive the success of prospecting activities, whereas work network ties contribute to successful solution development and delivery (Üstener and Iacobucci 2012). Proficient salespeople hold a deep understanding of intraorganizational members' interdependencies and how their connections contribute to sales efforts' success (Üstener and Iacobucci 2012). Notwithstanding, not all work ties are created equal, and salespeople benefit from having many weak ties with service colleagues and maintaining few strong ties with marketing personnel (Claro and Ramos 2018). Furthermore, salespeople that set out to develop many work ties with their colleagues can do so at a high cost due to the investments in effort and time to transfer and coordinate knowledge, potentially hurting sales performance (Carboni and Ehrlich2013). Accomplished salespeople are more likely to nurture work ties across functional areas inside their firms, but they are prudent not to over-exert themselves with the excessive

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maintenance of intraorganizational relationships (Gonzalez and Claro 2017). When salespeople

read beyond organizational hierarchies and strategically collaborate with colleagues whose

experience and knowledge complement their sales activities, greater sales performance can be

achieved (Claro and Ramos 2018).

Salespeople create customer value by effectively deciphering customer requirements,

customizing, adapting, and integrating offerings, deploying coordinated solutions, and providing

post-deployment customer support (Panagopoulus, Rapp, and Oglivie 2017). Through high-

quality interactions with intraorganizational members, salespeople ensure that customers' needs

can be successfully met with the existing resources (Panagopoulus, Rapp, and Oglivie 2017).

Moreover, salespeople's solution involvement, which refers to the extent to which salespeople

participate in the activities necessary to provide end-to-end solutions, can significantly improve

customer satisfaction and sales performance (Panagopoulus, Rapp, and Oglivie 2017). However,

in order for coordinated sales offerings and solutions to realize their full potential and be

successful, customers must engage in adaptive behaviors to make concerted efforts to adjust their

processes and comply with sellers' specifications (Panagopoulus, Rapp, and Oglivie 2017).

Empirical evidence suggests that the mere act of coordinating sales resources does not lead to

enhanced outcome-based sales performance (e.g., revenue, sales quotas). However, said

coordination does improve customer-related sales outcomes such as customer satisfaction and

customer relationship quality, which subsequently improve outcome-based sales performance

(cf., Kalra et al. 2017; Li, Sun, Cheng 2017). In essence, in high-complex solutions,

salespeople's coordination success hinges on customers' abandonment of 'the customer is king'

mentality to adapt their processes to the sellers' solution requirements. For example, an

automated machine requiring raw materials to be feed in an organized and pre-determined way

will not operate properly if the customer's purchasing department buys the raw materials in bulk rather than in the required pre-packaged presentation form. Thus, customers must coordinate internally to ensure that sellers' solutions succeed.

Cluster 3: Managerial and Leadership Influences on Salesperson's Intraorganizational Adaptation

Sales managers are a critical component of effective sales organizations, and their support, guidance, and leadership can help salespeople attain positive results. Salespeople's relationships with their managers can significantly affect their performance (Schrock et al. 2016). In addition, salespeople's perceptions of their managers' personal characteristics can influence their acceptance of organizational goals and objectives (El-Samen and Akroush 2018). Moreover, salespeople define themselves not only in terms of their individual characteristics, but also in terms of their social environment. Interpersonal identification, which refers to the level of identification that salespeople perceive that they share with their managers, enables salespeople to learn from their managers' experience (Ahearne et al. 2013). Interpersonal identification between salespeople and their managers can result in favorable sales behaviors, positive customer appraisals, and higher sales performance (Aherne et al. 2013). However, for interpersonal identification to produce optimal results, both salespeople and their managers must hold similar identification levels with each other. If salespeople exhibit an over-identification with their managers, this can lead to codependency and maladaptive behaviors, which can hurt their sales performance (Ahearne et al. 2013).

Managers can exert immediate influence on their salespeople by translating organizational strategies into tactical activities (El-Samen and Akroush 2018). For example, market-oriented firms leverage managerial supervision to encourage their employees to become

customer-oriented to create superior customer value and nurture sustainable relationships with customers. In addition, sales managers' organizational commitment, which refers to their level of identification and attachment to their firm, influences salespeople's customer orientation, increasing service quality, reducing customer churn, and improving sales performance (Jones, Busch, and Dacin 2002).

Sales managers can facilitate salespeople's market orientation behaviors, which are defined as the extent to which salespeople explore and integrate customer preferences, competitive intelligence, and product knowledge to create customer value (Chen, Rivas, and Wu 2018). Sales managers that care about their salespeople's well-being offer support to help them perform their jobs well. Supervisory support, described as salespeople's perceptions of managers' encouragement, support, and concern for their well-being (Jones, Busch, and Dacin 2002), can impact salespeople's *working smart* behaviors such as sales planning (Chen, Rivas, and Wu 2016). Sales planning allows salespeople to adopt a long-term perspective of the activities that must be completed to satisfy customer needs and achieve sales objectives, which can increase sales performance (Chen, Rivas, and Wu 2016). Nevertheless, sales managers must be attentive to ensure that salespeople do not fall into the *analysis paralysis* trap, precluding salespeople from implementing customer-oriented actions (Jaramillo et al. 2009).

Part of being a positive influence for their salespeople entails that sales managers identify improvement opportunities and take corrective actions to rectify salespeople's unproductive behaviors. Supervisory feedback informs and motivates salespeople to demonstrate proper selling behaviors (Chakrabarty, Oubre, and Brown 2008). Positive feedback is more effective at improving salespeople's performance than negative feedback because the latter only informs salespeople about their inadequacies but does little to motivate them (Chakrabarty, Oubre, and

Brown 2008). Furthermore, positive feedback helps create low-stress sales environments, which help salespeople develop positive attitudes towards their job (Jaramillo et al. 2009). Thus, it is recommended that sales managers adopt a positive approach when dealing with salespeople's failures to ensure that their feedback produces performance enhancements (Chakrabarty, Oubre, and Brown 2008).

Sales managers can enable salespeople to properly serve customers by articulating and communicating a clear vision, while offering the resources needed to carry out that vision (Jaramillo et al. 2009). Sales managers can motivate salespeople to pursue common goals for their collective benefit (Jaramillo et al. 2009). Sales managers who practice a servant leadership style, which focuses on their subordinates' welfare, influence salespeople to adopt the organization's vision and mission, encouraging the enactment of extra-role behaviors that go beyond their own self-interest to serve customers (Jaramillo et al. 2009). Salespeople's extra-role behaviors engender sales activities that focus on intangible aspects of service and product provisions (e.g., delivery, expertise, and assistance) that improve service quality and sales performance (Jones, Busch, and Dacin 2002).

Sales leadership is a fundamental factor in a salesforce's success, primarily through the practice of sales enablement activities focused on providing the tools needed to help salespeople succeed in their sales endeavors (Peesker et al. 2019). Sales managers must adapt to new situations and address change instead of avoiding it to provide proper support to their subordinates through a novel leadership style known as adaptive leadership (Peesker et al. 2019). Adaptive leadership finds its roots in both the transformational and servant leadership literature streams but extends its domains by explicitly focusing on four key areas: coaching, collaborating, championing, and engaging customers to help salespeople to improve their sales

performance (Peesker et al. 2019). Adaptive sales managers provide individualized assistance (i.e., coaching), organize and facilitate learning opportunities (i.e., collaborating), intervene on behalf of their salespeople to shield them from non-essential tasks (i.e., championing), and interact with customers at executive levels to help salespeople advance sales opportunities (i.e., customer engaging) (Peesker et al. 2019).

Salespeople face a highly complex sales environment both externally and internally. Customers have changed how they buy and what they expect, increasing the diversity of customer demands and involvement of different customer stakeholders (Schmitz and Ganesan 2014). Therefore, sales managers must play a pivotal role in matching their leadership behaviors to situational and subordinate characteristics to maximize performance (Schmitz and Ganesan 2014). Adaptive sales leaders can support salespeople with cross-functional teams to assist with technical and logistic matters. In addition, sales managers must be adaptive to eliminate or at the very least reduce sources of organizational complexity by clarifying salespeople's responsibilities and objectives and offer enough resources to help salespeople meet job demands, achieve performance goals, and mitigate the adverse effects of role stressors (Schmitz and Ganesan 2014). In this vein, adaptive sales managers can empower their salespeople to have greater authority and ownership of their work, expanding their potential and motivation to become more adaptive in their sales environment (Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005). As boundary-spanning employees, salespeople can better satisfy customer needs when they have the flexibility to adapt (Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005).

Notwithstanding, salespeople must display an advanced level of empowerment readiness to reap the benefits of controlling their sales encounters. Salespeople empowerment readiness refers to salespeople's level of knowledge and experience that should permit them to be

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successful in an empowered environment (Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005). Sales managers must adapt their salespeople's empowerment based on their readiness levels to ensure that salespeople at initial development stages receive more regulating directives, while salespeople at advanced stages should receive supportive guidance to improve their sales performance (Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005).

Salespeople can be considered relationship managers who receive support from employees inside and outside of their sales departments to meet their customers' needs (Bradford et al. 2010). The modern sales environment's complexity, such as high-customization and high-risk sales opportunities, presents an ideal situation for employee collaboration. Sales managers can create dedicated support teams to help salespeople in complex selling situations to decrease the amount of time required to coordinate intraorganizational networks (Arndt and Harkins 2011). Sales managers can define support structures (e.g., compensation, organizational structures) to ensure that salespeople complete sales activities quickly and with the appropriate quality to meet both the buyer and seller's needs at the lowest reasonable cost, thus enhancing sales performance (Arndt and Harkins 2011). Furthermore, co-workers can contribute to the overall customer experience, and when salespeople perceive their co-workers to be altruistic, cooperation to find solutions and provide assistance to satisfy customer needs is enhanced. Sales managers' active directing and monitoring can help salespeople capitalize on their customer-oriented sales efforts and improve their sales performance (El-Samen and Akrouch 2018).

Cluster 4: Salesperson's ambidexterity and creativity

Salespeople must provide excellent service, while reaching their sales objectives to succeed in the modern sales environment (Agnihotri et al. 2017). In addition, salespeople have responsibilities to both internal and external stakeholders (Agnihotri et al. 2014) and are

compelled to balance their time and effort between revenue generation, customer acquisition, and customer retention-related activities (Agabler et al. 2017). The complex selling environment's multiple and often competing demands require salespeople to be agile to rapidly respond to changes in their environment to maximize value (Hughes and Oglivie 2020). Therefore, salespeople must be ambidextrous to cope effectively in their environment and utilize their resources to achieve performance objectives and meet demands (Gabler et al. 2017).

Salespeople's ambidexterity has been recognized as a viable alternative for achieving productivity gains by focusing on both service and sales objectives (Gabler et al. 2017). Ambidextrous salespeople demonstrate an inclination to learn and adapt, considered two of the most potent selling behaviors (cf., Agnihotri et al. 2017). Furthermore, salespeople require creativity to adapt offerings and, thus, generate superior customer value (Gabler et al. 2017). Ambidextrous salespeople are driven to find creative ways to combine service and sales activities to produce favorable performance outcomes (Agnihotri et al. 2014). Creativity, defined as the generation of new ideas and novel behaviors, can help salespeople identify customer problems and find appropriate solutions to satisfy their needs (Agnihotri et al. 2014). Salespeople's creative ideas and behaviors may improve sales tasks' efficiency and effectiveness, expand the customer base, and increase customer satisfaction, thereby contributing to overall sales performance (Wang and Netemeyer 2004). Salespeople display creativity by generating and evaluating novel solutions to existing problems, adopting new perspectives, defining and solving new problems, and detecting latent problems (Wang and Netemeyer 2004).

During the introduction of new products, ambidextrous salespeople can exhibit a more robust adoption of new products than their less ambidextrous counterparts by showing commitment and dedicated work to achieve performance goals, improving sales performance in

the process (Arditto et al. 2020). Ambidextrous salespeople are adept at designing new products and services or adapting existing ones to meet their customers' needs, leading to increased performance (Arditto et al. 2020). Despite the many benefits of salespeople's ambidexterity, the simultaneous goal pursuit between sales and service, external and internal stakeholders, and current and future customer needs can have adverse effects on salespeople's performance (Aghniotri et al. 2017). Salespeople's ambidexterity can induce high levels of felt stress, which can inhibit positive effects on sales performance (Agnihotri et al. 2017). Moreover, when salespeople face demands to engage in both sales and service activities, their sales performance can be damaged because their sales efforts can be stretched thin across multiple demands (Oglivie et al. 2017). The tension between sales and service imperatives can force salespeople to allocate resources in suboptimal ways, resulting in lost sales or customers (Oglivie et al. 2017).

A sales environment that displays a moderate emphasis on service and sales goals helps salespeople obtain higher sales performance than sales environments emphasizing high levels of service-sales or low levels of service-sales priorities (Gabler et al. 2017). Sales managers can support their salespeople in sales-service environments by proactively reducing role conflict and transferring demanding customers to salespeople with higher ambidextrous skills (Agnihotri et al. 2017). While salespeople's ambidexterity is not a *silver bullet* to succeed in the modern sales environment, it is crucial in complex sales situations requiring high levels of sales-related skills to deliver customized products while maintaining high levels of service quality (Gabler et al. 2017). Furthermore, as customer demands evolve in an increasingly dynamic and complex marketplace, salespeople's creativity will be instrumental to quickly and effectively solve customer problems and provide quality service (Agnihotri et al. 2014).

Cluster 5: Salesperson's technology orientation

The age of information has changed how salespeople sell. Salespeople have benefited from the information revolution because they can research prospects easily, understand their underlying needs, and propose solutions that address *hard-to-see* opportunities. Nevertheless, the vast amount of information is growing at an accelerated rate, which requires proper information management tools to ensure that salespeople do not drown in a *sea of data*. Technology specifically customized to help salespeople during their sales-related tasks has emerged as a necessity in the modern sales environment (Eggert and Serdaroglu 2014).

Modern salespeople must do more in less time, and technological advances have become critical for their achievement of goals (Rapp, Agnihotri, and Forbes 2008). Technology can contribute to salespeople's productivity by standardizing mechanical tasks, organizing information for easy access, and creating a collective knowledge base that employees can tap into, making their jobs easier (cf., Park et al. 2010). Salespeople frequently need to access, analyze, and share information to meet customer demands and requirements and salesforce automation technology helps them accomplish said tasks (Rapp, Agnihotri, and Forbes 2008). Sales technology is the application of information technology (IT) to support the sales function (Hunter and Perrault 2006). When salespeople utilize sales technology tools, they can reduce the amount of time spent on *administrative* activities and focus on customer-centric activities that significantly impact sales opportunities (Rapp, Agnihotri, and Forbes 2008). One particular type of sales technology is the customer relationship management system (CRM), representing IT and relationship marketing's marriage to produce a technology that helps salespeople manage customer interactions and transactions (Plouffe, Williams, and Leigh 2004).

The availability of CRM systems allows salespeople to retrieve critical customer information to plan effective sales encounters, anticipate customer responses based on historical data and analytical techniques, and overcome customer objections (Rapp, Agnihotri, and Forbes 2008). An emerging area intimately related to sales technology is social media use to aid in the achievement of sales tasks. In the sales context, social media refers to the technological component of a seller firm's communication and relationship-building functions, which leverages customer and prospect networks to promote value co-creation activities (Itani, Agnihotri, and Dingus 2017). Social media can extend salespeople's influence and connection with customers by enabling salespeople to collect competitive intelligence from social media platforms and learn about customers, competitors, and market trends (Itani, Agnihotri, and Dingus 2017). Salespeople's social media usage enhances sales performance through information-based capabilities and selling behaviors (Itani, Agnihotri, and Dingus 2017).

In general, sales technology can positively impact two broad sales task categories: externally-focused (i.e., customer relationship), which focuses on cultivating high-quality salesperson-customer relationships, and internally-focused (i.e., internal coordination), which focuses on internal role performance and contribution to salespeople's success (Hunter and Perrault 2006). In the externally-focused category, sales technology enables activities such as forecasting, pipeline management, and activity management (Eggert and Serdaroglu 2014). Concerning the internally-focused dimension, sales technology facilitates information management, team selling activities, and report generation (Eggert and Serdaroglu 2014). Additionally, SFA technology can improve sales efforts' quality and effectiveness through faster access to relevant and accurate information (Eggert and Serdaroglu 2014).

Sales technology promotes collaboration between salespeople and sales support employees. This collaborative effort results in the alignment of goals and in the development of joint solutions that ultimately result in enhanced sales performance (Rodriguez and Honeycutt 2011). However, salespeople may accept technology but may be reluctant to adopt and use it, defeating the overarching promise of sales technology to free up salespeople's time to accomplish more activities with less effort (Robinson, Marshall, and Stamps 2005). Salespeople's use of technology depends on their perceptions about the ability of technology to help them reach their performance goals (Park et al. 2010). Salespeople's attitudes toward using sales technology and perceived usefulness are critical determinants of behavioral intentions to use technology (Robinson, Marshall, and Stamps 2005). Salespeople that exhibit a pronounced propensity for leveraging technology to perform task relevant to the sales role are said to possess a sales technology orientation (Hunter and Perrault 2005). Salespeople with greater sales technology orientation can use the information to facilitate their sales planning and adaptive behaviors, positively impacting their overall sales performance (Hunter and Perrault 2005).

While sales technology usage is not directly linked to sales performance, salespeople's behaviors while using sales technology can improve sales performance (Robinson, Marshall, and Stamps 2005). For example, the improved collaboration that originates from the usage of CRM systems enhances the understanding of customer needs to propose an appropriate solution while simultaneously improving the effectiveness of sales processes by promptly meeting short-term goals (Rodriguez and Honeycutt 2011). Firms can encourage their salesforce's technology adoption by providing the support and resources necessary to use sales technology effectively (Hunter and Perrault 2005). Moreover, sales managers can support salespeople's technology adoption by offering adequate training, resources, and external assistance to encourage

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technology adoption (Eggert and Serdaroglu 2014). More importantly, once facilitating

conditions have been established for salespeople's technology adoption, continuous supervision

is warranted to ensure that activities and expectations are being met (Eggert and Serdaroglu

2014).

Cluster 6: Salesperson's organizational selling environment

Organizational elements inside salespeople's selling environment are vital to creating

environments conducive to high performance through manageable factors at the individual

salesperson level. For example, company policies can influence salesperson's satisfaction, which

is an important metric to evaluate because it represents a viable avenue to improve customer

satisfaction (Evanchitzky, Sharma, and Prykop 2012). Salespeople's satisfaction reflects their

level of agreement with their work atmosphere and firms' processes and procedures

(Evanchitzky, Sharma, and Prykop 2012). Organizational policies that are perceived of as

transparent and fair can positively impact salespeople's behaviors. When salespeople operate in

firms where a sense of pay fairness exists, they develop greater trust toward their firm and feel

motivated to participate in organizational citizenship behaviors to benefit both their firms and

customers (Rouziou et al. 2018). Furthermore, pay fairness encourages salespeople's helping

behaviors toward co-workers, leading to the accrual of social capital (Rouziou et al. 2018).

Social capital supports salespeople's development of strong social networks that are critical

when customer solutions require intraorganizational experts' cooperation, resulting in improved

sales performance (Rouziou et al. 2018).

Supportive organizational environments provide salespeople with the tools, training, and

support needed to effectively execute sales tasks (Schepers and van der Borgh 2020).

Additionally, when salespeople perceive their firms' to be supportive, they engage in extra-role

behaviors consisting of discretionary actions that exceed the pre-established role expectations to benefit customers (Schepers and van der Borgh 2020). Firms' that endow their sales force with autonomy foster salespeople's ability to predict intraorganizational actors' behaviors and anticipate their actions, which allows them to adapt accordingly with both extra-role and in-role behaviors aimed at satisfying customer needs and enhancing sales performance (Schepers and van der Borgh 2020).

Satisfied customers stand at the pinnacle of sales success, and salespeople strive to maintain high-quality relationships with their customers (Wang 2012). Customers evaluate salespeople based on whether they have the knowledge and expertise to offer relevant solutions and their ability to respond promptly (Wang 2012). Given that solving customers' problems requires an in-depth understanding of customers' needs, salespeople may opt to learn about their customers' business to improve their proposed solutions' adequacy.

Salespeople's psychological climate enables them to interpret firms' priorities, which are then used to formulate appropriate actions. Hence, when salespeople perceive that their firms to have a learning climate, they will be motivated to acquire knowledge and use it to better serve their customers (Wang 2012). An organizational climate refers to employee perception about environmental attributes that guide expectations regarding outcomes, requirements, and interactions in the work environment (Wang 2012). Organizational culture differs from an organizational climate in that culture represents a set of widely-shared beliefs, whereas climate is based on idiosyncratic perceptions about the organizational environment (Wang 2012). Thus, a learning climate denotes a salesperson's perception that his or her organization expects employees to learn as part of their jobs in order to meet their customers' needs and obtain favorable performance outcomes (Wang 2012).

Customers' future behavioral intentions are strongly influenced by their satisfaction with salespeople (Agnihotri, Yang, and Briggs 2019). Proposing solutions to solve customer problems requires creativity and innovation from salespeople. Firms perceived to have innovation climates, characterized by flexibility and acceptance of novel techniques to address challenges, stimulate salespeople's implementation of strategies for satisfying customer needs in innovative ways (Agnihotri, Yang, and Briggs 2019). Furthermore, salespeople's ability to innovate can be influenced by their time-perspective, representing a relatively stable trait whereby a salesperson focuses on the past, present, or future (Agnihotri, Yang, and Briggs 2019). Salespeople with long-term perspectives exhibit a general disposition to approach customer problems with a focus on future implications. Thus, salespeople's innovation under a long-term perspective may emphasize customers' future benefits, which can require time to materialize. In sharp contrast, salespeople with short-term perspectives may focus on providing customer solutions with immediate results, which can be vital when responding to unexpected situations (Agnihotri, Yang, and Briggs 2019). Consequently, despite a firm's innovative climate, salespeople's innovation requires an accurate diagnosis of the customers' time perspective to validly provide benefits that match said perspective and increase sales performance.

Personal traits and organizational climate perceptions influence salespeople's attitudes, behaviors, and performance (Schrock et al. 2016). When salespeople's personalities match their firms' characteristics, sales performance improves, but when they are incompatible, role stress can develop (Schrock et al. 2016). Salespeople that enjoy interpersonal competition can further improve their performance if they perceive to operate under a competitive psychological climate (Schrock et al. 2016). However, highly competitive psychological climates can also lead to

pronounced turnover when salespeople lack a desire to win and be better than others (i.e., competitiveness) (Schrock et al. 2016).

Cluster 7: Salesperson's stressors and counterproductive workplace behaviors

The modern selling environment can generate high-levels of stress for salespeople, especially when they do not have enough resources to effectively deal with demands from managers, co-workers, or customers (cf., Beeler et al. 2020). Salespeople can evaluate stressors and adapt appropriately by relying on coping mechanisms (Beeler et al. 2020). Stressors in the selling environment can influence salespeople to engage in counterproductive workplace behaviors that negatively impact sales performance. One common source of stress for salespeople is the introduction of new products to sell by their firms because there is inherent uncertainty about whether salespeople will be successful in meeting the new products' quotas. Therefore, salespeople may favor selling existing products before devoting effort to sell newly-introduced ones, known as conservative selling behavior (van der Borgh and Schepers 2018). Conservative selling behavior captures salespeople's preference to engage in known and familiar activities before trying new and unknown ones. Salespeople may invest effort in selling new products only after they have attempted to sell existing products, which can negatively affect the new product's success and, consequently, sales performance (van der Borgh and Schepers 2018). One way to diminish the negative impact of conservative selling behaviors is to provide salespeople with accurate information about new products and adequate resources to help them succeed (van der Borgh and Schepers 2018).

Salespeople are expected to act in their customers' best interests while also being good stewards of their firms' successes, which can cause them to experience felt stress such as role conflict and role ambiguity. Salespeople often encounter sales situations in which they have to

sell to friends or acquaintances, activating conservative behaviors because they are extra cautious to ensure that their selling activities do not compromise their friendships (Beeler et al. 2020). Prospective customers who are also the salesperson's friends can induce the salesperson to experience friend-selling conflict, which involves a feeling of incompatibility associated with simultaneously acting as a salesperson and a friend (Beeler et al. 2020). Prospects can interpret the prudence that emerges from friend-selling conflict as a salesperson's genuine care to meeting their needs which is not solely tied to achieving financial gains (Beeler et al. 2020). While this conservative approach to selling resulting from friend-selling conflict can produce positive customer outcomes such as satisfaction, it can also diminish sales performance due to the sales role's ambiguity (Beeler et al. 2020). In addition, when salespeople experience role ambiguity, they are less likely to anticipate customer problems and engage in proactive behaviors to find solutions, damaging sales performance (Beeler et al. 2020).

To satisfy customer needs, salespeople require the help of co-workers to successfully deliver value propositions. Salespeople's networking ability is a determining factor that allows them to connect and develop relationships with prominent co-workers and personnel inside their firms that can assist them in selling related tasks. Additionally, salespeople's political skill enables them to become more influential by accurately reading situational and contextual cues (Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019). One dimension of political skill, social astuteness, is exceptionally relevant in networking activities because it enhances salespeople's presentation toward others by understanding their underlying motivations (Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019). However, networking can be counterproductive when salespeople engage in opportunistic behaviors to obtain short-term benefits while ignoring the long-term mutual reciprocity component needed to engender positive and sustainable networking outcomes (Dugan, Rouziou,

and Hochstein 2019). Opportunistic behaviors have been linked to a Machiavellianism personality trait, and salespeople who possess said trait utilize flattery and cynicism to manipulate others to provide assistance (Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019). Salespeople's Machiavellianism attenuates the positive effect of internal networking on sales performance, making it difficult for salespeople to perform well in the long run (Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019).

Internal networking provides salespeople with the advantage to leverage specialized expertise from intraorganizational members. Frequently, salespeople do not have formal authority over specialists, and they rely on informal means to garner their assistance (Murtha, Challagala, and Kohli 2011). Mutual collaboration inside the firm requires trust from the parties involved, but sometimes salespeople may be concerned about co-workers' opportunistic behaviors aimed at customers. Salespeople may fear that others inside the firm may engage in internal opportunism, a behavior marked by self-serving actions that compromise customers' attainment of their goals (Murtha, Challagala, and Kohli 2011). For this reason, salespeople may attempt to mitigate internal opportunism by participating in internal blocking. When salespeople conceal customer information from co-workers due to internal opportunism concerns, they internally block their co-workers and inhibit their ability to develop satisfactory customer solutions (Murtha, Challagala, and Kohli 2011). The problem arises when salespeople misdiagnose internal opportunism and block their peers' work based on incorrect perceptions, thus, diminishing sales performance (Murtha, Challagala, and Kohli 2011).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review reveal that salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation is a complex phenomenon that can underlie many of the behaviors

that salespeople engage in inside their firms. This investigation defines a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation as the amalgamation of personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general disposition to exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment, answering the first review question. Therefore, intraorganizational adaptation is characterized by salespeople's actions to cope, manage, modify, and adjust to the internal selling environment in order to be successful.

Focusing on the second review question, which examines the extent to which the current scientific knowledge informs us about intraorganizational adaptation, the conclusion is that extant literature has discussed the concept of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation pervasively. Nevertheless, it has not been explicitly defined before this study. Scholars have hinted at the idea of intraorganizational adaptation in the context of adopting new products (Atuahene-Gima 1997), adapting to organizational change (Ahearne et al. 2010), accepting and adopting new strategic implantations such as sales-service imperatives (Agnihotri et al. 2017) and sales technology (Hunter and Perrault 2006). Furthermore, salespeople's willingness to learn about their sales jobs and customers' needs (cf., Ahearne et al. 2010), responsiveness to market demands and customers' requirements (cf., Plouffe 2018), interaction with co-workers to improve internal work conditions and facilitate the transfer of knowledge (cf., Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010; Steward et al. 2010), underscore the ubiquitousness of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation.

Addressing the third review question, which inquires about intraorganizational adaptation's nomological network and its relationship to sales performance, this investigation concludes that there are a plethora of relevant factors, variables, and constructs affecting this relationship. Specifically, a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation linkage to sales

performance can be impacted by inherent qualities and traits to the individual salesperson (e.g., competitiveness, learning orientation, coachability, political skill), relationship with co-workers (e.g., trust, cooperation, collaboration), supervisory and leadership influences (e.g., feedback, sales controls, support), and organizational enablers (e.g., psychological climate, organizational practices and regulations). Supporting evidence suggests that salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation improves relationships with co-workers (Bradford et al. 2019) and customers (Üstener and Iacobucci), as well as the attainment of individual and organizational performance goals (e.g., sales quotas, new product sales, high-quality service provision). However, not every salesperson is adept at successfully engaging in intraorganizational adaptation, and negative consequences can arise, including over-exertion to develop internal networks leading to unmet performance objectives (Ahearne et al. 2013), increased levels of felt stress (Beeler et al. 2020), and counterproductive workplace behaviors (e.g., manipulation, opportunism) (Dugan, Rouzio, and Hochstein 2019). Interestingly enough, a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation can be improved, developed, and learned (cf., Schmitz and Ganesan 2014). Salespeople can become proficient at intraorganizational adaptation through training and coaching, whereas organizations can augment their development by promoting atmospheres that are conducive to learning, networking, and involvement (cf., Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005).

CONCLUSION

The scientific community has amassed a staggering number of insights regarding sales performance and the factors that have an effect on this crucial performance metric. Despite such great advancements, researchers have not been successful at explaining large portions of variance in sales performance as a dependent variable, and much about how to enhance it remains unknown. This has motivated researchers to adopt novel approaches in its inquiry and

examine sales performance from different perspectives. One perspective that has gained

prominence among scholars in recent years examines salespeople's internal selling environment.

In particular, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptation can further our understanding of how

salespeople's operations inside their firm can contribute to external outcomes (Plouffe 2018).

Despite the increased research efforts demonstrating that factors inside salespeople's selling

environments can be beneficial for salespeople, customers, and the selling firm, the linkage

between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptations and sales performance has not been

formally addressed. This review provides a valid, objective, and transparent appraisal of the

selling function's internal aspects that more closely reflect salespeople's intraorganizational

adaptation and its relationship to sales performance. In conclusion, this systematic literature

review formally defines a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptation as the amalgamation of

personal characteristics and cognitive and social abilities that underlie a general disposition to

exert change inside their firms in order to succeed in the selling environment, which

consequently improves the execution of a salesperson's behaviors and the results of those

behaviors to the achievement of organizational, individual, and customer goals.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTIVENESS: INTERNAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS THAT IMPROVE SALES PERFORMANCE

Traditionally, marketing scholarship focused on sales research has recognized salespeople's interactions with customers as a primary driver of sales performance. However, recent studies have acknowledged the importance of the sales function's intraorganizational dimension, which refers to salespeople's interactions within their firm. Adopting a market orientation perspective, this investigation proposes the concept of intraorganizational adaptiveness, defined as a generalized selling behavior that is directed inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and fulfillment of the firm's offering(s). This investigation posits that intraorganizational adaptiveness increases the effectiveness of salespeople's efforts to advocate for customers inside their firm, resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction and sales performance.

Keywords: sales, sales performance, intraoganizational selling environment, adaptive selling

INTRODUCTION

The modern B2B sales environment is very complex, as buyers are looking for sellers that can provide solutions based on their specific requirements (Schmitz and Ganesan 2014; Üstener and Iocobucci 2012). This complexity has caused salespeople to seek out resources and expertise beyond their own to satisfy customer needs (Hughes, Le Bon, and Malshe 2012). The involvement of more actors rests on salespeople's ability to identify, gain access to, and coordinate resources that can generate positive outcomes for the selling firm and the customer (Plouffe and Barclay 2007; Plouffe and Grégoire 2011). The recognized importance of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (Plouffe 2018) underscores the notion that salespeople's actions inside their own firms can generate favorable outcomes that can outperform the outcomes obtained from externally directed sales behaviors (Plouffe et al. 2016; Weitz and Bradford 1999).

Salespeople engage in non-customer interaction behaviors more frequently than previously believed (Marshall, Moncrief, and Lassk 1999). Thus, despite the modern salesperson's high level of customer-centricity, their time is not devoted entirely to external interactions with customers (Plank and Reid 1994). Instead, salespeople can also act as advocates for their customers within their own firms to satisfy their customers' needs. For example, sometimes salespeople must convince co-workers to ship a customer's order after hours in order to meet a deadline. To do so, salespeople must build partnerships within their companies, leverage internal resources, and influence other employees (Ahearne et al. 2013; Gonzalez, Claro, and Palmatier 2014).

Coordination inside the selling firm (Steward et al. 2010) is germane to salespeople's success because although salespeople usually secure the customer's initial order, the balance of

the organizational departments deliver the promised offering. Thus, salespeople's collaboration with other departments inside their firm facilitates future customer patronage. In other words, to serve customers well, salespeople must often rely on personnel in other functional areas of their firm to do their jobs (Hartmann, Wieland, and Vargo 2018). Salespeople use their relationships with key employees inside their firm to improve sales performance, while advancing their customer's agenda (Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016). Therefore, salespeople often practice adaptive-type behaviors to customize their approach to other employees and sell their customer's needs successfully inside their own firms (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Intraorganizational adaptiveness is proposed as a selling behavior that enables salespeople to find the appropriate fit to environmental conditions and elements (i.e., changes in organizational structures, personnel changes) to execute effective techniques to secure the internal resources required to satisfy their customers' needs. For instance, a salesperson seeking to promote his or her customers' successes may engage in intraorganizational adaptiveness, evaluate a situation, and deliberate, "for this type of co-worker, I should approach with tactic A; for this other type of co-worker, tactic B, etc." (Román and Iocobucci 2010, p.368). Intraorganizational adaptiveness can be defined as *"a generalized selling behavior which is directed inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and fulfillment of the firm's offering(s)."* Adaptiveness is a requirement of successful selling, mainly because there is no universal selling behavior and certainly no *one-size-fits-all* approach in the modern marketplace—which is replete with heterogeneous customer needs (Román and Iocobucci 2010; Weitz 1979). The salesperson must actively influence other functional areas within his or her company to better serve the customer (Rapp et al. 2017). Thus, being adaptive

enables salespeople to carry the customer's voice across the organization more effectively.

Intraorganizational adaptiveness is therefore proposed as a market-oriented behavior because it

represents an enactment of market orientation at the individual level (Homburg, Wieseke, and

Bornemann 2009. Collectively, intraorganizational adaptiveness revises the concept of adaptive

selling and extends its application to a salesperson's internal selling environment (cf., MacInnis

2011). Intraorganizational adaptiveness provides a managerially relevant behavior that can be

learned, trained, developed, and selected by salespeople (cf., McFarland 2019) with the purpose

of augmenting sales performance through the advancement of customers' successes with the

enactment of "downstream" selling behaviors (Plouffe, Nelson, and Beuk 2013). This

investigation provides a novel perspective that aims to complement existing knowledge about

customer-oriented selling behaviors in a thought-provoking manner by proposing a re-

conceptualized construct that merges two established streams of literature; market orientation

and adaptive selling (see Figure 14). Specifically, the paper adds to the latest conversation in

sales scholarship that examines the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role. Marketing

academics can benefit from this investigation by gaining a deeper understanding of the adaptive-

type behaviors undertaken by salespeople within the confines of their own organizations in order

to advocate for the success of their customers and increase sales performance. This paper's main

contribution is touting the importance of the internal aspect of the sales role, which recent

empirical evidence has demonstrated has the capacity to explain more variance in sales

performance than externally directed sales activities (Plouffe et al. 2016; Weitz and Bradford

1999).

The manuscript proceeds as follows: First, it presents the literature on intraorganizational

selling behaviors, demonstrating that salespeople's internally directed selling behaviors are

crucial determinants of sales performance. Second, a theory-driven study informed by anecdotal evidence identifies the construct of intraorganizational adaptiveness, operationalized as a market-oriented behavior that facilitates the effectiveness of salespeople's internal selling efforts. Third, the novel operationalization is purified, and its relationship to relevant internal selling behaviors such as salespeople's navigation and coordination, along with its effect on two-managerially relevant outcome variables are examined. Finally, the findings are discussed to improve managers' attitudes regarding intraorganizational adaptiveness so that actions are taken to facilitate salespeople's engagement in this selling behavior in order to enhance sales performance. The findings will also provide further insight into the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role with stimulating recommendations for academics aimed at invigorating research efforts on this topic. The essay ends with concluding remarks highlighting the relevance of intraorganizational adaptiveness in the modern sales environment and potential avenues for future inquiry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Precursors of the Intraorganizational Dimension of the Sales Function

The business-to-business (B2B) sales environment has evolved into a complex ecosystem of organizational players that are increasingly looking for partners to provide specialized products and integrated solutions (Steward et al. 2010; Tuli et al. 2007). For example, in B2B commerce, both exchange parties (i.e., seller and buyer) frequently include experts that come together to reach favorable outcomes, where several factors are negotiated (e.g., payment terms, shipping, etc.) and contractual agreements are formalized to establish long-term relationships. In addition, B2B commerce involves multiple unique business partners, each playing a different role in the supply chain, and many business outcomes can be attributed to their relationships

(Mentzer and Gundlach 2010). One primary driving force in B2B exchange is satisfying needs and delivering value along the value chain (Kotler 2017).

Delivering value in the modern B2B market poses some challenges that have transformed the sales function. For example, customers are interested in acquiring 'solutions' that come in the form of complex offerings (Tuli et al. 2007). These offerings require that salespeople look beyond their own expertise and knowledge to be able to satisfy customers' needs (Üstener and Godes 2006). Therefore, salespeople must have an in-depth understanding of customers' requirements to orchestrate resources and deliver appropriate offerings (Steward et al. 2010). As such, salespeople may depend on other departments' skills within their firms, such as engineering, R&D, production, and finance, when responding to customer's requests.

Several factors have contributed to the emphasis placed on the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (Plouffe 2018), such as the relaxation of organizational structures (Capron and Hulland 1999), the overlap in employee responsibilities (Agnihotri et al. 2017), and the interaction between a firm's departments (Homburg, Jensen, and Krohmer 2008). The development of horizontal organizational structures that facilitate the collaboration between the different departments and the sharing of talent and expertise within the firm has resulted in salespeople becoming boundary-spanning employees (Singh 1998). Salespeople perform multiple activities that were not traditionally considered part of their job description; thus, they frequently reach outside of their immediate social and professional network to acquire the resources to advance their customers' needs. This search for relevant resources has led salespeople to navigate their internal organization to identify key resources that can help them accomplish any number of tasks and offer their customers a higher level of service quality (Plouffe and Barclay 2007; Plouffe and Grégoire 2011).

The Emergence of the Intraorganizational Dimension of the Sales Function

The sales function has become pivotal to a firm's strategic goals, as the sales force is utilized not only for selling activities but also for business development (Moncrief and Shipp 1997). In light of the sales function's heightened organizational prominence, the increased sophistication of its customers, and the accelerated movement towards a one-world globalized market, salespeople are now shifting their focus from short-term transactional exchanges to long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Isolated sales departments have transformed into integrated selling teams occupying talent from diverse departments from within the firm (Marshall, Moncrief, and Lassk 1999).

The increased cross-functional interactions and collaborations occurring inside firms underscore the importance of effective selling efforts to provide customers with added value (Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003). It requires salespeople to interact with more employees inside their firm than they had done in prior decades. Additionally, business strategies to enhance firm performance are adopted with greater frequency than in the past. One such strategy is market orientation, which posits that firms should gather, generate, and disseminate market intelligence to fulfill their customers' needs in order to remain competitive and profitable in the marketplace (Kohli and Jaworski 1993). In addition, market orientation emphasizes that intraorganizational factors can facilitate cross-functional cooperation and coordination inside firms (Jaworski and Kohli 1993). Given that customers in the modern sales environment need highly complex and customized solutions, firms have developed specialized units to address customers' requirements (Worman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003). Thus, selling teams were assembled to better serve customers, and as such, are populated by employees from diverse

backgrounds, leveraging complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities (Bauer et al. 1998; Weitz and Bradford 1999).

Managerial support is germane for salespeople's success in acquiring needed resources to serve customers (Jaramillo et al. 2009). Institutionalized procedures that implement formal communication channels among employees inside the firm can enhance information generation and sharing (Kohli and Jaworski 1993). However, informal employee interactions within the firm have been shown to exert a greater impact on solution generation than formal interactions (Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019). Hence, intraorganizational environments that allow employees to seek support across their organization can further enhance the advantages of cross-functional collaboration by more effectively selling customers' needs inside the firm. Salespeople engage in internal selling, which refers to purposeful actions that aim to garner resources on behalf of customers and to diffuse customers' needs across the firm (Joshi 2010). In doing so, salespeople may adapt their selling approaches to increase the effectiveness of their internal selling efforts. Evidence suggests that internal selling is often more important than external selling when dealing with complex customer solutions (Workman, Homburg, and Jensen 2003).

The demands of the modern B2B environment have tipped the scales in favor of intraorganizational connectivity between employees, functions, and departments. Observable changes are reported in the activities that salespeople are required to perform compared to past compilations of sales activities (Moncrief and Marshall 2001). Some activities, such as coordinating tasks, expediting orders, and supervising product quality on behalf of customers, emphasize the transition from exclusively externally directed sales efforts to internally directed ones (see Marshall, Moncrief, and Lassk 1999). The emergence of the intraorganizational

dimension of the sales role (Plouffe 2018) includes a plethora of non-customer-directed selling behaviors that do not involve the actual customer interaction but rather describe interactions with internal actors in the selling firm to advance the customer's needs (Plank and Reid 1994). Intraorganizational behaviors such as navigation (Plouffe and Barclay 2007; Plouffe and Grégoire 2011), coordinating sales efforts (Steward et al. 2010), internal networking (Morrison 2002), intrapreneurial activities (Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri 2013), and proactive workplace behaviors (Parker and Collins 2010) among others, demonstrate that salespeople work internally to obtain favorable external outcomes. In addition, the acknowledgment that factors and personnel inside an organization can significantly influence salespeople's performance is limited by the *external* interpretation of adaptive selling (Sujan 1999). Therefore, this investigation proposes the concept of intraorganizational adaptiveness as a translation and extension of the traditional adaptive selling perspective to the internal selling environment.

Related Constructs and Differentiation

Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

Intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA) is proposed as a market-oriented behavior that finds additional support in the adaptive selling academic literature and describes salespeople's modification of behaviors inside their firms to provide beneficial outcomes for their customers. Salespeople's pre-disposition toward IA captures the notion that salespeople are not merely products of their environments; instead, they are sculptors and engaged co-creators of their environments (Bell and Staw 1989; Hartman, Wieland, and Vargo 2018; Plouffe 2018). As an individual-level behavior, IA can produce enduring behavioral change because behavioral responses due to intrinsic motivation and psychological processes (e.g., beliefs) are relatively stable over time (Dweck, Chiu, and Hong 2009).

In contrast, behaviors that occur solely due to external environmental stimuli tend to be short-lived and dynamic (Engle and Lord 1997). It is important to note that the behaviors that result from salespeople's IA are responses and not reactions. A response is reasoned, and it involves the consideration of the long-term effects of an action. At the same time, a reaction is instantaneous and cannot account for long-term effects. Reactions are concerned with an immediate action prompted by a specific stimulus. Behavioral responses often hold a positive connotation, while behavioral reactions tend to be considered negative. For example, in the medical field, physicians become worried when patients are *reacting* to a specific drug. However, when patients are *responding* to the treatment, this is seen as a beneficial sign. Thus, behavioral responses are generally seen in a positive light because they echo salespeople's disposition to embrace new situations and challenges as learning opportunities (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). In comparison, behavioral reactions tend to be negatively laden because they imply that salespeople must take immediate action to address customers' problems in a corrective rather than preventive manner. Furthermore, when the problem is solved, salespeople usually return to their *normal* state or *comfort zone*.

A salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness is strongly associated with subsequent, 'downstream' behaviors that will be enacted by a said salesperson (Sternberg 1985; Dweck 1996; Plouffe, Holmes, and Beuk 2013). A behavior is an action that serves a purpose, and that represents an expression of an underlying factor (e.g., mindset) (Ajzen and Fishbein 2000; Chandrashekaran et al. 2000; Fishbein and Ajzen 1980). Salespeople's behaviors define how they will act relative to some established norms (Azjen 1985). When a salesperson sends tailored emails to potential customers to offer them a solution that can increase their productivity, this action truthfully represents a selling behavior—*prospecting*.

As a result, IA is a behavior that can influence salespeople's actions with the explicit purpose of advocating for and/or further enabling customers' success by satisfying their needs and helping them to achieve their goals. In general, behaviors can provide feedback and stimulate retrospective appraisals of actions, which can promote learning and alter guidelines for future behaviors (Dweck and Leggett 1988). For example, salespeople may engage in specific behaviors in order to pursue or avoid anticipated outcomes.

Intraorganizational adaptiveness is mainly concerned with the purposeful modification of salespeople's behaviors inside their own firms in response to environmental conditions at the customer-level interface. The underlying aim of salespeople's IA is to promote customers' successes—achieving their desired outcomes when using the vending firm's product or service (Hochstein et al. 2020). Adaptiveness refers to salespeople's capacity to adapt, enabling them to succeed in their environment (Spiro and Weitz 1990). Therefore, salespeople may exhibit varying levels of IA that will influence their subsequent actions (Gwinner et al. 2005; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Intraorganizational adaptiveness is defined as follows:

> *A generalized selling behavior which is directed inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and fulfillment of the firm's offering(s).*

The focus of intraorganizational adaptiveness is not constrained to any particular customer situation or 'deal,' and it can be germane at any step of the sales process. For instance, a salesperson with a strong tendency towards IA may integrate technological changes into his or her firm to help customers monitor the fabrication process of a specialized piece of equipment in real-time. Also, when a salesperson exhibits a pronounced level of IA, he or she can recognize

the needs of other employees inside the firm and use this knowledge to elaborate persuasive arguments to accommodate customers' requirements. For instance, delays in the credit approval process for customers may translate into missed delivery deadlines, and this may occur because of clerical errors from salespeople when filling out paperwork on behalf of their customers. Thus, a salesperson may recognize that producing legible and correctly completed credit applications might help the accounting department accelerate credit approval, which may benefit the customer by facilitating on-time delivery (Joshi 2010; Judson et al. 2007). Hence, a salesperson aware of the credit approval process may begin working with the shipping department in order to make pre-arrangements to deliver a customer's order as soon as credit approval is finalized. This proactive measure accelerates the customer's order processing time, potentially improving the customer's success (Grant and Ashford 2008).

Intraorganizational adaptiveness is conceptually distinct from related constructs because: (i) it is a behavior that is not limited to a specific customer or sales situation nor a particular step in the selling process; (ii) it has the purpose of enabling or advocating for the customer's success; and (iii) it is proactive in nature (see Table 12).

Proactive Workplace Behaviors

In general, employees in organizations seek to influence their environments and gain a sense of control of their actions (Kim, Cable, and Kim 2005). Salespeople can influence their environments when they engage in premeditated actions to achieve some benefit. Henceforth, salespeople can engage in proactive workplace behaviors, such as implementing ideas and solving problems (Parker, Williams, and Turner 2006). Proactive behaviors can be defined as "anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and/or their environments" (Grant and Ashford 2008, p. 4). This anticipatory behavior is preceded by motivation, and the expected

outcomes can be beneficial to the individual, the company, or both (Frese 2001). However, in some instances, the benefits obtained by the individual may be deleterious to other stakeholders (Griffin and Lopez 2005).

Proactive behaviors entail acting in advance and envisioning future outcomes to create change (Grant 2007). Intraorganizational adaptiveness can be considered proactive, and similar to a proactive workplace behavior, it seeks to influence salespeople's environments. However, unlike proactive workplace behaviors, which can sometimes produce adverse consequences for customers, intraorganizational adaptiveness is undertaken with the explicit purpose of benefiting customers. Salespeople can engage in proactive workplace behaviors to gain more product knowledge and improve their sales performance, whereas salespeople engaging in intraorganizational adaptiveness will do the same in order to better serve their customers. Essentially, the difference between proactive workplace behaviors and intraorganizational adaptiveness stems from the source of motivation. The former aims to impact a salesperson's environment mainly for the benefit of the individual salesperson. At the same time, the latter originates from a salesperson's motivation to adapt to changing environmental conditions to offer enhanced value to his or her customers.

Intrapreneurial Behavior

Intrapreneurial behavior stems from entrepreneurship and represents the practice of entrepreneurial behaviors inside the firm (Kuratko, Montagno, and Hornsby 1990). Intrapreneurship is seen as a means to enhance innovation, obtain a competitive advantage, and increase firm performance. Intrapreneurs adopt novel approaches and rely on their own creativity to develop innovative solutions while operating inside the confines of their firm (Sengupta,

Krapfel, and Pusateri 2013). Intrapreneurs think outside of the box, take calculated risks, and mobilize internal resources to innovate (Pinchot 1984).

Intrapreneurship focuses on fostering innovation, whereas intraorganizational adaptiveness is not only focused on generating a novel or innovative response but also on the appropriateness of a response. Intraorganizational adaptiveness may generate a novel response to customer needs, but it does not always need to be so because its focus is more on finding an adequate behavioral fit in response to environmental demands at the customer interface level. Salespeople may act as intrapreneurs when they identify an opportunity inside their firm that can be updated or modified in order to produce enhanced results. For example, salespeople acting as intrapreneurs may advise hand tool designers that an aesthetic improvement to the product's handle (e.g., developing a more ergonomic handle) might increase its appeal to customers by tapping into their hedonic needs. In comparison, salespeople engaging in intraorganizational adaptiveness may inform the same group of designers that changing the product's handle is not necessary given the way in which customers use the tool (i.e., utilitarian use) and that a more appropriate modification would be to extend the product's warranty period as indicated by customers' feedback. Both recommendations aim to satisfy customer needs, but while the former entails innovating with respect to product design, the latter is neither creative nor innovative; but it results in creating and accentuating a product attribute that should be appealing to customers.

Influence Behaviors

Influence behaviors refer to actions that are carried out to convince another person to fulfill a request (Yukl, Seifert, and Chavez 2008). Salespeople's influence behaviors are important because other groups of people (e.g., customers, managers, co-workers, suppliers) can impact their sales performance (Plouffe et al. 2016). Salespeople use different tactics to enact

their influence behaviors for a specific purpose. Influence behaviors can be deployed using multiple influence tactics in order to be persuasive. These tactics can be categorized into three groups, (1) noncoercive tactics, (2) soft-coercive tactics, and (3) hard-coercive tactics (Plouffe et al. 2016). Noncoercive tactics rely on logical arguments to obtain advice and help that is beneficial to the influencer. In addition, non-coercive tactics can appeal to the target's (e.g., intraorganizational co-worker) emotional characteristics to enlist their support. Soft-coercive tactics offer some benefit to the other party and may include ingratiation to gain leverage. Hard-coercive tactics can involve the use of forceful compliance and intimidation to obtain desired outcomes.

Influence behaviors may increase the effectiveness of intraorganizational adaptiveness by enabling salespeople to produce more persuasive arguments that encourage other intraorganizational actors to act in the customer's favor. However, not every situation requires that salespeople influence others to achieve successful outcomes for the customer. For example, a salesperson may engage in intraorganizational adaptiveness by adopting a new CRM software because doing so can enable the salesperson to better serve her customers without the need to exercise any influence on other internal partners for this adoption to occur.

Internal Networking

Internal networking refers to the process by which salespeople connect with intraorganizational co-workers to have access to resources that may be useful in the future (Morrison 2002). Salespeople practice networking behaviors, which are defined as "an individual's attempt to develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work careers" (Forrent and Dougherty 2001, p.283). Through internal networking, salespeople can enhance their reputation by associating with higher-status

individuals (Steward et al. 2010), facilitating access to resources within their firm (Van Emmerik 2006). For instance, internal networking can increase access to different sources of expertise, leading to overall performance improvements (Steward et al. 2010; Üstner and Iacobucci 2012).

Internal networks describe a set of actors and their relationships (Brass et al. 2004). Two general perspectives can be used to examine internal networks, (1) the relational approach, and (2) the structural approach. The relational approach focuses on the information and resources exchanged within the network (Adler and Kwon 2002), while the structural approach studies the architecture of the relationships within the network (Burt 1992). Both the relational and structural approaches of examining internal networks are critical to a salesperson's success because they provide access to knowledge and expertise that is not normally possessed by the individual salesperson (Chiaburu and Harrison 2008).

Internal networking behaviors can enhance intraorganizational adaptiveness effectiveness because they can facilitate salespeople's access to co-workers' information, enabling more effective social interactions (Macintosh and Krush 2017). The main distinction between intraorganizational adaptiveness and internal networking is that the former can occur independently of the latter. In particular, salespeople may engage in intraorganizational adaptiveness without the intention of building an internal network, much less the need to maintain one.

Embeddedness

Salespeople and other employees can become highly embedded within their organizations. Embeddedness in the work context refers to the extent to which individuals are enmeshed in their current jobs (Mitchell et al. 2011). Salespeople who are highly connected to other intraorganizational actors can become part of an embedded salesforce characterized by a

high degree of cohesiveness among employees that can produce improved performance outcomes (Bradford et al. 2010). Salespeople with high levels of embeddedness may also develop high levels of social capital, which refers to the value obtained from cultivating interpersonal relationships (Coleman 1990). Social capital can be seen as a consequence of embeddedness, and salespeople with strong ties within their organization can leverage it to advance their careers (Ng and Feldman 2010). In sum, salespeople highly embedded within their organizations can operate more effectively and achieve superior performance (see Sekiguchi et al. 2008).

Most successful salespeople are avid relationship managers, which requires that they become highly embedded within their own firms and occasionally the customers' (Bradford et al. 2010). Highly embedded salespeople can gain access to higher-quality knowledge that can be used to increase the success of their sales efforts (Bradford et al. 2010). While embeddedness and intraorganizational adaptiveness share some commonalities, such as the increased effectiveness from being connected with co-workers that can provide access to valuable resources, there is a clear distinction between the two. Specifically, intraorganizational adaptiveness is not dependent on salespeople being embedded within their firm because they can appropriately respond to changes in their internal selling environment even when they possess a low level of organizational embeddedness. Ultimately, salespeople that are effective at practicing intraorganizational adaptiveness can enjoy higher levels of organizational embeddedness due to their ability to find the appropriate way to connect with intraorganizational partners. Thus, intraorganizational adaptiveness may lead to higher levels of embeddedness when correctly applied.

Coordinating Behaviors

Salespeople must draw on multiple organizational partners' expertise to develop meaningful value propositions (Steward et al. 2010). Coordination refers to identifying, assembling, and managing an *ad hoc* team within salespeople's firms, with the purpose of delivering superior customer solutions (Steward et al. 2010). Many customer solutions are far too complex for salespeople to develop by themselves, thus, cross-functional teams are used to meet customer requirements (Homburg et al. 2002; Üstener and Godes 2006). For example, salespeople may request engineers' assistance to assess whether a change in a particular machine feature can decrease the cycle time used to fabricate a particular product, thus satisfying the customer's need to increase productivity.

Accomplished salespeople generally have access to information and share it with key others in an effort to deliver coordinated customer solutions (Üstener and Godes 2006). Hence, to coordinate resources, salespeople must first be able to gain access to them. Intraorganizational adaptiveness is proposed as a selling behavior that can facilitate the coordination of expertise inside salespeople's firms. In addition, coordination is precisely focused on delivering superior customer solutions, but intraorganizational adaptiveness adopts a broader perspective and focuses on the entire sales process. In this regard, intraoganizational adaptiveness can be used during prospecting to improve the identification of potentially profitable customers by sharing information with key others that can provide insight regarding any potential challenges associated with a particular prospect. Furthermore, intraorganizational adaptiveness can help overcome customer objections by relying on the expertise of intraorganizational partners to effectively communicate to customers how a firm's offering solves a particular problem or exploits a current business opportunity (Moncrief and Marshall 2005).

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to acquire and apply knowledge from one's emotions and those of others to produce beneficial outcomes (Kidwell et al. 2011). Salespeople with higher emotional intelligence not only generate more revenue for their firm than do salespeople with lower emotional intelligence, but they also are better at reducing customer attrition (Kidwell et al. 2011). Salespeople with high emotional intelligence can accurately perceive their customers' emotions, which allows them to make adjustments in their approach and thus improve the effectiveness of sales efforts (Mayer and Salovey 1997). In some cases, salespeople's emotional intelligence is more important than their cognitive ability in obtaining beneficial sales outcomes. For example, a salesperson who has high cognitive ability but low emotional intelligence can possess extensive product knowledge but may fail to perceive that the customer is confused, preventing a sale from being successfully closed (Schmidt and Hunter 2004).

Emotional intelligence is a relevant skill for salespeople, and it may increase the effectiveness of intraorganizational adaptiveness by enabling an accurate assessment of others' emotional states, as well as the maturity for knowing how to effectively harness such insights. Despite the importance of emotional intelligence to successfully maneuver within organizations, salespeople deficient in this key skill may still successfully engage in intraorganizational adaptiveness. For instance, salespeople may modify their behaviors inside their firm in response to new managerial regulations without the need to rely extensively on their emotional intelligence (cf., Ahearne et al. 2010). Finally, perhaps the strongest difference between emotional intelligence and intraorganizational adaptiveness is that the former represents a skill

that lacks a specific or well-defined purpose. In contrast, the latter represents a behavior that

aims to advocate for and/or enable the customer's success.

Political Skill

Political skill can be defined as salespeople's ability to understand the social dynamics of

the work environment and use such knowledge to influence others to obtain personal and/or

organizational objectives (Ferris et al. 2005). Politically skilled salespeople can secure resources

and influence others to complete tasks that can lead to superior performance (Ferris et al. 2005).

Moreover, politically skilled salespeople guard their highly-valued reputation, particularly when

they are viewed as sincere, authentic, and genuine (Bolander et al. 2015). Politically skilled

salespeople are adept at identifying what needs to be done and how it should be done without

being perceived of as self-serving, further enhancing their reputational status (Munyon et al.

2015).

Political skill reflects the ability to effectively influence others at work (Kipnis, Schmidt,

and Wilkinson 1980). The use of influence tactics enables politically skilled salespeople to rally

others to their cause and achieve personal or organizational goals (Zinko et al. 2002).

Consequently, political skill is considered a highly desirable trait in salespeople, and it can

positively impact the effectiveness of a salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness. The key

difference between salespeople's IA and their political skill is that the latter entails the explicit

use of influence and power to obtain desired results, whereas the former can occur subtly, almost

completely undetected by others. For example, a salesperson speaking with a manufacturing

engineer may use language perceived as appropriate to this situation to communicate more

effectively (i.e., intraorganizational adaptiveness). This appropriate language can have the

unintended consequence of producing a tacit influence effect. In this regard, the salesperson's

ostensible motives are to improve communication with the engineer and not to directly influence

him or her to do something that solely benefits the salesperson.

Social Astuteness

Social astuteness is considered a sub-dimension of political skill, and it refers to

salespeople's ability to present themselves favorably to others and understand others' hidden

motivations (Ferris et al. 2005). Social astuteness reflects salespeople's ability to observe,

understand, and interpret social interactions and others' behaviors (Ferris et al. 2005; Munyon et

al. 2015). Socially astute salespeople are more likely to build internal organizational networks

(Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019). In addition, socially astute salespeople are skilled at

reading and interacting with others in ways that can provide personal benefits (Ferris et al. 2005).

Social astuteness is broad and non-context specific; thus, it is applicable across many different

social interactions (Plouffe and Grégoire 2001).

Social astuteness differs from IA primarily because it entails understanding social

interactions with other intraorganizational partners to obtain some personal benefit, whereas IA

focuses on the actual modification of salespeople's behaviors based on perceived information.

Intraorganizational adaptiveness causes a change or modification to occur, whereas social

astuteness merely improves salespeople's understanding of social interactions without actually

initiating a change.

Social Competence

Social competence is vital in selling environments because interactions with internal and

external partners are necessary components of successful selling. Social competence refers to

salespeople's ability to communicate and deal effectively with others (Shafer 1999). Salespeople

with high social competence tend to be intuitive, accurate in their perceptions about social

situations, and effective users of 'common sense' (Shaffer 1999). Salespeople with good social

skills, such as social competence, are successful in diagnosing and reading social interactions

and are more capable of assessing others' perceptions regarding themselves (Goleman 2006).

Salespeople can capitalize on positive impressions or make corrections to remedy negative

impressions when they have an accurate understanding of others' perceptions.

Social competence is required to successfully communicate an organization's value

proposition to stakeholders, such as co-workers, customers, and managers (Verbeke et al. 2008).

Sales performance is maximized when salespeople possess high social competence and high

cognitive abilities (Verbeke et al. 2008). In sharp contrast, when salespeople are high in

cognitive ability and low in social competence, their level of sales performance is sub-optimal,

and they are commonly labeled as "competent jerks." (Casciaro and Lobo 2005, p.3). Social

competence differs from IA in that IA is not solely bounded by social interactions, and since it

extends to non-social situations as well. For example, salespeople may engage in IA when

learning how to use new technology to make sales processes leaner, improving customer

outcomes such as reduced product lead times.

Knowledge Brokering

Sales interactions are increasingly becoming knowledge-intensive, and salespeople have

increasingly begun offering knowledge-based solutions to customers (Bettencourt et al. 2002).

The shift to customized solutions from generic offerings has led to salespeople operating as

knowledge brokers (Verbeke et al. 2008). Knowledge brokering refers to salespeople's

management of different knowledge sources to market an offering that is uniquely tailored to

match the specific needs of each individual customer (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011).

Salespeople undertaking the role of knowledge brokers help customers, their firms, and other

business partners to gain deeper insights to produce long-term benefits for the business parties involved in the exchange (Rapp et al. 2014; Sheth and Sharma 2008; Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). Modern salespeople deal with hyper-informed customers, and there is added pressure to possess knowledge that is scarce and not readily available to customers (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011).

Knowledge brokering emphasizes the transmission of knowledge from the salesperson to other intraorganizational actors to communicate relevant market information. Intraorganizational adaptiveness may involve knowledge sharing, but this is not its exclusive focus. Instead, IA is used when the salesperson seeks to respond appropriately to environmental changes inside their firm, and while they may require the utilization of knowledge, it is not the defining dimension of this construct. For example, a salesperson may engage in IA to ensure that her customer's products are well-packaged, and to do this, the salesperson will select the best approach to enlist the shipping manager's support. In this situation, the salesperson may decide not to share additional details with the shipping manager about her customer's needs, thus not being classified as knowledge brokering. The situation described may not be the most appropriate because communicating the customer's needs may enhance the message's persuasiveness and result in improved customer outcomes (e.g., proper and fast shipment of products). For these reasons, knowledge brokering is not a prerequisite for the enactment of IA.

Self-monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to salespeople's management of their self-presentation to others based on social cues (Snyder 1974). Self-monitoring theory argues that salespeople differ in how they control their expressive behaviors by tailoring them to immediate situational cues (Snyder 1979). Moreover, this theory states that salespeople with high and low levels of self-monitoring

process cues similarly. However, high self-monitors are more likely to act on these cues than low self-monitors (Fine and Fisher 1900).

Salespeople may use varied information sources, such as situational or interpersonal cues and attitudes, to guide their actions in social contexts (Snyder and Cantor 1980). Salespeople high in self-monitoring can regulate their self-presentation to the public and tend to be extremely responsive to social and interpersonal cues (Snyder and Gangestad 1986). In comparison, salespeople low in self-monitoring lack the ability or the motivation to regulate their self-presentations; in other words, their behaviors are more accurate reflections of their attitudes and true inner feelings (Snyder and Gangestad 1986).

Self-monitoring and IA reflect the use of environmental cues to adjust behaviors. However, the former is conducted to improve one's own presentation to the intended public or target audience, while the latter is not conducted exclusively to improve one's self-presentation. In this regard, salespeople engaging in IA use environmental cues to respond accordingly with the unequivocal purpose of producing a benefit for their customers while not making central improvements to their self-presentation.

Adaptive selling

Adaptive selling is an established driver of sales performance in the marketing literature (Franke and Park 2006) due to the acknowledgment that there is no universal way of selling nor a single best way to sell (Thompson 1973; Weitz 1979). Adaptive selling is defined as "the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986, p.175). By using adaptive selling, salespeople gather information about customers to adapt their approach in an appropriate manner. In doing so, salespeople can observe their customers'

reactions during sales interactions and make quick adjustments to ensure more effective delivery of the sales message (Weitz and Wright 1978).

Adaptive selling as discussed in the literature, describes interactions with customers in the external selling environment (McFarland 2019). In contrast, IA involves the salesperson examining the internal selling environment, which takes place inside the selling firm. One key distinction between adaptive selling and IA besides the difference in focus (internal vs. external) is that the latter is not confined to social interactions (e.g., salesperson and customer). Rather, it encompasses a broader scope that includes adaptation to other environmental conditions such as organizational change due to the implementation of a new management system, the addition of a new business unit, a merger with another firm, or another firm's acquisition.

Intraorganizational Employee Navigation

Understanding how employees or salespeople work inside their firm is necessary to get a more nuanced assessment of their performance. Salespeople can navigate their internal environment to discover resources that can help them accomplish specific job tasks (Plouffe and Grégoire 2011). Intraorganizational employee navigation is defined as "self-initiated behavior that an employee engages in to identify salient resources germane to their work, key personnel who can assist them with job-related tasks and responsibilities, and/or the alignment of other needed organizational processes, inputs, or policies in their favor" (Plouffe and Grégoire 2011, p.697). Salespeople can generate personal benefits from the practice of intraorganizational employee navigation by pinpointing their firm's informal organizational structure, as well as identifying key others who can assist them in work-related activities (Plouffe and Grégoire 2011).

While both intraorganizational employee navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness share some common elements, such as a focus on the salesperson's internal activities and their understanding of the organization's internal environment, there are marked differences that set them apart. More specifically, intraorganizational employee navigation entails salespeople's active involvement in their organization to identify personnel that can assist them in the foreseeable future (Plouffe and Grégoire 2011). In sharp contrast, IA is not centered on identifying resources. On the contrary, IA is more concerned with achieving an appropriate *fit* in response to stimuli in the internal environment. The achievement of appropriate fit refers to salespeople's ability to improve their working conditions to better serve customers while operating in their internal selling environment. Thus, suppose that a firm introduces a new sales technology, a salesperson with a strong proclivity toward IA will attempt to learn and incorporate this new technology in her job because doing so can potentially improve her customers' value. In summary, as salespeople understand the firm's organizational structure, they can better ensure that the behaviors emanating from their IA translate into favorable outcomes.

Salesperson Navigation

The complexity of the modern sales environment requires that salespeople navigate their own organizations to secure resources to better serve customers and offer them more innovative solutions. Salesperson navigation refers to "activities requiring the salesperson to work the *white spaces* of their organization to discover personnel, resources, or capabilities that may benefit them in specific sales situations or at a later juncture" (Plouffe and Barclay 2007, p.529). Salesperson navigation has two sub-dimensions, exploratory and task-driven navigation. Exploratory navigation antecedes its task-driven counterpart, and it is defined as "the extent to

which salespeople engage in activities which help them gain a generalized understanding of their own organization, its capabilities, and its resources" (Plouffe and Barclay 2007, p.532). For example, salespeople who actively stay informed about internal developments across their firm's departments engage in exploratory navigation that can later be converted into an input for task-driven navigation.

Task-driven navigation is defined as "the extent to which salespeople engage in purposeful internal activities related to moving specific sales opportunities closer to completion and otherwise ensuring that their own job situation is optimal" (Plouffe and Grégoire 2007, p. 532). Salespeople who discover a co-worker's engineering expertise and apply it to communicate product benefits more effectively engage in task-driven navigation. Salesperson navigation is similar to intraorganizational adaptiveness in that both are phenomena that occur inside salespeople's firm. However, while salesperson navigation deals mainly with identifying resources, capabilities, and employees that can be useful to the salesperson, intraorganizational adaptiveness focuses on modifying behaviors to obtain such resources to promote customer success.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Historically, sales research interested in sales performance has embraced the notion that externally directed selling efforts aimed at the customer are a primary determinant of performance. Recent studies, however, identify salespeople's skills, behaviors, and interpersonal interactions that take place inside their own organization as significant contributors to performance outcomes (Plouffe 2018). This new research stream stems from the relationship management literature (Leigh and Marshal 2001), which describes salespeople as relationship managers who must interact internally to better serve their customers (Weitz and Bradford 1999).

Moreover, the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) can be considered a derivation of market orientation applied at the individual level inside the firm (Plouffe 2018).

Market Orientation

Market orientation embodies the marketing concept, as it refers to the "organization-wide generation of market intelligence, dissemination of intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it" (Kohli and Jaworski 1990, p3). The philosophy of market orientation emphasizes learning about the market, sharing across the organization, and adapting a firm's offering to the market's dynamism (Jaworski, Kohli, and Sahay 2000). While market orientation encompasses a broad set of factors and stakeholders, the customer remains at its core (Narver and Slater 1990). Several conceptualizations of the construct exist in the literature; however, they all highlight three themes: (1) maintenance of a customer focus, (2) coordinated marketing efforts, and (3) the improvement of profitability (Kohli, Jaworski, and Kumar 1993).

Market orientation embodies the marketing concept at the firm-level, implying that firms should identify and satisfy customer needs (Day 1994; Kirca, Jaychandran, and Bearden 2005), and it entails that employees inside the firm have a deep understanding of customers' requirements in order to create superior value propositions (Narver and Slater 1990). There are two main schools of thought regarding market orientation conceptualizations, the behavioral and the cultural perspective. The behavioral perspective focuses on the activities carried out to disseminate and respond to market intelligence (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). The cultural perspective emphasizes the values associated with the adoption of a market orientation, and how these values influence market-oriented behaviors (Narver and Slater 1990). Both perspectives are associated with beneficial outcomes for firms (Kirca, Jaychandran, and Bearden 2005).

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Market orientation generates positive results for the enacting firm, its customers, and its employees (Jaworski and Kohli 1996). That is, market-oriented firms can enjoy superior performance when compared with that of firms not aligned with a market-oriented approach (Hult and Ketchen 2001). Adopting a market orientation is especially beneficial when firms operate in a turbulent market marked by rapidly transforming customer preferences (Grewal and Tansuhaj 2001), or when faced by agile competitors that can readily modify their marketing mix to secure a competitive advantage (Noble et al. 2002). Market-oriented firms can increase customer loyalty and satisfaction because they can provide better customer solutions (Jaworski and Kohli 1993; Narver and Slater 1994). Employees working for a market-oriented firm express an increased desire to satisfy customer needs, experience a strong feeling of organizational commitment, and are more likely to be satisfied with their work (Kirca, Jaychandran, and Bearden 2005; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Market orientation is not a *take-or-leave* it strategy. Instead, it is a strategy that can be customized to varying organizational levels such that it will ensure profit maximization (Song and Parry 2009). For example, a firm operating in a relatively stable competitive environment with a seemingly constant supply and demand factors may not be required to adopt the most stringent level of market orientation because the costs associated with doing so would significantly exceed the associated rewards (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Some level of market orientation should enable firms to remain competitive and relevant in their customers' minds, thus, positively impacting overall performance. In addition, firms adopting a market orientation facilitate intraorganizational collaboration and knowledge sharing, resulting in operational efficiencies accruing to such organizations. In sum, market orientation involves responding to market conditions. Thus, it entails that firms remain adaptive to change to satisfy

customers' needs, foster relationships with customers, and enhance business performance (Kohli and Jaworski 1993).

Adaptive Selling

Adaptive selling, which refers to the altering of sales behaviors based on salespeople's perceptions (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986), is linked to a firm's customer orientation and sales performance (McFarland 2019). The central tenet is that there is no universally best way to sell; hence, salespeople must adapt and use the most appropriate approach to satisfy their customers' needs (Román and Iacobucci 2010). To practice adaptive selling, salespeople need to collect relevant information to develop effective sales strategies (Weitz 1978). Using adaptive selling, salespeople can meet the demands of their immediate environment (Charkrabarty, Widing, and Brown 2014; Stenberg and Hedlund 2002). Empirical evidence suggests a strong positive relationship between adaptive selling and sales performance (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011).

Adaptive selling can guide salespeople's selection of influence tactics based on their perceptions during selling situations (McFarland, Challagalla, and Shervani 2006). When the right influence tactic is adopted, salespeople become more persuasive, and they can obtain favorable outcomes from their interactions with customers as a result (McFarland 2019). An accurate assessment of salespeople's perceptions can enhance the effectiveness of adaptive selling on sales performance (Kidwell, McFarland, and Avila 2007). Even minimal adaptations from salespeople can have beneficial effects on their performance (Spiro and Weitz 1990). For example, demonstrating genuine concern for customers can promote trust, leading to high-quality relationships (Franke and Park 2006).

While experienced salespeople may have a greater number of techniques that can be used to assist their customers, inexperienced salespeople may be equally effective at adaptive selling because they possess social skills gained from broad social interactions that enable them to be perceptive of their customers' needs (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). In addition, salespeople's own intraorganizational environment can facilitate the practice of adaptive selling (Sujan 1999). For example, inexperienced salespeople with limited domain-specific knowledge can navigate their own organizations and identify the valuable resources necessary to satisfy their customers' needs, followed by an adaptation of behaviors leveraging said resources when dealing with customers.

Salesperson Navigation

Modern salespeople are increasingly acting as relationship managers with both external and internal partners (Beverland 2001). Salespeople's relationships inside their own firm can significantly contribute to their overall success by tapping into their co-workers' knowledge and expertise, hence making their selling efforts more effective (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). Internal resources produce intermediate sales outcomes vital in the development of customer solutions (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). For instance, having adequate inventory levels can allow salespeople to deliver products to customers uninterruptedly, thus positively influencing their customers' likelihood of success. Salespeople can deploy different resources from inside their firms that can assist them in providing superior customer solutions. Salespeople's identification of resources inside their firms is captured by the concept of salesperson navigation, defined as "the activities requiring the salesperson to work the 'white spaces' of their organization to discover personnel, resources, or capabilities that may benefit them in specific sales situations or at a later juncture" (Plouffe and Barclay 2007, p. 529).

Accomplished salespeople understand that seeking help and advice across different organizational departments enables them to provide increased value to their customers (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). Salespeople's intraorganizational navigation involves the discovery and procurement of resources, key employees, and competencies that enable salespeople to fulfill their tasks and, therefore, improve their performance (Plouffe and Gregoire 2011). For this reason, a salesperson's navigation inside their firm is seen as a proactive behavior that can improve internal sales results. After effectively navigating the organization, salespeople can exercise intraorganizational adaptiveness and coordinate selling efforts to satisfy customer needs and improve sales performance. Salesperson navigation enables salespeople to practice IA more effectively and efficiently because salespeople that can properly navigate their organizations will identify the resources necessary to deliver successful customer solutions. Hence, the following is hypothesized:

H1: Salespeoples's navigation is positively related to their intraorganizational adaptiveness.

Interfunctional coordination

Interfunctional coordination is posited as a market orientation component that describes employee contact across the firm. Such contact facilitates the interaction, transmission, and use of information inside the organization (Deshpande and Zaltman 1982; Jaworski and Kohli 1993). Market intelligence is exchanged and applied more efficiently to drive performance when individuals across departments are connected (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Interfunctional coordination is defined as "the coordinated utilization of company resources in creating superior

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value for target customers" (Narver and Slater 1990, p.22). Any employee inside the firm can contribute to the creation of value for customers, and optimal customer solutions can be obtained when individuals in different departments collaborate in a synchronized fashion (Narver and Slater 1990). For instance, engineers can gather information from trade journals that can help the marketing department develop better offerings for their customers (Kohli and Jaworski 1990).

Frontline employees, such as salespeople, may become aware of changing conditions in the marketplace. Such information can be used as an input in the new product development process, resulting in improved new products. Market-oriented companies that practice interfunctional coordination can generate, disseminate, and respond to market intelligence more effectively and improve performance, as a consequence (Jaworski and Kohli 1990). Therefore, interfunctional coordination facilitates communication across departments and promotes internal support within the firm to produce optimal customer solutions (Jaworski and Kohli 1993). In addition, interfunctional coordination can result from formal and informal contact among employees across departments. Thus, formal hierarchical organizational structures establishing employee connectedness are not a prerequisite for successful coordination inside the firm (Jaworski and Kohli 1993). Furthermore, the greater the extent to which individuals across departments are connected, the more likely they are to share market intelligence and collaborate to generate increased customer value (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Interfunctional coordination between the different organizational departments will have an augmenting effect for salespeople navigating their organization and engaging in intraorganizational adaptiveness. When salespeople perceive a high level of interfunctional coordination in their firms, they will be better suited to identify valuable resources because intraorganizational partners will be more open and receptive to salespeople's needs. When salespeople operate in a firm that lacks interfunctional

coordination, salespeople will experience major challenges to *sell* their customers' needs to other departments and employees. When interfunctional coordination is high, salesperson's navigation will have a stronger positive effect on salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness than when the opposite is true. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H2: A firm's interfunctional coordination increases the positive relationship between salespeople's navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness.

Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

Intraorganizational adaptiveness is a market-oriented selling behavior that takes place at the intersection of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (Plouffe 2018) and a salesperson's capacity for adaptive selling (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Salespeople can engage in intraorganizational adaptiveness in response to trends and developments inside their firm, as its purpose is to better serve customers and help them reach their goals through internal advocacy efforts. Extant literature states that satisfying customer needs can increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, enhancing sales performance, especially when the salesperson and the customer are in a long-term business relationship (Franke and Park 2006; Saxe and Weitz 1982). In addition, salespeople can adapt their approach with other key co-workers to communicate their customer's needs more effectively to provide better solutions to their customers.

Salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness allows them to become more persuasive when interacting with other employees inside the firm. Finding and executing the appropriate approach increases their appeal to others, facilitating the assemblage of cross-functional teams

with the expertise to maximize value propositions for customers. The synchronization of internal resources to satisfy customer needs, resulting from the coordination of resources, can enhance salespeople's sales performance (Román and Iacobucci 2010). Furthermore, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness can increase the quality of their relationships with customers because salespeople that engage in such behavior will secure favorable resources that may positively impact their customers' satisfaction levels and chances of success. As a result of this process, relationship quality can increase, creating stronger professional bonds between the salesperson and his or her customers. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H3: A salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness is positively related to his or her relationship's quality with customers.

Additionally, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness improves their coordination of resources, expertise, and personnel inside the firm which is necessary to provide valuable offerings to customers. The better that salespeople are in adapting their approaches when interacting with other employees inside their firm, the more successful they will be in persuading such employees to coordinate with their sales efforts. Hence:

H4: A salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness is positively related to the coordination of his or her firm's internal resources.

Salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness can increase their sales performance by facilitating access to resources inside their firm essential to satisfying customer needs and

promoting salespeople's self-adjustments to better serve their customers. Consequently, customers will be motivated to continue their business relationships with salespeople who can transmit their needs to other employees inside the selling organization and who can adapt their individual service to produce superior solutions. Thus:

H5: A salesperson's intraorganizational adaptiveness is positively related to his or her sales performance.

Learning Orientation

A learning orientation "orients salespeople to improve their abilities and master the tasks they perform" (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994, p.39). Salespeople that are learning-oriented have a strong desire to improve their skills to become better performers (Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla 1998). In addition, salespeople's learning orientation is strongly associated with their tendency towards adaptive selling (Goad and Jaramillo 2014), as it enables salespeople to embrace sales interactions as learning opportunities and to consider challenges in their selling environment as necessary for professional growth (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). Salespeople with a learning orientation view their selling ability as an attribute that develops gradually with experience (Harris, Mowen, and Brown 2005).

Firms that promote a learning orientation can influence salespeople to satisfy customer needs to establish long-term relationships (Harris, Mowen, and Brown 2005). Also, adopting a learning orientation motivates salespeople to engage in behaviors aimed at providing customer solutions in challenging situations, such as when extensive research is required to familiarize themselves with their customers' specific needs (Vermette, Ludewijks, and Vermunt 2001).

Thus, under a learning orientation, salespeople are more likely to rely on other employees'

expertise inside their firm to meet customers' requests. Moreover, the extent to which

salespeople seek out knowledge sources within their organization is increased when they are

learning-oriented. This suggests that a salesperson's learning orientation, or their tendency to

embrace new knowledge, can enhance the coordination of sales efforts. Salespeople's learning

orientation can strengthen the effectiveness of their intraorganizational adaptiveness to

coordinate internal resources, expertise, and personnel because such an orientation motivates

salespeople to enjoy the process of facing challenges, learning, and applying the acquired

learning towards achieving success. Also, learning-oriented salespeople can acquire knowledge

from internal interactions and accrue valuable experience that will make them more effective at

tailoring their approaches to co-workers to advance their customers' needs. Therefore, the

following is hypothesized:

> **H6:** A salesperson's learning orientation strengthens the positive relationship between his
>
> or her intraorganizational adaptiveness and coordination of internal resources.

Salespeople's learning orientation can positively influence customer satisfaction because

learning-oriented salespeople have an inclination to gain in-depth knowledge about their

customers' operations in order to satisfy customer needs, which promotes the formation of long-

term customer relationships. Therefore, salespeople's learning orientation can enhance the

relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and the quality of their

relationship with customers. Moreover, salespeople's learning orientation motivates them to

improve their selling skills, improving their sales performance. Thus:

H7: A salesperson's learning orientation strengthens the positive relationship between intraorganizational adaptiveness and customer relationship quality.

H8: A salesperson's learning orientation strengthens the positive relationship between intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales performance.

Coordination of Internal Resources

The increased demands and complexities associated with delivering customer solutions require the involvement of more organizational actors than just salespeople. For instance, salespeople in a modified re-buy situation may consult other departments inside their organization to ensure that the customer's needs can be met (Liu et al. 2020). Salespeople often assemble groups of cross-functional experts to provide added value to customers (Homburg et al. 2002). Enhanced customer value can be produced when salespeople leverage talent found throughout their organization (Üstener and Godes 2006). Sometimes the best solutions are created when salespeople work in synergy with other members of their organizations (Schultz and Evans 2002). Thus, to successfully deliver value to customers, salespeople need to coordinate sales efforts (Üstener and Godes 2006).

Coordination can be defined as "the process that salespeople follow in diagnosing the customer organization's requirements and subsequently identifying, assembling, and managing an *ad hoc* team of organizational members who possess the knowledge and skills to deliver a superior customer solution" (Steward et al. 2010, p.551). The successful coordination of sales efforts is contingent on salespeople's awareness of the diverse expertise in their firms, the level

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of specialized knowledge possessed by so-called experts, and the exact timing when such expertise is appropriate for the development of a customer solution (Steward et al. 2010). Salespeople's internal coordination can increase salesperson-customer relationship quality because salespeople that can coordinate internal elements to better serve the customer can forge an affective link with their customers. That is, when salespeople are successful at coordinating internal resources on behalf of their customers, customers' needs will be better satisfied, and customer relationship quality will be strengthened. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

> **H9:** A salesperson's coordination of sales resources is positively related to his or her relationship quality with customers.

Salespeople's internal coordination taps into the firm's collective knowledge by bringing *ad hoc* teams of diverse people together to find superior customer solutions. In doing so, coordinated sales efforts can deliver increased value for customers. Solutions that offer more value to customers can be more attractive and hence increase purchase likelihood. Thus:

> **H10:** A salesperson's coordination of sales resources is positively related to his or her sales performance.

Customer Relationship Quality

Customer relationship quality can be defined as "the combined strength of a customer's trust in, satisfaction with, and commitment to a given salesperson" (Mullins et al. 2014, p.39). Salespeople evaluate the quality of their relationships with customers because this is an

important metric to track, and doing so has been shown to reduce customer attrition (Gallo 2014; Schmitz et al. 2020). For example, when salespeople perceive that the quality of their relationships with customers is decreasing, they can take action to remedy this issue and ensure that they retain their customers. Accurate customer relationship quality perceptions depend on salespeople's ability to read both their customer's verbal and non-verbal cues during social interactions (Ickes 1997). However, this interaction need not be face-to-face, as salespeople can sometimes interpret customers' cues from a telephone conversation and even email messages. Although social interactions where both the salesperson and the customer are physically present can provide richer information due to the availability of more than just verbal communication, this is not always possible, and salespeople may rely on indirect ways to evaluate their relationships' strength.

A decrease in the frequency of e-mail communication can indicate impoverished relationship quality. Salespeople with developed intuition and sufficient people skills can make an accurate determination regarding their relationships with customers using this metric, and then mimic their customers to increase their behavioral compatibility (Palmatier et al. 2006). Salesperson-customer compatibility has been shown to increase customer relationship value and reduce feelings of uncertainty with the salesperson (Palmatier et al. 2006). In addition, accurate perceptions of customer relationship quality enable salespeople to gain a deeper understanding of their customers' goals (Palmatier et al. 2006), providing salespeople with clues to better satisfy their customers' needs, strengthen their relationships, and consequently improve sales performance (Morgan and Hunt 1994). When salespeople foster high-quality relationships with their customers, customers may feel obliged to increase purchase behavior to reciprocate salespeople's ingratiating behaviors (Homburg, Koschate, and Hoyer 2005). The better the

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relationship between salespeople and their customers, the more trust, commitment, and satisfaction that customers will have with their salespeople. Consequently, customers will feel obligated to reciprocate with increased purchases, extended contracts, etc. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H11: A salesperson's relationship quality with customers is positively related to his or her sales performance.

[insert figure 1 about here]

METHOD

Scale Development and Validation Process

To develop a scale for measuring intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA), established scale construction recommendations were followed (Churchill 1979; Gerbing and Anderson 1988), as well as previous scale development articles (e.g., Bolton 2004; Böttger et al. 2017; Nenkov, Inman, and Hulland 2008). A deductive approach guided by theory (Hinkin 1998), prior sales literature, and anecdotal experience from business-to-business salespeople was adopted to generate the initial pool of items. After item generation, two subsequent studies were conducted, involving (1) scale purification and initial validation, and (2) nomological network exploration. Survey responses were analyzed from two samples made up of B2B salespeople. The market research firm Centiment and Amazon's Mechanical Turk were used to collect data (e.g., McFarland and Dixon 2019; Hochstein et al. 2019). The Mike Loya Center for Innovation and

Commerce at the University of Texas at El Paso provided the funding necessary to collect the data.

Item Generation

The focus of this stage in the scale development process is to identify a broad set of items that capture the underlying construct, meaning that all items share a common latent variable (Churchill 1979). The intent is to be exhaustive with respect to the inclusion of potential items within the boundaries established by the construct's definition (DeVellis 2017; Edwards and Bagozzi 2000). Redundancy, which refers to items measuring the same attribute of a construct may be undesired in the final scale, but this is not an important concern during early stages of the scale development process, as it is preferred to produce a reliable set of items that reflect the underlying construct (DeVellis 2017).

An initial set of 28 items adhering to the construct's definition was generated (cf., Habel et al. 2020). Items were worded carefully to enhance clarity and comprehension. Item comprehension is considered a function of syntax and context (Hardy and Ford 2014). Therefore, special consideration was given to the wording of each item because failing to accurately and precisely express an item can cause respondents to interpret survey items differently from the researcher's intended meaning, resulting in the development of an erroneous construct measurement (Hardy and Ford 2014). In addition, double-barreled statements, items conveying two ideas, and leading questions that influence a respondent's choice were avoided (Hardy and Ford 2014). A five-point behavioral Likert-type scale that presents items as a declarative statement, preceded by response options anchored in "1 = Never" and "5 = Always" were employed. A Likert-type scale is a viable choice for this investigation because it can adequately measure salespeople's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (DeVellis 2017). The decision to include

a five-point response format was made to enhance the discrimination of the construct's underlying attributes and improve variability in responses to the scale's items (DeVellis 2017). A five-point scale can also provide a more stringent evaluation of the scale's reliability by reducing the undue influence of scale design (i.e., increasing the points in a scale can increase reliability despite the quality of the actual scale items not being adequate) (Krosnick 2018). In addition, a five-point scale can minimize the amount of overlap between adjacent scale points, thus, reducing the cognitive burden on respondents, which can improve the quality of the responses obtained (Casper et al. 2019).

Item Refinement

The scale items were subjected to a review by a panel comprised of four university professors in Marketing and Management with knowledge in scale development (DeVellis 2017). A review protocol (see Appendix), a description of the intended sample, and the construct's definition was provided to each reviewer. The items in the intraorganizational adaptiveness scale were rated based on clarity (i.e., comprehension) using a five-point scale anchored in "1 = Not at all understandable" and "5 = Extremely understandable." Additionally, reviewers were asked to suggest any changes that may improve item comprehension. Then, reviewers rated items based on relevance—how central each item is related to the construct of interest. A five-point scale anchored in "1 = Not at all relevant" and "5 = Extremely relevant" was used. Moreover, reviewers were asked to propose additional items that may capture aspects of IA which might have been overlooked in the initial set of items.

Five new items were added to the scale, and the previous 28 items were refined based on the feedback received from the reviewers. The set of 33 items was then reviewed by a sample of ten professional B2B salespeople from the intended population on the basis of (1) item

comprehension and (2) item relevance. An adapted version of the review protocol previously used with academics was employed, and minor changes were made to simplify the instructions and improve the wording for administration to a practitioner sample. For example, the word 'construct' was replaced with 'concept' to avoid confusion and reduce complexity (Hardy and Ford 2014). The items were revised based on the comments received by salespeople, and one item was eliminated altogether from the item pool.

The polished set of 32 items were then subjected to a review by a group of 12 marketing professors with expertise in selling and sales management. Seven professors completed their reviews and delivered detailed feedback related to the ability of each item in capturing the underlying construct based on the definition provided, thus, further confirming the content adequacy (i.e., validity) of the intraorganizational adaptiveness construct (Nunally and Bernstein 1994). Content adequacy refers to the psychometric property, which occurs when the content of a measure covers a representative sample of the domain to be measured (Campbell and Fiske 1959). Appropriate modifications were made to improve the precision of the items' wording, following the suggestions mentioned by the marketing professors who reviewed the scale. Overall, the construct was perceived to be multidimensional with at least two related sub-dimensions, confirming the theory-driven approach used to conceptualize intraorganizational adaptiveness based on the marketing orientation framework (see Kohli and Jaworski 1993; Narver and Slater 1990).

Scale and Survey Instrument Pre-testing

A survey instrument was assembled with the resulting items from the previous procedure using Qualtric's survey software. Items measuring social desirability were included to aid in assessing the validity of the final scale. The social desirability scale used in this survey

corresponds to the one developed by Fisher and colleagues (2020), which is specifically designed for employee contexts (e.g., salespeople), thus, being more suitable for this investigation. In this vein, items that correlate substantially with social desirability were considered candidates for exclusion (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff 2003). Several related construct measures were included in the survey instrument to examine their relationship with IA and provide a check of discriminant validity (DeVellis 2017).

Five professional B2B salespeople completed the questionnaire and provided their opinions regarding the survey length and comprehension. Total survey completion time was assessed, as well as any comments shared by the group of salespeople. Afterward, the survey instrument was pretested in Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Data collected from crowdsourcing websites such as MTurk have been used with greater frequency by academics in recent years (Goodman and Paolacci 2017). MTurk has been used in sales research in the past to examine salespeople's behaviors and attitudes (e.g., Grisaffe, VanMeter, and Chonko 2016), as well as customer-related phenomena (e.g., Hochstein et al. 2019). An important advantage of MTurk over other more traditional alternative sources to collect primary data is the accessibility to a diverse respondent pool that can be more representative of larger populations (Sheehan and Pittman 2016). With respect to data quality, MTurk responses have shown that workers are better at following instructions and paying attention to research studies because they are motivated to maintain high approval ratings (Hauser and Schwarz 2016).

MTurk's premium qualification options of "Job Function – Marketing, Sales, and Business Development," and "Location – United States" were selected to reach the intended population. The 'task' (i.e., survey) was described as a survey intended to examine employees' internal work environments to avoid including 'faithless respondents,' respondents who are

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deceitful when self-selecting to participate in surveys by misconstruing their eligibility (Springer et al. 2016). Avoiding to overtly state the eligibility requirements in MTurk can enhance the validity of the data collected (Siegel, Navarro, and Thomson 2015). Three filtering questions at the beginning of the survey were used to provide further confidence in the representativeness of the MTurk sample. Specifically, the first question asked respondents to select the job function/department that most closely aligns with the job that they perform from a list of multiple alternatives (e.g., HR, Operations, Finance and/or Accounting, etc.). Because sales departments are sometimes considered part of the Marketing function, the option of 'Sales and/or Marketing' was used to allow respondents to progress to the next filtering question. The second question asked respondents to select the applicable options regarding the activities for which they are compensated by their employers (e.g., selling to prospects and/or customers, managing and/or implementing sales initiatives, handling customer support, etc.). If the respondents failed to select "selling to prospects and/or customers," then they were excluded from the sample. Lastly, question number three asked respondents to indicate whether most of the customers to which they sold and/or serviced were considered businesses (B2B or organizational customers) or individual customers (B2C or individual consumers). Again, if the respondents failed to select the option related to B2B, then they were excluded from the sample. After the filtering process, 50 valid responses were collected from a sample of B2B salespeople working in the United States, whose main activities include selling to customers.

Several precautions were taken to increase data quality and minimize errors. Given that crowdsourcing can be negatively affected by fraudulent response behaviors when financial incentives are offered in exchange for respondents' time, a "Captcha Verification" question was added to lower the incidence of "bots" (i.e., programs used to answer surveys posing as humans).

Captcha verification or "Completely Automated Public Turing Test" is a widely used web technique to differentiate humans and computers, helping to ensure that respondents are real humans and not computer programs (Chandler et al. 2019). In Captcha verifications, respondents are generally asked to identify specific segments from an image or set of images—humans find this task easy to complete, whereas it is nearly impossible for computer programs to do the same.

Another common concern with crowdsourced data involves the multiple completion of a survey by the same respondent, which can diminish the validity of the data collected (Kees et al. 2017). The feature "Prevent Ballot Box Stuffing" was enabled in Qualtric's survey options to detect duplicate respondents and prevent them from completing the survey more than once. Prevent Ballot Box Stuffing stores a cookie on respondent's browsers. If the same respondent attempts to complete the survey using the same browser and device without clearing previously-stored cookies, then this will be flagged as a duplicate, and the survey will be discontinued. Cookies in computer terms are small text files generated when users connect to servers. These text files can be used to identify devices in a network (Palmer 2005).

Despite the sample size of this pretest not being of adequate size to draw statistically valid conclusions, the purpose of the pretest was to evaluate the instrument's performance prior to its deployment to a larger sample. The results of this pretest were examined to determine whether any changes needed to be made. The only change made was to include a fourth filtering question which asked respondents in an open question format to provide a brief description of their occupation.

STUDY 1: Scale Purification

Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered to an independent sample of 450 salespeople from the population of interest (Hinkin 1998). Participants were recruited using MTurk following the strict procedure described in the previous section, and a small financial incentive of $1 was offered in exchange for their participation (Grisaffe, VanMeter, and Chonko 2016). A screening process was used to exclude responses that failed the attention check, and that included nonsensical answers to an open-ended filtering question. For example, respondents who typed "hello" as a brief description of their sales jobs were excluded. Also, duplicate submissions from MTurkers were detected and removed. It is possible that these participants were able to surpass the established preventative measures by clearing their browsing history and cookies, thus, becoming invisible to Qualtric's detection system.

Sample

The final sample consisted of 402 business-to-business salespeople working in the United States, from which 32.8% identified themselves as female, 65.9% male, and 1.2% as 'other.' With respect to age, 50% reported an age between 18 and 31, 41.1% reported being between the age of 32 and 52, and 8.9% reported being 53 or older. About sixty percent of the respondents self-identified as being Caucasian, 31.6% as African American, 4.7% as Hispanic or Latino American, 1% as Asian American, and 2% as Native American. The median annual income was between $30,000 and $59,000. Approximately sixty-nine percent of salespeople had between 1 and 6 years of sales experience, 28.6% had between 7 and 15 years, and 2% had between 16 and 20 years of experience. Regarding education level, 66% had at least some college education, and

34% had complete an undergraduate or graduate university degree. A more comprehensive description of the sample is included in Table 13.

Measures

Items measuring intraorganizational adaptiveness and seven other constructs were included in the survey instrument. *Salesperson navigation* was measured using the five-point scales from Plouffe and Grégoire (2011) and Plouffe and Barclay (2007), anchored in "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." *Adaptive selling* (ADAPTS) was measured in a five-point scale format using Spiro and Weitz's (1990) scale, along with some recommended additional items from McFarland (2019), with anchors "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Selling orientation* (SO) *and Customer orientation* (CO) were measured with a five-point format using the shortened ten-item validated *SOCO* scale adapted from Saxe and Weitz (1982), with anchors "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." *Sales performance* was measured in a five-point format using Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar's (1994) scale, anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Social desirability* (SDR-O) was measured in an eleven-point format ranging from "1 = Not True" to "4 = Somewhat True" to "7 = Very True" developed by Fisher, Hochstein, and Plouffe. Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and inter-construct correlations for the variables examined are listed in Table 14. Each of the scale's items are listed in the Appendix.

Results

The responses collected were used to examine the scale's psychometric characteristics. Coefficient alpha will be used to obtain a measure of the scale's reliability. Reliability values exceeding .80 are preferred, however, .70 is considered the minimum standard for acceptable reliability (Nunally and Berstein 1994). Items exhibiting low inter-item correlations and low item-scale correlations were considered candidates for deletion if their content is not considered

theoretically relevant (Churchill 1979). Items that contribute the least to overall internal

consistency were the first to be considered for exclusion (i.e., lowest squared multiple

correlations) (DeVellis 2017). The scale's dimensionality was assessed using exploratory factor

analysis (EFA). The objective of this analysis is to uncover the underlying structure of the data

by reducing its size into a set of factors that are capable of accounting for a large portion of the

variability in the items (O'Rourke and Hatcher 2013). In factor analysis, the observed variables

or items are considered linear combinations of the underlying factors (Hair et al. 2006).

Survey responses were subjected to an EFA in SPSS 25 to explore the dimensionality of

IA (Hair et al. 2006) and assess whether the dimensions established *a priori* based on theory

were detected in the data. Maximum likelihood was used as the extraction method because this

method maximizes differences between factors and has been shown to be appropriate when

working with latent variables that will be used in a structural equation model (Hoyle 2012).

Three factors had eigenvalues exceeding Kaiser's criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1, and a

visual examination of the scree plot provided added support (Hair et al. 2006). To improve the

interpretation of the factors, Promax rotation was used. Promax rotation is appropriate when the

factors are expected to be correlated, which is the case with IA (Hair et. al. 2006).

The Keiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy returned a value (KMO = .942)

which is considered excellent, thus, indicating that the factor analysis technique should yield

distinct and reliable factors (Sharma 1996; Kaiser 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity (χ^2 =

1100.2, $df = 55$, $p < .001$) corroborates that the inter-item correlations are sufficiently large for a

factor analysis procedure (Stewart 1981). Items that exhibited low factor loadings ($\lambda < .35$), that

cross-loaded with other factors, or that were not statistically significant ($p > .05$) were considered

for deletion (Sharma 1996). After removing offending items, a subsequent EFA was performed

where evidence from Kaiser's criterion, inspection of the scree plot, and a parallel analysis supported the retention of two factors. Parallel analysis is considered a very robust criterion when deciding the number of factors to retain (Hair et al. 2006).

The initial set of thirty-two items was reduced to sixteen items which were distributed into two factors. The first factor includes 9 items, which contains items such as "I proactively adapt to changes inside my firm that may be beneficial for my customers" appears to represent an individual-centered dimension referred to as 'Discretionary Intraorganizational Adaptation' (DIA). The second factor, with 7 items, and containing items such as "I engage my co-workers inside my firm in an effort to improve value for my customers" represents a group-centered dimension referred to as 'Collaborative Intraorganizational Adaptation' (CIA).

An initial reliability assessment was conducted (α = .84) on a summated IA scale comprising the purified items and its correlation with related and relevant constructs was explored. In particular, IA's association with customer orientation, salesperson navigation, adaptive selling, selling orientation, social desirability, and sales performance was evaluated (see Table 14). This initial exercise suggests that IA appears to be positively correlated with related constructs as theoretically expected. As a preliminary analysis, IA's items were subjected to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS 26. Intraorganizational adaptiveness was modeled as a second order construct with two sub-dimensions (DIA, and CIA) (N = 350, $\chi2$= 623.34, df = 365; RMSEA = .04, CFI = .96, and SRMR = .05). The two sub-dimensions demonstrated to load strongly on the second-order latent factor with statistically significant parameter estimates exceeding .89 (see Table 15). However, at the sub-dimension level, several items showed loadings below the .70 level. Nevertheless, it was decided to include all sixteen items in the IA scale to be validated in a follow-up questionnaire from a second independent sample of B2B

salespeople in order to confirm the factor structure supported by the EFA and the preliminary

CFA, as well as to examine its nomological validity.

STUDY 2: Scale and Nomological Validation

Responses from a second independent sample of B2B salespeople were used to assess the

scale's validity. A congeneric model, which assumes that all items share a common latent

variable, was specified (Jöreskog 1971). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to

confirm the scale's factor structure obtained from the exploratory factor analysis and preliminary

CFA carried out in the previous study. The objective of this study was to leverage CFA to test

whether the theoretically predicted latent factors underlie the set of hypothesized variable scores

(Hair et al. 2006).

Data Collection

Panel data was collected from a professional panel data provider (Centiment) using the

pre-tested survey instrument (Grisaffe, VanMeter, and Chonko 2016; McFarland and Dixon

2019). A 'CAPTCHA' verification check was employed to minimize the occurrence of responses

generated by 'bots' or computer programs developed to answer surveys (Dupuis, Meier, Cuneo

2019). Similar to the procedure used to collect data from Amazon's Mechanical Turk, the

questionnaire included three filtering questions that assessed whether the potential respondent

worked in sales, sold to customers and or prospects, and sold to and/or serviced business or

organizational customers. In addition, a control question was embedded in the questionnaire

approximately at the 70% completion mark to assess respondents' level of attention (Hulland,

Baumgartner, and Smith 2017; Paas and Morren 2018). Empirical evidence has shown that when

working with specialized samples such as salespeople, using multiple attention checks can cause

respondents to become overwhelmed and this can diminish their level of engagement with the

research study as they may feel that the researchers are trying to trick them (Clifford and Jerit 2015; Krosnick 1999). A total of 357 responses were obtained, but seven were discarded due to quality issues related to 'straight-lining,' respondents' behavior characterized by the identical selection of answer choices across different questionnaire items which reduces the quality of the data (Taiminen and Ranaweera 2019). These low-quality responses were also identified by having an extremely fast completion time when compared to the sample's average ($\overline{X} = 485$ seconds).

Sample

Three-hundred and fifty business-to-business salespeople working in the United States made up the final sample. The median age of the respondents was between 39 and 45 years old, 39.8% of respondents self-identified as female, 60% as male, 0.3% as other, and 0.6% preferred not to respond. Seventy-eight percent self-identified as Caucasian, 10.6% as African American, 5.4% as Hispanic or Latino American, 3.7% as Asian American, 0.3% as Native American, and 2% as 'other.' The median income was in the range of $90,000 and $119,999, and 45.7% had more than 15 years of sales experience. About 40 % had completed an undergraduate or graduate university degree. A more comprehensive description of the sample's characteristics can be found in Table 13.

Measures

The sixteen items obtained from the previous purification study were included to measure intraorganizational adaptiveness. Scales measuring theoretically related constructs were included to test the proposed construct's discriminant validity. Specifically, *Adaptive selling* (ADAPTS) was measured in a five-point scale format using Spiro and Weitz's (1990) scale, along with some

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recommended additional items from McFarland (2019), with anchors "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Selling orientation* (SO) and *Customer orientation* (CO) were measured with a five-point format using the shortened ten-item validated *SOCO* scale adapted from Saxe and Weitz (1982), with anchors "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." In order to test the nomological validity, four constructs were included in the survey instrument. *Salesperson navigation* was measured using the five-point scales from Plouffe and Grégoire (2011) and Plouffe and Barclay (2007), anchored in "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." *Sales performance* was measured in a five-point format using Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar's (1994) scale, anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Sales coordination* was measured in a five-point format using Plouffe and Grégoire's (2011) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Customer relationship quality* was measured in a five-point format using an adapted version of Mullins et al.'s (2004) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Social desirability* (SDR-O) was measured in an eleven-point format ranging from "1 = Not True" to "4 = Somewhat True" to "7 = Very True" developed by Fisher, Hochstein, and Plouffe. To test the hypothesized model's moderation effects, scales measuring interfunctional coordination and learning orientation were included. *Interfunctional coordination* was measured in a five-point format using Narver and Slater's (1990) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree." *Learning orientation* was measured in a five-point format using Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla's (1998) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree." Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and inter-construct correlations for the variables examined are listed in Table 16. Each of the scale's items are listed in the Appendix.

Controls

Several control variables were included in the survey instrument. In particular, sales experience was operationalized as the length of time (years) a salesperson has been employed in the sales profession (Oglivie et al. 2017). In addition, age, education level, income, gender, and firm size, operationalized as the number of employees working in the firm, were measured (cf. Hochstein, Bolander, Goldsmith, and Plouffe 2019).

RESULTS

The intraorganizational adaptiveness construct was modeled as a second-order construct and subjected to a CFA in AMOS 26 to explore the psychometric properties of the IA scale, as well as test its discriminant validity from theoretically related constructs. Three indices are reported; one absolute index (SRMR), an incremental index (CFI), and a parsimony index (RMSEA). The comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) have been shown to outperform other fit indices in terms of their precision (Fan and Sivo 2005; Sivo et al. 2006). The model fit the data well ($\chi 2$ = 623.34, *df* = 365; CFI = .96; SRMR = .05; RMSEA = .04). The second-order intraorganizational adaptiveness construct was supported by the strong parameter estimates exhibited by its two sub-dimensions, 'Discretionary Intraorganizational Adaptation' (λ = .87, *p* <.001) and 'Collaborative Intraorganizational Adaptation' (λ = .95, *p* < .001) (see Table 17). Composite reliability values for all of the constructs' scales exceeded the .80 level, with IA achieving excellent reliability, with a composite reliability value of .90 (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Convergent validity was established for all of the scales in the model by exhibiting statistically significant *t*-statistics and parameter estimates exceeding .70 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981), signifying that the items exhibit a high proportion of variance

in common because they measure the same construct (Hair et al. 2006). The scale measuring

adaptive selling included a parameter estimate below .70 (λ = .68). Nevertheless, no major

concerns are considered given that this scale is not part of the hypothesized model and that the

estimate is relatively close to .70. Discriminant validity for all of the scales in the model was

supported with average variance extracted (AVEs) estimates exceeding .58 and with inter-

construct correlation values smaller than the square root of the AVEs (Fornell and Larcker

1981). In addition, the results from a Hetero-Trait Multi-Trait (HTMT) Matrix provide strong

evidence for discriminant validity between IA and theoretically related with no inter-construct

comparison exceeding the threshold of .85, thus, establishing the constructs as empirically

distinct constructs (Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, and Ramirez 2016) (see Table 16).

In order to test the research hypotheses, survey responses from the second sample were

used to test IA's nomological validity (*N* = 350). The intraorganizational adaptiveness

construct's relationship to theoretically related constructs was tested by specifying a structural

equation model containing measures of sales coordination, customer relationship quality, and

sales performance (Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman, 1996).

The model was analyzed with IBM AMOS 26 using multiple indicators for each latent

construct. The analysis followed the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing

(1988). First, a confirmatory factor analysis was used to specify a congeneric measurement

model in which all observed variables were forced to load on their corresponding latent factors

without any permissible cross-loadings. The measurement model was estimated using the

maximum likelihood method (χ^2 = 850.4, *df* = 530, *p* < .001). Goodness-of-fit indices for the

measurement model indicate that the model fits the data well. In agreement with the threshold

values recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), the goodness-of-fit indices demonstrated

acceptable fit to the data (CFI = .95; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .04). The measures in the model proved to be reliable, with composite reliability estimates ranging from .77 to .91.

Additionally, the results offered support for both convergent and discriminant validity. All factor loadings in the model exceeded .70 and featured statistically significant *t*-values in support of convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (see Table 17). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the average variances extracted (AVEs) with the shared variances between each construct (Fornell and Larker, 1981) (see Table 16). The square root of the AVEs was larger than any inter-construct correlation in the model, providing evidence of discriminant validity. Furthermore, the results of a Hetero-Trait Multi-Trait (HTMT) analysis provided additional support for discriminant validity, showing that no values between constructs exceed the threshold value of .85 (Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, and Ramirez 2016). The HTMT analysis measures similarity between latent variables, values below .85 demonstrate that latent factor pairs are discriminant valid (Franke and Sarstedt 2019).

After the evaluation of the measurement model, the structural model was tested. The model was estimated using the maximum likelihood method (χ^2 = 531.854, *df* = 266, *p* < .001). The goodness-of-fit indices were acceptable (CFI = .94, SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .05). The results revealed that salesperson navigation was statistically significant and positively related to intraorganizational adaptiveness (β = .78, *p* < .001), intraorganizational adaptiveness was statistically significant and positively related to customer relationship quality (γ = .48, *p* < .001), intraorganizational adaptiveness was statistically significant and positively related to sales coordination (γ = .69, *p* < .001), and intraorganizational adaptiveness was statistically significant and positively related to sales performance (γ = .39, *p* < .001), in support of H1, H3, H4, and H5 respectively. Additionally, the results suggest that sales coordination is marginally positively

related to customer relationship quality, but this result is statistically non-significant ($\gamma = .02$, p $> .10$), thus, failing to support H9. Sales coordination appears to be marginally negatively related to sales performance, but this result is statistically non-significant ($\gamma = -.02$, $p < .10$), therefore, not supporting H10 (see Table 19). Customer relationship quality shows a strong statistically significant and positive relationship to sales performance ($\gamma = .48$, $p < .001$) in support of H11. Furthermore, upon examination of the squared multiple correlations, results indicate that intraorganizational adaptiveness, customer relationship quality, and sales coordination account for 54.4% of the variance in sales performance. Intraorganizational adaptiveness accounts for 46.9% of the variance in sales coordination, and 24.3% of the variance in customer relationship quality.

The hypothesized interaction effects were tested following a multiplicative structural equation approach (Hoyle 2012; Hair et al. 2006). First, the items for interfunctional coordination and intraorganizational adaptiveness were mean-centered. Second, product terms were created by multiplying the items contained in the two variables, resulting in 25 product terms for the interaction between interfunctional coordination and intraorganizational adaptiveness. The same procedure was followed to generate product terms for the interaction between learning orientation and intraorganizational adaptiveness, resulting in 55 product terms. In order to reduce the size of the product terms in each interaction to a more manageable size for the structural equation procedure, the items for each interaction were subjected to a separate exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Maximum likelihood was used as the extraction method, and Promax rotation was specified to aid in the interpretation of the correlated factors (Hair et al. 2006). In accordance with Kaiser's rule, factors with eigenvalues exceeding the value of 1 were extracted. Scree plots were scrutinized to detect the inflection points and provide supporting

evidence for the retention of factors. The results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO = .84) and

Barlett's sphericity test (χ^2 = 2997.69; df = 66, p < .001) demonstrate that the results of the

factor analysis for the interaction terms between salesperson navigation and interfunctional

coordination should yield reliable distinct factors (Kaiser 1974; Stewart 1981). Regarding

sampling adequacy (KMO = .87) and Barlett's sphericity test (χ^2 = 3251.26; df = 91; p < .001)

for the factor analysis of the interaction terms between learning orientation and

intraorganizational adaptiveness, the results show that the analysis was also adequate (Sharma

1996).

The factor analysis uncovered the underlying structure of the interaction variables, where

three factors were retained for interaction between salesperson navigation and interfunctional

coordination, these three factors explained a total variance of 74%. Three factors were retained

for the interaction between learning orientation and intraorganizational adaptiveness, with a total

explained variance of 69%. Items that were non-significant (p > .05), with low loadings (λ <

.35), and that cross-loaded with other items were removed (Hair et al. 2006). The resulting items

from each factor analysis were used to create summated scales. The interaction between

salesperson navigation and interfunctional coordination was specified in the structural equation

model as a three-item latent variable leveraging the summated scales created in the previous step.

The interaction between learning orientation and intraorganizational adaptiveness was modeled

as a three-item latent variable in the structural model using the summated scales.

The results of the multiplicative structural equation model showed that none of the interaction

effects appeared to be statistically significant, despite showing a small effect in the hypothesized

directions. Interfunctional coordination does not appear to moderate the relationship between

salesperson navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness (β = .10, p < .10), learning

orientation does not appear to moderate the relationships between intraorganizational

adaptiveness and sales coordination ($\beta = .01$, $p < .10$), intraorganizational adaptiveness and

customer relationship quality ($\beta = .03$, $p < .10$), and intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales

performance ($\beta = .05$, $p < .10$), thus, H6, H7, and H8 are not supported accordingly.

DISCUSSION

Firms and salespeople operating in B2B markets have become aware that selling is

getting more complex and sophisticated, leading salespeople to seek further support from

intraorganizational actors in order to satisfy customer needs (Jones et al. 2005). Generally,

customers enjoy a plethora of choices when searching for a product or service, have unparalleled

expertise in product features and functions, are well-versed in negotiation tactics, and demand

ever-increasing satisfaction levels (cf., Moncrief 2017; Plouffe, Nelson, and Beuk 2013). The

rise in customer demands due to the availability of information, and the commoditization of

many products and services, has eroded the intrinsic value of market offerings (Haas, Snehota,

and Corsaro 2012). Nevertheless, new opportunities have become available for the sales function

and the individual salesperson to help customers reach their goals. Ultimately, firms stand to gain

copious benefits by leveraging their sales force value-creation capabilities to appeal to customers

in ways that go beyond the product itself.

Customers are looking for salespeople that can furnish them with additional business

insight and adaptability to special needs that can help them succeed, especially in larger price

sales where the product and the salesperson can become inseparable in the customer's eyes.

Modern customers want to do business with salespeople that add value, such as illuminating

customers about potential business benefits (e.g., reduced costs, seamless integration of solutions

with existing processes, and customer support). When it comes to value, customers are in the

driver's seat—the value that customers are searching for entirely depends on them. However, astute salespeople can identify customer idiosyncrasies to deliver the *right type* of value and ensure a successful alignment between the value expected by customers and the value offered by sellers. This fixation on value creation underscores the notion that there is no generic model or one-size-fits-all approach to satisfy customer needs; thus, salespeople must adapt to customers' needs if they want to be successful in the evolving B2B market space (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986).

Extant marketing literature has intensely explored the concept of adaptive selling and how salespeople modify their behaviors to best match their customers' expectations (McFarland 2019). Although a salesperson's interactions with customers are powerful drivers of sales success, recent research is shifting the focus from externally directed selling efforts (i.e., customer-facing activities and behaviors) to the activities, processes, and behaviors carried out by salespeople inside their firms (e.g., Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016). Empirical evidence shows that what salespeople do inside their firms can significantly impact sales performance (e.g., Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016). This internal selling perspective refers to the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) (Plouffe 2018), and accumulating evidence is demonstrating that salespeople's behaviors inside their firms are a strong predictor of sales performance (Plouffe, Hulland, and Wachner 2009).

The current investigation explores salespeople's adaptations inside their firms by proposing a novel conceptualization that finds support in the adaptive selling (McFarland 2019; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986) and market orientation literature (Narver and Slater 1990; Kohli and Jaworski 1993), while transposing it to salespeople's internal selling environments (Plouffe 2018). The resulting concept of intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA) was operationalized to

capture salespeople's adaptations inside their firms aimed at enhancing value for their customers. Specifically, IA is defined as *a generalized selling behavior which is directed inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and fulfillment of the firm's offering(s)*.

The research findings provided strong support for intraorganizational adaptiveness's hierarchical structure as a second-order construct with two subdimensions: discretionary intraorganizational adaptation (DIA) and collaborative intraorganizational adaptation (CIA). The first sub-dimension (DIA) captures salespeople's individual behavior to adapt, adjust, and modify their own selling approach inside their firms to improve customer value. The second sub-dimension (CIA) encapsulates the team selling component of most modern sales deals by capturing salespeople's behavior to influence co-workers inside their firm to adapt to customers' needs and improve their customers' successes. The findings revealed that IA's measure is reliable, and it adequately represents the construct of interest. Additionally, IA proved to be a distinct construct *vis-à-vis* theoretically related constructs such as adaptive selling (Spiro and Weitz 1990), customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz 1982), employee intraorganizational navigation (Plouffe and Grégoire 2011), and salesperson navigation (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). Furthermore, IA demonstrated to be orthogonally related to selling orientation (Saxe and Weitz 1982), as theoretically expected because IA is more altruistic in nature, and salespeople who engage in IA do so with the explicit purpose of advancing their customers' goals.

In a further examination of IA, a nomological validity study's findings demonstrated that IA behaves as expected when modeled against theoretically related constructs. In particular, salespeople's task-driven navigation showed a strong and positive relationship with IA,

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supporting the hypothesis that salespeople who engage in IA navigate their internal

organizational environments to learn more about their organization, understand the

organizational structure, and network and identify resources that can help them fulfill their sales

tasks. Salespeople's engagement in IA suggests that being adaptive inside one's firm and

influencing co-workers to promote customers' success can increase sales performance.

Specifically, a structural equation modeling analysis demonstrates that IA explains 15.2% of the

variance in sales performance.

The findings suggest that intraorganizational adaptiveness positively impacts

salespeople's relationship quality with their customers. Salespeople who exert influence inside

their firms when dealing with customers' requirements and better adapt to satisfy customers'

needs can reap positive outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty, increasing the

quality of their relationship with customers, which can be reciprocated with increased customer

patronage (Agniotri et al. 2016; Rapp et al. 2006). Nurturing and maintaining relationships with

customers is vital because, in B2B markets, many business deals are long-term, and customers

consider their relationships with salespeople as an avenue for increased value and a source of

competitive advantage (Hunt and Duhan 2002; Weitz and Bradford 1999). Recent academic

work has explored the emerging trend of customer success management in firms, which

articulates that the role of seller organizations is to further customers' priorities in an effort to

ensure continuous patronage (cf. Rapp et al. 2017). The idea is that if sellers are able to play a

pivotal role in their customer's success by improving business conditions and minimizing

potential hazardous situations, customer churn will be reduced, and the potential for increased

share-of-wallet can be maximized (Hochstein et al. 2020). For the reasons previously outlined,

salespeople strive to maintain and grow positive relationships with their customers. Moreover,

the findings revealed that salespeople's relationships with their customers explained 23.04% of the variance in sales performance, demonstrating that maintaining a healthy and high-quality relationship with customers is strongly associated with salespeople's performance outcomes.

The findings also revealed that IA is positively related to sales coordination, which allows salespeople that practice IA to procure the assistance of key others when delivering solutions for their customers (Steward et al. 2010; Weitz and Bradford 1999). Customers' demands are increasingly being met by a team of intraorganizational members in the seller's organization. Market offerings are no longer treated as isolated acquisitions, but instead, they are considered comprehensive products that integrate with the overarching business strategy (Jones et al. 2005). It is becoming more difficult for an individual salesperson to deliver the value expected by customers without co-workers' assistance. Therefore, salespeople who engage in IA can be more effective at coordinating sales resources inside their firms to ensure that their customers' needs are satisfied.

Interestingly, the research findings suggest that sales coordination does not impact sales performance, thus, failing to support the hypothesized relationship. While this finding seems to defy the conventional wisdom that salespeople's coordination of resources inside their firm to better serve customers should positively affect sales performance, this result is nonetheless plausible. Specifically, sales performance is often assessed as a function of salespeople's achievement in generating sales, meeting or exceeding sales quotas, and contributing to a firm's profitability (Rich et al. 1999; Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). However, sales coordination entails an investment of time and effort that can be detrimental to immediate performance outcomes. Salespeople's escalating involvement in non-selling tasks (e.g., planning, paperwork) may decrease their availability to spend time in revenue-generating activities. In addition,

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salespeople may not be the best judges of profitable opportunities when they lack clear guidance

from management. For example, sales managers frequently complain when salespeople spend a

significant amount of resources *quarterbacking* a customer's solution that does not provide the

greatest final return for the firm or when salespeople pursue a sales opportunity by promoting a

familiar product, irrespective of whether said product generates greater profits compared to those

from other viable options in the product line.

Perhaps, yet another explanation for the non-significant and marginally negative

relationship between sales coordination and sales performance does not involve the salesperson

at all. In complex B2B sales, it is common that successful solutions require both the coordination

of the seller and the customer firm (Hochstein, Bolander, Goldsmith, Plouffe 2019; Zoltners,

Sinha, and Zoltners 2001); as one salesperson interviewed during the scale development process

of the current research stated, 'it takes two to tango.' Therefore, although salespeople may

achieve effective coordination of resources inside their firms, the solution may not produce the

desired results if organizational actors in the customer firm fail to coordinate accordingly. This

failure on the customer's end may lead to undesirable outcomes such as decreased customer

satisfaction, reduce buying activity, and even the termination of long-term contractual

relationships—negatively impacting sales performance.

The relationship between salespeople's sales coordination and the proximal outcome

variable of customer relationship quality, while marginally positive, was found to be statistically

non-significant. As mentioned above, coordinating sales resources can have some negative

implications that can curtail salespeople's performance. Regarding salespeople's relationship

with their customers, sales coordination can be a cumbersome process that can create

inefficiencies by obstructing salespeople's ability to rapidly address customers' needs (Maltz and

Kohli 1996). Moreover, customers expect salespeople to promptly respond to their requests (Maltz and Kohli 2000). To attend to customers' requests swiftly, salespeople coordinating resources can increase friction between intraorganizational members that can potentially have negative performance consequences (Keller 2001), such as weakening salespeople's relationships with their customers. For instance, when assembling a quote to answer a customer's request for quotation (RFQ), salespeople in the *high-tech* industry may require assistance from co-workers in the engineering department. However, suppose a salesperson lacks the skill to effectively influence engineers to immediately attend to the customer's needs. In that case, the customers may become impatient, negatively impacting their appraisal of the supplier firm (Churchill et al. 1985). In other words, even if salespeople engage in sales coordination, they must have the political acumen to *sell* their customer's needs inside their firm and motivate co-workers to provide their support and expertise (Bolander et al. 2015). Politically skilled salespeople possess the ability to understand the dynamics of their work environment, while utilizing their understanding to exert the influence that may help them to achieve desirable outcomes (Kalra et al. 2017). Even when salespeople can coordinate resources, the result may not produce the desired level of effectiveness because other intraorganizational members may perceive that salespeople are acting only to further their own agendas. Hence, co-workers will be less inclined to support salespeople's efforts to address customers' needs.

The findings suggest that none of the interaction effects tested met the criteria to be considered statistically significant despite being in the hypothesized direction. The interaction between salesperson navigation and interfunctional coordination was theorized to strengthen the relationship between salesperson task-riven navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness. When salespeople operate in firms emphasizing interfunctional coordination, they can enjoy

greater access to other functional areas than in firms where departments work in isolation and organizational silos abound (Kohli and Jaworski 1993). This perceived openness among a firm's different departments can be conducive to salesperson navigation, enabling them to map out their organizational structure and identify resources and co-workers that may help address customers' needs (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). Notwithstanding, salespeople working in collaborative environments cannot fully realize the positive effects of such environments. Extant research indicates that increased collaboration sometimes fails to pay dividends in the form of increased performance (Ancona and Caldwell 1992; Lovelance et al. 2001) because firms and their employees may lack the ability to work well across specialized departments (Melton and Hartline 2012). Thus, despite salespeople working in an interfuctionally coordinated environment, they still may not be able to extract benefits from resources and co-workers in distinct functional areas if they are not motivated to navigate their organization (Brown and Peterson 1994). A lack of motivation can happen for several reasons, such as salespeople's indifference to understand their organizational structure (Jaramillo et al. 2007), reduced networking ability (Tredway et al. 2010), and belief that exploring their firms' internal structure distracts them from their job (cf. Singh 1998), which can trigger negative consequences (e.g., unmet sales quotas, reduced or forgone commissions).

Research has shown that salespeople's learning orientation can facilitate information acquisition that may be useful in selling situations (Sujan, Weitz, Kumar 1994). Salespeople who are learning-oriented accumulate knowledge from both successful sales encounters and failed sales attempts (Boichuk et al. 2014). Henceforth, learning orientation can be a valuable trait in a salesperson. The moderation analysis findings revealed that the interaction between

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salespeople's learning orientation and intraorganizational adaptiveness did not enhance IA's relationship with sales performance, sales coordination, and customer relationship quality.

Regarding the effect of IA and learning orientation on sales performance, it is reasonable to presume that salespeople's learning orientation accelerates the acquisition and accumulation of information, improving salespeople's adaptation to customers' demands. Nevertheless, superior information ownership does not necessarily translate into an appropriate interpretation of said information (Rollins et al. 2001). Salespeople can obtain relevant information from internal resources but may not accurately evaluate and apply such information to customer-related matters (cf. Calatone, Cavusgil, and Zhao 2002). Additionally, the learning process is marked by what is commonly known as a *learning curve*. Thus, recently acquired information may not immediately crystalize into measurable performance outcomes.

Salespeople's combined effect of IA and learning orientation can prove unproductive on the relationship between salespeople's IA and sales coordination if the internal sales environment does not nurture a learning orientation. For salespeople to learn, organizations and managers must be open to the prospect of slow performance improvements or even momentary dips in performance with the expectation of superior results in the future. Given the highly dynamic B2B environment, organizational cultures (cf., Narver and Slater 1990) and managerial support (cf., Mullins and Syam 2014) may not accommodate salespeople's investment to learn outside of their immediate functional area. Without managerial approval, salespeople may not feel empowered (Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005) to further their understanding by seeking co-workers' assistance. Moreover, in extreme cases, salespeople may detract from expanding their learning frontiers altogether and decide to relinquish the opportunity to leverage intraorganizational resources at the expense of improving conditions for customers' success.

The strong linkage between IA and customer relationship quality suggests that salespeople who advocate for their customers inside their firm fortify their bonds with customers. High-quality relationships with customers entail that salespeople learn about their customers to understand how they can add value, which is why salespeople's learning orientation was posited to improve the relationship between IA and customer relationship quality. The findings suggest the opposite, revealing that despite salespeople's proclivity to learn, they may not be able to formulate actionable information to help their customers achieve favorable results (Rollins et al. 2001). Furthermore, without a straightforward objective, salespeople's learning orientation may lead to unstructured and inefficient *knowledge crusades* unworthy of the investment in effort and resources. Sometimes a salesperson's enthusiasm to learn can lead to waste if the learning endeavor is not organized around a concise and specific objective (Diefendorff et al. 2000). It might be difficult to foster and maintain healthy customer relationships due to the large number of stakeholders involved in complex buying situations.

The addition of work-related stressors experienced by boundary spanning employees such as salespeople (e.g., role conflict and role ambiguity) (Brown and Peterson 1994; Rizzo, House, and Lirtzrman 1970) can exacerbate the adverse effects of trying to learn as much as possible from a myriad of intraorganizational members, sales encounters, and customer characteristics. Moreover, it is also reasonable to consider that salespeople may be driven to learn but may show no motivation to act on their accumulated knowledge. Prior research has noted that even when salespeople know what should be accomplished, as well as how to accomplish a specific task, they may consciously choose not to take action (Diefendorff, Richard, and Gosserand 2006). For example, salespeople's learning orientation can propel them to learn how to create favorable conditions for their customers inside their firms. However, due

to salespeople taking part in deviant behaviors (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006), they may choose not to use their knowledge to promote customer satisfaction.

IMPLICATIONS

The research presented contributes to both marketing theory and practice devoted to the examination of sales performance by introducing to the field a new selling behavior called intraorganizational adaptiveness. Established literature streams support salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness at the intersection of market orientation, adaptive selling, and the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role. Intraorganizational adaptiveness describes salespeople's proclivity to adapt inside their own firms to benefit their customers and help them succeed by meeting their goals, requirements, and expectations. The following sections detail how salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness contributes to marketing theory and illustrates the practical utility of the research findings to help managers improve their salespeople's intraorganizational selling efforts and increase sales performance.

Theoretical implications

The current investigation advances prior sales research in several ways. First, leveraging adaptive selling (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Wetiz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986) and market orientation (Narver and Slater; Kohli and Jaworski 1993), the current investigation offers academicians with a reconceptualized measure to assess salespeople's adaptive behaviors inside their firms (cf., MacInnis 2011). In doing so, the novel operationalization contributes to the current examination of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) (Plouffe 2018) by introducing to the marketing literature a construct that captures salespeople's behaviors to adapt, modify, and adjust within their firms to better serve their customers and contribute to their customers' successes. Additionally, the introduction of intraorganizational adaptiveness expands the current knowledge on adaptive selling by demonstrating the vital role that salespeople's adaptive behaviors within

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their firms can play in enhancing relevant customer-related outcomes. In addition, intraorganizational adaptiveness expands extant scientific knowledge related to employee adaptability by contextualizing it with respect to salespeople's relationships with sales support staff and co-workers (Sujan 1999). Thus, potentially demonstrating a more potent effect on sales performance (cf., Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). Furthermore, the altruistic feature of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness, and its proactive nature, overcomes the restrictive perspective of *reactive* and *self-interested* salespeople's adaptations that can lead to short-term gains, but that ultimately tend to lead to long-term losses as customers try to avoid opportunistic and deviant selling behaviors (cf., Jelinek and Ahearne 2006).

Second, the newly-developed construct of intraorganizational adaptiveness can enable researchers to further explore the internal perspective of modern sales by examining its relationship to the eclectic mix of non-customer directed sales behaviors (e.g., internal selling, coordinating) to create a comprehensive and robust view of the modern internal selling environment and its effects on externally directed sales outcomes. Sales research has systematically studied salespeople's relationships with customers and external stakeholders, which has proven to be a determining factor for individual-level sales performance, as well as a strong predictor of firm-level success. However, the amount of explained variance in sales performance has historically been disappointing (cf., Plouffe, Sridhara, and Barclay 2010). Thus, intraorganizational adaptiveness stands to add a theory-driven and empirically-tested behavior that promises to supplement the collection of selling behaviors to potentially augment the amount of explained variance in sales performance variables.

Third, salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness provides additional support to the accumulating evidence that salespeople's external outcomes are heavily dependent on their

internal selling efforts, activities, and behaviors (Plouffe, Hulland, and Wachner 2009). The

present research suggests that a positive and strong linkage exists between salespeople's

intraorganizational adaptiveness and their coordination of sales resources and relationship quality

with their customers. Furthermore, this research examined a theoretically derived antecedent of

intraorganizational adaptiveness. Specifically, the results revealed that salespeople's task-driven

navigation is a strong predictor of salespeople's engagement adaptive behaviors inside their

firms, which are undertaken to improve customers' value. Therefore, this investigation provides

marketing scholars with a long-overdue re-examination of adaptive selling's external

perspective, supported by market orientation, that better captures the aggressive shift towards an

intraorganizationally connected selling environment required to meet the ever-increasing

demands of customers in the contemporary market.

Managerial implications

The current investigation informs managerial decision-making in several ways. First, it

highlights the importance of acknowledging the intraorganizational perspective of the modern

sales environment and makes a call to action to find ways to leverage internal resources that can

provide measurable external results (e.g., Plouffe 2016). Dynamic forces in the external

environment influence firms to embrace change concerning their value offerings to customers. In

turn, these external influences stimulate a series of internally directed changes that require

intraorganizational members to adapt in order to succeed at delivering value to customers when

dealing with changing conditions (Dyer and Singh 1998). Thus, salespeople that engage in

intraorganizational adaptiveness to better serve their customers and help them reach their goals

through internal advocacy efforts can generate favorable external outcomes (e.g., customer

satisfaction) (cf., Plouffe, Hulland, and Wachner 2009). For this reason, managers are

encouraged to empower their sales force to enable salespeople's involvement in

intraorganizational adaptiveness and promote a customer-centric business approach (Agnihotri et al. 2014).

Second, while managerial encouragement is essential for salespeople's adaptive behaviors to permeate the internal selling environment, it is also equally important for managers to outline clear objectives. The challenge with salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness lies in their idiosyncratic ways of adapting to change, making it difficult for managers to standardize an operating procedure for salespeople's adaptations. However, establishing concise guiding principles accompanied by direct sales control initiatives can help seller organizations maintain a flexible yet focused structure (e.g., Oliver and Anderson 1994). For example, in innovation-driven organizations where creativity is necessary for organizational success, management has successfully removed obstacles for creativity while establishing concrete conditions that delineate the scope of said creativity to achieve specific objectives (cf., Griffin, Parker, and Mason 2010).

Third, managerial support is required to extract as many benefits as possible from salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness. For example, with the appropriate guidance from managers, salespeople can be leveraged to provide individualized solutions for each customer. Salespeople's own evaluative perceptions can be complemented with analytically-derived metrics such as customer lifetime value (CLV) to customize customers' value, thus improving resource allocation, efficiency, profitability, and competitiveness (Reinartz and Kumar 2000). At the same time, the notion of adjusting the *level of value* offered to different customers may be perceived as a dangerous tactic to pursue. In actuality, this tactic can be highly effective when correctly applied because, as mentioned before, the *type of value* sought by customers depends solely on them. For instance, when dealing with a knowledgeable customer who is very well

informed about product features and who is aware of the particular needs that his or her company is seeking to fulfill, a salesperson that eagerly offers enhanced value in the form of professional advice may find the customer not receptive to this selling approach.

The customer in the situation described is not interested in being educated about the solution or the needs that can be met. Instead, this customer is interested in a smooth and easy transaction to acquire a specific product. In this sense, customers' type and level of desired value are heterogeneous, and while one customer may value a consultative type of selling approach, another may value a transactional one instead. Thus, firms seeking to remain competitive can adopt customized selling approaches to differentiate themselves from alternative offers in the market and achieve favorable benefits.

Finally, managers are urged to foster regulated intraorganizational interactions among different employees within their firms to facilitate learning, customize selling approaches, and promote salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness. The increased level of customization places an additional burden on salespeople to gather and disseminate market intelligence within their firms (Kohli and Jaworski 1993). Therefore, managerial support is vital to facilitate salespeople's roles as boundary-spanning employees (Brashear et al. 2003). Salespeople act as *orchestrators* who coordinate technical experts' efforts in their firms to provide individualized service to customers (Weitz and Bradford 1999). Additionally, in order for salespeople to establish and maintain strong customer relationships, they must deal with a great diversity of individuals within their firms. Consequently, managers that promote an intraorganizational environment where salespeople can interact with co-workers in different functional areas and establish clear guidelines and controls can potentially increase the effectiveness of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness to meet customers' requirements.

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Nevertheless, as the research's findings suggest, it is not enough to promote interfunctional coordination and expect salespeople to take advantage of it to bolster their adaptive behaviors. Managers must ensure that salespeople have the ability required to network with co-workers (Bolander et al. 2015), exert influence (Plouffe et al. 2016), and have the motivation to act on their acquired information (Jaramillo et al. 2007). Fortunately, salespeople's adaptive behaviors' effectiveness can be trained, developed, and aligned to a firms' overarching strategy (cf., McFarland 2019).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This investigation has some limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the results. From a methodological standpoint, the cross-sectional design employed to collect the data reduces the robust establishment of direct causality. Further examination using a longitudinal approach is warranted to better elucidate the extensions of this research's findings (cf., Bolander, Dugan, and Jones 2017). This investigation implemented several procedural measures to reduce the incidence of common method variance contaminating the model's parameter estimates (Podsakoff et al. 2003) and verified the impact of biasing effects using statistical tests (Hulland, Baumgartner, and Smith 2018). However, given that this investigation relied on self-report responses from salespeople, future research should conduct follow-up inspections of the intraorganizational adaptiveness construct using distinct data collection methods and additional data sources (e.g., objective performance data, managerial ratings) to enhance the newly-developed scale's validity. Data from two large business-to-business salespeople samples enriched the generalizability of the research findings. Nevertheless, future research should explore the relationship of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness in different settings with diverse cultural factors (e.g., power distance) can elucidate the boundary

conditions of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness (cf., Schepers and Van der Borgh 2020).

The model in this research found strong empirical support for the relationship between salespeople's IA and a series of managerially-relevant outcome variables, as well as a vital antecedent variable. Nonetheless, future research should examine other variables such as salespeople's political skills (Bolander et al. 2015) to expand the construct's nomological network. Salespeople's IA as described by the novel operationalization captures salespeople's altruistic and proactive disposition to help their customers succeed. For this reason, further research should study IA's relationship to the growing practice of customer success management in firms seeking to reduce customer churn and increase patronage by addressing critical factors in their customers' businesses to help them succeed (Hochstein et al. 2020). In addition, whereas this research set out to explore positive influences that can impact sales performance, the marketing literature can benefit from further research exploring IA's relationship with variables that can be detrimental to sales performance (e.g., role conflict, role ambiguity) (Brown and Peterson 1994). While this investigation found supporting evidence for the positive effect between salespeople's IA and sales performance at the individual level, additional research is required to evaluate whether this effect improves team-level and firm-level performance.

Salespeople's IA relationships and interactive effects with relevant variables in the marketing literature should be investigated to increase our understanding of salespeople's adaptive behaviors inside their firms. For example, future research should assess salespeople's IA in relation to salespeople's technology use and adoption. Technology is fundamental in the current B2B markets; however, salespeople have traditionally lagged behind to take advantage of innovations in sales technology (Jelinek, Ahearne, and Mathieu 2006). Furthermore, given that

salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness entails salespeople's discretionary control to adopt, modify, or promote changes that may benefit their customers, future research should explore the ethical implications of said behavior and the potential moderation effects of regulatory forces in the selling environment on salespeople's behaviors (Jones et al. 2005).

CONCLUSION

Business-to-business salespeople are increasingly becoming a source of competitive advantage for their firms (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011). Salespeople's ability to initiate, develop, and maintain relationships with customers grants them the title of strategic frontline employees, who act as the primary communication conduit between customers and seller organizations (cf., Mullins et al. 2014). Both anecdotal and empirical evidence demonstrates that modern salespeople play a pivotal role in their firm's ability to meet customer requirements (Jaramillo et al. 2013). Notwithstanding, the traditional view of salespeople as 'lone wolves' who must spend as much time as possible 'outside' their firms and in front of their customers to reap positive results is being complemented by recent research findings demonstrating that salespeople's inner workings inside their firms stand to provide greater performance gains than the ones obtained from the 'external' perspective (Plouffe 2018).

Escalating complexity in the B2B market, developments in technology, and increased demands from customers are forcing salespeople to find ways to create value for their customers (cf., Singh et al. 2019). Salespeople are having to adapt to the changing selling environment not only when dealing with their customers outside of their firm (Spiro and Weitz 1990), but also inside their own firm to coordinate and leverage the support of intraorganizational resources to deliver solutions and meet their customers' expectations (cf., Steward et al. 2010; Weitz and Bradford 1999). Salespeople's external adaptations have been widely studied, and their positive

effects on performance are well known (McFarland 2019). However, salespeople's adaptations and adaptive behaviors inside their firms have received scant attention from scholars.

The current research followed strict methodological guidelines to develop, validate, and test a measure of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness. Intraorganizational adaptiveness is introduced as an internal selling behavior that captures salespeople's tendency to adapt and respond to changes inside their firm to generate favorable outcomes for their customers and help them succeed. The novel scale proved to be positively associated with salespeople's coordination of sales resources, relationship quality with their customers, and sales performance. As such, salespeople's IA can equip both scholars and practitioners with an up-to-date measure of salespeople's adaptative behaviors enacted inside their firms that can help explain greater variance in sales performance than that of previously studied selling behaviors and provide additional relevant avenues to continue the study of the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role.

CHAPTER FIVE

EVALUATING SALESPEOPLE'S INTRAORGANIZATIONAL ADAPTIVENESS WITH

INTERNAL BENCHMARKING: A MULTI-METHOD APPROACH

Evaluating salespeople's performance remains a priority for both scholars and practitioners, mainly because salespeople directly contribute to a firm's success by generating revenue. However, there is no universally accepted way to evaluate performance, and a plethora of idiosyncratic approaches makes comparisons very difficult. Furthermore, with the market's increased focus on waste elimination, cost reduction, and maximization of outputs, firms can benefit from embracing complexity and making it a competitive advantage. Examining how salespeople's relative efficiency impacts their adaptive-type behaviors inside their firms to drive customer success provides novel insights for firms aiming to improve their sales productivity. This investigation examines salespeople's efficiency to assess the cost associated with performing at a certain effectiveness level. A resource allocation perspective was adopted to explore salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and its effects on sales coordination, customer relationship quality, and sales performance based on varying the salesperson's efficiency levels. Collectively, the findings reveal that top-revenue generating salespeople are not necessarily the most efficient; thus, their exemplary sales performance could come at a high cost for firms seeking to streamline their sales processes.

Keywords: sales performance, salesperson's efficiency, benchmarking, relative efficiency, data envelopment analysis

INTRODUCTION

In the modern business-to-business sales environment, salespeople are valuable assets for their firms because they generate revenue, manage customer relationships, and disseminate market intelligence to other intraorganizational departments (Mulki, Jaramillo, and Marshall 2007; Steward et al. 2010). Given the increased complexity of customers' demands in the market, salespeople are increasingly leveraging their intraorganizational environments (i.e., internal resources, co-workers) to satisfy customers' needs (Zoltners et al. 2006). Moreover, salespeople engage in market-oriented behaviors inside their firms to meet their customers' demands (Homburg et al. 2009). One of these behaviors, intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA), describes salespeople's proactive adaptations inside their firms with the purpose of advocating for their customers' needs and goals in order to enhance their successes.

Intraorganizational adaptation has been shown to improve sales outcomes such as sales coordination and customer relationship quality, as well as sales performance. However, salespeople's IA has not been examined in the context of salesforce efficiency. Specifically, firms are constantly searching for ways to improve operational efficiency, and sales departments are being pressured to increase their efficiency levels to match the efforts of other functional areas. In ultra-competitive markets, it is not enough for salespeople to perform well; they must also maximize their productivity and minimize waste (Horsky and Nelson 1996). Traditionally, firms have focused on developing a competent salesforce to ensure substantial revenues (Kumar et al. 2014). Despite the many advantages of having a competent salesforce, the investment and operational costs associated with its maintenance can represent a substantial economic burden for the firm (Boles, Donthu, and Lohtia 1995). Consequently, firms actively evaluate their

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salespeople's performance to ensure that they are good stewards of their resources and that organizational goals are being met.

Given the constant pressure to remain profitable, firms may use a combination of performance evaluation methods in order to gain a better understanding of how their salesforce is meeting organizational goals. Furthermore, firms may be interested in understanding the costs associated with a certain performance level, known as efficiency (Campbell et al. 1990, p.41). Efficiency provides a measure of how well salespeople are operating. Evaluating efficiency is essential to certify that salespeople are producing positive outcomes for the firm at a reasonable cost. Efficiency is particularly suited for the modern sales environment, where maximizing productivity, eliminating waste, and reducing costs is a priority on almost every firms' agenda.

This investigation adopts a resource allocation perspective to study salespeople's efficiency and its effects on the relationships between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and a set of managerially-relevant outcomes. The findings demonstrate that salespeople can be classified into three groups based on their efficiency levels, low optimizers, core optimizers, and top optimizers. The linkage between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales performance appears to be stronger for core optimizers than for both low and top optimizer groups. The positive relationship between customer relationship quality and sales performance is strongest for top optimizers than for any other group. Furthermore, core optimizers, comprised of salespeople operating at average efficiency levels, exhibit the strongest relationship between intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales coordination when compared with the other two groups. Nevertheless, sales coordination does not appear to impact sales performance in any of the groups, which is consistent with a previous study on intraorganizational adaptiveness.

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The present research contributes to marketing theory and practice by elucidating the impact of a salesperson's efficiency on internal advocacy efforts to satisfy customers' needs and promote their successes. Specifically, the findings shed light on the varying effects of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness on customer relationship quality, sales coordination, and sales performance. In this vein, when salespeople operate at top efficiency levels, their performance appears to lag compared to that of salespeople operating at average efficiency levels. However, salespeople with a strong focus on efficiency extract greater value from their relationships with customers than low and average efficiency salespeople, which can translate into increased sales performance in the long run. The findings provide evidence that a salesforce emphasizing efficiency may produce inferior sales performance in the immediate period. Nevertheless, this may not be necessarily detrimental to a firm's performance, given that a salesforce that produces substantial revenues may be doing so at a high cost. Thus, in the end, the net profit of the sales operation may not be sustainable for firms in the long run.

This investigation is organized in the following manner. First, this research presents the theoretical framework used to develop the hypotheses of interest. Namely, the hypotheses aim to determine whether the most efficient salespeople exhibit more substantial reliance on intraorganizational adaptiveness and whether their outcomes are superior to those obtained by less efficient salespeople. Second, the research method contained herein, which includes a series of analytical techniques used to test the hypotheses, is described. Third, the findings are discussed in the context of the contemporary B2B market, underscoring the importance of understanding the effects of a salesforce's focus on efficiency on sales performance. This essay's balance describes the implications for both academicians and managers, highlighting the

paradoxical tradeoff that appears to exist between salespeople's performance and efficiency, and

ends with the acknowledgment of limitations and opportunities for future research.

CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Modern Business-to-Business Sales Environment and Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

In the modern sales environment, seldom can a single salesperson operating isolation

satisfy customers' needs. The level of complexity associated with the delivery of products and

services to satisfy customers' needs has placed additional requirements on salespeople and their

firms. Business-to-business markets are highly dynamic, and adapting to customer trends is a

prerequisite for success (Jones et al. 2005). Furthermore, the sales function has evolved from

merely communicating product benefits to customers to actually creating and enhancing

customer value within a market-oriented atmosphere (Hartman, Wieland, and Vargo 2018).

Salespeople have expanded their domains to create value for customers (Agnihotri et al. 2014)

and have been compelled to interact with multiple actors in the sales process (e.g., suppliers,

business partners, co-workers). Salespeople have come to realize that their relationships with co-

workers are as crucial as the ones with their customers. Non-selling employees inside

salespeople's firms have the power to positively influence salespeople's performance and

customer service quality (Plouffe et al. 2016). Henceforth, modern salespeople are working with

intraorganizational partners more than ever before.

The marketing literature abounds with scientific knowledge regarding salespeople's

adaptations during customer-facing sales interactions (McFarland 2019). Salespeople's adaptive

selling has been established as a selling behavior that can positively impact sales outcomes such

as customer satisfaction and sales performance, among others (Franke and Park 2006).

Nevertheless, in the modern B2B environment, a myriad of activities and processes must take

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place *behind the curtain* before a salesperson interacts with a customer. Thus, salespeople's

activities and behaviors inside their firms can determine whether a salesforce is successful or not

(Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016). For instance, salespeople can excel at uncovering

customers' needs, and thus, propose innovative solutions to customers' problems, yet customers

will not be fully satisfied until the solution is delivered—which requires the participation of sales

support staff. Salespeople that continuously look for ways to improve customer value actively

engage in activities that can benefit their customers (Hughes and Oglivie 2020; Jaramillo and

Grisaffe 2009). Many of these activities can occur inside salespeople's firms (e.g., adopting

customer relationship management (CRM) systems, implementing new quality standards), and

when executed correctly, they can positively impact external sales outcomes (Hunter and

Perrault 2006). Salespeople can engage in several internally directed sales behaviors such as

salesperson navigation (Plouffe and Barclay 2007), intraorganizational employee navigation

(Plouffe and Grégoire 2011), coordination (Steward et al. 2010), internal networking (Bolander

et al. 2015), knowledge brokering (Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011) among others, in an effort

to utilize internal resources appropriately and enhance customer value.

One behavior, in particular, intraorganizational adaptiveness (IA), captures salespeople's

proclivity to engage in adaptive-type behaviors inside their firms that enhance customer value.

Intraorganizational adaptiveness is defined as a generalized selling behavior which is directed

inside the salesperson's own internal work environment, whose purpose is to advocate for and

champion customers' needs, goals, and broader success as these pertain to the selling and

fulfillment of the firm's offering(s). Salespeople that engage in IA actively initiate change that

has the potential to serve their customers. For example, salespeople that practice IA can

anticipate that relying on a single supplier to complete their customers' orders may be risky,

especially when this order has the potential to cause production complications for their customers. Consequently, said salespeople might simultaneously quote and make preparations with different suppliers to expedite a particular component if the original supplier cannot meet the delivery schedule, which could compromise their customers' operations. Salespeople's IA is extremely relevant in today's selling environment because it also encapsulates salespeople's collaborations with their co-workers to advocate for their customers' needs. As such, salespeople engaging in IA will seek to influence and persuade key others inside their firms to ensure that their customers' needs are satisfied.

Salespeople's role as boundary spanners has led them to acquire a diverse set of responsibilities in their firms, which places additional limits to their already congested work schedules (Rutherford et al. 2011). Salespeople's IA can enable salespeople to improve the utilization of their internal resources and maximize their outputs to better serve their customers. As such, salespeople's IA should allow salespeople to increase their efficiency while working inside their firms by streamlining sales processes and activities, involving co-workers in sales activities, and actively looking for areas of opportunity to enhance customer value.

Salesperson's Resource Allocation, Sales Performance, and Efficiency

Irrespective of the industry, B2B salespeople have an extensive list of activities that they perform on a day-to-day basis (Moncrief, Marshall, and Lassk 2006). Accomplished salespeople must plan out their days to ensure that they have enough time to answer calls, attend meetings, complete training sessions, and create sales presentations, among many other tasks. Time is perhaps the most limited resource that salespeople possess, and the choices they make when deciding how to allocate a fixed amount of time to one activity over another can come at a cost (Kanfer and Ackerman 1989). It is logical to expect that salespeople that optimize their time

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utilization can maximize their sales outcomes. Salespeople that plan a detailed sequence of activities that must be completed in order to meet their job demands and serve their customers well should be able to maximize their performance. Adopting a resource allocation perspective, salespeople's capacity to meet multiple demands is limited because said demands compete for the same finite units of time (cf. Bonney, Plouffe, and Woltner 2014). Investing time in one sales activity necessarily comes at the expense of another. However, salespeople who engage in IA may accrue additional internal resources that may help mitigate the adverse effects of time constraints. For example, a salesperson engaging in IA may recruit co-workers' assistance and delegate the preparation of customers' quotes while she oversees the shipping of other customers' orders. Moreover, a salesperson that engages in IA may actively seek to create *leaner* sales processes by implementing novel technology or adopting management practices that foster efficiency (Ahearne, Srinivasan, and Weinstein 2004).

In addition, salespeople's IA can be applied in a discretionary manner and may not require co-workers' collaboration. Suppose a salesperson notices that customers' orders are being delayed because sales support staff fail to quickly generate internal orders based on customers' purchase orders (POs). This salesperson may engage in IA to learn the procedure involved in the internal order process to ensure that he or she fills out the right paperwork after receiving customers' POs. This adoption of additional work on the part of the salesperson may seem to consume more valuable time, but in fact, it does not. Under the old regime where internal orders were filled out by sales support staff, the salesperson was regularly contacted to inform support staff about details every time customers placed orders, interfering with the salesperson's schedule. Similar to the concept of intermediaries in marketing channels, where sometimes firms opt to remove intermediaries to make their distribution channels leaner (Green

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et al. 2012), salespeople may decide to remove the *middleman* in their sales processes and make the fulfillment of customers' orders leaner. By streamlining this process, salespeople can eliminate the need to involve sales support staff and avoid back-and-forth communications because salespeople know the exact details of their customers' particular orders. Hence, salespeople's IA has the potential to conserve time, increase efficiency, and enhance customer value.

Salespeople's IA can facilitate resource allocation and efficiency, which in turn can improve their sales performance. Even the smallest differences in salespeople's time allocation can accumulate to significant amounts over their careers, which can result in large differences in individual performance (Becker 1985). Sales performance can be thought of as accomplishing the tasks that the firm hired the salesperson to do (Campbell et al. 1990). For example, an outside sales representative may be hired to prospect for new customers. Whether this sales representative succeeds in converting prospects into customers is not part of her performance, but it is rather a matter of effectiveness. Effectiveness refers to "the evaluation of the results of performance" (Campbell et al. 1990, p.41). One key difference between performance and effectiveness is that the former is mostly under the salesperson's control, while the latter incorporates elements outside of the salesperson's control (Campbell et al. 1990). While an outside sales representative may exhibit satisfactory performance by visiting many prospects each day, this individual may fail to convert the prospects into customers because the product offered is suboptimal in the marketplace or because the sales territory is unfruitful (i.e., factors external to the salesperson).

Given the constant pressure to remain profitable, firms may use a combination of types of performance evaluations to gain a better understanding of how their salesforce is meeting its

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organizational goals. Furthermore, firms may be interested in understanding the costs associated with performing at a certain level, known as efficiency. Efficiency is the "ratio of effectiveness to the cost of achieving that level of effectiveness" (Campbell et al. 1990, p. 41), and it provides a measure of how well salespeople are operating. Evaluating efficiency is essential to certify that salespeople produce positive outcomes for the firm at a reasonable cost. Efficiency is particularly suited for the modern sales environment where the coordination of sales resources is needed to maximize productivity while reducing costs and waste.

Navigation and Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

Contemporary salespeople are increasingly nurturing their relationships with external (e.g., customers, competitors) and internal actors (e.g., co-workers, business partners) in the sales process (Beverland 2001). Salespeople's internal relationships with employees inside their own firms can contribute to their individual-level sales performance by gaining access to various sources of knowledge and expertise (Plouffe and Barclay 2007). Resources inside salespeople's firms can facilitate the smooth flow of sales activities, making selling more effective and efficient (Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010). Salespeople work to identify valuable "personnel, resources, or capabilities that may benefit them in specific sales situations or at a later juncture" (Plouffe and Barclay 2007, p.529).

Task-driven navigation, defined as "the extent to which salespeople engage in purposeful internal activities related to moving specific sales opportunities closer to completion and otherwise ensuring that their own job situation is optimal" (Plouffe and Grégoire 2007, p.532), enables salespeople to seek the assistance of co-workers to provide superior customer value. When salespeople *navigate* their firm's internal structures, they can enlist the help of key employees, procure access to resources and competencies necessary to fulfill customers' needs

and demands (Plouffe and Gregoire 2011). Salespeople that engage in navigation can possess a detailed repertoire of internal resources that can become the focus of their intraorganizational adaptiveness behavior. For example, when a salesperson is aware that planning engineers are a great resource to obtain accurate information about production schedules, said salesperson could use this information to notify customers about the potentially limited supply of products. Thus, allowing the customer to take preventive measures and minimize negative outcomes. Furthermore, salespeople that know where to find the right resource for a particular task can conserve valuable time which would have been used to investigate and locate such resources within their firm—delivering customer solutions more efficiently. Salespeople that successfully navigate their firms can enhance the positive effects of their intraorganizational adaptiveness behavior, improving the efficiency of their sales activities. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

> **H1a:** The positive relationship between salespeople's navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness will be stronger for salespeople that operate at top efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at average or low-efficiency levels.

> **H1b**: The positive relationship between salespeople's navigation and intraorganizational adaptiveness will be stronger for salespeople that operate at average efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at low-efficiency levels

Salespeople's Intraorganizational Adaptiveness, Coordination, and Sales Performance

It is becoming more difficult for salespeople working in isolation to offer the level of value sought out by customers than if they worked on teams (Bolander et al. 2015; Kalra et al. 2017). To deliver the right level of value, salespeople interact with other functional areas inside their firms because this expands their access to expertise. Selling teams are becoming the norm

in industries where salespeople rely on experts' assistance within their firms to deliver customized solutions for customers (Steward et al. 2010; Weitz and Bradford 1999). The cross-functional collaboration required to successfully meet customer needs has given rise to salespeople's coordination behaviors, whereby the salesperson aims to gather resources and bring together expertise when addressing customers' demands. Coordination can be defined as "the process that salespeople follow in diagnosing the customer organization's requirements and subsequently identifying, assembling, and managing an *ad hoc* team of organizational members who possess the knowledge and skills to deliver a superior customer solution" (Steward et al. 2010, p.551). In order to be successful at coordinating resources, salespeople must gain access to the right individuals and convince them to assist in the delivery of superior customer value. Salespeople who engage in IA can advocate for their customers' needs inside their firm and procure the help of key others. In doing so, coordinated sales efforts can deliver increased value for customers. Henceforth, solutions that offer additional value to customers will be more attractive and, thus, increase sales performance.

Salespeople's IA can improve the coordination of resources, expertise, and personnel because it facilitates co-workers' involvement when addressing customers' needs. Moreover, salespeople's IA can augment sale performance by facilitating access to resources inside their firm, essential to satisfying customer needs. Salespeople who optimize their time allocation may coordinate resources and establish priorities to efficiently attend to critical customer-related matters (Jaramillo and Grisaffe 2009). Additionally, efficient coordination of resources can enhance salespeople's sales performance because proper synchronization of internal resources can lead to improved fulfillment of customer needs (Román and Iacobucci 2010). Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

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H2a: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales coordination will be stronger for salespeople that operate at top efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at average or low-efficiency levels.

H2b: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales coordination will be stronger for salespeople that operate at average efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at low-efficiency levels

H3a: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales performance will be stronger for salespeople that operate at top efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at average or low-efficiency levels.

H3b: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and sales performance will be stronger for salespeople that operate at average efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at low-efficiency levels

H4a: The relationship between salespeople's sales coordination and sales performance will be positive and stronger for salespeople that operate at top efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at average or low-efficiency levels.

H4a: The relationship between salespeople's sales coordination and sales performance will be positive and stronger for salespeople that operate at average efficiency levels than for salespeople operating at low-efficiency levels.

Salespeople's Intraorganizational Adaptiveness and Customer Relationship Quality

Accomplished salespeople continuously evaluate the quality of their relationships with customers to ensure that they are satisfied. Maintaining a high-quality relationship with customers can be a crucial prophylactic measure against customer attrition. Customer

relationship quality can be defined as "the combined strength of a customer's trust in, satisfaction with, and commitment to a given salesperson" (Mullins et al. 2014, p.39). When salespeople perceive that relationship quality with their customers is decreasing, they can attempt to identify the source of the problem and work to alleviate it (Mullins et al. 2014; Palmatier et al. 2006). Salespeople interpret a combination of verbal and non-verbal signals from their social interactions with customers to evaluate whether their relationship is positive (Ickes 1997). Social interactions can occur via electronic media such as e-mails and video conferencing, or they can occur in face-to-face settings as well.

When salespeople nurture high-quality relationships with their customers, they can improve their service by enhancing their customers' trust, reducing uncertainty, and facilitating their willingness to accept recommendations and advice (Palmatier et al. 2006). In addition, high-quality customer relationships allow salespeople to understand their customers' goals and aspirations (Palmatier et al. 2006). Heightened knowledge and understanding about customers enable salespeople to offer superior customer value, further strengthening their relationships, positively impacting sales performance (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Customers in high-quality relationships tend to reciprocate their salespeople's outstanding service with continued patronage, generating increased revenue (Homburg, Koschate, and Hoyer 2005).

Highly efficient salespeople tend to be organized and *get things done the right way*, which can accelerate their responses to address their customers' needs and requirements (Jaramillo et al. 2007). Moreover, salespeople's IA can increase customer relationship quality because they will be able to secure resources that will positively impact their customers' satisfaction and success (Weitz and Bradford 1999). Hence, efficient salespeople can develop their relationship quality with customers by satisfying customers' needs in a timely fashion,

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fortifying their professional bonds, and increasing sales performance. Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H5a: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and customer relationship quality levels will be stronger for top-efficiency salespeople than for average or low-efficiency salespeople.

H5b: The positive relationship between salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness and customer relationship quality levels will be stronger for average efficiency salespeople than for low-efficiency salespeople.

H6a: The positive relationship between salespeople's customer relationship quality levels and sales performance will be stronger for top efficiency salespeople than for average or low-efficiency salespeople.

H6b: The positive relationship between salespeople's customer relationship quality levels and sales performance will be stronger for average efficiency salespeople than for low-efficiency salespeople.

METHOD

Context, Sampling, and Data Collection

The research present is focused on studying salespeople that work for US firms that operate in B2B markets. Generally, business markets exhibit complex buying processes involving multiple stakeholders. In addition, business markets are subject to fluctuating supply and demand factors that require the selling firms' salespeople to adapt to customer trends to satisfy customers' needs and requirements. Therefore, a professional provider of panel data (Centiment) was hired to collect data using a survey instrument (Grisaffe, VanMeter, and Chonko 2016; McFarland and Dixon 2019).

The sample was comprised of three-hundred and fifty business-to-business salespeople working in the United States. The respondents' median age was between 39 and 45 years old; 39.8% of respondents self-identified as female, 60% as male, 0.3% as other, and 0.6% preferred not to respond. Seventy-eight percent self-identified as Caucasian, 10.6% as African American, 5.4% as Hispanic or Latino American, 3.7% as Asian American, 0.3% as Native American, and 2% as 'other.' The median income was in the range of $90,000 and $119,999, and 45.7% had more than 15 years of sales experience. About 40 % had completed an undergraduate or graduate university degree. A more comprehensive description of the sample's characteristics can be found in Table 13.

Overview

This research adopted a multi-stage approach and utilized several analytical techniques to study salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness vis-à-vis their levels of efficiency. First, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the constructs' psychometric properties for the variables that were designated as inputs and outputs for the DEA procedure. Second, based on the results of the CFA, summated scales were created for each variable. Third, salespeople's efficiency scores were calculated using a bootstrapped data envelopment analysis, which differs from traditional DEA analysis in that it conducts a bootstrapping procedure to generate more precise efficiency estimates (Simm and Besstremyannaya 2020). Fourth, a two-step cluster analysis was conducted on the resulting data to segment salespeople based on their efficiency levels. Lastly, a multi-group structural equation model analysis was performed to examine the contrasting effects of salespeople's intraorganizational adaptiveness on three managerially-relevant outcome variables based on their differing efficiency levels (see Figure 16).

Input Variables

This study used established scales from the literature, as well as one newly-developed scale to measure the following input variables: (1) intraorganizational adaptiveness, (2) adaptive selling, (3) customer orientation, (4) learning orientation, and (5) salesperson navigation. Eleven items were used to measure i*ntraorganizational adaptiveness* using a five-point Likert-type scale format anchored in "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." *Adaptive selling* (ADAPTS) was measured with a five-point Likert-type scale format using Spiro and Weitz's (1990) scale, along with some recommended additional items from McFarland (2019), with anchors "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Customer orientation* (CO) was measured with a five-point Likert-type scale format using the abbreviated ten-item validated *SOCO* scale adapted from Saxe and Weitz (1982), with anchors "1 = Never" and "5 = Always." *Learning orientation* was measured using a five-point Likert-type scale format using Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla's (1998) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree." *Salesperson navigation* was measured using the five-point Likert-type scales from Plouffe and Grégoire (2011) and Plouffe and Barclay (2007), anchored in "1 = Never" and "5 = Always."

Output Variables

Scales validated in the literature were employed to measure three output variables, including (1) customer relationship quality, (2) sales coordination, and (3) sales performance. *Customer relationship quality* was measured in a five-point Likert-type scale format using an adapted version of Mullins et al.'s (2004) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Sales coordination* was measured with a five-point format using Plouffe and Grégoire's (2011) scale anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree." *Sales*

performance was measured in a five-point format using Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar's (1994) scale, anchored in "1 = Strongly disagree" and "5 = Strongly agree."

Data Envelopment Analysis

Data envelopment analysis (DEA) is a non-parametric technique that computes the relative efficiency of comparable decision-making units (DMUs), by determining the minimum level of inputs required to maximize the level of outputs (Parsons 1994). Farrell (1957) first introduced this linear programming technique, which was later popularized by Charnes and colleagues (1978). DEA's solidification as a useful technique to evaluate relative efficiency came about due to its independence of central tendency requirements. In other words, DEA does not use the average efficiency value for benchmarking exercises; it constructs an efficiency frontier based on the information obtained from top performers (Parsons 1990). This measure of relevant efficiency informs decision-makers about the changes that can be made to controllable inputs in order to maximize outputs. A detailed review of DEA can be found in Norman and Stoker's (1990) and Charnes et al. (1994).

DEA is flexible enough to accommodate multiple inputs and outputs to compute a single efficiency index. The efficiency of any DMU, such as the efficiency of individual salespeople, can be computed as the ratio of weighted inputs to weighted outputs to obtain a maximum permissible value (Xavier, Moutinho, and Moreira 2015). Two options are available when using DEA to compute efficiency scores, constant returns to scale (CRS) and variable returns to scale (VRS). Constant returns to scale represents a measure of technical and scale efficiencies, while variable returns to scale, measures only technical efficiency (Cooper et al. 2004). Technical efficiency emerges from the management of each salesperson's operations (i.e., DMU), whereas scale efficiency is based on the conditions of the operation (Ablanedo-Rosas and Gemoets 2010).

For example, technical efficiency can arise when salespeople decide to pursue one prospect over another that is perceived as less profitable, potentially generating improved efficiency from the decision-making process. On the other hand, Scale efficiency refers to the time constraints faced across multiple visits by a salesperson. Thus, after a certain amount of prospecting, a salesperson's output will not improve because the salesperson has surpassed his or her operational capabilities.

Charnes et al. (1978) developed the general procedure, including N decision-making units, using I inputs and J outputs to generate an efficiency frontier delineated by efficient DMUs. The efficiency score of a DMU can be computed by maximizing the ratio of total weighted outputs by total weighted inputs, subject to the constraint that this ratio must not exceed a value of one. The mathematical expression used to compute DEA is the following:

$$max \ E_m = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{J} v_{jm} y_{jm}}{\sum_{i=1}^{I} u_{im} x_{im}} \tag{1}$$

$$\frac{\sum_{j=1}^{J} v_{jm} y_{jm}}{\sum_{i=1}^{I} u_{im} x_{im}} \leq 1$$

$$u_{im}, v_{jm} \geq 0$$

Where:

E_m is the efficiency of the mth DMU,

y_{jm} is the jth output of the mth DMU,

v_{jm} is the jth weight of the jth output,

x_{im} is the ith input of the mth DMU,

u_{im} is the ith weight of the ith input,

$m = 1, 2, …., N.$

Equation (1) can be simplified by transforming it into a linear programming problem in the following manner:

$$maxE = \sum_{j=1}^{J} v_{jm} y_{jm} \qquad (2)$$

Subject to

$$\sum_{i=1}^{I} u_{im} x_{im} = 1 \qquad (3)$$

$$\sum_{j=1}^{J} v_{jm} \ y_{jm} - \sum_{i=1}^{I} u_{im} \ x_{im} \leq 0, \quad m = 1,2, …, N \qquad (4)$$

$$v_{jm}, u_{im} \geq 0; \quad i = 1, 2, … , \ I; \quad j = 1, 2, …. , J; \quad m = 1, 2, …. , N \qquad (5)\text{-}$$

Bootstrapped DEA

The estimation of efficiency scores generated by traditional DEA computations may not be entirely accurate because they can be influenced by several factors, including estimation technique and distribution assumptions (cf., Charnes et al. 1978). To improve the accuracy and robustness of the efficiency estimates, a bootstrap procedure can be utilized to minimize the inherent bias in traditional DEA estimations (Simar and Wilson 1998). In order to approximate the true distribution of the efficiency scores, 2000 iterations of the bootstrap DEA procedure were conducted.

RESULTS

Efficiency Computation and Clustering

A congeneric model in which all observed variables were forced to load on their corresponding latent factors without any permissible cross-loadings was specified in IBM AMOS 26. Multiple indicators were used to measure each latent construct (Anderson and

Gerbing 1988). Maximum likelihood was employed as the estimation method (χ^2 = 850.4, df = 530, $p < .001$). Goodness-of-fit indices for the measurement model indicate that the model fits the data well. In agreement with the threshold values recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999), the goodness-of-fit indices demonstrated acceptable fit to the data (CFI = .94; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .04). The model's measures proved to be reliable, with composite reliability estimates ranging from .77 to .91.

All factor loadings in the model exceeded .70 and featured statistically significant *t*-values in support of convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (see Table 17). Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the average variances extracted (AVEs) with the shared variances between each construct (Fornell and Larker, 1981) (see Table 16). The square root of the AVEs was larger than any inter-construct correlation in the model, providing evidence of discriminant validity.

Once the psychometric properties were assessed, summated scales for each variable of interest were created in IBM SPSS 26. Five variables were specified as input variables because they are considered resources that salespeople can use at their discretion to carry out their sales activities and tasks. Additionally, three variables were considered as output variables because salespeople rely on positive results on these key variables to enhance their job performance. Input and output variables and their corresponding descriptive statistics are shown in Table 20.

[Insert Table 20 about here]

Next, a benchmarking procedure using data envelopment analysis was used to measure and compare salespeople's productivity. DEA can be superior to other analytical tools because it

compares salespeople to 'top performers' instead of 'average performers,' which can discern new details that may remain hidden under traditional central-tendency examinations (Afriat 1972; Banker et al. 1984; Charnes et al. 1978). This study satisfies the widely accepted convention establishing that the minimum number of DMUs should be at least three times greater than the summation of inputs and outputs [350 > 3(3+4)] (Boussofiane and Dyson 1991; Walters and Laffy 1996). An input-oriented CRS estimation approach was employed based on the belief that salespeople's and their firms' interest is to maximize their production function by adjusting controllable inputs (i.e., resources under the control of the individual salesperson), and because CRS includes both technical and scale efficiencies (Banker et al. 1984). Technical efficiency is associated with management, and scale efficiency is determined by the size of the operations (Charnes et al. 1978).

Traditional DEA has some statistical limitations to calculate precise efficiency estimates (Banker 1993; Dyson et al. 2001); for this reason, we employed a robust procedure to obtain more accurate estimates. Specifically, the package 'rDEA' (Simm 2020) was used to conduct a robust analysis. Robust DEA uses a bootstrapping procedure to enhance the differences in efficiency scores and, hence, provide more accurate efficiency scores. This improves the discrimination of better-performing DMUs from under-performing ones (Staat 2006). The bootstrap procedure produces adequate estimates regarding the real distribution function of the efficiencies, along with dispersion statistics that may be used to carry out parametric analyses.

The efficiencies scores obtained from the DEA analysis were used to conduct a two-step cluster analysis using SAS version 9.4 to segment salespeople in the sample into homogenous groups based on their relative efficiencies (Punj and Stewart 1983). In the first step, Ward's method was used to perform a hierarchical cluster analysis on the data leveraging a Euclidian

distance similarity measure (Hair et al. 2006). Several clusters appeared present in the data, a careful examination of a dendrogram, agglomeration schedule, and the set of retention criteria depicted in Table 21 indicated that a three-cluster solution was most appropriate. It should be noted here that the decision to retain a three-cluster solution was based on Cormack's (1971) suggestion that clusters should maintain high internal cohesion or intra-cluster homogeneity while simultaneously exhibiting external isolation or high inter-cluster heterogeneity. Additionally, a three-cluster solution was deemed most appropriate in terms of stability and reproducibility (Everitt et al. 2011) based on the excellent values of .8 in the *silhouette* plot and the 1.69 *cluster size ratio* (i.e., the ratio between the largest and the smallest cluster) (Kaufman and Rousseeuw 1990).

[insert Table 21 about here]

In the second step, the hierarchical clustering technique results were used as initial seeds or starting points to conduct a non-hierarchical *k*-means cluster analysis on the data set. In order to assess the clusters' quality, a robustness check was performed by randomly deleting ten percent of the cases in the sample data and conducting a subsequent cluster analysis on the remaining data. The results of this robustness check revealed that deletion of cases did not greatly alter the cluster structure, thus, implying that the clusters and their respective sizes are not mere artifacts of the technique being used (Cormack 1971; Milligan 1980). The following describes the demographic profiles of the segments emerging from a three-cluster solution. Cluster one, labeled as 'Low Optimizers' included 127 (36.3%) of survey respondents, with 42.5% being female. Salespeople's modal age (21.3%) was between 25 and 31, and the modal income (29.1%) reported ranged from $60,000 to $89,999. Cluster two, labeled as 'Core

Optimizers' was composed of 140 salespeople (40%), with 37.1% being female. The modal age

(17.10%) was reported to be between 25 to 31 years of age, with a modal income (19.3%)

ranging from $60,000 to $89,999. Cluster three, labeled as 'Top Optimizers' included 83

(23.71%) of the respondents, with 37.3% being female. The modal age (22.9%) ranged from 32

to 38, and the modal income (25.3%) ranged from $30,000 to $59,999.

Descriptively, *low optimizers* appear to have adequate sales performance ($M = 4.09$, $SD =$

.75) and relationship quality with their customers ($M = 4.41$, $SD = .56$), but they struggle to

coordinate sales resources ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .79$) based on their mean values for each outcome

variable measured. *Low optimizers'* average efficiency score is .71, with their lowest and highest

efficiency scores being .57 and .77 respectively. Speaking of *core optimizers*, they appear to

have the highest sales performance ($M = 4.26$, $SD = .68$) and relationship quality with their

customers ($M = 4.54$, $SD = .56$), and salespeople in this group appear to be adept at coordinating

resources ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .86$). Lastly, *top optimizers* appear to be the best at coordinating sales

resources ($M = 4.3$, $SD = .78$), and their relationships with customers are satisfactory ($M = 4.36$,

$SD = .6$), but their performance appears to be slightly lower than that of *low optimizers* ($M =$

4.07, $SD = .72$) based on the average value of each outcome variable. Complete demographic

characteristics for each cluster are shown in Table 22.

[Insert Table 22 about here]

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Multi-group Analyses

Invariance Testing

Before the differences between the three groups of salespeople were tested, an invariance evaluation was performed to determine whether the measures forming the measurement model have equivalent meaning and are used similarly by the three different groups of salespeople (Hair et al. 2006). Given that the multi-group analysis's purpose is to compare differences across the different groups of salespeople, it was determined that configural invariance, metric equivalence, and scalar invariance were necessary to draw valid conclusions from the group comparisons (see Table 23). Configural invariance refers to the extent to which the number of factors and pattern structures are similar across the three groups (Hair et al. 2006). A multi-group CFA model was specified and simultaneously estimated in IBM AMOS 26, where a *Totally Free Multiple Group Model* (TF) or what is commonly known as a *base model* was evaluated in terms of its model fit. The data seemed to adequately fit the model ($\chi^2 = 1875.6$, $df = 1161$, $p < .001$; CFI = .90; SRMR = .06; RMSEA = .04). Additionally, all three groups' parameter estimates were statistically significant, and the chi-square difference test-degrees of freedom ratio (CMIN/$df = 1.61$) indicated a good model fit in support for configural invariance across the three groups (Byrne 1989; Marsh and Hocevar 1985).

Next, metric invariance was tested in the multi-group model. Metric invariance provides evidence that the respondents understood and used the measurement scales similarly across the groups, thus, enabling for a meaningful comparison of values across the groups (Hair et al. 2006). An unconstrained model (i.e., base model) was compared against a fully constrained model to test for full metric invariance. The results demonstrated that full metric invariance was not supported based on the chi-square difference test between the two models ($\Delta\chi^2 = 79.9$, *df*

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=46, $p < .05$). Therefore, additional testing was conducted to determine if partial metric

invariance could be established. A more granular approach was employed, and factor loadings

were sequentially constrained to be the same for the three groups in order to locate the violation

of invariance in the measured variables (Hair et al. 2010). Pairwise parameter comparisons were

inspected based on the critical path ratios for differences in the measurement parameters. The

analysis showed that there were some statistically significant differences in the factor loadings

between groups in the following latent factors: salesperson navigation (one parameter), learning

orientation (three parameters), customer relationship quality (two parameters), and sales

performance (one parameter). However, each construct had more invariant than non-invariant

factor loadings, providing evidence of partial metric invariance. Furthermore, a new model was

tested, where the offending parameter estimates were allowed to be freely estimated. This new

model was then compared to the baseline model to detect statistically significant differences. The

results provide supporting evidence for partial metric invariance ($\Delta\chi^2 = 23.78$, $df = 30$, $p > .05$).

Partial metric invariance is considered sufficient to allow for meaningful comparisons between

different groups to be made (Hair et al. 2006).

 Although scalar invariance is mainly needed when the differences between group means

will be examined and not when examining the differences in parameter estimates is the chief

purpose of the analysis, it was determined to be necessary to assess this type of invariance as

well. Scalar invariance implies that the measurement scales' values share the same meaning

between the groups (Hair et al. 20010). Scalar invariance is established when examining the

intercepts terms for each measured variable indicates that the value of the observed variables

when a construct is equal to zero is equivalent between groups (Hair et al. 2006). A fully

constrained model with respect to the intercept terms was compared against the base model to

assess scalar invariance. The results of this test failed to support strict scalar invariance ($\Delta\chi^2 =$ 214.44, $df = 60$, $p < .05$). Thus, the model was tested for partial scalar invariance, which, in practice, is enough to obtain meaningful comparisons of mean differences across groups (Hair et al. 2006). A series of models were specified to identify the intercept terms that varied across groups. Three latent factors proved to be invariant in their scales (sales performance, intraorganizational adaptiveness, and salesperson navigation). Four latent factors exhibited non-invariant intercept terms, including sales coordination (two intercept terms), learning orientation (five intercept terms), and customer relationship quality (two intercept terms). A new model was specified, where the offending intercept terms were allowed to be freely estimated. A comparison of this model to the base model provided evidence of partial scalar invariance ($\Delta\chi^2 =$ 56.13, $df = 42$, $p > .05$).

[Insert Table 23 about here]

Multi-Group Structural Equation Model

After evaluating the measurement model, the multi-group structural equation model was tested in IBM AMOS 26 (cf., Bollen 1989). The model was estimated using the maximum likelihood method ($\chi^2 = 1291.96$, $df = 798$, $p < .001$). The goodness-of-fit indices indicated adequate fit (CFI = .94, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .04). Multi-group analysis has been used previously in structural equation modeling to examine interaction effects and differences across groups (Kock 2013; Little et al. 2007; Wagner 2011). Three groups were specified based on the results of the cluster analysis. A three-group model was created by separating the total sample based on efficiency levels (cf., Voorhees and Brady 2005). The primary objective of this type of analysis is to compare path coefficients for equivalent models using three subsamples, in which a

fully constrained model is estimated (χ^2 = 1291.95, *df* =798, *p* < .001) while an identical but

unconstrained model is allowed to vary (χ^2 =1364.16, *df* = 852, *p* < .001) in its parameter

estimates (Floh and Treiblemaier 2006). A chi-square difference test was employed to evaluate

whether differences were present in the models tested (Anderson and Gerbing 1982). The chi-

square test ($\Delta\chi^2$ = 43.5, *df* =28, *p* < .05) demonstrated that there were significant differences at

the model level; thus, further examination of the parameter level was conducted (Dabholkar and

Bagozzi 2002).

Subsequently, the model was re-estimated, constraining one path coefficient, while the

balance were allowed to vary freely. Several iterations of this process were completed until all of

the structural paths were tested for all three groups. All the hypotheses were tested one-

directionally and Bonferroni-adjusted alpha levels were used to account for familywise

comparisons (Hair et al. 2010) (see Table 24). The results demonstrated that the relationship

between salespeople's navigation and IA was statistically significant and positive for all three

groups; *top optimizers* (γ = .96, *p* < .001), *core optimizers* (γ = .77, *p* < .001), and *low optimizers*

(γ = .76, *p* < .001). However, no statistically significant differences in the parameter estimates

were detected between *top* and *core optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2$ = .10; *df* = 1; *p* < .1), *top* and *low optimizers*

($\Delta\chi2$ = .72; *df* = 1; *p* > .1), and *core* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2$ = .70; *df* = 1; *p* >.1). Thus, no

support was found for H$_{1a}$ or H$_{1b}$. The invariance tests revealed that the positive relationship

between IA and sales coordination was stronger for *core optimizers* than for *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2$

= 4.96; *df* = 1; *p* < .1) and *top optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2$ = 5.58; *df* = 1; *p* < .05), thus, supporting H2$_a$. The

results did not support H2$_b$, because the positive relationship between IA and sales coordination

was stronger for *core optimizers* than for *top optimizers*. However, this relationship was stronger

for *top optimizers* than for *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2$ = 3.07; *df* = 1; *p* < .1). In addition, IA appears to

be statistically significant and positively related to coordination for all three groups; top optimizers ($\gamma = .87$, $p < .001$), *core optimizers* ($\gamma = .93$, $p < .001$), and *low optimizers* ($\gamma = .72$, $p < .001$).

Evaluating the inter-group differences in the relationship between IA and sales performance, the chi-square difference tests' results fail to detect statistically significant differences between *top* and *core optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .21$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$), *top* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .43$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$), and *core* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .08$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$). Thus, support for H3$_a$ and H3$_b$ is not found. Nevertheless, it is meaningful to note that based on the parameter estimates this relationship is statistically significant for all groups and it appears to be stronger for *core optimizers* ($\beta = .97$, $p < .001$) than for *low optimizers* ($\beta = .51$, $p < .001$) and for *top optimizers* ($\beta = .59$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, the results suggest no statistically significant differences between the three groups with respect to the relationship between sales coordination and sales performance, failing to support H4$_a$ and H$_b$. This relationship appears to be non-statistically significant in all three groups, but the direction of the effect suggests a negative association.

The relationship between IA and customer relationship quality is positive and statistically significant only for *top optimizers* ($\gamma = .49$, $p < .001$) and *low optimizers* ($\gamma = .38$, $p < .01$). The chi-square difference tests' results did not find a statistically significant difference between *top* and *core optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = 1.54$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$), *top* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .95$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$), and *core* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .02$; $df = 1$; $p > .1$). Therefore, no support was found for hypotheses H5$_a$ and H5$_b$. The relationship between customer relationship quality and sales performance appears to be positive and statistically significant for all three groups; *top optimizers* ($\beta = .50$, $p > .001$), *core optimizers* ($\beta = .35$, $p < .05$), and *low optimizers* ($\beta = .45$, $p <$

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.001). However, the inter-group differences tests suggest the absence of statistically significant differences between *top* and *core optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = 1.27$; *df* = 1; *p* > .1), *top* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = .50$; *df* = 1; *p* > .1), and *core* and *low optimizers* ($\Delta\chi2 = 0.55$; *df* = 1; *p* > .1). Thus, failing to provide support for H6$_a$ and H6$_b$. A summary of the results is presented in Table 25 and in Figure 16.

[Insert Table 24 about here]

[Insert Table 25 about here]

[Insert Figure 16 about here]

DISCUSSION

Over the past decades, B2B markets have experienced an explosion of complexity marked by mass customization, strict quality requirements, lean inventory management practices, and shorter product life cycles (cf., Ahearne et al. 2010). Firms have realized that embracing complexity is a life-or-death matter—the difference between profitability and bankruptcy. Furthermore, firms are becoming aware that complexity can provide a decisive competitive advantage because they can earn a privileged position if they can adequately deal with it (Day 2011). The evolution of salespeople as strategic frontline employees in boundary-spanning roles has placed added importance on how firms utilize their sales function (Plouffe et al. 2016). Progressive firms leverage their salespeople's knowledge, skills, and capabilities to benefit from market complexity and offer superior customer value. However, salespeople are expensive assets, and firms continuously seek to improve their salesforce efficiency to ensure that performance goals are achieved at a reasonable cost (Boles, Donthu, and Lohtia 1995).

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Salespeople's roles are filled with a myriad of responsibilities, tasks, and objectives (Moncrief, Marshall, and Lassk 2006). Additionally, salespeople frequently interact with many stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, sub-contractors, designers, developers, and business partners, to name a few. The increased market complexity has permeated organizational structures, and as a result, salespeople's jobs have become more complicated than they have been in the past. Managing across multiple tasks and activities, salespeople must find ways to effectively meet their performance goals. Notwithstanding, firms and salespeople are cognizant that *doing the right thing* is not equivalent to *doing the thing right*, meaning that achieving a positive sales outcome like closing a deal is not necessarily desirable if the operational costs involved in closing it surpass the financial gains actualized. Therefore, efficiency is now a focal point in sales organizations to ensure that the cost of selling does not outweigh the revenues earned.

Resource allocation theory posits that resources such as time are limited; thus, salespeople must decide how to allocate a fixed amount of time between different tasks (Becker 1965). Salespeople's decisions regarding how to allocate their time have powerful ramifications on their performance, but, more importantly, on their efficiency. Salespeople that invest more time in high-impact activities (e.g., calling prospects to understand their needs) than in low-impact activities (e.g., filling out expense reports) can generate more sales at a faster rate (Kumar et al. 2014).

This research's findings reveal that salespeople can be segmented into three homogeneous groups based on their efficiency level. The first group, labeled as *core optimizers* is the largest of the three, and it is composed of salespeople with what can be described as average sales efficiency. The efficiency study indicates that this group of salespeople would need

a reduction of 23% in inputs on average to achieve the greatest efficiency levels. *Core optimizers* appear to be salespeople that can adequately coordinate resources, although they are not the organization's best performers. *Core optimizer's* IA appears to exert the most potent effect on sales coordination than it does in the other groups, indicating that salespeople with average efficiency actively advocate for their customers' needs and attempt to coordinate resources to offer superior customer value. In addition, *core optimizers'* IA appears to be strongly related to sales performance, surpassing the positive effects of *low* and *top optimizers'* IA on sales performance. Despite the beneficial effect of *core optimizers'* IA on sales performance, IA's impact on customer relationship quality seems to have no statistically significant effect. *Core optimizers* may actively seek to offer superior customer value, but they may fail to productively translate their customers' needs into actions that enhance their relationships with customers.

Top optimizers are the most efficient salespeople, as they appear to be the most adept at coordinating resources that could contribute to their elevated efficiency levels. Based on their average efficiency score, salespeople in this group could achieve even greater efficiency if they decrease their inputs by 11%. The findings suggest that while *top optimizers'* relationship between IA and sales coordination is stronger than that of *low optimizers*, this effect is not sufficiently strong enough to surpass that of *core optimizers*. Additionally, *top optimizers'* IA is strongly related to customer relationship quality, more potent than in any of the other two groups, and the relationship between IA and sales performance is statistically significant and positive as well. Furthermore, *top optimizers'* relationship between customer relationship quality and sales performance is substantial, but it is not significantly different from that of the other groups.

The least efficient group of salespeople is labeled *low optimizers*. This group is characterized by exhibiting adequate sales performance and customer relationship quality levels, as well as in having difficulty coordinating sales resources. On average, *low optimizers* should consider reducing their input utilization by 29% to reach *top optimizers'* efficiency level*s*. The positive effect of salespeople's IA on sales coordination is weakest in the *low optimizer* group, but IA's effect on sales performance, while inferior to that of *core optimizers*', is significant, which is not the case for *top optimizers*. Moreover, like their top counterparts*, low optimizers* show a substantial and statistically significant effect between IA and customer relationship quality, contrary to this relationship for *core optimizers*.

Collectively, the findings demonstrate that salespeople's internal navigation positively influences IA, and it does not differ significantly from group to group. This suggests that irrespective of salespeople's efficiency levels, navigating one's own organization, recognizing the variety of resources that are available, and how such resources can be exploited across selling tasks can aid customer advocacy efforts through the enactment of IA (Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010). Regarding salespeople's IA and its impact on coordination, the findings reveal that *core optimizers* are able to better orchestrate resources than *low* and *top optimizers*, and that *top optimizers* can coordinate resources better by engaging in IA than can *low optimizers* (Steward et al. 2010). It is noteworthy that salespeople's IA is significantly and positively related to sales coordination for all three groups, suggesting that IA is useful for coordinating resources regardless of salespeople's efficiency levels. It appears that even though *core optimizers* are less efficient than are their other colleagues, they can engage in IA and coordinate resources more successfully than can *top optimizers*. One explanation for this counter-intuitive finding is that coordinating resources relies on IA's collaborative dimension to a greater extent than on the

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individual, discretionary dimension. As such, coordinating resources necessitates that

salespeople interact with multiple individuals and functions inside their firms, and having good

relationships with co-workers is essential to enlist their help when addressing customers' needs.

Highly efficient salespeople may consider these interactions to be inefficient, and the time

needed to cultivate valuable relationships may be perceived of as a misuse of their time. Thus, it

is plausible that *top optimizers* prefer to focus on activities that can produce the greatest results,

and networking may not be seen as a priority (cf. Bolander et al. 2015). Additionally, winning

co-workers' support is intricately related to salespeople's good citizenship behaviors, and co-

workers may be willing to reciprocate the help that they have received from salespeople (Rapp,

Bacharach, and Rapp 2013). Thus, *top optimizers* may not receive enough support from co-

workers if they have failed to help co-workers in the past. This can be due to salespeople's

impressions that helping others can be time-consuming and it is something that does not directly

contribute to their performance, and it can come at a cost (Bergeron 2007; Rapp, Bacharach, and

Rapp 2013). Therefore, *top optimizers*' myopic focus on their tasks may inhibit their ability to

coordinate resources, especially when other employees' involvement is required to offer superior

customer value.

Surprisingly, salespeople's coordination does not appear to impact sales performance,

and it does not differ between the three groups, showing a negative association across all of

them. Even though coordinating resources inside salespeople's firms is necessary to meet

customers' demands, this may not automatically translate into enhanced sales performance.

Many customer solutions require coordination from both the seller firm and their own firm to

generate successful outcomes (Hochstein, Bolander, Goldsmith, Plouffe 2019; Zoltners, Sinha,

and Zoltners 2001). For example, in the *high-tech* industry, automated machines' success to

promote productivity depends on salespeople coordinating inside their firms to locate the most

appropriate product for their customers' needs. However, the benefits of said automated solution

technologies may not be realized if employees inside the customer's firm fail to coordinate and

adequately train machine operators. Even more alarming, sometimes machine operators may

intentionally sabotage machines because they fear losing their jobs, which stems from

management's failure to ensure job security. Hence, the findings suggest that sales

coordination's effect on sales performance depends on successful coordination on the customers'

end as well.

 Salespeople's coordination does not seem to be statistically related to customer

relationship quality, but there are statistically significant differences between them. Specifically,

the effect of coordination on customer relationship quality appears to be negative for *top*

optimizers, whereas it is marginally positive for *low optimizers.* This contrasting effect across the

two groups suggests that, as alluded to above, *top optimizers* have difficulties coordinating

resources, especially when this requires their co-workers' help. Failure to coordinate resources

can affect their relationships with customers, thus potentially decreasing the quality of their

relationships (Mullins et al. 2014). In the case of *low optimizers*, this effect is non-significant but

slightly positive, which could mean that while they are better at coordinating resources given

their willingness to nurture *goodwill* with co-workers, substantial benefits are not observed in

their relationship quality with customers. As mentioned previously, coordination on the seller's

side is only part of the equation; on the other side, customers should be able to coordinate as well

for solutions to succeed. When customers fail to coordinate and their acquired solutions

underperform, they can express frustration and dissatisfaction with salespeople and the seller

firm's offerings (Jelinek and Ahearne 2006). Hence, salespeople's customer relationship quality can weaken.

Salespeople's linkage between IA and customer relationship quality seems to be statistically significant and positive for *top* and *low optimizers*, but it is non-significant for *core optimizers*. Nevertheless, no statistically significant differences between the three groups were detected. This could imply that salespeople's enactment of IA to better serve their customers leads to increased customer relationship quality for *low optimizers* because they should benefit the most from being adaptable inside their firms, given their limited efficiency to operate. For example, *low optimizers* may heavily rely on IA to procure co-workers' assistance when addressing customers' needs in order to deliver excellent solutions. Customers, unaware of *low optimizers*' dependence on other key personnel, may appreciate their efforts and express an elevated level of satisfaction, loyalty, and trust. Thus, *low optimizers* can enjoy improved customer relationship quality because they are skilled at meeting their customers' demands by engaging in IA. On the other hand, *top optimizers* can also obtain more benefits from IA regarding their relationships with customers than can *core optimizers*. Namely, *top optimizers* may choose to focus on high-impact activities to provide superior customer value, exceeding the benefits generated by *core optimizers*, which may focus on some non-value-added activities (cf. Agnihotri et al. 2017). Thus, customers may experience greater satisfaction and demonstrate added loyalty to salespeople that help them to achieve their goals, strengthening their relationship quality (Mullins et al. 2014).

When salespeople develop high-quality relationships with their customers, they can improve their sales performance, and this investigation's findings support this conclusion. Independent of salespeople's efficiency levels, higher-quality relationships with customers

appear to improve sales performance, and this relationship does not exhibit statistically

significant differentiated effects across groups. Adopting a more granular perspective and

examining the effect size by groups, it is visible that *top optimizers* enjoy superior sales

performance from their relationships with customers. This can be due to *top optimizers*'

efficiency to respond to customer needs and agility to solve customer problems, which positively

impacts their sales performance (Zablah et al. 2012). The findings also suggest that *low*

optimizers can reap more benefits from their customer relationships than can *core optimizers*

when it comes to sales performance. This can be explained by the fact that inefficient salespeople

may devise better techniques to maintain high-quality relationships with customers than do *core*

optimizers. For example, a *low optimizer* may recognize his or her limited efficiency to promptly

solve customer problems and may opt to use ingratiating techniques to placate customers'

concerns associated with their low efficiency to maintain his relationship with customers in good

standing (Kadic-Maglajlic, Boso, and Micevski 2018). The caveat is that this technique is not

viable in the long run because customers may become aggravated with constant and continuous

failures resulting from the salesperson's inefficiency (Bolander et al. 2020; Dubinsky 1999).

Furthermore, not meeting customer needs is a recipe for disaster, and salespeople that engage in

unethical behavior that is designed to obscure customers' cognizance of service failures stand to

lose business opportunities and cause irreparable reputational damage (Friend et al. 2014).

IMPLICATIONS

This investigation offers several valuable insights for academics and actionable

recommendations for managers. Salespeople's efficiency is studied within the context of the

intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) (Plouffe 2018), elucidating that

salespeople's efficiency can generate different effects for relevant sales outcomes. The findings

provide evidence that sales efficiency is an important goal to ensure that the cost of selling does

not exceed the revenue generated by salespeople (Boles, Donthu, and Lohtia 1995). However,

efficiency should be approached as a long-term strategy because short-term fixations at the

tactical level may fail to result in immediate favorable outcomes. Generating more sales is only

part of the equation, and sales efficiency is vital not only for improving salespeople's resource

allocation but also for streamlining sales processes and reducing sales cycle times.

The findings revealed that the most efficient salespeople are not necessarily the best

coordinators of internal resources, and that their sales performance is not substantially superior to

that of less efficient salespeople. However, managers should be mindful of two key issues

regarding the sales performance of efficient salespeople. First, sales performance is mainly

related to sales volume obtained by salespeople and their successful achievement of sales quotas

(Berhman and Perrault 1984). This does not mean that because the most efficient salespeople

appear to generate lower revenues than less efficient salepeople, their performance should be

considered inadequate. In fact, it could be possible that efficient salespeople sell in reduced

quantities but at a higher profit margin (cf., Posdakoff and MacKenzie 1994). Second, sales

efficiency hinges on the organization's maturity relate to their operations and sales processes

(Chonko et al. 2003). For example, efforts to increase efficiency are futile when sales processes

and activities are not performed properly by salespeople. Efficiency exposes its true virtue when

salespeople are already effective at their jobs (i.e., achieve their job's objectives) because areas

for improvement and opportunity can then be addressed. Suppose a salesperson is forced to make

her sales cycle more efficient by reducing the time invested in closing deals, but her firm does

not provide clear direction about the requirements to escalate sales opportunities in the sales

process (i.e., rules to move sales opportunities forward). This salesperson's efforts to improve

efficiency would only confuse and distract her from selling activities, further deteriorating her efficiency.

Additionally, the approach to improve sales efficiency should not be segregated. Instead, it should be adopted as a holistic goal of the sales function and sales organization because an individual salesperson's efficiency may not generate substantial benefits if the rest of the sales organization operates inefficiently. For this reason, managers are encouraged to establish clear key performance indicators (KPIs) to clarify what is expected from salespeople and how their performance will be evaluated (Inyang, Agnihotri, and Munoz 2017). In addition, managers should promote and regulate consistent sales processes to allow the standardization of repetitive tasks. Sales departments must closely align with Marketing departments to improve lead generation efforts and increase the identification of *better* prospects—in an effort to achieve higher efficiency levels (Le Meunier-Fitzhugh and Piercy 2009). Sales managers are also advised to intimately know their salespeople's strengths and weaknesses to guarantee that salespeople are assigned to sales territories where they can use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to exploit said territory's potential (Rapp et al. 2020; Megnuc et al. 2011). Lastly, sales organizations should offer continuous training and preparation to their salespeople and have the necessary support systems (i.e., coaching) to help their development (Brashear et al. 2003).

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Evaluating salespeople's efficiency is extremely important for the current sales environment because firms are gradually looking for ways to reduce waste and maximize productivity. This essay explores salespeople's efficiency while operating inside their firms to obtain positive outcomes. This investigation leveraged a data envelopment analysis technique to compute the efficiency scores of a sample of 350 B2B salespeople in the United States.

Subsequently, a cluster analytic technique was used to segment salespeople based on their efficiency scores. The results revealed that three clusters appeared to be present in the data; *low*, *core*, and *top optimizers*. The findings suggest that salespeople's efficiency influences the positive effects of their intraorganizational adaptiveness on managerially relevant sales outcomes such as coordination of sales resources, customer relationship quality, and sales performance.

This investigation adhered to strict methodological and scientific rigor. Nonetheless, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design used in this research limits the finding's generalizability; thus, longitudinal studies should be conducted to study the long-term effects (Bolander et al. 2017). Second, the sample includes salespeople in the United States, which could limit the generalizability of the findings. More research using different samples from different countries and different contexts is warranted to ameliorate this limitation. Lastly, this research uses salespeople's perceptions to measure the variables of interest; therefore, future research should include multi-source data and objective performance data to validate the findings.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This dissertation adopts one of the latest research streams in sales performance, labeled as the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role, and merges it with the well-established concept of adaptive selling to propose the construct of intraorganizational adaptiveness. In doing so, adaptive selling is re-conceptualized and updated to reflect the latest developments in the contemporary selling environment, providing both academics and practitioners with a state-of-the-art perspective into salespeople's behaviors inside their firms that exert a significant influence on external sales outcomes. This newly-envisioned construct proposes that salespeople adapt their behaviors inside their firms to meet their customers' requirements. Furthermore, intraorganizational adaptiveness proposes that salespeople anticipate and respond to changes in their internal selling environments in ways that are perceived of as appropriate in order to contribute to their customers' success. This dissertation strategically develops IA from its origins in the extant marketing literature, tests it against related constructs in a nomological network to establish its validity, and extends its application in the current sales efficiency context, which seeks to reduce operational costs while simultaneously maximizing sales outcomes, across four essays.

The first essay adopts a macro-view of sales performance research published over the past 120 years. Bibliometric data is analyzed to provide an in-depth picture of what has been done, who has done it, where it has been done, and when it was done. Collectively, this essay summarizes sales performance research in the past century and maps out meaningful trends in research, as well as areas that could benefit from an increase in scientific exploration. Moreover, this essay conducts a main path analysis which resulted in the identification of six main clusters

depicting the main artery of sales performance research from 1900 to 2019. Surprisingly, the most recent cluster shifts the focus of prior research from external sales efforts directed at the customer to the examination of internal sales efforts directed at salespeople's intraorganizational environments that can translate into beneficial external outcomes for customers. In addition, adaptive selling re-surfaces in this cluster as an important selling behavior with the acknowledgment that it must be modernized to enhance its utility for the contemporary B2B marketplace. Hence, this promising research direction is developed in the next essays.

The second essay zooms in and provides a microscopic view of the adaptive-type behaviors that take place inside salespeople's internal selling environments as part of the IDSR. A systematic literature review that adheres to the scientific method was used to ensure a rigorous consultation of the literature and overcome some of the major limitations of traditional narrative reviews (e.g., reviewer bias, lack of replicability). This study's findings provide answers that explain how intraorganizational adaptiveness manifests itself in salespeople's sales environment, the factors, constructs, and barriers that impact this newly-operationalized behavior's relationship with sales performance based on peer-reviewed articles published by the scientific community. Moreover, an in-depth examination of this emerging research stream elucidates our current understanding and future research avenues that, if addressed, can enhance our knowledge about this topic.

The third essay conducts a series of studies to operationalize intraorganizational adaptiveness. This measure provides academics with a way to evaluate this construct's contribution to sales performance and enables practitioners to gain a deeper understanding of how salespeople's adaptiveness is instrumental to obtaining favorable sales outcomes. Subsequently, an empirical study using structural equation modeling demonstrates that IA is

strongly related to relevant variables such as sales navigation and coordination, and its potential contribution to sales performance research is revealed by the significant amount of explained variance in sales performance.

The fourth essay continues with the study of intraorganizational adaptiveness and aligns this notion to the current needs of the B2B marketplace by examining its relevance to salespeople's efficiency. Given that firms are increasingly placing importance on their sales force's efficiency, this essay leverages a non-parametric technique called data envelopment analysis to compute salespeople's relative efficiency to maximize sales output production (e.g., coordination, customer satisfaction, and revenue) by minimizing input requirements (salesperson's effort and time investments). This essay extends IA's utility by providing scholars and managers alike with actionable implications to improve salespeople's productivity and minimize waste in the sales process.

In conclusion, this dissertation presents a thought-provoking and scientifically rigorous examination that aims to induce a change in scholars' approach to the study of sales performance from exclusively focusing on externally directed sales efforts to considering the salespeople's internal selling environment. In addition, managerial thinking is challenged by providing exciting and evidence-based research findings that underscore the importance of salespeople's internal selling environments and their adaptive behaviors to promote their customers' success from within their firms.

FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURE 1
Search Procedure

Advanced search WebOS Core Collection
Topic search terms: (sale* AND performance) OR
(sell* AND performance) OR
(frontline AND employee* AND performance AND sale*)
= 20,966 results

Language:
English
= 20,364 results

Excluded papers
= 602

Document type:
peer-reviewed
academic articles
= 16,052 results

Excluded papers
= 4,312

Categories:
- Business
- Management
- Economics
- Business finance
- Operations research
- Psychology
= 9,594 results

Excluded papers
= 6,458

Final sample
= 9,594 articles

Note: *Psychology* under the categories refers to *Applied Psychology*.

TABLE 1

Annual Scientific Production

Year(s)	Published Articles
1900-1980	79
1981-2000	568
2001	98
2002	93
2003	93
2004	110
2005	166
2006	178
2007	216
2008	234
2009	284
2010	305
2011	341
2012	347
2013	404
2014	429
2015	457
2016	451
2017	543
2018	547
2019	405

Note: The total number of journal articles published per year(s). The time periods from 1900 to 1980 and from 1981 to 2000 were aggregated for simplicity given that multiple years within these time frames had small numbers of articles published per year.

TABLE 2

Leading Authors

Authors	Articles
Ahearne M	30
Agnihotri R	24
Kumar V	23
Rapp A	23
Sharma A	22
Jaramillo F	21
Dubinsky AJ	19
Homburg C	17
Cravens DW	16
Jones E	16
Boles JS	15
Rugman AM	15
Schwepker CH	15
Cook WD	14
Dekimpe MG	14
Johnson JS	14
Moncrief WC	14
Palmatier RW	14
Panagopoulos	14
Rutherford BN	14
Bolander W	13
Evans KR	13
Piercy NF	13
de Ruyter K	12
Friend SB	12
Hughes DE	12
Marshall GW	12
Menguc B	12
Onyemah V	12
Pullins EB	12

Note: The total number of publications per author.

TABLE 3

Publications per country

Country	Articles
USA	2507
UK	410
China	323
Germany	236
Canada	209
Taiwan	176
Australia	175
Spain	167
Netherlands	154
India	150
Italy	147
France	143
Korea	142
Finland	83
Sweden	78
Turkey	75
Japan	69
Brazil	54
Belgium	53
New Zealand	53

Note: The total number of publications per country.

TABLE 4

Productivity by Research Institution

Affiliations	Articles
University of North Carolina	82
University of Houston	81
Erasmus University	76
Hong Kong Polytech University	74
Pennsylvania state university	74
University of Pennsylvania	74
Georgia State University	71
Indiana University	67
Michigan State University	65
University of Alabama	62
Cornell University	59
Purdue University	56
Arizona State University	55
University of Georgia	55
University of Michigan	55
University Missouri	54
Texas Christian University	53
Tilburg University	53
Northeastern University	51
Texas AandM University	51

Note: The total number of publications per institution.

TABLE 5

Leading Journals

Sources	Articles
Industrial Marketing Management	226
Journal of Business Research	173
International Journal of Production Economics	162
Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	151
Management Science	115
Journal of Marketing	111
Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing	105
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	100
European Journal of Operational Research	88
International Journal of Production Research	75
Journal of Product Innovation Management	70
Journal of Marketing Research	62
Strategic Management Journal	62
Journal of Applied Psychology	56
Marketing Science	56
European Journal of Marketing	55
Journal of Business Ethics	55
Small Business Economics	53
Expert Systems with Applications	51
Journal of Business Venturing	45

Note: The total number of published articles per journal.

TABLE 6
Top Keywords

Words	Occurrences
performance	1952
impact	790
model	633
management	556
sales	481
behavior	480
information	389
determinants	326
innovation	321
market	304
firms	292
knowledge	247
antecedents	244
strategy	239
models	236
firm performance	235
industry	230
perspective	224
consequences	215
satisfaction	214
orientation	208
research and development	205
productivity	200
salespeople	185
quality	184

Note: The total number of times a keyword appeared in the sample of published articles.

TABLE 7

Trending topics

Topic	Frequency	Year
Market	304	2013
Industry	230	2012
Firm	176	2013
Demand	161	2014
Competitive advantage	144	2012
Work	134	2013
Financial performance	118	2015
Word-of-mouth	109	2016
Sales performance	108	2016
Salesperson performance	107	2012
Integration	106	2014
Dynamics	104	2015
Price	104	2014
Motivation	104	2011
Success	104	2010
Job-performance	101	2011
Supply chain	99	2016
Decision-making	94	2014
Commitment	93	2014
Control-systems	91	2010
Profitability	88	2012
Organizational commitment	84	2012
United-states	81	2011
Governance	79	2013
Service	76	2016
Entrepreneurship	75	2015
Sales force	69	2015
Policy	66	2016
Asset sales	65	2011
Buyer-seller relationships	61	2011

Note: The most frequent topics examined per year.

FIGURE 2
Top Topics Growth
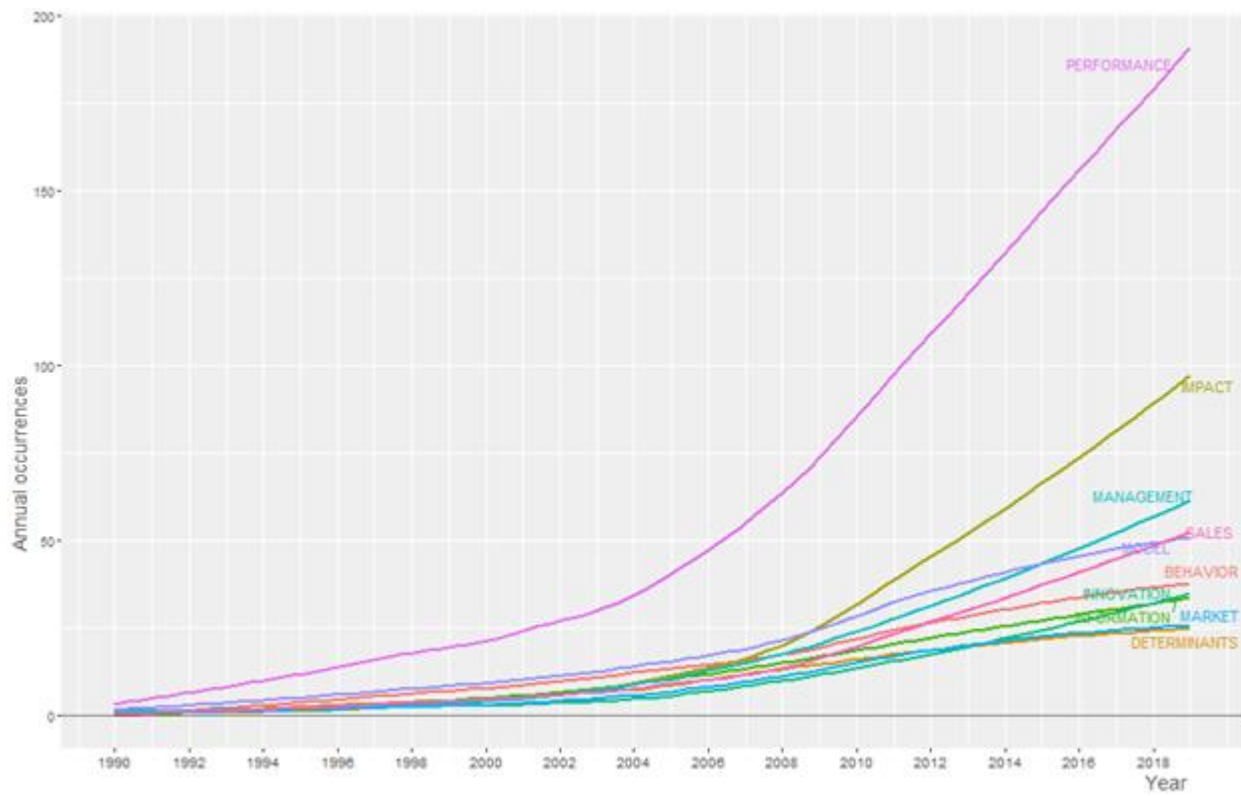
Note: The number of times a topic was examined in the sample of articles per year.

TABLE 8
Most Cited Articles

Document	Year	Local Citations	Global Citations
Sujan H, 1994, JM	1994	205	497
Cravens DW, 1993, JM	1993	160	269
Oliver RL, 1994, JM	1994	160	330
Franke GR, 2006, JMR	2006	141	278
Brown SP, 1994, JM	1994	126	290
Verbeke W, 2011, JAMS	2011	118	177
Brown SP, 1993, JMR	1993	107	505
John K, 1995, JFE	1995	88	276
Lang L, 1995, JFE	1995	84	203
Mackenzie SB, 1998, JM	1998	82	359
Hunter GK, 2007, JM	2007	79	145
Ahearne M, 2010, JMR	2010	76	77
Homburg C, 2008, JM	2008	69	107
Ahearne M, 2005, JAP	2005	64	424
Mackenzie SB, 2001, JAMS	2001	61	324
Barber BM, 1996, JFE	1996	58	638
Homburg C, 2011, JM	2011	58	158
Ahearne M, 2010, JM	2010	56	56
Jaramillo F, 2009, JPSSM	2009	55	68
Wang GP, 2002, JAMS	2002	54	156
Roman S, 2010, JAMS	2010	54	118
Brown SP, 1998, JM	1998	53	181
Rouzies D, 2005, JPSSM	2005	53	101
Dellarocas C, 2007, JIM	2007	53	524
Evans KR, 2012, JPSSM	2012	52	72
Ahearne M, 2007, JAMS	2007	50	107
Hughes DE, 2013, JAMS	2013	50	67
Mackenzie SB, 1993, JM	1993	49	297
Rapp A, 2006, IJRM	2006	48	96

Note: The total number of citations received by a specific article. JM = *Journal of Marketing*;
JMR = *Journal of Marketing Research*; JAMS = *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*;
JFE = *Journal of Finance Economics*; JAP = Journal of Applied Psychology; JPSSM = *Journal
of Personal Selling and Sales Management*; JIM = *Journal of Interactive Marketing*; IJRM =
International Journal of Research in Marketing.

TABLE 9

Most Cited Journals

Sources	Articles
Journal of Marketing	13621
Journal of Marketing Research	8853
Strategic Manage Journal	6606
Manage Science	6597
Academy of Management Journal	5739
Journal of Finance	5737
Journal of Applied Psychology	5706
Journal of Financial Economics	5135
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science	4377
Industrial Marketing Management	4233
Journal of Business Research	3725
Academy of Management Review	3685
Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	3582
Marketing Science	3575
Journal of international Business Studies	2874
Harvard Business Review	2754
Administration Science Quarterly	2731
Journal of Management	2701
American Economic Review	2595

Note: The total number of articles citing a specific journal.

FIGURE 3
Journal Publication Growth
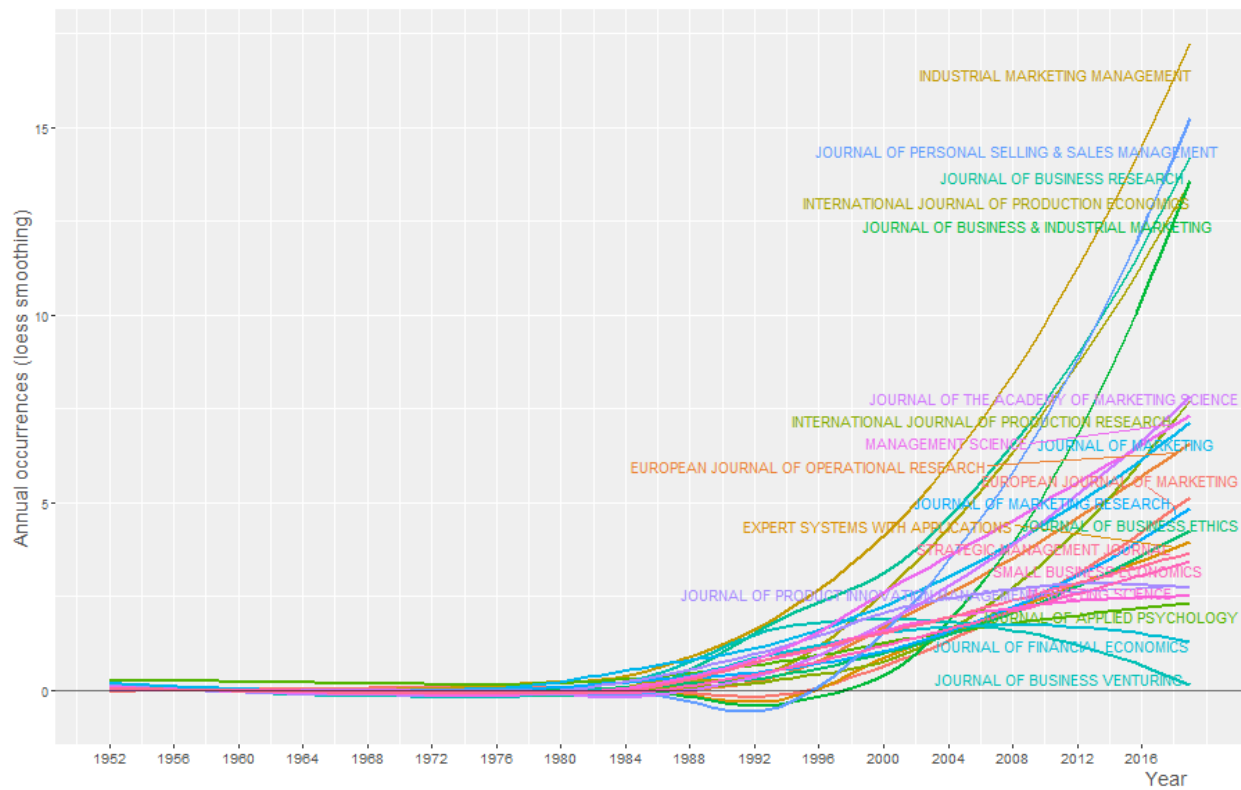
Note: The total number of published articles in a journal per year.

TABLE 10
Most Cited References

Cited References	Citations
FORNELL C, 1981, J MARKETING RES,	522
PODSAKOFF PM, 2003, J APPL PSYCHOL,	404
ARMSTRONG JS, 1977, J MARKETING RES,	333
ANDERSON JC, 1988, PSYCHOL BULL,	316
BARNEY J, 1991, J MANAGE,	288
NUNNALLY J.C., 1978, PSYCHOMETRIC THEORY	262
CHURCHILL GA, 1985, J MARKETING RES,	251
BAGOZZI R. P., 1988, J ACAD MARKET SCI,	211
AIKEN L. S., 1991, MULTIPLE REGRESSION	206
BARON RM, 1986, J PERS SOC PSYCHOL,	206
SUJAN H, 1994, J MARKETING,	205
WEITZ BA, 1986, J MARKETING,	188
SPIRO RL, 1990, J MARKETING RES,	182
ANDERSON E, 1987, J MARKETING,	180
MORGAN RM, 1994, J MARKETING,	179
SAXE R, 1982, J MARKETING RES,	179
JENSEN MC, 1976, J FINANC ECON,	176
KOHLI AK, 1990, J MARKETING,	163
OLIVER RL, 1994, J MARKETING,	161
CRAVENS DW, 1993, J MARKETING,	160
NARVER JC, 1990, J MARKETING,	160
COHEN WM, 1990, ADMIN SCI QUART,	155
JAWORSKI BJ, 1993, J MARKETING,	152
BEHRMAN DN, 1982, J BUS RES,	142
PODSAKOFF PM, 1986, J MANAGE,	142
FRANKE GR, 2006, J MARKETING RES,	141
CHURCHILL GA, 1979, J MARKETING RES,	140
WEITZ BA, 1999, J ACAD MARKET SCI,	139
WERNERFELT B, 1984, STRATEGIC MANAGE J,	131
TEECE DJ, 1997, STRATEGIC MANAGE J,	129

Note: The total number times a specific article was referenced by other articles.

FIGURE 4
Main Keywords Network
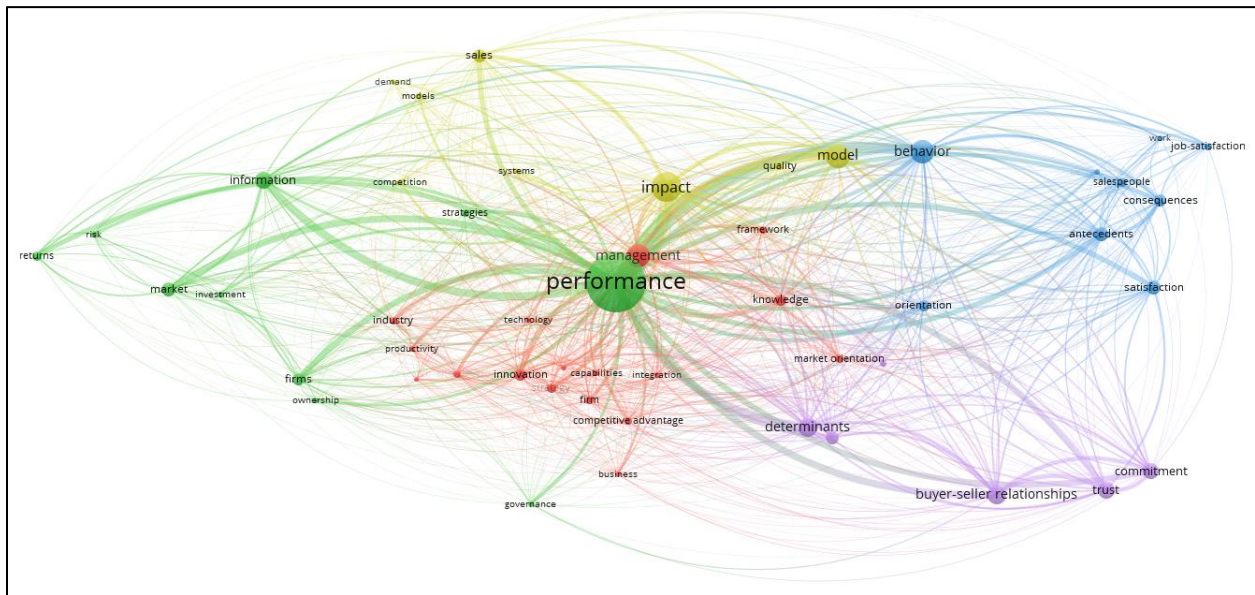
Note: Cluster number (color) and its underlying theme. Cluster 1 (red) = Business Strategy and Managerial Factors, Cluster 2 (green) = Financial Outcomes and Firm Performance, Cluster 3 (blue) = Salespeople Activities and Performance, Cluster 4 (yellow) = Industry and Market Factors, Cluster 5 (purple) = Buyer-Seller Relationships.

FIGURE 5
Author Co-citation Network
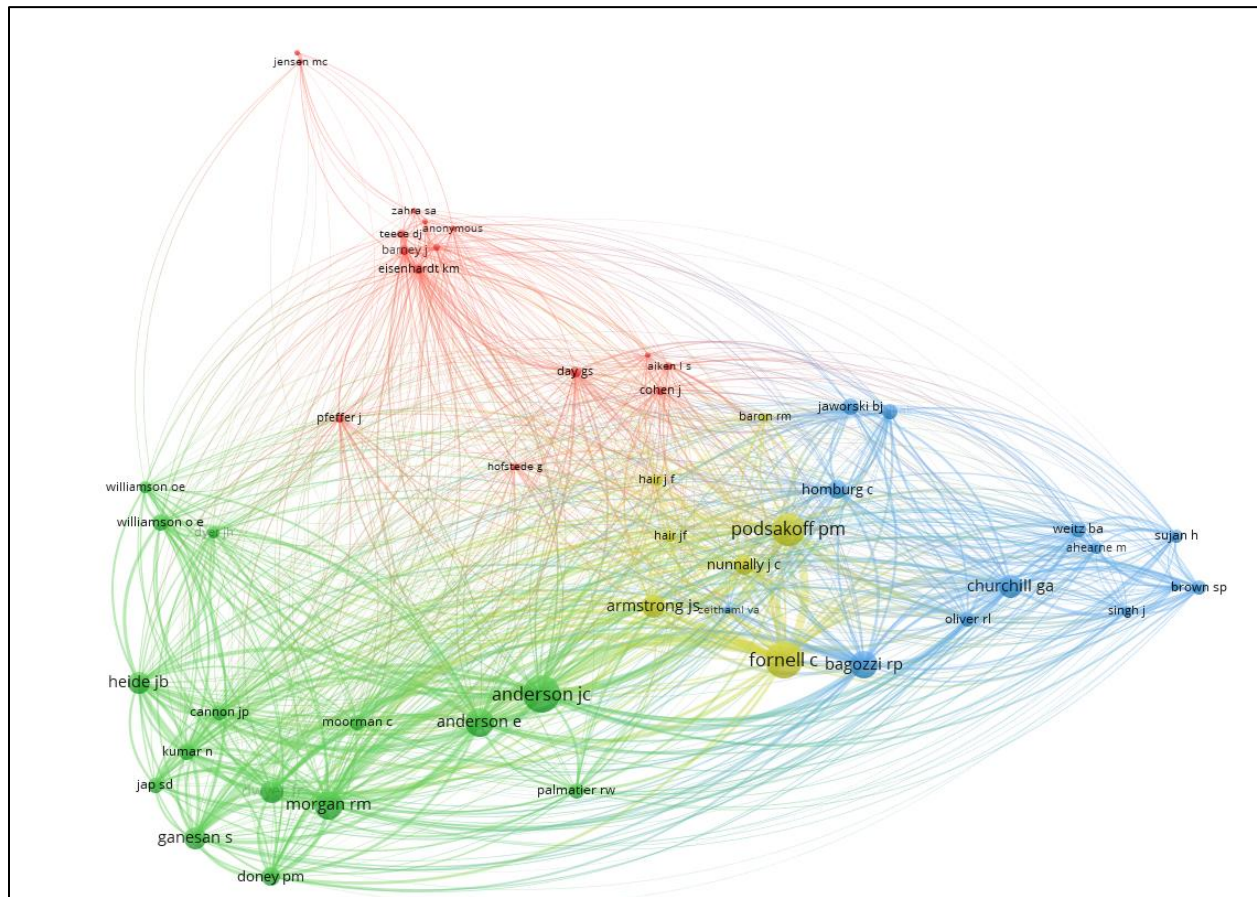
Note: Cluster number (color) and its main members (authors). Cluster 1 (red) = Barney, Esenhardt, Porter, Days, Pfeffer, and Kotler; Cluster 2 (green) = Anderson JC, Anderson E, Morgan, Heide JB, Dwyer, Moorman; Cluster 3 (blue) = Bagozzi, Churchill, Homburg, Weitz, Aherne, Jaworski, Kohli; Cluster 4 (yellow) = Podsakoff, Fornell, Armostrong, Nunally, Hair.

FIGURE 6
Inter-Journal Citation Network
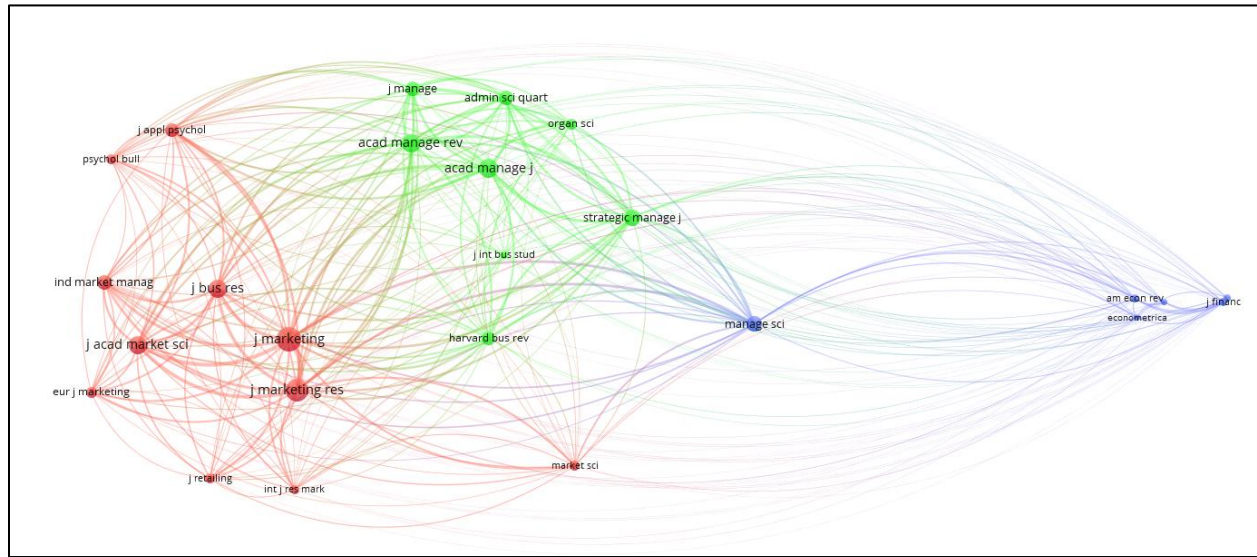
Note: Cluster number (color) and its members (journal discipline). Cluster 1 (red) = Marketing Journals; Cluster 2 (green) = Management Journals; Cluster 3 (blue) = Finance and Economics Journals.

FIGURE 7
Author Collaboration Network

Note: Cluster number (color) and its members (authors). Cluster 1 (red) = Agnihotri, Ahearne, Bolander, Dubinsky, Homburg, Hughes, Jones, Kim, Rapp, and Wieseke; Cluster 2 (green) = Cravens, Katsikeas, Leonidou, Marshall, Menguc, Moncrief, and Panagopoulus; Cluster 3 (blue) = Boles, Friend, Jaramillo, Mulki, and Rutherford; Cluster 4 (yellow) = Evans, Kumar, Palmatier, and Sharma.

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FIGURE 8
Institutions Network
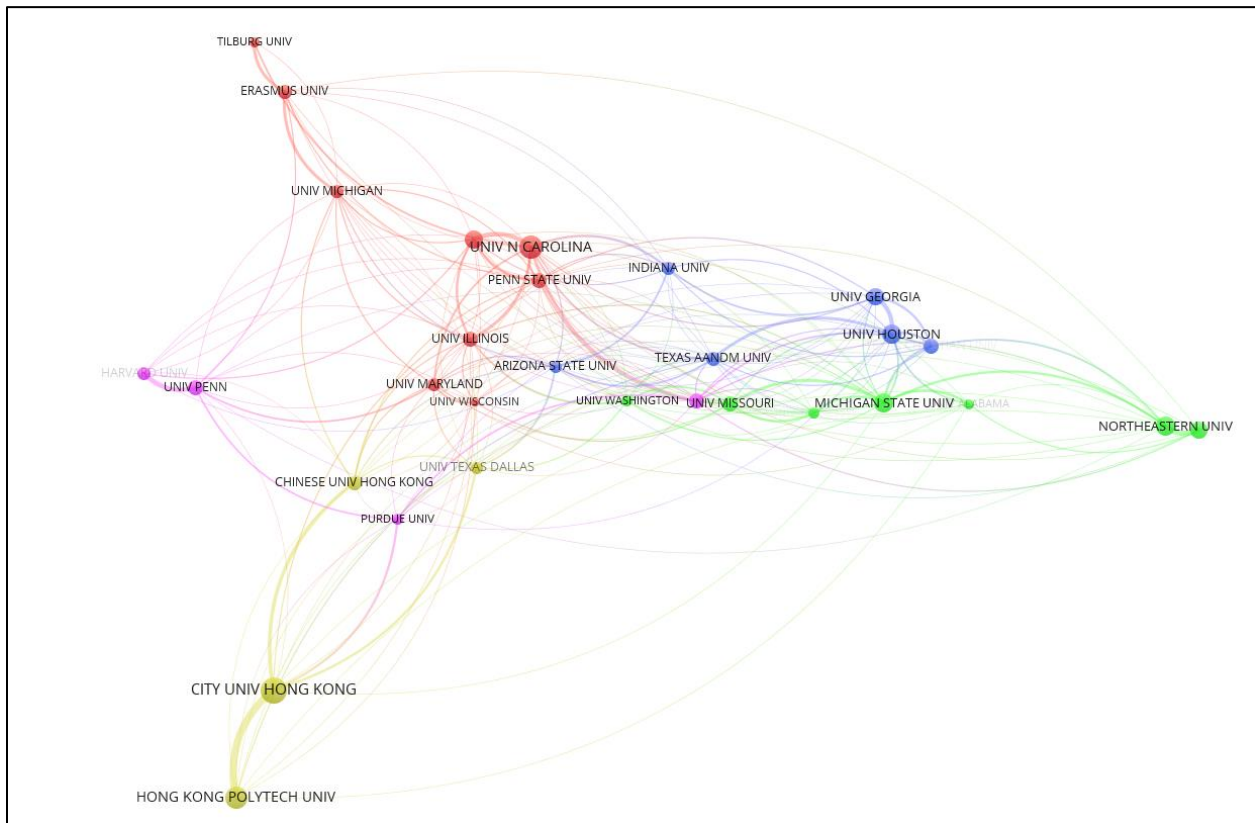
Note: Cluster number (color) and its members (institutions). Cluster 1 (red) = *University of N. Carolina*, *Cornell University*, and *Pennsylvania State University*; Cluster 2 (green) = *Michigan State University*, *Northeastern University*, and *University of Texas Arlington*; Cluster 3 (blue) = *University of Houston*, *University of Georgia*, *Texas Christian University*; Cluster 4 (yellow) = *City University of Hong Kong*, *Hong Kong Polytechnical University*, *Chinese University of Hong Kong*; Cluster 5 (purple) = *Georgia State University*, *University of Pennsylvania*, and *Harvard University*.

FIGURE 9
Country Collaboration Network
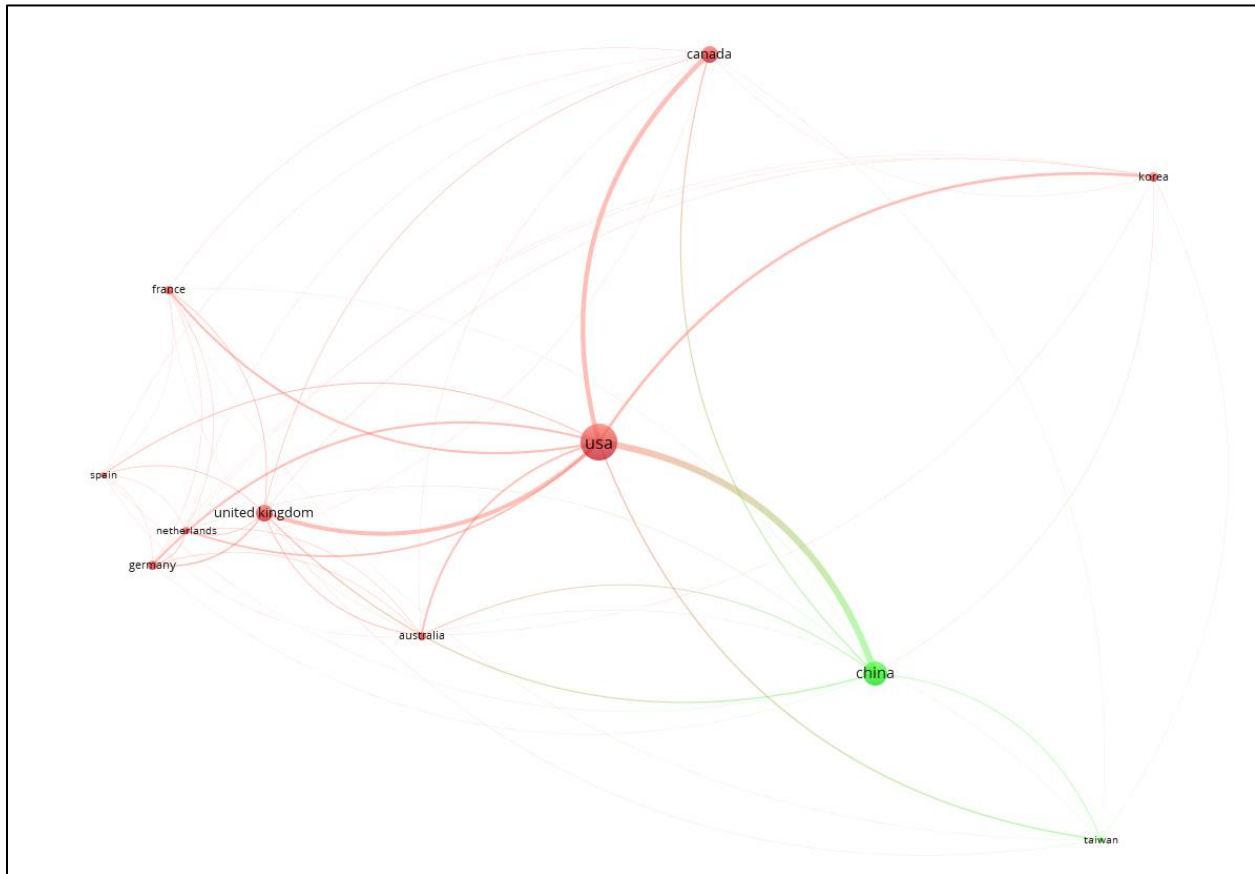
Notes: Cluster number (color) and its members (countries). Cluster 1 (red) = Western countries (USA, Canada, UK, Germany, France, Spain); Cluster 2 (green) = Eastern countries (China)

FIGURE 10
Search Path Count (SPC)
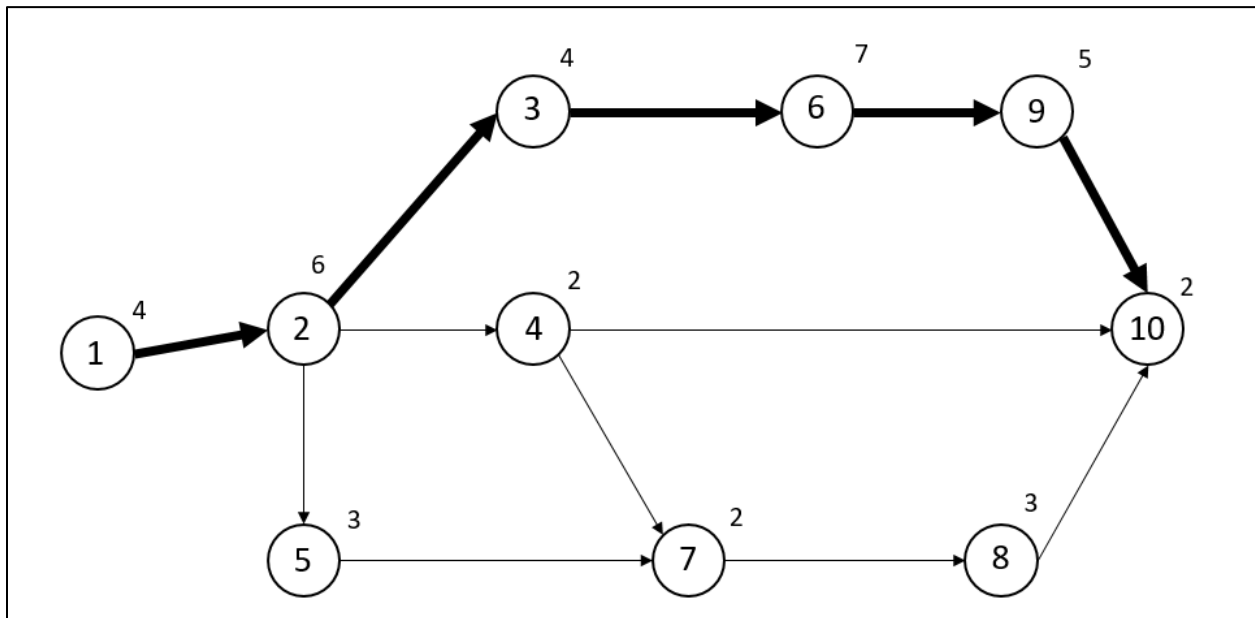
Note: The bold arrows depict the highest search path count (SPC) of citations that were frequently employed by authors in their articles (4+6+4+7+5+2 = 28). This top path represents the linkages between articles #1, #2, #3, #6, #9, and #10. These six articles comprise the most traversed path, which is measured by the frequency that a citation link has been used in the network.

FIGURE 11
Main Path with Key-Route Search
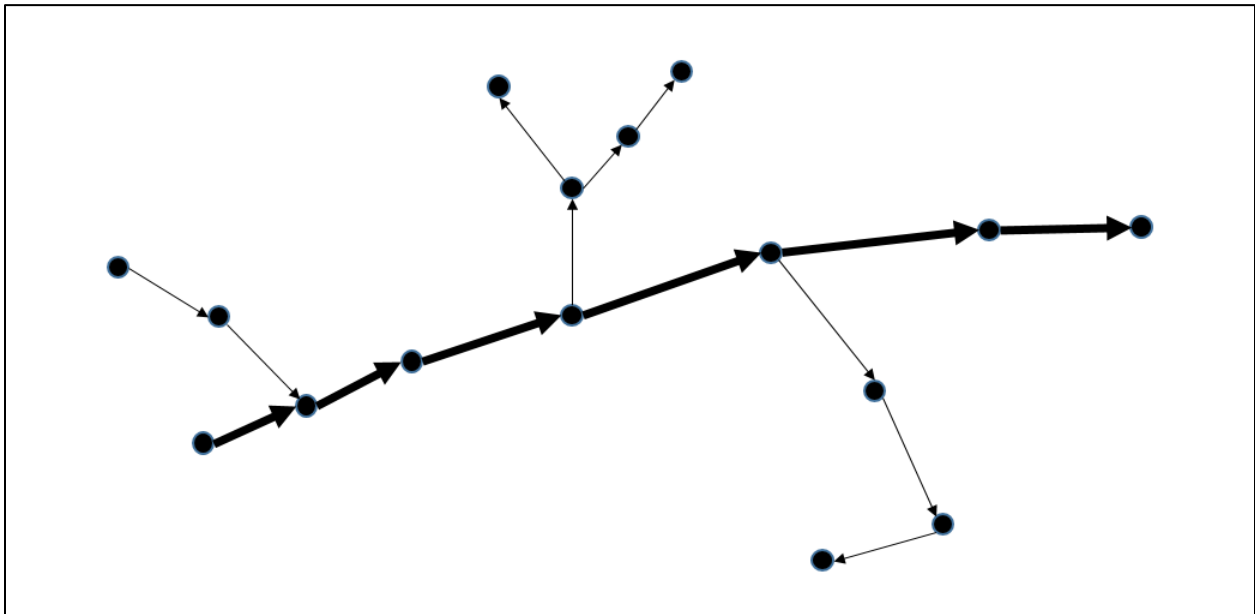
Note: The bold arrows depict a hypothetical main path generated from a sample of academic articles, while the slimmer arrows represent the key routes or sub-dimensions of the main path.

FIGURE 12
Main Path of Sales Performance Literature
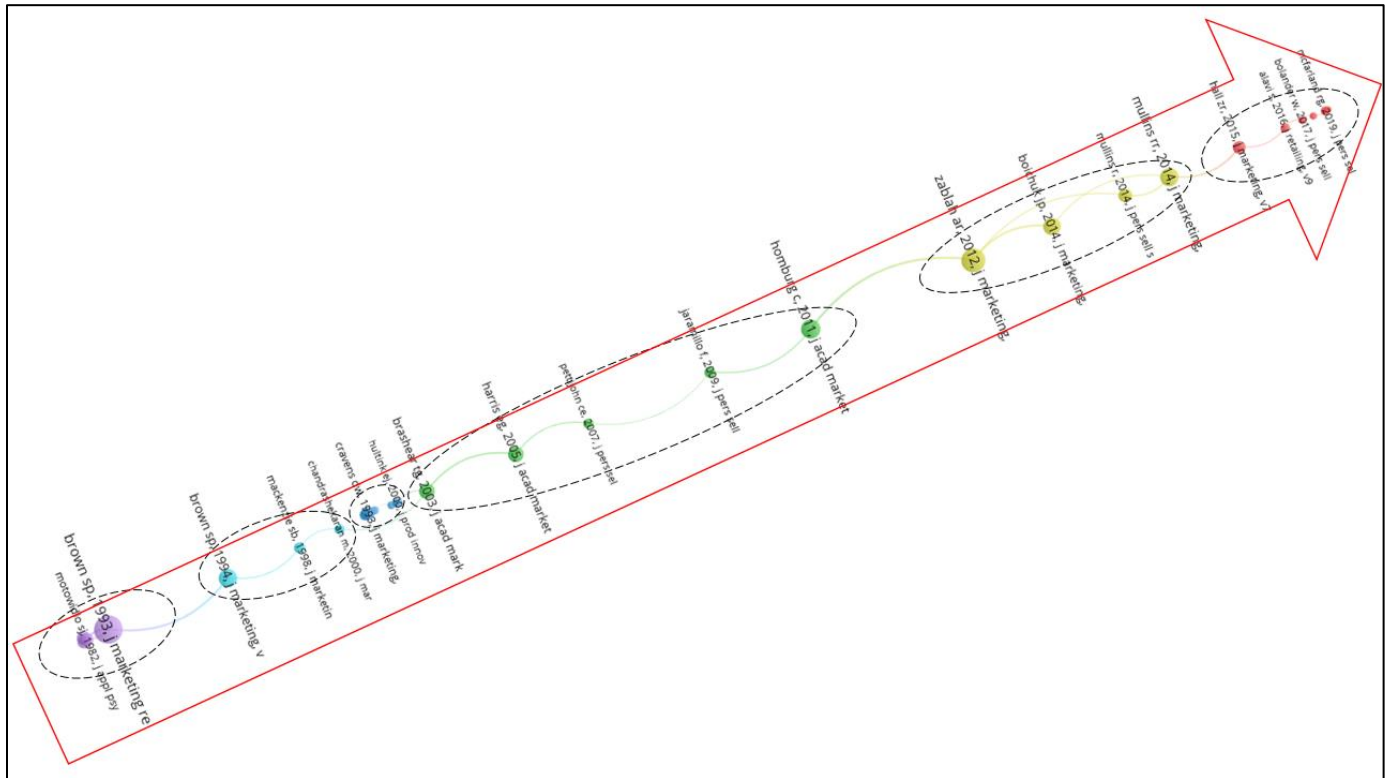
Note: Main path comprised by the six clusters uncovered in the analysis, representing the development of main ideas addressed in sales performance research: Cluster 1 (purple) = *salesperson satisfaction and sales performance*; Cluster 2 (teal) = *job stress and turnover*; Cluster 3 (blue) = *sales control systems*; Cluster 4 (green) = *relationship selling*; Cluster 5 (yellow) = *customer orientation and leadership support*; and Cluster 6 (red) = *internal selling and the salesperson's influence*.

TABLE 11

Milestone Papers and Underlying Themes in the Sales Performance Main Path

| Article	Source	Type	Underlying Theme	Description
Cluster 1				Self-esteem and motivation is recognized as an important antecedent of satisfaction and performance. Satisfaction appears to be a consequence of performance and not the reverse.
Motowidlo 1982	JAP	Empirical		
Bagozzi 1980	JB	Empirical	Salesperson Satisfaction	
Bagozzi 1980	JM	Empirical	and Job Performance	
Brown and Peterson 1993	JMR	Empirical		
Cluster 2				Job stress can reduce salespeople's motivation to exert effort causing a deleterious effect on sales performance. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are negatively related to turnover.
Brown and Peterson 1994	JM	Empirical		
MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Ahearne 1998	JM	Empirical	Job Stress and Turnover	
Chandrashekaran et al. 2000	JMR	Empirical		
Cluster 3				Behavioral-based controls are associated with customer-oriented behaviors, whereas outcome-based controls are linked to sales-oriented behaviors. Outcome-based controls enable salespeople to exercise more autonomy and engage in adaptive selling behaviors that result in favorable sales outcomes.
Cravens, Woodruff, and Stamper 1972	JM	Empirical		
Cravens et al. 1993	JM	Empirical		
Oliver and Anderson 1994	JM	Empirical	Sales Control Systems	
Atuahene-Gima 1997	JPIM	Conceptual		
Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000	JPIM	Empirical		
Cluster 4				Relationship marketing is founded on salespeople's understanding of customer needs. Learning orientation motivates salespeople to increase the satisfaction of external and internal customers with the objective of establishing favorable long-term relationships and enhance sales performance.
Brashear et al. 2003	JAMS	Empirical		
Harris, Mowen, and Brown 2005	JAMS	Empirical		
Homburg, Müller, and Klarmann 2011	JAMS	Empirical	Relationship Selling	
Jaramillo et al. 2013	JPSSM	Empirical		
Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor 2007	JPSSM	Empirical		
Cluster 5				Leadership plays a key role in the effectiveness of customer-directed sales efforts and promotes the adoption of a value-based customer orientation, which captures salespeople's perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors aimed at driving customer satisfaction.
Boichuk et al. 2014	JM	Empirical		
Mullins et al. 2014	JM	Empirical	Customer Orientation and	
Zablah et al. 2012	JM	Empirical	Leadership Support	
Mullins and Syam 2014	JPSSM	Empirical		
Cluster 6				The salesperson's actions inside his or her organization is a strong determinant of sales performance. Adapting the sales approach is facilitated by making accurate judgments about the customer to engender positive sales outcomes.
Alavi, Wieseke, and Guba 2016	JR	Empirical		
Hall, Ahearne, and Sujan 2015	JM	Empirical	Internal selling and	
Bolander, Dugan, and Jones 2017	JPSSM	Conceptual	Salesperson Influence	
Plouffe 2018	JPSSM	Conceptual		
McFarland 2019	JPSSM	Conceptual		

Note: JAP = Journal of Applied Psychology; JB = Journal of Business; JM = *Journal of Marketing*; JMR = *Journal of Marketing Research*; JPIM = *Journal of Product Innovation Management*; JAMS = *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*; JPSSM = *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*; JR = *Journal of Retailing*

FIGURE 13

Systematic Literature Review Procedure

Step 1
Question Formulation

Step 2
Study Identification

Step 3
Study Selection and Evaluation

Step 4
Analysis and Synthesis

Step 5
Study Results
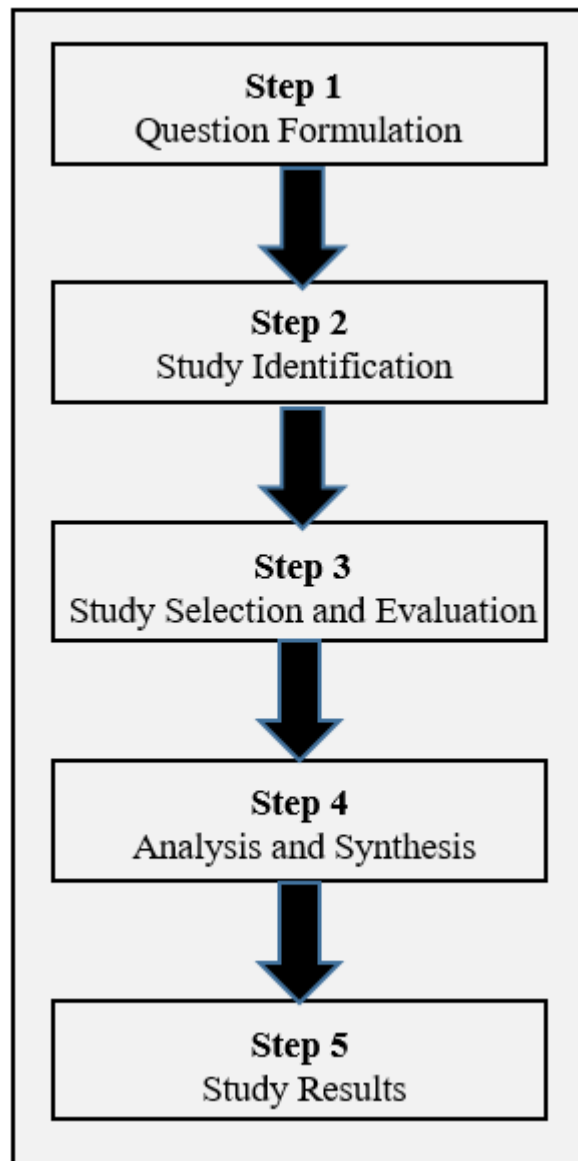
Note: Systematic literature review procedure (Denyer and Tranfield 2009).

TABLE 26

Systematic Literature Review Clusters

Article	Source	Type	Relevant Findings	Cluster Description
Cluster 1				*Salesperson's Intraorganizational Adaptiveness Traits and Characteristics*
Aherne et al. 2010	JM	Empirical	During organizational change, a learning-oriented salesperson's performance trajectory declines, increases, and stabilizes at a higher level.	
Altintas et al. 2017	EJB	Empirical	Salespeople's organizational commitment has a positive effect on their performance.	Salespeople can act as agents of change inside their organizations, and their adaptations can positively influence
Atuahene-Gima 1997	JPIM	Conceptual	Salespeople's new product adoption influences their customers' adoption of new product, which increases sales performance.	their sales performance. Salespeople need to continuously improve their skills and acquire new knowledge to
Barker 1999	CJAS	Empirical	Salespeople's planning and adaptiveness increases customer satisfaction, leading to better sales performance.	remain competitive. However, the success of salespeople's adaptations inside their firms hinges on their
Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2004	JAMS	Empirical	Performance goals that are difficult and specific improve salespeople's planning, which enhances their sales performance.	motivation and personal initiative to willingly invest effort and commitment to create superior customer value.
Hultink and Atuahene-Gima 2000	JPIM	Empirical	Salespeople's commitment and effort accelerates their new product adoption and lead to higher sales performance.	Furthermore, salespeople must be able to collaborate with co-workers to ensure that their adaptations produce
Jaramillo et al. 2007	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's initiative stimulates their engagement in sales behaviors that drive sales performance.	enduring benefits for their customers.
Johlke and Iyer 2017	APJML	Empirical	Salespeople operating in organizations with a customer mindsets achve superior sales performance.	
Johnson and Sohi 2017	IMM	Empirical	Salespeople's responsiveness and effort during strategy implementations enhance peformance outcomes.	
Kalra et al. 2017	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's task adaptivity attenuates the positive effect of salespeople's political skill on sales performance.	
Kimura, Bande, and Ferndandez-Ferrin 2019	IMM	Empirical	Salespeople's political skill is contigent on their level of instrinsic motivation in order to increase sales performance.	

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Li, Sun, and Cheng 2017	JBE	Empirical	Politically-skilled salespeople gain access to resources that enahnce their sales peformance.
Panagopoulos and Ogilvie 2015	IMM	Empirical	Salespeople's self-efficacy increses their sales performance.
Plouffe 2018	JPSSM	Conceptual	Salespeople's intraorganizational behaviors, skills, and factors are postively related to sales performance.
Plouffe and Barclay 2007	IMM	Conceptual	Salesperson's navigation produces positive results from salespeople's influence behaviors and tactics that leead to higher sales performance.
Plouffe and Grégoire 2011	PP	Empirical	Salespeople that engage in intraorganizational employee navigation obtain a better understanding of their internal sales environment which enahances their sales performance.
Plouffe et al. 2016	JM	Empirical	Salespeople's influence tactics aimed at business partners rather than at customers produce increased level of sales peformance.
Plouffe, Sridharan, and Barclay 2010	IMM	Empirical	Salesperson's navigation facilitates acccess to resources that postively impact sales performance.
Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan 2013	JAMS	Empirical	Salespeople's coachability improves their performance.
Shannahan, Shannahan, and Bush 2011	JBIM	Conceptual	Sales managers can develop salespeople's coachabilty to obtain superior peformance outcomes.
van den Berg et al. 2014	JPIM	Empirical	Salespeople can have a genetic predisposition to engage in internal knowledge brokering, which improves their performance.
Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011	JAMS	Empirical	Salespeople's proactivity and personal initiative facilitate access to knowledge sources that positively influence sales performance.
Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986	JM	Conceptual	Salespeople that engage in working smart behaviors are better strategists during sales interactions with customers, leading to enhanced sales performance.

				Salesperson's Intraorganizational Networking and Connectedness
Ahearne et al. 2013	JM	Empirical	Salespeople who are located in central positions in their intraorganizational networks have access to high-qulity information, leading to increased sales performance.	Salespeople increasingly necessitate the involvement of diverse intraorganizational actors to create superior customer value and improve sales performance. Salespeople can leverage their firms' cross-functional integration to disseminate market intelligence across different functional areas, especially if they hold central network positions within their organizational structures. Salespeople frequently coordinate resources inside their firms to achieve sales objectives. However, the success of said coordination efforts hinges on concerted efforts from both the seller and customer business side. Furthermore, coordination can be costly for salespeople, as they need to actively manage and develop their internal network.
Arndt, Karande, and Landry 2011	JR	Empirical	Salespeople's cross-functional intergration with other functional areas within their firms enhances sales performance.	
Bradford et al. 2019	JMTP	Empirical	Salespeople can facilate internal resource coordination to improve customer relationship quality and sales performance when they build strong internal networks with co-workers through helping behaviors.	
Carboni and Ehrlich 2013	HRM	Empirical	Salespeople in central position in their intraorganizational network can achieve greater sales performance, especially if they are high-performers and highly-experienced employees.	
Chakrabarty, Brown, and Widing 2013	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's interactions with co-workers can produce functional conflict that allows the needs of different stakeholders to be met, producing enhanced performance of sellers' offerings.	
Claro and Ramos 2018	JPSSM	Empirical	Cross-functional collaboration improves sales performance when salespeople hold few strong ties with marketing, and many weak ties with the service department.	
Gonzalez and Claro 2013	JAMS	Empirical	High-performing salespeople regularly interact with multiple intraorganizational members, but are cautious to not over-exert themselves with excessive intraorganizational relationships.	
Kadic-Maglajic, Boso, and Micevski 2018	JBR	Empirical	Cross-functional connectivity and goal compatibility allwo salespeople to achieve superior performance levels	
Micevski et al. 2019	JBR	Empirical	Salespeople operating in selling environments condusive to flexible resource exchange between different funtcional areas can produce superior customer-related outcomes and sale performance.	
Nowling, Walker, and Anaza 2018	IMM	Empirical	In high-volatile internal selling environments, salespeople can maintain high performance levels if they are connected to other intraorganizational members.	
Panagopoulos, Rapp, and Ogilvie 2017	JM	Empirical	The success of salespeople's coordination when delivering solutions to customers necessitates that customers successfully coordinate resources on their end as well.	
Parente, Pegels, and Suresh 2002	IJOPM	Empirical	Salespeople who work in firms that promote intra-firm connectivity between departments can better communicate customer requirements, improving customer satisfaction.	
Park and Dietz 2006	JBR	Empirical	Salespeople's relationship quality with their co-workers is a strong determinant of sales performance.	
Steward et al. 2010	JAMS	Empirical	Salespeople's coordination of internal resources can lead to enahanced sales performance when salespeople have access to diverse and strong internal relationships.	
Üstener and Iacobucci 2012	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's social networks improves the effectiveness of their prospecting efforts, while their work networks improve solution delivery, and both are	
van der Borgh, de Jong, and Nijssen 2019	JSR	Empirical	Salespeople's performance can be damaged when demands from co-workers and customers are incompatible.	

Cluster 3				*Managerial and Leadership Influences on Salesperson's Intraorganizational Adaptation*
Ahearne , Mathieu, and Rapp 2005	JAP	Empirical	Managers' empowerment behaviors can increase sales performance when salespeople are experienced and knowledgeable.	
Ahearne et al. 2013	JAMS	Empirical	Salespeople's identification with their managers enables them to learn from their experience to deal with customers and achieve superior sales performance.	Sales managers can positively influence salespeople to become more customer-oriented and commit to higher service quality levels, leading to enhanced sales performance. Sales managers' leadership style and supervisory support can provide salespeople with the tools needed to succeed in their sales tasks and generate higher customer value.
Arndt and Harkins 2011	JBIM	Conceptual	Managerial support is essential to develop appropriate sales support structures that enable salespeople to achieve higher sales performance.	
Chakrabarty, Oubre, and Brown 2007	IMM	Empirical	Sales managers' positive feedback provides salespeople with both informational and motivational value, which can lead to stronger sales performance.	
Chen, Rivas, and Wu 2018	JST&P	Empirical	Managerial support augments salespeople's engament in market oriented behaviors, which improve sales performance via planning and adaptive selling.	
ElSamen and Akroush 2018	BIJ	Empirical	Sales mangers personal characteristics play a pivotal role in fostering salespeople's acceptance of organizational goals to create and deliver superior custoemer value, and improve sales performance.	
Jaramillo et al. 2009	JPSSM	Empirical	Managers with servant leadership styles motivate salespeople's engagement in extra-role and customer-oriented behaviors, leading to increments in sales performance.	
Jones, Busch, and Dacin 2003	JBR	Empirical	Managers' enactment of their firms' makert orientation influences salespeople's customer-oriented behaviors, improving service quality and customer retention.	
Peesker et al. 2019	JPSSM	Empirical	Sales managers' adaptive leadership style improves sales performance through coaching, collaboration, championing, and direction during customer engagements.	
Schmitz and Genesan 201	JM	Empirical	Managers that help their salespeople cope with intraorganizational complexity and that help them maitain high levels of effort, can positively impact sales performance.	
Cluster 4				*Salesperson's Ambidexterity and Creativity*
Agnihotri et al. 2014	JSR	Empirical	Salesperson's creativity positively impacts sales performance when it is used to solve customer problems.	
Agnihotri et al. 2017	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's sales-service ambidexterity improves customer satisfaction, which can lead to increased sales performance.	Salespeople are responsible to both internal and external stakeholders, and they are accountable for providing excellent customer service while meeting sales goals. Salespeople can use their creativity to meet the demands of their roles and achieve adequate sales and service excellence levels. Salespeople's ambidexterity to perform both sales and service activities requires the ability to learn quickly and actively adapt to changes in the selling environment to produce high levels of sales performance. However, sales-service ambidexterity can trigger salespeople's felt stress, which can negatively affect sales performance if left unattended.
Arditto et al. 2020	MI&P	Empirical	Salespeople's creativity and effort leads to new product selling success and higher sales performance.	
Gabler et al. 2017	JSR	Empirical	Salespeople's ambidexterity fosters creativity and improves sales performance when either sales orientation or customer orientation is emphasized over the other.	
Hughes and Ogilvie 2020	JSR	Conceptual	Salesperson's ambidexterity can offers substantial long term benefits when used to create customer value,	
Ogilvie et al. 2017	JPSSM	Empirical	Salesperson's ambidexterity can be leveraged to produce enahnced sales performance when selling climates are aligned to salesperson's service-sales	
Wang and Netemeyer 2004	JBR	Empirical	Salespeople's creativity improves the effectiveness and efficiency of sales tasks, resulting in enahnced sales performance.	

Cluster 5

|				*Salesperson's Technolovy Orientation*
Eggert and Serdaroglu 2011	JMTP	Empirical	Managerial supervision promotes sales technology usage among salespeople to coordinate internal resources, improving sales performance via stronger customer relationships.	Sales technology is the application of information technology to support the sales function. Sales technology can improve salespeople's productivity by reducing the amount of time spent on
Hunter and Perrault 2006	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's technology orientation enables salespeople to effectively complete sales tasks by leveraging information and working smart to improve sales performance.	mechanical tasks and increasing the focus on customer-centric activities. Salespeople's use of technology can generate both external benefits in the
Itani, Agnihotri, and Dingus 2017	IMM	Empirical	Salespeople's social media usage improves sales peformance throgh selling behaviors aimed at collecting market intelligence and enganging in adaptive selling.	form of high-quality relationships with customers and internally with the achievement of sales performance. Salespeople's use of technology
Park et al. 2010	IMM	Empirical	Salespeople's use of sales technology improves sales performance when salespeople have the disposition to learn, which leads to higher quality customer relationships.	depends on their evaluations about their ability to use technology and whether said technology can help them reach performance goals.
Rapp, Agnihotri, and Forbes 2008	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's use of sales technology can ennance sales performance if salespeople optmize their time allocation to execute job-related activities	
Robinson, Marshall, and Stamps 2005	IMM	Empirical	Perceived usefulness and easy of use motivate salespeople's technology usage. However, to produce sales performance benefits, salespeople's technology usage must focus on increasing customer value.	
Rodriguez and Honeycutt 2011	JB2BM	Empirical	Salespeople's usage of CRM technology strengthens relationships with customers and promotes internal collaboration with co-workers, resulting in higher sales performance.	

Cluster 6

				Salesperson's Organizational Selling
Agnihotri, Yang, and Briggs 2019	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople operating in organizations with a climate for innovation and with a long term time perspective increase customer satisfaction, which results in higher willingness-to-pay from customers and improves sales performance.	Organizational elements inside salespeople's selling environment are vital to creating an environment conducive to high performance. Company policies can influence salespeople's perceptions of pay
Evanschitzky, Sharma, and Prykop 2012	EJM	Empirical	Salespeople can reciprocate their satisfaction with their organizations when interacting with customers, thus, positively impacting customer satisfaction and potentially leading to increased sales performance.	fairness, leading to greater trust and commitment with their firm and increased involvement in organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational climates that encourage salespeople's
Rouoziou et al. 2018	JPSSM	Empirical	Salespeople's perceptions of pay fairness in their organizations enables them to build social capital, resulting in enahnaced sales performance.	autonomy and provide the tools, training, and support needed to execute sales tasks enable salespeople to
Schepers and van der Borgh 2020	JSR	Empirical	Organizational support promotes salespeople's success and their enactment of selling behaviors that are positively linked to sales peformance.	achieve superior sales performance levels.
Schrock et al. 2016	ML	Empirical	Competitive salespeople generate greater sales performance benefits when operating in organizations	
Wang 2012	TSIJ	Empirical	Organizational learning climates promotes salespeople's adaptive behaviors that have a positive effect on customer satisfaction and can improve sales performance.	

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Cluster 7

Beeler et al. 2020	JPSSM	Empirical	When salespeople encounter friend-selling situations, they can experience increased ambiguity and enage in conservative selling behaviors to protect their friendship with customers which can decrease sales performance.	Stress develops when salespeople perceive a lack of resources to effectively deal with the demands from their managers, co-workers, and customers. Salespeople can rely on coping mechanisms to mitigate the adverse effects of stress. However, when demands significantly exceed resources, stress can provoke salespeople's engagement in counterproductive workplace behaviors. These undesirable behaviors may seem to produce positive returns for salespeople in the short term, but they are extremely damaging to sales performance in the long term.
Dugan, Rouziou, and Hochstein 2019	ML	Empirical	The positive effect of salespeople's internal networking on sales performance are reduced when they exhibit Machiavellianism traits which influences their engagement in counterproductive workplace behaviors such as manipulating co-workers.	
Murtha, Challagalla, and Kohli 2011	MSC	Empirical	Salespeople's concern about internal opportunism can activate internal blocking behaviors which limits a sales team's ability to produce optimal customer offerings, resulting in diminished sales performance.	
van der Borgh and Schpers 2018	JAMS	Empirical	Salespeople's lack of accurate information about new products can trigger conservative selling behaviors favoring existing products over new ones, which negatively impacts sales performance.	

Note: JAP = Journal of Applied Psychology; JBE = Journal of Business Ethics; JM = Journal of Marketing; JMR = Journal of Marketing Research; JPIM = Journal of Product Innovation Management; JAMS = Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science; JPSSM = Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management; JR = Journal of Retailing; JB2BM = Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing; EJM = European Journal of Marketing; JSR = Journal of Service Research; ML = Marketing Letters; TSIJ = The Service Industries Journal; MSC = Management Science; MI&P = Marketing Intelligence and Planning; BIL = Benchmarking: An International Journal; JBIM = Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing; JST&P = Journal of Service Theory and Practice; JMTP = Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice; HRM = Human Resource Management; IJOPM = International Journal of Operations and Production Management; EJB = EuroMed Journal of Business; CJAS = Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences; APJML = Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics; PP = Personnel

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FIGURE 14
The emergence of Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

Market Orientation

Intraorganizational Dimension of Sales Role

Resources inside a salesperson's firm can have a positive impact on external performance outcomes such as customer satisfaction and sales performance.

Intraorganizational Adaptiveness

Adaptive Selling

Adaptive selling enables salespeople to enhance their selling efficiency by tailoring their approach in reaction changes at the customer level interface based on perceivable cues.

Market-oriented behavior focused on salespeople's modification of behaviors in response changes in their internal sales environment aimed at driving customers' success.

Note: Adaptive selling is re-conceptualized to adhere to the changes in the contemporary selling environment by merging it with the Intraorganizational Dimension of the Sales Role to produce Intraorganizational Adaptiveness. This novel construct is proposed as a market-oriented behavior, embodying the marketing concept at the individual level.

FIGURE 15

Conceptual Model
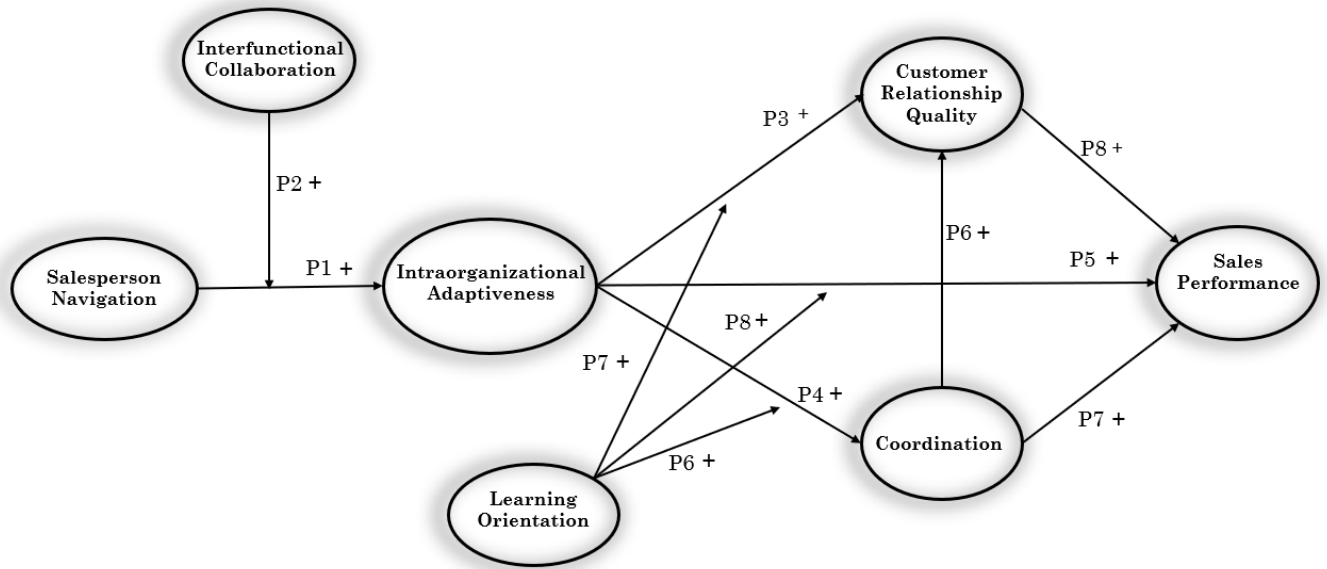
Note: The unit of analysis is the individual salesperson.

FIGURE 16

Multi-Method Approach
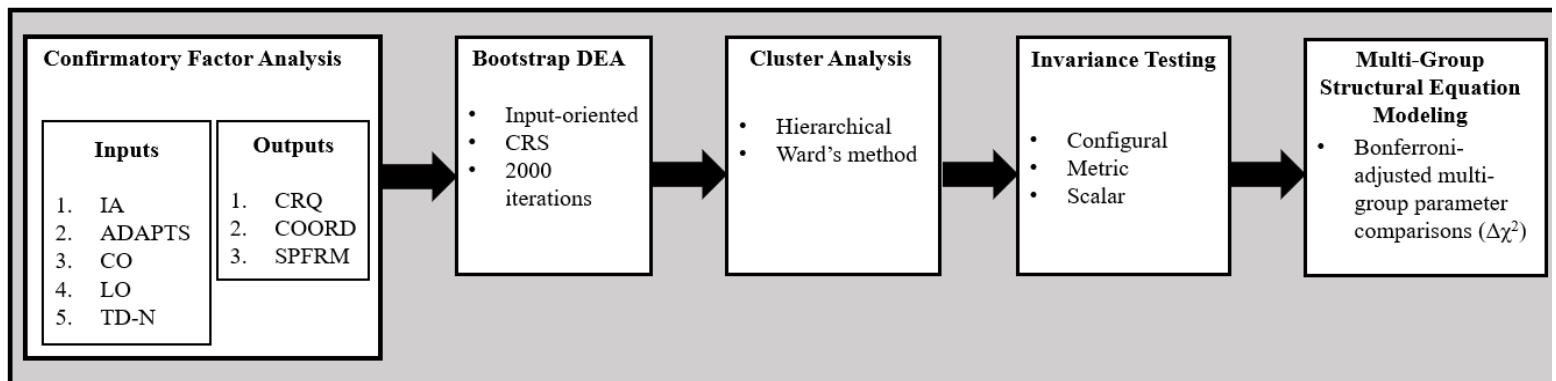
Note: Intraorganizational Adaptiveness (IA); Adaptive Selling (ADAPTS); Customer Orientation (CO); Learning Orientation (LO); Task-Driven Navigation (TD-N); Constant Returns-to-Scale (CRS); Chi-square difference tests ($\Delta\chi2$).

FIGURE 17
Salesperson's Divergent Effects based on their Efficiency Levels
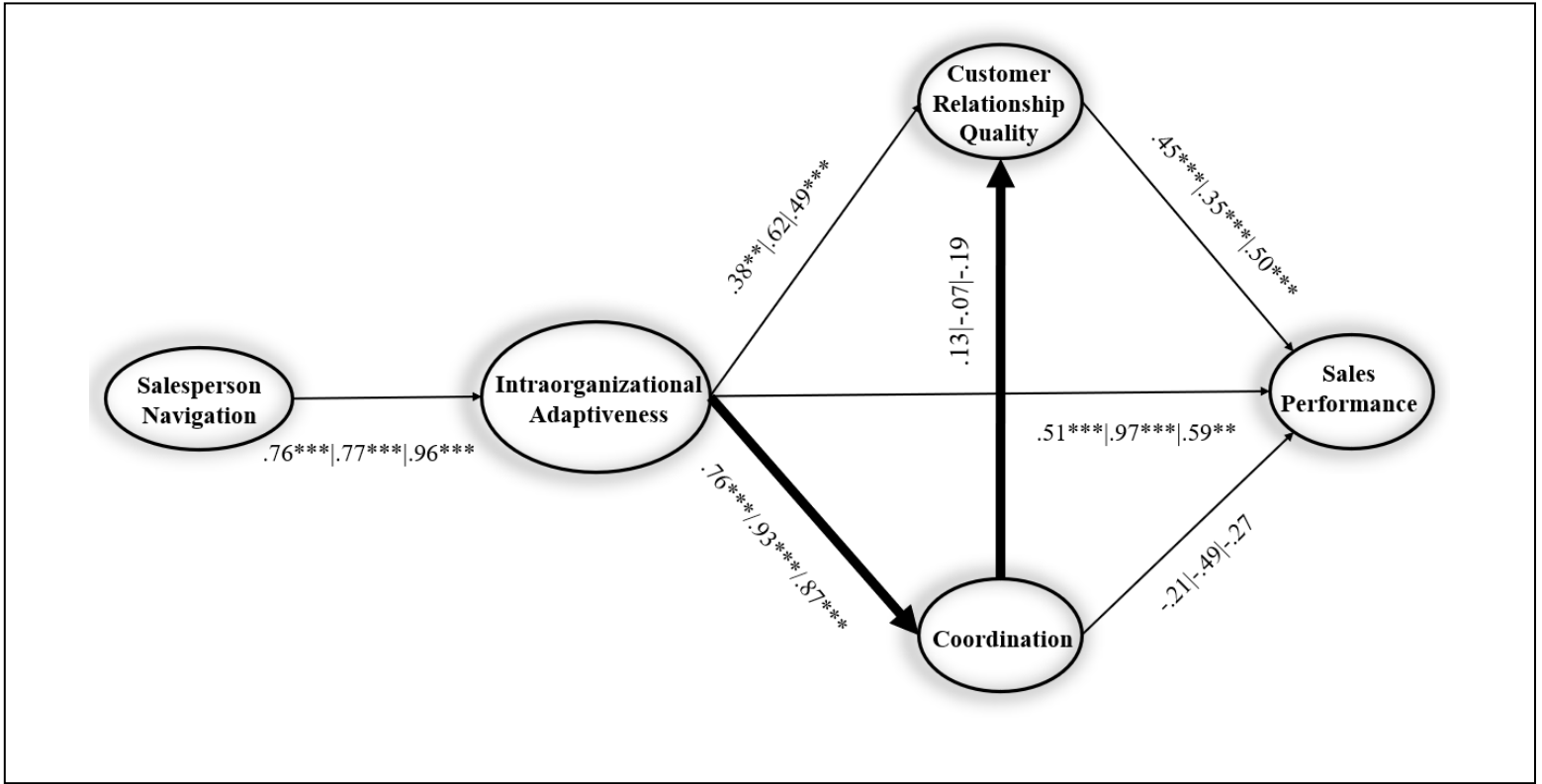
Note: Standardized parameter estimates for each salespeople group presented as *low optimizers | core optimizers | top optimizers*. Arrows in bold represent statistically significant difference between the three groups of salespeople. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

TABLE 12

Related Constructs

Salesperson Behavior/Activity	Conceptual Definition	Relevant Study	Contrast with Intraorganizational Adaptiveness
Coordination	The process that the salesperson follows in diagnosing the customer organization's requirements and subsequently identifying, assembling, and managing an ad hoc team of organizational members who possess the knowledge and skills to deliver superior customer solutions.	Steward et al. (2010)	Coordination is executed with the main purpose of delivering superior customer solutions, whereas IOA is not narrowly focused on the customer's solution, rather it takes in to account the complete sales process.
Proactive Workplace Behaviors	Anticipatory action that employees take to impact themselves and/or their environments.	Grant and Ashford (2008) Parker and Collins (2010)	Proactive behaviors involve initiating change, whereas IOA involves a modification based on perceived change.
Intrapreneurship	Ability to locate personnel or other resources within the seller firm and deploy them to assist the customer.	Sengupta, Krapfel, and Pusateri (2013) Kuratko, Montagno, and Hornsby (1990)	Intrapreneurship is primarily concerned with utilizing resources to foster innovation, while IOA does not need to be novel nor creative, it just needs to be appropriate.
Influence Behaviors	Attempt by one person to influence another to carry out a request.	Yukl, Seifert, and Chavez (2008) Plouffe et al. (2016)	While IOA does encompass influencing as part of its domain, a particular request does not need to be satisfied.
Embedddness	An embedded sales force is one that integrates on a regular basis with both its own organizational subunits as well as the customers' subunits for the purpose of creating customized products and services for its customers.	Bradford et al. (2010)	Embeddedness does facilitate the occurrence of IOA, but IOA is not dependent on embeddedness in order to take place.
Adaptive Selling	The altering of sales behaviors during customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation.	Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986) Spiro and Weitz (1990)	Adaptive selling examines a specific interaction, whereas IOA is dynamic and non-opportunity specific

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Networking	Process by which the employees construct an internal network across his/her own organization.	Morrison (2002)	Networking has the potential to improve IOA, but IOA can happen independent of a salesperson's network
Salesperson Navigation	Activities requiring the salesperson to work the white spaces of their organization to discover personnel, resources, or capabilities that my benefit them in specific sales situations or at a later juncture.	Plouffe and Barclay 2007	SpN can be task-driven and exploratory in nature and aims to identify valuable resources for current or future use, while IOA relies on cues external to the salesperson that inform the salesperson about appropriate modifications to improve performance.
Intraorganizational Employee Navigation	Self-initiated behavior that employee engages in to identify salient resources germane to their work, key personnel who can assist them with job-related tasks and responsibilities, and/or the alignment of other needed organizational processes, inputs, or policies in their favor.	Plouffe and Grégoire 2011	IEN antecedes IOA, and based on the navigation that salespeople perform, they can later utilize such knowledge to engage in IOA.
Emotional Intelligence	Ability to acquire and apply knowledge from one's emotions and those of others to produce beneficial outcomes.	Conte (2005) Kidwell et al. (2011)	EI lacks a well-defined purpose, whereas IOA has a specific purpose.
Political Skill	The ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in a way that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives.	Ferris et al. (2005) Munyon et al. (2015)	Political skill entails that influence and power will be used to obtain one's desired results, while IOA can occur in a subtly and inconspicuously.
Social Astuteness	Capacity to adjust behavior to different and changing situational demands in a manner that appears sincere, inspires support and trust, and effectively influences and controls the response of others.	Ferris et al. (2005)	Social astuteness is not context-specific and has broad applications, whereas IOA is specifically carried out by salespeople to increase performance and customer satisfaction
Self-monitoring	The ability to read situations and make behavioral adjustments.	Snyder (1974,1979,1987)	While self-monitoring attempts to change how one is perceived with the objective of personal gain, IOA is conducted specifically to improve performance and drive customer satisfaction.
Knowledge Broker	Salespeople's management of different sources of knowledge to market an offering uniquely tailored to match the specific needs of each individual customer	Verbeke et al. (2008) Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal (2011)	Salespeople that operate as knowledge brokers use their knowledge to tailor offerings to customers, whereas salespeople engaging in IOA modify their behavior without necessarily customizing a particular offering to a customer.
Social Competence	Being able to communicate and deal effectively with others.	Shafer (1999)	Social competence is bounded on social interactions, while IOA is broader and includes interacting in non-social situations.

Note: IA = Intraorganizational Adaptiveness;   SpN = Salesperson Navigation

TABLE 13

Sample Demographic Characteristics

	Study 1	Study 2
	Scale Purification	Scale and Nomological Validation
Sample size (*N*)	402	350
Age (%)		
18-24	6	5.1
25-31	44	18.9
32-38	18.4	18.6
39-45	14.2	12.6
46-52	8.5	13.7
53-59	6	10.6
60-66	2.7	14.9
66+	0.2	5.7
Gender (%)		
Female	32.8	39.1
Male	65.9	60
Other	1.2	0.3
Prefer not to respond	0	0.6
Race/Ethnicity (%)		
Caucasian	60.7	78
African American	31.6	10.6
Hispanic/Latino American	4.7	5.4
Asian American/Asian	1	3.7
Native American	2	0.3
Other	0	2
Income/year (%)		
0 - $29,999	9.2	7.4
$30,000 - $59,999	41	18.3
$60,000 - $89,999	30.8	23.4
$90,000 - $119,999	11.4	16.6
$120,000 - $149,999	5.5	17.7
$150,000 - $179,999	1.5	7.7

$180,000 - $209,999	0.5	5.4
$210,000 - $239,999	0	0.9
$239,999+	0	2.6
Education (%)		
Junior High School or less	5	0.3
High School	2	11.1
Trade Certificate	4	0.9
Some College or University Training	10	16
College Diploma	45	31.1
Undergraduate University Degree	24	22.3
Graduate University Degree	10	18.3
Years of sales experience (%)		
less than 1 yr.	0.2	1.1
1 – 2 yrs.	16.1	6.6
3 – 6 yrs.	53	18.6
7 – 10 yrs.	24.1	16.3
11 – 15 yrs.	4.5	11.7
16 – 20 yrs.	2	13.4
20+ yrs.	0	32.3

Note: Demographic characteristics of two independent samples of B2B salespeople analyzed in the studies.

TABLE 14

Reliability and Correlation Matrix

Constructs	α	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	0.84	3.81	0.55						
2. Navigation	0.72	3.77	0.65	0.77**					
3. Adaptive Selling	0.82	3.95	0.52	0.64**	0.59**				
4. Customer Orientation	0.84	3.90	0.59	0.68**	0.64**	0.61**			
5. Selling Orientation	0.73	3.74	0.71	0.49**	0.53**	0.56**	0.41**		
6. Sales Performance	0.71	4.02	0.52	0.64**	0.59**	0.84**	0.66**	0.48**	
7. Social Desirability	0.85	5.30	0.96	0.53**	0.50**	0.69**	0.50**	0.55**	0.60**

Notes: $N = 402$; α, reliability; M, mean;
SD, standard deviation

TABLE 15

Summary Measurement Results

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimates	*t*-Values
1. Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	3.9	0.68	.89 - .90	12.68-16.74
2. Navigation	3.9	0.79	.74 - .79	13.84 - 14.92
3. Adaptive Selling	4.1	0.72	.68 - 89	12.55 - 13.87
4. Customer Orientation	4.4	0.63	.72 - .83	14.54 - 16.10
5. Selling Orientation	2.7	1.29	.83 - .92	22.75 - 24.99

Notes: $N = 350$, $\chi2= 623.34$, df = 365; CFI = .96; SRMR = .05; and RMSEA = .04.

TABLE 16

Construct Validity and Correlation Matrix

Constructs	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1. Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	0.90	0.82	*0.90*	0.68	0.49	0.44	0.02
2. Navigation	0.88	0.58	.72***	*0.76*	0.48	0.36	0.17
3. Adaptive Selling	0.82	0.62	.49***	.46***	*0.78*	0.44	0.10
4. Customer Orientation	0.88	0.59	.54***	.37***	.46***	*0.77*	0.25
5. Selling Orientation	0.94	0.77	0.02	.18**	0.09	- 0.25***	*0.88*

Notes: $N = 350$, $\chi2= 623.34$, *df* = 365; RMSEA = .04, CFI = .96, and SRMR = .05.
M, average; SD, standard deviation; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

Numbers in the diagonal are square roots of AVEs from the confirmatory factor analysis.

Inter-construct correlations are shown below the diagonal; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$

Results from the Hetero-Trait Multi-Trait analysis (HTMT) are show above the diagonal.

TABLE 17

Scale Validation—Confirmatory Factor Analysis

IA sub-dimensions and scale items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimates
Discretionary Intraorganizational Adaptation (DIA)			**.87**
I proactively adapt to changes inside my firm that may be beneficial for my customers.	3.94	.848	.76
I monitor the environment inside my firm to find ways to improve customer value.	3.82	.914	.71
I proactively adopt procedures with potential to increase value to my customers.	3.95	.904	.74
I diligently adopt new technologies inside my firm that may increase value to my customers.	3.82	.955	.71
I proactively adapt to changes inside my firm to help my customers.	4.01	.868	.74
I monitor developments inside my firm that may benefit my customers.	4.01	.871	.71
Collaborative Intraorganizational Adaptation (CIA)			**.95**
I engage co-workers inside my firm in an effort to improve value for my customers.	3.92	.988	.78
I regularly interact with my co-workers to help improve customer value.	4.07	.872	.78
I proactively share information with my co-workers to make my customers' needs a priority.	4.07	.872	.80
I enlist the help of my co-workers to avoid potential problems for my customers.	3.95	.950	.76
I encourage the participation of members inside my firm to ensure that my customers' expectations will be met.	3.99	.916	.78

Notes: This table contains the intraorganizational adaptiveness construct, its sub-dimensions, and items. In addition, the item's means, standard deviations, and factor loadings are provided. All parameter estimates are statistically significant at the .001 level.

TABLE 18

Summary Measurement Results

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Parameter Estimates	*t*-Values
1. Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	3.95	0.98	.87 - .95	11.79 - 18.33
2. Navigation	3.92	0.79	.73 - .80	13.88 - 15.10
3. Learning Orientation	4.27	0.71	.74 - .86	13.95 - 16.56
4. Interfunctional Coordination	4.31	0.66	.70 - .75	13.53 - 14.59
5. Coordination	3.93	0.8	.87 - .96	14.30 -14.52
6. Customer Relationship Quality	4.28	0.55	.72 - .80	12.71 - 14.0
7. Social Desirability	4.93	1.59	.62 - .95	3.06 - 9.22
8. Sales Performance	4.16	0.72	.71 - .74	11.17 - 11.55

Notes: $N = 350$, $\chi 2= 1021.93$, $df = 598$; CFI = .94; SRMR = .04; and RMSEA = .04.

TABLE 19

Structural Model Results

Hypothesized Relationships	*Standardized Coefficients*	*Support for Hypothesis*
H1: Salesperson Navigation → Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	.78***	✓
H2: Interfunctional Coordination positively moderates H1	.10	✗
H3: Intraorganizational Adaptiveness → Customer Relationship Quality	.48***	✓
H4: Intraorganizational Adaptiveness → Sales Coordination	.69***	✓
H5: Intraorganizational Adaptiveness → Sales Performance	.39***	✓
H6: Learning Orientation positively moderates H4	.01	✗
H7: Learning Orientation positively moderates H3	.03	✗
H8: Learning Orientation positively moderates H5	.05	✗
H9: Sales Coordination → Customer Relationship Quality	.02	✗
H10: Sales Coordination → Sales Performance	-.02	✗
H11: Customer Relationship Quality → Sales Performance	.48**	✓

Note: *$p < .05$, **$p <.01$, *** $p <.001$; ✓ = supported, ✗ = not supported

TABLE 20
Relative Efficiency Input and Output Variables

Variables	CR	AVE	Max.	Min.	M	SD
Inputs						
Adaptive Selling	.82	.62	5.0	1.33	4.16	.68
Customer Orientation	.88	.59	5.0	1.80	4.43	.63
Learning Orientation	.88	.61	5.0	1.0	4.27	.71
Salesperson Navigation	.88	.58	5.0	1.0	3.92	.79
Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	.91	.83	5.0	1.64	3.96	.68
Outputs						
Customer Relationship Quality	.84	.56	5.0	2.25	4.45	.58
Sales Coordination	.83	.72	5.0	1.0	3.92	.89
Sales Performance	.77	.52	5.0	2.0	4.16	.72

Note: Notes: N = 350, $\chi2$= 1021.93, *df* = 598; RMSEA = .04, CFI = .94, and SRMR = .04. CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted; Max, maximum value, Min, minimum value; M, average; SD, standard deviation.

TABLE 21
Cluster Retention Criteria

Number of Clusters	*Semi-partial R^2*	R^2	RMSSTD	Distance	Silhouette Measure	Cluster Size Ratio
2	.1575	.66	.044	.2919	.8	1.5
3	.0664	.818	.0401	.1231	1	1.69
4	.0319	.884	.031	.0591	-	-

Note: Semi-Partial R^2, R^2, RMSSTD, Distance, Silhouette Measure, and Cluster Size Ratio are used to determine the number of clusters in the hierarchical solution.

TABLE 22
Cluster Demographic Data

	Low Optimizers	Core Optimizers	Top Optimizers
	Specified Seeds	Specified Seeds	Specified Seeds
Efficiency	.71	.8	.89
Cluster Size	127	140	83
Percentage of Respondents	36.29%	40.00%	23.71%
Male (%)	56.70%	62.90%	60.20%
Female (%)	42.50%	37.10%	37.30%
Prefer not to respond (%)	.80%	.00%	1.20%
Other (%)	.00%	.00%	1.20%
Age			
18-24	2.40%	5.70%	8.40%
25-31	21.30%	17.10%	18.10%
32-38	18.10%	16.40%	22.90%
39-45	13.40%	14.30%	8.40%
46-52	12.60%	15.00%	13.30%
53-59	8.70%	12.10%	10.30%
60-66	18.10%	13.60%	12.00%
67+	5.50%	5.70%	6.00%
Income			
0-$29,999	4.70%	11.40%	4.80%
$30,000-$59,999	13.40%	18.60%	25.30%
$60,000-$89,999	29.10%	19.30%	21.70%
$90,000-$119,999	20.50%	12.90%	16.90%
$120,000-$149,999	17.30%	17.10%	19.30%
$150,000-$179,999	4.70%	10.00%	8.40%
$180,000-$209,999	7.10%	5.70%	0.00%
$210,000-$239,999	1.60%	0.70%	2.40%
$239,999+	1.60%	4.30%	1.20%
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian/White	79.50%	79.30%	73.50%
African American/Black	7.90%	9.30%	16.90%
Hispanic/Latino American	6.30%	5.70%	3.60%
Asian American/Asian	3.90%	2.90%	4.80%

Native American/American Indian	.00%	.70%	.00%
Other	2.40%	2.10%	1.20%
Sales Experience			
<1 year	2.40%	.70%	.00%
1-2 years	5.50%	7.90%	6.00%
3-6 years	13.40%	17.10%	28.90%
7-10 years	18.90%	15.00%	14.50%
11-15 years	11.00%	12.10%	12.00%
16-20 years	15.00%	13.60%	10.80%
>20 years	33.90%	33.60%	27.70%
Firm Size			
1-50 employees	16.50%	31.4%	30.1%
51-100 employees	15.00%	12.9%	19.3%
101-250 employees	14.20%	13.6%	14.5%
251-500 employees	10.20%	12.9%	15.7%
501-1,000 employees	11.80%	7.1%	8.4%
1,000+ employees	32.30%	22.1%	12.0%

Note: Specified seeds represent the average efficiency values for each cluster.

TABLE 23
Invariance Testing

Model Testing	χ^2 (*df*)	$\Delta\chi^2$ (*df*)	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Configural Invariance	1875.6		.90	.042	.064
Metric Invariance	1899.4	23.7 (30)*	.90	.041	.065
Scalar Invariance	1931.7	56.1 (42)*	.89	.042	.064

Note: Configural, partial metric, and partial scalar invariance were established.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 24
Multi-Group Equality Test

	Low|Core	Low|Top	Core|Top
NAV → IA	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .70	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .72	Δχ2(*df* = 1) = .10
IA → CRD	**Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 4.96***	**Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 3.07***	**Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 5.58****
IA → CRQ	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .02	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .95	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 1.54
CRD→ CRQ	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .18	**Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 4.50***	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .83
IA→ SP	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .08	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .43	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .21
CRQ → SP	Δχ2(*df* = 1) = 0.55	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .50	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = 1.27
CRD→ SP	Δχ2(*df* = 1) = .32	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .06	Δχ2 (*df* = 1) = .04

Note: Bonferroni-adjusted statistically significant chi-square cluster differences presented in bold. NAV = Navigation; IA = Intraorganizational Adaptiveness; CRD = Coordination; CRQ = Customer Relationship Quality; SP = Sales Performance.
*p < .1; **p < .05; *p < .01.

TABLE 25
Multi-Group SEM Standardized Coefficients

Relationships	Low Optimizers	Core Optimizers	Top Optimizers
Salesperson Navigation → Intraorganizational Adaptiveness	.76***	.77***	.96***
Intraorganizational Adaptiveness→ Coordination	.72***	.93***	.87***
Intraorganizational Adaptiveness→ Customer Relationship Quality	.38**	0.62	.49***
Coordination→ Customer Relationship Quality	0.13	-0.07	-0.19
Intraorganizational Adaptiveness→ Sales Performance	.51***	.97***	0.59**
Customer Relationship Quality→ Sales Performance	.45***	.35***	.50***
Coordination→ Sales Performance	-0.21	-0.49	-0.27

Note: Inter-group differences in standardized coefficients based on level of relative efficiency; *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

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1. Systematic Review Protocol

1. Review title

The Intraorganizational Dimension of the Sales Role: A Systematic Literature Review

2. Authors

Gabriel Moreno (UTEP)

3. Background

Sales performance is germane to a firm's overall performance and the sales role has been primarily studied by examining its relationship to its external environment (i.e., customers, business partners). However, it has been recognized that the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) can have a significant impact on important outcomes, such as customer satisfaction and sales performance. Nevertheless, scholarly work examining ISDR has not been thoroughly organized and, as a result, a structured map of related research can potentially ignite scholarly interest in this area. Therefore, this systematic review attempts to rigorously scrutinize the existing literature to gain a more nuanced perspective on the relationship between the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role (IDSR) and sales performance.

4. Review Question

Is the intraorganizational dimension of the sales role positively related to sales performance? What factors influence this relationship?

5. Eligibility criteria

Study selection

Papers that meet the following inclusion criteria will be included in the systematic review:

- Intraorganizational activity/behavior(s)
- Sales performance (subjective OR objective) must be an outcome of the study
- Empirical studies
- Conceptual papers
- English Language
- Peer-reviewed academic sources

Exclusion criteria:

- Externally-directed sales activity/behavior(s)
- Sales performance that is not part of the study's outcomes

*The number of excluded studies will be recorded at each stage. For those excluded upon review of the full text, reasons for their exclusion will be provided.

6. Evidence gathering

Scholarly databases:

- Business Source Complete (EBSCO)
- Emerald
- JSTOR
- ScienceDirect
- Web of Science (WebOS)

Gray literature:

- Google Scholar

7. Search Strategy

#	search string	# of results
1	Intra* AND sale* performance	136
2	Intra* AND sell* performance	69
3	Internal* AND sell*	429
4	Internal* AND sale*	904
5	Intra* AND sell*	268
6	Intra* AND sale*	391
7	Within* AND sale* performance	763
8	Within* AND sell* performance	351
9	Combined results with **OR** operator	2,647

8. Study Quality Assessment

- Relevance of study to the research question
- Internal validity of the study
    - Sources of bias (CMV)
    - Measurement reliability
    - Measurement validity
- External validity of study
    - Sample representativeness
    - Response rate
- Appropriateness of data analysis
    - Statistical power
    - Fit indices (if reported)
    - Effect size
- Interpretation of findings based on the analysis

9. Data extraction

- Data Extraction form (title, authors, journals, etc.).
- Electronic copy of papers
- EndNote used for citations and reference management

10. Data Synthesis

- Tabulation of study findings (description of studies).
    - Geographical distribution of studies
    - Research methods used
    - Research participants
    - Research context
    - Theoretical approach
- Narrative Synthesis
    - Patterns in the data
        - Organize into logical categories
    - Integration of results
        - Analyze findings within each category
    - Interpretation of results
        - Summary of results and meaning
        - Relevance in answering the review question

2. Measures

Exploratory Navigation (EXN)

(Plouffe & Gregoire 2011; Plouffe and Barclay 2007)

1. I learn as much as possible about my organization.

2. I examine my own company's organization charts and personnel directories.

3. When in an office of facility of this company that is not my own, I seek to understand what goes on there.

4. When at company functions (e.g., conferences, social events), I network and meet coworkers I did not know before.

5. I think about ways this company could better help me meet my customer's needs.

6. I utilize my existing contacts and network within this organization.

7. I keep up-to-date with personnel changes within my company.

Task-Driven Navigation (TDN)

(Plouffe & Gregoire 2011; Plouffe and Barclay 2007)

1. I seek out others in my organization who can help me fulfill my sales tasks.

2. If it makes sense to do so, I identify coworkers who can help me take care of my sales tasks.

3. If it helps me complete my sales tasks, I will contact people and departments I have never contacted before.

4. I seek information from others in this company who can assist me with my sales tasks.

5. I consult with internal parties on how to best complete my sales tasks.

Adaptive Selling (ADAPTS)

(Spiro & Weitz 1990; McFarland 2019)

1. Each customer requires a unique approach.

2. I feel that most buyers can be dealt with in pretty much the same manner.

3. I change my approach from one customer to another.

4. I try to understand how one customer differs from another.

5. When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach.

6. I like to experiment with different sales approaches.

7. I am very flexible in the selling approach I use.

8. I can easily use a wide variety of selling approaches.

9. Basically, I use the same approach with most customers.

10. I find it difficult to adapt my presentation style to certain buyers.

11. I vary my sales style from situation to situation.

12. I feel confident that I can effectively change my planned presentation when necessary.

Salesperson Performance

(Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994)

1. I contribute to my company's acquisition of a good market share.

2. I sell high profit-margin products.

3. I generate a high level of dollar sales.

4. I quickly generate sales of new company products.

5. I identify major accounts in my sales territory and sell them.

6. I exceed sales targets.

7. I help my sales supervisor meet his or her goals.

Selling Orientation / Customer Orientation (SOCO)

10-item validated scale (shortened from original 24 item scale (Saxe and Weitz, 1982)

Customer Orientation

1. I try to figure out what the customer needs are.

2. A good employee has to have the customer's best interest in mind.

3. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product/service that helps solve that problem.

4. I offer the product/service that is best suited for the customer's problem.

5. I try to find out what kind of products/services will be most helpful to a customer.

Selling Orientation

1. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer.

2. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer.

3. I try to sell a customer all I can convince them to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.

4. I paint too rosy a picture of my product/service to make them sound as good as possible.

5. I decide what product/service to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to accept, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.

Social Desirability Scale (SDR-O)

(Fisher et al.)

1. I never say anything bad about my boss to other employees.

2. I have never lied at work.

3. I am completely unbiased in my evaluations of others in the organization.

4. When I am working, I do not waste any time in non-work related tasks.

5. I have never violated company procedures in order to solve a problem.

6. I have never gossiped about the people at work.

7. I always honestly report my actual progress on tasks.

8. I always display pride in representing my organization to others.

Sales Coordination (SCORD)

(Plouffe and Grégoire 2011)

1. I get the assistance of key others that I need when coordinating the details of my transactions.

2. I get key others to act as additional internal points of contact for my customers.

3. My coworkers give me the coordination assistance I need to maximize my productivity.

4. My coworkers ensure that my customers do not 'fall through the cracks.'

Customer Relationship Quality

(Mullins et al. 2004)

1. My customers would be willing to make sacrifices to preserve our professional relationship.

2. Overall, my customers are very satisfied with me.

3. Overall, my customers like working with me.

4. My customers would perceive me as being trustworthy.

5. My customers would perceive me as being honest in all our dealings.

6. My customers are committed to our professional relationship.

Interfunctional Coordination

(Narver and Slater 1990)

1. Top management from every function should know about customers' needs.

2. Information about successful and unsuccessful customer experiences should be shared across all functions.

3. All business functions should be integrated in serving the needs of our target markets.

4. All of our managers should understand how everyone in our business can contribute to creating customer value.

5. Departments inside the company should share resources with one another.

Learning orientation

(Kohli, Shervani, and Challagalla 1998)

1. There is a lot of new things to learn about selling.

2. It is worth spending a lot of time learning new approaches for dealing with customers.

3. An important part of being a salesperson is continually improving your sales skills.

4. I put in a great deal of effort in order to learn something new about selling.

5. It is important for me to learn from each selling experience I have.

6. Learning how to be a better salesperson is of fundamental importance to me

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gabriel Moreno received his BS in Electrical Engineering in 2012, MBA in 2016, and Ph.D. in 2021, all three from The University of Texas at El Paso. He has cross-functional professional experience in the business-to-business sector, including engineering, operations, project management, and solution selling in the *high-tech* industry. As a quantitative researcher, Gabriel holds a particular interest in sales and sales force management, personal selling, sales performance, sales efficiency, and buyer-seller relationships. His research has been presented at the American Marketing Association and Academy of Marketing Science conferences, where he has also served as a reviewer. In his leisure time, Gabriel enjoys running, reading, grilling, wine tasting, and most of all, spending time with his family.