College of Business Theses and Dissertations

Driehaus College of Business

Does Relevant Information Exchange Create Relationships Between Buyers and Sellers That Affect Sales?

Christopher Hansen
DePaul University, chansen@chicagostrategic.com

Recommended Citation

Does Relevant Information Exchange Create Relationships Between Buyers and Sellers That Affect Sales?

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Business Administration
Kellstadt Graduate School of Business
DePaul University
Chicago, Illinois

Dissertation Committee Members and Approvals
Richard A. Rocco, PhD, Chair
Grace Lemmon, PhD
D. Joel Whalen, PhD

Chris Hansen
DePaul University
May 2021

Acknowledgements

Biography

https://www.linkedin.com/in/chrishansen3/

Chris is an innovative growth and development leader who has acquired a diverse skillset over a career that has spanned nearly 30 years to date. He has held positions spanning a range of both business development and operational management positions. His experience includes operations, strategy, relationship management, account management, general management, and business development. Chris's experiences come from work in the technology industry, education technology and online education industry, the association management industry, and the consulting industry. Chris started his business career, and his love of the business growth process, as a sales intern working in France for a large global electronical connector company. Throughout his career, he has worked with large corporations, as well as smaller private companies. In addition, Chris owned and operated his own consulting company from 2009-2012, which focused on helping small organizations find growth solutions.

Chris is new to the academic world and is operating today as both a practitioner and academic researcher. Chris earned his BA in Business Administration from Lewis University, and his MBA, International Business and Doctorate in Business Administration from DePaul University. As an avid learner, he has also earned an executive certificate of completion from The Leadership Journey from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, and completed a seminar in Leadership, Change, & Managing Across Cultures, at HEC in Paris, France. Chris lives in Chicago, Illinois.

Abstract

This study quantitatively and qualitatively tests the influence of sales-deployed relational marketing material using an ongoing information stream (OIS) of relevant literature, and measures the impact on a buyer's likelihood to purchase in the future, the allocation of dollars to a purchase, and the development of relationship, trust, expertise, and reduction of uncertainty in decision making. The study produces generalizable results from a large cross-section sample of 400 buyers under specific conditions that included both imminent and no imminent sale conditions, and varying levels of deployment of the OIS. It was found that relevant information exchange by itself does not create relationships that affect sales outcomes, and there was no significant interaction between the deployment of an OIS in varying scenarios and likelihood to purchase in the future, nor the allocation of dollars. It was also found that an OIS does not significantly affect the develop of relationship, trust, expertise, nor reduction of uncertainty in decision making. Strategic sourcing principles, and qualitative results lead to a more complex story, where variables are highly correlated, and buyers consider additional factors not present in this study. This research adds to study of the field of sales and relationship marketing, and the general study of buyer-seller exchanges, by empirically showing that the effects of regular exchange of relevant information are negligible without consideration of other factors. Practitioners will benefit from deeper understanding of sales from the buyer perspective and buyer behavior, which can lead to strategies to establish relationships more quickly, and with larger effect.

Introduction

A simple internet search for a specific product or service will turn up quite a few private company developed white papers, case studies, and infographics. These are usually free information pieces designed to inform on some aspect of a product or service that a potential consumer might find valuable in support of their decision-making process. In addition to being found on seller's websites, these information pieces are often deployed in a business to business (B2B) sales situation to prospective customers via relationship marketing, or directly by salespeople as part of efforts to increase the likelihood of a buyer purchasing. These information pieces can be useful to a buyer searching for information. However, with an average of 11.2% of U.S. organizational revenues spent on marketing (Pemberton, 2018), marketers are not making this content development investment based on some benevolent information dissemination mission. They eventually expect greater outcomes in the form of customer acquisition, customer experience, and customer retention – which, in turn, leads to sales revenues. Yet, in that same Pemberton study, only 16% of CMOs planned to spend their money acquiring new customers, and instead looked to support customer experience and retention on a greater scale. What this means at the practitioner level is that where budget is lacking for robust relationship marketing efforts, Sales must still find ways to support relationship development as part of the sales function.

Sales is charged with the execution of relationship activities that bring in customers. Sales is accountable for the end results of the organization's efforts to win new customers, and when other resources lag, they often bear the majority burden of B2B relationship development and/or relationship marketing activities that lead towards customer acquisition. As a result, Sales

practitioners need to understand which efforts establish relationships that lead toward positive

business outcomes efficiently and effectively. This study seeks to establish empirically whether

those efforts, when they take the form of information pieces deployed as relationship marketing

by salespeople in a B2B sales context, do improve conditions that lead to a sale and/or positive

business outcomes. It's important to know the effect they have, not only because of the

significant dollars spent by organizations on various forms of relational marketing, but because

of the practical implications for individual sales people, enabled by sales technology and

knowledge of what works best, to improve their chances and the frequency of winning over

buyers when other resources are lagging.

Hunter & Perrealt (2007) stated in their study on relationship forging tasks and sales

technology that "the salespersons new imperative is to forge relationships and heighten

cooperation with customer firms" and proposed that salespeople can pursue relationship forging

tasks, like knowledge sharing, via sales technology. The relationship between buyers and sellers

has been transforming in recent times from transactional to a focus on relationship. This is true

for both sides of the transaction (buyers and sellers) and has escalated the concept of relationship

marketing to a strategic concern for businesses. A critical component to the success of

relationship marketing is an understanding of how each party processes information during

interactions that may lead to an exchange of resources between the organizations. It often occurs

in practice that a salesperson or marketing team uses timely and relevant pieces of information to

feed information to potential future buyers in the form of what is sometimes called a 'drip

campaign'. Drip campaigns are not often studied in academia, but the term is widely used by

practitioners. It typically involves a series of very targeted and personalized messages deployed

over time by sales technology to feed the likely information needs of sales prospects (Sudhir, 2011). The closest parallel in academic research is the concept of relational marketing (RM), which is broadly defined as any activity that seeks to establish a relationship with a prospective or existing customer (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). RM is inclusive of a broad range of relational approaches to customers that seeks to establish, and maintain over time some form of ongoing relationship, versus just trying to facilitate a discreet transaction. The first sale is not the only outcome sought, and exchanges of information serve strive to establish a series of interactions over time (O'Malley, 2014).

The deployment of informational pieces is a part of digital content marketing (DCM). DCM involves feeding digital content to prospective customers with the intent to educate, increase awareness of the brand, and create an element of exchange which may lead to future sales (Hollebeek & Mackey,2019). In practice, it typically involves sending a piece of specific information to prospective customers in the hopes of positioning their brand, and product or services, for positive perception and ultimately better disposition to make a sale. However, in academic research the acts involved in positioning that information is frequently attributed to the function of marketing. In practice the implementation of this is typically performed by salespeople who are deploying this information via sales technology - sometimes in conjunction with their marketing team, as part of collective efforts to win over buyers. The understanding the effects on organizational outcomes of marketing pieces deployed by salespeople as part of an omnichannel customer acquisition strategy is important, because customers are now seeking better coordination of their experience across a business' outreach efforts (Arli, Bauer, & Palmatier, 2018). Given this trend of customers seeking for more coordinated experiences with

their sales interactions, it is interesting to note that there is only a small amount of research that actually explores the perspectives of buyers within the sales the process, and uses of the sales technology that supports that (Rocco & Bush, 2016).

Many of the research articles encountered in the process of preparing this study focused almost exclusively on some stage of post or pre-sale relationship, and not on the actual origination mechanics of relationships that lead to sales. The studies reviewed tended to pick up the process at some point just beyond origination of the interaction. Inexplicably, it seems that the study of the origination of sales and sales relationships (both the process of initiating a sales relationship and the antecedent indicators of a sale) seem to be largely absent. Lambe, Wittmann, and Spekman (2001) suggest that the reason there are not many empirical studies related to the foundations of B2B relationship development is the difficulty related to getting data to study. Much of the research focusing on the early stage sale origination process is focused on marketing as the originator of the relationship, versus the salesperson's role. Further, outside of business to consumer situations, there is an absence of mention of the mechanics that are involved in the process of a salesperson contacting someone and starting a relationship in a B2B scenario (aka 'cold calling' or contacting a decision maker 'cold') via an email introduction to their company, products, and/or services. This study will go beyond current work, to measure whether relationship, trust, perception of expertise, reduced uncertainty, and relationship can be accomplished far in advance of any imminent sale via an ongoing information stream (OIS). Last, responding to the general call for more research on the effects of artificial intelligence (AI) on the relation building process (Arli, et al, 2018), this study also explores the concept of how prospective customers may perceive that process when it is implemented using AI.

This study asks the question that if marketers or salespeople disseminate information proactively as part of relationship marketing to pre-position their company as an expert, does that actually build customer trust, greater perceived expertise, relationship, and reduced uncertainty, and ultimately lead to greater sales? Further, when a salesperson sends information via sales technology to a seller, as a regular stream of informative and relative industry information pieces to prospective clients, does that also actually lead to greater trust, reduced uncertainty, and greater likelihood of a decision maker to buy, along with more allocation of dollars? Can marketers and salespeople work together to pre-position trust via boundary spanning objects that seeks to form the type of relationship that leads to a sale? Also, if the answers to these previous questions are found, can artificial intelligence, in support of this process, do the same work ethically, and without customer repercussions?

To answer the proposed questions, this study measured whether there is reduced uncertainty, higher perceived expertise, increased trust, relationship established, and increased likelihood to buy when deploying advance information pieces. The study also measured the likelihood of a buyer making a purchase decision after being exposed to a stream of relevant literature from a seller's company. In Hollebeek & Mackey's (2019) paper on DCM, they positioned that although there is much acceptance of the concept by practitioners, there is a knowledge gap and lagging of research in academia in this area. Answering the questions with the chosen measurements was important to providing possible explanations related to outcomes of real sales and marketing scenarios the results may fuel adjustment of practice to better suit outcomes of Relationship Marketing activities. This research adds to the field of study around

trust, relationship marketing, and buyer-seller exchanges by establishing empirically whether the regular exchange of relevant industry information via an OIS, under multiple conditions, leads to establishing greater trust and reduced uncertainty from the buying organization - which in turn may lead to greater sales via enhanced trust and relationship. This study expands the study of trust, boundary role, social exchange, and perceived expertise as it relates content marketing focused on relationship development, with empirical data and evidence pointing to the possible impact of widely used marketing strategies.

This study adds to practitioner knowledge, and further provides insight into the impact of relational marketing strategies that seek to achieve relationship sales success. The results of this study have potential to make sales process outcomes more effective and will provide specific evidence for practitioners to build more effective sales strategies from when trust and reduced buyer uncertainty is an important component of what they want to accomplish. The results of this study provide practitioners in Human Resource and Sales Management positions an empirical base from which they can train sales teams. The results add evidence, for both researchers and practitioners, to the implications of the shifts in how our economy works, and the long-term adjustment in how the facilitated transfer of goods and services will happen in the future. With the wealth of expert information floating around on the internet, practitioners need to know if there is an empirical link to a relationship sales outcome, and whether the marketing and sales functions could partner in information dissemination to improve the likelihood of a sale.

This paper is organized into nine distinct sections. First, a conceptual model is introduced that will serve as the base for the conclusions that led to the subsequent hypotheses. Next, a

thorough review of the literature is performed, which is organized around the theories that serve to form the foundations of the study. Third, the hypotheses and directly supporting theory for them will be introduced, and then followed by a methods and analysis section that will describe how this study will test the hypotheses. After discussion of results, managerial and theoretical implications will be discussed, along with limitations and suggestions for future direction.

Figure 1:
Conceptual Framework
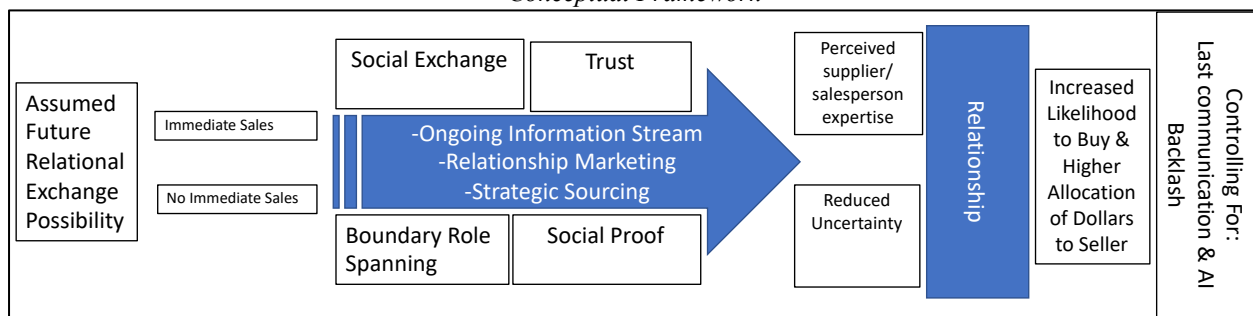
Literature Review

Sales, Relationship Marketing, and ultimately the relationship that leads to a sale, have a foundation in a core set of theories that seeks to explain the process by which buying and selling parties come together over mutual interests. This review of the literature most relevant to addressing the research questions posed was formative to the conclusions and hypotheses formed in this study, and focuses on the origination of the type of relationship development we are testing. It starts with Relational Exchange Theory (RET) and relational marketing definitions and includes an overview of concepts governing the transactional aspects of why buyers and sellers come together. Next the study explores relevant psychological aspects of relationship development via Social Exchange Theory (SET) and Boundary Role Theory (BRT). Next we explore evidence of how trust, perception of expertise, and reduced uncertainty originate.

Weaved throughout this review of literature and theory are multiple pointers for concepts that help us understand how the act of Ongoing Information Exchange (OIS), and the objects that form that exchange, form the basis of a multi-variate condition that leads to positive outcomes for both parties. Last, the review will briefly touch on the relevant theory covering the buyer perspective, relevant elements of strategic sourcing, and how Artificial Intelligence (AI) may affect what we know as established practice today related to relationship marketing.

Relational Exchange

Macneil (1980, 1987), in his work pertaining to relational norms, offers that exchange occurs in both discrete and relational contexts. As the originator of the base for Relational Exchange Theory (RET), he argued that there are a set of norms typically present that help define when there is an exchange relationship present. He goes on to further define that in a discrete versus relational exchange, the norms are transformed to adapt to the situation (Ivens & Blois, 2004). His work has been often cited when there is an aim to determine whether a relationship exists. More recent analyses of studies using MacNeal's norms to try to prove the presence of a relationship have resulted in inconclusive results (Ivens & Blois, 2004). Joshi and Stump said in their 2009 study that "RET is more of a prescriptive than predictive theory". This study is not trying to establish the existence of MacNeil's norms as antecedents of whether a relationship exists. This study uses as its base, a focus on relationship driven exchanges, and one of the possible norms that drive them. The focus of this study is an information exchange condition. Joshi & Stump (2009) found that supplier's customers were likely to respond well to relational selling behaviors and reciprocate with similar behaviors.

This study seeks to offer explanation for the question of when there is some level above a discrete relationship context, and where there is a connection between the buyer and seller in which they both expect it could turn into a long-term relationship, and whether a relationship condition that leads to a sale could be established via sales deployed relationship marketing. More specifically, whether a vehicle of relationship marketing, an ongoing information stream (OIS), can establish a condition where the form of relationship established leads to positive purchasing indicators. To establish a basis outside of the previously mentioned contract theory, this study will use elements of Social Exchange Theory (SET), Boundary Role Theory, trust, uncertainty, and perceived level of expertise to show how an OIS may lead to the establishment of a form of relationship that leads to feelings of reduced risk, and ultimately greater purchase intent.

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing has been defined as marketing and activities that support establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges. Relationship marketing activity supports exchanges that are not necessarily defined by the traditional buyer/seller roles and definitions. These exchanges are defined by the scenarios under which the exchanges are being made. Examples of scenarios include internal, external, supplier, buyer, and lateral (Morgan&Hunt, 1994). The time and effort that a salesperson devotes to building and maintaining a relationship is defined as relationship marketing activities (Palmatier, Scheer, Evans & Todd, 2008). Relational Marketing has been shown to improve customer loyalty and firm performance, but "the literature offers varied perspectives on which relational constructs mediate the effects of RM efforts on outcomes". (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006).

Additionally, the effectiveness of some relationship marketing activities has been found to be reduced by a buyer's willingness to engage, trust, and make an investment of effort into the interactions necessary to build a relationship (Palmatier, et al 2008).

The Content Marketing Institute defines content marketing as "a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action" (The Content Marketing Institute, nd). They further define content marketing as having quality and being different and more engaging than just a normal piece of marketing content. In a 2014 piece on Content Marketing in Forbes, Josh Steimle describes the idea of needing to create value for customers as a result of providing a piece of information to them and indicates that the many forms the information can take include infographics, webpages, podcasts, videos, and books.

Heide (1994) drew distinctions between market and non-market governance, where market governance focuses on situations where some form of a relationship is established beyond discrete. He theorized that when discrete exchange is eliminated, there is a form of relationship established. He further looked at dependencies created that underscore a form of governance that is established in an exchange relationship. In initiating a relationship outside of one governed by strict authority, there is bilateral relationship governance established via a selective entry process. That selective entry process could involve evaluation by the buyer of skills and qualification, as well as attitudes and values (Heide, 1994). He finds that there are specific patterns of dependence, and that those have impact on how the relationship is established (Heide, 1994). One of the findings from his study was that market governance relies

on incentives to coax out certain behaviors in the relationship. Knowing what those behaviors are can help a supplier to identify strategies for establishing and managing relationships – possibly with an OIS.

Firms in a competitive marketplace do not make exchanges anonymously, and their decisions are not always rational. They operate in complex networks of multi-level relationships where cooperation between buyer and seller are interdependent. These 'actors' in exchanges co-create value through the exchange of resources (O'Malley, 2014). As a salesperson is deploying their version of relational marketing via an exchange of information, they are signaling to a buyer, via that exchange of unrequested information, that they are ready and willing to execute their part in a mutually understood process of relationship formation.

Social Exchange Transactions, Boundary Role 'Objects', and Social Proof

In an economy that is increasingly moving towards being science based and knowledge intensive, salespeople will be expected to be cooperative, smart, and savvy in tailoring messages to their audience, acting in the role of a knowledge broker. Knowledge brokers are expected to transfer knowledge as value to their prospective clients. (Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). This potential 'exchange of knowledge' which can occur via what this study is calling an OIS from a seller, can be partially found to have its roots in Social Exchange Theory (SET). However, as Lambe, Wittmann, & Spekman (2001) note, SET is frequently used by scholars in relation to business to business (B2B). However, a clear link to its foundational premises is often missing. Emerson (1976) offers that Social Exchange Theory is not a theory itself, but a framework within

which many theories can interact with each other. He takes Blau's (1969) definition of social exchange as being a condition where actions are "contingent on rewarding reactions from others", and suggests that there is an "implied two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding process involving 'transactions' or simply 'exchange'"(Emerson, p.336). Social Exchange theory tells us that over a series of interactions, obligations can be created (Emerson, 1976), and under certain circumstances these obligations can lead to quality relationships (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

In contingent interpersonal transactions, reciprocal interdependence is created where there is a condition of reduced risk that is initiated when something is given, and the other party reciprocates. Once in motion, it can create a continuous self-reinforcing cycle (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). In a buyer/seller exchange, there is typically a context of an economic resource exchange. But there may be other exchange mediums, like socioemotional, in play, and each model may have its own rules (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p.881). In a social exchange relationship, individuals return benefits that are received, and that process can play out in a number of forms which are bounded by a set of rules that is determined by whether the relationship is from a series of interdependent transactions, or whether they are from the relationship that forms from the result of the transactions. In other words, the relationship could be the exchange, or it could be the ties that result from the exchanges (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p.883 & 886). They suggest that the form of exchange should be matched with the type of relationship. An economic relationship is best matched with an economic exchange and a social exchange is best matched with social relationship. It is possible that multiple conditions can

exist, but where that happens, there is additional risk and reward possible for both parties (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005, p.887).

Boundary Role Theory (BRT) suggests that organizations have boundaries created by authority that comes from understanding of the organization, and information exchange via boundary spanning representatives links the organization to the environment (Alrdich & Herker, 1977). Boundary role spanners can be in a variety of functions, including salespeople who represent their firm to another organization, and buyers who represent their needs to the external market. Aldrich and Herker (1977), when commenting on the boundary role occupants, stress that the participant's ability to translate information back to their organization can be important to organizational success. Thus, boundary role occupants are empowered with a high degree of trust, and also a certain degree of regulation. Additionally, they suggest that for purposes of spanning between organizations, there will be different levels of organization-environment interaction that serve to link client and customers (Aldrich and Herker, p.222).

Gopal and Gosain (2010) used boundary role spanning in their exploration of vendor-client relationships in outsourcing contexts to show that role spanning between organizations moderated the project performance within a supplier organization. Their context for this scenario was a situation where one party has knowledge, and another party can benefit from that knowledge. Both parties realize that they can achieve success if they are able to share that knowledge across boundaries. The idea that two parties identify a need to work together and establish an exchange to do that, is very relevant to the concepts of relationship marketing. Specifically, where an OIS is attempting to establish a position of knowledge for the supplier.

When the buyer/decision maker recognizes that ongoing information stream, they are in essence spanning roles to make an exchange of preliminary knowledge. Additionally, Gopal and Gisain use Carlile's (2002) and Star's (1989) definitions of three different roles in boundary spanning: objects, process, and spanners. Of particular interest to this study is the ideas Gopal and Gisain suggest around effective boundary 'objects' being something that creates a shared means to communicate and to learn from each other. Based on Carlile's study of how knowledge can span boundaries via an object that represents that knowledge, product information exchanged in the process of an OIS could be considered a boundary 'object'. That object could conceivably open up an exchange of knowledge. Levina and Vaast (2005) use multiple characterizations of boundary role spanners to identify them as those who facilitate the sharing of expertise between two groups at different locations. They also indicate that they can span within, and between, organizations. Thus, a boundary spanner can be a salesperson, and the information deployed via relational marketing on their behalf can be considered boundary 'objects'.

Delpechitrea, Beeler-Connelly, & Chakerc (2018) found that salespeople who are boundary spanners appear to create value at higher levels. As a boundary role spanner, salespeople in non-commodity roles will likely bond with a buyer via the boundary role object (OIS) in a way that creates Affect Based Trust (ABT). The presence of an exchange, via elements of SET, then feeds Cognition Based Trust (CBT) which is rooted in rational assessments of trustworthiness (Colquitt, Baer, Long, & Halvorsen-Ganepola,2014)

Social proof is the idea that a person bases some or all of their decision criteria on what they perceive others think is correct. (Cialdini, 2009; Cialdini, Barret, Butner, Wosinska, &

Gornik-Durose, 1999) This concept can have an impact on buyers as they seek to identify and fill

in uncertainties in their evaluation process with evidence from what they perceive others doing.

In a sales context this could take the form of a list of referent customers provided by a seller,

recollections of companies they respect that they may have perceived hearing of using the

seller's product, or mentions of referent customers in interactions with a seller. When the buyer

sees these referent materials, they may choose not to pursue further investigation, relying instead

on social proof, or basically assuming that what others have done must be right. In practice, the

idea that a salesperson offers, via the OIS, what appears as unbiased data and customer

references, may fill in uncertainties the buyers has – potentially without that buyer feeling the

need to directly verify those references.

Trust, Reduced Uncertainty and Information Sharing

Trust between a buyer and seller occurs when the buyer has something at risk, and that

risk is not easily mitigated any other way than working with the seller (Swan & Nolan,1985).

When trust unfolds over time, Swan & Nolan indicate that one of the variable components of that

trust is the image that the firm represents to that buyer. In Liberali Urban, & Hauser (2013) the

authors use evidence from other studies indicating that to earn trust, firms should be altruistic

and appear to put their purchaser's needs above those of their own. This study chose trust as one

vehicle to investigate how sales positioning by way of expertise demonstrated with an OIS might

occur, because there is also ample previous evidence in literature to support that trust is an

antecedent and mediator to future engagements that lead to sales. For example, Vanneste,

Puranam, & Kretschmer (2014) in their meta-analysis on trust over time in exchange

relationships, suggest that a trustor has an initial bias state that is either positive or negative when

a relationship is first engaged, and that over time that trust bias will shape how the relationship

evolves. They also suggest that a process of bias correction over time will influence whether trust

changes over the length of time over which a relationship evolves.

Colquitt, et al. (2014) explored trust as an element of social exchange theory and found

that McAllister's (1995) definition of affect based trust (ABT) was one of the most valid

indicators of a social exchange relationship. They used McAllister's definition of trust "as

positive expectations about and a willingness to act upon the words and intentions of an

exchange partner", and further defined it as originating from the emotional ties that form bonds

between exchange partners. Colquit, et al. found that affect based trust (ABT) was a more valid

indicator of an exchange relationship, over cognition-based trust (CBT), which is the more

rational assessment of trust. ABT is rooted in the emotional ties that bond exchange partners

together. Colquitt's work was focused on supervisor and organizational contexts, but social

exchange relationships happen across many different boundaries and contexts, including

buyer/seller relationships. Buying/decision making in a sales situation has rational elements to it,

and there is also an emotional process that is evoked, partially based on elements of trust, when a

social exchange relationship initiates in this context.

In their 2008 meta-analysis of buyer's trust in salespeople, Wood, Boles, & Babin

concluded that expertise had a lower influence on trust because expertise is assumed by a buyer.

They also found that a perceptual cue typically initiates a buyer's assessment of the seller, and

that cue categorizes them into a trustworthy or non-trustworthy category. However, this was all

largely based on the assumption of a person-to-person interaction of some sort, and that the

interaction was a point in time. Guenzi, in his 2002 review of salesforce activities and customer trust noted that "to date, we still have a poor understanding of the role played by sales force related factors, as opposed to company-based factors, in gaining and developing customer trust, which is one of the most important results in the relational perspective." (p.753). Swan, Bowers, & Richardson, in their 1999 meta-analysis, defined trust as having components of affect and cognition. The belief that there is competence to rely on in the salesperson, and a feeling of security about relying on the salesperson. They also found with medium effect that both the salesperson and the firm influence trust, and that the effects of trust on behavior were modest.

Wood, et al. (2008) suggest that trust is not derived just from the specific behaviors of salespeople. Trust is more about the assessment of seller characteristics by the buyer as they relate to the seller being able to represent and fulfill the buyer's interests. In addition, where a seller can increase trust, it will reduce decision making uncertainty (Gao, Sirgy, & Bird, 2005). Crosby, Evans, & Coles (1990) described how relationship sellers were more likely to keep in touch frequently with their customers, and thus likely to be more successful at getting needs related information. However, they also found that relationship quality had little to do with sales success, and that customers perceptions of similarity and expertise have more influence on sales success. They further define that salesperson expertise is most often exhibited in the form of information provided by the salesperson, and it reflects the competencies they perceive are associated with the transaction.

Information Sharing, Perceived Expertise, and Risk Framing

Belonax, Newall, & Plank (2007) suggested that buyers will scrutinize with greater intensity when a purchase is of greater importance. They also suggested that a buyer's perception of expertise can reduce uncertainty for the buyer in the purchasing process. Similar to what happens with social proof, they found that when a buyer's information on a firm is lacking, expertise of the firm is inferred based on perception of the expertise of the salesperson.

When Liberali et al (2003) studied whether sharing information on competitive products increased sales, they found that competitive information enhances brand consideration, and that the effects were mediated via trust. This study also cited evidence from multiple authors that firms earn brand consideration by earning trust. Further, they cite evidence from Morgan and Hunt (1994) that the sharing of meaningful and timely information is an antecedent of trust. Based on this, this study proposes that there is ample evidence to support the idea that dissemination of relevant information should build trust, and that this trust should lead to better positioning of a salesperson for a potential sale. However, there appears to be a gap in literature and studies as to whether the specific activities around information dissemination with the goal of pre-positioning the firm and their salespeople as 'experts', actually has an influence on the outcomes of the sale process. In their 2016 study on B2B content marketing, Jarvinen & Taiminen stated "understanding the role of content marketing in B2B sales is particularly crucial given persistent conflicts between marketing and sales departments with regards to lead generation and management."

In studies of the psychological behavior behind making choices, it has been shown that people tend to place more weight onto options perceived as more certain. This can result in things that appear more certain getting higher weight, and those options not appearing as certain to garner risk aversion (Khanamen & Taversky, 1979). In relation to this study, the sellers who can 'frame' their product/service as the one that is least risky, and/or being the product or service most certain to provide benefit, will have the best chance of a buyer making a decision in their favor. For example, a buyer who receives and recognizes an OIS from a seller that frames their option as the more-sure option, will be more likely to purchase that solution when some or all of the other antecedents of a purchase also line up for them. Thus the OIS, serves as proxy for reducing the risk decision when the weights of all options are compared. This idea supports the possibility that the presence of an OIS can 'frame' and pre-position trust, expertise, social exchange, social proof, and other factors previously mentioned to better position a seller for the likelihood of a sale.

Relationship, Attitude, and Reasoned Action as Antecedents to Sales

Jiang, Shiu, Henneberg, & Naude (2016) set out to develop a cross industry generalizable measurement of relationship quality, that could be used to better measure the results of relationship marketing and proposed that it should be measured from a buyer's perspective. Jiang, et al argued that relationship quality has been hard to define, and that measures of it vary widely. In their study, they re-affirmed the linkages between relationship quality and firm performance as evidenced in previous studies (Rauyruen and Miller, 2007; Leuthesser, 1997, Crosby et al. ,1990, De Wulf, Odekerken-Schro¨der, & Iacobucci, 2001; Palmatier et al., 2007),

and proposed that trust and commitment are antecedents that should be measured separately. Jiang et al (2016) argued that the core elements of measuring successful and long-term relationships should include the intensity of communication, long-term orientation, social satisfaction, and economic satisfaction from the buyers perspective. Interestingly, while Jiang et al (2016) make the case that measuring relationship should be from a single perspective, Rocco & Bush's (2016) study found that measuring from both perspectives can yield new insights. Their study found bi-directional perceptual differences that likely would not have been seen from only one perspective.

Attitudes are formed based on a set of beliefs accessible in someone's memory. Attitude Theory suggests that the beliefs accessible in memory are not perfect and are subject to biases or selectivity, and they do not necessarily need to conform with reality (Ajzen, 2012; Fishbein & Adzen,1975). People can only remember a certain number of things at any given time, and as a result it is possible that a buyer's beliefs about the product offered by the seller may be positively biased by the most recent exchange of information via an OIS. This positive recent memory may start to form a base of a relationship. The exchange is basically cementing these beliefs in recent memory. Reasoned Action Theory involves an attitude toward a behavior of interest that is influenced by referents, where referents can be any normative influencer around them. Similar to social proof, individual acts are based on what they perceive others might want them to do, as well as inferred actions they see others performing. (Ajzen, 2012; Fishbein & Ajzen 2010). Essentially, the relationship formed by the OIS exchange has created a referent status for the seller, where the buyer will feel socially obligated to make a certain decision as a result of the exchange.

Relationship Marketing seeks to establish relationships that lead to enhanced business performance outcomes like sales growth and profitability (Sin, et al, 2002). One of the measures of an established relationship is intensity of communication as seen from the buyer's perspective (Jiang et al, 2016). Ideally, mastery of the nature and types of communication that accomplish this relationship development will lead salespeople and relationship marketers to developing relationships quicker, which possibly leads to greater sales, and mutually beneficial buyer/seller outcomes.

AI, Sales Technology, and Resource Management

As early as the 1980's, scholars had been writing about the idea of assisting sales with technology (Collins, 1984). Using sales technology to communicate information has been found to enable a positive effect on relationship building performance between salespeople and customers (Hunter & Perrault, 2007). Artificial Intelligence (AI) uses smart algorithms to analyze and drive independent actions that result from the analysis of data, and it has been found that if they are used in the right business context, algorithms and AI can become a competitive advantage for firms(Gentsch, 2019). Because of the growing collection of data and subsequent use of it for purposes of improving business, AI will be increasingly used (and useful) in supporting sales efforts. With enough data and the right algorithms, almost any basic or routine sales task and customer interaction has the potential to be driven in some part by AI. The use of chat bots, which incorporate external programming interfaces with AI to interact with humans is

becoming more common. The idea of 'Conversational Commerce' has arrived, where increasingly savvy customers who have increasingly demanding expectations for timely responses, benefit from two-way real-time interactions with chat bots. Employers benefit from greater efficiencies in communicating with customers when using chat bots and possibly competitive advantage (Gentsch, 2019). Gentsch also noted that the potential downside of the use of AI is that it is believed to result in a loss of jobs, there are few laws governing it, and there is risk of customer backlash should they feel wronged by not being informed of the use of AI. For example, negative feelings could be triggered in situations where initial sales contacts are managed by AI driven bots (Davenport, Guha, Grewal, & Bressgott, 2020). On the other side of the argument, artificial interactions can help make a consumer's job in choosing products easier and more efficient when it is perceived as assisting in increasing the consumer's utility options (Andre, et al, 2017). The study of the practical tactical use and impact of AI in marketing and sales is emerging, and there is a sparse amount of research to date in this area.

Buyer Power, Strategic Sourcing, and Information Exchange

In their study of multi-item request for quotations, Schoenherr & Mabert (2011) found that across a range of buyer's strategic interests, they all commonly, in priority order, focused on price, supply security, and bundle building. However, they also found that these priorities vary in the intensity of application based on the strategic emphasis of the buyer. They cited evidence from Iyer (1996) and Heide and Weiss (1995) that indicated that the level of importance of a purchase can drive the number of alternatives considered. This can also include alternative sources, and they found that there is increasing strategic focus with that importance.

Buyer practitioner literature suggests that there are advantages to single sourcing or multi-sourcing. However, it has been found that the size of the supplier network does not really impact supplier performance, and that the number of suppliers has more to do with influencing power relationships (Terpend & Ashenbaum, 2012). In essence, the number of suppliers you consider will only matter depending on the types of power the buyer is interested in exerting later in the relationship. Buyers will increase their intensity of focus on key aspects of the sale important to the buyer, and will make strategic decisions about whether multi-sourcing or sole sourcing is best based on their interpretation of needs in a long-term supplier relationship. Buyers are reducing overall risk by their strategic emphasis on their organization's interests. Sellers who are more aware of the environmental conditions under which buyers are making their decisions, can better adapt their approach strategy to maximize their objectives (Schoenherr and Mabert, 2011).

The purpose of strategic sourcing is to engage potential suppliers that align with their goals, and the core tenets of that practice includes developing an understanding of the internal objectives and the external environment – including detailed understanding of suppliers (Sollish and Semanik, 2011). From the buyer side of an exchange, organizations that carry the organizational strategy all the way down to the purchasing execution level, and into differentiated models that take advantage of opportunities to optimize the purchasing process, are said to be using portfolio purchasing models (PPM's) (Formenti, Ellram, Boem, & Da Re, 2019). Outside of the purely financial considerations for PPM's, strategic sourcing models take into account relationships, which when established can reduce risk via establishment of trust and

reduction of uncertainty. Relational marketers can benefit from understanding how buyers develop strategic supplier relationships, and buyers have been shown to receive positive results from practicing strategic sourcing. This makes a win-win relationship possible when buyers practice strategic sourcing, and marketers understand the strategic supplier development process of their buyers (Sanchez-Rodrıguez, 2009). When buyers practice strategic supplier development practices, they receive benefits from relationship investment activities, and one of the activities they receive benefit from is exchanging information (Sanchez-Rodrıguez, 2009). By understanding a buyers environmental operating conditions and goals, as well as the process through which their approaches are processed by a buyer, a seller can potentially position information in a way that fosters the antecedents of trust and relationship, and makes the potential for positive business outcomes (sales) possible for the seller.

Hypotheses

This study suggests the question that if, in this new knowledge based economy where the 'stimulus' is a literature piece, blog, or other visible expression of the selling firm's expertise that is relevant to the buyer, would that pre-position trust and ultimately relationship in a situation where there is not yet a person-to-person exchange to base judgement on? For example, after seeing a piece information, will the buyer subsequently believe the firm is an expert in the areas they need? Additionally, because of the establishment of the antecedents and conditions of a relationship, will it pre-position the salesperson to an expedited sales exchange, where trust and expertise is already partially established? Or, will sharing that same type of information over a long-term buying relationship enhance trust? This study proposes that there is a gap in the

literature and research that ties brand positioning activities and relational marketing together in support of providing a salesperson providing relevant information to potential buyers in attempts to set up the perception of firm expertise, and pre-establishing trust and relationship. More specifically, when a relational exchange is possible, whether there is a need for an immediate sale or not, this study suggests that relationship marketing delivered via frequent contact and an ongoing information stream (OIS) can increase the likelihood of a B2B supplier/buyer relationship developing along with the dyadic antecedents of trust and communication, and ultimately relationship. When that develops, this study further theorizes that those antecedents will lead to increased perceived supplier and salesperson expertise, and reduced uncertainty. That process will result in a higher likelihood of buying from that seller and higher allocation of dollars to that seller (See Figure 2).

After review of the literature, hypotheses were formed that represent potential findings that will fill the gaps identified in linking relationship marketing deployed by salespeople to the antecedents of relationship, trust, perceived expertise, and reduced uncertainty, through to purchase by a buyer. This section offers detail on the three main hypotheses and seven sub-hypotheses with supporting theory. After that we will explore methods proposed to test the hypotheses. Figure 2 is offered as an easy visual reference for how the main hypotheses fit together.

Based on Gao et al's (2005) study related to reducing uncertainty for buyers in the decision making process, providing literature ahead of a sale should reduce some uncertainty in the sales process. Additionally, according to Palmetier et al.(2006), relationship marketing

strategies will have a wide range of effectiveness for creating strong sales relationships. They found that expertise and communication will be the most effective in creating stronger relationships, then relationship investment, and similarity. This study defines OIS as the activity where a seller is sending consistent, relevant, and timely information to a potential buyer as part of a relationship marketing effort. If a person supplies a something of benefit to another, the receiving party should respond in kind (Gergen, 1969), and interdependent reciprocity will be initiated when one person takes action (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). As Lambe, et al (2001) stated in their summarization of Homans (1958) work, "In general, SET suggests that trust-building between two parties may start with relatively small or minor transactions…As the number of interactions increases and the size of the transactions increases, trust increases". Further, trust and commitment have been identified by researchers as being crucial elements to a relational exchange (Lambe et al, p.14). Ramsey & Sohi (1997) argued that a salesperson's effectiveness is determined by a buyer's perception of their intent, and that certain behaviors and situational characteristics can send signals to buyers about that intent. Trustworthiness is not so much about what a salesperson does, as it is about how the buyer perceives their trustworthiness (Smith & Barclay, 1997). Thus:

> *H1a: When relationship marketing is present, a seller providing an Ongoing Information Stream as part of relationship marketing results in a significantly higher likelihood of the buyer recommending a purchase in the future.*
>
> *H1b: When relationship marketing is present, a seller providing an Ongoing Information Stream as part of relationship marketing results in a significantly higher allocation of dollars to the seller.*
>
> *H1c: When relationship marketing is present, an Ongoing Information Stream, results in significantly higher perceived seller and company trust.*

H1d: When relationship marketing is present, an Ongoing Information Stream, delivered via relationship marketing, results significantly higher perceived seller and company expertise.

Based on findings from multiple studies that were referenced by Jiang, et al (2016), the existence of relationship is a possible indicator of future intent to purchase. Their study concluded that intensive communication was a significant indicator of relationship. They found that trust and commitment were antecedents of the communication, along with other indicators, and that they were not significant moderators of relationship. Relationship marketing has as its goal to develop relationships, and an OIS used as part of relationship marketing should establish some form of perceived relationship between the buyer and seller.

H1e: There is a significantly positive relationship between an OIS, as part of relationship marketing, and the establishment of relationship between a buyer and seller.

Lacking other influences, and controlled for last buyer contact and switching costs, when a seller is performing relationship marketing, a buyer presented with an OIS from a seller will perceive reduced uncertainty of their sale and perceive the seller's expertise as high. Via this process, this study hypothesizes that if the interactions over time are perceived well by the buyer, it is possible that future interactions will continue to be perceived positively and that some form of exchange relationship will exit (Lambe, et al.,2001, p.8). Through a process facilitated by social proof, a buyer may also fill in the uncertainties they perceive when they see references to other customers, or with what they perceive others are doing correctly (Cialdini, 2009). An OIS that includes references to data and/or customers that the buyer perceives that others feel is correct, will also serve to reduce uncertainty in the decision process. Thus, via social proof:

H1f: An ongoing information stream, delivered via Relationship Marketing, results in significantly less buyer uncertainty and decision-making uncertainty about the seller.

When Joshi & Stump (2009) studied whether certain elements of RET would help predict commitment and opportunism, they conceptualized one of the relational norms as information exchange, and defined it as the expectation that a party is willing to provide helpful information to other partner regardless of whether they are obliged to do it. Their results indicated that suppliers can cultivate commitment via encouraging high relational norms in their relationships via behaviors like "keeping customers informed of any upstream market developments that may directly or indirectly affect the customer, and…consistently acting in a manner that puts the interest of the relationship ahead of their unilateral interests." (p.346). Based on this conceptualization of Relationship Exchange, it is proposed that:

> *H1g: When an Ongoing information Stream includes unbiased objective data, it results in a significantly greater likelihood to recommend a purchase.*

Crosby et al (1990) described how relationship sellers are more likely to keep in touch, and also indicated that perception of expertise has a high influence on sales outcomes. Palmatier et, al. (2006) found that across all elements of a relationship, expertise and communication are the most effective relationship-building strategies. A consistent stream of information, even when the buyer knows there is not a sale to be had currently, could result in higher likelihood of future award of sales. Thus:

> *H2a: When an ongoing information stream is pursued by a seller when there is an immediate purchase to be made by the buyer, it results in a significantly greater likelihood of the buyer recommending a purchase.*

According to the highly regarded supply chain management education unit at Michigan State University (Why Companies Should Consider Strategic Sourcing, 2019), strategic sourcing includes as one of its tenets the idea of keeping track of supplier sources, their differentiation points, and their brands. Jiang, et al (2016), found that relationship length and strategic sourcing experience did not significantly moderate the relationship quality. However, Formenti et al (2019), indicate relationship as a key element of differentiated purchasing model. Therefore, it should follow that where a supplier is making it easier to track and understand their offering via relationship marketing, decision makers who practice strategic sourcing are more likely to engage, process, and appreciate information from those potential suppliers. Thus:

> *H2b: Buyers practicing strategic sourcing principles are significantly more likely to buy from sellers providing an Ongoing Information Stream.*
>
> *H2c: Buyers are significantly less likely to buy from the last seller who contacted them when an Ongoing Information Stream is present*

In line with Crapanzano & Mitchells (2005) suggestion that when relationship and transaction are distinctly defined that it presents greater opportunities for discovery when researching social exchange theory, it is hypothesized that because Social Exchange Theory based relationships can happen in an economic to economic situation, it is also possible to create a defined condition electronically. This electronic condition can be created via AI, where an economic to economic relationship is created without a social relationship. Although it is widely accepted that AI and chat bots could replicate basic sales contacts, there is little research to substantiate the true feelings buyers have about whether or not that is true (Davenport, et al 2020). Kim and Duhacheck (2020) found, in a study of how humans perceive tasks performed by artificial agents, that they are more likely to respond positively when the artificial agent is

delivering a 'how to' message versus a 'why' message. Consumers do not want their sense of autonomy challenged when AI is involved, and can often make contrary decisions if they perceive it is threatened (Andre, et al., 2017) This study suggests there is a possible condition for positive perception that occurs when the buyer perceives the interaction as helpful and not threatening or manipulating their autonomy. If automation of basic contact facilitates a prospective customers base information needs related to uses and studies of the product, then it is likely the potential buyers will be pleased with the result and react positively to being served. Thus:

H3: AI driven contact will not significantly change the positive perception of the quality of an interaction by a buyer when related to basic information serving tasks

Figure 2
Hypotheses Illustration
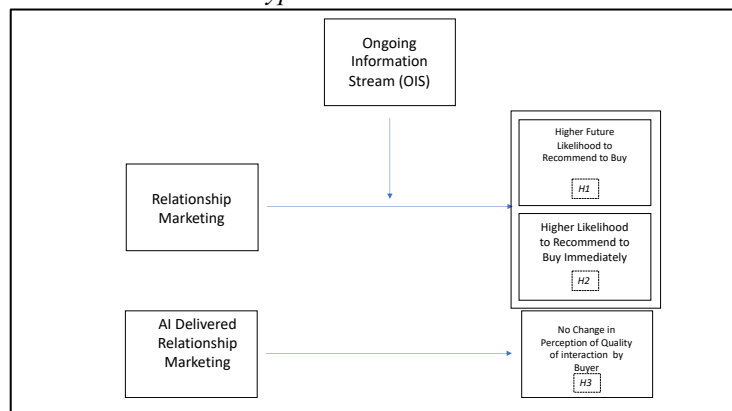
Methods

This section provides information related to the methodology used in testing the hypotheses. First explored is the study design, then participant selection criteria and sources for identifying participants. Next, the study elaborates on actions taken to ensure the power of the study, pre-testing for a control group, and reduction of invalid responses. This section also

explores the scales used in measuring the variables of perceived expertise, relationship, trust, and reduced uncertainty. Last, there is discussion of the measures for the remaining quantitative variables and the design and use of qualitative measures.

Study Design and Participant Selection

To test the hypotheses, a sample of 400 buyers was recruited from across a wide range of industries (see Figure 3). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics website, there are 407,410 buyers employed in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, nd). For a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence interval, the study estimated needing at least 384 total responses. To obtain a volume of respondents large enough to represent that minimum reliable sample size, the study engaged CINT, a market research company that recruits highly reliable buyer audiences across multiple industries for research and survey purposes. This study hypothesized that relationship development that ultimately leads to a differential in decision making is more likely to be present in non-commodity buying situations, where the product purchase is important to the operations of the company, and where there is some complexity beyond basic product attributes. As a result, the study recruited respondents who are buyers, decision makers, or recommenders, and who are more likely to consider utilizing strategic sourcing principles. See Figures 3,4,5,6,and 7 for details describing the buyer population.

Figure 3

Study participants by industry and Purchasing Responsibility[1]

Industry	%
Healthcare	12.61%
Information Technology/IT	12.61%
Education	9.62%
Banking/Financial	8.32%
Manufacturing	5.59%
Accounting	4.42%
Human Resources	3.64%
Not listed here	3.64%
Insurance	3.51%
Energy/Utilities/Oil and Gas	2.73%
Transportation	2.60%
Government/Public Sector	2.47%
Consulting	2.21%
Legal/Law	2.08%
Computer Reseller (software/hardware)	1.95%
Engineering	1.95%
Media / Entertainment	1.95%
Advertising	1.82%
Bio-Tech	1.82%
Computer Hardware	1.69%
Marketing	1.69%
Retail	1.69%
Market Research	1.30%
Telecommunications	1.30%
Real Estate/Property	1.17%
Aviation	1.04%
Brokerage	1.04%
Consumer Packaged Goods	0.91%
Internet	0.91%
Pharmaceuticals	0.65%
Consumer Electronics	0.52%
Environmental Services	0.52%
Total	100%

Purchasing Responsibility	%	Count
IT Hardware	29%	165
IT Software	33%	193
Printers, Copiers & Office Tech	21%	124
Financial	24%	141
Human Resources	18%	101
Food Services	7%	43
Telecommunications	14%	79
Sales	10%	55
Marketing/Advertising	13%	74
Security	13%	75
Auto Leasing / Purchasing	7%	42
Legal Services	9%	51
Operations	21%	121
Manufacturing	10%	57
Total	100%	577

[1] Representative of total participants, and not post screening participants

Figure 4
Gender of study participants
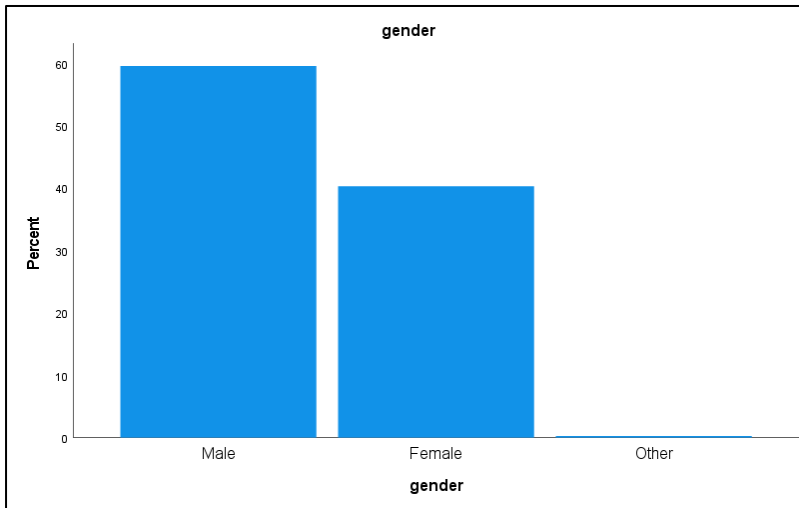
Figure 5
Study participant's response to whether they make ongoing or one time purchases
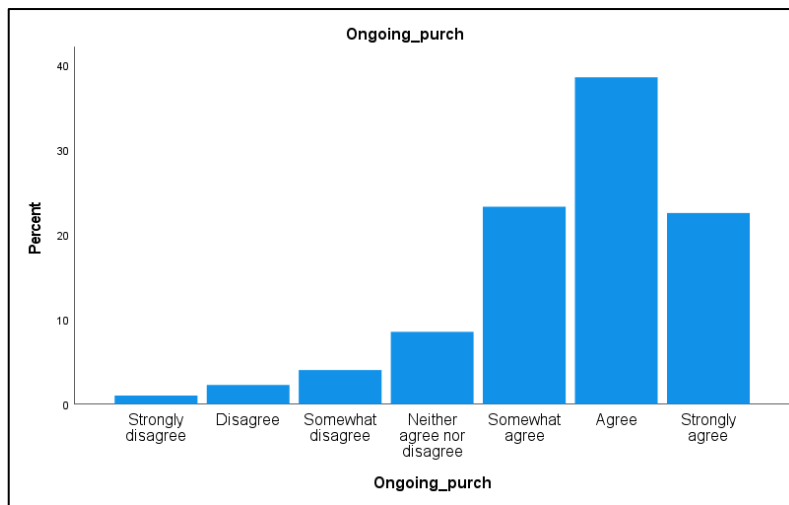
Figure 6
Study participants typical purchase authority amount
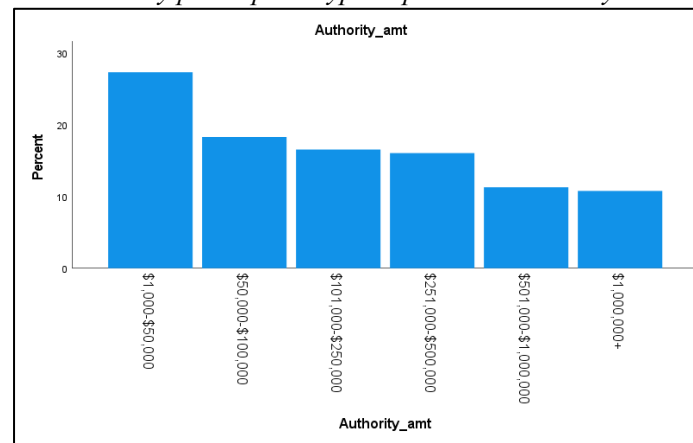
Figure 7
Study participants by whether they make independent or team based recommendations
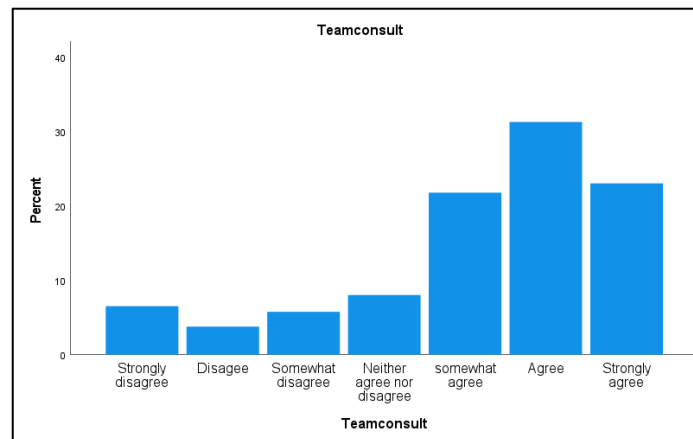
The study preselected participants whose industry and buying responsibilities reflected that would have buyer and/or recommender responsibility for products that typically can be strategically important to an organization, and generally require some thought before purchasing. Via advance demographic profiles available from our market research company, we were able to narrow down categories of buying responsibility and only deliver our survey to those who generally fit the needed respondent profile. As a further in-survey screening step, any participants who did not meet the required advance qualifications in the initial demographics

portion of the survey were screened out of the survey, and no responses were recorded for them. The study chose buyers whose responsibility included areas that typically require a more complex decision making, like those that represent IT Hardware, IT Software, Printers and copiers, Financial Department, Human Resources, Telecommunications, Sales, Legal services, and Marketing/Advertising. The study avoided participants from areas typically considered as low risk commodity buying areas. These low-risk-commodity buying areas are characterized by a saturated market and low dependence on a particular supplier, and buyers are largely just interested in maximizing profit of their organization (Autry, Williams, & Moncrief, 2013). To help achieve results representative of more complex sales, we eliminated buyers/decision makers/recommenders who have responsibility for things like Office supplies, Corporate travel, Shipping, Operations, Security, Food services, and auto leasing/purchasing – areas where it was possible that low risk commodity buying is more common and the purchase less strategic to the organization.

The study's market research partner, CINT, uses relevant ID and IP address checking to eliminate duplicate responses. They also use several checks to ensure pre-elimination of people who are not qualified to be filling out the survey. The study selected a market research firm due in hopes of a greater likelihood of obtaining a higher quality pool of respondents, quickly. The study did not choose to use other organizations, associations members for example, because of the greater likelihood of responses from these types of organization typically proving difficult to obtain in large enough numbers for validity and/or the possibility of ending up with a narrow pools of titles, industries, or responsibilities that might not be generalizable. Additionally, by using a research firm, the study was reasonably assured of avoiding any potential biases against

certain results related to protecting philosophies or goals of the organization they represent. The research firm has large pools of buyers already demographically profiled who are verified to be in the positions they report, and who are generally more willing to complete surveys due their pre-arranged relationship with these organizations. Respondents were paid a nominal fee by the market research firm for their participation in the survey. Wagner and Schubert (1976) found that rewards increased the likelihood of people to participate on a level other than pure volunteerism, and that representation would be obtained from a possibly smaller population. Participants in this study received a nominal fee that was paid to them directly from the market research firm.

Scales, Increasing Generalizability and Statistical Power

The study increased the statistical power and generalizability of the results by using previously tested scales, performing a pre-test, using an expert panel, randomizing scenarios to participants, reducing the incidence of invalid responses, using mixed methods, obtaining appropriate sample sizes, and using a cross-industry set of respondents. The specifics of those efforts are detailed in the next sections.

Study Design

In order to achieve responses from buyer/recommenders that reflected their response to very specific sales scenarios that reflected as close to a realistic scenario as possible, it was decided to use four scenarios where participants are randomly exposed to different conditions of an OIS. Figure 8 contains the conditions varied in each scenario

Figure 8
Conditions Varied In Scenarios

Scenario	Conditions Represented
1	Control, No OIS, AI
2	Condition of OIS Present, AI
3	Condition of OIS Present, with objective material, Senior Sales Rep Switch
4	Condition of OIS Present, Immediate Purchase, AI

Scales

To support validity and reliability, scales for measuring the variables of perceived expertise, relationship, trust, and reduced uncertainty were adapted from already validated scales from studies that measured that variable in as similar context as possible. See figure 11 for questions where existing scales were leveraged. Slight modifications in wording were made to fit into the context of this study, but the original intent of the questions was retained. Of particular note is the scale that was adapted for determining the presence of relationship marketing. The study was challenged to find a measure for the existence of relationship marketing presence from the perspective of the buyer/recommender. To solve for this challenge, two question sets were adapted from Palmatier et al's 2008 study of the factors affecting relationship marketing in business to business transactions. The scales measuring Relationship Orientation (RO) and relationship marketing activities were used as a proxy for an indication of the perception of the existence of relationship marketing by the buyer/recommender. Additionally, Palmatier indicated in his research that it was possible to change these questions from the seller to buyer perspective. As a result, four of the questions were changed to indicate a buyer's perspective, but otherwise left the same. The justification for using just those two question groups was that the combination

of measurement of relationship marketing presence (which speaks for itself) and the measurement of RO, which has been shown by the same study to modify the effectiveness of relationship marketing, would additionally validate the presence of RM. Altogether, nine questions were used to evaluate the presence of relationship marketing.

For the remaining variables, questions were created to elicit the simple response needed. A 7-point Likert scale was used to log participant responses for those questions. All questions were asked in each of the four scenarios randomly presented to the participants. The participants were randomized into different scenarios via the randomizer tool in Qualtrics. Appendix I lists the set up and scenarios that were be provided to each respective participant group, and Appendix II lists the questions used.

Generalizability

For generalizable validity across multiple industries the study sought high numbers of high-quality individuals, who were more likely to quickly and reliably respond to surveys. Using our market research company, the study recruited at least 100 respondents per scenario. Using the rule of thumb that Sekaran and Bougie (2016) adapted from Roscoe (1975), a sample size of between 30 and 500, several times the number of variables, and no smaller than 10 to 20, should be enough to establish generalizability for each category. The study ended up with a total of 579 participants, which were reduced down to 100 participants for each scenario.

Pre-test and Expert Panel

To test the hypotheses, the study ran a pre-test survey with 20 randomly assigned decision maker/buyers from across multiple industries. Once the pre-test was completed, an expert panel consisting of 2 practicing buyer/decision makers and 3 sales and marketing professionals were asked to review the survey and answer some basic questions about whether the survey flow and scenarios made sense and the general user experience of taking it. Feedback from the pre-test experience and expert panel was incorporated into modifying the survey.

Reducing Invalid Responses

The study made a conscious effort to reduce the incidence of potentially invalid responses, defined by content response faking, where responses are influenced by content but not completely accurate, and/or inattentive or careless responding where participants choose answers without regard to the context (Mead & Craig, 2012). The provider of our survey participants does some vetting of candidates to make sure they are legitimately in their role and are reliable survey participants. The study also included some instructional manipulation checks (IMC's) to ensure participants are who they say they are and have consciously and diligently completed the survey. This helped increase the statistical power of the study and reduced noise (Oppenheimer, Meyvis & Davidenko, 2009). This study used checks related to time to complete, demographic questions about their role, and at least one manipulation check in each of the scenarios provided, as well as at the end of the survey.

Mixed Methods

To ensure the study has captured the embedded processes that may be present in participants decision making, and understand possible illogical behaviors, the decision was made

to include an additional qualitative response section for each question group (Barbour, 2014). It is anticipated that in some cases the qualitative response section could elicit contradictory responses. This is an artificially created scenario, and the extra insights these possibly contradictory answers will provide will help the study in "unpicking…the circumstances or situations that may cause them to shift perspectives, and the contexts or settings in which they are likely to espouse different attitudes." (p.23). An a priori coding scheme was developed and can be found in Figure 10. Once collected, the qualitative results were coded for common groupings of responses, and numerically classified for analysis. For answers that did not fit within the a priori developed codes, new codes were be developed inductively. The results add background to the findings of the study.

Figure 10
A Priori Coding Scheme

Anticipated Categories of Responses
Seller Decision Choice
1. Not enough info to base a decision
2. Worked with what I had
3. Rewarded effort – seller worked for it
4. No clear choice
5. Demonstrated trust/reliability
AI
1. Ambivalence
2. Anti-AI
3. Practical (as long as I get what I need)
4. Split
5. Don't know

Participants

After the pre-test, the survey was made available to a population of buyer/decisions makers/recommenders from across multiple industries. 579 total participants accessed the survey. There were 148 responses that were 'screened' early, due to not having industry or purchasing experience. After initial screening and non-completes were eliminated, 110 participants were randomized into control Scenario 1, 109 participants into Scenario 2, 106 into

Scenario 3, 104 into Scenario 4. The 'Select Random Cases' function in SPSS was used to select just 100 participants for each scenario, to create a total sample of 400 participants, with 100 participants in each scenario. (See Figure 9)

Figure 9
Study Participants

Total Study Participants	579
Screened Participants	150
Total Scenario Participants	
Scenario 1	110
Scenario 2	109
Scenario 3	106
Scenario 4	104
100 randomly selected from each total scenario participants was used to obtain equal sample sizes for statistical tests	

All of the scenarios that participants were randomized into, included a small amount of information on the product they are buying, and buyers/decision maker/recommender experience to date with the seller. The importance and cost of the product was represented as significant to their budget and operating environment.

Analysis

To analyze the results of the survey, all results were compiled and downloaded to Excel from Qualtrics. After an initial review of the data to ensure completeness, the data was transferred to Tableau Prep software for initial cleaning and formatting of the data. Once initial formatting and cleaning was complete, an output file was generated to upload into SPSS. In SPSS, the data was graphed and analyzed for sources of bias, then reverse coding was accommodated, and all multi-item responses tested for Cronbach's alpha reliability. See figure 11 for alpha reliability, means, standard deviations, and scales used. Multi-items responses were then formed into variable constructs. To reduce Type I errors, a higher alpha reliability was

sought for each question set. To achieve an acceptable internal consistency rating, a Cronbach's

Alpha Reliability rating of at least .70 or above (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016, p.290) was sought.

All multi-item constructs used in the study achieved over .70 Alpha reliability.

Data was checked for kurtosis and skewness. No Kurtosis higher than 1.9 was observed.

No negative values greater than -1 was observed. The standard error of kurtosis was .238.

Skewness was observed, but at no level greater than 1.1. std error.

Due to the study design where differences are measured across an independent variable

and a covariate for between-group means of the four scenarios (fixed factors), it was determined

the best method for analysis would be ANCOVA (Field, 2018, p.425). The GLM function in

SPSS was used to study differences in the means between groups for all hypotheses. Figure 12

displays their resulting means and standard deviations across the entire sample.

SPSS was used to analyze the variables used in the comparison between groups for

Pearson's correlations. See correlation tables in Figure 13 for results.

The qualitative questions where buyers were asked to explain their recommendation to

buy decision, and their comfort level with AI were analyzed and coded into sets of the a priori

categories of answers, and several new categories were also derived inductively. See Figure 14

for results.

Figure 11

Variables, Scales, Means, SD, and Reliability

Variable Name	Alpha Reliability	Response Scale	Mean/ SD	Definition	Example Items	Source	Adopted or Adapted?
Strategic Sourcing	N/A	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.67/1.24	Developing a clear understanding of internal objectives, external environmental factors affecting the supply chain, and a robust understanding of potential suppliers and their strengths and weaknesses, and developing relationships with suppliers.	I practice strategic sourcing principles	Created	Created
Buy From Last Contact	N/A	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	4.50/1.79	N/A	I often recommend or buy from the last one who contacted me.	Created	Created
Burnout	0.86	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = never to 7 = every day	3.86 / 1.68	''feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources'' (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005, p. 208),"	I feel emotionally drained from my work	Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1996). The Maslach Burnout Inventory general survey. In C. Maslach, S. E. Jackson, q& M. P. Leiter (Eds.), MBI manual (3rd ed.). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.	Adapted, only took 3 items
Likelihood to Recommend	N/A	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.01/1.58	N/A	Indicate your likelihood to recommend to buy from this seller in the future.	N/A	Created
Relationship Marketing Presence	0.85	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.25 / .95	"Desire to engage in a strong relationship with a current or potential partner to conduct a specific exchange."	This business transaction requires a close relationship between me and this salesperson to ensure its success	Palmatier, R. W., Scheer, L. K., Evans, K. R., & Arnold, T. J. (2008). Achieving relationship marketing effectiveness in business-to-business exchanges. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 36(2), 174–190	Adopted/adapted (last 4 were modified from seller to buyer perspective per authors indication that was possible)
Relationship	0.91	Needs Improvement to outstanding?	5.30/1.12	"relationship building performance with customers is the extent to which the salesperson performs activities that cultivate a relationship that mutually benefits the selling and buying firms."	I feel the salesperson listens attentively to identify and understand my real concerns	Rocco, Richard A, and Alan J Bush. "Exploring Buyer-Seller Dyadic Perceptions of Technology and Relationships: Implications for Sales 2.0." Journal of research in interactive marketing 10.1 (2016): 17–32., and Hunter, G. K., & Perreault, W. D. (2007). Making Sales Technology Effective. Journal of Marketing,	Adapted by Rocco & Bush from Hunter & Perrault, then slightly adjusted by this study.
Residual Uncertainty	0.77		2.69/1.16	"Information sufficiency and the ability to make judgments and predictions about the outcome of the supplier selection decision"	I was confident that I was making the right choice	Riedl, D. F., Kaufmann, L., Zimmermann, C., & Perols, J. L. (2013). Reducing uncertainty in supplier selection decisions: Antecedents and outcomes of procedural rationality. Journal of Operations Management, 31(1–2), 24–36.	Adapted from Riedl et al, 2012, who adapted it from Dean and Sharfman (1993), Gao et al. (2005), and Kohli (1989).
Decision Making Uncertainty	0.71	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	3.55/0.79	"Supplier selection uncertainty is defined as decision-makers' perceived difficulty in predicting the outcomes with respect to supplier performance"	I had limited amount of information about the likely outcomes of buying from this supplier	Gao, T., Sirgy, M. J., & Bird, M. M. (2005). Reducing buyer decision-making uncertainty in organizational purchasing: Can supplier trust, commitment, and dependence help? *Journal of Business Research*, 58(4), 397–405.	Adopted from Gao et al. (2005), and Kohli (1989), changed to seven point in survey, back to five for analysis. Modified to 7- point scale.
Company Expertise	0.91	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.33/1.17	Company/representatives capacity to deliver competent performance	The company has great expertise	Belonax, J. J., Newell, S. J., & Plank, R. E. (2007). The Role of Purchase Importance on Buyer Perceptions of the Trust and Expertise Components of Supplier and Salesperson Credibility in Business-to-Business Relationships. The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27(3), 247–258.	Adapted to a 7 point Likert anchored in strongly agree to strongly disagree
Salesperson Expertise	0.88	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.5/1.15	Company/representatives capacity to deliver competent performance	The seller was knowledgeable	Belonax, J. J., Newell, S. J., & Plank, R. E. (2007). The Role of Purchase Importance on Buyer Perceptions of the Trust and Expertise Components of Supplier and Salesperson Credibility in Business-to-Business Relationships. The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27(3), 247–258.	Adapted to a 7 point likert anchored in strongly agree to strongly disagree
Salesperson Trust	0.91	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.43/1.23	The buyers perception of reliability and integrity of the salesperson/company	Based on what you know of the seller indicate your level of agreement using the preface "the seller is..."	Belonax, J. J., Newell, S. J., & Plank, R. E. (2007). The Role of Purchase Importance on Buyer Perceptions of the Trust and Expertise Components of Supplier and Salesperson Credibility in Business-to-Business Relationships. The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27(3), 247–258.	Adopted
Company Trust	0.93	1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree	5.33/1.20	The buyers perception of reliability and integrity of the salesperson/company	I trust the company	Belonax, J. J., Newell, S. J., & Plank, R. E. (2007). The Role of Purchase Importance on Buyer Perceptions of the Trust and Expertise Components of Supplier and Salesperson Credibility in Business-to-Business Relationships. The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, 27(3), 247–258.	Adopted
AI/Rep Comfort Change		1-7 Likert Scale from 1 = definitely yes to 7 = definitely not	2.48/1.17	N/A	Does the use of AI driven messaging change your decision at all	Created	Created

Figure 12

Means and Standard Deviations

Descriptive Statistics	All Scenarios				Scenario 1				Scenario 2				Scenario 3				Scenario 4			
	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rec_tospend_doll	400	2000	$ 107,660	$ 52,872	100	2000	$ 98,280	$54,861	100	8000	$ 105,160	$ 50,067	100	2000	$ 107,820	$ 53,697	100	10000	$119,380	$ 51,311
Strat_Source	400	1	5.67	1.24	100	1	5.46	1.39	100	1	5.80	1.21	100	1	5.70	1.12	100	2	5.70	1.21
lklhd_Rec_tobuy	400	1	5.01	1.58	100	1	4.86	1.48	100	1	4.99	1.67	100	1	4.94	1.56	100	1	5.25	1.59
Burnout_C	400	1.00	3.84	1.70	100	1.00	3.77	1.71	100	1.00	4.07	1.76	100	1.00	3.84	1.62	100	1.00	3.69	1.69
Relshp_C	400	1.00	5.41	1.10	100	1.00	5.37	1.14	100	2.60	5.47	1.06	100	2.00	5.30	1.08	100	2.00	5.48	1.13
DMU_Gao_C	400	1.00	3.53	0.78	100	1.00	3.52	0.74	100	1.67	3.59	0.78	100	1.50	3.45	0.76	100	1.67	3.57	0.85
Residunc_Reidl_C	400	1.00	2.69	1.15	100	1.00	2.80	1.21	100	1.00	2.69	1.12	100	1.00	2.69	1.03	100	1.00	2.57	1.24
Co_Exp_C	400	1.00	5.33	1.16	100	1.00	5.17	1.22	100	3.00	5.46	1.09	100	2.33	5.27	1.08	100	2.00	5.41	1.25
Sales_exp_C	400	1.00	5.52	1.14	100	1.00	5.34	1.25	100	2.00	5.55	1.10	100	2.33	5.57	1.06	100	2.00	5.61	1.12
Sale_trust_C	400	1.00	5.45	1.21	100	1.00	5.37	1.22	100	3.00	5.53	1.13	100	1.00	5.36	1.31	100	1.67	5.55	1.18
Co_trust_C	400	1.00	5.38	1.18	100	1.00	5.23	1.26	100	2.50	5.50	1.06	100	1.50	5.38	1.18	100	1.75	5.43	1.22
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	400	1.67	5.27	0.94	100	1.67	5.14	1.00	100	3.22	5.37	0.87	100	2.89	5.24	0.95	100	2.11	5.31	0.92

Figure 13
Correlations For Entire Sample & Each Scenario

Correlations[b]		Rec_tospend_doll	Strat_Source	Last_buy2_lastcontact	lklhd_Rec_tobuy	Burnout_C	Relshp_C	DMU_Gao_C	Residunc_Reidl_C	Co_Exp_C	Sales_exp_C	Sale_trust_C	Co_trust_C	Rel_mktng_pres_C3
Rec_tospend_doll	Pearson Correlation	--												
Strat_Source	Pearson Correlation	.167**	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001												
Last_buy2_lastcontact	Pearson Correlation	.394**	.189**	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000											
lklhd_Rec_tobuy	Pearson Correlation	.409**	.367**	.239**	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000										
Burnout_C	Pearson Correlation	.221**	0.043	.290**	0.069	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.390	0.000	0.168									
Relshp_C	Pearson Correlation	.405**	.421**	.341**	.595**	0.056	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.266								
DMU_Gao_C	Pearson Correlation	.219**	.273**	.499**	.191**	.248**	.317**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000							
Residunc_Reidl_C	Pearson Correlation	-.408**	-.362**	-.441**	-.470**	-0.074	-.744**	-.381**	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.138	0.000	0.000						
Co_Exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.497**	.343**	.407**	.525**	0.091	.791**	.301**	-.687**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.069	0.000	0.000	0.000					
Sales_exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.401**	.402**	.309**	.534**	0.024	.807**	.254**	-.687**	.809**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.628	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000				
Sale_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.443**	.367**	.343**	.517**	0.087	.782**	.253**	-.650**	.792**	.768**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000			
Co_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.480**	.357**	.402**	.506**	0.063	.750**	.303**	-.707**	.828**	.770**	.854**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.210	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	Pearson Correlation	.335**	.418**	.290**	.532**	0.041	.763**	.266**	-.634**	.670**	.712**	.666**	.639**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.415	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
b. Listwise N=400

Scenario 1 Correlations[c]

		Rec_tospend_doll	Strat_Source	Last_buy2_lastcontact	likhd_Rec_tobuy	Burnout_C	Relshp_C	DMU_Gao_C	Residunc_Reidl_C	Co_Exp_C	Sales_exp_C	Sale_trust_C	Co_trust_C	Rel_mktng_pres_C3
Rec_tospend_doll	Pearson Correlation	--												
Strat_Source	Pearson Correlation	.111	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.273												
Last_buy2_lastcontact	Pearson Correlation	.457**	.148	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.141											
likhd_Rec_tobuy	Pearson Correlation	.340**	.492**	.267**	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.007										
Burnout_C	Pearson Correlation	.244*	.131	.252*	.278**	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.195	.011	.005									
Relshp_C	Pearson Correlation	.378**	.440**	.304**	.545**	.194	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	.000	.053								
DMU_Gao_C	Pearson Correlation	.230*	.345**	.387**	.379**	.291**	.343**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.000	.000	.000	.003	.000							
Residunc_Reidl_C	Pearson Correlation	-.340**	-.401**	-.442**	-.482**	-0.193	-.757**	-.413**	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.054	.000	.000						
Co_Exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.494**	.335**	.444**	.536**	.245*	.796**	.320**	-.718**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.014	.000	.001	.000					
Sales_exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.386**	.378**	.361**	.538**	.175	.852**	.318**	-.798**	.838**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.081	.000	.001	.000	.000				
Sale_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.415**	.340**	.397**	.485**	.116	.826**	.305**	-.716**	.809**	.755**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000	.250	.000	.002	.000	.000	.000			
Co_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.480**	.428**	.451**	.498**	.153	.774**	.379**	-.770**	.837**	.804**	.869**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.129	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	Pearson Correlation	.445**	.350**	.314**	.463**	.173	.768**	.263**	-.717**	.668**	.757**	.699**	.688**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001	.000	.086	.000	.008	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
c. Listwise N=100

Scenario 2 Correlations[c]

		Rec_tospend_doll	Strat_Source	Last_buy2_lastcontact	likhd_Rec_tobuy	Burnout_C	Relshp_C	DMU_Gao_C	Residunc_Reidl_C	Co_Exp_C	Sales_exp_C	Sale_trust_C	Co_trust_C	Rel_mktng_pres_C3
Rec_tospend_doll	Pearson Correlation	--												
Strat_Source	Pearson Correlation	.252*	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011												
Last_buy2_lastcontact	Pearson Correlation	.447**	.231*	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.021											
likhd_Rec_tobuy	Pearson Correlation	.400**	.427**	.274**	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.006										
Burnout_C	Pearson Correlation	.157	.026	.325**	-0.077	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.120	.798	.001	.449									
Relshp_C	Pearson Correlation	.334**	.406**	.353**	.613**	-0.079	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000	.000	.432								
DMU_Gao_C	Pearson Correlation	.233*	.239*	.532**	.217*	.176	.315**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.020	.016	.000	.030	.080	.001							
Residunc_Reidl_C	Pearson Correlation	-.428**	-.377**	-.491**	-.433**	-0.006	-.698**	-.419**	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.949	.000	.000						
Co_Exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.488**	.300**	.321**	.511**	-0.043	.743**	.241*	-.613**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.002	.001	.000	.670	.000	.016	.000					
Sales_exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.377**	.422**	.214*	.463**	-0.084	.710**	.215*	-.555**	.743**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.032	.000	.405	.000	.032	.000	.000				
Sale_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.379**	.325**	.237*	.448**	-0.011	.722**	.256*	-.587**	.768**	.810**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.018	.000	.911	.000	.010	.000	.000	.000			
Co_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.455**	.243*	.303**	.515**	-0.035	.703**	.247*	-.623**	.772**	.724**	.840**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.015	.002	.000	.732	.000	.013	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	Pearson Correlation	.182	.512**	.249*	.603**	-0.101	.722**	.288**	-.549**	.559**	.598**	.606**	.504**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.070	.000	.013	.000	.315	.000	.004	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
c. Listwise N=100

Scenario 3 Correlations[c]

		Rec_tospend_doll	Strat_Source	Last_buy2_lastcontact	likhd_Rec_tobuy	Burnout_C	Relshp_C	DMU_Gao_C	Residunc_Reidl_C	Co_Exp_C	Sales_exp_C	Sale_trust_C	Co_trust_C	Rel_mktng_pres_C3
Rec_tospend_doll	Pearson Correlation	--												
Strat_Source	Pearson Correlation	0.066	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.514												
Last_buy2_lastcontact	Pearson Correlation	.371**	0.195	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.052											
likhd_Rec_tobuy	Pearson Correlation	.534**	.255*	0.161	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.010	0.108										
Burnout_C	Pearson Correlation	.207*	0.050	0.177	0.144	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.039	0.618	0.078	0.152									
Relshp_C	Pearson Correlation	.481**	.363**	.329**	.820**	0.092	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	0.001	.000	0.364								
DMU_Gao_C	Pearson Correlation	.311**	.219*	.496**	0.104	.316**	.283**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.029	.000	0.304	0.001	0.004							
Residunc_Reidl_C	Pearson Correlation	-.434**	-.313**	-.434**	-.486**	0.024	-.738**	-.347**	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.002	.000	.000	0.812	.000	.000						
Co_Exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.498**	.268**	.395**	.476**	0.013	.802**	.294**	-.797**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.007	.000	.000	0.896	.000	0.003	.000					
Sales_exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.415**	.384**	.309**	.572**	-0.009	.843**	0.184	-.750**	.825**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	0.002	.000	0.932	.000	0.066	.000	.000				
Sale_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.451**	.290**	.306**	.563**	0.148	.775**	0.183	-.639**	.743**	.749**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.003	0.002	.000	0.141	.000	0.069	.000	.000	.000			
Co_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.404**	.262**	.360**	.479**	-0.025	.720**	.213*	-.721**	.798**	.743**	.833**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.009	.000	.000	0.804	.000	0.034	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	Pearson Correlation	.361**	.490**	.276**	.549**	0.045	.794**	.197*	-.623**	.694**	.746**	.675**	.616**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	0.005	.000	0.656	.000	0.050	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
c. Listwise N=100

Scenario 4 Correlations[c]

		Rec_tospend_doll	Strat_Source	Last_buy2_lastcontact	likhd_Rec_tobuy	Burnout_C	Relshp_C	DMU_Gao_C	Residunc_Reidl_C	Co_Exp_C	Sales_exp_C	Sale_trust_C	Co_trust_C	Rel_mktng_pres_C3
Rec_tospend_doll	Pearson Correlation	--												
Strat_Source	Pearson Correlation	.232*	--											
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.020												
Last_buy2_lastcontact	Pearson Correlation	.306**	0.178	--										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.076											
likhd_Rec_tobuy	Pearson Correlation	.336**	.276**	.245*	--									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.001	0.005	0.014										
Burnout_C	Pearson Correlation	.311**	-0.066	.391**	-0.026	--								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.516	.000	0.797									
Relshp_C	Pearson Correlation	.427**	.470**	.386**	.606**	0.012	--							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	0.906								
DMU_Gao_C	Pearson Correlation	0.116	.282**	.581**	0.085	.222*	.314**	--						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.250	0.005	.000	0.400	0.027	0.001							
Residunc_Reidl_C	Pearson Correlation	-.426**	-.337**	-.403**	-.476**	-0.106	-.781**	-.351**	--					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	0.001	.000	.000	0.294	.000	.000						
Co_Exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.506**	.432**	.456**	.572**	0.113	.818**	.330**	-.637**	--				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	0.262	.000	0.001	.000					
Sales_exp_C	Pearson Correlation	.405**	.409**	.338**	.574**	-0.008	.830**	.291**	-.632**	.827**	--			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	0.001	.000	0.935	.000	0.003	.000	.000				
Sale_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.523**	.519**	.434**	.570**	0.086	.802**	.266**	-.662**	.852**	.781**	--		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	0.395	.000	0.007	.000	.000	.000			
Co_trust_C	Pearson Correlation	.580**	.441**	.474**	.541**	0.126	.799**	.356**	-.705**	.888**	.796**	.883**	--	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	0.213	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000		
Rel_mktng_pres_C3	Pearson Correlation	.310**	.328**	.312**	.520**	0.015	.768**	.308**	-.633**	.736**	.732**	.673**	.709**	--
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002	0.001	0.002	.000	0.879	.000	0.002	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
c. Listwise N=100

Results

Quantitative Results

The results of the tests of the hypotheses were obtained by running an ANCOVA analysis using the GLM function in SPSS. Testing showed that for the hypothesis H1a, the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's rating of Likelihood To

Recommend ($F(1,392) = 160.35$, $p = .000$, partial $n^2 = .29$). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the condition of presence of OIS in any variant, on Likelihood To Recommend after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, ($F(3,392) = 1.80$, $p = .15$, partial $n^2 = .014$).

In the testing of Hypothesis H1b, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's Recommend To Spend dollar amount allocation ($F(1,392) = 46.06$, $p = .000$, partial $n^2 = .11$). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the conditions of presence of any variant of OIS on Recommend To Spend dollar amount allocation after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence ($F(3,392) = 1.18$, $p = .316$, partial $n^2 = .01$).

In the testing of Hypothesis H1c, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's rating of Salesperson Trust ($F(1,392) = 307.00$, $p = .000$, partial $n^2 = .44$). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the conditions of presence of any variant of OIS on Salesperson Trust after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, ($F(3,392) = .34$, $p = .80$, partial $n^2 = .003$).

In testing Company Trust, the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's rating of Company Trust ($F(1,392) = 262.06$, $p = .000$, partial $n^2 = .401$). It was found that there was not a significant effect of the condition of presence of variants of OIS on Company Trust after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, ($F(3,392) = 1.88$ $p = .13$, partial $n^2 = .014$). Contrasts revealed that having the

condition of an OIS with objective material significantly decreased a buyer's rating of Company Trust compared to the control t(392)=-2.24, p=.03, partial n^2 = .013. Based on Cohen's (1988) rule for effect sizes, the effect size was small.

In the testing of Hypothesis H1d, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's rating of Salesperson Expertise (F(1,392) = 394.38, p = .000, partial n^2 = .50). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of condition of presence of any variant of OIS on Salesperson Expertise after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, (F(3,392) = ..86, p = ..46, partial n^2 = .007).

In testing Company Expertise, the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was found to be significantly related to a buyers rating of Company Expertise (F(1,392) = 312.95, p = .000, partial n^2 = .44). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of condition of presence of variants of OIS on Company Expertise after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, (F(3,392) = 1.70 p = .17, partial n^2 = .013). Contrasts revealed that having the condition of an OIS with objective material significantly decreased a buyer's rating of Company Expertise compared to the Condition of Presence of the OIS (t(392)=-2.18, p=.03, partial n^2 = .012). Based on Cohen's (1988) rule for effect sizes, the effect size was small.

In the testing of Hypothesis H1e, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Relationship (F(1,392) = 544.06, p = .000, partial n^2 = .58). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of condition of

presence of any variant of OIS on Relationship after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, $(F(3,392) = .16, p = .93$, partial $n^2 = .001)$.

In the testing of Hypothesis H1f, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Decision Making Uncertainty $(F(1,392) = 29.85, p = .00$, partial $n^2 = .07)$. It was also found that there was not a significant effect of condition of presence of any variant of OIS on Decision Making Uncertainty after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, $(F(3,392) = .49 \ p = .69$, partial $n^2 = .004)$.

In testing Residual Uncertainty, the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Residual Uncertainty $(F(1,392) = 258.90, p = .00$, partial $n^2 = .40)$. It was also found that there was not a significant effect of Condition of Presence Of Any Variant of OIS on Residual Uncertainty after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, $(F(3,392) = 1.03 \ p = .38$, partial $n^2 = .008)$.

In the testing of Hypothesis H1g, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Likelihood To Recommend $(F(1,196) = 98.40, p = .00$, partial $n^2 = .33)$. It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the condition of presence of an OIS with unbiased objective data on Likelihood to Buy after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, $(F(1,196) = 1.53 \ p = .22$, partial $n^2 = .008)$.

In the testing of Hypothesis H2a, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Likelihood To Recommend ($F(1,196)$ =91.53, p = .00, partial n^2 = .32). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the condition of presence of an OIS with an immediate purchase condition on Likelihood To Recommend after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, ($F(1,196)$ =1.54 p = .22, partial n^2 = .008).

In the testing of Hypothesis H2b, it was found that the covariate, Strategic Sourcing, was significantly related to a buyer's Likelihood To Recommend ($F(1,392)$ =57.51, p = .00, partial n^2 = .12). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of condition of presence of any variant of OIS on Likelihood To Recommend after controlling for the effect of Strategic Sourcing, $F(3,392)$ =.93 p = .43, partial n^2 = .007.

In the testing of Hypothesis H2c, it was found that the covariate, Relationship Marketing Presence, was significantly related to a buyer's ranking of Buy From Last Contact ($F(1,196)$ =16.55, p = .00, partial n^2 = .08). It was also found that there was not a significant effect of the condition of presence of any variant of OIS on Buy From Last Contact after controlling for the effect of Relationship Marketing Presence, ($F(1,196)$ =.04 p = .85, partial n^2 = .000).

In the testing of Hypothesis H3, it was found that there was a significant effect of condition of presence of any variant of OIS on AI/Rep Change Comfort, $F(3,396)$ =.4.76, p = .003, partial n^2 = .035. Contrasts revealed that having the condition of an OIS with Rep Change significantly increased buyer's rating of AI/Rep Change Comfort compared to the other

Conditions of Presence of the OIS (t(392)=3.41, p=.001, partial n^2 = .028). Based on Cohen's (1988) rule for effect sizes, the effect size was small.

Qualitative Results

Qualitative explanations to both the buying questions as well as the AI Comfort questions were coded, using the *a priori* deductively derived coding schemes, and non-answers were eliminated. This coding revealed the results found in Figures 14, 15, and 16. Of the 333 valid responses, the median answer for the seller choice was the statement 'Rewarded effort – seller worked for it'. This was also the majority answer, with 25% of the responses indicating that as their answer. In relation to AI/Rep Change Comfort, the median was the answer 'Practical (as long as I get what I need)', comprising 44% of valid answers.

Figure 14
Descriptive Statistics and Frequency Distributions of Explanation for 'Why Seller' and 'AI Comfort'

Statistics

		Dedcod_Why Seller	Dedcod_AI Comfort
N	Valid	333	333
	Missing	0	0
Mean		2.80	2.84
Median		3.00	3.00
Mode		3	3
Std. Deviation		1.429	0.970

Dedcod_Why Seller

	N	%
Not Enough Info	76	22.8%
Worked With What I Had	78	23.4%
Rewarded The Effort	86	25.8%
No Clear Choice	21	6.3%
Demonstrated Trust or Reliability	72	21.6%

Dedcod_AI Comfort

	N	%
Ambivalence	14	4.2%
Against It	114	34.2%
Practical	147	44.1%
Split	27	8.1%
Don't Know	31	9.3%

Figure 15

Frequency Distribution for 'Why Seller'
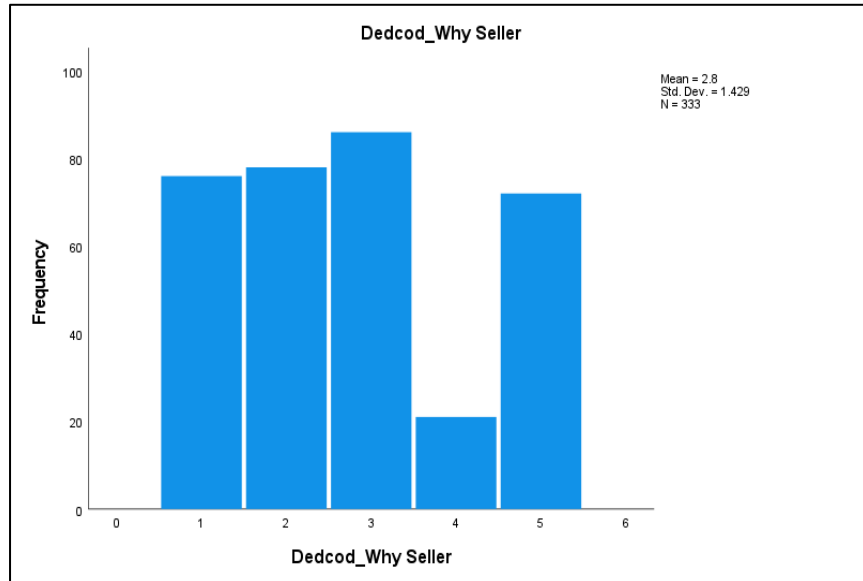
Figure 16
Frequency Distribution for 'AI/Rep Change Comfort'
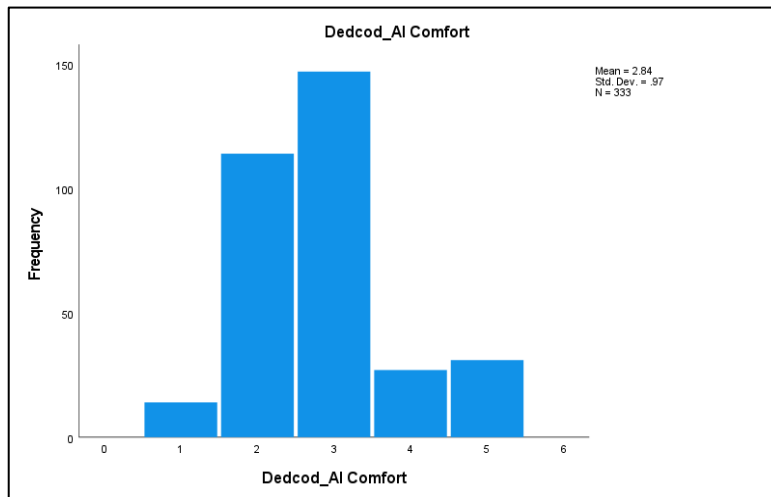
Discussion, Managerial Implications, Limitations, and Possibilities for Future Study

To the question posed by this study as to whether relevant information exchange by itself creates relationships that affect sales outcomes, the answer is no – or, at least not enough to show an effect. The role an OIS plays may be small, and in the chain of interactions comprising relationship marketing and sales interaction, it cannot be separated from its relationship with other activities that may influence the sale. This study was performed on a relatively large and diverse sample size of buyers, relative to other studies. However, the presence of multicollinearity was likely a strong factor in not being able to detect significance in the tests. The fact that the variables being tested showed high levels of correlation was an early indicator that the concept of OIS and the other variables tested may have been too closely related to identify the distinct impacts of each of them. For example, when a salesperson is using a 'drip campaign' to feed information to prospects, even though it may be part of a coordinated set of other sales activities, it is too hard to differentiate that from the larger relationship marketing category. There are likely other combinations of these same (or possibly different) components of the sales process that may more completely explain the buyer perceptions of seller behaviors that lead more directly to the end result of sales revenue. This section briefly discusses what was found as a result of this study, how these findings may affect management and sales practices, limitations to the study, and some possible opportunities for further investigation.

Discussion

When relationship marketing is being deployed at the salesperson level in the form of OIS, there was not a significant difference found between deploying the material and not deploying the material on the buyers Likelihood To Buy measurement, nor the Recommend To Spend dollar amount allocation. Additionally, the varied scenarios where an OIS was provided had no effect on seller or company trust, perception of expertise, relationship, or uncertainty. The mean dollars allocated to spend to the seller was roughly half the total amount possible, indicating that regardless of OIS, buyers still allocated about half the dollars to the sellers. It may be that buyers in this study lacked enough information, and simply allocated one-half of the money to mitigate their risk. It is also possible that the interactions described in the scenarios may have already created the necessary exchange relationship, trust, reduced uncertainty, seller trust, company trust, expertise, or relationship - which then made the OIS redundant to those factors. Said another way, relationship selling inherently involves keeping in touch, and it may not be possible to differentiate between the influences of all the different modalities of the performance of that 'keeping in touch' part of relationship building. It is also possible that other, unmeasured, factors may have been in play.

Company trust and company expertise were shown to have negative relationship with the scenario where objective material was deployed by the salesperson. However, the effect was small and as a result not enough evidence to say whether this is something to be recognized as generally true.

Under the OIS condition of immediate purchase, there was not an effect on the Likelihood To Recommend to buy in any the scenarios. There was also no significant difference of Likelihood To Recommend as a result of the behavior related to strategic sourcing or buying based on last contact from seller. This is possibly because there were unknown or unmeasured variables. It could also be that the idea of using strategic sourcing principles embraces the idea of relationship, and that the two are linked together. In other words, buyers practice relationship development as part of strategic sourcing, and strategic sourcing is likely a generally accepted practice for buyers. A buyer might not be swayed by an immediate condition of purchase, or of one instance of material being sent. They would react more strategically and with a long-term view. This idea is supported by the evaluation of qualitative information obtained from participants, where many indicated needing more information about the seller, and wanting a demonstration or more product information before a purchase.

In regards to whether AI/Rep Change Comfort will change the positive perception of the quality of an interaction by a buyer, there was indication of negative reaction to the idea of a switch in who they were dealing with – whether a machine or a person. When participants answered the question of "Does the use of AI driven messaging change your decision at all?" there was a mean response of 2.5, evenly between between 'probably yes' and 'might or might not'. More importantly, 78% of the cumulative answers were either neutral or negative (with majority falling negative) towards the idea of a representative change or finding out that their early interactions were AI driven before being replaced by a human should cause concern for those considering using AI. The qualitative results offer conflicting answers, as we see that almost as many people were against it, as had a practical reaction to it (34% to 44%). Sellers

using AI will want to be aware that, depending upon the context, their customers might react negatively to it if they find out afterwards. Further, the qualitative reactions were definitive, with statements like "I am more likely to interact and trust a person rather than AI" and "AI isn't as personal". In the sales world, where positive customer perception of your offering will mean the difference between sale and no sale, a seller will be best served by not inadvertently provoking a distinctly negative reaction to their interactions.

The lack of support for this study's hypotheses presents an interesting perspective into the aforementioned 11.2% of organizational revenues that are being spent on marketing. With large amounts of revenue going into relationship marketing, and B2b salespeople disseminating that information in direct appeals to clients, it prompts one to consider if this is an effective way to sway buyers. At the very least, the question is raised as to whether an OIS and/or relationship marketing are a significant part of why a buyer makes the decision they do. If it is not that, then it is something else. As mentioned previously, there are many theories related to trust and relationship that revolve around the question of what makes a buyer buy. However, this study finds that further work is needed to identify the nuances and direct connections between relationship marketing, sales deployment of that material, and the end result of a purchase.

Managerial Impact

This study opens up more questions for management about whether the common practice of a salesperson deploying information to their buyers has a return on the investment for the time and effort involved. Is sales deployed RM marketing needed to make a difference in a sale? Or, is there another more powerful combination of factors, that includes RM, and positively

influences the development of an exchange between buyer and seller. Sales Managers in B2B environments should be cautious in relying too heavily on deployed material to help influence buyer's perceptions of the product/service and firm. Since there is currently no definitive 'one thing' that influences the end sales outcomes, allocation of efforts across a range of relationship, trust, experience, and uncertainty reducing activities will likely yield positive effects. Further, the results related to strategic sourcing principles seem to indicate that regardless of the outcomes from this study, it may be a good idea for the sales team to be in touch with the principles of strategic sourcing. Knowing these principles will create a better understanding of the process of buying. That better understanding will potentially lead to more opportunities to participate in the buying process in a way that is appreciated and recognized by the buying organization. Qualitative results hinted at a buyer's appreciation of a seller staying within 'expected strategic sourcing boundaries', and the possibility of distrust forming when it was perceived that the seller was outside of that boundary. Practitioners should be sensitive that the deployment of information may have unwanted consequence if perceived as 'pushing information' versus attempting to be helpful.

Management will also be well served to pay attention to the use of AI and the changing in/out of sales representatives, which can have the potential to provoke negative perceptions, and thwart them in their pursuit of efficiently gained sales objectives. Qualitative results indicate almost as much of buyer discomfort as comfort. Until more is known, it may be best to proceed with caution, and limit the use of AI for customer interactions to scenarios where it is proven by customer sentiment to be accepted.

Limitations

This study had several known limitations. The first of those limitations being that the variables are closely related, and the study may not have used the right questions to tease out the significance of nuances between them. For example, the concept of OIS being a part of, or a subset of, relationship marketing meant it would be inherently hard to separate the two. Designing the scenarios around just relationship marketing and testing just relationship marketing as embodied by OIS would have possibly yielded more significant effects on the dependent variables.

Knowing the results from this study, a deeper exploration of the buyer thoughts behind the variables and scenarios may have yielded more significant results. Although this study strove to fill the gap in literature related to studies done from the buyer perspective of the sales process, the questions themselves were still very sales driven, and may not have resonated with the buyer participant's way of thinking. More careful thought in phrasing of the questions, and an expanded panel of buyer pre-test review experts would have likely yielded a more robust response from buyers.

Fourth, the use of a market research company to expediently obtain results also meant that the study was one step removed from the buyer participant selection process. We were blind to the selection of the sample until they encountered our screening criteria. The buyer sample we obtained was on the lower side of purchasing authority compared to what was expected. It is possible that although we achieved a large sample that represented a diverse set of industries and buying/recommending responsibility areas, it may not have attracted the right strategic buying

level to effectively evaluate the questions. Directly identifying or recruiting the buyers to participate in this study might have gotten to a diversely representative sample that better identified with the questions asked in this study.

The study could have pursued larger U.S. and international populations. Due to time constraints related to completion of the study, there was not time to adapt the survey and scenarios for global audiences and subsequently recruit international participants. Additionally, a larger sample could have been pursued within the United States, which might have facilitated responses from a potentially more diverse set of buyers with higher levels of responsibility.

Fifth, due to concerns about brevity and completion rates, the study had limits in terms of the information provided to the buyers in each scenario. The further delineation of differences by size of purchase, adding a choice between sellers, having pricing information, and deeper descriptions of the RM material they were receiving via the OIS may have resulted in different outcomes. Additionally, no information about product, relationship history, reputations, and related items that a buyer typically relies on for decision making were included in the scenarios.

Last, a different order of the questions might have elicited different responses. In the survey, the buyer was asked to make a decision first, then answer questions about relationship, trust and other variables. That sequence of completing the questions may have influenced the way they were answered. A redesigned order of the questions where the purchase decision is the last thing considered, may have yielded more definitive results.

Future Avenues For Research

First, although not part of the original hypotheses, this study did measure a buyers' level of Burnout as part of the demographic portion. When compared to scores for things like Relationship and Likelihood to Recommend, it was found that there was a small significant relationship between buyer levels of burnout and the OIS scenarios. Contrasts indicated a significant, but small, relationship between the control scenario and Likelihood to Recommend. A further avenue of study might explore the relationships between buyer choices when burnout is present, and when there is no clear differentiator between sellers.

Second, the qualitative results related to the buyers' explanations of their choices yielded some interesting results. For the question **"**Tell us briefly about any other considerations that you had thought about in making the decisions you made", several inductively derived themes became obvious. These themes were:

1. Wanting pricing/demonstration/services/feedback from other purchasers
2. Liked sales approach style
3. Tentative first investment in unknown seller
4. Distrust of approach/material

Further avenues for study might focus on exploring these themes further. All of these themes open up possible directions for future research around seller relationship marketing behavior and buyer decision reactions to that behavior. For example, there were a good number of comments related to wanting more information about pricing, service options, performance history, and demonstration opportunities. It would be interesting to delve further into a seller proactively providing a package of information that included all of these, plus what was previously provided, and whether that would somehow change outcomes more positively. On the

other side of this, there were a good number of indications of some sort of dislike and/or distrust of the approach related to sending emails and pushing information that was not requested. It seems from the qualitative reactions that some buyers view this as a detractor for the seller versus a benefit for their consideration. It would be interesting to further discover if that reaction was centered in a particular industry or product buying responsibility, and whether it occurred with greater frequency in certain scenarios or circumstances.

Third, negative reactions in the qualitative AI/Rep Change results merit further exploration, as there was an almost equal mix between negative and practical reactions, and many of the qualitative responses turned up some suspicion of the use of AI and Rep Change, while also having those who expressed appreciation of it. Sellers will need better information on buyer reactions to AI as usage of AI increases. Further, one of the scenarios in this study changed the dynamic slightly with a 'rep change', and that was found to be significantly related to a slightly more positive response than the AI scenarios. Although this study was not focused on the idea of analyzing prospective customer reactions to rep changes, there is definitely something there to explore further related to sales process and personnel changes.

Last, this study finds that further work is needed to identify the nuances and direct connections between relationship marketing, a salesperson's direct deployment of that material to a buyer, and sales outcomes. Perhaps elements of risk framing or social exchange may be more deeply embedded in the buyer seller relationship and need to be specifically pulled out both through improved scenario design and additional variables or measurements.

References

Ajzen, I. (2012). Martin Fishbein's Legacy: The Reasoned Action Approach. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *640*, 11–27. JSTOR.

Aldrich, H., & Herker, D. (1977). Boundary Spanning Roles and Organization Structure. *The Academy of Management Review*, *2*(2), 217–230. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/257905

André, Q., Carmon, Z., Wertenbroch, K., Crum, A., Douglas, F., Goldstein, W., Huber, J., Boven, L. van, Weber, B., & Yang, H. (2018). Consumer Choice and Autonomy in the Age of Artificial Intelligence and Big Data. *Customer Needs and Solutions; Shanghai*, *5*(1–2), 28–37. http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.depaul.edu/10.1007/s40547-017-0085-8

Arli, D., Bauer, C., & Palmatier, R. W. (2018). Relational selling: Past, present and future. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *69*, 169–184. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.07.018

Autry, C. W., Williams, M. R., & Moncrief, W. C. (2013). Improving Professional Selling Effectiveness Through the Alignment of Buyer and Seller Exchange Approaches. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *33*(2), 165–184. https://doi.org/10.2753/PSS0885-3134330202

Barbour, R. (2014). *Introducing qualitative research*. 55 City Road, London: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781526485045

Belonax, J. J., Newell, S. J., & Plank, R. E. (2007). The Role of Purchase Importance on Buyer Perceptions of the Trust and Expertise Components of Supplier and Salesperson Credibility in Business-to-Business Relationships. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *27*(3), 247–258.

Bendixen, M., & Abratt, R. (2007). Corporate Identity, Ethics and Reputation in Supplier-Buyer Relationships. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *76*(1), 69–82. Retrieved from JSTOR.

Blau, Peter Michael. Exchange and Power in Social Life. New York: J. Wiley, 1964. Print.

Carlile, P. R. (2002). A Pragmatic View of Knowledge and Boundaries: Boundary Objects in New Product Development. *Organization Science*, *13*(4), 442–455. JSTOR.

Cialdini, R. B., Wosinska, W., Barrett, D. W., Butner, J., & Gornik-Durose, M. (1999). Compliance with a Request in Two Cultures: The Differential Influence of Social Proof and Commitment/Consistency on Collectivists and Individualists. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*(10), 1242–1253. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167299258006

Cialdini, Robert B. Influence : Science and Practice . Fifth edition. Boston: Pearson Education, 2009. Print.

Cohen, J. (1988). Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences. New York, NY: Routledge Academic

Collins, R. H. (1984). Artificial Intelligence in Personal Selling. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *4*(1), 58–66. JSTOR.

Colquitt, J. A., Baer, M. D., Long, D. M., & Halvorsen-Ganepola, M. D. K. (2014). Scale indicators of social exchange relationships: A comparison of relative content validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *99*(4), 599–618. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036374

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social Exchange Theory: An Interdisciplinary Review. *Journal of Management*, *31*(6), 874–900. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602

Crosby, L. A., Evans, K. R., & Cowles, D. (1990). Relationship Quality in Services Selling: An Interpersonal Influence Perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, *54*(3), 68–81. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251817

Davenport, T., Guha, A., Grewal, D., & Bressgott, T. (2020). How artificial intelligence will change the future of marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*(1), 24–42. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00696-0

Delpechitre, D., Beeler-Connelly, L. L., & Chaker, N. N. (2018). Customer value co-creation behavior: A dyadic exploration of the influence of salesperson emotional intelligence on customer participation and citizenship behavior. *Journal of Business Research*, *92*, 9–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.05.007

De Wulf, K., Odekerken-Schröder, G., & Iacobucci, D. (2001). Investments in consumer relationships: A cross-country and cross-industry exploration. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, **65**, 33– 50.

Emerson, R. M. (1976). Social Exchange Theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *2*, 335–362. JSTOR.

Field, A. P., & Field, A. P. (2018). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*.

Fishbein, Martin, and leek Ajzen. 1975. *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

Fishbein, Martin, and leek Ajzen. 2010. *Predicting and changing behavior: The reasoned action approach*. New York, NY: Psychology Press

Formentini, M., Ellram, L. M., Boem, M., & Da Re, G. (2019). Finding true north: Design and implementation of a strategic sourcing framework. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *77*, 182–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2018.09.006

Gao, T., Sirgy, M. J., & Bird, M. M. (2005). Reducing buyer decision-making uncertainty in organizational purchasing: Can supplier trust, commitment, and dependence help? *Journal of Business Research*, *58*(4), 397–405. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00137-1

Gentsch, P. (2019). *AI in Marketing, Sales and Service: How Marketers without a Data Science Degree can use AI, Big Data and Bots*. Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89957-2

Gergen, K. J. (1969). *The psychology of behavior exchange*. Addison-Wesley.

Gopal, A., & Gosain, S. (2010). Research Note: The Role of Organizational Controls and Boundary Spanning in Software Development Outsourcing: Implications for Project Performance. *Information Systems Research*, *21*(4), 960–982. JSTOR.

Guenzi, P. (2002). Sales Force Activities and Customer Trust. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *18*(7–8), 749–778. https://doi.org/10.1362/0267257022780606

High Trust Selling. (2004). *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *21*(1), 75–76. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760410514030

Heide, J. B. (1994). Interorganizational Governance in Marketing Channels. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(1), 71–85.

Heide, J. B., A. M. Weiss. 1995. Vendor consideration and switching behavior for buyers in high-technology markets. J. Mark. 59(3): 30–43.

Hunter, G. K., & Perreault, W. D. (2007). Making Sales Technology Effective. *Journal of Marketing*, *71*(1), 16–34. JSTOR.

Hollebeek, L. D., & Macky, K. (2019). Digital Content Marketing's Role in Fostering Consumer Engagement, Trust, and Value: Framework, Fundamental Propositions, and Implications. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *45*, 27–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2018.07.003

Homans, George C. (1958), "Social Behavior as Exchange," American Journal of So- ciology, 63 (May), 597-606.

Hunter, G. K., & Perreault, W. D. (2007). Making Sales Technology Effective. *Journal of Marketing*, *71*(1), 16–34. JSTOR.

Ivens, Bjoern & Blois, Keith. (2004). Relational Exchange Norms in Marketing: A Critical Review of McNeil's Contribution. *Marketing Theory*. 4. 239-263. 10.1177/1470593104045603.

Iyer, G. R. 1996. Strategic decision making in industrial procurement: Implications for buying decision approaches and buyer- seller relationships. J. Bus. Ind. Mark. 11(3/4): 80–93.

Järvinen, J., & Taiminen, H. (2016). Harnessing marketing automation for B2B content marketing. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *54*, 164–175. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2015.07.002

Jiang, Z., Shiu, E., Henneberg, S., & Naude, P. (2016). Relationship Quality in Business to Business Relationships—Reviewing the Current Literatures and Proposing a New Measurement Model. *Psychology & Marketing*, *33*(4), 297–313. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20876

Joshi, A. W., & Stump, R. L. (2009). Determinants of Commitment and Opportunism: Integrating and Extending Insights from Transaction Cost Analysis and Relational Exchange Theory. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne Des Sciences de l'Administration*, *16*(4), 334–352. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1936-4490.1999.tb00693.x

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). On the interpretation of intuitive probability: A reply to Jonathan Cohen. *Cognition, 7*(4), 409–411. https://doi.org/10.1016/0010-0277(79)90024-6

Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk. *Econometrica*, *47*(2), 263–291. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1914185

Kim, T. W., & Duhachek, A. (2020). Artificial Intelligence and Persuasion: A Construal-Level Account. *Psychological Science*, *31*(4), 363–380. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620904985

Lambe, C. J., Wittmann, C. M., & Spekman, R. E. (2001). Social Exchange Theory and Research on Business-to-Business Relational Exchange. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing,* 8(3), 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1300/J033v08n03_01

Leuthesser, L. (1997). Supplier relational behavior: An empirical assessment. *Industrial Marketing Management*, **26**, 245– 254.

Levina, N., & Vaast, E. (2005). The Emergence of Boundary Spanning Competence in Practice: Implications for Implementation and Use of Information Systems. *MIS Quarterly*, *29*(2), 335–363. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/25148682

Liberali, G., Urban, G. L., & Hauser, J. R. (2013). Competitive information, trust, brand consideration and sales: Two field experiments. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *30*(2), 101–113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2012.07.002

Macneil, Ian R. The New Social Contract : an Inquiry into Modern Contractual Relations . New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980. Print.

Macneil, I. R. (1987). Relational Contract Theory as Sociology: A Reply to Professors Lindenberg and de Vos. Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics (JITE) / Zeitschrift Für Die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft, 143(2), 272–290. JSTOR.

Meade, A. W., & Craig, S. B. (2012). Identifying careless responses in survey data. *Psychological Methods*, *17*(3), 437–455. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028085

McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect- and Cognition-Based Trust as Foundations for Interpersonal Cooperation in Organizations. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *38*(1), 24–59. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/256727

Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(3), 20–38. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252308

O'Malley, L. (2014). Relational marketing: Development, debates and directions. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *30*(11–12), 1220–1238. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.939592

Oppenheimer, D. M., Meyvis, T., & Davidenko, N. (2009). Instructional manipulation checks: Detecting satisficing to increase statistical power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *45*(4), 867–872. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2009.03.009

Palmatier, R. W., Dant, R. P., Grewal, D., & Evans, K. R. (2006). Factors Influencing the Effectiveness of Relationship Marketing: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Marketing*, *70*(4), 136–153.

Palmatier, R. W., Scheer, L. K., Evans, K. R., & Arnold, T. J. (2008). Achieving relationship marketing effectiveness in business-to-business exchanges. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *36*(2), 174–190. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-007-0078-5

Palmatier, R. W., Scheer, L. K., Houston, M. B., Evans, K. R., & Gopalakrishna, S. (2007). Use of relationship marketing programs in building customer-salesperson and customer-firm relationships: Differential influences on financial outcomes. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, **24**, 210– 223.

Pemberton, Chris, 2018, 8 Top Findings in Gartner CMO Spend Survey 2018-19 [website], (https://www.gartner.com/en/marketing/insights/articles/8-top-findings-in-gartner-cmo-spend-survey-2018-19)

Ramsey, R. P., & Sohi, R. S. (1997). Listening to your customers: The impact of perceived salesperson listening behavior on relationship outcomes. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *25*(2), 127–137. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02894348

Ravi, S. (2011, August). What Is Drip Marketing. *Printing News; Melville*, *165*(8), 29.

Rauyruen, P., & Miller, K. E. (2007). Relationship quality as a predictor of B2B customer loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, **60**, 21– 31.

Rocco, Richard A, and Alan J Bush. "Exploring Buyer-Seller Dyadic Perceptions of Technology and Relationships: Implications for Sales 2.0*." Journal of research in interactive marketing* 10.1 (2016): 17–32. Web.

Roscoe, J.T. (1975). *Fundamentals Research Statistics for Behavioural Sciences.* (2nd.)

Schoenherr, T., & Mabert, V. A. (2011). An Exploratory Study of Procurement Strategies for Multi-Item RFQs in B2B Markets: Antecedents and Impact on Performance: Procurement Strategies for Multi-Item RFQs in B2B Markets. *Production and Operations Management*, *20*(2), 214–234. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1937-5956.2010.01175.x

Sánchez-Rodríguez, C. (2009). Effect of strategic purchasing on supplier development and performance: a structural model. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 24*, 161-172.

Sekaran, U., & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business: A skill building approach*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sin, L. Y. M., Tse, A. C. B., Yau, O. H. M., Lee, J. S. Y., & Chow, R. (2002). The effect of relationship marketing orientation on business performance in a service-oriented economy. *Journal of Services Marketing*, *16*(7), 656–676. https://doi.org/10.1108/08876040210447360

Smith, J. B., & Barclay, D. W. (1997). The Effects of Organizational Differences and Trust on the Effectiveness of Selling Partner Relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, *61*(1), 3–21. JSTOR. https://doi.org/10.2307/1252186

Sollish, F., Semanik, J., Sollish, C. P. M., Fred, & Semanik, J. (2011). *Strategic Global Sourcing Best Practices*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/depaul/detail.action?docID=644823

Star, S. L. (1989). Chapter 2 - The Structure of Ill-Structured Solutions: Boundary Objects and Heterogeneous Distributed Problem Solving. In L. Gasser & M. N. Huhns (Eds.), *Distributed Artificial Intelligence* (pp. 37–54). Morgan Kaufmann. https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-1-55860-092-8.50006-X

Steimle, J. (n.d.). What Is Content Marketing? Retrieved October 12, 2019, from Forbes website: https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshsteimle/2014/09/19/what-is-content-marketing/

Swan, J. E., Bowers, M. R., & Richardson, L. D. (n.d.). *Customer Trust in the Salesperson: An Integrative Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Literature*. 15.

Swan, J. E., & Nolan, J. J. (1985). Gaining Customer Trust: A Conceptual Guide for the Salesperson. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *5*(2), 39–48.

Swan, J. E., Trawick, I. F., Rink, D. R., & Roberts, J. J. (1988). Measuring Dimensions of Purchaser Trust of Industrial Salespeople. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *8*(1), 1–9.

Terho, Harri et al. "How Sales Strategy Translates into Performance: The Role of Salesperson Customer Orientation and Value-Based Selling." Industrial marketing management 45 (2015): 12–21. Web.

Terpend, R., & Ashenbaum, B. (2012). The Intersection of Power, Trust and Supplier Network Size: Implications for Supplier Performance. *Journal of Supply Chain Management*, *48*(3), 52–77. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-493X.2011.03261.x

The Content Marketing Institute. (nd) The definition of content marketing. Retrieved from https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, nd, retrieved from https://www.bls.gov/oes/2018/may/oes131020.htm

Vanneste, B. S., Puranam, P., & Kretschmer, T. (2014). Trust over time in exchange relationships: Meta-analysis and theory. *Strategic Management Journal*, *35*(12), 1891–1902. https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.2198

Verbeke, W., Dietz, B., & Verwaal, E. (2011). Drivers of sales performance: A contemporary meta-analysis. Have salespeople become knowledge brokers? *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *39*(3), 407–428. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-010-0211-8

What is Content Marketing? (n.d.). Retrieved October 12, 2019, from Content Marketing Institute website: https://contentmarketinginstitute.com/what-is-content-marketing/

Wagner, M. E., & Schubert, D. S. P. (1976). Increasing Volunteer Representativeness by Recruiting for Credit or Pay. *Journal of General Psychology*, *94*(1), 85. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221309.1976.9711593

Why Companies Should Consider Strategic Sourcing, (October 7, 2019), Retrieved from https://www.michiganstateuniversityonline.com/resources/supply-chain/why-companies-should-consider-strategic-sourcing/

Wood, J. A., Boles, J. S., & Babin, B. J. (2008). The Formation of Buyer's Trust of the Seller in an Initial Sales Encounter. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *16*(1), 27–39. Retrieved from JSTOR.

Wood, J. A., Boles, J. S., Johnston, W., & Bellenger, D. (2008). Buyers' Trust of the Salesperson: An Item-Level Meta-Analysis. *The Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *28*(3), 263–283.

Appendix I – Survey Introduction Text & Scenarios

<u>Common Introduction</u>:

Important Survey Scenario Background Information

The following information will serve as background for the scenario that you will be reviewing, and will be helpful to answering the subsequent questions. Please review this brief background description in preparation for reviewing the scenario and answering some questions about it afterwards.

Your role as a recommender

You are regularly tasked by your organization to recommend purchase of a product or service that your organization uses. Assume that the product or service you are recommending falls into one of the previous categories that you verified you had some responsibility over. This product or service represents a relatively complex purchase, it is a significant spend, and performance of this product or service could have some degree of unknown impact on your organizations performance in the segment it is used in, which could have an effect on expenses, revenue, and profit.

The product or service

This is not a commodity product/service, and each potential supplier may offer different options and features that could affects the end results of using the product/service within your organization.

About the recommender-seller interactions

Both the purchasers and sellers of this product desire an ongoing relationship between the organizations where the product/service is in use.

Assume that the scenario you will be exposed to fits into any typical process you might use to validate your recommendation choices. You have final say to recommend what is purchased based on your perceptions of the needs of your organization

Survey Scenarios

Scenario 1

Recommendation To Purchase Scenario You have received contact via email over the last few months from a salesperson introducing themselves. They have mentioned some key features of their product or service offering that are relevant to your use case and are offering to be a potential source should you need to purchase this particular product or service. You have exchanged several follow up questions about their product/service with the seller via email. You initially perceive them as reputable company, and they have represented their product well enough that you believe them to be a valid supplier of this product or service should you need it in the near future. You have not purchased from this supplier before, and they are not the only supplier of this product or service. As a last step, you met briefly with them (via phone, or video conference), asked them to keep in touch, and indicated that you will welcome any information that they choose to provide on an ongoing basis. Please answer the following questions based on this scenario:

Scenario 2

Recommendation to Purchase Scenario You have received contact via email over the last few months from a salesperson introducing themselves. They have mentioned some key features of their product or service offering that are relevant to your use case, and are offering to be a potential source should you need to purchase this particular product or service. You have exchanged several follow up questions about their product/service via email. You initially perceive them as a reputable company, and they have represented their product well enough that you believe them to be a valid supplier of this product or service should you need it in the near future. You have not purchased this supplier before, and they are not the only supplier of this product or service.
As a last step, you met briefly with them (via phone, or video conference) and asked them to keep in touch, and that you will welcome any information that they choose to provide on an ongoing basis.
The seller has followed up several times spaced out over a period of time by sending additional separate unsolicited emails with several pieces of informative, timely, and relatively objective material. Several of the pieces of information were helpful, but available to anyone who chose to look for them. All the pieces were informative, and positive towards the seller's offerings, but also could be perceived as relatively fair and objective. The pieces periodically referred to current customers using their product/service that you recognize as peer organizations. Please answer the following questions based on this scenario:

Scenario 3

Recommendation to Purchase Scenario You have received contact via email over the last few months from a salesperson introducing themselves. They have mentioned some key features of their product or service offering that are relevant to your use case and are offering to be a potential source should you need to purchase this particular product or service. You have exchanged several follow up questions about their product/service with the seller. You initially perceive them as a reputable company, and they have represented their product well enough that you believe them to be a valid supplier of this product or service should you need it in the near future. You have not purchased from this supplier before, and they are not the only supplier of this product or service. As a last step, you met briefly with them (via phone, or video conference) and asked them to keep in touch, and that you will welcome any information that they choose to provide on an ongoing basis.

The seller has followed up several times by sending separate unsolicited emails with several pieces of additional informative, timely, and relatively objective material. Several of the pieces of information were helpful, but available to anyone who chose to look for them. However, one of the information pieces was a study produced exclusively by a research company and would typically only be available to those who paid for it or had a license to use their studies for this purpose. That piece was an independently produced comparison of their product/service to other products/services – not all of which are slanted completely positively towards their product and had some fair critiques on the use of the product or service by an independent reviewer. The pieces periodically referred to current customers using their product/service that you recognize as peer organizations. Please answer the following questions based on this scenario:

Scenario 4

Recommendation to Purchase Scenario You have received contact via email over the last few months from a salesperson introducing themselves. They have mentioned some key features of their product or service offering that are relevant to your use case, and are offering to be a potential source should you need to purchase this particular product or service. You have exchanged several follow up questions about their product/service with the seller via email. You initially perceive them as a reputable company, and they have represented their product well enough that you believe them to be a valid supplier of this product or service should you need it in the near future. You have not purchased from this supplier before, and they are not the only supplier of this product or service. As a last step, you met briefly with them (via phone, or video conference), and asked them to keep in touch, and indicated that you will welcome any information that they choose to provide on an ongoing basis. The seller has followed up several times spaced out over a period of time by sending additional separate unsolicited emails with several pieces of informative, timely, and relatively objective material. Several of the pieces of information were helpful, but available to anyone who chose to look for them. All the pieces were informative, and positive towards the seller's offerings, but also could be perceived as relatively fair and objective. The pieces periodically referred to current customers using their product/service that you recognize as peer organizations. Please answer the following questions based on this scenario:

Appendix II

Survey Questions

<u>Demographics Section</u>

I work in one of the following general industry categories. Check the one (or ones) that most closely apply to your industry:

- [ ] Accounting (1)

- [ ] Advertising (2)

- [ ] Aviation (3)

- [ ] Banking/Financial (4)

- [ ] Bio-Tech (5)

- [ ] Brokerage (6)

- [ ] Computer Hardware (7)

- [ ] Computer Reseller (software/hardware) (8)

- [ ] Consulting (9)

- [ ] Consumer Electronics (10)

- [ ] Consumer Packaged Goods (11)

- [ ] Education (12)

- [ ] Energy/Utilities/Oil and Gas (13)

- [ ] Engineering (14)

- [ ] Environmental Services (15)

- [ ] Government/Public Sector (16)

☐ Healthcare (17)

☐ Human Resources (18)

☐ Information Technology/IT (19)

☐ Insurance (20)

☐ Internet (21)

☐ Legal/Law (22)

☐ Manufacturing (23)

☐ Marketing (24)

☐ Market Research (25)

☐ Media / Entertainment (26)

☐ Pharmaceuticals (27)

☐ Real Estate/Property (28)

☐ Retail (33)

☐ Telecommunications (29)

☐ Transportation (30)

☐ Not listed here (32)

I am a decision maker, recommender or buyer of products that generally support these types of functions (click all that most closely apply) :

☐   IT Hardware (1)

☐   IT Software (2)

☐   Printers, Copiers & Office Technology (3)

☐   Financial (4)

☐   Human Resources (5)

☐   Food Services (6)

☐   Telecommunications (7)

☐   Sales (8)

☐   Marketing/Advertising (9)

☐   Security (10)

☐   Auto Leasing / Purchasing (11)

☐   Legal Services (13)

☐   Operations (14)

☐   Manufacturing (15)

☐   Not Listed Here (12)

I have recommendation authority and/or decision-making authority for some, or all, of the products my company purchases.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

- -

The decisions I make as a recommender or decision maker are typically made after consulting with a team or committee.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

- -

 I have capability to recommend or make decisions for purchases up to certain limits.

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

The highest range amount I have authority to recommend or make decisions for is:

○ $1,000-$50,000 (1)

○ $50,001-$100,000 (2)

○ $101,000-$250,000 (3)

○ $251,000-$500,000 (4)

○ $501,000-$1,000,000 (5)

○ 1,000,000+ (6)

My recommendations or decisions for purchase are ongoing, meaning that I purchase the same types, or series of products once, and also ongoing over multiple years.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

My recommendations or decisions for purchase, are typically one-time, meaning that I purchase once, and typically do not need that product or service again in the next several years.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

I practice strategic sourcing principles, which are generally defined by activities such as developing a clear understanding of internal objectives, external environmental factors affecting the supply chain, and a robust understanding of potential suppliers and their strengths and weaknesses, as well as developing relationships with suppliers.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

Page Break

Now, we'd like understand more about you, your buying/recommendation habits, and your typical work day environment:

---

*

Enter your two character (text) state identifier:

_____

I identify as

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Other (3)

Please indicate your level of agreement to the following statements about your typical buying/recommendation habits:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
When I perceive all things are equal between sellers, I will allocate my recommended spend based on how well I feel they worked for it (2)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
When I perceive all things are equal between sellers, I often recommend or buy from the last one who contacted me (1)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
It does not matter which seller I choose when I perceive all things are equal between them (3)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

To better understand your typical work day environment, please indicate the frequency with which you experience the following statements:

I feel emotionally drained from my work

○ Never (1)

○ A few times a year or less (2)

○ Once a month or less (3)

○ A few times a month (4)

○ Once a week (5)

○ A few times a week (6)

○ Every day (7)

I feel used up at the end of the workday

○ Never (1)

○ A few times a year or less (2)

○ Once a month or less (3)

○ A few times a month (4)

○ Once a week (5)

○ A few times a week (6)

○ Every day (7)

I feel frustrated by my job

○ Never (1)

○ A few times a year or less (2)

○ Once a month or less (3)

○ A few times a month (4)

○ Once a week (5)

○ A few times a week (6)

○ Every day (7)

- -

<u>Main Section</u>

- -

Respond True or False to these questions:

	True (1)	False (2)
In this scenario the seller is described as reputable (1)	○	○
The seller generally meets your criteria and needs (2)	○	○

- -

You have no immediate need to purchase. Indicate your likelihood to recommend to buy from this seller in the future:

	Extremely unlikely (1)	Moderately unlikely (2)	Slightly unlikely (3)	Neither likely nor unlikely (4)	Slightly likely (5)	Moderately likely (6)	Extremely likely (7)
Likelihood to recommend (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

- -

✳

If you have $200,000 budget to recommend to spend on the product or service the seller provides at some point in the future, what percentage of your future purchase would you be most likely to recommend to allocate to this seller:
_____ Seller allocation % (1)

- -

Tell us briefly about why you made the decisions you did on this seller:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- -

Tell us briefly about any other considerations that you had thought about in making the decisions you made.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Page Break

Based on what you know of the seller, please indicate your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
This business transaction requires a close relationship between me and this salesperson to ensure its success (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A close relationship with this salesperson is important to my success (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A strong relationship with this salesperson would be very helpful in buying this product (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I don't need a close relationship with this salesperson to successfully buy this product (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe that a strong relationship with this salesperson is needed to successfully buy this product (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This seller is working hard to strengthen their relationship with me (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This seller is focusing attention on building and maintaining a relationship with me (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This seller would make significant investments in building a strong relationship with me (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This seller would devote considerable time and effort to my relationship with them (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Based on what you know of the seller, please indicate your level of agreement:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I feel the salesperson listens attentively to identify and understand my real concerns (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel the salesperson's products/services help build my business (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel the salesperson works out solutions to my questions or objections (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel the salesperson works with me/my company to help improve its profitability (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel the salesperson works with me/my company to develop a partnership that is profitable to both firms (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Based on the decisions you made, indicate your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I was confident that I was making the right choice (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had all relevant information to make this decision (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I could easily predict what it would have meant to choose a different supplier (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I knew little about the possible performance of this supplier's product and whether it would really meet our purchase goals (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had adequate information about the likely performance of this supplier's products (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I had limited amount of information about the likely outcomes of buying from this supplier (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It was very hard to evaluate the future performance of this supplier's products (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Page Break

Based on what you know if the seller, please indicate your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The company has great expertise (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The company is skilled in what they do (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The company has a great amount of experience (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Based on what you know of the seller, indicate your level of agreement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
The seller was knowledgeable (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The seller was qualified (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The seller was skilled (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Based on what you know of the seller indicate your level of agreement using the preface "the seller is..."

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Honest (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sincere (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Based on what you know of the seller, indicate your level of agreement related to **the company** they represent:

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I trust the company (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The company makes truthful claims (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The company is honest (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe what the company tells me (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

- -

Select 'strongly agree' for this item, then move on to the next question.

○ Strongly disagree (1)

○ Disagree (2)

○ Somewhat disagree (3)

○ Neither agree nor disagree (4)

○ Somewhat agree (5)

○ Agree (6)

○ Strongly agree (7)

Recalling the early email exchanges with the seller in the scenario, consider the following:
What if after several initial exchanges via email with the seller, you noted that the formality and tone from one of the messages was slightly different. You suspected that your initial exchanges were likely AI initiated (AI= artificial Intelligence, or messaging responding to your prompts via computer driven logic) until the exchanged questions became too specific to your use case. Because of the way the response changed when the questions became more specific, you perceived that a human took over and engaged the rest of the way.
Regardless, the exchange addressed all of your questions and concerns. Does the use of AI driven messaging change your decision at all?

○ Definitely yes (1)

○ Probably yes (2)

○ Might or might not (3)

○ Probably not (4)

○ Definitely not (5)

- -

Briefly explain your answer to the previous question about AI.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

- -