

AN EXAMINATION OF SALESPERSON BEHAVIOR
AS A DETERMINANT OF BUYER TRUST
IN THE SELLER AND INTERFIRM
MARKETING RELATIONSHIPS

BY

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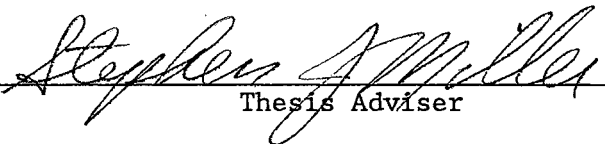
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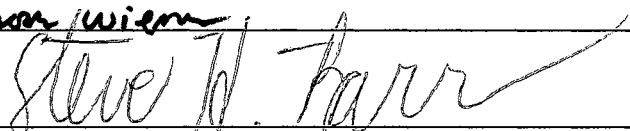
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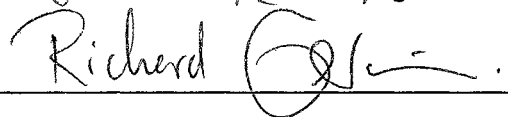
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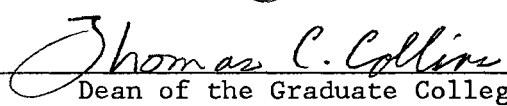
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Exploring buyer-seller interactions and exchange is fundamental to marketing. It has often been argued that the exchange of value between two parties is the core concept in marketing (e.g., Alderson 1957; Bagozzi 1975; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987; Kotler 1972). Attention must be given to explaining the behaviors of both buyers and sellers as directed toward consummating exchanges (Hunt 1983). Two research domains that have focused on buyer-seller interactions in marketing are personal selling and business-to-business marketing.

Research on Personal Selling

For many types of industries and firms, personal selling is the most important vehicle for communicating and consummating exchanges with markets (Kotler 1988; Weitz 1978; 1981). This is due in large part to the highly interpersonal and adaptive nature of personal selling, which allows great flexibility in message content and delivery. From a managerial standpoint, the important question about sales interactions is how the behaviors of salespeople affect outcomes. Research to date, however, has focused only on certain aspects of personal selling in answering the question.

One of the earliest research approaches sought to identify ideal salesperson traits (e.g., height, education), personality attributes (e.g., aggressiveness, dominance), and selling processes (e.g., the AIDA formula: attention, interest, desire, and action) that were consistently associated with higher sales performances (Davis and Silk 1972; Webster 1968). While this line of investigation often yielded some interesting results, the approach as a whole failed to provide generally consistent and conclusive knowledge of the determinants of salesperson effectiveness (Weitz 1981).

A second basic research approach in personal selling was based on the "Yale school of thought on personal communication" and interpersonal influence (Sheth 1976, p. 382). This approach viewed personal selling in the context of a source-message-receiver (SMR) model of one-way mass communication (Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977). Researchers attempted to explain how various combinations of SMR elements influenced sales outcomes.

Personal-selling research based on the SMR model is conceptually more sophisticated and realistic than trait-based approaches. Yet, the body of work to date is limited in its contribution. Like trait-based studies, SMR studies have focused on predicting sales success by selecting factors believed to be associated with salesperson effectiveness. Little has been accomplished toward explaining why (i.e., the process by which) certain relationships may exist (Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977).

More recently, researchers have attempted to develop richer conceptualizations of the buyer-seller dyad and interaction process

(e.g., Sheth 1976; Williams, Spiro, and Fine 1990). Their efforts are especially noteworthy for better depicting the two-way interaction between a buyer and seller and emphasizing the role of social processes within the buyer-seller dyad (Figure 1). Conceptualizations have included describing the communication process (e.g., Hulbert and Capon 1972) and accounting for situational contingencies that influence buyer-seller interaction (e.g., Weitz 1981). These descriptions have made at least two important contributions. First, they served to focus more attention on the interaction between sellers and buyers as a key determinant of selling outcomes. Second, in focusing on buyer-seller interaction, they began to delineate more thoroughly the important characteristics of the content and style of selling communication.

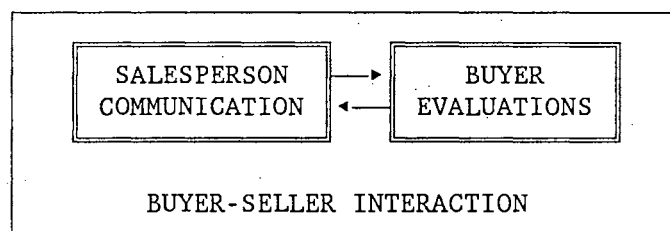


Figure 1. Buyer-Seller Interaction

The present study argues that previous research on personal selling has resulted in the identification of two fundamental behavioral concepts: (1) adaptive selling and (2) customer-oriented selling. Research has suggested that adaptive and customer-oriented selling behaviors are key determinants of salesperson effectiveness in many

selling contexts. This conclusion provides a central guiding theme to present-day selling research. Given important advancements, however, it can still be argued that knowledge development in the area of personal selling has been limited. Specifically, a review of the literature reveals at least three important limitations. First, research efforts, both conceptual and empirical, have been largely sporadic and ad hoc. Little effort has been made to integrate and extend key research perspectives (Hulbert and Capon 1972; Sheth 1976).

Second, research has focused almost entirely on identifying, from a normative perspective, what salespersons should do or what the content of the selling process should be. This research approach has pursued identifying static traits or communication styles and linking them to (predicting) sales outcomes. Thus, the salesperson is either implicitly or explicitly viewed as being solely responsible for the outcome of buyer-seller interactions; and the results speak more to salesperson selection than to training (Hulbert and Capon 1972; Webster 1968).

Finally, personal-selling research has focused primarily on the attainment of a sale or transaction as the definition of "salesperson effectiveness." Attention should be given to long-term buyer-seller relationships as potent sources of competitive advantage and driving mechanisms behind future sales in many circumstances (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988). This could shift attention to explaining behavioral aspects of salesperson-customer interactions and identifying key social processes (e.g., stages in relationship development) as important measures of salesperson effectiveness. Linking the salesperson's efforts to social outcomes directly addresses

the important issue of what the salesperson does to "shape the course along which an interaction proceeds" (Davis and Silk 1972, p. 65).

Important objectives for future research on personal selling include integrating and extending existing selling concepts, such as adaptive and customer-oriented selling. In addition, it is critical to gain a better understanding of the consequences of selling behaviors, to include the social aspects of buyer-seller interactions, such as trust and long-term relationship development. These issues are especially important in contexts such as business-to-business marketing. In these settings, personal selling is often the main form of communication from a selling firm to a buying firm and exchanges occur only as a result of multiple interactions and the development of buyer-seller relationships.

Research on Business-to-Business Marketing

Recent developments in the realm of industrial and business-to-business marketing further underscore the importance of exploring buyer-seller interactions. Developing partnerships, strategic alliances, and marketing relationships between firms (e.g., suppliers and distributors) is viewed increasingly as a key dimension of contemporary industrial marketing strategy. This trend has focused more attention on managing the interpersonal connections that develop between organizations (Garvin 1988; Schnaars 1991; Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1990). As this perspective has evolved, the industrial salesperson has come to be viewed as the critical link between firms and as an important factor in the selling firm's relationship-marketing strategy (Webster 1976).

From one perspective, the trend toward developing and managing interfirm relationships is part of the current interest in quality improvement. Firms are seeking to develop internal cultures, strategies, and management styles that yield improved quality (Figure 2). This quality improvement relates to both the products that are manufactured (product quality) and the interaction processes that take place between a selling firm and its customers (process quality) (Klaus 1985). Within this context, increasing emphasis is being placed on the link between managing the buying-selling interface and achieving long-term success in industrial marketing (Frazier and Sheth 1985; Spekman and Johnston 1986).

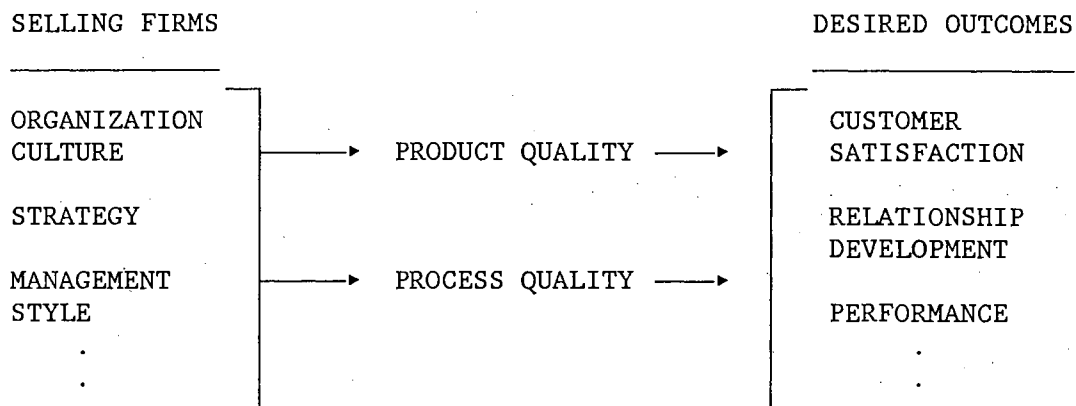


Figure 2. Trends in Business-to-Business Marketing

Research trends in business-to-business marketing have made important contributions to marketing thought. These contributions include viewing buyer-seller exchange as a dyadic rather than a

unilateral process (Levitt 1967; Webster 1968), and examining exchange in the context of long-term relationships rather than as discrete events (Arndt 1979; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987). Indeed, current research subscribes to the notion that buyer-seller exchanges in the distribution channel or business marketing arenas involve long-term relationships evolving from sequences of dyadic interactions (Iacobucci and Hopkins 1992).

To develop frameworks for examining exchange relationships between firms, marketing researchers have drawn upon theories of social exchange, group dynamics, and contract law (e.g., Heider 1958; Homans 1961; Macneil 1980; Thibaut and Kelley 1986). This body of thought has argued that exchange is fundamentally a social phenomenon, a transfer of tangible and intangible artifacts between two social actors. It is explicit in this social context that exchanges often transpire over time and involve the development of relationships between the actors. Thus, this body of theory is important for contributing much about the social dimensions of interpersonal interactions to the realm of marketing. And as this perspective has evolved, the need to better understand how these social issues influence marketing exchanges has been identified as a key research topic for the present and future (Arndt 1979; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988).

Purpose of the Present Study

The present study seeks to make substantive contributions to research on buyer-seller interactions by addressing the research needs noted above. The primary purpose of the study is to examine how

salesperson behaviors influence the development of interfirm marketing relationships (see Figure 3). Specifically, customer-oriented and adaptive selling are examined for their effect on trust within the buyer-seller dyad.

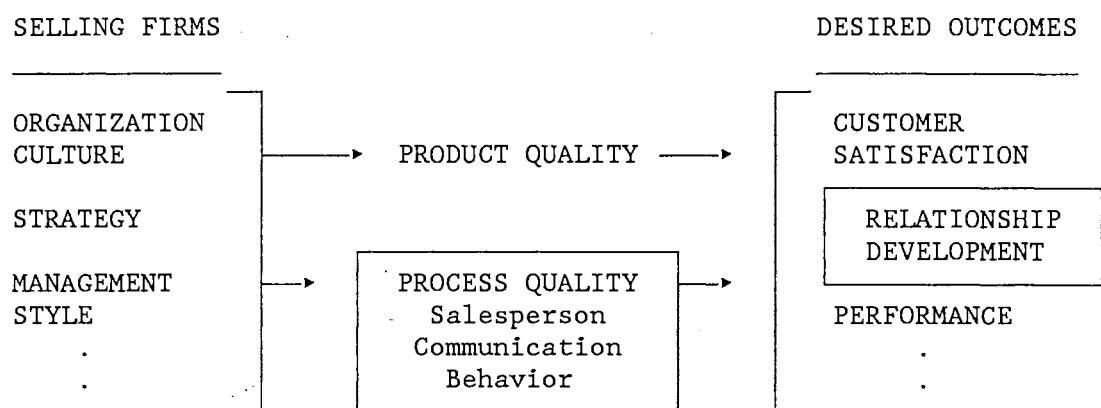


Figure 3. Focus of the Present Study

The study is based on the premise that customer-oriented and adaptive selling are two core behavioral constructs developed in personal selling and that trust is one of the most important indicators of an expanding relationship. Timely questions addressed by the research include:

1. To what degree does a salesperson's behavior influence a buyer's trust in the salesperson and in the selling firm?
2. To what degree does a buyer's trust in the seller influence the expansion of a marketing relationship between the buying and selling firms?

Linking Two Research Domains

An additional premise of this study is that an important opportunity exists to contribute to research on buyer-seller interactions by linking the research domains that examine salesperson effectiveness and relational exchange in marketing. Linking the two domains can allow researchers and practitioners to test central concepts and address key questions in both areas. For example, one important area of inquiry concerns how certain salesperson role behaviors influence buyer-seller negotiations and overall selling effectiveness (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Szymanski 1988; Weitz 1981). Other important questions relate to better understanding the antecedents of interfirm marketing relationships (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987).

Many selling contexts are relational in nature, where sales transpire over time and only after multiple selling interactions occur between buyer and seller. This is especially true in many industrial selling contexts. Often, exchange represents a high-involvement situation that is based on meeting relatively unique needs of individual prospects. In these contexts, then, the most important outcomes of initial buyer-seller interactions may be the social dimensions of a relationship that determine if future transactions will transpire.

Drawing upon social-exchange and group-process theories, recent research in marketing (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987) has conceptualized the process of relationship development in a marketing context. While a more thorough examination of this research will be presented later, it is useful at this point to identify the connection

between relationship development and personal selling that is of interest to this study (Figure 4).

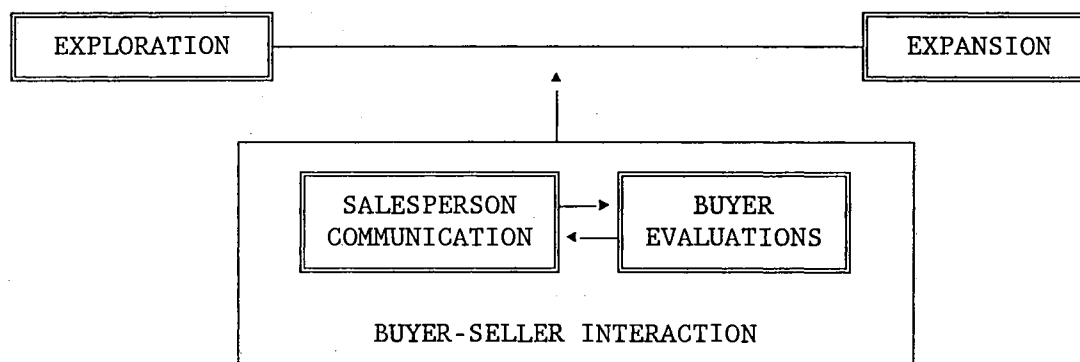


Figure 4. Buyer-Seller Interaction and Relationship Development

It is posited that customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors positively influence the formation of important social constructs between the prospect and the salesperson as well as between the prospect and the selling firm. This is especially true during early stages of relationship development. For example, it is during initial interactions between a salesperson and a prospect (the Exploration Stage) that critical dimensions of relationships (such as trust and commitment) form. These developments are the essential factors that define more advanced stages of relationships between firms (e.g., the Expansion Stage) (Bonoma and Johnston 1978; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987).

During customer-salesperson interactions, the salesperson is largely responsible for representing the selling firm's position and

strategy. Increasingly, selling firms are seeking the development of strong ties with buying firms that will lay the ground work for future exchanges. The present study seeks to support empirically that specific, trainable selling practices influence key dimensions of relationships between the buying and selling firms. As discussed earlier, there have been numerous ad hoc and inconsistent attempts to explain selling effectiveness as a function of specific salesperson characteristics or communication effects. However, almost no empirical work has explored the connections between salesperson behaviors and the social aspects of the buyer-seller relationship. Exploring this connection offers great potential for providing the type of systematic explanation of the selling process and outcomes attempted by previous research.

Salesperson Communication Behavior and Trust

In the proposed study, customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors are conceptualized as being important determinants of marketing relationships. Further, trust is viewed as an important first-level outcome of many selling interactions, a critical indicator of an expanding relationship, and a determinant of future sales. It is posited that a buyer's trust during initial buyer-seller interactions takes the form of trust in the salesperson as well as trust in the selling firm.

Social exchange theory (e.g., Homans 1961; Thibaut and Kelley 1986) provides a foundation for ideas about relationship development and behavioral interdependence. Trust is an important concept in this

literature. Indeed, interpersonal trust may be the most important single indicator of an expanding relationship (Scanzoni 1979). The behavioral norms that emerge during initial interactions lead to expectations about the future role performance of exchange partners. In a relational selling context, customer-orientated and adaptive selling behaviors can be indicators of a salesperson's cooperation, goal-congruence, commitment to the relationship, and interest in the buyer's needs (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Blake and Mouton 1970; Ford 1980; Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). These concepts are important bases for the development of expectations in the face of uncertainty and risk, which is the essence of trust in an exchange relationship. Thus, it is posited that customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors are positively related to a buyer's sense of trust in a salesperson in these contexts.

It is also posited that the relationship-development process during initial buyer-seller interactions extends to the buyer's sense of trust in the selling firm. This view builds on the notion of the salesperson as the most important source of information about the selling firm during the exploration phase of many exchange relationships (e.g., Leigh and Rethans 1984; Swan and Nolan 1985). Thus, the salesperson is seen as a cue to the buyer about the nature of the selling firm. The buyer's developing sense of trust in the salesperson influences the buyer's initial sense of trust in the selling firm, which in turn also influences future relationship expansion and exchange.

Potential Contributions

As noted above, past research in personal selling has focused on predicting sales as a function of static salesperson traits or communication styles. Little substantive work has focused on explaining behavioral and social aspects of buyer-seller interaction, which would focus more on explaining how and why various interaction processes work. In response, it is believed that the present study addresses several key issues in personal-selling research, including:

1. exploration of important social aspects of buyer-seller interactions and how these social processes influence future sales.
2. broadening of what is meant by salesperson effectiveness to include the social outcomes of buyer-seller interaction that influence subsequent selling success.
3. explanation of why certain sales communication behaviors are most effective toward achieving specific selling-firm objectives.
4. extension and empirical investigation of core concepts and measures in the existing personal-selling literature.

It is proposed that this line of investigation can contribute to better understanding and explaining behavioral and social aspects of buyer-seller interaction while also exploring important antecedents of marketing relationships between firms. While the study has significant managerial relevance to the domain of business-to-business marketing, it is also applicable to other contexts, such as retailing and consumer services. The following chapter reviews previous research relevant to the present study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the timeliness of exploring social aspects of interpersonal interactions in marketing, this section organizes and reviews key research domains relevant to the present study. Principal research areas to be explored include personal selling and the process of marketing relationship development.

One important research area pertains to the personal selling process. The personal-selling literature is reviewed in order to establish what has traditionally been meant by "salesperson effectiveness" and to identify concepts that have been examined as key determinants of effectiveness. The investigation is organized around characterizing basic approaches to personal-selling research, which have included: (1) identification of personal traits and personality attributes that predict selling success; and (2) modeling buyer-seller interaction as interpersonal communication. Special attention is given to descriptions of the content and style of selling communications, with the objective of identifying the most prominent and influential themes in personal-selling research.

A variety of research domains are examined for their contribution to understanding the development of long-term marketing relationships. For example, research in marketing channels has made a major

contribution to an overall acceptance of a social-system approach to analyzing business-to-business interaction (e.g., Brown 1969; Mallen 1963; Stern and Reve 1980; Achrol, Reve and Stern 1983). The review focuses attention on the current conceptualization of relational marketing, especially proposed antecedent conditions for long-term relationships in marketing. Topics include social exchange, behavioral interdependence, and group process.

One fundamental theme pervades the review of the key research domains. The dyadic view of seller-customer interactions has evolved into a central tenet of a variety of contemporary research domains. It can be seen that key concepts related to the dyadic perspective have influenced research trends in both personal selling and relational marketing.

The Dyadic Perspective in Customer Contact Research

In general, it can be argued that research dealing with interpersonal exchange processes is currently dominated by a dyadic perspective. The unifying theme of the dyadic perspective is that characteristics and actions of both parties in an interpersonal encounter are considered (cf. Iacobucci and Hopkins 1992; Solomon, et al. 1985; Weitz 1981). Such a view takes into account the effects of both parties as well as the situational context of interpersonal exchange as key determinants of exchange outcomes.

Various research domains have examined aspects of seller-customer interaction processes and contributed to the dyadic perspective. One important example is the topic of marketing exchange and its role in

marketing theory. Researchers have developed exchange as a central concept in marketing (cf. Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). Such conceptual research has played a major role in introducing and fostering behavioral research perspectives, such as social exchange theory (e.g., Homans 1961), in marketing. Thus, marketing exchanges are viewed primarily as social processes (e.g., Bagozzi 1974; 1979; Bonoma and Johnston 1978; Kotler 1972).

Framing marketing exchanges in a social context has had important effects. For one, behaviors and their influence on exchange partners are recognized as being fundamental dimensions of exchange (e.g., Bagozzi 1979; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). Additionally, the social perspective has had a strong influence on the trend toward viewing most marketing exchanges as part of relationships rather than as discrete events (e.g., Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). In other words, the vast majority of the marketing exchanges are seen as part of social processes that evolve over time, with a past and a future, rather than as discrete events.

Research in marketing exchange has had a marked impact on the study of seller-customer interaction as a dyadic process. It supports the important role played by social behaviors and relationships. Other research domains have made similar contributions from specific vantage points. Noteworthy examples include research on service encounters in services marketing literature and the examination of boundary-spanning role behavior in management and organizational studies.

Research in services marketing has focused significant attention on dyadic interactions due to the highly interpersonal nature of many

service offerings. The services arena has developed concepts such as the service encounter and the use of drama as a metaphor for the study of service encounters (e.g., Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990; Solomon, et al. 1985; Surprenant and Solomon 1987). Here, the essential characteristic of service encounters is their socially-defined structure. Each party to the exchange is an actor with a particular role to play within the specific context. Thus, services-marketing research offers further development of the dyadic perspective of buyer-seller interactions and suggests social-behavior frameworks for their examination.

In the area of organizational behavior, customer-contact personnel are often referred to as boundary-spanning role personnel. These individuals play a critical role in spanning the organizational boundaries that exist between firms and consumers (e.g., Bowen and Schneider 1985). The boundary-spanning perspective lends important insight to the study of dyadic buyer-seller interactions. One such contribution underscores the role of customer-contact personnel as information conduits. Boundary-spanning personnel serve to channel information to the external environment as well as to the organization from the environment (e.g., Leifer and Delbecq 1978). Thus, from a dyadic perspective, customer-contact personnel serve to represent the firm through their behavior and communication, and are often the principal source of representation to individual consumers.

A thorough review of the broad range of research that has contributed to a dyadic perspective of buyer-seller interaction is beyond the scope and purpose of the present study. Nonetheless, it is

argued that they all support a common concept. The key idea is that research dealing with the nature and outcomes of buyer-seller interactions has firmly adopted a dyadic, contingency perspective. The view is that interpersonal exchange is a social process and that behavioral and experiential dimensions of interactions are often as critical to marketing success as are product dimensions. The dyadic perspective is a fundamental premise of this research and each of the viewpoints identified above offer support for the proposed relationships that are the focus of this study.

Certainly, the principal domains of this study offer no exception to the dyadic research trend. Research in both personal selling (e.g., Evans 1963; Webster 1968) and interfirm marketing relationships (e.g., Arndt 1979; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987) have contributed to and been influenced by the overall trend. The primary purpose of the literature review is to delineate research trends and support that a fundamental relationship exists between the key areas of personal selling and relational marketing. In doing so, present limitations in knowledge development are underscored along with the potential for developing empirical research that further supports the relationship.

Research on Personal Selling

For years, the traditional view of selling focused on identifying ideal salesperson types or techniques (cf. Miner 1962; Webster 1968; Weitz 1981). In other words, researchers attempted to identify what salespeople should be or should do. Variables were ideal insofar as they (purportedly) were associated with achieving higher sales. A key

characteristic of this unilateral perspective was that only the salesperson's point of view was embraced (Figure 5).

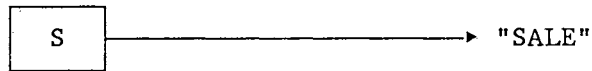


Figure 5. Unilateral Perspective of Selling

Research efforts implied that the salesperson (S) was totally responsible for outcomes of the selling process. Three approaches were common within this body of work (cf. Evans 1963):

1. Identification and development of an ideal sales personality through self appraisal or training. Suggested personality attributes included ambition, self-confidence, and diplomacy.
2. Development of ideal persuasion or manipulation techniques. For example, standard selling formulas could be perfected, such as the AIDA process (get Attention, arouse Interest, stimulate Desire, achieve Action) (e.g., Strong 1925). This assumes that the buying process for most individuals is similar and that prospects can be led through certain mental states, or steps, in the buying process.
3. Adaptation to the wants or needs of the prospect. This approach cast the salesperson in the role of analyzing the prospect and leading the prospect to believe that the salesperson understands his/her individual circumstances.

The traditional approaches to selling research generally provided inconclusive normative prescriptions and were not based on previous research or theory. In the search for richer, more accurate descriptions of the selling process, research began to recognize the role of the prospect in sales interactions. The perspective shifted to

a view of selling as a social situation in which it was "necessary to look at both parties to the sale as a dyad" (Evans 1963, p. 76). The theme of selling interactions as dyads provides a common theme and point of comparison for the main body of academic and practitioner research in personal selling. Over time, however, a variety of ad hoc approaches to personal-selling research have been adopted in the name of the dyadic perspective. Many researchers agree that dyadic research in personal selling can be organized into two related categories: (1) trait-based approaches and (2) interpersonal communication and influence perspectives (e.g., Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977; Davis and Silk 1972; Sheth 1976; Webster 1968; Weitz 1978). While actually quite similar, studies in these two categories exhibit fundamental conceptual differences. The distinction is useful here to portray evolutionary trends in research.

Trait-Based Approaches to the Buyer-Seller Dyad

Early attempts to adopt a dyadic perspective of buyer-seller interaction actually continued the trend of identifying key salesperson traits or personal characteristics. However, researchers claimed the studies were dyadic because they explored the degree of perceived similarity between the buyer and seller. The similarity hypothesis suggested that selling success was related to the degree to which sellers and/or buyers perceived they were similar along relevant variables.

Evans (1963) is often credited with being among the first to espouse and examine empirically the dyadic view of personal selling (cf.

Davis and Silk 1972; Fine and Schumann 1990; Webster 1968). Drawing on interpersonal-interaction research (e.g., interviewing) in medicine and sociology, Evans argued that interaction in the dyad determines outcomes. More specifically, it was hypothesized that in the buyer-seller dyad perceived similarities between individuals would positively influence sales. Personal attributes such as social, economic, physical, personality, and communication characteristics were the issues of comparison.

In Evans' study, interpersonal interaction in the exchange dyad consisted of the comparison (degree of match) of dyad members. Insurance salespeople and their prospects were evaluated for the degree of perceived match in dyads in which prospects purchased and those in which they did not. The results supported that "the more alike the salesman and his prospect are, the greater the likelihood for a sale" (p. 79).

Other studies of the same period provide similar examples of the similarity test. Gadel (1964) focused on age as a key variable. This study revealed that the sales of insurance agents tended to concentrate among persons of the same age group as the agent, especially for young agents. Tosi (1966) examined the extent to which customers and salesmen share the same conception and expectation of the salesperson's role in a wholesaler-retailer exchange. The degree to which the dyad members agreed on the ideal salesperson behavior was considered a measure of role consensus. An important finding was that as the salesperson came closer to meeting the customer's expectations, the buyer did business with fewer of the salesperson's competitors. Additional similarity

studies explored issues such as education (e.g., French 1960; Mosel 1952), intelligence (e.g., Dunnette and Kirchner 1960), or the degree to which similarity was more related to sales success than other factors such as expertise (e.g., Brock 1965; Woodside and Davenport 1974).

Regardless of the specific issues being examined, similarity studies tended to share certain characteristics in common. They were basically correlational in nature, relying on historical sales figures as the primary dependent variable (Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977). Also, as a body, the findings offered have been largely inconclusive and inconsistent (Weitz 1981). As a result, they provide only minimal insight into the behavioral dynamics of the buyer-seller dyad (Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977; Webster 1968; Weitz 1978).

Initial dyadic approaches to the study of personal selling did provide one important element to the picture. Whereas the traditional approach of previous studies saw the salesperson (S) as solely responsible for the sales outcome, early dyadic studies acknowledged the prospect (P) within the dyad (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Initial Dyadic Perspective of Selling

An examination of these studies, however, reveals that the salesperson is still viewed largely in the mode of acting unilaterally on the

prospect. Here, the similarity hypothesis implies matching or assessing and adapting to the prospect in an attempt to deliver the ideal stimulus that will yield the desired sales results.

This observation raises an important point for the purposes of the present study. It can be argued that the earliest dyadic studies of personal selling recognized and underscored the fundamental concept of salesperson adaptation. A basic feature of many of these studies is the implicit or explicit assumption that adaptation is an essential part of the selling process in many contexts. This observation supports the view that the earliest dyadic research presaged and paved the way for important later studies focusing on adaptation (e.g., Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz 1981; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986).

Personal Selling as Interpersonal Communication and Influence

Research focusing on buyer-seller trait similarities represents one attempt to establish a dyadic perspective of salesperson effectiveness. In reviewing such efforts, Webster (1968) emphasizes that they did not consider the behavioral dynamics of the interaction itself. Webster underscores the need to account more for the actions, attitudes, perceptions, expectations, and reactions of both the salesperson and the prospect in understanding outcomes of interactions. Webster goes a step further to argue that "the outcome of the sales call depends upon how well the salesman and the prospect have communicated with each other -- how well they have achieved a common understanding that will enable both to fill their needs and achieve their goal" (p. 9). He goes on to pose the dimensions of interpersonal communications,

such as perception and role expectations, that are significant factors in pursuing an interactive approach to sales research. Thus, Webster (1968) provides the view of personal selling as interpersonal communication.

Most interpersonal-communication research in selling draws upon two related theoretical bases: (1) social-interaction theory and (2) the Yale school of thought on personal communication and influence. Social-interaction theory frames selling as a social rather than an individual process (cf. Webster 1968). The essential characteristic of this social-interaction perspective is that each party in face-to-face interaction influences the behavior of the other. According to Heider (1958), "[h]ow one person thinks and feels about another person, how he perceives him and what he expects him to do or think, how he reacts to the actions of others" all influence the process and outcome of interactions.

In a similar manner, communication theory (e.g., Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953) underscores the influence processes involved in interpersonal communication. Here, there is specification of the source, message, and receiver (SMR) elements of communication and their relationship to persuasion and opinion change (cf. Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977; Sheth 1976).

Source and Message Effects

Within a selling context, much of the work that adopts a communication perspective has examined the effects of behavioral predispositions (source effect). It has been posited that variables

such as forcefulness, dominance, or sociability are characteristic of more successful salespeople (e.g., Albaum 1967; Ghiselli 1973). For example, Albaum (1967), developed univariate measures of the general attitudes and service policies of gasoline stations to predict sales success of individual stations. Surveys revealed the importance of friendliness and courteousness to consumer preferences for service stations.

More significantly, a communications framework has focused attention on the effects of message content and type (message effect) used by salespeople. Jolson (1975) examined the effects of a canned presentation vs. an extemporaneous or interactive presentation on product comprehension and intention to purchase. The results suggest that product comprehension is enhanced by the interactive presentation while purchase intention is greater with a canned presentation. In Jolson's study, however, presentations were made to a group (students) and there is no reason to believe that similar results would occur in a one-on-one encounter.

Similar research has explored the effect of product-oriented vs. personal-oriented messages (Farley and Swinth 1967), soft sell vs. hard sell communication (Reizenstein 1971), and one-way (noninteractive) vs. conversational (interactive) sales presentations (Capon 1975) on outcomes such as total sales and attitude toward the product and salesperson. These studies support the view that differences in message content and type can yield significantly different results. Specifically, more personalized, conversational delivery of messages that focus on the buyer's needs and role perceptions as well as product

attributes are positively related to sales, product comprehension, and favorable attitudes toward the salesperson.

Arguably, many of these SMR studies are similar to trait-based approaches discussed previously and are similar in effect to Figure 6 above. The research in essence depicts the salesperson acting on the prospect to achieve a sale. However, these studies are better anchored in a useful theoretical framework for personal selling (social interaction and personal communication). Additionally, there is a greater orientation to behavioral issues and communication messages as selling stimuli. Therefore, it can be argued that they shift attention in the literature more toward social aspects of the buyer-seller dyad.

Toward an Interactive Framework

A select few studies have used the communication framework to develop a more interactive perspective of personal selling. Ground-breaking research has investigated the dynamics of the "verbal behavior patterns" between salesperson and prospect (e.g., Chapple and Donald 1947; Pennington 1968; Willett and Pennington 1966), including amount, frequency, and content. While offering novel approaches to examining buyer-seller interaction, these studies have primarily maintained a focus on a sale or transaction as the key outcome of interest. Nonetheless, these are important examples of a trend toward capturing more of the social aspects of buyer-seller interaction.

A particularly interesting study is offered by Levitt (1967). He used MBA students along with professional buyers, engineers, and scientists as subjects and exposed them to a variety of simulated sales

presentations. These presentations were developed to examine how factors related to the situation, the sender, the message, and the receiver influenced outcomes of selling communications. One basic question addressed by the study was the effect of selling-firm reputation on salesperson effectiveness (source effect).

The results indicated that firm reputation can be an important determinant of a salesperson's ability to gain initial interactions with prospects. Additional findings suggested that buyers may favor but expect more from salespersons representing well-known firms and that the importance of reputation (source credibility) may vary according to the perceived risk in the buying situation.

Levitt's study is important for several reasons. First, it uses interpersonal communication concepts to better depict interaction between the sender, the receiver, and the overall context in a selling situation. Therefore, it addresses the effect of variables like the selling firm's reputation. Additionally, aspects of the receiver (e.g., the role adopted) are accounted for as they may potentially influence outcomes. In turn, both situation and receiver are examined for their interaction with the salesperson during communications. Thus, Levitt's study anticipates a contingency perspective that dominates current research in personal selling (e.g., Weitz 1981).

These sparse examples represent an effort to capture the social processes involved in personal selling and provide a conceptual bridge to subsequent research. Key elements in the trend include recognizing prospect responses to salesperson communication stimuli as well as some context effects (Figure 7).

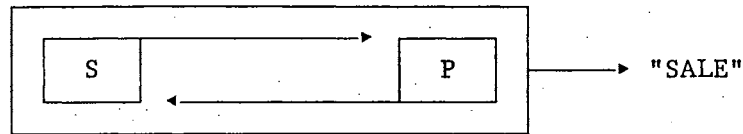


Figure 7. Initial Interactive Perspective of Selling

Several issues are noteworthy concerning the use of interpersonal communication as a framework for selling research. A key concept is that research has addressed both how salespeople should communicate to be effective as well what should be the content of effective selling. On one hand, this approach extends the idea of adaptation as a fundamental aspect of selling. Interpersonal communication has attempted to show that certain behavioral patterns are more effective than others in achieving sales. Additionally, much effort has been devoted to identifying effective types of communication messages. This has revealed an important issue: the significant positive effect that customer-oriented communication may have relative to static, product-oriented communication in many situations. This is a fundamental concept that has continued to gain momentum in selling research as well as a broader range of marketing domains.

Interpersonal communication places emphasis on the message source as well as message content and type (Capon, Holbrook, and Hulbert 1977). While largely similar in its simplicity to trait-based research in personal selling, it provides a more sophisticated conceptual framework. Further, it moves closer to behavioral aspects of buyer-

seller dyad, has become an increasingly important aspect of more recent and sophisticated attempts to model the buyer-seller dyad.

Advances in Conceptualization: Communication Content and Style

Research streams based on personal traits and interpersonal communication have given way to further advances in conceptualizing personal selling and the buyer-seller dyad. Recent conceptualizations are anchored in prior notions of identifying the process and content of effective selling communication. However, they provide richer and more explicit detail of the dyad members and their relationship. Key elements that receive greater attention in these models include personal attributes, perceptual filters such as motivations and needs, and feedback loops that provide ongoing information about the interaction (e.g., Bearden 1969; Hulbert and Capon 1972; O'Shaughnessy 1972; Spiro, Perrault, and Reynolds 1977).

The focus of these models is on personal aspects of dyad members. Yet, it can be seen that some elements of this domain are still missing. One primary example is knowledge structure and experience that individuals bring to an interaction process. Also, with the focus on the dyad members and their relationships, little of the dyad environment, such as situational contingencies, is provided. A key characteristic, though, is that most models either implicitly or explicitly extend the concepts of the salesperson's customer orientation and adaptation by including feedback mechanisms (assessment of customer and adaptation of message) (Spiro and Weitz 1990).

An important conceptual advance made by other recent sales research has been the introduction of theories of interpersonal interaction styles. This has resulted in attempts to define richer, multi-dimensional categories of salesperson communication style. Research on social interaction and group dynamics (e.g., Bass 1960; Heider 1958; Homans 1961) has spawned several inventories of personal interaction modes. For example, Bass (1960; 1967; Bass et al., 1963) has suggested that individuals tend to be task-oriented, interaction-oriented, or self-oriented when in group situations. These behavioral orientations are further defined (cf. Bass 1967):

1. Task-oriented: individuals who are reinforced primarily by task effectiveness. They are likely to be concerned about getting a job done, solving external problems, and working persistently to remove barriers to accomplishing objectives.
2. Interaction-oriented: individuals who reap satisfaction and rewards from their interactions with others. They are likely to be less concerned about getting a job done and more interested in maintaining harmonious, conflict-free relationships with others.
3. Self-oriented: individuals who are attracted to the direct rewards of group membership regardless of the task or interaction effectiveness of the group. The group is merely the theater in which generalized needs can be satisfied.

The Interaction Orientation Inventory has been influential, especially in the context of leadership style and its relationship to organizational effectiveness (e.g., Bass 1960). Riesman (1950; 1952) provides a similar example in his Theory of Social Character. He posits that in general, humans can be grouped into three major types of social character:

1. Tradition-oriented: individuals oriented in the traditional ways of their forefathers.

2. Inner-directed: individuals who turn to their own inner values and standards for guidance in their behavior.
3. Other-directed: individuals who depend on the people around them to give direction to their actions.

Riesman argued that tradition orientation was no longer a relevant concept in much of the U. S. Subsequently, the concepts of inner directedness and other directedness have been investigated as opposite ends of a continuum by means of an I-O scale (e.g., Kassarian 1962).

Theories of social interaction provide a rich resource for describing and investigating the buyer-seller dyad. Indeed, theories of interaction styles have been drawn upon directly or indirectly by both practitioners and academics in the sales area. Thus, research in personal selling has developed communication style inventories based on dimensions specific to selling contexts. Primary examples include the Grid for Sales Excellence based on concern for the customer and concern for the sale (Blake and Mouton 1970) and the Social Style Matrix based on an individual's degree of assertiveness and degree of responsiveness (e.g., Merrill and Reid 1981)

It is readily apparent that one reason for the appeal of these inventories is their strong convergence and descriptive power with regard to fundamental selling concepts, such as adaptation and customer orientation, anchored in past selling research. For instance, by crossing the two basic dimensions of "concern for the customer" and "concern for making a sale," the Grid for Sales Excellence creates five major seller types (Blake and Mouton 1970, p. 4). Two examples of resulting salesperson styles include:

1. Low Concern for the Customer / High Concern for Making the Sale: this yields a sales approach characterized by product oriented messages, hard sell, high pressure, and task orientation.
2. High Concern for the Customer / High Concern for Making the Sale: this yields a sales approach characterized by consultative communication, orientation to the customer's needs and satisfaction, and thorough product knowledge.

These selling styles embody characteristics that strongly parallel product- or sales-oriented vs. customer-oriented issues addressed in past research.

An additional major point is that style inventories also define major buyer types and emphasize adapting the sales presentation style to match the buyer's style. A fundamental premise of these inventories is that a salesperson, by assessing and classifying a prospect, has the opportunity and information necessary to match an appropriate presentation style to the situation. For example, the basic notion of the Social Style Matrix in a selling context is to classify buyers as Drivers, Expressives, Amiables, or Analyticals and to adopt communication styles that are more or less task-oriented and social-oriented. Thus, selling style inventories also expand the basic notion of salesperson adaptation as developed in past research.

Two Important Models

Within an analysis of more recent and advanced investigation of the selling process, two conceptualizations in academic literature are particularly noteworthy and influential. First, Sheth (1976) developed a comprehensive conceptualization of buyer-seller interaction, which included delineation of both the content and style dimensions of buyer-

seller communication. Second, Weitz (1978; 1981) produced a contingency framework for explaining salesperson effectiveness. His model specifies key contingencies relative to the salesperson, the buyer, and the situation that influence interaction outcomes.

In many ways, these two models are representative of the progress made in researching the selling process and salesperson effectiveness. They reflect the key issues of communication style and content and either implicitly or explicitly recognize customer orientation and adaptation as fundamental selling orientations. They are also noteworthy in that they initiate and influence subsequent research, a phenomenon not common in the area of personal selling.

Sheth's Model of Buyer-Seller Interaction

Sheth (1976) characterized previous research in buyer-seller interaction as being relatively ad hoc attempts to investigate various similarity hypotheses and source, message, and channel factors related to interactions. Additionally, he recognized a conspicuous absence of any comprehensive conceptualization guiding research of the buyer-seller dyad. In response, a conceptual framework was offered that was both comprehensive and abstract enough to include all types of buyer-seller interactions. The basic postulate of the framework is that the effectiveness of buyer-seller interaction is a function of two distinct dimensions of interaction: (1) the content of communication and (2) the style of communication.

Communication content. Content refers to the substantive aspects of why the buyer and seller are interacting; the suggestion, offer,

promotion, or negotiation of product-specific utilities and expectations. Product utilities make up the key dimensions of content and include (1) functional, (2) social-organizational, (3) situational, (4) emotional, and (5) curiosity utilities offered by products and sought by buyers.

Communication style. Style represents the format, ritual, or mannerism which the buyer and seller adopt in their interaction. Style is highly individualistic preferences and expectations about the process of interaction. Drawing upon the social-interaction research of Bass (1960) (as discussed above), Sheth depicted style as having three dimensions: (1) task-oriented, (2) interaction-oriented, and (3) self-oriented. Both buyer and seller can be defined in terms of one of these interaction styles.

Importantly, Sheth also includes in the model exogenous factors that can influence the style and content of buyer-seller interaction. Personal factors include the individual's background, lifestyle characteristics, and the expectations and performance of specific roles within the dyad. Organizational factors include the objectives of the organizations represented by the buyer and seller, the organizations' management style, and the organizations' structure. Finally, product-specific factors that can influence buyer-seller interaction include technological and competitive stature of the product offering, market motivations such as the generalized needs and wants of consumers, and specific plans that the buyer and seller have for the product.

A major aspect of Sheth's model is the explicit representation of compatibility as the driving mechanism behind successful interactions.

According to Sheth "a satisfactory transaction between the buyer and the seller will occur if and only if they are compatible with respect to both content and style of communication" (p. 383). Thus, compatibility equates to matching the seller and prospect, which can be achieved by "modifying sales appeals, retraining salespeople, reassignment of salesmen, as well as changes in recruiting and selection of personnel" (p. 386).

Additionally, Sheth recognizes that various interaction styles can be more successful than others. Here, Sheth's model is important because it asserts that numerous objectives can be the object of interaction, including increasing awareness and reinforcing behavior. However, the focus of the model is the issue of compatibility, not the outcome of interaction. Finally, a significant aspect of Sheth's model is the delineation of situational factors that can influence interaction which previously had received little attention in selling research.

Sheth's model provides an appealing conceptualization that describes the content and style of buyer-seller interaction and has influenced other researchers (e.g., Williams and Spiro 1985; Williams, Spiro, and Fine 1990). For example, Williams and Spiro (1985) extend Sheth's conceptualization. Applying communication theory, the elements of communication codes (verbal and non-verbal form) and rules are added to the picture. Communication style, in turn is defined as the synthesis of content, code, and rule elements into unique communication patterns. Further, the study discusses and supports the interrelationships that implicitly exist between Sheth's model and previous research, such as Blake and Mouton's (1970) Grid for Sales

Excellence and empirical investigation of selling influence techniques by Spiro and Perrault (1979).

Williams and Spiro also discuss their study that empirically explores the relationship between interaction styles and sales resulting from buyer-seller interaction. Here, the authors also extend Sheth's work by operationalizing task orientation, interaction orientation, and self orientation and hypothesizing that specific interaction orientations (task or interaction) will yield greater sales. It is important to note that the focus is on achieving a sale as the outcome variable in their study. In their study of 251 customer-salesperson transactions in thirteen sporting goods stores, significant effects were found for the customer's interaction style, and the interaction between the customer's and the salesperson's style. A notable result was the "overriding importance of the customer's orientation" in determining the sale (p. 440). This underscores the importance of recognizing different customer styles and adapting the salesperson's style appropriately.

Sheth's model has made significant contributions by identifying style and content as the basic components of selling interactions and providing an organizing framework for past and future research. Despite the fundamental nature of these concepts to personal selling research, however, they have received only minimal development, especially in academic research (cf. Williams, Spiro, and Fine 1990).

Weitz's Contingency Model

Weitz (1981) has specified a contingency perspective of personal selling effectiveness. The fundamental notion is that sales

effectiveness is a function of certain behaviors and characteristics associated with the salesperson, the customer, and the dyad. The four key constructs, and their dimensions, that influence effectiveness are:

Selling Behaviors

1. Adapting to customers.
2. Establishing bases of influence.
3. Influence techniques used.
4. Controlling the sales interaction.

Resources of the Salesperson

1. Product and customer knowledge.
2. Analytical and interpersonal skills.
3. Availability of alternatives.

Characteristics of the Salesperson-Customer Relationship

1. Level of conflict and bargaining.
2. Relative power.
3. Quality of relationship.
4. Anticipation of future interaction.

Characteristics of the Customer's Buying Task

1. Needs and beliefs.
2. Knowledge of alternatives.
3. Characteristics of the buying task.

Key aspects of Weitz's model are pertinent to the present discussion. Most importantly, it summarizes past research by specifying adaptation and influence techniques as key dimensions of selling behaviors that determine selling effectiveness. Weitz describes influence techniques in the same vein as communication styles in other research, referring to issues such as product orientation and person orientation as well as types of appeals such as emotional or deceptive.

An additional important feature is that the relationship between the seller and buyer is identified as an important determinant of sales success. This implies that issues such as the quality of the relationship and the future of the relationship often precede transactions and underscores the importance of social issues as initial

outcomes of buyer-seller interactions. While serving as something of a path breaker in this regard, it is noted that the model does not develop how the relationship evolves and is influenced by early interactions between the salesperson and customer.

Due to the important features identified above as well as other aspects of the model, Weitz's contingency framework has influenced the focus of subsequent research on relevant issues such as the adaptive selling concept (Miles, Arnold and Nash 1990; Morgan and Stoltman 1990; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Despite the promise and the central nature of the contingency model to selling research, however, little empirical work has been done to investigate or extend it.

Conclusions

Research on selling effectiveness has taken a variety of paths. These efforts have to one degree or another adopted a dyadic perspective of personal selling in examining the style and content of buyer-seller interaction. The basic perspective that has evolved addresses the influence of both buyer and seller on the sales outcome (as in Figure 7) and in many ways, recent conceptualizations of the selling process are representative of the evolution of research in personal selling (e.g., Sheth 1976; Weitz 1981). The present study argues that two fundamental selling concepts have resulted from these efforts: (1) adaptive selling and (2) customer-oriented selling. Each of these constructs, along with their specific dimensionality and related measures, will be highlighted in the following sections.

Adaptive Selling

In the preceding literature review, certain observations were made. It was noted that research has attempted to adopt a dyadic perspective of selling. This trend reflects an effort to better account for both the salesperson and the buyer in understanding interactions and salesperson effectiveness. Resulting efforts have tended to prescribe how salespeople can communicate effectively or what should be the content of effective communication. Further, it has been argued that two basic approaches to researching the buyer-seller dyad have developed in the literature: (1) trait-based approaches and (2) examining selling interactions in the context of interpersonal communication and influence processes.

One conclusion that results from an analysis of research in personal selling is that adaptation is a central tenet of the literature as it has developed. Adaptive selling in large part reflects attempts to prescribe how salespeople can be most effective. Adaptation is based on the notions that different selling approaches are needed in different situations and that personal selling is the only communication vehicle in marketing that allows modification of messages to the specific needs and beliefs of each customer (e.g., Gwinner 1968; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz 1981). Past research either implicitly or explicitly highlights adaptation by focusing on matching the salesperson and/or the message to the prospect and the situation.

Trait-based approaches have attempted to identify ideal traits in a salesperson that are associated with selling success. Such an approach suggests a similarity hypothesis. The similarity hypothesis

implies assessing and matching the prospect in an attempt to deliver the ideal stimulus that will yield the desired sales results. Achieving a match between salesperson and prospect along relevant interpersonal dimensions, such as age, education, and role perceptions, may lead to greater sales (e.g., Evans 1963; French 1966; Tosi 1966).

A second approach has viewed selling interactions within a framework of interpersonal communication and influence processes. This method has examined the various effects of the source, message, or receiver in persuasive communication. It has been suggested that varying message type or delivery style across situations is often more effective than canned presentations (e.g., Jolson 1975). Also, research supports that effective salespeople alter influence techniques depending on the situation (e.g., Spiro and Perrault 1979). Thus, researchers have proposed that modifying selling communications to meet the circumstances will often lead to greater success.

Researchers have argued that most of the major conceptualizations of the selling process have implicitly or explicitly included adaptation (Spiro and Weitz 1990; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Basic research has depicted adaptation in the form of feedback loops and/or alteration of influence strategies in response to assessing buyers' social styles (e.g., Sheth 1976; Spiro, Perrault, and Reynolds 1976; Weitz 1978; 1981). Adaptation has also been fundamental in the development of sales-training programs that emphasize the assessment of buyers' social styles and the alteration the salesperson's selling style (e.g., Alessandra, Wexler, and Barrera 1987; Blake and Mouton 1970; Merrill and Reid 1981).

It can be argued that adaptation is actually a foundation concept in much of the extant research on buyer-seller interaction. It is somewhat surprising, then, that "most empirical research on personal selling has largely ignored the adaptive nature of personal selling" (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986, p. 177). One contemporary stream of research represents a noteworthy effort to address this discrepancy.

In two seminal works, Weitz (1978; 1981) synthesized past research and provided an important foundation for future research on adaptive selling. Weitz (1978) initially developed and partially tested a model of the selling process. The model related five basic selling activities to selling success:

1. Developing impressions of the customer.
2. Formulating appropriate strategies and messages.
3. Transmission of the messages.
4. Evaluation of customer reactions to the messages.
5. Making adjustments in the previous activities.

The model is referred to as the ISTEAM model, for impression, strategy, transmission, evaluation, and adjustment. A fundamental premise of the model is that selling is an iterative cycle of developing sales strategy, communicating, evaluating outcomes, and making adjustments. Evaluations provide feedback for making adjustments in the selling process. One adjustment can be in the form of altering communication style in the transmission of selling messages. Thus, Weitz supported the view that adaptation is a fundamental aspect of the selling process.

Weitz (1981) expanded on the basic themes in the ISTE model in developing a contingency perspective of salesperson effectiveness. Weitz extended themes and recognized inconsistencies in past research in stating that there is no one right way to sell. Salesperson effectiveness is framed as a function of four categories of contingencies:

1. Selling behaviors.
2. Resources of the salesperson.
3. Characteristics of the salesperson-customer relationship.
4. Characteristics of the customer's buying task.

More specifically, salesperson effectiveness is viewed as the "first-order interaction between behaviors and characteristics associated with the salesperson, the customer, and the dyad" (p. 91). Further, Weitz identified adaptive selling as one of the basic elements of the behavioral contingency domain.

Importantly, it was recognized that there were no measures of adaptivity in sales behavior at the time the model was developed. However, a variety of personality constructs were identified that might indicate a predisposition to use adaptive behavior in selling. For example, it was suggested that dogmatism and authoritarianism would be negatively related to adaptivity while tolerance for ambiguity and self-monitoring style would be positively related. These constructs, then, could serve as the conceptual basis for future scale development.

An important link was added to the conceptual development of adaptive selling by Weitz, Suja, and Suja (1986). The authors formally defined adaptive selling 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" (p. 175). Adaptive selling was further specified by suggesting that it is conceptually opposite of canned sales presentations that use the same message and delivery regardless of the situation. Also, it was suggested that the adaptive selling concept includes the motivation in a salesperson to work smarter in efforts to be more effective.

This definition is important for at least three reasons. First, it summarized past research. Inherent in the definition is the concept of selling being an iterative cycle of communication, evaluation, and adaptation. Second, the definition clarified that adaptive selling can include alteration of selling behaviors both during a single selling interaction and across multiple selling encounters. Finally, the definition underscored the cognitive dimension of adaptive selling. In other words, it emphasized that adaptive selling requires the development of a knowledge structure that would allow the salesperson to be adaptive as defined.

The researchers identified important elements of the knowledge dimension, including knowledge of customer types and knowledge of sales strategies. These issues also relate to earlier models (ISTEA and Contingency) that suggested an essential aspect of selling is the ability to assess the customer and the selling situation in order to develop appropriate selling communication. The cognitive aspect of adaptive selling has been reflected in subsequent research on adaptive selling (e.g., Morgan and Stoltman 1990; Szymanski 1988).

Measurement of Adaptive Selling

The conceptual development described above has culminated recently in the development of a measure of adaptive selling. Spiro and Weitz (1990) reported the development of a sixteen-item paper-and-pencil measure (ADAPTS) that reflects the conceptual foundation established in preceding research. The scale, in its initial form, is designed for salesperson self-evaluation and attempts to measure the degree to which salespeople are predisposed to practice adaptive selling. In keeping with prior definitions, the scale attempts to tap the multi-dimensionality of adaptivity:

1. Recognition that different selling approaches are needed in different situations.
2. Confidence in the ability to use a variety of different sales approaches.
3. Confidence in the ability to alter the sales approach during customer interaction.
4. A knowledge structure that facilitates the recognition of different sales situations and access to sales strategies appropriate for each situation.
5. Collection of information about the sales situation to facilitate adaptation.
6. Actual use of different approaches in different situations.

The first three issues pertain to the salesperson's motivation to practice adaptive selling. The fourth and fifth elements relate to capabilities or the cognitive tools necessary to practice adaptive selling. The sixth issue assesses actual behavior.

A 42 item pool of questions was generated initially to tap the six facets of adaptive selling. Questionnaires were sent to 500 salespeople in 10 divisions of a single national manufacturer of diagnostic

equipment and supplies. A 54% response rate yielded 268 usable questionnaires. Standard scale purification techniques were used to test the factor structure and reliability of the measures.

Principal component factor analysis revealed a five component structure for the data. The reported eigenvalues for the first five factors were 7.24, 2.36, 1.91, 1.27, and 1.07. The factor loadings did not correspond to the a priori conceptualization of the facets of adaptive selling. However, items representing five of the six facets did load significantly on the first component. On the basis of the results, the decision was made to develop one scale representing all facets of adaptive selling rather than separate, multi-item scales for each facet. Item-reduction techniques were used to construct the unidimensional scale. The final sixteen-item scale had a reported coefficient alpha of .85.

The final scale has at least two items representing each of five of the six original facets of adaptive selling. Items related to the fourth facet, knowledge structure, were not represented in the final scale. However, seven items representing facet six were included, and four of these seem relevant for assessing adaptive selling in a single person/single situation context.

To assess the nomological validity of the ADAPTS scale, simple correlations were examined between ADAPTS scale items and general personality measures of interpersonal flexibility:

1. Self-monitoring style (Lennox and Wolfe 1984).
2. Androgyny (Bem 1981).
3. Empathy (Davis 1980; Johnson, Cheek, and Smither 1983).

4. Opener (predisposition to open up or elicit intimate information from others) (Miller, Berg, and Archer 1983).
5. Locus of Control (Paulhaus 1983).

ADAPTS was found to be related significantly ($p < .001$) to the measures of interpersonal flexibility, supporting the nomological validity of the scale.

Conclusion

Adaptive selling is a fundamental concept developed in personal-selling research. However, the concept has only recently begun to receive full specification and significant empirical development. A growing stream of research has focused attention on adaptive selling and a multi-item paper-and-pencil scale has been reported. Recent efforts are promising and provide a useful foundation for future exploration of the antecedents and consequences of adaptive selling.

Customer-Oriented Selling

Similar to the discussion in the previous section on adaptive selling, customer-oriented selling can be viewed as a core concept that has developed in personal-selling research. In many ways, it also reflects the fundamental trait-based and interpersonal-communication approaches to researching the buyer-seller dyad that have become trends in the literature. Like adaptation, customer orientation is a result of attempts to prescribe how salespeople can communicate most effectively. However, the concept of customer orientation has also influenced efforts to identify the ideal content of selling communication.

Customer orientation is a fundamental tenet of the marketing concept, which is a business philosophy that emphasizes understanding consumer needs and achieving customer satisfaction as primary means of realizing marketing success (e.g., Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Customer orientation has been aptly described as the practice of the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson and customer (Saxe and Weitz 1982).

In selling, customer orientation has often meant putting the customer's interests ahead of the salesperson's (e.g., Swan, Trawick, Silva 1985). Customer orientation has been at least implied since the earliest selling research focused on customer satisfaction as the main goal of selling (e.g., Strong 1925; Bursk 1947; Reiser 1962). As selling research adopted a dyadic perspective, customer orientation was evident. The need to better account for the characteristics and needs of buyers in buyer-seller interaction was the driving force behind the trend. As discussed earlier, the dyadic perspective attempted to shift research attention from the salesperson as a unilateral agent in determining sales, to the interaction between the buyer and seller. This emphasized the salesperson's need to assess the customer and the situation and provide selling stimuli appropriate to the situation.

Customer orientation has been especially evident in research approaches that have adopted an interpersonal-communication perspective of personal selling. In one respect, customer orientation is viewed as part of the process of effective selling. For example, one implication has been that customer-oriented influence techniques, such as

sociability and friendliness, are related to greater customer satisfaction (e.g., Albaum 1967).

In another respect, customer orientation has influenced the content or type of selling communication. This notion is at least partially reflected in research examining the varying effects of canned vs. extemporaneous sales messages (e.g., Jolson 1975), product-oriented vs. person-oriented sales messages (e.g., Farley and Swinth 1967), soft sell vs. hard sell communication (e.g., Reizenstein 1971), and one-way (noninteractive) vs. conversational (interactive) sales presentations (e.g., Capon 1975).

Previously, it was pointed out that recent, more sophisticated models of the personal-selling process have drawn upon research on social interaction and group dynamics (e.g., Bass 1960; Heider 1958; Homans 1961) to develop inventories of buying and selling style. These inventories also reflect much of the premise of customer orientation. For example, in his model of buyer-seller interaction, Sheth (1976) adopts Bass' (1960) Interaction Orientation Inventory identifying task-oriented, interaction-oriented, or self-oriented social styles. Interaction-orientated individuals reap satisfaction and rewards from their interactions with others. They are likely to be less concerned about getting a job done and more interested in maintaining harmonious, conflict-free relationships with others. This is conceptually more consistent with customer orientation than the other two styles (e.g., Williams and Spiro 1985). In a similar way, Blake and Mouton (1970) suggest that salespeople can be classified as being more concerned with the sale or more concerned with the customer.

Measurement of Customer-Oriented Selling

Given its pervasiveness in the literature, it can be argued that customer orientation is a second fundamental concept in much of the existing research on buyer-seller interaction. As with adaptive selling, however, it is noteworthy that "little empirical research has examined the effectiveness of customer-oriented selling and the factors influencing the extent to which people engage in it (Saxe and Weitz 1982, p. 343).

In response to this discrepancy, Saxe and Weitz (1982) developed a paper-and-pencil scale to measure the degree to which salespeople are more sales-oriented or customer-oriented in their selling style (SOCO). The authors synthesized a literature review of the marketing concept and interviews with salespersons and sales managers to identify seven characteristics of customer orientation:

1. A desire to help customers make satisfactory purchase decisions.
2. Helping customers assess their needs.
3. Offering products that will satisfy customer needs.
4. Describing products accurately.
5. Adapting sales presentations to match customer interests.
6. Avoiding deceptive or manipulative influence tactics.
7. Avoiding the use of high pressure.

Scale Structure

The domain specification initially generated a pool of 104 scale items representing the seven categories, including both positively- and

negatively-worded items to control for possible acquiescence bias. A survey of expert judges reduced the pool to the 70 items consistently rated as being clearly representative of customer orientation. Standard scale reduction and purification techniques were used through two iterations of surveys with separate samples of professional salespeople to reduce the scale to the twelve positive and twelve negative items with the highest corrected item-to-total correlations.

Reliability checks using coefficient alpha and test-retest measures supported that the 24-item scale was internally consistent and stable over time. A principle-components factor analysis revealed a two-factor structure common with many scales consisting of both positive and negative items, in which the second factor separates the negative items from the positive items. The initial scale items were seven-point Likert-type measures. Analysis revealed that scores from the salesperson self report of customer orientation were skewed to the high end of the response distribution. To reduce the skewness, the final version of the scale used a nine-point format.

Scale Validity

One interesting point is that, of the seven characteristics originally identified as representing customer orientation, the notion of adaptation of sales presentations was rejected in initial interviews and later in the first data collection. It was argued that salespeople with both low and high customer orientation may adapt sales presentations. Perhaps the two constructs are related but adaptation is insufficient as a criterion for defining customer orientation. The

results of the scale development process suggested that the key concept is that "a highly customer-oriented salesperson will not sacrifice the customer's best interests to make a sale" (p. 347).

Content validity was addressed during early stages of the scale development in terms of domain specification and the use of expert judges to reduce the initial pool of items. Convergent and discriminant validity was supported using measures of long-term vs. short-term orientation (significant positive correlation), Machiavellianism (significant negative correlation), and social desirability (lack of correlation).

Of greater interest, known-group validity was assessed by examining response patterns across salespersons in various industries. As might be expected, salespersons in certain industrial settings with much repeat business had higher customer-orientation scores than salespeople in other settings such as retailing. This raises the issue that the selling situation and the content of the selling interaction may have an effect on customer orientation in salespeople. For example, it seems plausible to assume that customer-oriented selling is most relevant and effective when customers need and use salespeople for information. Such is the case, for instance, with sales involving expensive or complex products. Similarly, salespeople are likely to be most customer-oriented when they have certain resources, such as time and information, required to respond to customers. Customer orientation will also be appropriate when the salesperson and customer interact over time and establish a relationship in the context of exchange.

Saxe and Weitz examined these issues in order to assess the nomological validity of the SOCO scale. During the second round of salesperson surveys, eighteen items were included to measure attributes of the selling situation. As expected, a positive relationship was revealed between customer orientation and situations in which the buyer and seller establish a longer-term and cooperative relationship. Also, customer-oriented selling is related to situations in which salespeople have the ability to help customers satisfy their needs.

Saxe and Weitz were quick to point out that the exhibited relationships between the SOCO scale and situational factors may be biased due to common-method variance (self reports of salespeople). Additionally, little can be inferred about the causality of the relationship. For example, the data do not suggest whether customer orientation yields stronger buyer-seller relationships or vice versa. However some support is provided for the nomological validity of the scale and these same issues reveal some interesting questions for present and future research.

Conclusion

The development of the SOCO scale provided a promising foundation for exploring a central topic in selling, and subsequent research has begun to build on the foundation. For instance, an initial question that was addressed is the assessment of customer orientation from the perspective of the buyer. Michaels and Day (1985) replicated the SOCO scale with industrial buyers by restructuring the questions to tap buyers' perceptions. The results were strongly similar to those from

the Saxe and Weitz (1982) study except that buyers' mean ratings of the customer orientation of salespeople were lower, pointing to the issue of data distribution discussed in the original study. The implication is that salespeople tend to rate themselves higher on customer orientation than buyers.

Williams and Wiener (1990) examined whether SOCO measures customer orientation as an enduring predisposition in salespeople or as a selling behavior. The results supported that the SOCO scale frames customer orientation as a behavior implemented by salespeople during their role performance. Similarly, the SOCO scale has been used to extend research on customer orientation to retail (Brown, Widing, and Coulter 1991) and service (Kelley 1992) settings.

Replications and extensions have provided support that the SOCO scale is a reliable and robust measure. Additional research has begun to augment the perspective provided by Saxe and Weitz. Of particular note, Williams (1992) integrated past research and extended the domain of customer orientation to include six dimensions:

1. Needs (the practice of a consultative style of selling in identifying and addressing the needs of the customer).
2. Manipulate/Deceit (the practice of being non-manipulative and non-deceitful in dealing with customers).
3. Double Win (the practice of seeking mutual benefits from the exchanges between customer, company, and salesperson).
4. Pressure (the practice of being non-forceful or non-pushy in dealing with customers).
5. Follow Up (the practice of following up after a sale to take care of problems and assure the customer's satisfaction).
6. Represent (the practice of representing (advocating) the customer's interests to the selling firm).

Scale development resulted in a 24-item composite measure (CUSTOR) with an estimated reliability of .91 (Nunnally 1978).

Ongoing research has resulted in increased awareness and understanding of the nature of customer orientation. In turn, the results of these research efforts provide an important basis for examining the role of salesperson behavior as an antecedent to salesperson effectiveness.

Relational Exchange and Trust in Marketing

Much research in personal selling has attempted to explain what determines salesperson effectiveness. In general, these efforts have focused on explaining the style and/or the content of effective communication between buyers and sellers. Adaptation and customer-orientation represent two basic aspects of selling communication that have surfaced within this domain of research.

While significant conceptual advances have been achieved, this body of research is not without its limitations. As argued previously, research has been largely ad hoc with only minimal theoretical development in the form of extending and testing key conceptualizations of the buyer-seller dyad. Also, research has recognized the social/behavioral aspects of buyer-seller interactions but this topic has received scant empirical examination. In this same vein, it is argued that a significant limitation is an overwhelming focus on achieving a sale or transaction as the immediate "effectiveness" outcome examined in selling research.

The present study argues that an important opportunity exists to address these limitations by linking two research domains: salesperson effectiveness and relational exchange in marketing. Relational exchange focuses on the social aspects of interactions within the context of their past and future. Much of the literature on social exchange and group dynamics identifies trust as a core dimension of evolving social relationships. Thus, trust development during buyer-seller interactions can serve as an important measure of relationship development. Linking salesperson effectiveness to this perspective can allow researchers and practitioners to test central concepts and bridge important gaps in personal selling research.

The following sections define the concept of relational exchange in marketing and identify trust as a core social dimension of relationships. Attention is then directed toward how trust has been used and measured in marketing contexts.

The Concept of Relational Exchange

Foundation literature in marketing has long argued that exchange is the central concept in marketing (e.g., Alderson 1965; Bagozzi 1974; 1979; Kotler 1972; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987). This body of thought has argued that exchange is fundamentally a social phenomenon, a transfer of tangible and intangible artifacts between two social actors. It is explicit in this social context that exchanges often transpire over time and involve the development of relationships between the actors. Yet, despite the social nature of exchange, it has also been argued convincingly that the vast majority of marketing research has

treated exchange as a discrete event, largely ignoring its relational aspects (e.g., Arndt 1979; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988). In response to this observation, marketing researchers are examining exchange phenomena increasingly in the context of relationships that develop over time. Indeed, some researchers view the transition as a fundamental paradigm shift in marketing (e.g., Kotler 1991).

Marketing researchers have drawn upon theories in the literature of social exchange, group dynamics, and contract law (e.g., Heider 1958; Homans 1961; Macneil 1980; Thibaut and Kelley 1986) to develop frameworks for examining exchange relationships. These are research bases in which interpersonal communication and relationships have long been a central point of attention (Fischer and Drecksel 1983). Two key ideas are common to descriptions of interpersonal relationships within this research.

Time. The concept of time is basic to social relationships and exchange. According to Macneil (1980), most exchanges transpire over time. Part of each transaction is the context of its past and its anticipated future. Further, the basis of future interactions may be grounded in expectations (both implicit and explicit), trust, and joint planning.

Relationship Stages. A second important concept, which is related to the concept of time, is the evolution of relationship stages. For example, Scanzoni (1979) provides a model of five stages of social relationships that is representative of other conceptualizations (e.g., Leik and Leik 1977; Lerner 1979). According to Scanzoni, relationships

evolve through five distinct stages: (1) awareness, (2) exploration, (3) expansion, (4) commitment, and (5) dissolution. Descriptions and characteristics of these stages are summarized in Table 1.

In the context of the present paper, the exploration stage and the expansion stage of Scanzoni's model are significant and warrant further discussion.

Exploration. The inception of the exploration stage is marked by the first interactions between two parties. In this phase, potential exchange partners first consider obligations, benefits and burdens, and the possibility of further interactions. At this point, social constructs such as interdependence and trust are minimal or non-existent because there is no foundation of experience in which to base these feelings. Thus, the initial experiences acquired during exploration are critical to the evolution of all subsequent stages. According to Scanzoni, the key experiential processes during this stage include (1) attraction (identification of potential rewards and costs of interaction), (2) communication and bargaining, (3) development and exercise of power, (4) development of behavioral norms, and (5) development of expectations.

Expansion. The fundamental difference between the exploration and the expansion stages of relationships is the "enlargement or increase of intermeshing interest-spheres (or goals, ends, or objectives) that bind actors or groups" (Scanzoni 1979, p. 79). More specifically, Scanzoni identifies that when a sense of mutual benefit seeking and trust have developed, the relationship has reached a critical point of expansion. While quite similar, joint benefit orientation and trust are distinct in

at least one way. Joint benefit orientation refers to a perception or belief that one member of a relationship is truly motivated, at least in part, by the welfare of the other party to the relationship.

Importantly, this belief is past oriented, based on past dealings.

While also based on experience, trust is a perception or belief that some future action or behavior will occur.

TABLE 1

THE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
(Scanzoni 1979)

AWARENESS	Recognition by one party that another party is a feasible exchange partner. Interaction has not transpired.
EXPLORATION	Marked by first bilateral interactions. First mutual consideration of obligations, benefits, burdens. Minimal investment and interdependence. Expectations formed by cues.
EXPANSION	Marked by emergence of trust and joint benefit orientation, increased interdependence. A consequence of each party's satisfaction with the other's role performance.
COMMITMENT	Most advanced stage of interdependence. Formation of loyalty. Relationship marked by high relative levels of resource input, consistency of input, and durability of association.
DISSOLUTION	Disengagement from high levels of interdependence and commitment. Defined by the degree of directness and other-orientation with which the disengagement is enacted.

A few observations are important to the present discussion. A critical juncture in a relationship resides at the point of transition between exploration and expansion. Exploration captures the very first interactions between two parties. Critical experiences occur that determine if the relationship will develop and go further. In one sense, experiences based on the behaviors and actions of the relationship partners during exploration serve as cues for current and future desires and intentions. In turn, experiences or cues are the bases of expectations in the form of trust, which is a key indicant of an expanding relationship.

Relational exchange theory provides a useful and realistic framework for the examination of marketing exchanges. Many of the concepts described above have found direct application to marketing contexts (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Ford 1980). Further, relational exchange can apply to a variety of marketing contexts, as discussed below.

Relational Exchange in Marketing

Research on relational exchange in marketing has become more prominent. For example, research in services marketing has explored how interpersonal processes between service personnel and customers can be enhanced to develop long-term buyer-seller relationships. Much of the focus here is on the role of service personnel in creating quality service encounters. Due to the highly interactive nature of most services, significant attention has been given to the interaction processes adopted by service personnel. One important research result

has been the exploration of specific role behaviors that lead to exchange relationships between service personnel and customers (e.g., Berry 1983; Crosby, Evans, and Cowles 1990).

Research in strategic marketing has also identified the usefulness of the relational exchange concept. Here, much emphasis has been on deriving enhanced firm performance and potential sources of competitive advantage through the establishment of relationships in both consumer and industrial markets (e.g., Schnaars 1991). One perspective is that marketing exchanges are analogous to marriages, and much of the benefit (e.g., customer loyalty) to be gained by a firm in its market(s) is through management of customer relationships for the long term, beyond initial transactions (e.g., Levitt 1983).

Research in marketing channels has proved a particularly fruitful domain for the application of relationship concepts. An expanding body of work has conceptualized or examined empirically various aspects of vertical and horizontal interfirm relationships (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988; Spekman and Johnston 1986). Several examples represent how social exchange concepts have been adapted to channels research to make influential contributions.

Ford (1980) developed a model of buyer-seller relationship development in industrial markets. Similar to Scanzoni (1979), Ford's model identifies five stages through which interfirm relationships may evolve: (1) pre-relationship, (2) early, (3) development, (4) long-term, and (5) final. Key dimensions are identified that define and vary across each stage. These include experience, uncertainty, degree of

commitment, social distance (degree of familiarity), and adaptations.

Several parallels exist between Ford's and Scanzoni's model.

Importantly, experience and past satisfactory performance by firms is viewed as an important source of decreased social distance and increased trust between firms, with performance adaptations being an important signal of commitment.

Important and influential conceptualizations of interfirm relational exchange have been provided by Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) and Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal (1988). Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh apply concepts from contract law (Macneil 1980) and Scanzoni's (1979) five-stage framework in modeling the relationship development process between firms. Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal extend the notion of relational exchange within the context of just-in-time relationships between manufacturers and suppliers. An important contribution made by these studies is synthesizing key situational and process characteristics of exchange and how these characteristics differ between firms that pursue discrete exchanges vs. relational exchanges. Table 2 (below) summarizes important issues.

As noted above, these conceptualizations are rooted in the work of social exchange and contract law. Thus, many of the comments discussed previously are pertinent here. The issues of experience, expectations, and trust are noteworthy and significant. Experiences such as initial selling interactions, negotiation, and performance of obligations yield future expectations and developing trust between exchange partners. These fundamental concepts are at the very center of increasingly

sophisticated and explicit investigations of interfirm exchange behavior (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Frazier 1983).

TABLE 2
DISCRETE TRANSACTION
VS.
RELATIONAL EXCHANGE *

CHARACTERISTICS OF EXCHANGE: SITUATION AND PROCESS	TRANSACTION ORIENTATION	RELATIONSHIP ORIENTATION
Time Orientation	Short-term	Long-term
Bonding (Trust)	Low	Moderate to High
Focus of Exchange (Price, Value)	Price, transaction, unilateral	Product, social, economic, technical value, Joint Profit
Commitment	Low	Moderate to High
Interdependence	Low	Moderate to High
Frequency of Communication	Low	Moderate to High
Nature of Information	Formal, focused on transaction	Formal and informal, coordination, planning
Risk Orientation	Low	Moderate to High

* (ADAPTED FROM Macneil 1980; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988)

Contemporary ideas about relational exchange have begun to influence research on the selling process. For example, the concept of relational communication (Soldow and Thomas 1984) suggests interesting issues about selling communications. Relational communication, according to Soldow and Thomas, represents a level of abstraction higher than communication content and refers more to the form of communication. In other words, in terms of grammatical form and response mode, it addresses the notion that every message communicates something about itself beyond the actual message content. Message exchanges, in part, attempt to indicate the right to direct, structure, or dominate the interpersonal communication system (the relationship).

Other researchers have begun to suggest linkages between the selling process and aspects of buyer-seller relationship development. For instance, Miles, Arnold, and Nash (1990) have applied adaptive selling concepts to specific stages of the dyad's relationship. Similarly, others have linked the selling process specifically to trust development, a critical aspect of developing relationships (Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983; Swan and Nolan 1985; Swan et al. 1988) or to the relationship development process in general (Fine and Schumann 1990).

Relational exchange is an appealing and useful concept for the examination of marketing exchanges. It is receiving increased application in a variety of marketing contexts, including services marketing, strategic marketing, channels, and personal selling. A key indicator of an expanding relationship is the development of trust between the exchange partners. As the relational exchange concept has

been adopted in marketing, the investigation of trust in marketing contexts has become more important. The following sections discuss in more detail the concept of trust and how it has been examined in marketing.

The Concept of Trust

Trust has been conceptualized in a variety of ways within the literature of social psychology, group dynamics, and social learning (Frost, Stimpson, and Maughan 1978). Overall, though, trust has been examined either as a general concept or as an aspect of interpersonal interaction.

Researchers have argued that trust is a basic ingredient in the healthy personality (Erikson 1953) and an aspect of a person's expectations about human nature and norms of behavior (Wrightman 1964). In his detailed and influential review of trust, Barber (1983) discusses Parson's (1969) four media of exchange among social systems - commitment, influence, power, and money. Here, commitment is the basic appeals to obligation in the form of norms and values, and trust is viewed as a consequence of commitment.

Deutsch (1973) also reviews a variety of general meanings of trust. His discussion couches trust as a psychological state and includes describing trust variously as despair, social conformity, innocence, faith, and risk-taking or gambling. While recognizing the many meanings researchers have given the concept of trust, Deutsch focuses on and develops the meaning of trust as confidence or an expectation based on a sufficient confidence of some outcome.

Barber (1983) suggests that a common theme that links these general views of trust is the various types of expectations people have about social systems. In its most general sense, trust means the expectation that natural orders (e.g., physical, biological, social, and moral systems) will persist and be realized. Thus, a body of research has examined trust as a very general and basic notion concerning an individual's expectations about the arrangement and persistence of natural order.

Interpersonal Trust: Expectations

In some important respects, the concept of interpersonal trust represents a departure from the notion of basic trust (Rotter 1967). Fundamentally, interpersonal trust implies interaction between entities (Zand 1972). In his review, introduced above, Barber (1983) identified a variety of general definitions of trust. In addition, he discussed alternative and more specific notions of trust as expectations social actors have regarding one another. This begins to develop the perspective of trust as a phenomenon of interpersonal interaction.

In keeping with his initial conclusion that expectation is a common theme in trust, Barber developed two additional views of expectation in the context of interpersonal trust. The first view is that trust is the expectation of technically competent role performance on the part of those involved in social relationships and systems. The competent performance expected may involve expert knowledge, technical capability, or routine performance. The second perspective of interpersonal trust is the expectation that partners in interaction will

carry out their fiduciary obligations and responsibilities. This view refers to the expectation that others will fulfill their duties, in certain situations, to place others' interests before their own. The notion of fiduciary responsibility suggests that part of interpersonal trust is attributing the cause or motive behind the behaviors of social actors, an important idea that will be developed later.

In a manner similar to Barber, Deutsch (1973) distinguished between basic trust and interpersonal trust. The notion of confidence is common here. But, with regard to interpersonal trust, much attention was focused on understanding the conditions that lead one person to trust the intentions of another. Important factors that influence an individual's trust in another include (1) the perceived strength of the motivation underlying the other's intentions, (2) the perception of the other person's commitment to the intention, (3) the perceived motivational source of the intention, and (4) the perceived focus (objective) of the intention.

One key observation that results from the views presented thus far is that interpersonal trust involves the perceptions one person has of another. This is very much in line with the view developed by research in interpersonal communication that trustworthiness is a perception one person has for another, not a personal attribute (e.g., Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953). More specifically, interpersonal trust involves expectations or confidence that people behave or will behave certain ways in certain contexts. These expectations are based on evaluations of why people behave certain ways. In other words, interpersonal trust involves attributing the force behind the behavior of others. The

notion of attribution is implicit or explicit in most discussions of interpersonal trust. According to Barber (1983), expectations "are the meanings actors attribute to themselves and others as they make choices about which actions and reactions are rationally effective and emotionally and morally appropriate" (p. 9). Attribution is an antecedent of interpersonal trust and involves evaluating behavioral motives such as altruism (e.g., Deutsch 1973; Frost, Stimpson, and Maughan 1978).

Interpersonal Trust: Experience

An influential body of research argues that interpersonal trust is learned. Social learning theory suggests that trust is determined by specific expectations within the context of a situation along with experiences in other perceived similar situations (Rotter 1967; 1980). This supports and enhances the view that trust is expectation or confidence. The suggestion is that expectations, at least in part, are learned as a result of prior experiences in similar situations. This is an important concept because it introduces the notion that trust is based on experience along with expectations. Additionally, social learning theory suggests that people may develop a learned predisposition to trust others or not trust others in given situations.

Rotter (1967) introduced the Interpersonal Trust Scale (ITS) to measure trust as a generalized, learned predisposition. While the scale has been shown to have a degree of construct validity, some researchers have argued that the ITS in its original version did not represent the multi-dimensional nature of trust (e.g., Kaplan 1973). Subsequent

researchers have provided factor-analytic evidence that dimensions of trust may include:

(Kaplan 1973)

- * Institutional trust (trust toward major social agents in society).
- * Sincerity (perceived sincerity of others).
- * Caution (need to be cautious; fear that others will take advantage).

(Chun and Campbell 1974)

- * Political cynicism (concerns skepticism and cynicism about politicians and political bodies).
- * Interpersonal exploitation (concerns self-protection and caution toward others).
- * Societal hypocrisy (concerns failure of others and institutions to meet commonly held expectations).
- * Reliable role performance (concerns failure of individuals to fulfill specific, personal role requirements).

(Corazzini 1977)

- * Suspicion (concerns suspicion that others may take advantage).
- * Personal risk-taking.
- * Financial risk-taking (gambling).
- * Cynicism (concerns hypocrisy in society).

Research by Rotter and others may represent the trust construct in its most abstract sense and suggests that trust is a basic predisposition that is learned through experience and concerns fundamental aspects of relationships with various individuals and institutions in society.

An integral part of trust development, then, is experience: both previous experience in similar situations and experience resulting from multiple contacts with a person over time. This raises questions within the context of the present investigation. What types of experience are

most conducive to the formation of trust? Does trust begin to form with initial interactions between people? How much of trust is attributable to learned predispositions and how much to initial interactions?

There is increasing evidence that trust is a fundamental aspect of developing interpersonal relationships (Zand 1972; Deutsch 1973). As discussed earlier, relationships develop over time and evolve through relatively distinct and identifiable stages. Trust has been identified as a critical (perhaps the most important) indicator of the transition from very early stages to expanded stages of relationships (cf. Leik and Leik 1977; Macneil 1980; Scanzoni 1979).

One implication that has been argued, then, is that trust between individuals in a specific situation begins to form with initial interactions. This view suggests that elements of trust result from interpretations of the behavioral cues and increased risk-taking exhibited by social actors. For example, Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi (1973) argue that three criteria exist for trust to develop. First, there must be a risky situation in which a social actor's outcomes are at least partially determined through the behavior of another person. Second, cues must be present that provide the actor with information about the probabilities of various uncertain outcomes. These cues can include communication from another person announcing his/her intentions. Finally, the actor must display a reliance on the information received through the cues. This leads the authors to define interpersonal trust as "a reliance upon information received from another person about uncertain environmental states and their accompanying outcomes in a risky situation (Schlenker, Helm, and Tedeschi 1973, p. 419).

The current discussion of interpersonal trust reveals another fundamental concept. The development of trust through experience typically involves risk-taking or a sense of gambling over time. Trust grows over time as a result of the outcomes of a series of risky episodes in a developing relationship. This is what Zand (1972) refers to as spiral reinforcement. Trust (or mis-trust) forms in the interaction of two or more people. As each behavioral episode in the developing relationship evolves and the outcome evaluated, trust is either strengthened or diminished. Eventually, a level of trust equilibrium develops that tends to gravitate toward the lowest level of trust brought to the relationship by one of the actors.

Summary

The previous review has revealed various definitions of trust and that interpersonal trust can differ from basic trust. Emphasis has been placed on two facets of interpersonal trust. First, interpersonal trust is, in part, a result of expectations about the behavior of others. An important antecedent of these expectations is the attribution or evaluation of why people behave or will behave certain ways in certain situations. Second, interpersonal trust is also a result of experience resulting from previous, similar interactions or from multiple interactions with other social actors. These experiences involve a series of risk-taking episodes and evaluations of outcomes. This perspective underscores that trust may be partially a learned predisposition resulting from a spiral reinforcement of experiences (Rotter 1967; 1980; Zand 1972). The following sections examine how

interpersonal trust has been used in marketing research and the potential for further research in this area.

Trust studies in Marketing

Trust is a concept of recognized importance in marketing. It has been alluded to or examined directly in a variety of marketing contexts. It is a key element in contemporary conceptualizations of interorganizational exchange (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Bonoma and Johnston 1978; Frazier 1983; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987) and has been implicitly or explicitly conceptualized as a factor in the personal-selling process (e.g., Saxe and Weitz 1982; Swan and Nolan 1985; Swan, Trawick, and Silva 1985; Swan, et al. 1988). Despite the recognized relevance of trust to marketing research, surprisingly little has been done to specify its function or develop and test valid measures of trust for marketing settings, especially at the level of the dyad (cf. Dwyer and Lagace 1986; Martin 1991; Swan and Nolan 1985). Thus, noteworthy reviews and examination of the trust concept are increasing among marketing researchers.

Recent research reflects and expands the dimensions of basic trust and interpersonal trust discussed above. Key themes include expectations, experience, and risk-taking. For example, in an influential discussion of buyer-seller trust, Dwyer and Lagace (1986) identify three general categories of trust perspectives: (1) trust as a personality trait, (2) trust as a predisposition toward another, and (3) trust as risking behavior. The first two views build on the notion of trust as a belief. Such a perspective underscores the concept of trust

within the context of expectations and experience as developed by research in social psychology and social learning (e.g., Barber 1983; Rotter 1967). The third perspective represents that an element of trust is behavior. Researchers have previously identified that trust is often manifested through the assumption of various forms of risk, such as personal risk and financial risk (e.g., Corazzini 1977).

Other researchers have also extended fundamental notions of trust within the realm of marketing. For example, it has been suggested that a learned predisposition to trust in certain situations can influence the development of trust on the part of both a buyer and a seller (e.g., Dwyer and Lagace 1986; Martin 1991). This may be especially true during initial selling interactions when experience with a specific exchange partner is minimal. Researchers have also recognized that during selling interactions, buyers and sellers may make attributions concerning the motives behind the actions of the exchange partner (e.g., Anderson and Narus; Frazier 1983; Swan and Nolan 1985). Attributions based on the role performance of buyers and sellers may have significant influence on the development of trust in an exchange relationship.

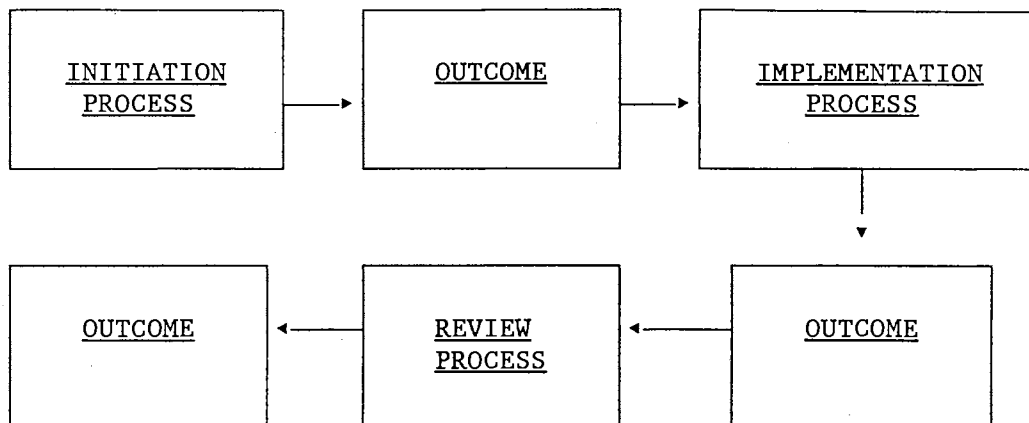
In a similar manner, communication behavior during buyer-seller interaction may serve as an important cue about the intentions of exchange partners (Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983; Swan, Trawick, and Silva 1985; Swan, et al. 1988). More specifically, certain behaviors may provide important signals about the relational intentions of salespersons and selling firms, as well as potential buyers and buying organizations in business-to-business contexts. This suggests, for example that specific selling communication behaviors may more readily

influence the development of trust between buyers and sellers, even during the initial interactions (Martin 1991; Swan and Nolan 1985).

Trust in Interorganizational Exchange Behavior

Research in marketing channels and interorganizational exchange is a domain in which trust has been especially important. Attention has focused increasingly on the antecedents and consequences of strategic exchange relationships between firms. Within this context, researchers have identified trust as one of the essential concepts in understanding developing relationships. While a number of studies provide good examples of this trend (e.g., Bonoma 1976; Bonoma and Johnston 1978; Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Frazier, Spekman, and O'Neal 1988), two works are especially representative. Frazier (1983) developed a detailed model of interorganizational exchange behavior. His model depicts the flow of processes from initiation through review of exchanges and interactions, including the intermediate outcomes of each stage. The framework is especially important for identifying key constructs that come into play during various stages of exchange. It is also a significant source of research propositions for the further exploration of business-to-business exchange issues.

Anderson and Narus (1990) provide an empirical test of a model of manufacturer and distributor working partnerships. Through the use of structural equation analysis, the study is especially important for specifying key behavioral constructs and their relationships within a channel system. Figure 8 provides a synthesis of important ideas and constructs examined by Frazier (1983) and Anderson and Narus (1990).



(Model and discussion adapted from Anderson and Narus 1990; Frazier 1983).

- * Initiation Process. Focuses on why and how firms initiate exchanges. Begins with perception of a need and a motive to form an exchange relationship. This stage includes search, identification of deserved and expected rewards, situational factors that influence initiation, and initial negotiations with potential exchange partners.
- * Outcome. Outcomes of initiation include the assumption of a channel role, establishment of power (dependence and authority), and development of aspirations (goals) with regard to exchange relationship.
- * Implementation Process. Implementation begins with exchanges of products and ongoing interactions between representatives of the exchange firms. Key aspects of behavior include role performance, information communication, cooperation, and influence techniques.
- * Outcome. Outcomes of implementation include the achieved rewards or losses (intrinsic and extrinsic) resulting from implementation processes.
- * Review Process. Review focuses on evaluation of the rewards or losses perceived as resulting from implementation processes. This stage includes attribution of responsibility and the use of cues to evaluate personnel and exchange performances in terms of attractiveness, trust, and expertise.
- * Outcome. Outcomes of review include satisfaction or dissatisfaction (intrinsic and extrinsic) with the overall exchange relationship.

Figure 8. Interfirm Exchange Behavior

Figure 8 depicts the flow of processes from the initiation of negotiation to the review of exchanges and interactions that occur between buying and selling organizations. The figure highlights concepts relevant to the present study from the current research perspective of interfirm exchange. These include the use of role performances and communication behaviors as cues for subsequent development of attributions and trust. It specifies, among other issues, initial and ongoing interactions as well as the outcomes of the various intermediate processes.

It can be argued, however, that the perspective neglects some key issues in interfirm exchange. In general, certain issues are not clear that are pertinent to the behavioral dynamics of dyadic interactions between industrial salespersons and purchasers. This observation leads to some key questions, including:

1. What effect does selling communication (salesperson role performance) have during the initiation stage of the model?
2. Do industrial buyers use selling communications as cues during initial interactions?
3. Do processes such as attribution and trust development begin during initial interactions?

Trust and associated concepts are recognized as important in the context of interfirm exchange. However, certain aspects at the level of the dyad may be neglected. Research of the trust construct in personal selling offers the potential to address many of the questions raised by research at the organizational level.

Trust in Personal Selling

Research that addresses specifically the concept of trust is sparse in personal selling and is relatively recent. Yet, attention to this matter is increasing, and researchers have used a variety of approaches to examine the role of trust in buyer-seller interactions. One important contribution from the domain of personal selling is its focus on the behavioral dynamics of dyadic interactions as compared to other domains. Thus, research in selling contexts offers the potential to address key aspects of trust in marketing that might otherwise remain neglected.

Some contributions to the topic of trust in personal selling have been made more or less indirectly. For example, studies have examined processes that influence rapport-building between a salesperson and a prospect, rapport being related to trust. Others have assessed the effect of certain stimuli on a buyer's perception of a salesperson's credibility, with trustworthiness being a dimension of source credibility. Nickels, Everett, and Klein (1983) adapted the concept of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) as a means of studying the development of salesperson-customer rapport. NLP was developed initially to help medical therapists develop more trust, rapport and understanding with clients. It is a technique for enhancing one's ability to detect personality types through increased awareness of verbal and physical cues. NLP has been very successful and is now being investigated in other contexts (e.g., teaching, selling) in which it is advantageous to establish and maintain rapport.

Nickels, Everett, and Klein describe the Rapport Cycle that is based on speaking the language of the recipient and using descriptive words that match the primary thinking mode of the listener. This is followed by matching the customer in other behaviors as well (e.g., posture). The stages of the Rapport Cycle include:

1. Salesperson perceives and processes verbal and behavioral cues.
2. Salesperson paces body language and word patterns.
3. Customer feels comfortable with and trusts salesperson.
4. Salesperson elicits customer wants and decision strategy.
5. Customer provides further cues.
6. Salesperson perceives and processes cues.
7. Salesperson matches presentation and product to customer desires.
8. Customer feels satisfied with purchase and salesperson.
9. Salesperson interacts with customer.
10. Customer provides further cues.

To the degree that rapport is used analogously with trust, trust-building is a continuing cycle of perceiving cues and matching appropriate behavior between social actors. Trust development is identified as a process that begins immediately as the cycle unfolds; a direct result of the rapport building cycle. Thus, Nickels, Everett, and Klein provide support for the notion that selling behaviors during initial exchange interactions, especially an adaptive selling style, may directly influence the development of customer trust.

Simpson and Kahler (1980) sought to examine source credibility in the context of personal selling. More specifically, their purposes were

(1) to examine prospect perceptions of a salesperson's source credibility as a function of the salesperson's title and (2) to develop a scale for source credibility in a selling context. In their study, source credibility was defined as the trust, confidence, and faith a respondent has in the salesperson. Thus, source credibility may offer insights into trust and its operationalization in marketing.

The researchers accessed past research in speech, communication, and public relations that has conceptualized source credibility (e.g., Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953) as a perception one person has of another, not a personal attribute. A scale specific to a selling context was developed. Scale purification and reduction processes suggest that four basic dimensions of a salesperson's source credibility include dynamism, believability, expertness, and sociability, with trustworthiness being an element of expertness.

A few attempts have been made directly to measure trust in a selling context. Sullivan, Peterson, and their colleagues recognized that trust plays a critical role in the development of exchange relationships in an intercultural context. In fact, it is viewed as the essential requirement in many cultures such as Japan. In two studies, (Sullivan, et al. 1981; Sullivan and Peterson 1982) the researchers examined the antecedents and role of trust development in intercultural business relationships. The study was based on the premise that Americans and Japanese would define trust similarly. Trust was operationalized as a dependent variable influenced by scenarios (manufacturing context) describing various patterns of negotiation and conflict resolution between Japanese and American managers.

The Interpersonal Trust Scale (ITS) (Rotter 1967) was adapted to develop an eleven-item measure of future trust between the Japanese and American exchange partners in the scenarios. Scale design attempted to reflected the modifications and multidimensionality identified by other researchers that have examined the ITS (e.g., Corazzini 1977; Kaplan 1973). The scale identified ten elements of trust:

1. Sincerity.
2. Lack of caution.
3. Lack of suspicion.
4. Desire for close relationship.
5. Reliance.
6. Equality.
7. Expectancy.
8. Predictability.
9. Consistency.
10. General agreement.

Factor analysis revealed a unidimensional trust construct in this particular study, with five of the original ten elements remaining significant:

1. A belief that the other person will act sincerely in future dealings.
2. The desire to work hard in the future to establish a close relationship.
3. A reliance on the other person in future dealings.
4. The expectation that the future relationship with the other person will be good.
5. The belief that the future behavior of the other person will be consistent with past behavior.

Research has also examined communication within a marketing channel and the perceived trustworthiness that may result. Specifically, Bialaszewski and Giallourakis (1985) investigated the importance of communication techniques and their influence on the development of trust between manufacturers and distributors. In the study, trust was defined as an attitude displayed in situations where a person is relying on another person, a person is risking something of value, and a person is attempting to achieve a desired goal.

Distributors for a heavy-equipment manufacturer were questioned regarding the adequacy of communication with the manufacturer in terms of telephone communication, personal visits, and the quantity and quality of information received. The dependent variable, trust, was operationalized in the following way:

1. Perceived confidence and trust the channel manager has toward the distributor.
2. Freedom of discussion without jeopardizing the relationship.
3. Sincerity of the channel manager.
4. Trust and confidence regarding the overall fairness of the channel manager.

No theoretical basis or rationale is discussed for the measures. No discussion of instrument validation is provided. Thus, serious questions exist regarding the usefulness of this study in extending the conceptualization and operationalization of trust in a marketing context.

Swan, Trawick, and Silva (1985) provide one of the more influential studies of trust in the personal-selling literature. They investigated the processes and techniques industrial salespeople used to

gain the trust of their customers. Trust was conceptualized based on Rotter's (1967) view that a trusting person is one who assumes risk. Medical salespeople were questioned regarding the communication behaviors by which they sought to convince prospects of their trustworthiness during initial sales calls. A literature review and prestudy indicated that five issues were necessary in gaining trust (in order by mean importance rating):

1. Honesty/Candor.
2. Customer orientation (placing the customer's interests ahead of personal interests).
3. Dependability and Reliability.
4. Competence.
5. Likability.

An important fundamental finding from their study was that customer trust in a salesperson is a direct result of the salesperson exhibiting these trust-building attributes during selling interactions. Also, trust-development begins with initial interactions and builds over a series of calls.

An important follow-up study was conducted by Swan, et al. (1988). This study is a significant contribution to the personal-selling literature in its own right. It offers a twenty-item scale to measure the five dimensions of customer trust identified by Swan, Trawick, and Silva (1985). The researchers purport that no effort had yet been reported to develop a scale to measure customer trust of salespeople. It is also significant as one of the only efforts to extend and test existing concepts of trust in personal selling or marketing in general.

Questionnaires containing 28 Likert-type items, including three measures of overall trust were sent to purchasing managers in a southeastern state and a midwestern industrial area. A 34% response rate yielded 187 completed questionnaires. The scale reliabilities ranged from .88 to .67 with only minimal possible improvement to be gained by dropping any items. Thus, the scale was deemed acceptable as a developmental measure and all items were retained for further analysis. Factor analysis suggested that a smaller subset of four dimensions may underlie trust:

1. Competence (the salesperson is a knowledgeable and accurate source of information).
2. Responsibility (honesty and frankness in providing information).
3. Dependability (not over promising).
4. Likability (friendliness).

An additional study of trust in a personal-selling context that has been influential is provided by Schurr and Ozanne (1985). This study examined trust and perceived bargaining toughness as variables influencing an industrial purchaser's bargaining behavior in a simulated bargaining experiment. Trust was operationalized using six semantic pairs:

1. Honest/Dishonest.
2. Sincere/Insincere.
3. Straightforward/Deceptive.
4. Open/Closed.
5. Troublesome/Not Troublesome.
6. Reliable/Unreliable.

Experimental manipulations of trust and bargaining stance (tough/soft) provided evidence that a buyer's preconceptions about a seller's trustworthiness and moderates reactions to an expected tough bargaining stance. Expecting a tough bargaining stance from a seller who is perceived to be trustworthy is related to a buyer being more integrative toward the seller in terms of message-sending and concession-making behavior. Schurr and Ozanne (1985) provide an important contribution to the literature in terms of measurement of trust and the implications of trust. In this study, however, trust was used a predictor variable and, therefore, the study does not offer implications about trust-building influences.

Conclusions

It seems clear that trust is a significant concept to marketing researchers and is just in its infancy from a conceptual and operational standpoint. While important contributions have been made, research to date has been relatively sparse and ad hoc toward understanding the antecedents and consequences of trust in marketing contexts.

The significance of trust has been recognized especially in organizational contexts with regard to interfirm exchange relationships. In general, this domain seems characterized by relating a fuller array of constructs that tap the theoretical base of research on basic and interpersonal trust. However, important questions remain regarding the behavioral dynamics that lead to and result from trust development at the level of the dyad.

Trust is also important in selling contexts. One contribution from this domain is a focus on dyadic interactions and the role of trust. Not as much significant work has been done at the level of the dyad yet. Attempts have been made to apply theoretical foundations to the development of trust measures in a selling context. What has been done suggests that further scale development is both necessary and warranted.

A review of research on trust and its use in marketing results in basic observations and conclusions about the domain of the trust concept. Most importantly, research supports that multiple issues relate to trust (e.g., Dwyer and Lagace 1986; Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992; Swan and Nolan 1985), including:

1. Feelings (an affective component including liking).
2. Beliefs (a cognitive component based on experience and expectations).
3. Intentions (plans to continue or increase trusting in the future).
4. Behaviors (actual reliance and dependence on another).

With regard to these various facets of trust, previous research has tended to take two different approaches (Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). One approach has been based on viewing trust as feelings and beliefs that a person has about the future behavior and performance of another person or group. These elements embody feelings like caution and evaluations of sincerity as well as expectations about the future role performance of another entity.

A second approach has conceptualized trust as a person's behavior or intentions to act in a trusting manner in the future. For example,

trust can be assessed by the degree of reliance, dependence, or risk-taking that one person exhibits toward another. Similarly, a person can plan to commit increased resources to a relationship in the future, or plan to increase their dependence or reliance on another party. The various elements that have been found to relate to trust provide a framework for developing richer, multi-dimensional measures of the trust concept in marketing contexts.

A foundation exists for developing and exploring research questions concerning the interaction of sellers and buyers and the effect this interaction has on the development of buyer-seller relationships. Selling behaviors (role performances) are sources of information about the salesperson and the selling firm. As such, they are cues used by buyers as the basis for processes such as behavioral attribution and trust formation, even during initial selling interactions. To date, little work exists concerning the relationship between salesperson behavior and trust development in marketing exchanges (e.g., Martin 1991).

The Relationship Between Salesperson Communication Behavior and Relational Exchange in Marketing

The preceding sections have reviewed literature pertaining to salesperson effectiveness and relational exchange in marketing. Identification of the determinants of salesperson effectiveness has been a dominant theme in selling research. The dyadic perspective of buyer-seller interaction has evolved to become the dominant perspective in this research domain. While a variety of approaches have been used to

explore the dyad, it is argued that adaptive selling and customer-oriented selling have emerged as the two central themes in personal selling.

Critical observations were developed within the literature review regarding existing research on personal selling. One fundamental point is that research has largely ignored the social and behavioral dynamics of buyer-seller interactions. This seems to be the case in spite of the dominance of the dyadic perspective that recognizes the influence of both the salesperson and the customer on interaction outcomes.

A second point is, in a sense, a manifestation of the first. There remains a strong research tendency to define salesperson effectiveness in terms of the attainment of a sale or transaction. Over-attention to the sale as the immediate outcome of buyer-seller interactions reflects general inattention to the many social aspects of interactions. Important initial outcomes of many types of interactions include trust and relationship development. While sales are important, contemporary thinking is beginning to underscore the importance that these initial social issues have on ultimately achieving a sale. The social aspects of buyer-seller interaction warrant closer and specific attention.

A third issue is that research on salesperson effectiveness has been largely sporadic and ad hoc. Much extant research, especially earlier efforts, has tended to offer normative prescriptions based on the experiences and opinions of the researcher. Relatively little effort has been directed toward extending and testing the key concepts and themes that have been developed in personal-selling research.

The present study proposes that an important opportunity exists to address many key issues in sales research by linking the research domains that examine salesperson effectiveness and relational exchange in marketing. The relational exchange paradigm, as discussed previously, has influenced several areas of marketing research. Perhaps the most significant treatment, though, has been in the area of business-to-business or interorganizational exchange. Here, research has developed and tested increasingly rich conceptualizations of marketing relationships and associated social constructs, such as trust within the relationship development process.

In linking the two research domains, customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors are conceptualized as being important determinants of marketing relationships. Further, trust is viewed as an important first-level outcome of many selling interactions, a critical indicator of an expanding relationship, and a determinant of future sales. It is posited that a buyer's trust during initial buyer-seller interactions takes the form of trust in the salesperson as well as trust in the selling firm.

A Buyer's Trust in the Salesperson

Many selling contexts are relational in nature, where sales transpire over time and only after multiple selling interactions occur between buyer and seller. This is especially true in many industrial selling contexts. Often, exchange represents a high-involvement situation that is based on meeting relatively unique needs of individual prospects. In these contexts, then, the most important outcomes of

initial buyer-seller interactions may be the social dimensions of a relationship that determine if future transactions will transpire.

Social exchange theory provides a foundation for ideas about relationship development and behavioral interdependence. Trust is an important concept in this literature. Interpersonal trust may be the most important single indicator of an expanding relationship. It is posited that customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors are positively related to a buyer's sense of trust in a salesperson in these contexts. Social exchange theory provides that the behavioral norms that emerge during initial interactions lead to expectations about the future role performance of exchange partners. In a relational selling context, customer-orientated and adaptive selling behaviors can be indicators of a salesperson's cooperation, goal-congruence, commitment to the relationship, and interest in the buyer's needs (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Blake and Mouton 1970; Ford 1980; Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). These concepts are important bases for the development of expectations in the face of uncertainty and risk, which is the essence of trust in an exchange relationship.

A Buyer's Trust in the Selling Firm

It is also posited that the relationship development process during initial buyer-seller interactions extends to the buyer's sense of trust in the selling firm. This view builds on the notion of the salesperson as the most important source of information about the selling firm during the exploration phase of many exchange relationships (e.g., Leigh and Rethans 1984; Swan and Nolan 1985). Thus, the

salesperson is seen as a cue to the buyer about the nature of the selling firm. The buyer's developing sense of trust in the salesperson influences the buyer's initial sense of trust in the selling firm, which in turn also influences future relationship expansion and exchange.

Trust in the selling firm at this point takes the form of inferences and expectations about the future role performance of the selling firm. Logically, buyers will begin to make inferences and form expectations about a selling firm and its products during even the first encounters with communication about the firm. Relevant issues will certainly pertain to aspects of the product offering, such as:

- * Pricing (e.g., fairness, competitiveness).
- * Product innovation and development (e.g., innovativeness, features).
- * Quality (e.g., reliability, number of defects).

Other important matters will likely concern the firm's personnel and how the firm conducts business, including:

- * Service after the sale (e.g., promptness, expertise of personnel).
- * Order delivery and availability (e.g., timeliness, flexibility).
- * Billing procedures (e.g., easy to understand, easy to deal with).
- * Support for training (e.g., adequacy, willingness to help).
- * Behavior of other personnel (e.g., courteous, empathetic).

One aspect of the present study is to identify the characteristics of the selling firm that are important and relevant to the buyer in forming an initial sense of trust in the selling firm. A second aspect concerns what inferences and expectations a buyer may make about these

characteristics based on the salesperson's communication behavior during initial interactions.

Conclusion

Previous research has either implied or specified a relationship between selling behaviors and relational exchange. Further, it has been emphasized that there is an especially great need to examine buyer-seller interactions in an interorganizational context and how they influence the initial sense of trust and relationship development (e.g., Dwyer and Lagace 1986). Within this body of research, key points include:

1. Relationship development begins with first interactions (e.g., Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983).
2. Trust is a critical indicator of relationship development and begins with first interactions (Scanzoni 1979; Macneil 1980).
3. The role performance of social actors in exchange serves as a cue for relationship intentions. Role performance includes behavior and communication (Ford 1980; Martin 1990; Soldow and Thomas 1984; Swan Trawick, and Silva 1985).
4. The sales literature supports that adaptive selling and customer-oriented selling are two principle selling behaviors that influence trust and relationship development (Miles, Arnold, and Nash 1990; Nickels, Everett, and Klein 1983; Saxe and Weitz 1982; Swan, et al. 1988).

The following chapter describes the study that examined these relationships. The chapter includes specific hypotheses that were tested and details of the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In the review of the personal selling literature (Chapter II), it was indicated that the research in this field has evolved from a unilateral perspective toward an interactive view of the buyer-seller relationship (Figures 5, 6, and 7). This interaction is depicted in Figure 9 within the context of initial interactions between a salesperson and prospective buyer (the exploration stage of a relationship). In this conceptual framework, the salesperson (S) serves as a selling stimulus to the exchange through selling communications. As with key research perspectives (e.g., Sheth 1976; Williams and Spiro 1985), selling communications include the content of the salesperson's delivery as well as the salesperson's behavior. As discussed in Chapter II, customer-oriented selling and adaptive selling are two fundamental behavioral aspects of selling communication that have been identified and examined in previous sales research.

In response to the salesperson's communication, the prospect (P) evaluates the interaction based on both the social aspects of the interaction and the communication content pertaining to products. These evaluations begin during the first interactions with a salesperson (the exploration stage of the relationship) and influence the prospect's verbal and non-verbal feedback to the salesperson. The assessment of

the interaction will then influence future exchange relationships between the buyer and seller.

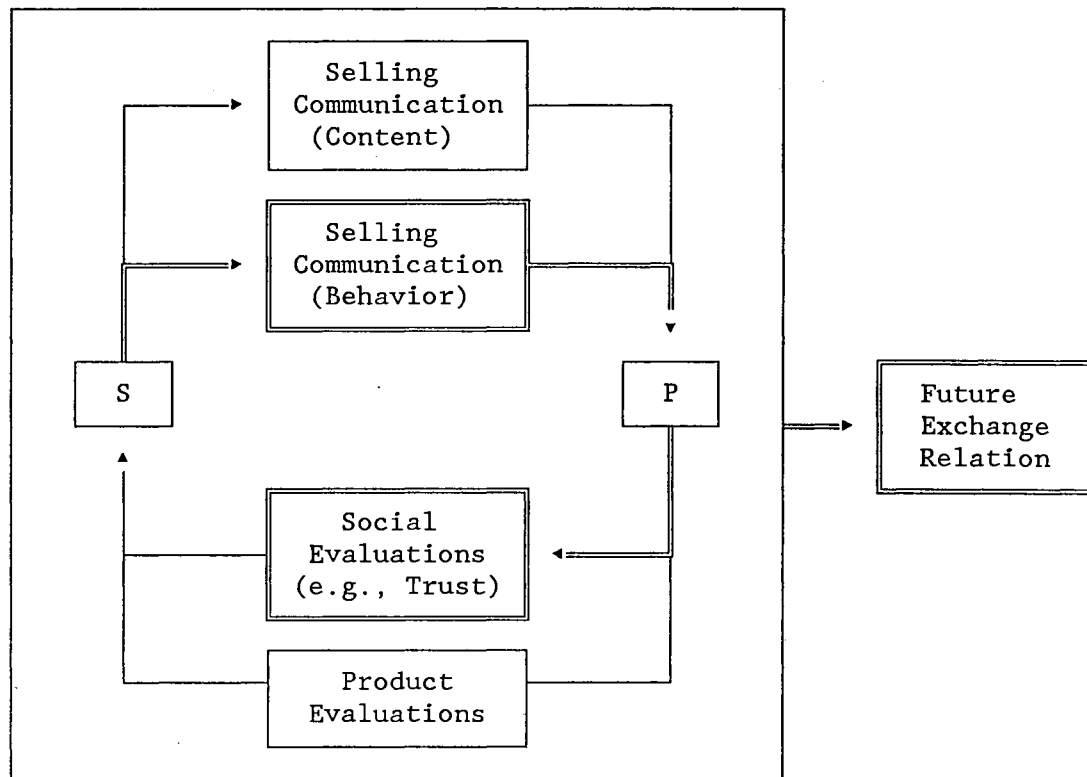


Figure 9. Focus of the Study: The Influence of Buyers' Social Evaluations of Initial Selling Communications on Future Buyer-Seller Exchange Relationships

The high-lighted paths in Figure 9 indicate the focus of the present study. Since most exchanges evolve over time (especially those between organizations), the primary outcome of initial selling interactions will be the social aspects of relationships that will determine if future information acquisition and purchase activity will

transpire. At this early stage in the relationship, it is postulated that social aspects of interaction will be of more importance than product characteristics and performance information. The latter factors will increase in their importance to the relationship over time.

Behavioral aspects of selling communication are thought to influence the exchange relationship through the generation of trust in the salesperson and in the organization that the salesperson represents. With this view in mind, the present study focuses on the following issues within the context of the exploration stage of a buyer-seller relationship:

1. the evaluations made by organizational buyers regarding the selling behaviors of industrial salespersons.
2. the effect that selling behaviors have on the buyer's trust in the salesperson and the selling firm.
3. the effect that the buyer's trust has on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the selling firm in the future.

Hypotheses

Given the fundamental research issues identified above, the relevant constructs to be examined in the present study are salesperson communication behavior (operationalized as customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors), buyer trust in the salesperson, buyer trust in the selling firm, and buyer willingness to expand the relationship with the seller in the future. Figure 10 provides a model that depicts the proposed relationships among the key constructs in the study.

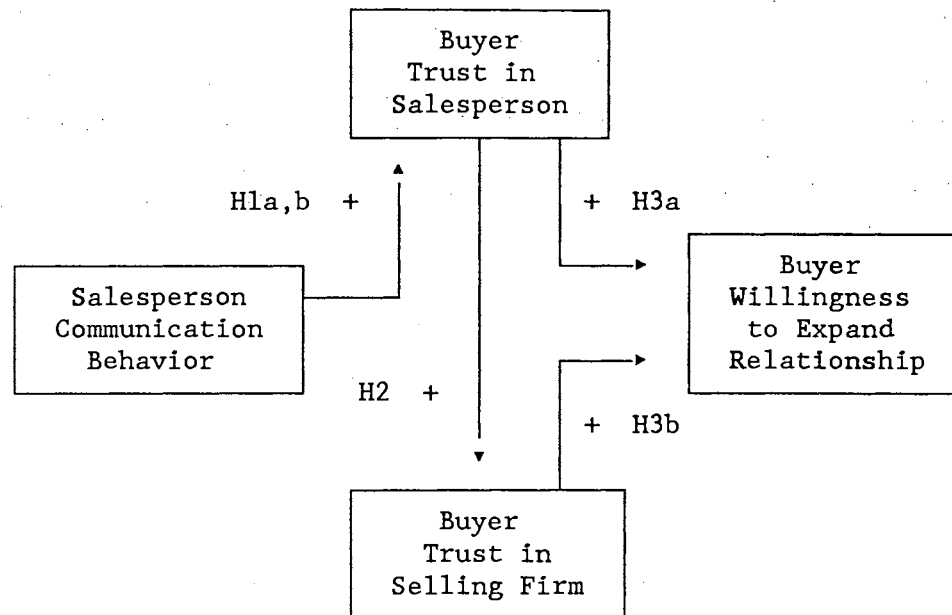


Figure 10. Proposed Relationships Among Key Constructs

Based on the proposed relationships, a number of formal hypotheses are established. As stated in alternate form, these are:

- H1a. Perceived customer-oriented selling behavior has a positive effect on a buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.
- b. Perceived adaptive selling behavior has a positive effect on a buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.
- H2. A buyer's trust in the salesperson has a positive effect on the buyer's trust in the selling firm during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.
- H3a. During the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship, a buyer's trust in the salesperson has a positive effect on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship in the future.
- b. During the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship, a buyer's trust in the selling firm has a positive effect on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship in the future.

General Design

This study examined issues pertinent to the exploration stage of a buyer-seller relationship. Thus, it was deemed important to control the data-collection process in a manner that would isolate buyer-seller interactions in that stage. For this reason, the research design selected was a reversed-treatment experiment in a field setting (Cook and Campbell 1979).

The experimental stimuli for the study were sales interaction scenarios that simultaneously manipulated customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors at high/low levels within the context of an initial buyer-seller interaction.

Scenarios were used to focus and control each subject's reference point in evaluating salesperson behaviors and the selling context. Script theory (e.g., Abelson 1976; 1981; Leigh and Rethans 1984) provided an important foundation for the conceptualization, development, and validation of the scenarios. According to script theory, scripts are cognitive structures that, when activated, organize comprehension of events and situations. These scripts provide a basis for developing accurate and relevant scenarios of specific events in order to elicit desired cognitions.

Script theory has been especially useful in research on industrial buyer-seller interactions as a basis for developing scenarios that control information processing and evoke specific selling contexts (e.g., Leigh and McGraw 1989; Leigh and Rethans 1984; Schurr and Calder 1986). Moreover, scenarios have been used in research similar to the present study to control cognitions and variance within data (Dubinsky

et al. 1992) and to examine trust within buyer-seller relationships (Sullivan et al. 1981; Sullivan and Peterson 1982).

The data-collection process was by self-administered questionnaires that were personally distributed and retrieved. The questionnaires measured the research constructs through a variety of single-item and multi-item scales. In addition, a number of measures were taken to use as manipulation checks for the experimental stimuli.

In order to enhance internal validity of the study, all selling scenarios focused specifically on the interactions regarding the purchase of computer equipment. Additionally, the study sample included only managers of computer outlets, which enhanced the validity of respondents' cognitive processing of the role-playing scenarios. The specific aspects of the study are discussed in detail within the following sections.

Sampling and Data Collection

The population studied consisted of resellers of automated office products. These are firms that typically establish agreements with manufacturers of products such as personal computers, printers, and copiers and resell the products to end users.

Judgment sampling and a drop-off methodology were used to deliver and collect the research instruments. Students from a large midwestern university were trained by the principal researcher in appropriate procedures for identifying and contacting respondents and collecting completed questionnaires. Judgment sampling and the drop-off methodology provided a number of benefits to the data-collection

process, including speed, cost control, qualification and selection of representative subjects, and control over non-response (Kalton 1983; Lovelock, et al. 1976).

As part of the initial contact procedures, assistants recorded the type (independent or chain) and location (city) of each firm where a contact was made and materials were dropped off. This information allowed for assessment of potential non-response bias by comparing drop-off figures with data from those questionnaires that were actually returned. Instruments were delivered to a total of 142 potential respondents. Of these, it was reported that 65 (46%) represented independent resellers while 77 (54%) were part of a chain of retail outlets.

A total of 115 questionnaires were collected, representing 54 independent resellers and 60 chain retailers, with 1 respondent declining to provide information about their firm type. However, 3 questionnaires were incomplete (2 independents and 1 chain respondent) and deemed unusable for the main study. Thus, the final sample consisted of a judgment selection of 112 resellers from the midwest region of the United States for a 79% response rate. The sample size and response rate are comparable to those reported in recent related studies in business-to-business marketing contexts (e.g., Ganesan 1993; Noordewier, John, and Nevin 1990).

Respondents were randomly assigned to either the high or low customer-oriented/adaptive selling scenarios. Cross-tabulation of the scenario version (high or low behavior levels) and the type of firm (independent or chain) confirmed that expected distributions of the

scenarios across types of firms had been achieved ($X^2 = .035$, d.f. = 1, $p = .85$). Of those potential respondents that were contacted and given a scenario and questionnaire, thirty did not respond. These individuals represented 11 independent resellers and 17 chain retailers from a mix of cities represented in the study. Based on this information and the overall response rate, non-response bias was not considered to be a problem for the main study.

Development of the Data-Collection Instrument

The basic components of the data-collection instrument included:

1. a scenario depicting either high or low customer-oriented and adaptive selling.
2. measures of perceived salesperson behaviors: i.e., the customer-orientation and adaptiveness of the salesperson.
3. measures of the buyer's trust in the salesperson and in the firm the salesperson represents.
4. measures of the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller.
5. measures for respondent classification and various manipulations.

Existing scales for perceived salesperson behaviors (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Williams 1992) were adapted for this study. Thus, little pre-test evaluation of these items was required. An integral part of the development of the complete survey instrument, however, was the creation of valid scenarios depicting high or low customer-oriented and adaptive selling behavior, and scales measuring trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. Generally-accepted procedures served as a foundation for generating and pre-testing these elements (e.g., Churchill 1979).

Figure 11 outlines the overall sequence of procedures used to develop and pre-test the components of the instrument. The development procedures fell into two streams of activities that were pursued concurrently, as suggested by Figure 11. Development of the scenarios and the salesperson behavior scales was based on capturing the domain of customer-oriented and adaptive selling within the scenarios and using existing scales in the marketing literature as response items.

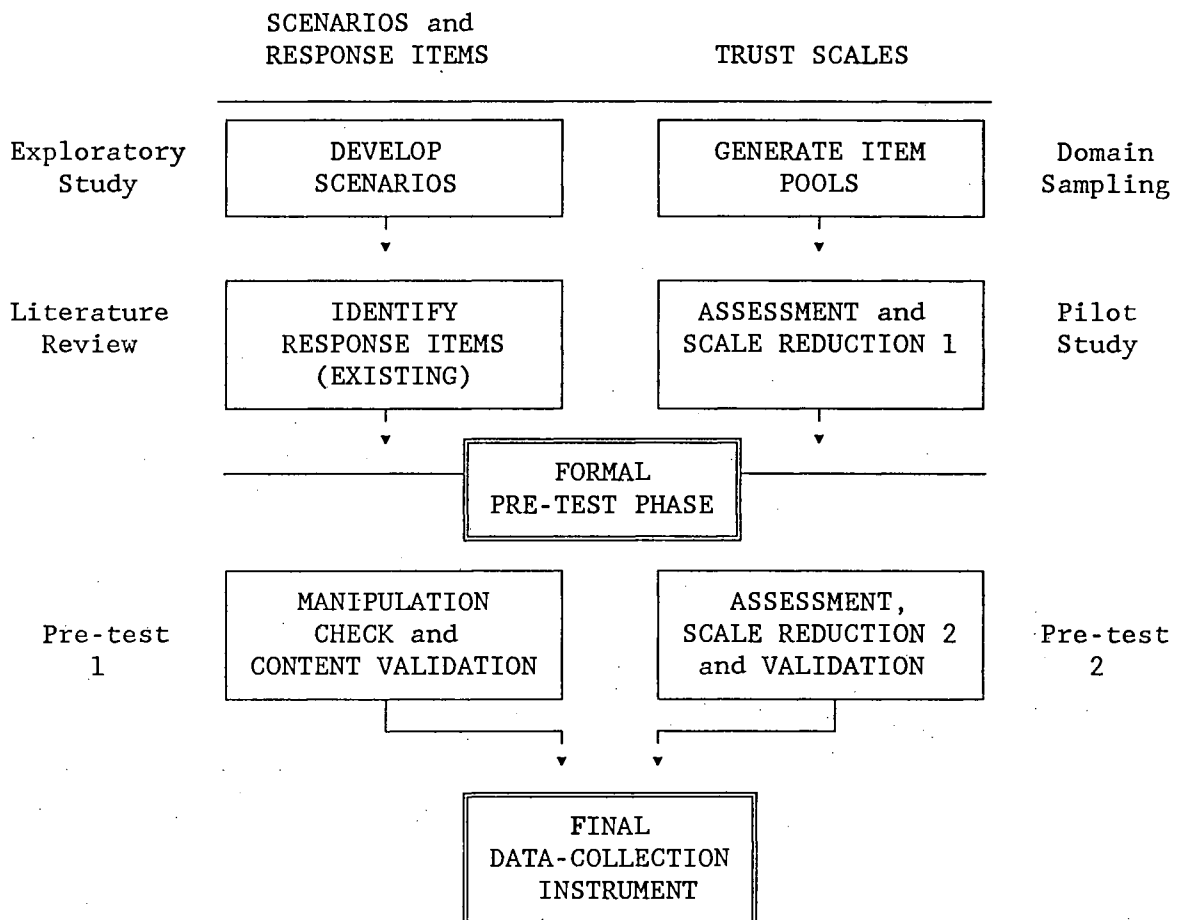


Figure 11. Development of the Data-Collection Instrument

The various stages of the development process ultimately converged into the complete data-collection instrument for use in the main study. The remainder of this chapter summarizes the processes used to develop and pre-test each of the components of the instrument.

Selling Scenarios

Two scenarios were created depicting initial interactions (the exploratory stage of a relationship) between a salesperson and a professional buyer. The two scenarios depicted the salesperson using either high (Appendix A) or low (Appendix B) customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors. The initial conceptualization and development of the scenarios was based on review of prior research on salesperson behavior and on previous script-theoretic approaches to examining buyer-seller interactions (e.g., Leigh and Rethans 1984). In addition, previous professional-selling experience of the principal researcher served as a resource.

Exploratory Field Study. Two studies were conducted to assess content validity and check the manipulation of selling behaviors in the scenarios. First, an exploratory field study was conducted with professional buyers. Using convenience sampling, ten professional buyers were personally interviewed. These buyers represented organizations that frequently purchase products such as personal computers, printers, and the like. Each buyer, as part of their job, regularly dealt with computer and/or automated office-equipment salespersons (supplier representatives). Five received the initially-designed high customer-orientation/adaptation scenario (scenario A) and

five received the low customer-orientation/adaptation scenario (scenario B). The ten buyers were from three different locations, with A and B scenarios evenly dispersed across each location.

Each participant responded to a series of open-ended questions regarding the nature of the selling process in the scenario, clarity of the scenario, etc. In addition, each responded to the initial customer-orientation and adaptation scales. Based on the results, minor adjustments were made in the content of the scenarios. For example, it was determined that there was too little information during the initial interactions to assess if the salesperson gave accurate information about the product being sold. Therefore, this facet of customer-oriented selling was dropped from the study. Simple comparison of mean responses to the Likert-type items provided strong initial support that the scenarios were, overall, manipulating customer-oriented and adaptive selling.

Formal Pre-test. A second study served as the formal pre-test and manipulation check of the scenarios. A convenience sample of evening MBA students (n=81) at a large midwestern state university was given the refined scenarios along with the full complement of measures intended for use in the main study (discussed in the next section). Evening MBA students were selected because they were primarily older members of the local work force and could relate more realistically to the scenarios. The sample size was deemed appropriate because the scenarios had previously undergone considerable conceptual and exploratory development and the salesperson behavior measures were existing scales not requiring pre-testing.

Statistically significant differences were found for customer-oriented and adaptive behavior between those respondents receiving the high customer-orientation/adaptation scenarios and those that received the low customer-orientation/adaptation scenarios.

Measures of Customer Orientation and Adaptation

Twenty one items from existing scales (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Williams 1992) were used in the first set of response measures to assess the respondent's perception of the degree of customer-oriented selling behavior based on the scenario. The items reflected six previously-identified dimensions of customer orientation (Williams 1992). In addition, six items measuring adaptive selling behavior (Spiro and Weitz 1990) were included in the multi-item scale.

The customer-orientation scales were used to facilitate the formal pre-test and manipulation check of the selling scenarios. As part of the pre-test data analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and scale reliabilities were assessed for the sub-scales measuring individual dimensions of customer orientation and for the linear combination of subscales (Cronbach 1951; Nunnally 1978). Results were comparable to previous research using the scales and no problems were indicated regarding their functionality as response measures to the scenarios.

Trust Measures

An important objective of the research project was to develop multi-item measures of a buyer's trust in a salesperson and in the

selling firm. Accepted scale-development procedures in the marketing literature guided the development of these components of the survey instrument (e.g., Churchill 1979). First, a review of the social-psychology and marketing literatures served as the basis for specifying the domain of trust. Second, content analysis of the interviews conducted during the exploratory field study with professional buyers served as an important substantive resource for domain specification, especially regarding trust in the selling firm. For the purposes of this study, trust was defined as willingness to rely or depend on another party in the presence of risk and uncertainty. This definition coincided with previously-reported marketing research (e.g., Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). As with that research, it was recognized that trust could comprise various facets, including:

1. an affective component (feelings of likability, reliability, honesty, cooperativeness about another party).
2. a belief or expectation component (cognitions about another party's ability to perform their relational role in the future).
3. a behavioral or intention component (actions or intentions to act in certain ways that place the person at risk or dependence on another party, especially in a context of uncertain outcomes).

Based on this initial conceptualization, item pools consisting of 10-12 items for each component were developed to measure trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. Two studies were performed as part of the scale purification and reduction process. A pilot study was conducted as an initial item-reduction step. Then, a formal pre-test was conducted.

Pilot Study. The first step in the scale-development process was to simply identify which items were actually relating to the domain of trust. The approach used to accomplish this was to establish "known groups" of sales occupations that are typically associated with high or low trust and to assess the scale items in those contexts. The known groups provided a basis for assessing the concurrent validity of the scale items (e.g., Saxe and Weitz 1982; Zeller and Carmines 1980).

Focus-group style discussions were conducted with five small groups of undergraduate students enrolled in professional selling courses at a large midwestern state university. The discussions pertained to identifying types of selling positions and characterizing them according to which are generally associated with high trust and low trust among buyers. Content analysis of the discussions revealed that, among the participants, pharmaceutical sales positions were always associated with high trust and never associated with low trust among buyers. Conversely, used car sales positions were always associated with low trust and never associated with high trust among buyers. This information was used to develop questionnaires consisting of brief instructions, salesperson and selling firm descriptions (either pharmaceutical sales or used car sales), global trust items, and the trust item pools.

The pilot-test questionnaires were administered to a large undergraduate marketing class in which students were randomly assigned to receive questionnaires depicting either high or low trust salesperson/selling scenarios. There were 127 usable responses. The sample provided an adequate number of respondents for conducting initial

factor analysis and scale purification (approximately ten times the number of items per dimension).

An iterative process using factor analysis and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was performed on the data. This process yielded a clear item structure and captured the original conceptualization of trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. The factors were renamed to be more specific to a selling situation. Based on an analysis of factor loadings and scale reliabilities, the following factors relating to trust in the salesperson were identified:

1. Interpersonal traits of the salesperson in a job context (general evaluations of the salesperson's honesty, reliability, cooperativeness, etc.).
2. Job capabilities of the salesperson (specific beliefs about the salesperson's training, knowledge, expertise, etc. required to perform the selling role).
3. Sociability of the salesperson (feelings about the salesperson's friendliness and sociability as a person).
4. Behavior toward the salesperson (willingness of the respondent to rely on, depend on, commit to, recommend the salesperson).

Similarly, trust in the selling firm appeared to have the following factors:

1. Job capabilities of selling firm personnel (specific beliefs about other members of the selling regarding the training, knowledge, expertise, etc. required to perform their roles).
2. The nature of cooperation between the selling firm and buyers (the degree of perceived fairness and flexibility the selling firm has in its negotiations with buyers).
3. Product offerings of the selling firm (perceptions that the goods and services offered by the selling firm are up to date, reliable, high quality, etc.).

4. Behavior toward the selling firm (willingness of the respondent to rely on, depend on, commit to, recommend the selling firm).

The trust factors identified closely paralleled the original conceptualization of the two trust constructs. At that time, items in the original item pools were individually evaluated and determinations were made to either rewrite them to reflect the revised conceptualization of the trust constructs or to drop the items from the scales. The original item pools were reduced by one half through this process.

Formal Pre-test. A formal pre-test of the trust scales was conducted by repeating the procedures within the original pilot study while using the revised items. A total of 198 usable surveys were collected through use of a convenience sample of undergraduate buyer-behavior and professional-selling classes at the university. Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability assessment were conducted on the collected data.

Overall, the revised item pools exhibited the same factor structure that was identified from the pilot study. Factors and their associated items were reviewed by evaluating factor loadings, communalities, and item-to-total correlations. Sub-scales for the various trust factors were reduced to three or four items each with a focus on eliminating redundant items that did not contribute specifically to the sampling of the trust domain.

This chapter has discussed the design and implementation of the research project. Specific attention was paid to the procedures used to develop the various components of the data-collection instrument.

Appendixes A and B provide the final versions of the selling scenarios. Appendix C provides a copy of the cover letter and the response questionnaire included with scenarios in the final data-collection process. Chapter IV discusses the analysis of data collected in the main study. Attention is focused on the formal testing of the hypotheses stated at the beginning of this chapter and on a discussion of the results.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH RESULTS AND TESTS OF HYPOTHESES

This chapter focuses on the empirical results of the main study. The data were analyzed using a standard statistical package (SPSS) for personal computers. First, a descriptive profile of the respondents is provided. Second, a summary of analyses used to assess the measures of key constructs is offered. Finally, tests of hypotheses are summarized and the results are discussed.

Profile of Respondents

The sample for the study consisted of 112 resellers of office-automation products in the midwest region of the U. S. Sixty-three (56%) of the respondents received a questionnaire that depicted a low customer-oriented/adaptive selling scenario and measures for the study. Forty-nine (44%) received the high customer-oriented/adaptive selling scenario and identical study measures.

As discussed in Chapter III, sampling and data collection utilized trained research assistants to contact participants and to drop-off and retrieve data-collection instruments. The slight difference in the total numbers of high- and low-scenario respondents in the final sample was due to random effects associated with distributing and collecting instruments through multiple research assistants (i.e., differences in

numbers of subjects actually contacted by assistants, differences in follow-up persistence, etc.).

Personal Traits

Information was obtained regarding a variety of aspects of individual respondents.

Demographics. The average age of the respondents was 34 years, with 35 respondents (31%) reporting ages of 19-28 years, 31 (28%) ages 29-38 years, and 33 (29%) ages 39-56 years. Thirteen people declined to provide this information. All but one respondent identified their sex in the study. Eighty-six (77%) of the respondents were male while 25 (22%) were female.

Years of Education Beyond High School. The average number of years of formal education beyond high school was 3, with 49 respondents (44%) claiming 0-2 years, 44 (39%) claiming 3-4 years, and 15 (13%) claiming 5-8 years.

Professional Characteristics of Respondents. Information was gathered regarding the professional attributes of respondents. Attention was focused on identifying a respondent's position (title) in their firm and on exploring the amount of experience they had in dealing with product suppliers and supplier representatives.

In qualifying a potential respondent for participation in the study, the key criterion was to identify persons within reseller firms that regularly interacted with supplier representatives and made purchasing decisions, such as what to order from suppliers or what

quantity to order. In reality, a number of job titles might meet this criterion.

An open-ended response format was used to obtain a respondent's job title. Five groups or types of positions were held by respondents in the study. These reflected the roles individuals played in their firm and their perspective on interacting with suppliers and supplier representatives. Table 3 summarizes the five categories of positions and the number of individuals identified in each group.

TABLE 3
FIVE CATEGORIES OF JOB TITLES

Category Number	Typical Responses (Number of Respondents in Category)
1.	President; Owner (24)
2.	General Manager; Store Manager; Assistant Manager (26)
3.	Vice President (specific area); Sales or Marketing Manager; Department Supervisor (30)
4.	Sales Representative; Account Manager (16)
5.	Support Personnel (16)

A substantial number of respondents indicated that they were a president or owner of a firm. This response was typically associated with firms that were independent resellers of office automation equipment as opposed to being part of a retail chain. In such contexts, it is quite common for the owner or a principal partner to be

responsible for the daily operations of the firm, including being the primary contact person for supplier representatives.

A second significant group of respondents indicated they were a form of general manager. As opposed to group one, these respondents were typically associated with retail chains that sold automated office products. Responses such as general manager, store manager, and assistant manager were interpreted to mean someone who had general or overall responsibility for a wide variety of activities in the firm, at least when they were on duty.

A third group of respondents tended to indicate they were responsible for a specific functional area in their firm. Responses included vice president for merchandising, sales manager, and supervisor of the electronics or computer department. These responses were interpreted to identify persons that generally had a different level or type of responsibility (more focused) than persons assigned to the first two groups.

The fourth group was viewed as being specifically sales-related individuals. Responses included sales representative, account representative, account supervisor, and the like. It was interpreted that these responses identified someone who did not manage a department or area within the firm and might have a different perspective on selling behaviors than other respondents. These responses were typically associated with independent resellers, where it is common (especially in smaller firms) for salespersons to have regular contact with supplier representatives and input regarding purchasing decisions.

A fifth group represents what will be referred to as support personnel. Typical responses were service technicians and sales support personnel. These persons may perform a variety of functions, including installation, training, and demonstration of equipment to the firm's customers. These personnel do have contact with supplier representatives. However, the contact is typically of a different nature than the contact represented by the other groups. For example, service technicians interact with suppliers to order repair parts or to gain technical information. Sales support personnel may communicate with suppliers to gather information about competitive equipment or to learn information about operating and demonstrating new products.

Years in Current Position. The previous section discussed the various job titles respondents reported holding. Participants in the study were also asked how many years they had held that position. The average number of years reported was 5, with 41 people (37%) reporting 1-2 years, 37 (33%) reporting 3-5 years, and 34 (30%) reporting 6-22 years.

Years of Experience Buying From Suppliers. Participants in the study were asked to report how many years of professional experience they had, overall, buying from suppliers of office-automation equipment. The average number of years was almost 7, with 35 respondents (31%) reporting 1-2 years of experience, 37 (33%) reporting 3-7 years, and 40 (36%) reporting 8-30 years.

Time Spent Interacting with Suppliers. As a final question regarding their jobs, respondents were asked what percent of their work

time was spent interacting with (by phone or in person) firms that are current or potential suppliers of office-automation products. The average amount of time reported was 20%. However, 63 (56%) reported they spent 15% of their time or less interacting with suppliers. Twenty persons (18%) answered between 15% and 30% while 29 (26%) claimed that they spent over 30% of their work time dealing with suppliers.

Firm Characteristics

Information was collected regarding key characteristics of the firms represented by the respondents. Attention was focused on identifying the type (independent or part of a retail chain) and size of the firm where the respondent worked.

Type of Firm (Chain or Independent). A key distinction can be made among types of firms that sell automated-office products. An important type of distributor is the authorized, independent reseller, which is typically a single, locally-owned and -operated outlet. Alternately, many large retail chains serve as resellers of office products. These can include general merchandise resellers that have electronics departments (e.g., Wal-Mart, Target) as well as resellers that specialize in office products (e.g., Radio Shack, ComputerLand). Respondents were asked to identify which of these two basic categories of resellers best described the firm where they worked. With one non-response, 52 (46%) reported working for an independent distributor while 59 (53%) identified themselves as part of a chain of distribution outlets.

Number of Outlets in Chain. Related to the previous question, participants were asked to report the approximate number of outlets in the chain if they reported working for a chain of resellers. Of the 59 respondents (53%) that reported working for a chain, 57 reported an average of approximately 1500 outlets. However, there was a wide distribution of responses of from 2 to 10,000. The median was 284.

Number of Suppliers of Office-Automation Products. One general indicator of the size of a reseller is the number of products the reseller carries. Respondents reported that the firms where they worked represented an average of 18 suppliers, with 36 (32%) reporting 1-8 suppliers, 33 (29%) reporting 9-18, and 35 (31%) reporting 19-100 suppliers.

Summary

The previous sections provided information about the personal and professional characteristics of the respondents in the study as well as characteristics of the firms represented by the respondents. The sample used in the study was representative of professional buyers that typically interact with the type of manufacturer representative portrayed in the selling scenarios. The data support that the respondents had the experience (years of experience and time spent interacting with suppliers) that would allow them to cognitively role play and evaluate the buyer-seller interaction.

The sample also reflected a cross-section of appropriate reseller employees in terms of respondents' role in the firm (job title), age, and gender. Further, a cross-section of reseller organizations was

obtained in terms of the type (independent or chain) and size of the firm. The characteristics of the sample and random assignment of scenarios to respondents allowed for control over effects in the study's results due to sampling bias.

Measurement of Key Constructs

Before performing the actual tests of the research hypotheses, analyses were conducted to confirm the structure and reliability of the salesperson behavior and buyer trust measures.

Measurement of Salesperson Behavior

The scale to measure salesperson customer orientation was adapted from existing scales (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Williams 1992) and included 21 items. The items were treated as a single multi-dimensional measure with subscales representing six previously-conceptualized dimensions of customer orientation (Williams 1992). The customer-orientation scale was constructed as a composite of the six subscales to form a linear combination. Using Nunnally's (1978) formula, the reliability of the linear combination was calculated to be .98. This version of the scale will be referred to hereafter as CUSTOR.

Six items from the ADAPTS scale (Spiro and Weitz 1990) were also included as measures of salesperson behavior. Only the six items measuring the adaptive-behavior dimension were drawn from the original ADAPTS scale, since the present study focused on selling behaviors. These items were summed and averaged and treated as a single scale. The reliability of the scale was estimated to be .93 using Cronbach's (1951)

coefficient alpha. This version of the scale will be referred to hereafter as ADAPTS.

It was necessary to examine whether the planned manipulation of perceived salesperson behavior had occurred. The CUSTOR and ADAPTS scales provided a manipulation check of salesperson behavior in the two selling scenarios. Moreover, it was important to assess the variance in the other main variables in the study (TRUSTPERSON, TRUSTFIRM, and RELATE) associated with subjects' assignment to scenarios, since the study is based on the notion that different levels of customer-oriented/adaptive selling behaviors yield differences in buyer trust and willingness to expand the relationship with the seller. Therefore, a comparison of means between scenarios on the CUSTOR and ADAPTS variables as well as on TRUSTPERSON, TRUSTFIRM, and RELATE is provided in Table 4.

A statistically significant positive relationship (at $p \leq .0001$) between scenarios was found for both CUSTOR and ADAPTS scales. Thus, it was concluded that customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors had been successfully manipulated in the main study. In addition, it was concluded that the CUSTOR and ADAPTS scales were reliable measures of the constructs they were intended to measure and were appropriate for use in subsequent hypothesis tests.

Comparison of means also showed that the manipulation of salesperson behavior in the scenarios had a statistically significant positive effect (at $p \leq .0001$) on TRUSTPERSON, TRUSTFIRM, and RELATE. Therefore, initial support was found for using these measures in analysis of the hypothesized relationships in the study.

TABLE 4
 MANIPULATION CHECK OF THE SELLING SCENARIOS AND
 EXAMINATION OF KEY VARIABLES USING
 COMPARISON OF MEANS AND ANOVA

CUSTOR by Scenario	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases (n=112)
Low Scenario Group	2.94	.85	63
High Scenario Group	5.23	.90	49
F = 189.61 p ≤ .0001			
ADAPTS by Scenario	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases (n=112)
Low Scenario Group	2.29	.99	63
High Scenario Group	4.70	1.27	49
F = 127.68 p ≤ .0001			
TRUSTPERSON by Scenario	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases (n=112)
Low Scenario Group	4.10	.71	63
High Scenario Group	5.43	.71	49
F = 98.27 p ≤ .0001			
TRUSTFIRM by Scenario	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases (n=112)
Low Scenario Group	3.75	.67	63
High Scenario Group	4.93	.62	49
F = 90.64 p ≤ .0001			
RELATE by Scenario	Mean	Std. Dev.	Cases (n=112)
Low Scenario Group	3.33	1.29	63
High Scenario Group	5.06	.99	49
F = 60.62 p ≤ .0001			

Measurement of Buyer Trust in the Salesperson

The scales measuring buyer trust in the salesperson were analyzed to confirm their reliability and that their structure was congruent with pre-test development. As a first step in the analysis, principal-components factor analysis was conducted using oblique rotation. The factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater were examined. Summary statistics are provided in Table 5. The results were consistent with the factor structure exhibited during the scale-development and purification pre-tests. Two factors were identified with eigenvalues greater than 1.0.

TABLE 5
FACTOR ANALYSIS OF BUYER TRUST
IN THE SALESPERSON

Item	Factor Loadings *	
	Factor 1	Factor 2
TP6	.8652	.0228
TP7	.8563	-.1431
TP8	.7824	.0609
TP9	.7721	.1261
TP5	.6092	-.0329
TP2	.5862	.2880
TP3	-.0390	.9293
TP4	-.0384	.8891
TP1	.2377	.6203
Eigenvalue:	4.7257	1.1723
% Var.	52.5	13.0

* Oblique Rotation

The first factor identified a dimension relating to interpersonal traits and job capabilities of the salesperson. These items were consistent with the conceptualization that interpersonal trust involves evaluations about another person's role performance in a specific social context. A second factor appeared to tap general feelings about the friendliness and sociability of a salesperson.

Since the items loading on respective factors were summed and averaged to form two separate scales for further analysis, it was deemed important to examine internal reliability of the subscales. Scale reliabilities were calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and are summarized in Table 6. The subscales associated with factor 1 and factor 2 had alpha coefficients of .87 and .80 respectively and were deemed to be sufficiently reliable for use in subsequent analyses in the main study.

Support for the content validity and concurrent validity of the two scales was established by jointly considering certain pieces of evidence (e.g., Nunnally 1978; Zeller and Carmines 1980). First, the development of the scales was based on a review of theoretical literature and past research pertaining to the domain of trust. The factors related to separate and specific themes discussed and operationalized in these sources. In addition, a correlation of .50 between factor 1 and factor 2 supports that the scales were measuring related but somewhat different constructs.

TABLE 6
INTERNAL RELIABILITY OF SCALES MEASURING
BUYER TRUST IN THE SALESPERSON

SCALE/Item	Std. Scale Alpha	Corrected ITC	Alpha If Deleted
<u>INTERPERSONAL/JOB</u>	.87		
TP2		.65	.85
TP5		.47	.87
TP6		.79	.82
TP7		.64	.85
TP8		.72	.83
TP9		.74	.83
<u>SOCIABLE</u>	.80		
TP1		.55	.82
TP3		.76	.61
TP4		.63	.74

Further support was sought by relating the two subscales to a four-item global measure of buyer trust in the salesperson. Cronbach's coefficient alpha for the global trust measure was .92. The global scale was regressed simultaneously onto the two subscales. The results, summarized in Table 7, revealed that both factors had statistically significant relationships with the global trust scale. Therefore, both were identified as subscales measuring related dimensions of trust in a salesperson. The two subscales were summed and Nunnally's (1978) formula for assessing the reliability of a linear combination of scales was used to estimate the reliability of the single scale at .90. It was concluded that the resulting scale was a valid and reliable measure of a

buyer's trust in a salesperson for use in subsequent hypothesis tests and will hereafter be referred to as TRUSTPERSON.

TABLE 7
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SUBSCALES MEASURING
BUYER TRUST IN THE SALESPERSON WITH
GLOBAL TRUST

Variable	Beta	t	Sig. t
Constant	-2.07		
INTERPERSONAL/JOB	.72	12.23	.0000
SOCIABLE	.22	3.64	.0004
R ²	.76		
F	167.03		
Prob. F ≤	.0001		

Measurement of Buyer Trust in the Selling Firm

The scales measuring buyer trust in the selling firm were assessed in a manner similar to that used to assess measures of trust in the salesperson. Principal-components factor analysis using oblique rotation was first conducted on the scales. The factors with eigenvalues of 1.0 or greater were examined. Summary statistics are provided in Table 8.

TABLE 8
 FACTOR ANALYSIS OF BUYER TRUST
 IN THE SELLING FIRM

Item	Factor Loadings *		
	<u>Factor 1</u>	<u>Factor 2</u>	<u>Factor 3</u>
TF9	.9428	-.0067	.0117
TF10	.9297	-.0869	.0393
TF12	.9296	.0498	-.0239
TF11	.8298	.1518	.0287
TF8	-.0382	.9177	.0410
TF6	.0564	.8673	.1061
TF5	.0124	.8541	.0801
TF7	.0925	.8507	-.1260
TF3	-.0647	.0900	.7788
TF2	.0709	-.1596	.7070
TF1	.2118	.0483	.6875
TF4	-.0296	.3440	.6824
Eigenvalue	6.1536	1.9482	1.1269
% Var.	51.3	16.2	9.4

* Oblique Rotation

The results were consistent with factors exhibited during the scale-development and purification pre-tests. The first factor related to job capabilities of employees other than the salesperson in the selling firm. A second factor pertained to the cooperation that the selling firm exhibited toward its distributors with respect to negotiations. A third factor was comprised of items assessing the products offered by the selling firm. The three factors reflected issues that were identified and developed as a result of literature review and an exploratory study with professional buyers. The items

loading on each factor were summed and averaged to form three separate subscales for further analysis.

Reliabilities of the subscales were calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha and are summarized in Table 9. The subscales associated with factor 1, factor 2, and factor 3 had alpha coefficients of .78, .92, and .95 respectively. It was concluded that the scales were sufficiently reliable for use in subsequent analyses in the main study.

TABLE 9
INTERNAL RELIABILITY OF SCALES MEASURING
BUYER TRUST IN THE SELLING FIRM

SCALE/Item	Std. Scale Alpha	Corrected ITC	Alpha If Deleted
<u>OTHERS</u>	.78		
TF1		.68	.66
TF2		.41	.80
TF3		.57	.71
TF4		.65	.66
<u>COOPERATION</u>	.92		
TF5		.81	.90
TF6		.89	.87
TF7		.73	.93
TF8		.85	.88
<u>PRODUCT</u>	.95		
TF9		.89	.92
TF10		.84	.94
TF11		.85	.94
TF12		.89	.92

As with the measures of buyer trust in the salesperson, support was sought for the content validity and concurrent validity of the measures of trust in the selling firm. An important conceptual foundation was provided by the review of previous marketing research as well as exploratory interviews with professional buyers. These sources were used to identify those issues that influence a buyer's consideration of another firm as a potential supply partner in a channel relationship. The factors that resulted from the factor analysis closely matched the specific issues identified by the conceptual sources. In addition, the factor correlations supported that the scales were measuring related but somewhat different constructs.

The concurrent validity of the scales was supported by relating the three subscales to a global measure of trust. A four-item global measure of buyer trust in the selling firm (Cronbach's alpha = .89) was regressed simultaneously onto the three subscales. The results of the regression, summarized in Table 10, revealed that all three factors had a significant relationship with the global scale. Thus, it was concluded that the three scales measured separate but related dimensions of buyer trust in the selling firm.

The three scales were summed and Nunnally's (1978) formula was used to estimate the reliability of the linear combination of scales at .94. It was concluded that the resulting scale was a valid and reliable measure of a buyer's trust in a selling firm for use in subsequent hypothesis tests and will hereafter be referred to as TRUSTFIRM.

TABLE 10
REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SUBSCALES MEASURING
BUYER TRUST IN THE SELLING FIRM WITH
GLOBAL TRUST

Variable	Beta	t	Sig. t
Constant	-.72		
AGREE	.58	10.29	.0000
PRODUCT	.35	5.91	.0000
OTHER	.12	1.97	.0516
R ²	.76		
F	113.88		
Prob. F ≤	.0001		

Measurement of Buyer Willingness to Expand the Relationship

Part of the main study sought to examine the degree to which a buyer's trust influences the buyer's willingness to expand the buyer-seller relationship. According to the concept of an expanding relationship (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Scanzoni 1979) expansion is characterized by the perceived attractiveness of another party as a potential exchange partner and willingness to depend on and commit to the other party. A two-item global measure based on this concept of the expansion phase of a relationship was developed for use as a dependent variable in this analysis and is hereafter referred to as RELATE.

Summary of Scale Development

The previous sections analyzed the measures of the key constructs used in the main study. Table 11 provides a summary of the final measures that were used to test hypotheses. The following section discusses each hypothesis test and the results of the tests.

TABLE 11
SUMMARY OF SCALES USED IN
TESTS OF HYPOTHESES

Variable	Measurement
<u>SALESPERSON BEHAVIOR</u>	
Customer-Oriented Selling Behavior	CUSTOMOR: 21 items using 7-point Likert scales (adapted from Saxe and Weitz 1982; Williams 1992).
Adaptive Selling Behavior	ADAPTS: 6 items using 7-point Likert scales (adapted from Spiro and Weitz 1990).
<u>BUYER TRUST IN SELLER</u>	
Trust in the Salesperson	TRUSTPERSON: 9 items using 7-point Likert scales (scale created for the study).
Trust in the Selling Firm	TRUSTFIRM: 12 items using 7-point Likert scales (scale created for the study).
<u>RELATIONSHIP EXPANSION</u>	
Willingness to Expand the Relationship	RELATE: 2 items using 7-point Likert scales (global scale created for the study).

Tests of Hypotheses

Correlation Analysis

As an initial assessment of relationships among the research constructs in this study, a correlation analysis was conducted. Results of the analysis are provided in Table 12. As might be expected, there are moderately high correlations among all of the constructs. In fact, all of the correlations are statistically significant.

TABLE 12

PEARSON CORRELATIONS AMONG
OBSERVED VARIABLES

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. CUSTOR	1.0000				
2. ADAPTS	.8566	1.0000			
3. TRUSTPERSON	.8221	.7196	1.0000		
4. TRUSTFIRM	.7181	.6597	.7107	1.0000	
5. RELATE	.6896	.6166	.6746	.8214	1.0000

All correlations significant at $p \leq .01$

Salesperson behavior was measured by two scales, CUSTOR and ADAPTS, as discussed earlier. The .86 correlation between these variables indicates that they are closely tapping the same domain. As will be evident in the later hypothesis testing, it is questionable whether their joint consideration in exploring buyer trust relationships improves over the sole use of the richer CUSTOR scale.

Both CUSTOR and ADAPTS correlate quite highly with buyer trust in the salesperson at .82 and .72 respectively. From the viewpoint of parsimony, CUSTOR is more predictive of buyer trust in the salesperson than is ADAPTS.

With regard to the relationship between buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm, the .72 correlation indicates a strong linkage. Within the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship, this is an initial indication that buyers may well extend their developing sense of trust in the salesperson to the selling firm, even though little or no information about the selling firm is available.

Finally, both buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm are related to the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller. The correlations are .67 and .82 respectively. TRUSTFIRM exhibits a stronger correlation than does TRUSTPERSON.

The research hypotheses focus on linkages among salesperson behavior, buyer trust, and buyer willingness to expand the relationship. In theory, a chain of relationships is proposed. However, it merits note that CUSTOR and ADAPTS have high correlations with RELATE (.69 and .62 respectively). In the data analysis that follows, attention will turn to both direct and indirect relationships that exist.

To formally test the research hypotheses comprising this study, regression analysis was used to test each of three hypotheses. In the following sections, each hypothesis is restated and the relevant regression analysis is provided. The hypotheses are stated in alternate

form for clarity. However, the statistical tests use the regression beta coefficients to examine the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the dependent variable and the respective independent variable(s) pertaining to each hypothesis.

Salesperson Behavior and Buyer Trust in the Salesperson

Hypothesis 1 pertains to the relationship between salesperson behavior and a buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of a buyer-seller relationship. Both customer-oriented (hypothesis 1a) and adaptive (hypothesis 1b) selling behaviors were examined in relationship to trust in the salesperson. Examining these relationships has implications for extending knowledge and past research about the effectiveness of fundamental selling behaviors. In addition, there are implications for better understanding the role of specific salesperson behaviors in the development of buyer-seller relationships. Hypothesis 1, stated in alternate form as two sub-hypotheses is:

Hypothesis 1a.

Perceived customer-oriented selling behavior has a positive effect on a buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.

Hypothesis 1b.

Perceived adaptive selling behavior has a positive effect on a buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.

To test hypotheses 1a and 1b, TRUSTPERSON was regressed simultaneously on CUSTOR and ADAPTS. The results are provided in Table 13. The overall model was statistically significant at the .0001 level, with an R^2 of .68.

The hypotheses are tested by examination of the beta coefficients for the regression model. The beta coefficient for CUSTOR was .77, which was significant at $p \leq .0001$. Thus, the null hypothesis for H1a that there is no relationship between customer-oriented selling and buyer trust in the salesperson is rejected.

The beta coefficient for ADAPTS was .06, which was statistically insignificant for zero ($p = .5853$). Thus, the null hypothesis for H1b that there is no relationship between adaptive selling and buyer trust in the salesperson is accepted. For H1b, the reader may recall that a moderately high correlation between ADAPTS and TRUSTPERSON was found. However, this link is apparently subsumed by the close relationship between CUSTOR and ADAPTS.

TABLE 13

REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SALESPERSON
BEHAVIOR VARIABLES WITH BUYER
TRUST IN THE SALESPERSON

Variable	Beta	t	Sig. t
Constant	2.50		
CUSTOR	.77	7.32	.0000
ADAPTS	.06	.55	.5853
R ²	.68		
F	114.12		
Prob. F \leq	.0001		

The results of the regression analysis support the proposition that customer-oriented selling is a significant determinant of a buyer's trust in the salesperson. Of special significance, it appears that this relationship pertains even to initial buyer-seller interactions, when there is no knowledge of or previous experience with the salesperson upon which to base the buyer's trust. This interpretation coincides with previous marketing research on dyadic interaction, as discussed in Chapter II, suggesting that an individual's behavior during interaction can serve as a cue to others about that person's intentions and capabilities in future interactions.

In contrast, the regression analysis does not support that adaptive selling influences a buyer's trust in a salesperson. An initial conclusion is that this outcome results from the high correlation between CUSTOR and ADAPTS in the study and the stronger relationship between CUSTOR and TRUSTPERSON.

Buyer Trust in the Salesperson and Selling Firm

Hypothesis 2 explores the relationship between trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship. By definition, the exploration stage captures only the initial interactions between a seller and prospective buyer. It is important to reiterate here that the scenarios used in the study to depict initial buyer-seller interactions provided no information about the selling firm. All that respondents had to evaluate was the selling behavior of the salesperson in the scenario as

the salesperson initiated contact with a prospect. Perceptions of the selling firm are generalizations from that experience.

The buyer's trust in the salesperson is treated as being separate and distinct from the buyer's trust in the selling firm. Over time, however, the customer will develop knowledge and perceptions of the salesperson as an individual and as a member of the selling organization. It is quite plausible that when the prospective buyer has no knowledge of or experience with the selling firm, projections of anticipated organizational response to the individual will occur.

Hypotheses 2 in alternate form is stated as:

A buyer's trust in the salesperson has a positive effect on the buyer's trust in the selling firm during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship.

Bivariate regression was used to test hypothesis 2, with TRUSTPERSON as the independent variable and TRUSTFIRM as the dependent variable. Table 14 summarizes the results of the regression analysis. The regression analysis revealed a statistically significant explanatory relationship at the .0001 level, with an R^2 of .51. The null hypothesis of no relationship between TRUSTPERSON and TRUSTFIRM is rejected.

The results of the regression analysis conform with research that views the salesperson as playing a boundary-spanning role between the selling and buying organizations (e.g., Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1979). Especially in business-to-business contexts, the salesperson is often the most important source of information for an organizational buying center about the selling firm. These results support that the salesperson can act as a cue to the buyer about the nature of the selling firm, even during initial interactions. This perspective offers

implications for the use of the sales force in the design and implementation of the selling firm's relationship strategies in its chosen markets.

TABLE 14

REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF BUYER TRUST
IN THE SALESPERSON WITH BUYER
TRUST IN THE SELLING FIRM

Variable	Beta	t	Sig. t
Constant	1.27		
TRUSTPERSON	.71	10.60	.0000
R ²	.51		
F	112.25		
Prob. F ≤	.0001		

Buyer Trust and Buyer Willingness to Expand the Relationship

Hypothesis 3 addresses the role that trust plays as a determinant of exchange relationships. This linkage has been conceptualized in social exchange theory and has become increasingly important to specific areas of marketing such as business-to-business marketing.

Specifically, the hypotheses explored the degree to which trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm separately and jointly explain a buyer's willingness to expand a relationship with a seller during the

exploration stage of the relationship. Hypothesis 3, in alternate form as two sub-hypotheses is:

Hypothesis 3a.

During the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship, a buyer's trust in the salesperson has a positive effect on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship in the future.

Hypothesis 3b.

During the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship, a buyer's trust in the selling firm has a positive effect on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship in the future.

To test the hypotheses, buyer willingness to expand the relationship with the seller (RELATE) was regressed simultaneously on TRUSTPERSON and TRUSTFIRM. Table 15 summarizes the results of the regression analysis for hypotheses 3a and 3b. A statistically significant outcome was found for the model at the .0001 level, with an R^2 of .69. Trust perceptions appear to link with relationship expansion.

TABLE 15

REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF BUYER TRUST
VARIABLES WITH BUYER WILLINGNESS
TO EXPAND THE RELATIONSHIP

Variable	Beta	t	Sig. t
Constant	-2.05		
TRUSTPERSON	.18	2.43	.0169
TRUSTFIRM	.69	9.13	.0000
R^2	.69		
F	122.06		
Prob. F \leq	.0001		

As a test of H3a, the beta coefficient for TRUSTPERSON was significant at $p \leq .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no relationship between a buyer's trust in the salesperson and willingness to expand the relationship with the seller is rejected. For H3b, the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between buyer trust in the selling firm and the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller is also rejected at the .01 level.

The regression analysis provides support for the proposition that trust is an important determinant of relationships in marketing (e.g., Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). Further, the hypotheses examine the relative importance of the two trust constructs during the exploration stage of the relationship. It is important to note that, even within the context of the exploration stage of the relationship, buyer trust in the selling firm exhibited a considerably stronger influence on a buyer's willingness to expand the relationship than did buyer trust in the salesperson. This is evident from the beta weight of .69 for TRUSTFIRM vs. .18 for TRUSTPERSON.

It seems plausible that after an initial interaction in which no information about the selling firm was provided to the prospective buyer, the buyer's evaluation of the salesperson would be the most important influence on other variables. However, the results suggest that trust in the selling firm may quickly be formulated early in the exploration stage of the relationship and play a dominant role in determining expansion of the relationship in the future. Nevertheless, the results clearly indicate the overall importance of salesperson behavior in determining the outcomes of buyer-seller interactions.

Path Analysis

The tests of the hypotheses in the previous section examined a number of direct relationships among the constructs in the study. To further assess the relationships among the key constructs in the study, path analysis was conducted. Path analysis is not intended as an exclusive means of deducing causal relationships. Rather, path analysis provides further quantitative interpretation of correlation and regression analyses, in combination with qualitative information, to simultaneously evaluate effects and relationships in the model as a whole (Dillon and Goldstein 1984). It serves the purpose of reflecting both direct and indirect relationships among the constructs. Figure 12 depicts the relevant effects analyzed using path analysis.

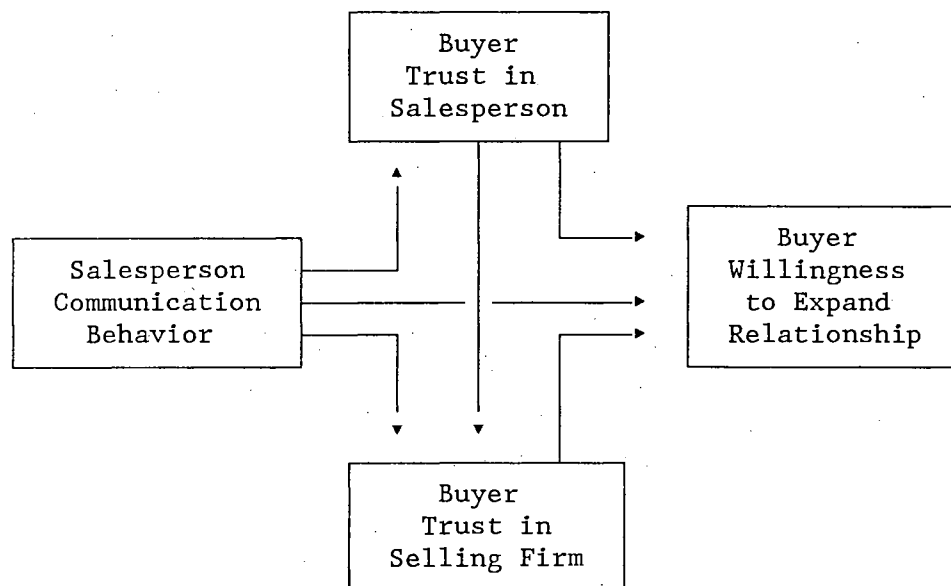


Figure 12. Effects Analyzed Using Path Analysis

As an overview, consider the justification for the linkages proposed in Figure 12. The interaction between a salesperson and prospective buyer is examined within the exploration stage of the exchange relationship. In its purest sense (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987), this means that it is the initial interaction and the buyer has no knowledge of or previous experience with the salesperson or the selling firm.

The fundamental issue addressed by the study is the degree to which the salesperson's behavior during the exploration stage of a relationship influences the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship in the future. Salesperson behavior was operationalized as adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior.

Trust is perhaps the key determinant of an expanding relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh 1987; Scanzoni 1979). Therefore, the buyer's trust in the seller is a critical outcome of initial buyer-seller interactions as well as an antecedent of relationship expansion. An important aspect of the study was the conceptualization and measurement of two separate buyer trust constructs: buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm.

As a first step in the relationship-development process, it was first thought that both adaptive and customer-oriented selling behaviors would have a positive influence on the buyer's trust in the salesperson. Both social exchange theory and previous research in personal selling provided a theoretical foundation for this hypothesis. The basic premise is that the salesperson's behavior during interaction with a prospective buyer serves as a cue about the salesperson's intentions,

attractiveness, and expertise concerning future interactions. For the path analysis, the measure of buyer trust in the salesperson was regressed simultaneously on the measures of adaptive selling behavior and customer-oriented selling behavior.

Second, the buyer's trust in the salesperson is viewed as being separate and distinct from the buyer's trust in the selling firm. This is especially plausible when the prospective buyer has no knowledge of or experience with the selling firm. It was hypothesized that the buyer's trust in the salesperson has a positive influence on the buyer's trust in the selling firm during the exploration stage of the relationship.

This hypothesis is based on the concept of the salesperson playing a boundary-spanning role between the selling and buying organizations (e.g., Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1979). Especially in business-to-business contexts, the salesperson is often the most important source of information for an organizational buying center about the selling firm. Thus, the hypothesis examines the degree to which a buyer's trust in a salesperson may be extended to the buyer's evaluation of the selling firm when no other experience or information has been provided about the selling firm. The salesperson acts as a cue to the buyer about the nature of the selling firm and affects the implementation and success of the selling firm's relationship strategies in its chosen markets.

For the path analysis, the direct effect of buyer trust in the salesperson on buyer trust in the selling firm was examined along with the potential direct and indirect effects of adaptive and customer-oriented selling behavior. Thus, the measure of buyer trust in the

salesperson was regressed simultaneously on the measure of buyer trust in the salesperson and the measures of adaptive and customer-oriented selling behaviors.

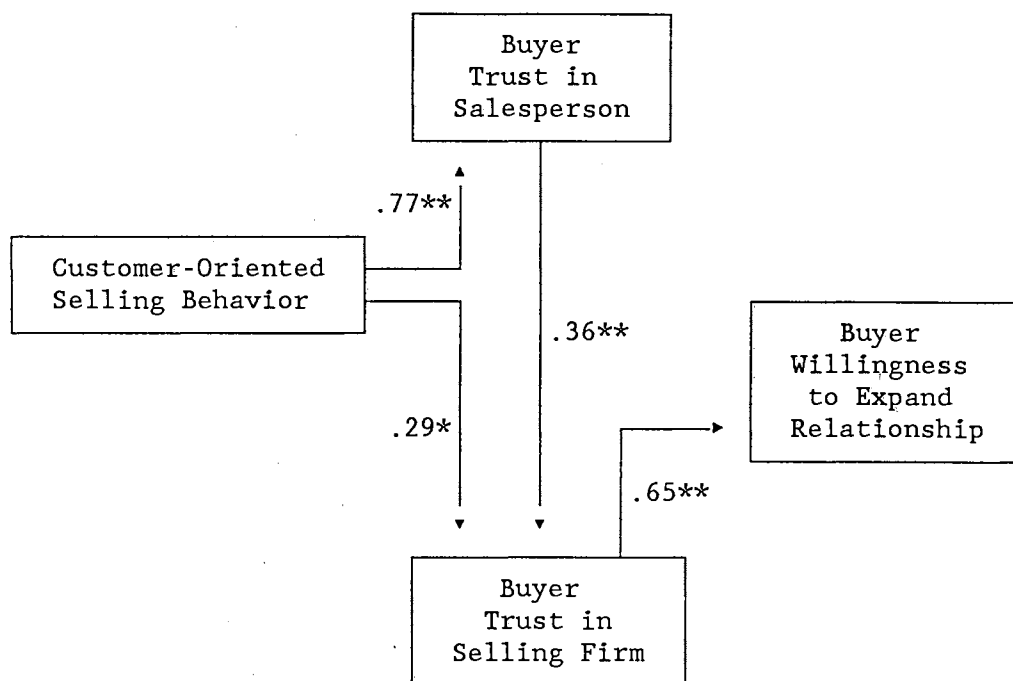
Finally, both buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm were hypothesized to have a positive influence on the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller. This hypothesis extends current empirical investigation of the role of trust in determining marketing relationships and examines the relative importance of the two trust constructs during the exploration stage of the relationship.

For the path analysis, the direct effects of buyer trust in the salesperson and in the selling firm were assessed along with the potential direct and indirect effects of adaptive and customer-oriented selling behaviors. Therefore, the measure of a buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller was regressed on the measures of buyer trust in the selling firm and in the salesperson as well as on the measures of adaptive and customer-oriented selling behaviors. Table 16 summarizes the three regression analyses used to conduct the path analysis.

Figure 13 depicts the results of the path analysis as drawn from Table 16. Statistically significant path coefficients and R^2 statistics that resulted from the regression analyses are provided in the figure. Adaptive selling behavior appears to play no significant role in the analysis as based on the earlier test of hypothesis 1b and the repeated results in Table 16. Thus, adaptive selling behavior was dropped from the figure.

TABLE 16
SUMMARY OF THREE REGRESSION ANALYSES
USED FOR PATH ANALYSIS

Depend. Variable	Independ. Variables	Beta	t	Sig. t
1. TRUSTPERSON				
	Constant	2.50		
	CUSTOR	.77	7.32	.0000
	ADAPTS	.06	0.55	.5853
			R ²	.68
			F	114.12
			Prob. F ≤	.0001
2. TRUSTFIRM				
	Constant	1.76		
	TRUSTPERSON	.36	3.27	.0015
	CUSTOR	.29	1.95	.0533
	ADAPTS	.15	1.19	.2366
			R ²	.57
			F	46.95
			Prob. F ≤	.0001
3. RELATE				
	Constant	-1.73		
	TRUSTPERSON	.09	0.93	.3571
	TRUSTFIRM	.65	8.09	.0000
	CUSTOR	.16	1.26	.2101
	ADAPTS	-.02	-0.17	.8678
			R ²	.70
			F	61.74
			Prob. F ≤	.0001



* Sig. at $p \leq .05$
 ** Sig. at $p \leq .01$

Figure 13. Results of Path Analysis

In general, the results of the previous hypothesis tests were supported by the path analysis. First, customer-oriented selling behavior exhibited a significant direct effect on buyer trust in the salesperson, while adaptive selling was indirectly related through its correlation with customer-oriented selling. Also, buyer trust in the salesperson had a direct effect on buyer trust in the selling firm. Finally, buyer trust in the selling firm had a direct effect on a buyer's willingness to expand the relationship.

Other aspects of the path analysis suggest important differences when compared to the hypothesis tests. A key difference is that

customer-oriented selling behavior appears to have a direct effect on buyer trust in the selling firm. A further significant difference is that buyer trust in the salesperson appears to have only an indirect effect on willingness to expand the relationship through the buyer's trust in the selling firm.

While providing a different perspective than was initially conceptualized, the results tend to support the general proposition that salesperson behavior during initial interactions with a prospective buyer can have a strong influence on the buyer's trust in the salesperson and in the selling firm. Moreover, through the buyer's trust, salesperson behavior can influence the buyer's willingness to expand the relationship with the seller in the future.

This chapter provided results of the research project and tests of the hypotheses. Chapter V will interpret and discuss the findings in more detail. Also, the implications of the findings will be assessed from a managerial perspective. Finally, the limitations of the present study will be reviewed and suggestions for future research directions that are implied by the project will be discussed.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

In the previous chapter, the results of the research project were provided. Attention focused on the various statistical analyses performed in the main study and on the outcome of those efforts. In this chapter, attention turns to implications of the research findings and to recommendations for further research. To begin, the fundamental research questions and basic research design are reviewed. Then, the results of the study are interpreted and their implications discussed. Finally, the study is evaluated in terms of its limitations and recommendations for future related research are suggested.

Research Issues

The core topic within this research project concerned the effect that salesperson behavior has on relationship development between selling and buying firms. This research linked two theoretical domains: (1) salesperson effectiveness and (2) business-to-business marketing.

Salesperson Effectiveness

Research on salesperson effectiveness has explored interpersonal interactions between salespeople and buyers in an effort to explain why some salespeople produce more sales than others. Historically, the

research focus has been on the content of interactions (e.g., message or personality issues), with largely inconclusive results.

Recent research has been directed toward the process of buyer-seller interactions. This work has underscored the importance of understanding the social aspects of interactions (i.e., relationship development) as determinants of salesperson effectiveness. Here, the key concept is salesperson communication behavior, the process used by salespeople when interacting with buyers.

An important contribution made to this research domain has been the conceptualization and measurement of two key behavioral constructs in selling: customer-oriented and adaptive selling (e.g., Saxe and Weitz 1982; Spiro and Weitz 1990). These selling behaviors have become central topics in sales research and provide a foundation for studying the selling process and its outcomes. Yet, little substantive knowledge exists regarding the effect of customer-oriented and adaptive selling on the performance of salespeople and selling organizations.

Business-to-Business Marketing

The building of positive interfirm relationships has become an important strategic theme in business-to-business marketing. Past research in business-to-business marketing has drawn heavily on social-exchange theory to understand the social dimensions of interfirm exchange. Such research has focused largely on the dynamics of existing relationships (e.g., the role of power and conflict). Recent research has used social-exchange theory to explore how relationships form between organizations. For instance, Dwyer, Schurr, and Oh (1987) have

modeled the relationship development process in a marketing context as five stages: (1) Awareness, (2) Exploration, (3) Expansion, (4) Commitment, and (5) Dissolution. Such research provides a useful framework for exploring specific phases of relationship development and the dynamics involved in the transition from one phase to the next.

A key component of relationships has been posited to be trust. It has been argued that trust may be the key determinant of relationships (Scanzoni 1979). Beginning with initial interactions between parties (i.e., the Exploration Stage of the relationship), critical social processes unfold (e.g., trust development), which determine whether the relationship will evolve to later stages. Yet, despite the recognized relevance of trust to the study of relationships, only minimal research has been done to specify its function or develop and test valid measures of trust in marketing contexts (Martin 1991).

Research Questions

The review of previous research concerning salesperson effectiveness and business-to-business marketing led to the conclusion that the two domains could be linked through the concept of trust. Trust represents an important social outcome of buyer-seller interactions as well as a critical antecedent of relationships.

This study focused on the Exploration Stage of relationship development. This time-frame perspective allowed isolation of the effects of salesperson behavior on a buyer, since no previous relationship existed between the seller and buyer at this stage. For the purposes of the study, trust was used as the key indicant for

assessing the buyer's response to salesperson behavior and for predicting the potential for relationship expansion.

In the study, trust was defined as a willingness to rely or depend on another party in the presence of risk and uncertainty. In addition, it was viewed as taking two distinct forms from the buyer's perspective: trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. This allowed examination of the salesperson's role as a cue to the buyer about the nature of the selling firm, even when little or no specific information about products or the selling firm has been communicated.

Based on the conceptual evolution of the research project, the following research questions were formed to guide the empirical investigation:

1. To what degree does salesperson behavior influence the buyer's trust in the salesperson during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship?
2. To what degree does the buyer's trust in the salesperson influence trust in the selling firm during the exploration stage of the buyer-seller relationship?
3. To what degree does the buyer's trust in the salesperson and selling firm influence willingness to expand the relationship?

Research Design and Methodology

Pilot studies, pre-tests, and a main study were conducted to investigate the research questions. The basic design of the main study included an experiment in a field setting. Selling scenarios that characterized the Exploration Stage of a buyer-seller relationship were developed. The scenarios were framed within the context of a specific industry and selling situation (office-automation products) that was

congruent with respondent job settings. The key variable manipulated in the study, salesperson behavior, was operationalized as possessing two components: customer-oriented and adaptive selling. Salesperson behavior was manipulated at two levels in the scenarios to reflect high and low levels of customer-oriented and adaptive selling.

Exploratory studies and pretests were conducted to provide manipulation checks for the experimental treatments and to examine the content validity of the scenarios. In addition, extensive development and purification of the measures of buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm were conducted, since the review of previous research revealed that insufficient measures of these separate constructs existed for the purposes of the study.

Judgment sampling was used to collect data from 112 resellers of office-automation products in the midwest region of the U. S. The sample design allowed for efficiently accessing a specific segment of respondents while sampling across demographic and professional characteristics of the respondents, such as age, sex, job title, and type of reseller firm. Data-collection instruments were distributed and picked up by trained research assistants at each respondent's place of work.

Research Results

The data collected in the main study were used to test hypothesized relationships among the key constructs in the study. The hypotheses were stated formally in Chapter III and the statistical tests

were summarized in Chapter IV. Table 17 summarizes the findings from the tests of the hypotheses.

As depicted in the table, support was found for four of the hypotheses while one hypothesis was not supported. Interpretation of the findings can be discussed from the perspective of the fundamental relationships examined in the study.

TABLE 17
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM
TESTS OF HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis	Relationship Examined (from - to)	Finding
H1a	Customer-Oriented Selling leads to Buyer Trust in the Salesperson	Support
H1b	Adaptive Selling leads to Buyer Trust in the Salesperson	Fail to Support
H2	Buyer Trust in the Salesperson leads to Buyer Trust in the Selling Firm	Support
H3a	Buyer Trust in the Salesperson leads to Buyer Willingness to Expand the Relationship	Support
H3b	Buyer Trust in the Selling Firm leads to Buyer Willingness to Expand the Relationship	Support

Salesperson Behavior and Buyer Trust in the Salesperson

The study examined the relationship between salesperson behavior (customer-oriented and adaptive selling) and a buyer's trust in the salesperson. Each behavior exhibited a strong correlation with buyer trust in the salesperson. Both, however, were part of the original conceptualization of selling behavior. A fundamental question arising from previous sales research concerns how these behaviors are related. Is adaptive selling part of customer orientation? Are they both part of a larger domain? Does adaptive selling occur in the absence of customer-oriented selling and, if it does, what is the effect?

To examine the relationship of the selling behaviors with trust in the salesperson, multiple regression analysis was conducted. Only customer orientation was found to be significant as a result of this analysis. Adaptive selling behavior, while highly correlated with buyer trust in the salesperson in the study, appeared to have primarily an indirect effect on buyer trust through its .86 correlation with customer-oriented selling. On the other hand, most of the association customer-oriented selling behavior had with buyer trust in the salesperson was in the form of a direct effect.

One explanation for the findings is purely statistical. The customer-orientation and adaptive selling variables were highly correlated in the study. Therefore, any distinct effects the two variables had on trust in the salesperson could not be detected and the significant statistical variance in the trust variable was attributed to customer orientation, given its higher correlation with trust. Methodological issues are related to this interpretation. Manipulation

checks supported that adaptive selling was being manipulated in the scenarios. However, the data suggested that a stronger manipulation of customer orientation had occurred. It is possible that respondents could not make strong enough evaluations about the adaptive selling behavior because of the context of the scenarios. Perhaps not enough information was provided to make a full assessment of adaptive selling relative to customer orientation.

A second explanation is more conceptually oriented. It can be interpreted from the analyses that adaptive selling is similar to or is even a part of customer-oriented selling. This interpretation must be tempered by the context of the study. First, the scenarios only depicted a very restricted part of an overall buyer-seller relationship (the Exploration Stage). At best, the data speak only to the function of adaptive selling within this specific context. It is possible that the role of adaptive selling changes or evolves during the relationship development process. Similarly, It may require more time and experience for a buyer to make determinations about the adaptiveness of a salesperson than to assess the customer orientation of the salesperson.

Buyer Trust in the Salesperson and Selling Firm

A second basic relationship examined by the study concerns the effect that buyer trust in the salesperson has on buyer trust in the selling firm represented by the salesperson. A significant aspect of the study was the conceptualization and operationalization of these two separate trust constructs. This allowed for the investigation of the degree to which salespeople may function as surrogates for the firms

they represent from the buyer's perspective. It is important to reiterate that this investigation was in the context of the Exploration Stage of a buyer-seller relationship. Respondents received no information about the selling firm or its products in the scenarios.

One perspective might readily suggest that respondents didn't have enough information to develop any sense of trust based on their evaluation of specific aspects of the firm. Yet, support was found for a positive explanatory relationship between a buyer's trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. It can be interpreted from the data that buyers may make substantial evaluations about a firm from even initial encounters with salespersons representing the firm. Importantly, these evaluations appear to extend to specific facets of the firm, including the firm's products, its negotiations with firms that resell its products, and characteristics of employees in the firm.

Some caution must be used when interpreting the predictive effect that buyer trust in the salesperson may have on buyer trust in the selling firm in the context provided by the study. The primary concern is that the data are cross-sectional, representing a point in time. Causality is best inferred under carefully-controlled experimental conditions. Nonetheless, the design of the study provides some basis for interpreting that the causal criterion of sequentiality was met. Respondents provided assessments of their trust in the selling firm only after first reading the scenario and evaluating their trust in the salesperson. Evaluations made about the selling firm followed reading about the buyer-salesperson interaction in a scenario and evaluating the salesperson.

Additionally, theoretical support exists in previous research on the boundary-spanning role of salespersons and other customer-contact personnel. These employees have been conceptualized as playing a key role as conduits of information about selling firms, especially in many industrial selling contexts (e.g., Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1979). The data support that buyers may infer information about a large domain of selling-firm issues based on interactions with a salesperson very early in the relationship.

Buyer Trust and Buyer Willingness to Expand the Relationship

A third relationship that was of fundamental interest to the study was between the trust variables and the buyer's willingness to expand a relationship with the selling firm in the study. The purpose was to offer some empirical investigation of the relational marketing concept being developed currently in marketing research. This aspect of the study specifically explored the concept of trust as a key determinant of interfirm relationships. Further, the investigation focused on the role that the salesperson plays early in the relationship development process. The outcome of initial interactions between a buyer and salesperson (i.e., buyer trust) was viewed in turn as an antecedent to the Expansion Stage of the relationship.

The present study examined the effects of both buyer trust in the salesperson and in the selling firm on buyer willingness to expand the relationship. It was hypothesized that both variables would exhibit a positive relationship. Multivariate regression analysis was used to test this hypothesis.

The results of the analyses support that both trust variables have a positive explanatory relationship with a buyer's willingness to expand a relationship with the selling firm. However, the data support that buyer trust in the selling firm had a much greater effect relative to buyer trust in the salesperson. Intuitively, this outcome might be expected in settings in which a buyer has had experience over time with the selling firm. As interactions occur with various members of the selling firm and experience is gained with the selling firm's products, buyer trust in the selling firm would develop and become an increasingly significant determinant of the relationship between the buyer and seller. Nonetheless, given that the study provided only information about a salesperson in a controlled scenario depicting initial contact with a prospective buyer, the results are somewhat unexpected.

Based on the design of the study, it can be interpreted that the two trust variables represent separate but related constructs. It appears that the trust that develops as a result of initial interactions between a salesperson and prospective buyer may have a substantial effect on the buyer's early sense of trust in the selling firm. In turn, a buyer's trust in the selling firm plays a considerable role in determining the buyer's future intentions to expand the relationship with the selling firm at what may be an unexpectedly early stage in the interactions. This interpretation of the results further emphasizes the significance of the role played by the salesperson as the boundary spanner between buying and selling organizations.

As with the previous discussions, some care is warranted in interpreting causal relationships among the variables, since the data

are cross-sectional. In a similar vein, the Expansion Stage of the buyer-seller relationship was operationalized as a willingness to expand, rather than assessing what actually happened at a later point in time. Further, the data were collected from what would in reality be only one member of the buying center of a buying firm. Ultimately, a variety of other persons would influence the expansion of the relationship between the selling and buying firms.

Research and Managerial Implications

The present study was concerned primarily with the interaction process between buyers and salespeople. The study focused on how salespeople perform their tasks (i.e., the behaviors they use during interactions) and the effect that the behaviors have on the buyer-seller relationship development process. To investigate these issues, certain theory-development needs were identified at the outset of the project. The needs, as identified by previous research, included:

1. the need to investigate the consequences of key selling behaviors.
2. the need to assess the views of buyers in exploring the outcomes of selling behaviors.
3. the need to extend the interactive perspective of selling by exploring the social outcomes of selling interactions.
4. the need to explore the antecedents of relationships in a marketing context.
5. the need to operationalize specific stages of the relationship development process.

The methods used to address these research needs and the results of the study have implications for both marketing research and application.

Research Implications

Social exchange theory provided a useful background against which to explore buyer-seller interactions. Support was found for the basic idea that, within social interactions, one person's behavior serves as a cue to others about the person's characteristics and capabilities. Based on behaviors during social interactions, outcomes such as trust may develop between those involved in the interaction. Beginning with the first encounters, such cues leading to trust may be more important than objective content of communications on matters such as product offerings, price, and the like.

Strong support was provided for the proposition that salesperson behavior has a significant influence on a salesperson's effectiveness. Specifically, empirical evidence was provided to underscore the value of customer-oriented selling. A salesperson's customer orientation can positively affect a buyer's trust in the salesperson. Thus, customer orientation can be viewed as a key determinant of salesperson effectiveness and performance, both in terms of relationship development with buyers and ultimate sales volume.

The research suggests that customer-oriented and adaptive selling behaviors are closely related from a buyer's perspective and that adaptation has little influence individually on a buyer's trust. This finding challenges previous research (e.g., Saxe and Weitz 1982) supporting the view that adaptive selling is not conceptually part of the domain of customer orientation. The latter studies were based largely on data collected from salespeople about their selling practices. It seems likely that one key difficulty in examining

adaptive selling is that adaptation may be interpreted in different ways by buyers and salespeople as well as within each group. Additionally, the effect of adaptation may change as a buyer-seller relationship evolves, taking on a more meaningful role in later stages. In any event, the results of this study regarding the interrelationship of customer orientation and adaptation in selling are certainly not conclusive. Further investigation of this matter is warranted.

The present study conceptualized and measured both buyer trust in a salesperson and buyer trust in a selling firm. Further, the research contributed to an understanding of the dimensionality of these separate trust constructs. The results provided strong support for the role that trust plays as a key determinant of relationships within a marketing context. The study also underscored the importance of the salesperson's role as a boundary-spanning person between buying and selling firms. Even initial encounters with a previously unknown salesperson may activate the development of the buyer's trust in the selling firm. This trust in the selling firm may, at a very early stage, be a more substantial force than trust in the salesperson in determining a buyer's future exchange intentions.

Managerial Implications

The research implications of the study are readily extended to the realm of managerial application. A fundamental message pertains to the training and management of salespeople and customer-contact people in general. The message is that during interactions salespeople are, in effect, the selling firm from a buyer's perspective. This is especially

true when the buyer knows little or nothing about the selling firm, as is frequently the case in the Exploration Stage of the relationship. The present study suggests that the association between salesperson behavior and a buyer's evaluations about the selling firm may be very significant and occur at a very early phase in buyer-seller interactions. Further, the association may extend to distinct facets of the selling firm such as product quality or the expertise of service personnel. It merits accent that such inferences occur in the absence of specific information about these matters.

The study results support the idea that customer-contact personnel, and especially salespersons, may be the most important employees in a firm in terms of achieving and sustaining customer relationships and, ultimately, sales. Firms cannot afford to underemphasize the hiring, training, and compensation of these personnel. New thinking must be applied to even the basic aspects of sales management. One key issue, for example, is sales force compensation. Firms are increasingly emphasizing customer orientation and relationship management with new and existing customers. However, sales force compensation continues to be based primarily on transactions as measured by daily and monthly sales quotas. Reward structures must take into account the practice of customer orientation, which may call for selling a customer a low-priced product or even recommending against a purchase at a given point in time.

A contemporary theme in many marketing arenas, especially business-to-business marketing, is the use of interfirm relationships and strategic alliances to gain sustainable competitive advantage over

competitors. To the extent that salespersons, through their selling behaviors, determine the development and continuation of a buyer's trust, they are a principle asset to be included at all levels of strategic planning toward achieving the selling firm's relational-marketing goals.

Limitations of the Research

As with any research, there are limitations to this study that temper the findings. It is important to more thoroughly identify and discuss these limitations in order to gain a full and accurate interpretation of the results.

One important area of consideration pertains to the design and content of the selling scenarios and response questionnaires. Selling scenarios were used primarily as a means of controlling for potential sources of bias. For instance, the scenarios offered control over what respondents considered when they evaluated salesperson behavior during initial selling interactions. Thus, a degree of internal validity was established. However, the scenarios may have lost some external validity in the process by not accurately or fully depicting the reality of the intended context. For example, no information was provided about the selling organization while typically a buyer will have had some informational cues through prior experience. Similarly, in an effort to achieve brevity and clarity, the scenarios may have been too "pure" or simplistic. This might have resulted in over manipulation of the selling behaviors and overestimation of the effect of selling behavior on the trust variables relative to product information.

In a similar vein, there is the potential for method bias as a result of the construction of the response questionnaire. Order bias may have resulted from sequencing the measures from trust in the salesperson to trust in the selling firm to future relationship intention. The effect may have been to "teach" respondents how to respond to the items measuring trust in the selling firm, leading to a transparent relationship between trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm.

Some protection against order bias may have been provided by the scale development process and the resulting dimensionality of the scales. In addition, negatively worded items were used as a check for acquiescence and learning. While these items provided some aid, they may also have hampered the reliability of the final versions of the trust scales. There was evidence that some respondents did not fully attend to the meaning of the items.

In terms of questionnaire design, it must also be remembered that only the behavioral portion of the ADAPTS (Spiro and Weitz 1990) scale was used in the study, because the study focused on selling behaviors. Once again, caution must be used when making evaluations and comparisons about the relative effects of customer orientation and adaptiveness, since the full conceptual domain of adaptive selling was not represented in the study.

The scope of the study is another area related to an analysis of the questionnaire design. It is generally accepted that lengthy data-collection instruments can have a negative effect on response rates, especially in studies in industry settings. Response rate was a key

consideration influencing the careful selection of variables to include in the study and the development of the measures of buyer trust. Nonetheless, expanding the scope of the present study to include other variables would expand the contribution of the study.

The study focuses on buyers' perceptions of salesperson behavior and how these perceptions influence the development of exchange relationships between firms. Within this context, then, research on personal selling and business-to-business marketing are fruitful sources of other variables that could be included in the study.

Previously-developed frameworks of communication style in personal selling (e.g., Sheth 1976) could be tapped to assess the communication style of both the salesperson and the buyer. This would allow examination of the congruence between a buyer's and salesperson's style (e.g., task orientation, interaction orientation, and self orientation) as a determinant of communication effectiveness. Similarly, it would be useful to assess the degree to which perceived salesperson style influences the effectiveness of specific selling behaviors or how style may better explain the nature of specific behavioral constructs in selling.

Another useful area of inquiry would be to examine how buyer personality or cognitive structure might moderate or mediate the relationship between salesperson behavior and buyer trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. In developing the behavioral scales used in the present study, Saxe and Weitz (1982) and Spiro and Weitz (1990) used measures of other constructs (e.g., empathy, Machiavellianism, locus of control) to validate measures of salesperson

behavioral orientation. These same scales could be included in the present study to assess their relationship to salesperson behavior from the buyer's perspective. This would provide further validation of the measures of salesperson behavior and an opportunity to examine the role of buyer personality and cognitive structure in buyer-seller interactions.

Research on business-to-business marketing and marketing channels provides additional ideas about relevant variables to include in the study. This area of research has been particularly important to the development of knowledge about trust and marketing relationships. Along with trust, other variables have been used to examine interfirm relationships, including cooperation, commitment, dependence, and involvement (e.g., Anderson and Narus 1990; Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpande 1992). It would be beneficial to include such variables in the present study. This would allow gaining buyer perspectives about the interrelationships among these variables and the trust variables developed in the study. Thus, further validation of the trust measures would be accomplished while enhancing understanding of the nature of trust and extending current research on relationships in marketing channels.

Sampling and data collection methodology suggest a final area of discussion. Sampling relied on a judgment methodology with the selections made by trained research assistants. Further, the study was restricted to a single industry, buyer-seller context, and geographic region. The initial exploratory and pilot studies support that the scenarios captured a reasonably general buyer-salesperson interaction

process. Nonetheless, the generalizability of the results are limited without replication and extension of this type of research in other contexts and using broader samples. In addition, the data are cross-sectional. The ability to make inferences about causality among the variables would be enhanced by longitudinal data-collection methods.

Recommendations for Future Research

Assessment of the results and limitations of the research suggests a variety of directions for future research. First, additional research with buyers is warranted concerning the interrelationship of customer-oriented and adaptive selling. One approach would be to further compare how both behaviors influence various facets of salesperson effectiveness and performance. However, using the full complement of items from the existing ADAPTS scale (Spiro and Weitz 1990) and gathering data about actual salespersons or selling interactions would enhance the results.

Further investigation of the effect of salesperson behavior on trust and relationship development should generalize to other buyer-seller contexts and include examination of how trust evolves over time. Research could address issues such as how dominant and durable the effect of salesperson behavior is over the life of a relationship; if the relationship evolves more quickly under conditions of high customer orientation and/or adaptive selling; if poor salesperson behavior influences an existing relationship.

A significant area of inquiry related to the present study concerns the dimensionality of buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm. Accepted methodology served as the basis for

conceptualizing and developing the measures of the trust constructs. The process revealed multiple facets of trust in the salesperson and trust in the selling firm. Therefore, a foundation has been established upon which to extend investigation of the relationships between salesperson behavior, buyer trust in the salesperson, and buyer trust in the selling firm.

Replications using the trust scales could serve to confirm the dimensional structure of the measures. It would be revealing also to begin examining the relationship between salesperson behavior and various dimensions of a buyer's trust in the salesperson. For example, does salesperson behavior affect various dimensions of trust differently? A salesperson's behavior may influence trust in the salesperson primarily through buyer evaluations about the knowledge and expertise of the salesperson or through other generalizations. Such research could extend knowledge about the role of customer orientation and adaptive selling in salesperson effectiveness and provide practitioners with additional insights into issues such as sales training.

In a similar manner, the relationships among the dimensions of buyer trust in the salesperson and buyer trust in the selling firm are of interest. It would be important to examine which aspects of trust in the salesperson have the greatest effect on the various dimensions of trust in the selling firm. In addition, this line of inquiry should be extended to investigate if the role of the individual dimensions changes or if the interdimensional relationships evolve as the buyer-seller relationship evolves. For example, it might be hypothesized that the

importance of the product dimension of trust in the selling firm increases as the relationship expands.

Finally, an area of future research interest involves the general accuracy of the model used in this study in explaining the relationships tested. Simultaneous evaluation of the behavior-trust-relationship model using path analysis and/or structural equation analysis represents one potential line of inquiry. This would reveal additional information about the quality of the measures and the nature of the linkages among the constructs. Similarly, using longitudinal data-collection methods would provide greater explanation of the relationships.

Without question, salesperson behavior represents a significant area of marketing research for both academicians and practitioners. The conceptualization and measurement of key salesperson behaviors has opened important areas of investigation. Given the potential effect that salesperson behavior has on the development of relationships between firms, the relevance of this area of research is only increasing within the contemporary world of marketing and business strategy.

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APPENDIX A

SCENARIO DEPICTING HIGH CUSTOMER-ORIENTED
AND ADAPTIVE SELLING

A SUPPLIER-DISTRIBUTOR SCENARIO

INSTRUCTIONS (TASK DESCRIPTION)

Office Automation, Incorporated (OAI) is an independent distributor of automated office products. Key product lines include name-brand personal computers and printers.

You work for OAI. Your duties include purchasing and some general management functions. In this capacity, you are often involved in the evaluation of potential suppliers and their products for OAI to sell.

The following scenario describes encounters you had recently with a sales representative from PrinTron, Incorporated, a manufacturer of laser printers. The scenario is written from YOUR PERSPECTIVE (the buyer) as you recall your interactions with the sales representative and consider what to do next. Please read the scenario very carefully, then respond to the questions that follow.

A SUPPLIER-DISTRIBUTOR SCENARIO

INITIAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Michael Adams recently called to introduce himself. "I'm a sales representative for PrinTron, Incorporated. We manufacture laser printers for use with personal computers," Michael said. "PrinTron is looking to establish a dealer in your area in the near future. We'd like to see if a dealership agreement with OAI might be mutually beneficial for both our firms."

"If you are interested in knowing more, I'll send you information about our printers. Then I'll follow up to see if you would like to arrange a meeting. I'd appreciate the opportunity to learn more about your firm's objectives and to explore how PrinTron printers could help you achieve them."

I agreed to have Adams send an information packet, which arrived a few days after his phone call. The product information was interesting and, when Michael Adams called back, I set up a meeting for the following week.

INITIAL MEETING WITH MICHAEL ADAMS

During the first several minutes of the meeting, Michael asked a number of questions and listened as I explained about the nature, history, and needs of OAI. He was especially interested in our customers and the kind of work they do with their computers. After this discussion, Adams suggested that we discuss some of the relevant features of the demonstration printer he had brought with him.

At that point, I interrupted and began asking questions about PrinTron and about his role as a sales representative. "I hope I'm not throwing off your presentation by asking some questions up front" I said. "But at OAI, we've adopted a philosophy of taking our time and getting to know the people we do business with. We've been burned in the past by acting hastily."

"I appreciate your questions. You've raised some important issues and I'm happy to discuss them" Adams responded. He explained that he could give a standard presentation that includes a product demonstration, a discussion of PrinTron's marketing philosophy, and details of the PrinTron dealer agreement. "However, I would much rather discuss your immediate interests" he said.

Michael then began discussing his role as the regional sales representative for PrinTron. "My most important role as regional sales representative is to help dealers be successful" he emphasized. "That includes working with dealers to establish goals and implement plans that maximize their chances for success."

"I'm glad you brought up the terms of the dealer agreement" I said at that point. "OAI is not in a position to make a significant investment in new inventory at this time. The ideal situation for the near term would be the ability to order inventory as we make sales."

"I appreciate knowing that" Michael responded. "I could recommend setting you up as a new dealer for a start-up period with only a demonstration unit and some promotional literature, if that would help you."

Later, Michael described and demonstrated the PrinTron laser printer he had brought with him. Then, we spent the final hour of our meeting discussing the PrinTron dealer agreement. Michael acknowledged that he had contacted other potential dealers in the area. However, he emphasized that he only looks for situations that are beneficial to both parties. Thus, he said there was no immediate deadline for a decision.

Before leaving, Michael agreed to leave a demonstration printer at OAI so that sales and service personnel could examine it more closely. Then, he arranged to return in about a week to see how things were going.

CONCLUSION

The week after the meeting I sat in my office preparing to meet with Michael Adams. He was due to arrive in about thirty minutes. As I waited, I wondered whether OAI should continue exploring a dealer agreement with PrinTron. I really didn't know much about PrinTron other than what I had learned during the previous week. If we continued, it would be necessary to commit additional resources in the form of time, personnel, and money. All things considered, was I willing to recommend making that commitment?

APPENDIX B

SCENARIO DEPICTING LOW CUSTOMER-ORIENTED
AND ADAPTIVE SELLING

A SUPPLIER-DISTRIBUTOR SCENARIO

INSTRUCTIONS (TASK DESCRIPTION)

Office Automation, Incorporated (OAI) is an independent distributor of automated office products. Key product lines include name-brand personal computers and printers.

You work for OAI. Your duties include purchasing and some general management functions. In this capacity, you are often involved in the evaluation of potential suppliers and their products for OAI to sell.

The following scenario describes encounters you had recently with a sales representative from PrinTron, Incorporated, a manufacturer of laser printers. The scenario is written from YOUR PERSPECTIVE (the buyer) as you recall your interactions with the sales representative and consider what to do next. Please read the scenario very carefully, then respond to the questions that follow.

A SUPPLIER-DISTRIBUTOR SCENARIO

INITIAL TELEPHONE CONVERSATION

Michael Adams recently called to introduce himself. "I'm a sales representative for PrinTron, Incorporated. We manufacture laser printers for use with personal computers," Michael said. "I am currently talking to a number of distributors in your area about the opportunity to become a PrinTron dealer. My intention is to locate one firm in the near future that best matches PrinTron's needs and sales objectives and establish it as our dealer."

"If you are interested in knowing more, I'll send you information about our printers. Then I'll follow up to see if you would like to arrange a meeting. I think you'll appreciate the opportunity to hear more about PrinTron and to see a product demonstration."

I agreed to have Adams send an information packet, which arrived a few days after his phone call. The product information was interesting and, when Michael Adams called back, I set up a meeting for the following week.

INITIAL MEETING WITH MICHAEL ADAMS

During the first several minutes of the meeting, Michael began describing the PrinTron product line and the wide array of features offered by the various models. Soon, though, I interrupted and began asking questions about PrinTron and about his role as a sales representative. "I hope I'm not throwing off your presentation by asking so many questions up front" I said. "But at OAI, we've adopted a philosophy of taking our time and getting to know the people we do business with. We've been burned in the past by acting hastily."

"I appreciate your questions. However, if we continue I believe most of them will be answered" Adams responded. He explained that he had a standard presentation that includes a product demonstration, a discussion of PrinTron's marketing philosophy, and details of the PrinTron dealer agreement. Michael then continued with a brief demonstration of the PrinTron printer he had brought with him.

Later, Michael discussed his role as the regional sales representative for PrinTron. "My most important role as regional sales representative is to help make sales happen" he emphasized. "That includes working with dealers to establish quotas and terms that maximize dealer sales."

"I'm glad you brought up the terms of the dealer agreement" I said at that point. "OAI is not in a position to make a significant investment in new inventory at this time. The ideal situation for the near term would be the ability to order inventory as we make sales."

"I appreciate knowing that" Michael responded. "However, I would still recommend purchasing the standard new-dealer inventory, which includes three units and a spare-parts kit up front. Then, we can deal with any problems that may arise as they come up."

We spent the final hour of our meeting discussing the PrinTron dealer agreement. Michael emphasized that he had contacted many potential dealers in the area and that it was a matter of which firm seized the opportunity first. Thus, he said that a decision should be made soon.

Before leaving, Michael agreed to leave a demonstration printer at OAI so that sales and service personnel could examine it more closely. Then, he arranged to return in about a week to see how things were going.

CONCLUSION

The week after the meeting I sat in my office preparing to meet with Michael Adams. He was due to arrive in about thirty minutes. As I waited, I wondered whether OAI should continue exploring a dealer agreement with PrinTron. I really didn't know much about PrinTron other than what I had learned during the previous week. If we continued, it would be necessary to commit additional resources in the form of time, personnel, and money. All things considered, was I willing to recommend making that commitment?

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER AND RESPONSE QUESTIONNAIRE

ILLINOIS STATE
UNIVERSITY

186



5590 Department of Marketing

325 Williams Hall
Normal, IL 61790-5590
Telephone: (309) 438-7261
Facsimile: (309) 438-5510

June 2, 1993

Dear Distributor:

I am a student in the Marketing Department at Illinois State University. Currently, I am working with other Marketing students to conduct a study of firms that distribute office-automation products, such as computers and printers. The study focuses on the relationships that distributors have with their suppliers and with supplier sales representatives. The ultimate goal of the research project is to better understand what distributors look for in their suppliers and how to improve relationships between firms.

Your cooperation is requested in completing the enclosed survey questionnaire. The questionnaire has been designed so that it relates to your professional expertise and can be completed quickly. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your opinions about how suppliers and their sales representatives do their jobs.

Your responses will in no way be identified with you or your firm. No codes or other means of identifying individual respondents will be used. Your answers will be used only in statistical combination with other respondents.

Your participation is VERY IMPORTANT to the success of this project and will contribute to our understanding of interfirm relationships. Thank you for your time and assistance!

Sincerely,

Department of Marketing
ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

EVALUATION OF SALESPERSON JOB PERFORMANCE

Based on the scenario, please provide YOUR EVALUATION OF HOW THE PRINTRON SALES REPRESENTATIVE (MICHAEL ADAMS) PERFORMS HIS ROLE AS A SALESPERSON. After reading each statement, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement by circling the number that best represents your evaluation of how the salesperson typically does his job. The meanings of the numbers are:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) STRONGLY DISAGREE | (4) NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE | (5) SLIGHTLY AGREE |
| (2) DISAGREE | | (6) AGREE |
| (3) SLIGHTLY DISAGREE | | (7) STRONGLY AGREE |

For example, if you SLIGHTLY AGREE with the following statement you would circle number 5 on the following scale:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE		
The salesperson tries to manipulate buyers.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

	STRONGLY DISAGREE							STRONGLY AGREE		
<i>The salesperson (Michael Adams):</i>										
1. tries to get buyers to discuss their needs.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
2. tries to influence buyers with information rather than with pressure.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
3. begins the sales talk before exploring a buyer's needs with him.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
4. makes recommendations that are best suited to the buyer's problems.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
5. looks for ways to apply pressure on the buyer to make him buy.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
6. will follow up his contacts to make sure buyers are satisfied.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
7. varies his sales style from situation to situation.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
8. tries to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a buyer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
9. will apply pressure to get a buyer to buy if he is not sure the product is right for the buyer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
10. tries to achieve his company's goals by satisfying customers.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
11. spends more time trying to persuade a buyer to buy than trying to discover his needs.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
12. uses a set sales approach.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
13. tries to help buyers achieve their goals.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
14. decides what products to offer on the basis of what he can convince buyers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy the buyer in the long run.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
15. will make suggestions to his company as to how they can better serve buyers.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
16. treats all buyers pretty much the same.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
17. tries to bring a buyer with a problem together with a solution that helps him solve that problem.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
18. uses selling efforts that are beneficial to both his company and the buyer's company.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
19. tries to sell as much as he can rather than to satisfy a buyer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
20. is very flexible in the selling approach he uses.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
21. tries to figure out what a buyer's needs are.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
22. treats a buyer as a rival.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
23. will follow up his sales to take care of customer problems and complaints.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
24. basically uses the same approach with most customers.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
25. tries to sell a buyer all he can convince the buyer to buy, even if he thinks it is more than a wise buyer would buy.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
26. will assist his company in developing products and services based on customer needs and problems.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
27. doesn't change his approach from one buyer to another.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			

*** PLEASE CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE ***

PERCEPTIONS OF THE SALESPERSON
AND THE SELLING FIRM

The following sections address your GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE SALESPERSON (MICHAEL ADAMS) AND THE FIRM HE REPRESENTS. This perception focuses on the CHARACTERISTICS THAT YOU TEND TO ASSOCIATE WITH THIS TYPE OF SALESPERSON AND SELLING FIRM.

It is important that you provide the best possible indication of your feelings and beliefs based on the information you have from the scenario.

After reading each statement, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement by circling the number that best represents your perception of how the salesperson typically does his job. The meanings of the numbers are:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| (1) STRONGLY DISAGREE | (4) NEITHER AGREE OR DISAGREE | (5) SLIGHTLY AGREE |
| (2) DISAGREE | | (6) AGREE |
| (3) SLIGHTLY DISAGREE | | (7) STRONGLY AGREE |

For example, if you SLIGHTLY AGREE with the following statement you would circle number 5 on the following scale:

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE			
The salesperson is genuinely interested in other persons' ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I. THE SALESPERSON

First, consider your perceptions of the salesperson.

	STRONGLY DISAGREE			STRONGLY AGREE			
<i>In general, the salesperson (Michael Adams):</i>							
1. is friendly.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. lacks the skills to do his job in a professional manner.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. is a nice person.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. is sociable.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. has the technical expertise required to sell the product(s).....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. is honest.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. is disliked by many customers.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. has the training necessary to manage customer accounts.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. is reliable.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. is customer-oriented.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>In general, I would:</i>							
1. trust Michael Adams.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. count on Michael Adams to do what he promised.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. make buying decisions based on what Michael Adams told me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. not recommend Michael Adams to others at my place of work.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. rely on Michael Adams to solve a problem with one of my purchases.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

II. THE SELLING FIRM

Now consider your perceptions of the selling firm that the salesperson represents.

<i>In general, other members of the selling firm (PrinTron):</i>							
1. have the technical expertise required to perform their specific jobs.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. know little about the product(s) sold by the selling firm.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. are knowledgeable about the latest developments in their field.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. have the training required to solve customer problems.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

*** PLEASE CONTINUE ON THE NEXT PAGE ***

	STRONGLY DISAGREE				STRONGLY AGREE		
<i>When establishing agreements with firms to distribute its products, PrinTron generally:</i>							
1. allows for the unique needs of the distributor.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. strives to be fair to the distributor.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. views the distributor's success as the key to PrinTron's success.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. allows the distributor to have significant input into the terms of agreements.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>In general, PrinTron's products:</i>							
1. are reliable.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. are up-to-date.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. have features that customers want.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. compare favorably with the competition.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>In general, I would:</i>							
1. trust PrinTron as a selling firm.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. count on other members of PrinTron to do what they promised.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. make buying decisions based on information provided by PrinTron.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. not recommend PrinTron to others at my place of work.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. rely on employees of PrinTron to solve a problem with one of my purchases.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. view PrinTron as an attractive supplier to my present firm.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. be willing to have my firm develop a relationship with PrinTron to distribute its products....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

III. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Please provide the following basic descriptive information about yourself and the firm where you work. *The information will be used only to see if certain groups of people respond differently than others.* Your responses to this questionnaire will remain anonymous.

1. What is your current job title
(please be as specific as possible): _____
2. How many years have you held your current position: _____ years
3. Overall, how many years of professional experience do you have
buying from suppliers of office-automation equipment: _____ years
4. On average, what percent of your work time is spent interacting with (by phone
or in person) firms that are current or potential suppliers of office-automation
products to your firm: _____ percent
5. Years of formal education beyond high school: _____ years
6. Your sex (check one): _____ male _____ female
7. Your age: _____ years
8. Which best describes the firm where you work (check one):
 - a. _____ a single, independent distributor
 - b. _____ part of a chain of distribution outlets
9. If the firm where you work is part of a distribution chain, how many outlets
are in the chain (approximately): _____ outlets
10. How many different suppliers of office-automation products are represented
by the firm where you work (approximately): _____ suppliers
11. How many people are employed by the firm where you work (approximately): _____ employees

*** THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION ! ***

VITA 2

Michael Alan Humphreys

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: AN EXAMINATION OF SALESPERSON BEHAVIOR AS A DETERMINANT OF BUYER TRUST IN THE SELLER AND INTERFIRM MARKETING RELATIONSHIPS

Major Field: Business Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, October 10, 1954. Married May 22, 1976 to Donna Jo (Farmer) Humphreys. Three children, Adam M. Humphreys, Audra M. Humphreys, and Alyssa M. Humphreys.

Education: Graduated from Will Rogers Senior High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May, 1972; received Bachelor of Music Education Degree from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 1976; received Master of Music Degree from Baylor University, Waco, Texas, in May, 1979; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 1994.

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