

## Salespersons' Skills-Set in Marketing Exchanges: Implications for Pharmaceutical Companies

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### Abstract

*Sales force performs an essential role in generating revenue and income for the companies. The current research study examines the impact of salespersons' skills-set on customers' behaviors. It also aims at exploring the mediating role of salespersons' relational behavior. Quantitative research methodology was implied in which data were collected with the help of convenient sampling technique. Before using this questionnaire, Reliability and Validity was established in the local context. Encouraging response rate of 80% was received from pharmaceutical employees out of 600 questionnaires. The responses received reveals significant positive impact of skills-set on customer behavior. Mediation effect of salespersons' relational behavior indicates salespersons focusing on cooperative intentions, and mutual disclosure is considered to be a strong component of building relational behaviors. On this basis, it is recommended that with relational behaviors, salespersons can better identify customers' needs and wants. Secondly, salespersons will be in a better position to alter their selling techniques. Thus, salespersons' skills-set can be important in effective customer relationship management and can substantially affect the customers' behaviors.*

**Keywords:** Customer Behavior, Customer Orientation, Adaptive Selling, Relational Behaviors, Pharmaceutical Industry

### Introduction

Studying customer behavior is the prime focus of any organization. This is an era of competition where customers have multiple options in terms of brands and products. Numerous customer behavior models are available, yet, this research area needs further detailed investigation. As a salespersons' job is getting more competitive and new selling techniques are being incorporated, implications of required measures have become more difficult to identify as sales processes are becoming multifaceted (Huhtala *et al.*, 2014). As it has become complex, the salesperson's responsibilities are also very demanding. Salesperson role is not only to sell the product but to answer the problem/issue of the customer in a way that the customers become loyal towards the company for repeat purchases (Horbach & Rennings, 2013). Hence, it becomes more relevant to top management to hire and train salespersons who have specialized skills-set to cope with the modern challenges of the market.

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Both top management and salespersons jobs are getting tougher. For top management, they have to recruit salespersons with competitive skills-set. Due to these dynamic challenges it has become very difficult to select an individual and assess the performance (Johnston & Marshall, 2013). The traditional method of selecting a salesperson was quite simple. The applicants who were extrovert, energetic, better in public dealing, and task-oriented were more likely to be selected (McClaren, 2013). As the modern era is more competitive, it is essential for both management and applicants to improve. For management, additional measures are required to assess salespersons' performance. On the other hand, applicants should have more than the traditional skills, particularly relational behaviors, to become a part of any dynamic sales team (Terho *et al.*, 2012).

After identifying a competitive skills-set, salespersons are needed to develop their relational behaviors. These relational behaviors must have multiple outcomes in terms of cooperative intentions that these relational behaviors should be cooperative in term of exhibiting continuous support for the targeted customers. Secondly, interactions' intensity shows how often customers are willing to buy from you. The most important salespersons must act as a central hub for both the company and the customers (Pekovic & Rolland, 2016). This central hub should play smart for the interest of both parties. For the company, salesperson should find loyal customers who make repeat purchases and whose interactions' intensity remains high. For customers, a salesperson should assess and satisfy customers' needs and wants in a proper manner to gain his/her loyalty (Pekovic & Rolland, 2016). Hence, this comprehensive model would more likely develop loyal customer behavior in terms of repeat purchases and Word of Mouth (WoM).

This research shows evidence those sales professionals who focus on buyer-seller relationship, influence sales revenue and retain more customers, which has potential implications for maintaining customer relationships over time. Salespeople who interact with customers more often are more likely to perceive how the customer feels in various situations, know which selling strategies are useful in various settings, understand how basic cooperative strategy might evolve given a customers' current trust state, and manage emotions to reduce frustration and anxiety or elevate moods through positive emotions. Thus, relational behavior can be important to effective customer relationship management and can substantially affect the firm's bottom line (Zablah *et al.*, 2012).

The study is based on customer behavior's Cognitive theory of Zeithaml and Crosby theory of Relational Behavior. The marketing literature has emphasized the importance of influencing customers' decision making to find optimal solutions and the importance of meeting customers' needs (customer orientation). This suggests that without relational behavior, sales professionals trying to use customer orientation may

not recognize which emotions will reduce tension or may fail to understand how negative emotions will lead to anger and frustration, and either be unable to manage customers' emotions by helping them relax (Hur, Moon, & Jung, 2015). In their failure, they might seem to be uncaring, disingenuous, or even manipulative. Thus, relational behavior on the part of salespersons can significantly improve the use of selling techniques (Delmas & Pekovic, 2015). These relationships represent an extension of how relational behaviors influence customer relationships and suggest that salespeople who have mutual disclosure as their main concern will not only perform more effectively, but also more proficiently employ strategies designed to create and maintain strong positive customer relationships (Yoo & Arould, 2014).

Modernization and rapid changes in psychological behaviors of customers has led to the interest of researcher into developing an understanding of special kinds of skills-set needed to cope with these modern challenges. Therefore, the prime objective of this research study is to check the impact of salespersons' skills-set that might be helpful in creating brand loyalty that ultimately results in positive customer behaviors.

### **Literature Review**

A higher sale is the ultimate goal of any business organization, and for this reason every organization should have the best chunk of sales force. For this critical part, modern businesses have some pre-requisites of hiring potential salespeople (Gong & Choi, 2016). Hence, they are the boundary-spanners between the organization and its customers. Salespeople who are good in identifying customer needs and wants are more likely to perform well in the field (McClaren, 2013). Additional skills like adaptive during sales encounters is also very important.

Salesperson role is different now. They are not hired to sell a product or service or solution to any problem. They are hired to create a strong bond between the organization and customer through being customer oriented and adaptive in the field (Lopez-Zafra, Garcia-Retamero, & Martos, 2012). Furthermore, salespersons relational behavior is very important in making this bond stronger. This bond will have manifold benefits. Firstly, the customer will engage in repeat purchases. Secondly, if the customer is satisfied with one product of the company then he/she will do cross-buying too (Tsiros, Ross, & Mittal, 2009). Thirdly, the most effective marketing tool is WoM. That is, if a customer is satisfied, he/she will eventually spread a positive WoM for that particular brand (Ahuja *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore, the researcher believes that for this particular study all the variables (customer orientation, adaptive selling, salesperson relational behavior and customer behavior) have objective characteristics in organizations like pharmaceuticals, as this study is investigating reality of the relationship between salespersons' skill set and

customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM; therefore, the researcher has selected objectivism approach. In this particular research study, the researcher has discussed salespersons' skills (customer orientation, adaptive selling) and their impact on customer behavior (repeat purchase and WoM) with mediating role of relational behavior which have tangible realities.

### **Salespersons' Skills-set**

Customer orientation is considered as the key area of interest as far as salespersons abilities are concerned. Salesperson uses this as a tool which points out the limit to which a sales person can take part in the buying decision for a customer. In the case of facing customers, the sales representatives with customer orientation participate actively (Juliet, John, & Tanner, 2010). High level of customer orientation enables a representative to resist actions that dissatisfy a customer.

Previous studies have shown that salespersons with customer-oriented abilities are more likely to influence customer behaviors in terms of repeat purchase and positive WoM. As a salesperson is a nominated representative of a company who faces customers, therefore the sole aim of the salesperson is to fulfill customer needs (Pekovic & Rolland, 2016). Whereas the companies that focus on customer orientation, perform better. They also deliver solutions according to the needs of the customers as observed by sales representatives. Furthermore, representatives also provide the customers with alternative solutions to cater better to their needs (Ehret, 2004).

It was mentioned by Saxe and Weitz (1982) that customer orientation can be beneficial for the salespersons for building long-term profitable relationships between the company and its customers (Stock *at al.*, 2005). Customer oriented behaviors can positively influence customer decision making in many ways. For instance, a customer-oriented salesperson will be in a better position to understand the needs and wants of the customers. Secondly, he/she shall be in better position to offer product, service or solution to meet that highlighted problem (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Keeping customer-oriented approach salespersons can build long-term profitable business relationships with their targeted customers (Yoo & Arnould, 2014).

It is required for the salespersons to adopt behaviors which are appealing to customers and avoid those which repel customers. The sales representatives that care more for customer's preferences are supposed to provide better solutions and products that satisfy them. Highly manipulative behaviors mostly mislead customers and ultimately result in brand switching behaviors (Reinartz, Thomas, & Bascoul, 2008). Therefore, the identification of the customers' needs and wants is essential. Salespersons that are more customer focused are more likely to build strong customer behaviors in terms of repeat purchase, cross buying and positive WoM.

Secondly, the skill-set includes adaptive selling. Adaptive selling is defined as the shifting behavior of salespersons during sale encounters. When this technique works, it proves to be profitable for both parties. It also allows improving ones' ability to collect relevant information from the targeted customers and to utilize it effectively. Adaptive salespersons have this convincing ability that they can alter the decision making of the customers with their active participation (Boorum, Ramsey, & Goolsby, 1998). Therefore, customer behaviors can be altered by highly adaptive salespersons (Keillor *et al.*, 2000). Being adaptive in sales encounters now has become a prominent solution to deal with knowledgeable customers (Cannon & Perreault, 1999). As the positive effect on salesperson' attitude and behavior, adaptive selling has proved to be a key to success in this competitive era (Fang, Evans, & Palmatier, 2004; Park & Holloway, 2003).

Hence, to deal with market competition and complex customer behaviors, companies need those salespersons who are more customer oriented and adaptive in several sales strategies. Therefore, this study hypothesized as follow:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The more the salespersons are customer oriented, the higher will be the repeat purchases and positive WoM by the customers'*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The better the salespersons' adaptive selling, the higher will be the repeat purchases and positive WoM by the customers'*

### **Salespersons' Relational Behavior and Customer Behavior**

Salespersons' relational behaviors are defined as the behavioral capacity utilized to work continuously for the betterment of buyer-seller relationship. In simple words, actions or strategies developed in order to maintain the profitable relationship is the key focus of these relational behaviors. Although these actions or strategies are evaluated by the customers; how much a salesperson is responsible. This relationship is based on customer expectancy of salespersons' role in building this buyer-seller relationship. Crosby *et al.* (1990) conceptualized salesperson relational behavior on three dimensions. He suggested that a salespersons role should be based on mutual disclosure, cooperative intentions, and interaction intensity. In contrast to this, other researchers considered relational behavior as in problem solving tactic. In this particular research study, the author has taken salesperson relational behavior on the basis of mutual disclosure, cooperative intentions, and interaction intensity.

Building relationships is the key interest of salespersons these days. Due to dynamic customer behaviors, it is becoming more difficult for the salespersons to exhibit such selling strategies which promote mutual disclosure (Huhtala *et al.*, 2014). Salesperson duty is becoming challenging as it is not about one-time interaction. Relationships need continuous interactions to be aware on latest customers' issues. Therefore, even though a salesperson is customer oriented and adaptive during sales

encounters; hence, salespersons need to be cooperative as well as up to date with the target customer in order to maintain buyer-seller relationship. Therefore, this research study hypothesizes as follow:

*H<sub>3</sub>: The better the salespersons' relational behavior, the better the mediating effect among customer orientation and customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM*

*H<sub>4</sub>: The better the salespersons' relational behavior, the better the mediating effect among adaptive selling and customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM*

### Materials & Methods

Quantitative research technique is used to measure the social phenomena by gathering and dissecting numerical information and concentrating on the connection among more modest number of properties crosswise over many cases (Tuli, 2010). Salespersons working in pharmaceutical companies of Pakistan make the population of this research study. Pharmaceutical industry in Pakistan is a very competitive and fast-growing industry. Around 800 pharmaceutical manufacturing plants are being installed and are fulfilling 70% of the finished medicine demand of Pakistan. Many of these 800 pharmaceutical manufacturing units are controlled by 25 multinational companies operating in Pakistan. Therefore, a huge competition has been seen between domestic and multinational pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan. Following are the most popular domestic and multinational pharmaceutical companies operating in Pakistan.

Table 1: *Top 10 Pharmaceutical Companies*

No.	Company	No.	Company
1	Getz Pharma	6	Bayar
2	Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan) Ltd	7	SAMI pharmaceutical (Pvt.) Ltd
3	Ferozsons Laboratories	8	Hilton Pharma Ltd.
4	The Searle Company Ltd	9	Wyeth Pakistan Limited
5	Pfizer Pakistan Limited	10	GlaxoSmithKline Pakistan Limited

Questionnaires are distributed in different units of the above mentioned pharmaceutical companies located in major cities of Pakistan like Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Sialkot and Gujranwala. The respondents were the employees in the marketing and sales department of the above mentioned pharmaceutical companies.

### Results

#### Demographic Details

Initially, a number of 450 questionnaires were collected from the sampling subjects. Almost same response was seen from all the pharmaceutical companies. The response rate was an encouraging 80%. Subsequently, the scrutinization of questionnaires and entry of responses from the sample entities clears the picture that 480 questionnaires

were filled, and out of these, 450 questionnaires were properly filled out by the respondents.

Table 2: *Gender-wise Demographics (N=450)*

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	379	84.2	84.2
Female	71	15.8	100.0
Total	450	100.0	

Table 2 explains gender-wise demographics. The majority of respondents of this research study are male. 379 respondents, which are 84% of the total sample size fall in the male category. The remaining 16% of the respondents are female. This shows that most pharmaceutical companies have more male salespersons as compared to female salespersons. In other words, it can be assumed that the pharmaceutical industry prefers to hire male salespersons over female salespersons.

### Regression Analysis

This model summary explains the impact of predictors (customer orientation, adaptive selling) on the outcome variable (customer behavior). R square is also known as the coefficient of determination. This explains the variance in outcome variables due to predictor variables. In simple words, it measures the change in outcome variable, explained by predictor variables. The R square value is .075 which means that 8% variance is explained by predictor variables (customer orientation, adaptive selling).

Table 3: *Model Summary Regression*

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error
1	.281 <sup>a</sup>	.079	.075	.84631

a. Predictors: (Constant), CO, AS

Table 4: *Beta Coefficients*

Model		Unstd. Coeff.		Std. Coeff.	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.823	.267		6.823	.000
	AS	.207	.042	.228	4.977	.000
	CO	.259	.061	.195	4.263	.000

In Table 4, which explains the variance caused by each predictor variable, the significance level explains whether the standardized coefficients value is statistically significant or not. The standardized coefficient's value for adaptive selling is .228 which explains the variance or positive change caused in the outcome variable (customer behavior). In simple words, 23% positive change in customer behavior will occur for a 1% change in the predictor variable (adaptive selling), whereas the (Sig. < .05). The standardized coefficients value for customer orientation is .195 which explains the

variance or positive change caused in outcome variable (customer behavior). In simple words, 20% positive change in customer behavior will be occur if 1% change occurs in the predictor variable (customer orientation), where the (Sig. < .05).

**Mediation**

The researchers should remember that if the stages required in Baron and Kenny's process are totally fulfilled, despite everything it doesn't infer that the mediation has happened as there are different less conceivable models that are steady with the information. In direct relationship, the impact of independent variable (customer orientation) on dependent variable (customer behavior) is 17% as acceptance is confirmed by the p-value (less than 0.05).

Table 5: *Regression Weights Mediation-1*

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
CB	<---	CO	.165	.062	3.547	***

The effect of independent variable (customer orientation) is .165 where its significant value is <.05. After including the mediator variable (relational behavior), the impact increases; 220 with significant p-value stays <.05, therefore, no mediation is found between customer orientation and customer behavior.

Table 6: *Estimates mediation-1*

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
RB	<---	CO	.098	.069	1.417	.156
CB	<---	CO	.220	.062	3.547	***
CB	<---	RB	.030	.042	.704	.481

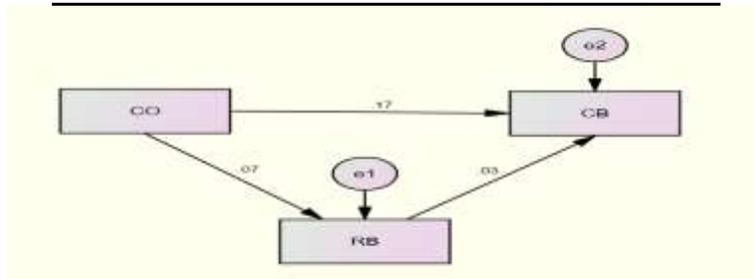


Fig. 1: *Mediation between customer orientation & customer behavior*

Table 7: *Model-Fit Indices for Mediation 1*

Model Fit	Values	Model Fit	Values
RMR	.000	AGFI	.935
RMSEA	.022	NFI	.976
GFI	.945	IFI	.996
CFI	.996	TLI	.995

Table 7 mentioned above signifies some of the other model fit indices which measure the goodness of model suggested in the research study, like Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), NFI, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR).

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) proposed that GFI is alternatively used against  $\chi^2$ . It is stated that the statistical range of GFI is 0 to 1. The value of GFI is closer to 1; signifies more GFI and the acceptance range is .7 to 1. It is reported that the enhancement in GFI value is because of the greater degree of freedom against the sampling size. The table shows that the value of GFI=.0945

AGFI statistics shows the value of .935 and is showing AGFI at excellent level. AGFI signifies the degree of freedom depicting the reduction of fitness and more saturation of model ranges between 0 to 1 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Generally, the value >.90 is acceptable. CFI demonstrates the statistics of .996, which is closer to the goodness acceptable index, and hence the value is equal to 1. It is reported in his study that CFI is least affected by the sample size. The table further signifies that NFI = .972, which is excellent as demonstrated the cut off criteria in their study that values near to 1 are acceptable.

It is reported in their study that the most sensitive fitness index in connotation with the number of parameters in the research model is RMSEA. Byrne (1998) suggested the statistical value range as .05 to .10 whereas, the categorization on the basis of statistical value range depicting fair indexation fit of values beyond .10 are considered to be poor fitness index and values between .080 to .10 provide medium fitness index whereas the values below .80 show good fit. However, more recently, a cut-off value close to .06 or a stringent upper limit of .07 seems to be the general consensus amongst authorities in this area. The table above shows statistics of RMSEA=.022 which is in an acceptable range.

**Mediation 2**

The researchers should remember that if the stages required in Baron and Kenny's process are totally fulfilled, despite everything, it doesn't infer that the mediation has happened as there are different, less conceivable models that are steady with the information. In the direct relationship, the impact of independent variable (adaptive selling) on dependent variable (customer behavior) is .202% as acceptance is confirmed by the p- value (<.05).

Table 8: *Regression Weights Mediation-2*

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
CB	<---	AS	.202	.031	29.312	***

The effect of second predictor variable adaptive selling is .202 whereas significant value is  $<.05$ . After including mediator variable (relational behavior) the impact become less with a value of .183 with significant p-value ( $<.05$ ). Therefore partial mediation is found between adaptive selling and customer behavior.

Table 9: *Estimates mediation-2*

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
RB	<---	AS	.086	.047	1.809	.071
CB	<---	AS	.183	.042	4.354	***
CB	<---	RB	.024	.042	.567	.565

Fig. 2: Mediation between adaptive selling & customer behavior

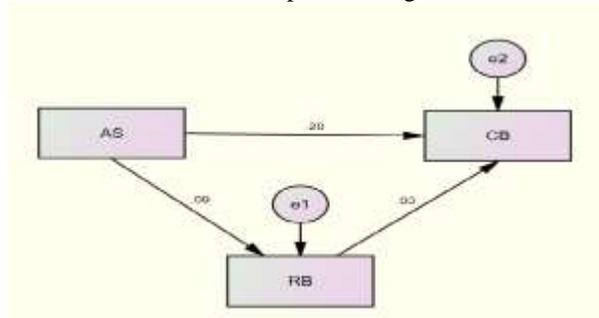


Table 10: *Model-Fit Indices for Mediation 2*

Model Fit	Values	Model Fit	Values
RMR	.000	AGFI	.928
RMSEA	.053	NFI	.972
GFI	.938	IFI	.996
CFI	.996	TLI	.996

Table 10 mentioned above signifies some of the other model fit indices which measure the goodness of model suggested by researches study like Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), NFI, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Root Mean Square Residual (RMR).

Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) proposed that GFI is alternatively used against  $\chi^2$ . It is stated that the statistical range of GFI is 0 to 1. The value of GFI is closer to 1, signifying more GFI and the acceptance range is .7 to 1. It is reported that the enhancement in GFI value is because of greater degree of freedom against the sampling size. The table shows that the value of  $GFI=.0938$

AGFI statistics shows the value of .928 and is showing goodness of fitness index at excellent level. AGFI signifies the degree of freedom depicting the reduction of fitness and more saturation of model ranges between 0 to 1 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Generally values  $>.90$  are acceptable.

CFI demonstrates the statistics of .996, which is closer to the goodness acceptable index, and hence the value is equal to 1. Fan *et al.* (1999) reported in his study that CFI is least affected by the sample size. The table further signifies the NFI=.972, which is excellent, as demonstrated by the cut off criteria in their study that values near 1 are acceptable.

It is reported in their study that the most sensitive fitness index in connotation with the number of parameters in the research model is RMSEA. Byrne (1998) suggested the statistical value range is .05 to .10 whereas, the categorization on the basis of statistical value range depicting fair indexation fit of values beyond .10 are considered to be poor fitness index and values between .80 to .10 providing medium fitness index whereas the values below .80 shows good fit. However, more recently, a cut-off value close to .06 or a stringent upper limit of .07 seems to be the general consensus amongst authorities in this area. The table above shows statistics of RMSEA=.019 which is in an acceptable range.

### **Discussion**

The prime objective of this research study is to check the impact of salespersons' skills-set and their impact on customer behaviors mediating effect of relational behavior between customer orientation, adaptive selling, and customer behavior. Adding to the direct effects of relational behavior on salespersons, our findings indicate that better relational behavior helps salespeople to significantly influence the effectiveness of key marketing exchange variables.

The first hypothesis of this research study is "the better the salespersons' customer orientation, the better will be the customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM". Customer oriented salesperson can play an essential part during sales encounters. The reason behind this that customer-oriented salespersons are more likely to better evaluate customer needs and wants (Franke & Park, 2006). Furthermore, they are more likely to provide customers with suitable solutions regarding customer needs and wants.

Organizations are growing fast. The essential key factors regarding better communication with the targeted customers to make them aware about organizational value creation, giving assurance, evaluating and offering best solutions according to their needs and wants cannot be achieved without including the vital frontier spanner, the salesperson. Customer orientation is getting attention in marketing literature. Customer orientation from the salesperson's perspective has been examined in many researches. Enhancement of salesperson's performance is a key concern in the sales process. This aspect is very important, yet, it is unexplored and in the current economic situation where

companies are trying to be more competitive with high productivity and rise in cost of sales with less interest of consumer in purchasing undertaking.

The second hypothesis of this research study is, “the better the salespersons’ adaptive selling, the better will be the customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM”. A salesperson who has adaptive selling behavior will have more knowledge about several selling techniques, which are required in different sales situations. Salesperson should have confidence in the capability to utilize a wide range of different sales techniques (Keillor *et al.*, 2000).

Furthermore, salesperson should have confidence and the capability to modify the sales technique during a market sales encounter (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2007). A knowledge structure that assists in knowing about different selling circumstances to identify which technique is best suited in each circumstance (Park & Holloway, 2003). Collecting information to adapt the best selling technique is mandatory. The accurate utilization of several techniques in several selling situations is essential in the end, as until and unless an accurate selling technique would result worst if it were not implemented accurately (Park & Deitz, 2006).

The third and fourth hypothesis of this research study is “the better the salespersons’ relational behavior, the better the mediating effect among a) customer orientation b) adaptive selling and c) customer behavior in terms of repeat purchase and WoM. The relationships and affiliations inside firms start with making contacts between every representative as the business is to convey on the premise of these encounters. Tests infer that while the assessment of people an all the more surely and grounded surveys are given while assessing amid get-togethers; these audits are firmly identified with the behavior and results. Thus, within the sight of an individual expert, the judgments on relations would be lesser identified with the result within the sight of the social attributes the firm offers. Parallel to this, a client to businessman battle has been battled under ominous and beneficial impacts. For instance, many firms headed their workers for making solid relationships with their customers because of the dread of preoccupation of clients' endurance towards the representative allowing them to "seize" clients while moving among occupations. In the wake of considering all situations, it appears that the client to representative determination may consolidate to give eventual outcomes that are identified with money offers, offerings and headway, coming about into paying regard premiums because of the loyalty and commitment to the organizations alongside the client's ability. Along these lines, the concentration of alliance will move from solitary relationship to offerings related relationships.

## **Conclusion, Implications and Future Research Directions**

### **Conclusion**

Building relational behaviors of salespersons should be the main concern of organizations. Adaptive selling behavior during every sale encounter is very important, especially where the competition is very high, and buying patterns of customers are very complicated. The study forecasts that relational behavior might have essential contingency effects in sales encounters rather than directly effecting customer behavior. Adaptability is crucial for every salesperson. In several selling situations, it is difficult to evaluate customers' choice. Salespersons with better adaptive selling would easily alter their selling techniques to that particular situation. Similarly, salespersons' relational behaviors can potentially enhance repeat purchases and WoM.

### **Implications**

**Research Implications:** Relationship with customers is directly influenced by the behavior and action of the salespersons, influencing the organization's performance indirectly as well. So, we can say that highly specialized salespersons are the need of time to deal with these challenges. Sales team should have high qualities to develop and maintain buyer-seller relationships so that focus will be on long-term relation between the former and the latter. Another effective technique of sales is adaptive selling and customer orientation in which sales behaviors are shifted during the encounter of sales. This shift of behavior depends upon the information needed to provide the solution to the customers' problems. Furthermore, emotionally sound salespersons are preferred as they can better understand the situation of the customer and are able to give them a better solution. Contemporarily, there is high competition between salespersons. In the present era, salespersons with high mental as well as physical abilities are needed in order to handle the challenges and strategies of the competitors and are crucial to capture the decisions of the customers with better knowledge. Salespersons are required to be more aware about the needs of the customers, the products and the trend of the competitors so that they are able to cope up with these challenges.

**Implications for Managers:** This research study has multiple managerial implications, mainly related to marketing and sales department. First, sales executives should consider customer orientation an essential part of their sales and marketing teams. For sales executives, to improve the performance of their respective departments, they required to keen about the role of salespersons in creating departmental innovativeness as they bring the valuable information from the market. Through improving customer focus, executives can support their team members to come up with unique and diverse ideas, which might result in better customer-salespersons relationship.

Secondly, after identifying competitive skills-set, salespersons are needed to develop their relational behaviors. These relational behaviors must have multiple outcomes in terms of cooperative intentions that these relational behaviors should address corporate goals of that particular company. Secondly, interactions intensity is how often customers are willing to buy from you. Most importantly, salespersons must play as a central hub for both the company and the customers. This central hub should play smart for the interest of both parties. For the company, salesperson should find loyal customers that make repeat purchases and whose interactions intensity is high. For customers, a salesperson should assess and satisfy customers' needs and wants in a proper manner to gain his/her loyalty. Hence, this comprehensive model will more likely develop loyal customer behavior in terms of repeat purchases and WoM.

### **Future Research Directions**

Additional empirical research with different sample sizes and industry is needed on these variables in order to better understand the extent of the effect of each variable on customer-salesperson relationship. Researcher assumes that this study will provide future researchers with a guideline to better interpret the influence of emotions, relations and feelings in marketing transactions. Understanding the impact of salespersons' relational behavior and emotional intelligence might lead to a range of results, including knowledge of salespeople on dealing with customers, and the use of feelings and different emotions in marketing exchanges.

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