

**Accepted Manuscript**

This version of the paper has been accepted for publication after peer review and is available on Emerald Insight at:

<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/BIJ-10-2021-0598/full/html>

**Please cite this article as:**

Høgevold, N.M., Rodríguez, R., Otero-Neira, C. and Svensson, G. (2024), "Benchmarking meta-analytical conceptualizations of B2B seller skills against empirical evidence in services firms", *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 884-902.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/BIJ-10-2021-0598>

**General rights:**

This author accepted manuscript is deposited under a [Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial 4.0 International](#) (CC BY-NC) license. This means that anyone may distribute, adapt, and build upon the work for non-commercial purposes, subject to full attribution. If you wish to use this manuscript for commercial purposes, please contact:

[permissions@emerald.com](mailto:permissions@emerald.com).



## **Benchmarking Meta-analytical Conceptualizations of B2B Seller Skills against Empirical Evidence in Services Firms**

Journal:	<i>Benchmarking: an International Journal</i>
Manuscript ID	BIJ-10-2021-0598.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	sales performance, services firms, skill level, interpersonal, adaptativeness, sales technology

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

**Benchmarking Meta-analytical Conceptualizations of B2B Seller Skills  
against Empirical Evidence in Services Firms**

**STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** To benchmark meta-analytical conceptualizations of B2B seller skills against empirical evidence in services firms.

**Methodology/Approach:** Based on a deductive approach and questionnaire survey focusing on a range of services firms from different industries and corporate sizes. A total of 389 questionnaires out of 732 were returned, generating a response rate of 53.1%.

**Findings:** Provide empirical evidence and structures relating to B2B sellers’ capabilities in a seven-dimensional conceptualization, all of which can be used in services firms to improve their seller efficiency. Each seller skill dimension performs a different function in the sales services process.

**Research implications:** We conclude that the verified meta-analytical conceptualizations of B2B seller skills seem valid and reliable in services firms. Nevertheless, further research needs to be carried out, based on other company characteristics as well as industries.

**Practical implications:** Reducing the risk perceived by customers in B2B services settings through cultivating the sellers’ capabilities, based on the seven-dimensional evidence of seller skills to enhance sales performance.

**Originality/Value/Contribution of the paper:** Contributes to existing theory and previous studies by offering a foundation on which to structure sales performance indicators in services firms. Specifically, it contributes to structuring B2B seller skills across a selection of principal dimensions in B2B services settings.

**Keywords** – sales performance, services firms, seller skill, interpersonal, adaptiveness, selling-related knowledge, sales technology, Norway,

## Benchmarking Meta-analytical Conceptualizations of B2B Seller Skills against Empirical Evidence in Services Firms

### INTRODUCTION

Seller's performance or "...*excellence in making effective sales...*" (Punwatkarn and Varghese, 2014, p. 81) is a key issue that undoubtedly affects the overall performance of firms (Boles, Brashear, Bellenger and Barksdale, 2000). This applies particularly in the business-to-business (B2B) contexts (Aydin, Koc and Kaya, 2017; Limbu, Jayachandran, Babin and Peterson, 2016), given the relevant function of the sales staff as a linkage between companies and customers (Futrell, 2006).

In such environments, if sellers *work smart*, they add value to customer interactions and maximize business revenue (Boles et al., 2000; Futrell, 2006; Gordon et al., 1997; Rapp, Ahearne, Mathieu and Schillewaert, 2006). Certainly, firms' sellers are a critical resource in competitive environments (Moghareh Abed and Haghighi, 2009), and prominent actors as well (Gulati, Bristow and Dou, 2004). Yet, Gulati, Bristow, and Dou (2004) contend that a majority of research centers on manufacturers or buyers, but not the provider or seller. This study, therefore, considers the point of view of this critical business actor, namely, the sellers in B2B settings.

Seller performance, "*also known as sales performance*" (Limbu et al., 2016, p. 657) is a performance process that reflects the performance outcome of salespeople in terms of the effectiveness and efficiency of their work. Indeed, "... *sales force is a vital marketing tool...*" (Amor, 2019, p. 76) and therefore, identifying and fully understanding the indicators of seller's performance is highly relevant for managers as well as researchers in the sales arena, in order to increase the managerial ability to predict sales performance (Evans, McFarland, Dietz and Jaramillo, 2012; Herjanto and Franklin, 2019; Hovelvold et al., 2022).

The literature recognizes a number of sales performance indicators that can explain seller performance (Verbeke et al., 2011). The literature also confirms that seller skills are one of the key areas of sales performance indicators (Basir, Ahmad, and Kitchen, 2010; Churchill et al., 1985; Churchill, Johnson, and Walker, 2000; Verbeke et al., 2011; Walker et al., 1977). Nevertheless, more research on the issue is needed (Kwak, Anderson, Leigh, and Bonifield, 2019; Ulaga and Kohli, 2018). Several scholars have called for an increase in research-based knowledge on B2B seller skills and their effect on sales performance (Rodriguez et al., 2022a), since it appears to be: "...*the most important predictor of sales performance...*" (Rentz et al., 2002, p. 13).

In addition, the literature also suggests that the indicators of seller performance, including seller skills, are affected by the type of products (goods or services) that sellers offer (Churchill et al. 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011) and, recently, Rodriguez et al. (2022 a,b) recognize the paucity of evidence supporting the effect of seller skills on sales performance and the need to deepen our understanding of sales performance drivers but placing the focus on services in B2B environments. Moreover, Ahmad and Akbar (2020) confirm the sparse empirical evidence on this aspect in the case of B2B services firms. In effect, the various characteristics of services (e.g., Berry and Parasuraman, 1991) imply a more interactive and people-based selling process where relationships between sellers and buyers are more intense (Padin et al., 2015; Zeithaml et al. 1996) and clearly "...*affect the outcome of the sale...*" (Verbeke et al., 2011, p. 417).

Certainly, selling services is fundamentally different to selling products (Lin et al., 2018; Ulaga and Loveland, 2014), as the relationship between sales employees with B2B customers in service settings is much more intense and strongly affects customer retention and the firm’s competitive advantage (Alzaydi et al., 2018). Consequently, the role of salespeople skills is particularly relevant in shaping the sales performance in service B2B organizations.

It is therefore relevant, and important, to understand those selling skills that sellers need in B2B service markets, in order to adapt their selling strategies and be effective in their interactions with customers (Simintiras et al., 2013), and to ultimately succeed and increase competitive advantages and sales performance (Ulaga and Loveland, 2014). In this respect, Johlke (2006, p. 311) comments on the need to deepen research on: “...the nature and role of selling skills and their relations with job performance...”. In view of this research gap, “understanding those sales performance drivers factors of sales employees from a service perspective becomes imperative in securing a competitive advantage for sellers in a B2B context” (Rodríguez et al., 2022b, p. 579). Accordingly, this study centers on those seller skills that drive sales performance in service industries.

Altogether, the research objective of this study is to benchmark meta-analytical conceptualizations of B2B seller skills against empirical evidence in services firms. The benchmark is derived from the meta-analytical conceptualizations by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985). Accordingly, this study rests on the principal categories of B2B seller skills in the context of sales performance as conceptualized in the referenced meta-analyses, such as interpersonal, degree of adaptiveness, and selling-related knowledge plus use of sales technology, that are subsequently divided into a set of dimensions.

The specific contributions of this study bring scientific utility (Corley and Gioia, 2011) to the existing theory of service sales. The main value of this study relates to its general aim of improving the understanding of a particular area of indicators of sales performance: namely seller skills, which has been acknowledged as a key factor in sales research (Rentz et al., 2002). Specifically, we compare the meta-analytical conceptualizations with the empirical evidence relating to the properties of seller skill indicators affecting sales performance, considering Johnson and Jaramillo (2007) suggestion to use meta-analytical works to build up knowledge in sales research.

Consequently, this study uses Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al.’s (1985) meta-analytical conceptualizations as points of reference. It should be noted that these conceptualizations have not been tested previously and therefore lack empirical evidence of validity and reliability. In doing so, this study contributes to verifying the findings reported by Verbeke et al.’s (2011) and Churchill et al.’s (1985) meta-analytical conceptualizations on B2B seller skills in the context of sales performance in services firms. Therefore, the relevance of this work lies in validating, within a service B2B context, a proposed framework derived from the meta-analysis that synthetizes theory (Barrios et al., 2013; Card, 2015) and whose relevance needs to be assessed according to scientific standards (Cooper et al., 2019) in such a way as to ensure the progression of science and theoretical development of this sales arena (Johnson and Jaramillo, 2017; Tipton et al., 2019). That is to say, considering the previous meta-analysis, in this paper, we verify the critical role and impact of seller skill drivers on performance, in order to provide insights and guidance to managers in competitive B2B service settings.

Furthermore, recognizing that the indicators of sale performance (e.g., seller skills) are affected by industry context and type of products (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011), the study

focuses specifically on services seller skill in B2B settings. Accordingly, this study aims to falsify or confirm the validity and reliability of a conceptualizations of seller skills in services firms. Additionally, the conceptualizations tested in this study benchmark the dimensions of sellers' skills as indicators of sales performance, according to Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985) considering the services seller's viewpoint in B2B (Gulati et al., 2004). To do so, we structure this article as follows: (i) theoretical framework; (ii) methodology; (iii) empirical findings; (iv) research implications; (v) managerial implications; (vi) conclusions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

There is a lack of empirical sales literature explaining the variables which influence sales performance. One rare attempt is the study of Oniomah et al. (2019) who stated that the use of lead management systems inside sales influences performance through improving salesmanship and technical skills, adaptative selling, or lead follow-up intensity. However, these variables explain only 55% of sales performance. Charoensukmongkol and Suthatorn (2021) stated that *"It is essential for sales organizations to ensure that their sales force has adequate improvisational skills to handle sales adaptations effectively during unexpected sales situations"*. Most sales literature takes into account the impact of just two or three skills on sales performance (Harindranath et al., 2019). In most empirical studies, these skills fail to explain the sales performance variance. In this respect, reviewing the sales literature, we find one notable exception. Amor (2019) led a research project from the point of view of the seller and the sales manager. This research took into account, from an empirical point of view, the importance of multiple skills such as communication and listening skills, knowledge possession, follow-up, technology skills, sales presentation skills, flexibility and adaptability, empathy, cooperative skills, honest and ethical behavior, and time management skills. The link between sales performance and overall firm revenue (Rich et al., 1999) is what made the empirical research about the factors which can influence sales performance success so important for both the practical and theoretical literature.

Moreover, sales performance is a complex concept that can be measured as absolute or relative (Rodriguez et al., 2022a), which justifies the compelling need to use the appropriate empirical measures to understand which skills could influence relative sales performance and which absolute performance, and to what extent.

### **Framing sales performance**

Sales performance is one of the most important concepts in sales management and personal selling. The main reason for the importance of sales performance is its link to overall firm revenue (Rich et al., 1999). In fact, the clearest measure of this concept is "a resultant sale" (Zallico et al., 2009, p.598). However, the sales job is increasing in complexity. There are factors such as customer satisfaction, customer loyalty or the management of long-term customer relationships that are strategic for companies. This means it is necessary to consider a broader perspective of sales performance (e.g. Haines, 2004; Ingram et al., 2005).

In this study, we use an objective measure of sales performance as an indicator of a seller's contribution to the success of his/her organization (Rich et al., 1999).

### **Framing seller skills in sales performance**

Sellers' performance and related indicators of sales performance have been major research areas in the sales literature (Aydin, Koc, and Kaya, 2017; Hogevoold et al., 2022). The literature on sales performance indicators reveals three generally recognized meta-analytical works that

strive to group the research findings within the sales domain the literature. Specifically, this includes the work of Walker, Churchill and Ford (1977) followed by that of Churchill, Ford, Steven, and Walker (1985) and lately, by Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal (2011). This latter meta-analytical work of Verbeke et al. (2011), based on the other two previous seminal works, integrates sales performance indicators into five categories, with several sub-categories, namely sellers': skill, motivation, role perception, aptitude, and organizational and environmental.

The selling skills by the seller were found to be the most important area of sales performance indicators (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). Ford et al. (1987) describe seller skill as the natural or learned ability to perform necessary tasks in the sales process. It is clear that firms need highly skilled sellers to ensure successful sales, (Amor, 2019; Ingram et al., 2004) as the sellers represent the most important link of the firm with its customers (Lee and Dubinsky, 2003). Indeed, the literature assumes that possessing (or not) such skills affects seller success in the sales process, and hereafter, firms' sales performance (Basir, Ahmad and Kitchen, 2010; Churchill et al., 1985; 2000; Futrell, 2006; Rentz, Shepherd, Tashchian, Dabholkar and Ladd, 2002; Ingram et al., 2004; Verbeke et al., 2011).

This is particularly true in B2B settings where sellers operate as the "...interface between the company and its market..." (Basir et al., 2010, p. 52) and "...salespeople play an essential role in identifying and defining opportunities for their firm..." (Evans et al., 2012, p. 91). Certainly, the effect of seller skills on sales performance is well established in the theory (Basir et al., 2010; Ford et al., 2018). It is especially true in B2B settings, given that direct and face-to-face seller communication with customers is the predominant strategy. In such a context, identifying the specific seller skills that contribute to sales success in B2B settings is a crucial area for managers and researchers alike.

Hence, since Churchill et al.'s (1985) meta-analysis, the literature has paid particular attention to the identification of those relevant characteristics of sellers that are key inputs of sales performance (Ford et al., 1987; Rentz et al., 2002; Park and Holloway, 2003; Verbeke et al., 2011) to help managers, predict the performance levels of sellers.

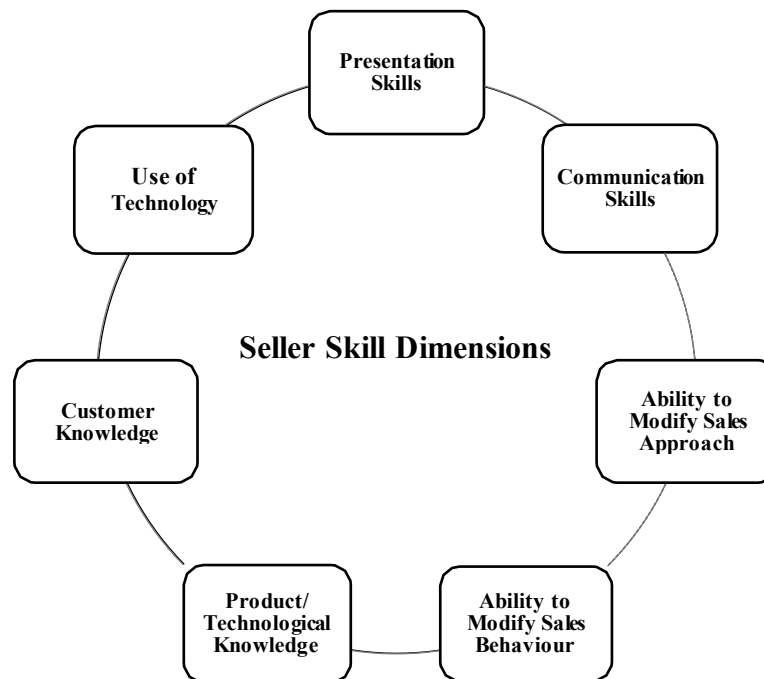
Various micro and macro selling skills have been identified in previous research related to such aspects as interpersonal abilities to understand and persuade others, in the form of communication or presentation skills (e.g. Ford et al., 1987), the capability or seller degree of adaptation to the selling situation within the interaction (e.g. Weitz et al., 1986), or the knowledge sellers have with regard to the product, technology or market (e.g. Ahearne and Schillewaert, 2000). In particular, Rentz et al. (2002) categorize such selling skills into three categories: interpersonal, salesmanship, and technical skills. More recently, and considering the technological challenges business are facing nowadays, the use of technology for sales is also considered a relevant skill that must be included as a seller competence (Arlı, Bauer, and Palmatier, 2018; Onyemah, Swain, and Hanna, 2010; Verbeke et al., 2011).

This study, therefore, applies a conceptualization, based on Verbeke et al.'s (2011) meta-analytical work, consisting of four areas and seven dimensions, that structure sellers' skill dimensions in B2B settings, and include the following categories of skills: (i) interpersonal, (ii) degree of adaptiveness, (iii) selling-related knowledge and (iv) the use of sales technology (see figure 1).

Accordingly, the seven dimensions taken into consideration as shown in Figure 1 are: interpersonal – (1) presentation skills and (2) communication skills; degree of adaptiveness – (3) ability to modify the sales approach and (4) ability to modify sales behavior; selling-related knowledge – (5) about product/technology and (6) about the customer; and (7) sales technology is about sellers’ use of technology.

**Figure 1: Conceptualization of B2B Seller Skills in Sales Performance.**

**Source: Author’s own**



## **SELLER SKILL DIMENSIONS**

Given the relevance of seller performance for managerial practices and considering that such skills are a key input for sales performance (Basir, Ahmad and Kitchen, 2010; Churchill, Johnson and Walker, 2000), the sales management literature pays great attention to the identification of those seller characteristics that can help managers to predict a higher performance level of sellers (Park and Holloway, 2003).

As above indicated and following the conceptualization by Verbeke et al.’s (2011) in their meta-analytical work, this study considers a conceptualization of four areas and seven dimensions of those seller skills that impact sales performance (see Figure 1).

### **Sellers’ Interpersonal Skills**

A seller skill dimension, as considered in this study, refers to B2B sellers’ interpersonal skills. The sales literature considers interpersonal skills as a wide range of seller abilities, such as persuasion, understanding, ability to listen, and empathy (Churchill et al., 1985; Rentz et al., 2002). These skills affect the seller’s ability to adapt sales strategies, while engaging in sales interactions with customers (Simintiras et al., 2013) so as to improve sales performance (Boorum, Goolsby and Ramsey, 1998; Punwatkarn and Varghese, 2014; Koponen, Julkunen, and Asai, 2019).



Recently, Ulaga and Kohli (2018) called for further research on the excellence of the interpersonal set of skills that B2B sellers need to be successful. On this issue, and considering the multitude of interpersonal skills, and with the aim of reducing them to a manageable number, this study follows the conceptualization provided by Verbeke et al. (2011) in their meta-analytical work. Two main dimensions are taken into consideration, namely: B2B seller communication skills and B2B seller presentation skills which have been investigated to improve sales performance (Arli, Bauer, and Palmatier, 2018).

*Sellers' Communication Skills*

Sellers need to communicate effectively in competitive environments since the most basic activity of exchange in B2B is precisely that of interpersonal communication (Notarantonio and Quigley, 2015). The exchange is: "...initiated, maintained, and terminated on a person-to-person basis..." (Williams and Spiro, 1985, p. 434). Indeed, the sales literature widely accepts the importance of communication for successful selling (Griffith, 2002; Rentz et al., 2002; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986).

Effective communication is clearly a key issue in B2B settings for achieving sales success, as sellers act as the direct link between the company and its customers (Futrell, 2006; Lee and Dubinsky, 2003). Indeed, a good communicator implicitly adapts communication to the selling situation and changes what is said and how in order to gain maximum sales. Nevertheless, communication is not just about sending information but is also a process of selling to influence the customers' purchase behavior (Dinu, Marei, and Pavel, 2017). Williams and Spiro (1985) and Dion and Notarantonio (1992) find an empirically strong association between seller communication and effective sales performance.

*Sellers' Presentation Skills*

Successful selling depends on effective presentations in B2B, since "...the salesperson's efforts unfold, exchange begins, and the buyer starts the decision process" (Cicala, Smith and Bush, 2012, p. 78). Johlke (2006, p. 312) defines sales presentation skills as those skills "...related to effectively conducting the personal selling process (i.e., the series of inter-related steps that salespeople commonly use to engage with and influence the customer...)".

The sellers' presentation to customers is a crucial stage of the sales process. If the seller has the ability to provide a good sales presentation that matches the customer's needs and concerns, this will improve sales performance (Abdolvand and Farzaneh, 2013; Cicala et al., 2012; Johlke, 2006).

**Degree of Seller Adaptiveness**

The ability of sellers to adapt to customers in B2B settings is an issue of paramount importance for achieving maximum sales effectiveness. Successful sellers need to understand and differentiate between selling situations and adapt to them accordingly (Arli et al., 2018; Evans et al. 2012; Román and Iacobucci, 2010). As Spiro and Weitz (1990) indicate that the degree of adaptiveness is a process in which sellers gather information and use it to meet their customers' needs and develop a unique sales atmosphere that will have a beneficial impact on their success.

Verbeke et al.'s (2011) meta-analytical conceptualization includes two dimensions, taking into consideration the degree of seller adaptiveness, namely the seller's ability to modify their sales approach and their sales behavior. In fact, the sales literature unanimously agrees that if the

sellers are competent enough to modify both their approach and behavior during sales interactions, this will yield a positive effect on sales performance (Boorom et al., 1998; Franke and Park, 2006; Jaramillo, Locander, Spector and Harris, 2007; Spiro and Weitz, 1990).

#### *Ability to Modify Sales Approach*

Sellers' ability to modify their sales approach reflects the capability to consciously customize their sales strategy (Basir et al., 2010). The main premise is that: "...the best way to sell is to select and implement a sales strategy contingent upon the characteristics of the prospective customer and situation..." (Román and Iacobucci, 2010, p. 363).

Modifying the sales approach is a process in which skilled sellers are able to tailor several selling tactics, such as sales presentation and communication modes, to the characteristics of each customer (Spiro and Weitz, 1990; Weitz et al., 1986). If sellers have the ability to modify their sales approach and offer an exclusive sales strategy for each customer (Román and Iacobucci, 2010), this adaptive talent will lead them to an increase in sales performance (Boorom et al. 1998; Franke and Park 2006).

#### *Ability to Modify Sales Behavior*

Seller ability to modify sales behavior reflects the capability to strategically modify their own behavior, thus adapting it to the exigencies of the marketplace and thus increasing their sales performance (Roman and Iacobuzzi, 2010; Weitz et al., 1986). The characteristics and environmental conditions of each sales situation are different so sellers must be able to behave adaptively (Weitz, 1981).

During the sales interaction, sellers skilled in this ability will change their behavior depending on their perception of the customer and the sales situation (Notarantonio and Quigley, 2015; Spiro and Weitz 1990). This behavioral component allows expert sellers to speak the "...customer's language..." (Román and Iacobucci, 2010, p. 377) and thus, enhance sales performance (Franke and Park 2006).

#### **Sellers' selling-related knowledge**

Seller skills involve specific knowledge related to their specific sales process (Kwak et al., 2019; Rentz et al., 2002). The knowledge associated with technical aspects of the products, as well as those related to the market and consumers, are important in B2B settings (Ahearne and Schillewaert, 2000; Verbeke et al., 2011). Sellers need to present rich knowledge of both the products they offer and the market where they offer them, to be able to tailor their sales strategy and apply more productive sales techniques (Basir et al., 2010; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan, 1986).

Sellers will reach out better to customers and increase their sales performance by possessing selling-related knowledge (Rentz et al., 2002). Verbeke et al. (2011) propose two main dimensions, namely knowledge about product features (including technical ones) and knowledge about customers.

#### *Product/Technological Knowledge*

Technical skills or product knowledge imply that sellers have a sound understanding of the product offered to customers, such as product specifications, applications, functions engineering skills, and technological development (Ahmad, Sah, and Kitchen, 2010; Amor, 2019; Churchill et al., 2000; Futrell, 2006; Rentz et al. 2002). In doing so, product and technical skills are related to the crucial capability of sellers to provide relevant and correct information to customers and enhance their performance of sales tasks (Basir et al., 2010).

Punwatkar and Varghese (2014) also indicate that sellers’ product/technological knowledge can improve sales, as this knowledge enables sellers to link product features more effectively with specific customer needs. It also permits sellers to apply different sales strategies, such as cross-selling and multiple selling, subsequently generating profitable sales and enhancing sales performance. As a result, matching the specific requirements of customers with the products (Akçura and Srinivasan, 2005) increases seller performance within the sales process (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002; Basir et al., 2010; Rentz et al., 2002; Verbeke et al., 2011).

*Customer Knowledge*

Customer or market knowledge “...constitute(s) the marketing skills of a salesperson...” (Basir et al., 2010, p. 55), including information and understanding that sellers possess about the industry in which they operate, comprising external and organizational environmental aspects (Ingram et al., (2004) such as knowledge on customer needs, rival markets, competitors, products, economic structure or company/industry trends (Ahearne and Schillewaert, 2000; Ahmad et al., 2010; Amor, 2019; Manning, Ahearne, Reece and MacKenzie, 2015; Futrell, 2006).

It is critical for seller efficiency and sales performance to be enhanced by customer knowledge in order to choose the most suitable sales strategy for each customer (Leong et al., 1989). Sellers will perform their selling activities more effectively by pursuing deep customer knowledge (Amor, 2019; Churchill et al., 2000; Ingram et al., 2004; Rentz et al., 2002; Verbeke et al., 2011).

**Sellers’ Use of Technology**

The sellers’ use of technology and its beneficial impact on their success is also considered in this study, given the increasing role that sales technology plays in personal selling in B2B markets (Ahearne, Srinivasan and Weinstein, 2004; Onyemah et al., 2010). This dimension covers the ongoing relevance of the use of the internet and other sales technologies in order to manage sales activities (Ahearne, Jones, Rapp, and Mathieu, 2008).

Without a doubt, the sales literature considers the use of technology as an important business challenge (Engle and Barnes, 2000; Gulati, Bristow, and Dou, 2004). It is a key issue for research in the sales area, to achieve a better understanding of effective sellers (Arli et al., 2018; Onyemah et al., 2010).

In fact, considering the use of technology as one of the seller skills that is an indicator of sales performance, is in line with Verbeke et al.’s (2011) meta-analytical work: “...salespeople should possess sufficient cognitive abilities to succeed in today’s world of selling...” (p. 422). In addition, Ko and Dennis (2004) find that sellers with greater technological expertise will achieve more benefits. Furthermore, Gulati, Bristow, and Dou (2004) reveal a positive connection between sellers’ use of the internet and their sales performance.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Dimensions and Items**

This study is based on the findings reported on meta-analytical conceptualizations on sales performance by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985). Common denominators across these conceptualizations consist of a selection of principal seller skill dimensions in B2B sales-performance settings.

The dimensions and items used in the questionnaire on seller skills have been adapted to this study from previous ones in an iterative process. Several main aspects identified in the meta-analyses by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985) (i.e., interpersonal, degree of adaptiveness and selling related knowledge plus sales technology) have been divided into dimensions. In total, seven dimensions were used in this study as follows (see also Table 1 with items): (i) sellers' interpersonal presentation skills (Shannanham et al., 2015); sellers' interpersonal communication skills (Boorom et al., 1998); sellers' degree of adaptiveness and ability to modify the sales approach (Spiro and Weitz, 1990); (iv) sellers' degree of adaptiveness and ability to modify sales behavior (Lennox and Wolfe, 1984); (v) sellers' selling-related knowledge of customers (Shannahan, Bush, Shannahan and Moncrief, 2015); (vi) sellers' selling-related knowledge of products and technology (Román and Iacobucci, 2010); sales technology relating to sellers' use of technology (Engle and Barnes, 2000).

A five-point Likert-type scale was used for all items, with strongly agree (5) and strongly disagree (1) as the anchor points.

**Table I: Dimensions and items on skill-level.**  
**Source: Author's own**

*** Skill-level ***	
<b>Sellers' Interpersonal Presentation Skills</b>	
a)	I focus on figuring out the real concerns of our customers.
b)	I convince our customers that I understand their unique concerns.
c)	I communicate my sales presentations clearly.
<b>Sellers' Interpersonal Communication Skills</b>	
a)	I have no fear of speaking up in conversations.
b)	I am calm in conversations.
c)	I feel relaxed while conversing with a new acquaintance.
<b>Sellers' Degree of Adaptiveness about the Ability to Modify Sales Approach</b>	
a)	I can change to another approach when I feel that my sales approach is not working.
b)	I modify my sales presentation if the situation calls for it.
c)	I feel confident that I can change my planned presentation when necessary.
<b>Sellers' Degree of Adaptiveness regarding the Ability to Modify Sales Behavior</b>	
a)	I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them.
b)	When I feel that the image I portray is not working, I can change it to something that does.
c)	I have no trouble changing my behavior to suit different people.
<b>Sellers' Selling-Related Knowledge about Product/Technology</b>	
a)	I keep up with my company's production developments.
b)	I know the specifications of my company's offerings.
c)	I keep up with my company's technological developments.
<b>Sellers' Selling-Related Knowledge about Customers</b>	
a)	My ability to understand customer's buying motives is excellent.
b)	My ability to distinguish between different kinds of customers is excellent.
c)	My ability to identify and analyze customer needs is excellent.
<b>Sellers' Use of Sales Technology</b>	
a)	I use technology to record customer call information.
b)	I use technology to plan territory-management activities.
c)	I use technology to prepare sales presentations based on my customer's specific needs.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

**Research setting and Sample Characteristics**

This study is based on a deductive approach. A questionnaire survey was undertaken based on a sample of 732 services firms across industries of Norway and different corporate sizes. The Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 2007) was used to identify and classify each firm in the sample.

Targeting the sellers was based on the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC 2007) and companies were randomly chosen, based on generated lists from Proff.no. A web service for selecting businesses based on defined criteria. Medium sized and large companies were selected due to the fact that smaller companies in the service sector in Norway seldom have dedicated sellers. Also, the research project and methods for collecting and storing data was approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research, with project number 605489.

The participating respondents in this study received an introductory letter with the contact details of the researchers and a questionnaire. The respondents contacted were sellers, team leaders, sales managers, key account managers and regional managers. Two selection criteria for each respondent were applied, namely: (i) each oversaw a sales budget and evaluated based on the sales performance in relation to budget; and (ii) each respondent engaged in sales, not only in charge of other salespeople.

Relevant services firms were contacted, and the sales directors were briefly introduced to the research study and asked to participate in the questionnaire survey. Respondents were encouraged to participate. Email reminders were sent out or follow-up phone calls were made to stimulate targeted respondents to fill in and return the questionnaire. It was done within a week from the initial contact with each respondent. The same contact protocol was undertaken again after two and three weeks after the first occasion of contact if the respondents had not returned the questionnaire. In sum, 389 returned questionnaires out of 732 targeted respondents were received. The data collection generated a satisfactory response rate of 53.1%.

The two final items in the questionnaire were screening questions to determine respondents' competence to fill in the questionnaire as follows: (i) respondents' number of years in sales, and (ii) respondents' number of years in sales the firm. The aim of the screening items was to determine the sales knowledge of each respondent. Campbell (1955) suggested the inclusion of competence check items as respondents need to be sufficiently knowledgeable to fill in the questionnaire satisfactorily. This study, it is about antecedents of sales performance in B2B services contexts.

The screening items reveal that the average number of years of respondents are 20.4 years of sales experience, with a median of 17.0 years. The screening items also reveal an average of 9.9 years for respondents' sales experience in the firm, with a median of 7.0 years.

A selection of univariate statistics is reported along with the outcome of the multivariate statistics to describe and analyze the data gathered in this study. This methodology is appropriately justified by other empirical papers (i.e., Dellana et al., 2021; Lepistö et al., 2022; Raghuvanshi et al., 2019; Sharma, 2021). The empirical findings are reported in subsequent sections and related paragraphs that follow.

## **EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

### **Sample Characteristics**

The characteristics of the cross-industry sample of this study represent a range of Norwegian services-oriented businesses in B2B settings as shown in Table 2.

**Table II: Nature of Cross-Industry Sample.**

**Source: Author's own**

Nature of Business	Count	Full-Time Employee Equivalent	Count	Annual Turnover (Euro)	Count
Wholesale and retail trade	63	1 – 9	11	0 – 9.9 Millions	19
Transport and storage	39	10 – 19	10	10.0 – 49.9 Millions	31
Accommodation and food service	20	20 – 49	12	50.0 – 99.9 Millions	38
Information and communication	47	50 – 99	21	100 – 249 Millions	126
Financial and insurance	103	100 – 249	77	250+ Millions	175
Real estate	2	250 – 999	96	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>
Professional, scientific and technical activities	54	1000+	162		
Administrative and support service	45	<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>		
Other services	16				
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>				

Table 3 reports the outcome of univariate analysis regarding items of each dimension of B2B seller skills indicators, showing a minimal internal non-response bias. The table also shows the mean values and standard deviations for the skill indicator items measured. The outcome of univariate statistics reported in Table 3 indicates consistent and high-quality responses from the key informants.

**Table III: B2B Seller Skill Indicators – Univariate Statistics**

**Source: Author's own**

Dimension	Item	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
<u>Interpersonal</u> – presentation skills	a)	379	4.60	0.58
	b)	379	4.44	0.62
	c)	379	4.09	0.89
<u>Interpersonal</u> – communication skills	a)	378	4.24	0.75
	b)	379	4.33	0.72
	c)	379	3.80	0.73
<u>Degree of Adaptiveness</u> – ability to modify sales approach	a)	382	3.90	0.84
	b)	382	4.19	0.72
	c)	382	4.19	0.75
<u>Degree of Adaptiveness</u> – ability to modify sales behavior	a)	380	3.83	0.76
	b)	380	3.83	0.73
	c)	381	4.15	0.77
<u>Selling-Related Knowledge</u> – product/technical knowledge	a)	381	4.35	0.60
	b)	381	4.15	0.77
	c)	381	4.07	0.77
<u>Selling-Related Knowledge</u> – customer knowledge	a)	383	4.03	0.66
	b)	382	4.09	0.60
	c)	382	4.00	0.64
<u>Sales Technology</u> – use of technology	a)	382	4.22	0.80
	b)	383	4.12	0.89
	c)	382	4.02	0.90

### **Factor Analysis**

An exploratory factor analysis (Norušis, 1993 and 1994) was undertaken to falsify or confirm the seven-dimensional conceptualization of B2B seller skills, based on the meta-analyses by Verbeke et al. (2011). The initial factor analysis consisted of 21 items with three per dimension as shown in Table 1. The principal component method was applied to reveal the pattern in the factor solution. An orthogonal approach (varimax rotation) was applied to rotate the factor solution.

The factor analysis was based on the seven dimensions of B2B seller skills found in the meta-analysis of Verbeke et al. (2011). The multi-item measures of each dimension were borrowed and modified from various sources as follows:

- interpersonal:
  - presentation skills (Shannanham et al., 2015)
  - communication skills (Boorom et al., 1998)
- degree of adaptiveness:
  - ability to modify sales approach (Spiro and Weitz, 1990),
  - ability to modify sales behavior (Lennox and Wolfe, 1984)
- selling-related knowledge:
  - customer knowledge (Shannahan, Bush, Shannahan, and Moncrief, 2015),
  - product/technology knowledge (Román and Iacobucci, 2010),
- sales technology:
  - use of technology (Engle and Barnes, 2000).

**Factor Solution**

Table 4 shows that the outcome of the refined factor solution is satisfactory (KMO/Overall MSA: 0.806; Bartlett’s Test: Approx. Chi-Square: 2561.874: df: 210: Sig: 0.000). Measures of sampling adequacy range between 0.65-0.91. Communalities range between 0.50-0.79, with a total, explained variance of 67.1%. The Cronbach Alphas for the seven factors range between 0.55-0.81.

We conclude that all seven factors identified in the factor solution of B2B seller skill dimensions based on services firms indicate acceptable convergent, discriminant, and nomological validity, as well as reliability of each sub-dimension. However, the dimensions of interpersonal indicators for sales performance have a lower validity and reliability than the others when it comes to presentation skills and communication skills.

**Table IV: Multivariate Statistics.****Source: Author's own**

Dimension and Item		Factor(s)							*	**
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
<u>Selling-Related Knowledge</u> – customer knowledge	a)	<b>.822</b>	.080	.118	.167	.065	.157	.028	0.753	0.834
	c)	<b>.794</b>	.031	.246	.118	.078	.226	.016	0.762	0.826
	b)	<b>.777</b>	.045	.117	.139	.165	.039	.182	0.701	0.883
<u>Sales Technology</u> – use of technology	b)	.020	<b>.878</b>	.120	-.001	.082	-.008	.037	0.793	0.809
	a)	.015	<b>.836</b>	.145	-.040	.041	.052	.104	0.737	0.769
	c)	.098	<b>.751</b>	.016	.125	.061	.109	-.084	0.612	0.804
<u>Selling-Related Knowledge</u> – product/technical knowledge	a)	.095	.080	<b>.845</b>	.115	-.018	.152	.064	0.771	0.646
	b)	.217	.055	<b>.785</b>	-.042	.075	.061	.032	0.679	0.640
	c)	.120	.188	<b>.717</b>	.264	-.024	-.036	.061	0.639	0.812
<u>Degree of Adaptiveness</u> – ability to modify sales approach	b)	.048	.068	.184	<b>.788</b>	.270	.170	.070	0.768	0.828
	c)	.174	.025	.169	<b>.733</b>	.197	.122	.219	0.698	0.859
	a)	.305	-.003	.005	<b>.674</b>	.193	.125	.154	0.624	0.913
<u>Degree of Adaptiveness</u> – ability to modify sales behavior	a)	.073	-.015	.008	.093	<b>.825</b>	.186	.123	0.745	0.808
	b)	.092	.149	.029	.344	<b>.751</b>	.061	-.009	0.719	0.787
	c)	.160	.106	.003	.205	<b>.662</b>	-.104	.223	0.577	0.851
<u>Interpersonal</u> – presentation skills	b)	.173	.097	.115	.029	.167	<b>.748</b>	.023	0.642	0.811
	a)	.073	-.036	.210	.152	.085	<b>.693</b>	.132	0.578	0.831
	c)	.139	.106	-.146	.189	-.134	<b>.608</b>	.109	0.487	0.814
<u>Interpersonal</u> – communication skills	c)	.092	.021	.085	.145	.080	.120	<b>.823</b>	0.735	0.741
	b)	.071	-.001	.019	.209	.083	-.042	<b>.716</b>	0.571	0.791
	a)	.038	.040	.054	-.044	.156	.367	<b>.576</b>	0.498	0.780
*** (%)		10.6	10.2	10.1	9.9	9.4	8.5	8.4		
**** (%)		10.6	20.8	30.9	40.8	50.2	58.7	67.1		
*****		0.81	0.78	0.76	0.78	0.74	0.55	0.61		

\*Communality per Item;

\*\*Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA per Item);

\*\*\*Total explained variance per factor;

\*\*\*\*Cumulative explained total variance;

\*\*\*\*\*Cronbach's Alpha

**RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS**

In their meta-analytical conceptualization, Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985) find that seller skills are the most important indicator of sales performance in B2B settings. The undertaken assessment of B2B seller skills in services firms is therefore relevant in B2B sales settings in general and sales performance in particular.

This study makes a meaningful contribution to empirical support in services firms regarding B2B seller skills in the context of sales performance. It provides empirical evidence consisting of seven dimensions, thus offering a platform to structure seller skill dimensions in services firms. The study confirms the results in the meta-analytical conceptualizations reported by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985).

The dimensions of B2B seller skills used in the study are relevant and based on: interpersonal – presentation skills (Shannanham et al., 2015) and communication skills (Boorum et al., 1998); degree of adaptiveness – the ability to modify sales approach (Spiro and Weitz, 1990) and ability to modify sales behavior (Lennox and Wolfe, 1984); selling-related knowledge – customer knowledge (Shannahan, Bush, Shannahan and Moncrief, 2015) and



product/technology knowledge (Román and Iacobucci, 2010); and finally sales technology – use of technology (Engle and Barnes, 2000).

The results therefore offer sound and useful opportunities for further studies in the context of sales performance. For example, this study’s results support the relationship between seller skill dimensions in relation and sellers’ objective (Boorom et al., 1998) and subjective (Sujan et al., 1994) performance in services firms. The study also tests the relationship between these seller skill dimensions in relation to sellers’ economic and non-economic (Park and Holloway, 2013) satisfaction.

An additional suggestion in B2B settings of services firms is to test the structural properties between the seven dimensions of seller skills. In extension, a useful suggestion would be to test to what extent these seller skill dimensions associate and relate to other sales performance indicators, such as seller role perceptions, seller motivation, and aptitude as well as the influence of organizational and environmental aspects on sellers, revealed by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985).

Another suggestion is to test to what extent there exist any moderating and mediating effects between B2B seller skills, role perception, motivation, aptitude, and organizational/ environmental in B2B settings of services firms or if they all only relate to the outcome of sales performance.

**MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

An important managerial implication is about reducing the risk perceived by customers in B2B services settings through cultivating seller capabilities based on the seven-dimensional evidence of seller skills, to enhance sales performance. B2B sales in services firms are less tangible and may be more complicated to manage than B2B product sales. B2B sellers of services or service solutions require capabilities to visualize and make the service offer more tangible, as well as convince customers about the service offered to reduce the risk of unsatisfactory customer perceptions.

This study structures these B2B seller capabilities in seven dimensions, all of which can be used in services firms to improve sales efficiency. Each seller skill dimension has a different function in the sales services process. Services firms need to be aware of which B2B seller skill dimension is related to specific functions in the services sales process, to continuously develop the weakest dimension of seller skill among their sellers.

One way to apply the seven-dimensional seller skills in practice is to divide it into four parts as follows:

- (i) develop interest and trust stressing interpersonal skills. The main function of service presentations is to capture sufficient interest from the customer to increase the probability of closing the deal. Therefore, the interpersonal presentation skill of B2B sellers is fundamental. The interpersonal communication of the seller is key along all B2B selling processes to inspire customer trust.
- (ii) adaptiveness to continuous changes in the marketplace – service offers are often, and to a large extent, intangible. This characteristic provides an advantage that products do not possess. The B2B seller can adapt almost the complete B2B services sales process in terms of the sales approach as well as sales behavior, to enable a connection with the needs of the customer.

(iii) tangibilize the service offer – in the services market more than in the product one, B2B sellers are the face of services firms. The service offers are to a large extent not tangible, but the B2B seller is highly tangible. The B2B seller skills regarding selling-related knowledge, therefore, become crucial. The B2B seller needs to have the necessary knowledge of the service offer and also in-depth knowledge of the customer.

(iv) use of technology – nowadays, the B2B sales processes involve technology. B2B sellers should be more efficient if they possess the appropriate technological insights and knowledge. Some service transactions are digitalized and automatic to avoid mistakes related to technology, which will also develop perceived confidence by the customer.

Companies can hire young people to work as B2B sellers. When companies are recruiting, they can measure interpersonal skills, technology capability, or adaptiveness. Candidates with the highest skills could thus be hired (Harindranath et al., 2019). Furthermore, companies need to train candidates in service offers and the remaining skills in order to improve their capabilities.

Altogether, the seven-dimensional seller skills verified in B2B, structure the indicators of sales performance.

## **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE**

The seven-dimensional evidence of seller skills (see Figure 1) contributes to existing theory and previous studies by offering a foundation for structuring sales performance indicators in services firms. Specifically, it contributes to structuring B2B seller skills across a selection of principal dimensions in B2B services settings. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study to focus on services firms, based on the meta-analytical conceptualizations by Verbeke et al. (2011) and Churchill et al. (1985).

The seven-dimensional evidence of seller skills has research implications for the services discipline, and implications for B2B services practices. This study, therefore, makes a relevant contribution to existing theory and previous studies in services research, but also to B2B research in general.

We conclude that the verified meta-analytical conceptualizations of B2B seller skill dimensions appear to be valid and reliable in service firms. However, this study suffers from several limitations. For example, this study is limited to a Norwegian sample. It is also limited to service firms. Furthermore, it is limited to medium and large firms. It also targeted sellers. The limitations offer opportunities for follow-up studies based on different samples of companies. It also offers opportunities to target product-oriented companies. In extension, very large companies could be targeted in future studies. Consequently, further research needs, therefore, to be conducted, based on other company characteristics as well as industries. By extension, the seven-dimensional evidence of seller skills requires further research in other European B2B settings, as well as in non-European ones, such as Australia and North America, but also in non-Western B2B settings such as Africa and Asia.

## **REFERENCES**

Abdolvand, M. A., & Farzaneh, S. (2013). Impact of Sales Experience and Training on Sales Presentation Skills between Industrial Salespersons. *Research Journal of Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology*, 5(8), 2661-2670.

Ahearne, M. & Schillewaert, N. (2000). Effect of Information Technology on Salesperson Performance. Institute for Study of Business Markets, Pennsylvania State University.

Ahearne, M., Jones, E., Rapp, A., & Mathieu, J. (2008). High touch through high tech: The impact of salesperson technology usage on sales performance via mediating mechanisms. *Management Science*, 54(4), 671-685.

Ahearne, M., Srinivasan, N., & Weinstein, L. (2004). Effect of technology on sales performance: Progressing from technology acceptance to technology usage and consequence. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 24, 297–310 (Fall).

Ahmad, B. & Akbar, M. I.-u.-D (2020), “Key Drivers of Salesperson Performance: The Role of Sales Antecedents and Moderating Effect of Customer Directed Extra Role Behavior”, *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, pp. 22-34.

Ahmad, S.Z, Sah, B. M. & Kitchen, P. J. C. (2010). The relationship between sales skills and salesperson performance, and the impact of organizational commitment as a moderator: An empirical study in a Malaysian Telecommunications Company. *Int. Journal of Economics and Management*, 4(2), 181-211.

Akçura, M. T., & Srinivasan, K. (2005). Research note: Customer intimacy and cross-selling strategy. *Management Science*, 51(6), 1007-1012

Alzaydi, Z.M., Al-Hajla, A., Nguyen, B. and Jayawardhena, C. (2018), “A review of service quality and service delivery: towards a customer co-production and customer-integration approach”, *Business Process Management Journal*, Vol. 24 No. 1, pp. 295-328, doi: 10.1108/BPMJ-09-2016-0185.

Amor, N. E. H. B. (2019). What Skills Make a Salesperson Effective? An Exploratory Comparative Study among Car Sales Professionals. *International Business Research*, 12(11), 76-93.

Arli, D., Bauer, C., & Palmatier, R. W. (2018). Relational selling: Past, present and future. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 69, 169–184.

Aydin, S., Koc, E., & Kaya, N. (2017). The Influence of Critical Success Factors on B2B Sales Performance and the Mediating Role of Social Intelligence. *Business Management & Strategy*, 8 (2), 1-25.

Baldauf, A. & Cravens, D. W. (2002). Effect of moderators on the salesperson behavior performance and salesperson outcome performance and sales organization effectiveness relationship. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(11/12), 1367-1388

Barrios, M., Guilera, G., & Gómez-Benito, J. (2013). Impact and structural features of meta analytical studies, standard articles and reviews in psychology: Similarities and differences. *Journal of Informetrics*, 7(2), 478-486.

Basir, M. S., Ahmad, S. Z., & Kitchen, P. J. (2010). The Relationship between sales skills and salesperson performance: an empirical study in the Malaysia Telecommunications Company. *International Journal of Management and Marketing Research*, 3(1,2), 51-73. <https://accounts.google.com/b/0/AddMailService>

Berry, L. and Parasuraman, A. (1991), *Marketing Services: Competing Through Quality*, Free Press, New York, NY.

Boles, J., Brashear, T., Bellenger, D., & Barksdale, H. (2000). Relationship selling behaviors: antecedents and relationship with performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 15 (2/3), 141-153

Boorum, M.L., Goolsby, J.R. and Ramsey, R.P. (1998), “Relational communication traits and their effect on adaptiveness and sales performance”, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 16-30.

Buchanan. B. (1974). Building organizational commitment: The socialization of managers in work organizations. *Administrative science quarterly*. 533-546.

Card, N. A. (2015). *Applied meta-analysis for social science research*. Guilford Publications.

- Charoensukmongkol, P., and Suthatorn, P. (2021). Linking improvisational behavior, adaptive selling behavior and sales performance. *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management*, 70(7), 1582-1603.
- Churchill Jr. G. A., Ford, N. M., Hartley, S. W., & Walker Jr. O. C. (1985). The determinants of salesperson performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of marketing research*, 22(2), 103-118.
- Churchill, G. A., Jr., Ford, N. M.; Johnson, M.W. & Walker, O.C. Jr. (2000). *Sales Force Management* (6th ed.). Singapore: McGraw-Hill Co.
- Cicala, J. E., Smith, R. K., & Bush, A. J. (2012). What makes sales presentations effective—a buyer-seller perspective. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*. Volume 27 · Number 2, 78–88
- Cooper, H., Hedges, L. V., & Valentine, J. C. (Eds.). (2019). *The handbook of research synthesis and meta-analysis*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Corley, K. G., & Gioia, D. A. (2011). Building theory about theory building: What constitutes a theoretical contribution? *Academy of Management Review*, 36(1), 12 – 32.
- Dinu, A., Marei, R., & Pavel, I. M. (2017). Empirical Study Regarding The Influence Of Communication On Sales Performance. In *Proceedings of the INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE* (Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 182-187). Faculty of Management, Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Romania.
- Dion, P. A., & Notarantonio, E. M. (1992). Salesperson communication style: The neglected dimension in sales performance. *The Journal of Business Communication* (1973), 29(1), 63-77.
- Engle, R. L., & Barnes, M. L. (2000). Sales force automation usage, effectiveness, and cost - benefit in Germany, England and the United States. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 216-241.
- Evans, K.R., McFarland, R.G., Dietz, B. and Jaramillo, F. (2012), “Advancing sales performance research: a focus on five under researched topic areas”, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 32 No. 1, pp. 89-105.
- Ford, N. M., Walker, O. C., Jr., Churchill, G. A., & Hartley, S. W. (1987). Selecting successful salespeople: A meta-analysis of biographical and psychological selection criteria. In M. J. Houston (Ed.), *Review of marketing*. Chicago: American Marketing Association.
- Ford, J. K., Baldwin, T. T., & Prasad, J. (2018). Transfer of training: The known and the unknown. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 5, 201-225.
- Franke, G. and Park, J.-E. (2006), “Salesperson adaptive selling behavior and customer orientation: a meta-analysis”, *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 43 No. 4, pp. 693-702.
- Futrell, C. M. (2006). *Fundamental of Selling: Customer for Life Through Services*(9th Ed.). McGraw-Hill Irwin: New York.
- Gordon, G. L., Schoenbachler, D. D., Kaminski, P. F., & Brouchous, K. A. (1997). New Product Development: Using the Salesforce to Identify Opportunities. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 12(1),33-50.<https://doi.org/10.1108/08858629710157922>
- Griffith, D. A. (2002). The role of communication competencies in international business relationship development. *Journal of World Business*, 37, 256 – 265.
- Gulati, R., Bristow, D. N., & Dou, W. (2004). The impact of personality variables prior experience, and training on sales agents' internet utilization and performance. *Journal of Business to Business Marketing*, 11(1-2), 153-182.
- Haines, M. (2004), “Sales metrics and the sales dashboard: gear up for improved accountability”, *VARBusiness*, Vol. 20 No. 12, p. 60.

- Harindranath, R.M., Sivakumaran, B., and Jacob, J. (2019). The moderating role of sales experience in adaptive selling, customer orientation and job satisfaction in a unionized setting. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 34(8), 1724-1735.
- Herjanto, H., & Franklin, D. (2019). Investigating salesperson performance factors: A systematic review of the literature on the characteristics of effective salespersons. *Australasian Marketing Journal (AMJ)*, 27 (2), 104-112.
- Høgevold, N. M., Rodriguez, R., Svensson, G., & Roberts-Lombard, M. (2022). Organisational and environmental indicators of B2B sales performance. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 40 (1), pp. 33-56.
- Ingram, T. N., LaForge, R. W., Avila, R. A., Schwepker, Jr. C. H. & Williams, M. R. (2004). *Sales Management: Analysis and Decision Making* (5th Ed.). South-Wester, OH: Thomson.
- Ingram, T.N., LaForge, R.W., Locander, W.B., MacKenzie, S.B. and Podsakoff, P.M. (2005), "New directions in sales leadership research", *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, Vol. 25 No. 2, pp. 137-54.
- Jaramillo, F., Locander, W.B., Spector, P.E. & Harris, E.G. (2007), "Getting the job done: the moderating role of initiative on the relationship between intrinsic motivation and adaptive selling", *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 59-74.
- Johlke, M. C. (2006). Sales presentation skills and salesperson job performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 21(5), 311–319.
- Johnson, J. S., & Jaramillo, F. (2017). Meta-analyses in sales research. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 37(2), 134-152. Kopone, 2019).
- Ko, D.-G., & Dennis, A. R. (2004). Sales force automation and sales performance: Do experience and expertise matter? *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 24, 311–322 (Fall).
- Koponen, J., Julkunen, S., & Asai, A. (2019). Sales communication competence in international B2B solution selling. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 82, 238-252.
- Kwak, H., Anderson, R. E., Leigh, T. W., & Bonifield, S. D. (2019). Impact of salesperson macro-adaptive selling strategy on job performance and satisfaction. *Journal of Business Research*, 94, 42-55.
- Lee, S., & Dubinsky, A. (2003). Influence of salesperson characteristics and customer emotion on retail dyadic relationships. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 13(1), 21-36.
- Leong, Siew Meng, Paul S. Busch & Deborah Roedder John (1989). "Knowledge Bases and Salesperson Effectiveness: A Script-Theoretic Analysis," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 26 (May): 164–178.
- Lennox, R. D., and Wolfe, R. N. (1984). Revision of the self-monitoring scale. *Journal of personality and social psychology*. 46 (6). 1349-64
- Limbu, Y.B., Jayachandran, C., Babin, B.J. & Peterson, R.T. (2016), "Empathy, nonverbal immediacy, and salesperson performance: the mediating role of adaptive selling behavior", *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 654-667.
- Lin, H.-C., Bruning, P.F. and Swarna, H. (2018), "Using online opinion leaders to promote the hedonic and utilitarian value of products and services", *Business Horizons*, Vol. 61 No. 3, pp. 431-442, doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.010.
- Manning, G. L., Ahearne, M., Reece, B., & MacKenzie, H. H. (2015). *Selling today: Creating customer value*. Pearson Canada.
- Moghareh Abed, G. & Haghighi, M. (2009), "The effect of selling strategies on sales performance", *Business Strategy Series*, Vol. 10 No. 5, pp. 266-282.

- Notarantonio, E., & Quigley, C. J. (2015). The relationship between communication style and sales performance. In Proceedings of the 1990 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference (pp. 73-76). Springer, Cham.
- Ohiomah, A., Andreev, P., Benyoucef, M., and Hood, D. (2019). The role of lead management systems in inside sales performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 102, 163-177.
- Onyemah, V., Swain, S. D., & Hanna, R. (2010). A social learning perspective on sales technology usage: Preliminary evidence from an emerging economy. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 30(2), 131-142.
- Padin, C., Svensson, G., Otero-Neira, C., & Høgevold, N. (2015). New aspects of research to assess and manage critical incidents in service encounters. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 27-51.
- Park, J. E., & Holloway, B. B. (2003). Adaptive selling behavior revisited: An empirical examination of learning orientation, sales performance, and job satisfaction. *Journal of personal selling & sales management*, 23(3), 239-251.
- Punwatkar, S., & Varghese, M. (2014). Impact of competencies on sales performance: empirical evidence on salesmen at a furniture mart in central India. *Pacific Business Review International*, 6 (12), 81-86.
- Rapp, A., Ahearne, M., Mathieu, J., & Schillewaert, N. (2006). The impact of knowledge and empowerment on working smart and working hard: The moderating role of experience. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23(3), 279 – 293.
- Rentz, J. O., Shepherd, D. C., Tashchian, A., Dabholkar, P. A., & Ladd, R. T. (2002). A measure of selling skill: scale development and validation. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 22(1), 13–21.
- Rich, G. A., Bommer, W. H., MacKenzie, S. B., Podsakoff, P. M., & Johnson, J. L. (1999). Apples and apples or apples and oranges? A meta-analysis of objective and subjective measures of salesperson performance. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 41-52.
- Rodriguez, R., Høgevold, N. M., Otero-Neira, C., & Svensson, G. (2022a). The direct effect of B2B sellers' skills on relative and absolute sales performance: a dual measurement approach. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, (ahead-of-print).
- Rodriguez, R., Roberts-Lombard, M., Høgevold, N. M., & Svensson, G. (2022b). Organisational and environmental indicators of B2B sellers' sales performance in services firms. *European Business Review*, Vol. 34 No. 4, pp. 578-602
- Román. S. and Iacobucci. D. (2010). Antecedents and consequences of adaptive selling confidence and behavior: a dyadic analysis of salespeople and their customers. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 38(3). 363-382.
- Shannahan. R. J., Bush. A. J., Shannahan. K. L., and Moncrief. W. C. (2015). How salesperson perceptions of customers' pro-social behaviors help drive salesperson performance. *Industrial Marketing Management*. 51. 100-114.
- Simintiras, A. C., Ifie, K., Watkins, A., & Georgakas, K. (2013). Antecedents of adaptive selling among retail salespeople: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 20(4), 419-428.
- Spiro. R. L., and Weitz. B. A. (1990). Adaptive selling: Conceptualization, measurement, and nomological validity. *Journal of marketing Research*. 27(1). 61-69.
- Sujan, H., Weitz, B. A., & Kumar, N. (1994). Learning orientation, working smart, and effective selling. *Journal of marketing*, 58(3), 39-52.
- Tipton, E., Pustejovsky, J. E., & Ahmadi, H. (2019). A history of meta-regression: Technical, conceptual, and practical developments between 1974 and 2018. *Research synthesis methods*, 10(2), 161-179.

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Ulaga, W. & Kohli, A.K. (2018). The role of a solutions salesperson: Reducing uncertainty and fostering adaptiveness. *Industrial Marketing Management* 69, 161–168

Ulaga, W. and Loveland, J.M. (2014), “Transitioning from product to service-led growth in manufacturing firms: emergent challenges in selecting and managing the industrial sales force”, *Industrial MarketingManagement*, Vol. 43No. 1,pp. 113-125, doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2013.08.006

Verbeke. W.. Dietz. B.. & Verwaal. E. (2011). Drivers of sales performance: a contemporary meta-analysis. Have salespeople become knowledge brokers?. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 39(3). 407-428.

Walker Jr. O. C.. Churchill Jr. G. A.. & Ford. N. M. (1977). Motivation and performance in industrial selling: present knowledge and needed research. *Journal of Marketing Research*. 14(2). 156-168.

Weitz, B. A. (1981). Effectiveness in sales interactions: a contingency framework. *Journal of Marketing*, 45(1), 85-103.

Weitz, B. A., Sujan, H., & Sujan, M. (1986). Knowledge, motivation, and adaptive behavior: a framework for improving selling effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(October), 174–191

Williams, K. C., & Spiro, R. L. (1985). Communication style in the salesperson-customer dyad. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22, 434-442.

Zallocco, R., Pullins, E. B., & Mallin, M. L. (2009). A re - examination of B2B sales performance. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*. 24(8); 598 – 610.

Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of marketing*, 60 (2), 31-46.