

INDIVIDUAL ANTECEDENTS AND INTERORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF SALESPERSON-PURCHASER RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

Developing and preserving long-term quality relationships has been at the center of modern research in marketing as firms look for sources of sustainable competitive advantage. This research focuses on salesperson-purchaser relationship quality as a driving force behind strong relationships between organizations and the positive outcomes of greater coordination, less dysfunctional conflict and better performance. The paper combines literature from marketing, management, personal selling, business-to-business and channels research to develop a model of antecedents and consequences of salesperson-purchaser relationship quality.

There are two distinct streams of research that are tackling relationship development and management issues using different units of analysis. The personal sales and sales management literature approach is to study these issues by investigating the relationship between a salesperson and consumer or a corporate customer representative. The business-to-business and channels literature approach is to study relationship management issues by investigating the relationship between companies, albeit using data gathered from key informants. Rarely, studies provide information on both levels of analysis and both sides of the dyadic relationships. Recent research in marketing combines these approaches and demonstrates additional insights that could be gained from such combination although more qualitative research and dyad studies are needed. Based on previous research we build a theoretical model consisting of the following six propositions:

Proposition 1. Salesperson-purchaser relationship quality is positively influenced by both purchaser and salesperson job satisfaction.

Proposition 2. Salesperson-purchaser relationship quality is positively influenced by both purchaser and salesperson organizational commitment.

Proposition 3. Salesperson-purchaser relationship quality is positively influenced by salesperson expertise.

Proposition 4. Salesperson-purchaser relationship quality is positively influenced by salesperson customer orientation but negatively influenced by salesperson selling orientation.

Proposition 5. Salesperson-purchaser relationship quality is not influenced by relationship duration.

Proposition 6. Purchaser-salesperson relationship quality:

- a) Positively affects interorganizational coordination
- b) Negatively affects interorganizational dysfunctional conflict
- c) Positively affects interorganizational functional conflict
- d) Positively affects interorganizational performance

The utility of the model will largely depend on the design of the empirical test of the model and execution of measurement tools. Two key measurement issues should be driving future empirical investigation. First, implicit in the model is that dyadic collection of the data where measurement of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, relationship quality and interorganizational outcome variables of coordination, conflict and performance. Both purchaser and salesperson should be reporting on these constructs. Salesperson expertise and selling orientation and customer orientation could be reported by the purchaser only. Additionally, interorganizational outcomes should ideally be measured by using multiple respondents from each firm in the dyad or an objective accounting measure. Such design would be able to answer a question of whether most of research in business-to-business marketing studying only buyer-salesperson relationships and present them as study of firm relationships is reflective of the state of reality. Using objective performance information instead of self-reported data would be ideal as well. Such measurement would address the concern of the perceptual errors that managers may make in self-report studies.

References Available on Request