

# The Evolution of Personal Selling

Isa Söderling



<b>Author(s)</b>	
Isa Söderling	
<b>Degree programme</b>	
Tourism	
<b>Thesis title</b>	<b>Number of pages and appendix pages</b>
The Evolution of Personal Selling	59 + 1
<p>This Bachelor's thesis explores the evolvement of sales since 1870s, centralizing on personal selling. In addition to that, the implemented research examines the personal selling, its' characteristics and development in Finland. The objectives are to widen the knowledge about the subjects surrounding personal selling, as well as to understand how sales have developed within time and what can be predicted about the future of sales.</p> <p>This paper contains a theoretical and an empirical section. The theoretical section focuses on the topics of consumer behaviour, sales orientations and personal selling. The chapter about consumer behaviour introduces the influences on buyers' decision-making as well as presents the consumer buying process step by step. The chapter of sales orientations provides the evolvement and changes of sales approaches from 1870s to now and further. The chapter of personal selling defines the foregoing concept, provides the development stages of it, goes through the traditional sales process phase by phase, and views the significance and methods of rapport building.</p> <p>The empirical section concentrates on the characteristics and evolvement of personal selling in Finland. The research was implemented by arranging qualitative interviews with ten Finnish salespersons, and analysing the findings into a compact form.</p> <p>The results of the research show, that sales process does not seem to have changed that much over the years, but buyers and buying as well as salespeople and selling, have changed within time, mainly due to the development of technology and the increase of digitalization.</p>	
<b>Keywords</b>	
Sales, sales process, personal selling, rapport building, consumer behaviour	

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	1
1.1	Background and Objectives .....	1
1.2	Research Questions .....	1
1.3	Structure of the Thesis .....	2
2	Consumer Behaviour.....	3
2.1	Definition.....	3
2.2	Influences on Decision-Making .....	3
2.2.1	Personal Factors.....	3
2.2.2	Psychological Factors .....	4
2.2.3	Marketing Factors .....	5
2.2.4	Social Factors .....	6
2.2.5	Cultural Factors.....	7
2.3	Consumer Buying Process.....	7
3	Sales Orientations.....	10
3.1	Production Era .....	10
3.2	Sales Era .....	11
3.3	Marketing Era .....	12
3.4	Consultative Selling .....	13
3.5	Strategic Selling .....	14
3.6	Partnering .....	14
3.7	Value-Added Selling .....	16
3.8	Social Selling .....	16
3.9	What the Future Holds .....	17
4	Personal Selling .....	19
4.1	Definition and Values .....	19
4.2	History .....	19
4.3	The Sales Process.....	20
4.3.1	Preparation and Attitude.....	21
4.3.2	Engagement.....	21
4.3.3	Closing and Follow-up.....	25
4.4	Rapport Building .....	26
4.4.1	Meaning & Advantages .....	26
4.4.2	Rapport Building Methods .....	27
5	Research Approach and Methods .....	30
5.1	Qualitative Approach.....	30
5.2	Data Collection and Analysis.....	30
5.3	Research Questions .....	31

6	Research Results.....	32
6.1	How would you define personal selling?.....	32
6.2	What is special about sales in Finland? .....	33
6.3	What challenges exist on sales in Finland? .....	34
6.4	How sales have evolved in Finland? .....	39
6.5	Which are the main values in personal selling nowadays? .....	41
6.6	Which are the top qualities of the salesperson? .....	42
6.7	How would you see sales changing in the future?.....	46
6.8	Other comments .....	48
7	Discussion.....	49
7.1	Conclusions .....	49
7.2	Further research suggestions.....	50
7.3	Learning reflections.....	51
	References .....	52
	Appendices.....	60
	Appendix 1. Interview Questions .....	60

# 1 Introduction

Selling has changed rapidly within time. Various decades ago, selling concentrated largely on the production and profitability of the products and services. Nowadays, the personal selling skills and rapport building have expanded and become the key concentration in the sales process. Salespeople must sell themselves in a similar way than they sell the products or services.

## 1.1 Background and Objectives

Sales is one of the oldest professions, which is changing its form within time as many other professions. Since sales is one of the core processes of the companies, there is no doubt that without it, businesses cannot survive. As it can be seen through the history, consumer behaviour and development of technology has been shaping the characteristics and ways of doing sales. Although, some parts, such as the process of sales has not changed considerably.

The aims of this thesis are to understand on a wider scale how sales have developed over time from 1870s to this day, and how sales and personal selling are expected to develop in the near future. To achieve these objectives, various books and articles are read, as well as research is conducted. The qualitative research focuses on the characteristics and evolvement of personal selling in Finland. The research is implemented by interviewing ten participants that have variable experience on sales. When the research has been implemented, the data from the answers are analysed, after which the similarities, as well as the various thoughts and opinions of the research topics can be seen.

## 1.2 Research Questions

The main research questions of this paper are:

- *What is personal selling and how it has evolved within time?*
- *How personal selling has developed in Finland?*

The implemented qualitative research contains seven questions:

- *How would you define personal selling?*
- *What is special about sales in Finland?*
- *What challenges exist on sales in Finland?*
- *How sales have evolved in Finland?*
- *Which are the main values in personal selling nowadays?*
- *Which are the top qualities of the salesperson?*
- *How would you see sales changing in the future?*

### **1.3 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four parts: theory, research methods, research results and discussion. The theory topics are consumer behaviour, sales orientations and personal selling, and their data is collected from books and articles. The first topic of consumer behaviour presents the influences which affect to buyers' decision-making, as well as explains the consumer buying process. Sales orientations contain the evolvement of sales approaches from 1870s to now and suggestions for further. The chapter of personal selling concentrates on the definition and development of personal selling. The section presents also the traditional sales process through its' phases and justifies the importance of rapport building in sales.

The chapter of research methods support the following research and the results are presented by providing the findings question by question. In the end, the discussion summarizes the core results providing compact answers to the two main research questions. The discussion presents also further research suggestions as well as describes the learning reflections.

## **2 Consumer Behaviour**

As well as selling, consumer behaviour has changed dramatically within a short period of time. The main factor impacting to the behaviour, is the development of technology. Modern consumers are able to compare competing companies' products and services online with each other and choose the best deal. They also have an easy access to the reviews of any business.

Every consumer has external and internal influencers, which determine the decision of purchasing the product or service. The decision-making is present throughout the buying process, where consumer recognizes their needs for the product or service, evaluates the alternatives and solves the problems. Also, many modern buyers find value from the experiences which occur from the purchase.

### **2.1 Definition**

Consumer behaviour, as a concept, is defined as all the acts consumers perform when searching for, comparing, purchasing, using and evaluating the products and services which fulfil their wants and needs. Consumer behaviour, as a research study, explores the money usage as well as time and effort consumption of the consumers in the whole buying process. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 3.)

Consumers can be divided to personal and organizational consumers. Personal consumers purchase the products and services for their own use, for their household, or as a gift. Organizational consumers buy items to maintain the operations in their businesses. Personal consumers may make decisions quickly and individually, while organizational consumers often decide within a several people and purchase with careful consideration. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 4; Ahearne & al. 2014, 187.)

### **2.2 Influences on Decision-Making**

Every consumer has internal and external influences affecting their decision-making in the buying process. Internal influences are categorized as personal and psychological factors and external influences are divided to marketing, social and cultural factors. (Blythe 2012, 58.)

#### **2.2.1 Personal Factors**

Personal factors include the demographics, situation and the level of engagement of the consumer. Demographic elements are for instance age, gender, ethnic origin, education,

profession, income and occupation. (Blythe 2012, 58.) According to Pratap (2019), demographics influence largely on consumer's wants and needs, which therefore effects on the decision-making in the purchasing behaviour.

When people age, their lifestyles change and especially health needs and values reshape. Young people tend to spend more money on their lifestyle and momentary needs. When becoming adults, people often consider more carefully and buy more items for long-term use. And when people get older, they in most cases need to spend more money on health-related products and services. (Pratap 2019.)

Gender is also a huge influence in consumer's buying behaviour. Genders' wants and needs differ especially on fashion and lifestyle area. They still have many common consumption habits, for example in terms of food and hobbies. Income is also a significant influencer on consumer's buying behaviour. Middle class makes often buying decisions depending on utility and upper class would concentrate more on the style and special features of a product. Income often also determines the types of regular purchases. People with higher income spend more money on luxurious products and services, as well as on vacations. (Pratap 2019.)

Education level affects also to the consumer's decision-making. Higher educated people tend to think more carefully before purchasing a product or service. (Pratap 2019.) Consumer makes decisions also depending on their situational changes, which are for instance becoming unemployed or having a child (Blythe 2012, 58).

The level of engagement is the importance consumer gives for the product or service, as well as for the buying decision. For example, when buying a perfume, some consumer might find the exact brand to be the crucial element in the decision-making, while another consumer might not find it valuable at all. Another example is that if drummer's drum is damaged, they find it essential to purchase a new one for the performance reasons. (Blythe 2012, 58.)

### **2.2.2 Psychological Factors**

The psychological factors contain the perception of the world, motives, abilities and knowledge, attitudes and personality. People have a different perception of the world, which is being influenced by i.a. hearsay, previous experiences and imagination, and can affect to decision-making in a buying process. (Blythe 2012, 59.)



Motives are the consumer's reasonings why to purchase the particular product or service. In buying decisions, there are often several buying motives and they can be needs or desires. Buying motives can be emotional or rational. Emotional motives are based on a feeling or desire, compared to rational motives, which are based on a logic and free from emotions. There are also patronage and product buying motives. Patronage motives influence consumer to buy product or service from a specific company due to for instance the service, selection of offerings or the possibility to purchase online. Product buying motives cause the choice of a particular product instead of another. In these cases, buyer believes the product to be preferable due to for example brand, quality, price or design preferences. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 197-199.)

Abilities and knowledge of the consumer are also factors affecting to buying decisions. For example, a highly skilled climber would probably not spend money for beginners' climbing course. Also, knowledge about specific brand or product affect the consumer's approach to the decision. (Blythe 2012, 59.)

Attitudes are learned preferences to behave in a certain way towards the objects, such as products, brands and services. Attitude is divided to three components: cognition, affect and conation. Cognition creates the conscious knowledge and beliefs of the products and services, affect forms the emotions and feeling towards them and conation is the planning of the buying actions, which might ultimately change completely due to other influencing factors. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 268.)

Personality consists of the characteristics, interests and behaviours of people, differentiating them from each other. For example, an active person interested in sports would most likely spend more on sports activities, than someone who is not interested in sports. The characteristics of consumers are an important tool for targeting their market for the potential buyers. (Blythe 2012, 59.)

### **2.2.3 Marketing Factors**

The marketing factors are for example price and promotion of the product or service. For consumers, price can easily be reflected with the quality of the offering. If the price does not differ remarkably between various offerings, consumers will not use price as a reason to support a specific option. They usually lean on price in situations where they have no confidence on selecting. (Chuo 1992, 60.)

Low price can often create an appearance of low quality for consumers, even if it might be just the same quality as similar offering with higher price. If consumer feels risky in this

matter, they would probably pay a bit more only to feel more secure. So likewise, often a higher price makes consumers expect higher quality. (Balle 2019.) The risky feeling, which might come from purchasing the higher price offering, is the fear of not meeting with the expectations.

#### **2.2.4 Social Factors**

Social factors influencing the buying decisions of consumers, are roles, family and reference groups (Blythe 2012, 62). The roles in life can be short-term, for example being a bride, or long-term, for example being a father. Different roles in life bring different purchasing needs. Family roles influence usually the most from all other roles. Depending on the different product categories, the roles of the influencers, deciders, buyers, preparers, users, maintainers and disposers vary. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 339.)

For instance, a family is visiting IKEA to search for a new shelf for their living room. When teenage girl of the family recommends a particular shelf to other members of the family, she is the influencer. Parents find the shelf very suitable option for their living room and make decision to buy it. Therefore, parents are the deciders of this process. In this family, home costs are payed alternately by the husband and wife, and in this case, mom buys the shelf, which makes her the buyer of the process. (Ahamad & Sekhar 2014, 24.)

At home, the husband gathers the pieces and builds the shelf ready for use according to the instructions. Therefore, husband is the preparer of this process. Since the shelf was purchased for the living room, possibly all members of the family use it, which makes the whole family users of the process. If the shelf breaks at some point of its lifespan, the fixer of it is the maintainer of the process. The family members, who remove and get rid of the shelf, are the disposers of the process. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 339.)

Reference groups are the people, who we see ourselves belonging to and compared with, as well as whose opinions affect our values and decisions (Ahearne, Manning & Reece 2014, 195). The reference groups influencing our decision-making are categorized as primary, secondary, aspirational, dissociative, formal, informal and automatic groups (Blythe 2012, 61).

Primary groups are often the most influencing references. They are the people we see very often, for example family and friends. Secondary groups are the people we have a shared hobby or interest with. Aspirational groups have also often very strong influence on our decisions. They are the groups of people we wish to be part of. Dissociative groups are the opposites of aspirational groups. They are the groups of people we do not want to

belong to. These references lead us to avoid a particular type of behaviour. Formal groups are people with memberships on the specific groups. These groups are established to achieve certain goals and objectives with fixed rules. Informal groups, on comparison, are more friendship-based groups. Automatic groups are the ones we belong to automatically depending on our age, race, culture and education. (Blythe 2012, 61.)

### **2.2.5 Cultural Factors**

Culture is defined as learned and shaped values, behaviour, expressions, beliefs, as well as the society's language, laws, food, music, art, technology and so on (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 394). Cultural factors act as a significant influence on consumers' decision-making process. According to Durmaz (2014, 37), these factors are culture, subculture and social class.

Tunkkari (2017, 3) explains how culture is strongly connected with consumer behaviour:

Times are changing and new product and service innovations are being introduced more each day. Culture and consumer behaviour come hand in hand in such a way that products and services that meet the priorities of a culture at a certain time, are more likely to be favoured and accepted by consumers. Whereas, new products and services designed at a certain period provides a new window into the main cultural ideals of that period.

Subcultures are defined as smaller groups of individuals with similar values. These subcultures are divided to nationality groups, religious groups, racial groups and geographical areas. These groups influence the buying behaviour as well as the approaches towards marketing messages. (Durmaz 2014, 38.)

All societies construct of different social classes such as upper-upper class, lower-upper class, upper-middle class, lower-middle class, working class and lower class, and they are determined by the occupation, income, education, family background, and residence location of the resident (Durmaz 2014, 38). The consumers tend to keep in touch most often with the people from the same social class, which encourages different classes to share similar values and behaviour. Social classes influence the brand preferences as well as the feelings where and how people should shop. (Durmaz & Taşdemir 2014, 189.)

## **2.3 Consumer Buying Process**

Every consumer has different buying behaviour. Although, there is a general buying process pattern, which all consumers follow while decision-making. According to Blythe (2012, 50), the buying process contains five phases: need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase and post-purchase evaluation.

The first step of the process, need recognition, occurs when consumer becomes aware of something being incomplete and recognizing that there is a need for a certain product or service. The need recognitions might come either because of assortment depletion, which means the consumer's stocks are finishing, or assortment extension, where consumer finds a need to apply a new product to the selection. (Meyer 2013.)

The second step of the buying process is information search. Consumers search information through two types of sources: internal and external sources. Internal sources consist of previous experiences of the similar types of products as well as the heard hearsays about them. The external sources, comparatively, includes marketing and noncommercial information. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 533.)

Both, internal and external searching methods are effective, and depending on the planned purchase, the other one is more convenient. For example, when buying candy for self, it is easy to remember which the favorite flavors are. Therefore, the internal sources bring more information for the decision-making process. In turn, when planning to buy a new tv or car, often external sources are more sufficient to bring convenient information for the decision-making. (Blythe 2012, 51.)

The third phase is evaluation of alternatives. In this step, consumer creates an evoked set, where they collect the products which are considered as possible purchase options. When cutting out options from the selection, consumer often explore the products' characteristics and values to their own preferences. After this research, consumers typically compare the products to each other and cut out the less favorable options. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 534; Meyer 2013.)

The evaluation of alternatives may last only for a short while or take a longer time. During the process, various interrupts and conflicts can occur. Interrupts can come environmentally through in-store promotions for other products, affectively through physiological needs or as unexpected information, for example changes in shop's selection of products. Conflicts appear when the original plan of the consumer cannot be followed anymore, or when other plans occur. (Blythe 2012, 52-53.)

The fourth step is the main event of the buying process, the purchase transaction. Purchase can be done online or in store and there are three possible forms of purchases: trial purchases, repeat purchases and long-term commitment purchases. Trial purchases are usually associated with new products or services, which consumer tests for the first time.

When consumers are satisfied with particular product or service and continue the buying them, they are making repeat purchases. Consumers do long-term commitment purchases, when they buy long-lasting products, such as refrigerators. (Kanuk & Schiffman 2007, 545-546.)

When consumer uses the purchased product or experiences the bought service, they evaluate the result: did the purchase's performance meet with the expectations. There are three possible results of the evaluation. Either, the performance is lower than expected, the performance meets with the expectations or exceeds them. Lower than expected performance causes frustration and exceeded performance creates satisfaction. (Meyer 2013.)

Once the purchased product or service did not meet with the consumer's expectations, there are three ways the frustration is expressed: voice responses, private responses or third-party responses. Voice responses are the consumer's complaints straight to the shop, private responses are the complaints to family and friends, and third-party responses are legal actions or complaints to consumer organizations, TV consumer programs or online forums. (Blythe 2012, 54.)

### 3 Sales Orientations

Selling has changed its form throughout the years due to the influence of especially information and technology development and transformation of consumer behaviour. In the ancient Greek history, term 'salesman' is used in the writings of the philosopher Plato and the concept of selling was described as an exchange activity (Avila, Ingram, LaForge, Schwepker & Williams 2008, 3).

This chapter presents the concentrations of selling from 1870s to nowadays, as well as suggestions for further beyond. The universally considered sales orientation eras and approaches, which are also presented in a figure below (figure 1), are production, sales, marketing, consultative selling, strategic selling, partnering, value-added selling and social selling. These eras and approaches have named themselves according to the most predominant way of executing sales in the period, or due to the establishment of the exact method.

All these approaches are used and shaped by different businesses depending on their priorities and strategies. According to Business Finance Articles (2019), few of the most used and modern sales approaches these days are consultative, partnering and value-added selling approaches.

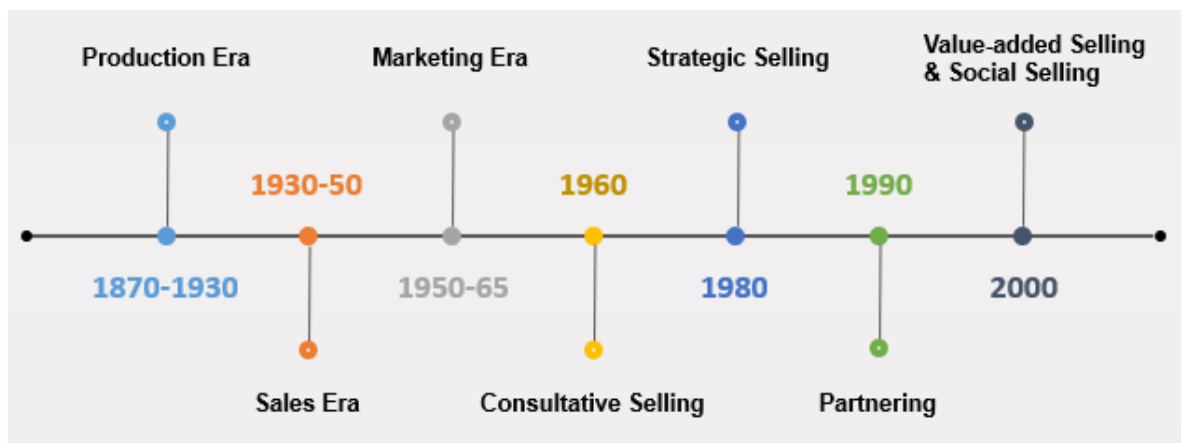


Figure 1. The Sales Orientations -timeline

#### 3.1 Production Era

Based on Ellis & al. (2011, 20), the production era took place in 1870s-1930s. In this era, businesses concentrated on mass production of patterned products due to the demand being much greater than supply. In the production era, emphasis was not on sale, because customers bought easily any products. (Bubnjević 2011, 373.)

In the production era, there was only little or no competition at all between the companies offering same products. Companies produced anything they could and the focus in business was put on the company, not the customers. The saying in production era was “products sell themselves”, and selling and marketing skills were non-existent, because there was no need for them. (Ellis & al. 2011, 20.)

During the production orientation, personal selling was in its early stages and was carried out by peddlers. Dictionary.com defines peddler as “a person who sells from door to door or in the street”. Nowadays, peddlers are probably connected more with selling drugs and stolen items. According to Heuvel (2012, 125), peddlers sold a wide selection of products from fresh food to fashion accessories, the customers varying from relatively poor to wealthy people.

### **3.2 Sales Era**

Sales era took place in 1930s-1950s. On this era, businesses concentrated on that time’s selling concept, which focused on the idea, that the firm is able to sell any produced products with various marketing methods, such as personal selling and advertising. (Keelson 2012, 37.) The sales orientation began due to the increasing production and competition between companies (Bubnjević 2011, 373).

The sales practices were executed aggressively, even if the wants and needs of the customer did not meet with the product’s qualities (Tadajewski 2011, 1132). This aggressive pressure-oriented technique is called hard selling. Soft selling is more modern and friendly way of selling. It emphasizes emotions of the customer and the rapport building. (Veirman 2015, 2.)

Due to this approach of hard selling, the negative viewing towards salespeople formed (Bubnjević 2011, 373). It developed because of the striking ideas of only selling being the aim of the company, and not customer satisfaction. This sales method created negative results also for companies. Even if sales could be done quickly, the probability of the buying customers staying loyal in long-term, was very minimal. (Keelson 2012, 37.)

Although the aggressive selling prevailed the most in the sales era, the concept has not disappeared from the present. Large number of business and salespeople are still carrying out these types of ideas and methods. Nowadays, the aggressive selling approach might appear as salesperson continuously trying to convince the customer to buy a specific product, even if customer rejects the offer. When the salesperson repeats the act again and again, the customer will presumably feel pressurized and uncomfortable.

During the era of two world wars (1915-1945), new sales approaches were not evolved hardly at all (Avila & al 2008, 4-5). After the Second World War, it was a time of recovery and businesses were focusing on production and aggressive selling (Chunawalla 2008, 9).

### **3.3 Marketing Era**

According to Ahearne & al. (2014, 62), the marketing era and the age of information began in the 1950s. The production-concentration was supplanted by a customer orientation, which is the business philosophy of the marketing concept. Therefore, marketing concept is a principle, which aims to increase sales by accomplishing their primary function of identifying and satisfying customers' wants and needs. (Cant & Heerden 2004, 23.)

When the marketing era began, large amount of new developments in the approaches, theories, research methods and models of marketing were founded (Moore & Wilkie 2003, 129). One of the significant creations is the traditional marketing mix, which Riaz & Tanveer (2017, 44) defines as "a set of controllable marketing tools that a company uses to create a desired response in the targeted market". Simplified, it means the planned elements of the product or service, which is offered to the market.

The concept of marketing mix is believed to be firstly used by Neil Borden (Goi 2009, 3) in the mid-1960s, when he published an article called "The Concept of the Marketing Mix" (Borden 1964, 7). This first version of marketing mix includes 12 components. They are product planning, pricing, branding, channels of distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, as well as fact finding and analysis. The original version was recreated to multiple variations, until E. Jerome McCarthy transformed and developed it for the most commonly known marketing mix. (Goi 2009, 3.)

McCarthy's marketing mix consists of four elements: product, price, place and promotion (Dominici 2009, 17). Product is the offering, for instance physical item, service, experience, event, property, information or idea, which is presented to the market (Mahapatra, Padhy & Sahu 2008, 212). The definition of place, aka distribution clarifies, how to get the product to the target market, as well as where, when and how customer can receive the product (Cant & Heerden 2004, 24). Promotion refers to the methods, which lead the target market to know about the available products (Mahapatra & al. 2008, 214). Personal



selling, advertising, publicity and sales promotion are methods of promotion. Pricing includes the pricing of the offerings, as well as pricing policies, for example discounts. (Cant & Heerden 2004, 24.)

In marketing era, personal selling emerged as a promotion of the businesses and their offerings. It was given importance because of the growing competition of the businesses due to the exceeding supply compared to demand, which then led to emphasis on consumers' needs. (Bubnjević 2011, 374.)

Based on Chunawalla (2008, 9), the marketing orientation lasted until 1965. So as a summary, on marketing era supply exceeded demand, there was a lot of competition, customers chose what products were made, businesses concentrated on marketing of the offerings with various activities, and companies focused more on profit than on the sales volume. (Ellis & al. 2011, 21.)

### **3.4 Consultative Selling**

Consultative selling emerged the late 1960s and was dominant sales method until the early 1970s (Ahearne & al. 2014, 64). Consultative selling can be defined as communicating and predicting customer's needs in order to be able to offer suitable solutions to solve the problem. Compared to marketing era, in consultative selling, salespersons as consultants do not concentrate on identifying wants and needs for only the sake of sales, but to solve the problem without manipulation, and often continuing the service even after the sale. This is how personal selling is seen to be evolved. (Bubnjević 2011, 375.)

In addition, Cronston, Murray and Schultz (2016, 8), define consultative selling as "pair of hands" consulting, which refers to understanding customer's needs and presenting solutions to solve the problem. They also describe the more modern type of consultative selling. This concentrates mostly on motivating customer with new ideas, collaborating with the customer and convincing the customer that they will be reach the goals and be satisfied. (Cronston, & al. 2016, 9.)

Avila & al. (2008, 13) suggest three main roles which salesperson aims to execute successfully. These roles are strategic orchestrator, business consultant and long-term ally. In the role of strategic orchestrator, salesperson uses their company's resources to support the customer throughout the sales process and beyond. This may include for instance the assistance of the organization's other departments' personnel for understanding customer's problem more in depth. As a business consultant, salesperson educates themselves on the topics of the customer's matter as well as educate the customer about their

company's offerings and the differences and advantages compared to competitors' offerings. In a role of long-term ally, salesperson does not insist the sale to happen right away but supports the customer and their decisions as well as respects the considerations of future purchasing possibility. (Avila & al 2008, 13.)

Research implemented by Belonax, McCardle, Newell and Plank (2011, 313), shows that consultative and personal relationship behaviour by the salesperson, has a positively remarkable effect on the customer's loyalty as well as their conception of the expertise level of the salesperson. According to these research results, a successful consultative selling might increase the probability to create long-term relationships.

### **3.5 Strategic Selling**

According to Ahearne & al. (2014, 65), strategic selling was established early 1980s. Sahaf (2013) describes, that on this approach, businesses emphasize the structure and planning of selling strategies and product positioning. When the strategic selling emerged, selling environment became more complex due to i.a. growing competition, wider selection of different products and increasing demand for customized solutions. Therefore, these features influenced and modified personal selling and its significance. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 65-66.)

Ching (2007, 2), defines strategic selling as a methodology of creating a sales plan, which is then monitored and developed according to the situational changes, such as customer's need changes or competitor companies' tactical changes. Ahearne & al. (2014, 68), suggest a strategic/consultative selling model, which includes five strategic steps, which salesperson and the representative company can follow in order to improve the selling outcomes. These steps are developing a personal selling philosophy, developing a relationship strategy, developing a product strategy, developing a customer strategy and developing a presentation strategy. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 68.)

### **3.6 Partnering**

Partnering became a significant asset for the selling in the 1990s due to the competition of businesses with similar offerings (Ahearne & al. 2014, 70). Pellicelli (2003, 1) defines partnerships or so-called strategic alliances as "agreements between companies (partners) to reach objectives of a common interest." and Cravens (1997, 456) describes the establishment of partnerships as follows:

The realignment of company resources with the demands of a new and more challenging business environment – characterising the 1990s and 2000s – has seen the

widespread emergence of strategies of collaboration and partnership with other organisations as a key element of the process of going to market.

According to Nyström (2007, 2), the most valuable features of the partnering relationship, are trust and mutual understanding. Based on these core elements, he presents "the partnering flower", which is a tool for structuring the characteristics of the relationship. The most valuable features in the relationship goes into the middle of the flower and other necessary features such as joint objectives, openness, continuous improvements, win-win philosophy and conflict resolution techniques (Eriksson 2010, 906) form the petals of the flower. (Nyström 2007, 3.)

Partnerships were already formed decades earlier with different goals in sight. In the 70's, alliances were established due to the aim for using the best raw material with lowest costs, and yet use the modern technology. Partnerships contributed also getting access to the international markets. In the 80's, businesses came together for strengthening their brands and expanding their supplies by creating products combining competences of each company. In the 90's forming partnerships increased due to benefits of for instance achieving competitive advantage, approaching new opportunities through continual innovation, maximizing the value evolution as well as reducing costs. (Pellicelli 2003, 2-3.)

The process of forming a partnership contains various significant steps, which should be carefully planned in order to achieve a successful relationship. The pre-development step includes the problem and need identification for forming the partnership. In this phase, it is significant to emphasize the trust building between the participants, since it is one of the most important pillars when partnering. Next phase is creating mutual strategy and partnership agreement. (McQuaid 2000, 11.)

The strategy, goals and risks are defined together by partners. It is also meaningful to agree about the participants' roles and responsibilities in the partnership taking into account also the financial responsibilities. At this phase, written contracts are formed and signed. The next step is to put the strategy into action. The last step is ex-post evaluation, where the possible changes of roles, approaches or techniques are made to the strategy and partnership. (Brandstetter & al. 2006, 8-9; McQuaid 2000, 11.)

So, the aims of partnerships vary depending on the involved companies. Setting new global standards is one of these goals, and a great case example of this is when Philips and Sony partnered in the late 80's to ensure the technological compatibility between European and Japanese products. Confronting competition is also one of the aims, which

ClarkEquipment and Volvo decided to establish when they both suffered from low production volume in the mid-80's. Risks to failure in a project can sometimes be very high and cause huge damage especially to one business. An example of companies dividing risks is when General Electric and Snecma partnered, so that they could plan and produce a new airplane propeller. The companies spent over two billion dollars and more than ten years in research and development after they sold the first engine. (Pellicelli 2003, 4-6.)

### **3.7 Value-Added Selling**

Value-added selling emerged already in 1980s and since then, it has increased its importance and prevalence rapidly among businesses and consumers. Ollila, Parviainen, Rosendahl, Thomas & Töytäri (2011, 494-495) define value-added selling as "understanding and improving customer's business in a proactive manner" by identifying customer's values and applying as well as bringing them up from the offered product or service.

Reilly (2008) describes value-added selling as follows:

Value-added selling is a proactive philosophy of seeking ways to enhance, augment, or enlarge your bundled package solution for the customer. It's promising a lot and delivering more, always looking for ways to exceed the customer's expectations.

There are two types of value orientations: product-orientation and relationship-orientation. Usually, in every sales process, one or the other bring more value to the customer. Product oriented value comes from the characteristics of the product, and relationship-oriented value is connected to the service and the sales process. (Ollila & al. 2011, 494.)

According to Reilly (2008), there are four core beliefs, that forms the philosophy of value-added selling. The first one is the significance of building trust. Despite the digitalization and brand loyalty, many consumers become loyal to people they trust. The second belief emphasizes the win-win situation between the salesperson and the buyer. For creating long-term relationships, the outcome of the sales process should always be equal for both sides of the business. The third belief is that sale is more about customer and their values than the salesperson. And the fourth belief is to sell customer a package solution, which consists of the product or service, the represented company and the salesperson themselves. (Reilly 2008.)

### **3.8 Social Selling**

The approach of social selling emerged in 2000s and Awario (2019) defines it as the usage of social media to communicate with potential customers as a purpose to eventually

sell products or services to them. Laurila (2016, 10) explains, that when interacting with potential customers, the salesperson learns also about customers' needs and challenges.

According to Awario (2019), businesses using social selling get 40% more qualified leads than cold calling companies, but still only 6% of companies use social media as this type of sales platform due to the low knowledge of the suitable social selling strategies.

Social selling strategy can succeed, when there are three factors included: sales team, corporate content and social media. There needs to be a salesperson or team, which publishes their brand and creates a strategy for publishing content online. In addition to those, there needs to be social media channels, which are utilized in sales. (Laurila 2016, 10-11.)

### **3.9 What the Future Holds**

It is quite perceived, that since consumer trends and behaviour are changing and technology is developing, sales have been evolving tremendously, and therefore it must continue to keep up with the current and forthcoming changes.

Fatemi (2019) has a suggestion of the growing and significant approach on sales for the future: design thinking. According to her, design thinking has increased in the past few years and that there are good examples of for instance Apple, Google and Samsung using the method for optimizing product innovation. Fatemi (2019) defines the design thinking as follows:

At its core, design thinking is a methodology for creative problem solving. In stark contrast to analytical thinking, which involves the breaking down of ideas, design thinking involves the building up of ideas.

The design thinking process can be divided to three steps: inspiration, ideation and implementation. The phases can be implemented in any order and they keep inside the identification of problems, asking of questions after another, creation of ideas and achievement of answers. (Serrat 2010, 3.)

Nowadays, consumers want and expect more personalized experience, and therefore the growth of the design thinking can provide customers the expected or even the expectations' exceeded experiences. Salesforce started to emphasize design thinking in their business and their revenue increased 100%. (Fatemi 2019.)

Signorelli (2018) presents in his article the ideas about sales' future from the people owning strong sales minds. One idea comes from Rex Bibertson, the principal of Rexb.co

LLC, who states that the professional salespeople will increase due to the developing technology and information accessibility. This means, that not only businesspeople, but also consumers become more professional in their ability to evaluate and purchase the products and services. (Signorelli 2018.)

Bova (2018) presents also few suggestions about the future of sales. She presents an idea that customer service agents will play bigger role in customer service than sales representatives. By this, she meant that for providing customer a long-term high-quality service, the customer experience improves, which creates long-term value and revenue growth, when customer decides to choose the same provider again. Other idea is that sales representatives will not be compensated anymore about the deal size but about the customers' usage of product or service. The idea is explained as follows:

Flexible usage is the ability for customers to pay for a service or product based on a sliding scale of need or amount used. Many sales reps will have a usage growth quota and be paid commission based on the growth of the customer. This means that "closing" a deal will mean far less, while enabling the client to use the product will be much more significant. (Bova 2018.)

The article states also, that selling will rely more and more on digital channels, where the customer engagement is executed. In addition to that, the usage of AI (artificial intelligence) will also increase and improve the customer service by carrying out the routine tasks and assisting with the understanding of the customer needs better. Writer points out also, that according to studies, instead of cutting the sales jobs, AI will create more jobs. (Bova 2018.)

There are many changes and developments expected to occur to affect many industries all around the world. The above-mentioned are only few of the suggestions, which sales is and will be affected by now and in the near future.

## **4 Personal Selling**

In order to understand the research problem, it is necessary to educate oneself with the concept of personal selling. This chapter presents the meaning and core values of personal selling, as well as explains the traditional sales process through its eight phases. In addition to these, the section defines rapport building and its benefits, as well as describes different methods for building this trust with the customer.

### **4.1 Definition and Values**

Personal selling is person-to-person selling method, where the salesperson meets with the customer in intention to sell a product or service (Bäckström 2008, 3). Personal selling is traditionally known as face-to-face selling, but nowadays it includes also telephone marketing and video conferencing (Stevenson 2005, 810).

The transaction can be established between businesses (B2B) or between a business and a consumer (B2C) (Armstrong & Kotler 2010, 446). B2B sales takes place for example when company buys office supplies from a furniture company. B2C selling occurs for instance when a car seller tries to find a specific car for customer's needs and ensure them to purchase it.

On personal selling, the core value is to build long-term relationships with customers rather than making short-term sales. Therefore, personal selling can be categorized as a form of relationship marketing, which aims on building trust with the customers and maintaining the long-term relationships through various marketing techniques, such as customer experience management and tailored services. (Bradford & Weitz 1999, 241.)

One of the main values in face-to-face selling is also the adaptiveness of the salesperson. In the strategy of adaptive selling, salesperson reads the comprehensibility and the level of purchasing desire of customer and adapts the sales techniques accordingly. (Aidla, Kõiv & Reinumägi 2016, 39.)

### **4.2 History**

Two centuries ago, personal selling was occurring as door to door selling by peddlers. Personal selling started to appear stronger in 1950s when the approaches and characteristics of it were identified (Avila & Inks 2017, 317). In this time, marketing was strongly emphasized due to the increased competition. On production era, companies did not have to

worry about consumer's wants or needs, because demand was so strong. But on the marketing era companies needed to begin to listen consumers' needs to find a way to sell more. (Bubnjević 2011, 374.)

When consultative selling established in 1960s, the significance of solving problems through the whole sales process grew and therefore manipulation by salespeople decreased (Bubnjević 2011, 375). Once strategic selling emerged in 1980s, personal selling and customized solutions increased due to the increased competition, wider selection of various products and growing demand for personalized solutions (Ahearne & al. 2014, 65-66).

Since 1980s, the emphasis of rapport building alongside the personal selling has increased and within time, there has been established various personal selling approaches, which are used to concentrate carrying out the sales processes with highlighting certain values, depending on the companies and their values.

### 4.3 The Sales Process

Every company has their own sales strategies and processes to follow in order to achieve as smooth and successful transaction with customer as possible. In the traditional personal selling process, there are eight main phases: preparation, opening, need and problem identification, presentation, dealing with objections, negotiation, closing and follow-up. In a figure (figure 2) and text below, the steps are divided into three parts: preparation and attitude, engagement, and closing and follow-up.



Figure 2. The Sales Process



### 4.3.1 Preparation and Attitude

Before the face-to-face meeting with customer, the first step for the salesperson is to get prepared for it. There are various significant factors to take into account when getting ready. Salesperson must ensure to have all the necessary knowledge of own company's offerings in order to offer the customer the most suitable options supporting their wants and needs. Also, it is convenient to do a background research about the customer and go through the pre-informed material about customer's interests, expectations, wants and needs. (Kaski, Niemi & Pullins 2017, 19.)

In addition to gathering all necessary information beforehand, they must also get ready for the sales meeting mentally to achieve inspiration and confidence. Research implemented by Kaski & al. (2017), shows that salespeople have their own approaches of motivating and preparing themselves for the meeting. The most commonly used assistance mentioned are meditation, self-talk and music. In the research, salespeople explain these practices giving them concentration, relaxation and confidence for the upcoming meeting. (Kaski, & al. 2017, 19-20.)

### 4.3.2 Engagement

*Opening* of the meeting happens when the salesperson's and customer's face-to-face meeting officially begins. This is the time when salesperson gives the first impression of himself as well as introduces the company he represents. The atmosphere and feelings, which arise from the meeting moment, set the mood which affects to the rest of the session. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 243.)

After opening of the meeting, the next step is customer's *need and problem identification*. What is the customer looking for? What is the preferred price range? Customers' wants and needs vary always. Frequently customer knows exactly what they want and need, but frequently they need the salesperson's guidance for finding the most suitable offering for them. In this phase, salesperson asks various questions to narrow down the range of offering options. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 243.)

Hopkins and Katt (2014, 78-79) remind how significant questions are for the salesperson for having the lead in the conversation:

Whenever you ask a question, your buyers will mentally answer it, even if they don't say much out loud. Therefore, your questions should be designed to guide and to direct the answers buyers come up with about your product, your company, and your ability to serve their needs.

[...]

When you help buyers ask themselves the right questions, the answers you want them to come up with are more likely to follow. In contrast, if you leave your buyers' questions to chance, you may not like their answers. In summary, the person who asks the questions controls the conversation during the sales appointment.

For understanding customers' needs as effectively as possible, salespersons often use "open" rather than "closed" questions. "Closed" questions are straightforward and are generally utilized for finding factual information. An example of "closed" question is: What is the name of the software your company currently uses? Answers for these questions tend to be short, when on contrary, "open" questions are extensive questions, for which customers cannot answer only with one word or phrase but must resolve their reflections. An example of "open" question is: Why does your company find it urgent to change the software? (Iryniuk 2018.)

When the customer's needs have been identified, salesperson must convince the potential buyer of possessing the answer for the problem. The salesperson chooses the suitable options from the selection of offerings by taking customer's requirements into account. In the *presentation* phase, salespeople tend to emphasize the buyer's benefits of purchasing the offering. The benefits are presented in two levels: the benefits buyer achieves when purchasing the specific product or service, as well as the benefits of selecting the exact supplier. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 245-246.)

Sales strategy, which can be used in benefit demonstration, is the combination of product feature and buyer's benefit. For instance, camera seller could use this tactic as follows: "The optics software of this camera is updated with the latest version, which means that you are able to take the sharpest and most luminous pictures." Salesperson must also remember to provide tangible evidence for supporting the propositions. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 130-131.)

While narrating benefits to the customer, the comparison between competitors is worth mentioning. It might make huge impact for the customer's decision-making to hear the competitor's corresponding product or service to be for example financially more consuming or more complex to use. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 246.)

Although the salesperson is the one giving the presentation, they are not the only one talking. Salesperson must continuously ask questions to ensure the comprehension and values of the customer. The questions and on-going conversation create concentration for

the customer due to the thoughts and responses they have to express. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 116.)

Also, reading customer's emotions is extremely meaningful for closing the sales. Occasionally, the high feeling of excitement towards the product or service makes the potential buyer purchase it earlier, if salesperson only notices the opportunity to ask. There are few signals implying interest to buy, which buyer shows unnoticeably. These signals are for instance fast talking, sudden friendliness, chin rubbing, questions about price and terms or delivery as well as changes in attitude, position or voice. If buyer is not ready for making purchasing decision yet, salesperson proceeds with the presentation. (Tracy 2007, 53-55.)

Despite the strong and convincing presentation, every now and then customer feels unsure and fears taking the risk of purchasing something new. There are methods salesperson uses to help reducing the risky feelings of customer. The first trick is reference selling, where salesperson narrates satisfied customers' stories about the same product or service. The proof provided by salesperson may reflect to customer in a way to make them wonder "if it worked well for him, it must work well for me too". (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 247-248.)

The second method is to perform a demonstration, which consist of two simple steps: firstly, providing all primary information of the features, usage as well as the earlier mentioned advantages and secondly, demonstrating these elements in practice. By testing the product or service also by themselves, customer gets clearer picture of it, which again assists in the decision-making. The third trick getting customer more convinced of buying, is assuring guarantees. These guarantees are associated with product accuracy, delivery and the after-sales. The fourth method is arranging a trial order for the customer. Trial order may, in a successful case, lead to customer satisfaction, and re-ordering. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 247-250.)

The next step is *dealing with objections*. As mentioned in previous paragraphs, all potential buyers are different. Some are very talkative and curious, and some are quieter and need more directives. Objections are the questionings and worries of the customer. When these objections arise, customer needs solutions for the problems to feel more convinced by the necessity of the product or service. At times, objections are also excusing of consumer to get rid of the salesperson.

There are five most typical forms of objections: the "just looking" objection, the price objection, the timing objection, the competitor objection and the "think about it" objection.

Salesperson must be prepared for the possible objections and handle them confidently. For example, if customer says in the store "I'm just looking", salesperson can ask "what are you looking today?". Therefore, customer might start the conversation and salesperson can begin the sales process with need identification. (Kupchik 2018, 122-129.)

According to Tracy (2007, 91-92), when consumers ask multiple questions about the price during the sales presentation, they do not seek for the option of the lowest price, but they seek for the fairest price, reflecting from the quality. With the objections and questioning of the price, buyers might also pursue for a price reduction.

Sometimes customers use time as an objection, for instance by saying, "Now is not a good time, call me after few weeks." To that, salesperson could answer by convincing that the company has special prices right now, but not after few weeks. The same tactic can be used to customers with "I need to think about it" -objection. This will create a pressure for customer and the answer will also make clear for salesperson is customer interested in the offerings or not. (Kupchik 2018, 126-127.)

When customer claims to be satisfied with the offerings of a competitor company or explains of having got a better deal from them, it is called a competitor objection. Since salesperson does not want to seem unprofessional and does not know about the future employments, they should never badmouth the competitors. Therefore, in this case it is important to emphasize the similarities and differences between the own represented company and the competitors by explaining in which way own company provides more value for the potential buyer. Demonstration can be very valuable in this situation. (Helinski 2019.)

After dealing with most of the customer's objections, it is a *negotiation* time. Negotiation can be defined as salesperson's and customer's compromising process for achieving an agreement, which satisfied both sides (win-win situation). During the negotiation, customer may come up with more objections, which can be discussed and agreed together. Negotiation consists agreements predominantly about the price, payment method and delivery times. (Ahearne, Manning & Reece 2014, 305; Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 255.)

Before starting to negotiate with the customer, salesperson must be aware of four circumstances: knowing the starting point, ending point, what is negotiable, and when to walk away. In the beginning of the negotiations, salesperson often offers highest possible price, because some buyers might accept the offer already. Also, when the price starts high, it can flexibly be lowered depending on negotiations. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 223-231.)

Since it is important to know the starting point, it is valuable also know the absolute ending point; where goes the line of compromising for the buyer's benefit. Moreover, knowing the negotiation terms of the company is necessary in order to give buyer promises which can be implemented. Although it is good to try to convince customer until the end and not give up, it is important to realize when the sales are not going to happen and is a good time to walk away. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 223-231.)

When negotiating with customer, it is essential for salesperson to listen and try to understand customer as well as possible. Depending on the customer's problem, salesperson must form and offer alternative solutions. If possible, salesperson should first compromise in other features of the purchase than price, to show the customer their belief to the value of the product or service. It can be possible, that customer buys the item when it is in its highest price. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 308.)

If customer specifically wants to negotiate about lower price, salesperson can use concession for concession method. It means giving discount for the product while asking a favor back. For example, the offer could be 5% discount of the product if providing payment right away. (Jobber & Lancaster 2015, 256.)

According to Ahearne & al. (2014, 310), negotiations last most commonly the last 20% of the selling process time. Therefore, salesperson can use a time pressure on customer for creating faster and possibly more successful agreement.

#### **4.3.3 Closing and Follow-up**

*Closing* the deal is the main goal in selling process. This is the phase, to which is led through all the previous work of needs' identifications, presentation, objections and negotiations. During negotiation, salesperson must observe and recognize the earlier mentioned buying signals, which can be verbal or nonverbal. Verbal are for example sudden friendliness, fast talking, changes in voice as well as questions about price or terms of delivery. Nonverbal signals are for instance chin rubbing and changes in attitude and position. (Tracy 2007, 53-55.)

There are various ways of closing the sale. The most common closing techniques are trial close, direct close, assumptive close and summary-of-benefits close. Trial close method is used during the sales presentation to see the readiness of the customer to purchase the offering. By using trial close questions, salesperson can see customer's reaction and attitude towards the idea of buying. An example of trial close questions is: Would you prefer

the construction process to begin on August or on September? (Ahearne & al. 2014, 331-333.)

In direct close, salesperson asks straight if customer is ready to buy. The question could be for instance, "Are you ready to continue to the next step in the process, perhaps placing the order?". Assumptive close method is used also in the end of presentation by intentionally assuming customer has already decided to buy the offering. Salesperson can ask the customer for example about the preferred payment method. (Kupchik 2018, 138-140.)

The summary-of-benefits close is used in the end of presentation by explaining customer their main benefits of the purchase. After the summary, salesperson suggests if sales should be done. This technique emphasizes the benefits for the customer, which may excite them to accept the deal. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 333.)

When the deal is agreed, the possible paperwork, i.a. contracts and payments or bills are done (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 270). After closing the sale and before leaving from the meeting, salesperson should reassure the buyer for having made the right decision of purchasing the specific product or service, because buyers might often have a small doubt of the purchase, aka. "post purchase dissonance". By encouraging buyer, they will most likely be less in doubt about the decision made. (Tharakan Nd.)

The last phase of the personal selling process is following up the delivery process and ensuring the customer satisfaction. In the *follow-up* step, salespersons can for example send a "Thank you for choosing us" -e-mail as well as feedback survey after receiving the product or experiencing the service. If company satisfies the buyer, a loyal customer-relationship might be formed.

#### **4.4 Rapport Building**

Rapport building is closely attached to personal selling, since its aim is to create trust and possibly eventually gain satisfied long-term customers. There are many benefits of rapport building for the salesperson as well as for the customer, and this rapport can be established and developed with multiple techniques.

##### **4.4.1 Meaning & Advantages**

Everyone builds various rapports with many different persons in their everyday life. Rapport can be defined as a relationship, which is based on relative connection and understanding between participants. It can be built for example between a teacher and student,

doctor and patient or supervisor and worker. In personal selling, it is created between salesperson and customer. (Kaski & al. 2017, 2.)

Hollman and Kleiner (1997) describe rapport as an attitude used to assist business transactions. Building rapport begins right from the meeting moment between the salesperson and potential customer. Successfully built rapport establishes relaxation and comfort, which leads to trust. Salesperson's benefits from establishing rapport are getting customer's careful attention and participation to the sales presentation as well as greater probability of closing successful sales. The benefit for the customer is to communicate with trustworthy salesperson who they can identify with. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 47-48.)

An example of the advantages of rapport building can be seen in a research study about dental patients' relationships with dental professionals presented by Macintosh (2009, 76). It shows that built rapport created familiarity and common-grounding, which then increased the customer satisfaction and affected also to the word-of-mouth communication. (Macintosh 2009, 76.)

#### **4.4.2 Rapport Building Methods**

There are multiple ways salesperson can build rapport with the potential customer. Rapport can be established verbally, through speaking and nonverbally, through behaviour. Verbal rapport can be built by small talk and finding common interests. For example, if meeting takes place in customer's home or office, the salesperson can look around and find informal topics to talk about before going into business. These topics can be associated for instance with family, hobbies and travel. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 53-54.)

In addition to small talk, giving compliments is a great way of creating comfort and building rapport. Everyone needs compliments every now and then to uphold their self-esteem. Although, if customer shows no interest towards small talk or sharing their interests, salesperson should then begin with the formal talk. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 115.)

Also, as a verbal and nonverbal tip, observing customer's behaviour and mirroring to act similar way, can be very effective rapport building method. Kupchik (2018, 117-118) explains how to do it:

If the customer is quiet and reserved, then you should behave the same way. If the customer is outgoing and friendly, you should be outgoing and friendly. If the customer starts barking like a dog, don't hesitate and bark right back.

This can be an effective technique, because customers tend to like salespeople who are similar to them. Same as friends, both salesperson and buyer adapt each other behaviour, such as postures, facial impressions and speaking features. It can easily me feel uncomfortable, if having conversation with person who acts completely opposite as you. Therefore, when finding similarities in salesperson's behaviour, customer feels comfort and starts to like them more. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 51.)

The nonverbal methods for building rapport are connected to salesperson's voice, clothing, postures and facial expressions. As the old saying goes "actions speak louder than words", researches show that in two people conversations, nonverbal messages have much more impact than verbal messages. Also, salesperson tend to be more trusted, when all verbal and nonverbal signs are similar and connected to each other without any discrepancy. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 109-113.)

The features in tonality of voice, which salesperson must pay attention to, are volume, speed and pronunciation. As mentioned earlier, it is effective to reflect own behaviour from customer's behaviour. Therefore, the same tip applies in volume and speed of the voice. The aim of salesperson could be to recognize the customer's volume and speed of voice within ninety seconds from meeting moment and transform own voice into the same level. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 56-58.)

Reasons to imitate the customer's way of speaking is to make the customer feel comfortable. For example, some customers might need the salesperson to speak loud because of hearing problems, some might understand better slower talk, and some are busy or bored and need the talk to happen fast. Also, clear pronunciation is important for the customer to fully follow and understand the presentation. If they feel confused, they easily refuse to buy. (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 57-58.)

Salesperson's appearance, such as clothing, creates also expectations and attitudes towards the salesperson and sales presentation. A study implemented by Cho (2001, 35) presents that 16-19-year-old customers had more positive attitudes towards informally than formally dressed salespeople, while over 65-year old customers had more positive attitudes towards formally dressed salespeople. The reasons for the attitudes were own preferences of specific types of clothing. This is a reason salesperson must know the customer well beforehand. Usually, more formal look is a safer alternative for creating a professional image of self. (Cho 2001, 35-37.)



Salesperson's posture and facial expressions are also very effective influences in rapport building. Salesperson should show confidence through a good straight posture and a smile. The posture of salesperson should show customer the interest and professionalism towards the meeting and not have a loose posture, which would show boredom or lack of motivation. In addition, it has been researched that smile creates a friendly image of a person, and therefore it can build trust also in a sales meeting. (Ahearne & al. 2014, 110-111.)

Handshake is a gesture made in the beginning and often in the end of the meeting. "Today, the handshake is an important symbol of respect and, in most business settings, it is the proper greeting" (Ahearne & al. 2014, 110). The handshake should always be confidently firm and it should include eye contact (Hopkins & Katt 2014, 65).

One of the biggest influences on establishing rapport, is listening skills of the salesperson. Customers want to feel respected and understood, and salesperson can provide those feelings by listening. Interrupting, on the other hand, creates the feelings of disrespect and irritation. Eye contact and nodding are the best ways to say "I'm listening". Salesperson should also occasionally repeat the customer's sayings and ask specifying questions to make sure to have been understood correctly. (Kupchik 2018, 118-121.)

Other method for building trust with the customer, is keeping phone away in the meeting, because it is unnecessary and might on the table or being answered, create disrespect. Also, emphasising with the customer's needs is significant in showing understandability and friendliness. Everyone knows the feeling of how negative attitudes create negative atmosphere, which then also takes energy away from people. There are no good results in negativity, and therefore positivity is important also in sales meetings. Lastly, keeping promises is significant for creating credibility and possibly establish a long-term relationship. (Kupchik 2018, 117-120.)

## **5 Research Approach and Methods**

Every research needs to exploit the most suitable approach and techniques to collect and analyse the data. This chapter focuses explaining the approach and data collection methods, which are implemented in the research. Research questions are also presented.

### **5.1 Qualitative Approach**

Qualitative research is a social science research, which concentrates on collection and analysis of non-numerical data of social life of specific communities or places. It determines conclusions by gathering experiences of individuals. The aim of the qualitative tradition is a “deep understanding of the particular”. Opposite from qualitative research, quantitative research collects data in a numerical pattern, typically with rating scale or closed questions. (Haradhan 2018, 2; McLeod 2017.)

The core qualitative research methods are observation and immersion, interviews, open-ended surveys, focus groups, content analysis, and oral history (Crossman 2019). The qualitative approach was chosen the most suitable method for this research, due to the aim to get as wide answers as possible, as well as hear other comments and thoughts surrounding the topic. The quantitative research method would have not fitted for this research, since this research does not concentrate on systematic investigation. Therefore, statistical methods are not suitable for implementing this research.

### **5.2 Data Collection and Analysis**

The data for the research was collected by interviewing ten Finnish salespersons. All the interviewees have varying amount of experience in sales and they work in different positions related on sales. Most of them work as sales coaches and sales managers.

The interviews contained seven open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were chosen to be used due to the higher probability to get wider and varying answers from all the interviewees. For most of the interviews, face to face meetings were arranged in different locations. Few interviews were implemented also as video and phone calls. Meetings' durations varied from 15 minutes to one hour.

Most of the interviews were audio recorded, so that discussions about the topics could be held with full concentration, and time could be saved. The next step was to write down all

the answers from the participants. Since the interviews were audio-recorded, nothing significant could not have been missed. The following step was the organization and comparison of the answers. That is how the research results were aggregated.

### 5.3 Research Questions

The main question of this research is:

- *How personal selling has developed in Finland?*

The seven questions surrounding the core question are:

- *How would you define personal selling?*
- *What is special about sales in Finland?*
- *What challenges exist on sales in Finland?*
- *How sales have evolved in Finland?*
- *Which are the main values in personal selling nowadays?*
- *Which are the top qualities of the salesperson?*
- *How would you see sales changing in the future?*

The definition of personal selling was asked to find out which are the main features and thoughts coming to mind from this concept. The second question about the special features of sales in Finland was asked, so that interviewees could think about the influence of Finnish culture to sales. In this question, they could also compare sales in Finland to sales in other countries. The word “sales” is used, so that the question is very general, and interviewees could come up with anything regarding on sales, sales work, sales approaches and consumer behaviour.

The challenges of sales in Finland was asked to find out, which are the threats, difficulties and development-needed matters regarding sales in Finland. The question about the evolvement of sales was looking for the answers of developments and changes of sales approaches and processes, which the interviewees could describe based on their own experience as well as knowledge about the sales features of the past.

The main values of personal selling, as well as the top qualities of the salesperson was asked to see, how the evolvement of sales has had an influence on these values and qualities. Lastly, interviewees were asked to describe their visions about the future of sales. This question was asked, so that different views on the predictions of developments and changes could be heard.

## 6 Research Results

This chapter presents the results of the interviews. The answers of ten interviewees are summarized and introduced question by question. After the findings of seven core questions, other comments of interviewees are introduced.

### 6.1 How would you define personal selling?

The salespeople defined personal selling very similarly. The definitions focus on the personal and independent way of handling the sales process with customer from the first contact to the end of closing the sale and further. The emphasizes in the answers were given to the importance of reading customers, identifying their wants and needs, and fulfilling these wants and needs by providing the most suitable solutions.

The salespeople defined personal selling concisely as follows:

“Face to face sales in principle. Selling a product or service personally to customer.”

“Solving customers’ problems and supporting their decisions with personal means.”

“Serving customers so that they get more out of it than what they expected. In personal selling, salesperson must also recognize the hiding needs of the customers by reading them.”

“How the salesperson gives effort and own resources when communicating with customer.”

“Personal communication with customer. The salesperson is the one contacting the customer and handling everything through the process.”

“Salesperson is contacted with the customer and does it with own personality.”

One salesperson mentioned, that there are two different types of personal sales: *customer service sales* and *self-imposed sales*. The person described customer service sales as “receiving orders” and self-imposed sales as salesperson taking initiative and selling products or services to customers.

Every participant considered face to face meeting significant for building trust with the customer. Although, contacting customers in various channels was seen also important. Few salespeople mentioned, that depending on the offered solution, process can be handled through e-mail, phone, video-calls and meetings.

One salesperson narrated what is in their opinion the most important thing to achieve in personal selling: *to get the consumer’s interest alive*. The interviewee explained that it can

be done even in strange ways. The salesperson told a good example of a success story, where electricity contract seller in street asked consumers: "Do you have time to talk about Jesus?". Consumers got confused and answered negatively. Then salesperson says: "Good, me neither. What about your...?" and continues the discussion with the relevant topic. This made consumers confused, but at the same time interested and amused, which then helped salesperson to continue the communication.

One interviewee emphasized the importance of passing the salesperson's own excitement to the offered product or service. The participant explained, that giving an exciting and positive feeling to customer in the buying moment, is not enough, but the good feeling must appear whenever customer sees the product. If this will not succeed, the customer might experience "buying hangover", which means regretting the buying decision.

The importance of realizing "the pain questions" of the customer, was also brought up. The pain questions were defined as objections, which customer does not necessary want to reveal. These objections could for example be related to money issues. Another salesperson reminded, that compromising and customizing solutions for customers, are often resulting from dealing with objections. For example, if customer's objection on ordering a magazine, is that they do not read on working days, the offered solution could be an option to order the magazine for weekends only.

## **6.2 What is special about sales in Finland?**

To this question, salespeople mainly answered how they see the affection of Finnish culture to sales. Salespeople described Finnish people as *honest, reserved, quality focused, rational thinkers, fact-focused, process-oriented, straightforward and realistic*.

The significance of trust and honesty for Finnish people was seen strongly in the interviews. According to the interviewees, those qualities are seen as the biggest values in our society. It was mentioned, that in sales, building trust and human to human approach is widely used in Finnish culture. One salesperson explained also, that even if people can sometimes be uncommunicative, when trust has been built, the sales process can easily be continued until sale is done.

Few interviewees explained, that for Finnish people, handshake is very binding, compared to people from many other cultures. Finnish people see it important to have to honor to keep the promise. Similarly, when agreeing about something, Finnish people tend not to

take back what they say. Almost all salespeople thought also that in Finland, fooling people is not seen normal in sales, and therefore pushing people to buy does not work well either.

It was mentioned, that in Finland, there is not “secretary barrier”, as in many countries. This means, that people can easily reach company’s decisionmakers straight, without communicating through any secretary or so. Salespeople as well as consumers, are seen to have a professional attitude towards sales. Also, according to the interview participants, Finnish people tend to be more quality focused, rather than price focused.

One salesperson said, that Finland is quite neutral country and therefore is an easy “playground for sales. By neutral country, the participant meant, that in Finland there is not much diversity in social groups, for instance there are not many dominant religions, which should be needed to take into account when doing business. The interviewee continued, that since Finland is a small country, there is not that much competition either.

Few quotations of how salespeople described Finnish people and their way of doing sales:

“We are very honest society. Salespeople and consumers are realistic and there is no lying or exaggerating. Good country to do sales, since most of the people are real and honest.”

“Finnish people, both salespeople and consumers, are more cautious, which can be a good and a slightly bad thing. Finnish people want to gather more information before decision-making, for example hear experiences from familiar people and read reviews online.”

“Compared to many countries, in Finland the emphasizes in business is put a lot into facts and rational thinking. Reasonings are important part of the sales job, have to be able to clearly explain ‘why exactly this product or service’.”

“Finnish people are quite reserved, both salespeople and consumers. In many other cultures people are livelier. But when facing with customer, the trust can be built quite easily.”

### **6.3 What challenges exist on sales in Finland?**

When this question was asked from the salespeople, they brought up various challenges regarding sales, Finland, and Finnish people. These challenges are presented below, after the comments of challenges regarding technology.

When salespeople were asked, if there are challenges which technology have caused, they answered not being concerned at all about everything going online, and that the

salespeople would not be needed anymore. They said, as a matter of fact, that they benefit out of services going online and getting automatized, because then they can be the ones offering the physical contact for customers who truly appreciate it.

One salesperson explained one negative side about the modern CRM tools:

“CRM can be very efficient tool, but earlier other support organizations gave the needed help with customer relationship management. Nowadays, the salesperson has to handle with CRM on their own, without the support organizations.

## **Sales**

Almost all the interviewees brought up the fact, that in Finland, “sales” as a word and as a work is seen negatively. This might be due to the dishonest salespeople, who do their job only for taking advantage of people and making money out of it. Due to these types of salespeople, consumers have doubts in trusting any salespeople. Few interviewees explained also, that in many other countries, the respect towards sales work is much higher, since it is the only way of making money and making the company to survive.

One salesperson told, that since “sales” word is seen so negatively in Finland, they decided to change their job title from Senior Sales Manager to Senior Relationship Manager. Like this, contacting with people in different fairs, works better.

One interview participant told, that in America, the most successful sales approach is “challenger sales”. Although, In Finland it is unfortunately not that popular, since the word “challenger” in Finnish is “haastaja”, which means more like a contestant, and therefore gives the approach a negative image.

## **Finland**

The interviewees found few challenges related on Finland as a country. Few salespeople thought, that since the country and its’ market is small, the prospect base is also very small. To clear up, prospect base consists of the current customers and potential customers.

One salesperson continued, that when the country is small, the companies are small also. Due to the small operational area in B2B business, and the large amount of similar providers, there is a lot of competition. The salesperson reminded, that especially when people from other businesses know each other well, have to play fair game and never say badly

about the competitor. Otherwise, even if it would help in the selling moment, it will backfire at some point. It was brought up also, that nowadays when it is crucial to be different to stand out from the competitors, sometimes it can be difficult to be innovative and find the ways to be different.

In addition to these challenges occurring from the competition, it was brought up that due to the competition, companies have to sell with so low prices, that there is no possibility to get profit almost at all. The salesperson continued, that because of the low selling prices, some companies buy a specific number of products from factories, so that they get bonuses from these factories. And even if the companies know they are not able to sell all of the products, they sell what they can, and the rest are brought for example to fairs, where they are sold with lower prices. Similarly, according to the interviewee, many car sellers get profit not until buyers take the cars to maintenance inspection or repairment.

It was mentioned by few salespeople, that Finnish companies are not that international, and the development of this area is very slow. According to one of the interviewees, it is also challenging and time consuming, that sales processes take long time in Finland. The reason is, that the decisions are often made by the board members of the company.

The salesperson working in a company where they sell products on stands, through phone and by going door to door, explained, that they have two threats, which might in future come true. The first threat is the resistance of shopping centers and shops on taking stands and workers on their premises. This threat is true due to the fact, that many customers tend to avoid the stands and their workers, and therefore the stands are disturbing shopping centers' and shops' customers' enjoyability. The second threat was seen to be the changes in laws. For instance, that peddling from door to door would become illegal or that new laws to decrease telemarketing would be put into effect. The salesperson explained, that Sweden has already a law, which prohibits telemarketers to call anyone they want. They can only call the ones who have given permits for these calls.

Few salespeople remarked also, that as in all around the world, also in Finland trends and the images of brands are changing very quickly. It means, that companies have a constant challenge on following time and trends carefully.

## **Finnish people**



The salespeople found many challenges also in Finnish people's characteristics and culture, which affect to the way of making sales. Two of the interviewees explained that people have got busier and therefore it is not as easy to reach people as it was earlier. Therefore, contacting customers might be very time-consuming process. People also make more careful decisions of how they want to spend their valuable time.

Finnish people were described also quite uncommunicative, which often apparently makes the beginnings of the sales processes very slow. In addition, Finnish people were told to be very careful and detail-oriented, which as well slows down the sales process. So, even if sales are not done, both sides, sellers and buyers, spend a lot of time and effort unnecessarily. Because of these consequences, salespeople saw it necessary for Finnish people to take more risks.

On a contrary to the detail-orientation of Finnish people, one interviewee mentioned that they still do not get prepared for the meetings as well as they should. For example, they are not communicating with the customers well enough beforehand, and as a result, the forthcoming meeting does not go as smoothly and clearly as it should. One salesperson told, that Finnish people have also problems in closing the deal. According to him, 60-70% of the salespeople do not ask about the decision of the customer, for the reason of being too scared of the rejection.

Finnish people were not seen that international. It was mentioned, that younger generations are more open for international environments and for English language usage, than older generations. In Finland, English as a service language is still unfortunately affecting negatively for the trust building between the salespeople and customers.

As mentioned earlier, "sales" as a word is seen more negatively in Finland than in many other countries. Due to the "bad" salespeople who fool and push customers to buy, every salesperson has been given the same image. Therefore, the honest salespeople suffer, and the acquisition of new customer is not that easy. Luckily, not everyone thinks negatively about salespeople, but according to the interviewees, a huge amount does. One salesperson mentioned also, that when the sales as a work has been given this kind of image, some jobseekers, who do not care about fooling people and want to just get money by any means, will apply for these jobs.

Few salespeople explained, that all salespeople, especially the new ones, could trust more on themselves and be braver. They said, that Swedish people start to sell even if the product or service is not fully ready. Finnish people, on the other hand, are too cautious

and careful, and start selling once having the “perfect” product. One salesperson answered as follows:

“Finnish salespeople still think too much about selling the perfect product but not shaping and customizing the product to fit with the customer’s want and needs (customer-oriented selling).”

Similarly, it was brought up, that Finnish people are slightly behind in creating extra value for customers. Salespeople said that it is improving, but unfortunately there are still many stores where workers do not even greet customers. This can make customers feel valueless, and for which reason they may prefer to leave the store.

It was also mentioned, that Finnish people think more rationally in business, compared to many other nationalities. This rational thinking might create some challenges in business, and therefore, few of the salespeople suggested that Finnish people could every now and then make decisions bearing in mind more their intuitions and emotions.

One challenge was seen to be the low usage of all possible technological tools as well as the data which can be accessed. For example, companies purchase different tools, such as CRM systems, but they do not put enough input to the training of the salespeople regarding on these new tools. It was highlighted, that especially older generations have got used to specific older tools, such as Excel, and therefore they feel some type of resistance when it comes to new technological solutions. And the same situation is seen with the accessible data of potential customers.

In addition to this, it was mentioned, that these new technologies are mainly used for different processes, but not as a support tools in building trust, which could be very significant. One interviewee brought up also, that there are great startups, innovations and products in Finland, but the salespeople are not able to market and sell them properly. The participant added, that startups often expect sales to grow quickly, but the fact is, that it takes time, effort and patience.

The training of Finnish salespeople was seen crucial also. According to one of the interviewees, companies are constantly searching for great salespeople since there are not many truly skilled ones.

In addition to challenges regarding Finnish people, salespeople mentioned few challenges which occur around the world. For example, there are so large amount of various buyer personalities, that it can sometimes be very hard to build different sales pitches according

to these personalities. Also, one interviewee mentioned that even if listening skills are the most valued skill in the sales process, salespeople are not carrying it out very well and they could develop it considerably.

#### **6.4 How sales have evolved in Finland?**

When asking about the evolvement of sales in Finland, almost every one of the salespeople answered, that sales have not actually changed that much, but the tools for both salespeople and consumers to use, have changed a lot within time. One salesperson added, that the sales process with its phases have not changed much at all from 90s to this day, regardless of technological developments.

Two salespersons said, that Finnish people have become busier with their work and everyday lives, and this can be seen to affect to their behaviour. According to the salespersons, the busyness of people makes it harder to reach them. And since Finnish people want to know in very detail about the seller's company and offerings, they choose also very carefully for what they sacrifice the time on.

Interviewees explained also, that the overall selling has increased in Finland. One salesperson narrated, that sales in Finland has become more as American style. The interviewee opened this up by explaining, that salespeople have become braver to take risks, and they understand better that products are not necessary selling themselves. According to the salesperson, the braveness has probably come from the social experiences, meetings, sales pitches and different events, such as Slush and Business Travel Forum. Touching the events, the salesperson brought up also the fact that nowadays people participate in various events much more than they did before. It was speculated, that the reason might be that due to the growth of digitalization, people appreciate these human contacts more.

Every salesperson emphasized, that consumers are very professional and full of knowledge nowadays due to the increase of digitalization, which enables the access to any information, anytime. One salesperson added, that since the selling and digitalization has increased, consumers know also the differences between various contract types, such as temporary contracts and continuous contracts.

Many of the interviewees brought up also, that nowadays consumers are more loyal to brands than before, and they make their decisions more and more by the influence of references.

One salesperson described the changes, which can be seen in telemarketing and stand selling. According to the interviewee, cold calling has decreased slightly, compared to the past. The interviewee continued, that stand selling has changed also. Ten years ago, it was very active and not as systematic and professional as it is nowadays. The salesperson added, that the interest towards stand work has decreased during this period.

Few salespersons discussed also about the differences of the solutions, which are offered to customers. They said, that years ago, salespeople used to offer a "ready" solution to customer, but now there are much more options for customers, and therefore they expect and want more personalized and custom-made solutions. So, the sales approach has become more customer-oriented.

Based on the salespeople's answers, trainings of salespeople have increased considerably, and people want to become professionals in their business areas. It was also mentioned, that even if the development of Finland becoming more international is very slow, the direction is correct. Also, the companies have shared the decision-making inside the company, so nowadays there are many decisionmakers, when before there was only one in each company.

### **Technology and digitalization**

Every salesperson agreed with the fact, that the developing technology and digitalization have shaped sales all around the world, also in Finland. They explained, that both buying and selling has got more digitalized. Buying is possible 24/7, and consumers buys exactly when they want. Consumers buy online especially products and services, which are not that expensive, and which customers know enough of. Consumers tend to buy the more expensive and detailed products from the stores.

It was described, that due to the possibility to buy anywhere online, the competition has grown significantly. Therefore, since it is necessary to stand out from the crowd, companies are more creative and personal with their brands and products.

All interviewees brought up very quickly the subject, that any information can be found very easily online these days. This means, that consumers are much more professional buyers than they were before, and they cannot be fooled anymore. Consumers read reviews, and compare products and services online, which was not possible even ten years ago. Many salespersons mentioned, that now when consumers have so much knowledge, the salespeople must be much more educated about their own offerings than before, so

that they would know something more than consumers. And if salespeople know the same amount of information as consumers, they need to find another way to create extra value. One salesperson's quotation: "Nowadays the customer does not want to meet the salesperson but wants to meet the professional."

Salespeople brought up the wider selection of channels, which can be used in business nowadays. Not so long time ago, these tools were only phone calls, emails and meetings. Now, in addition to those, there are Skype, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Facebook, and other applications which enable to communicate with consumers easily and with only a little effort.

According to the salespeople, LinkedIn is more and more used by salespeople for branding themselves. Social media is used also to market and sell the company online. Salespeople explained, that nowadays, it is not enough to say something to convince consumer about a company or offering, but there needs to be working marketing techniques and clear online support for the sayings. When consumer sees the strong support of webpages and reviews, the trust is created easier. Due to the strong influence of social media, this influential marketing as well as commercial cooperation has increased rapidly.

According to the salespeople, in ten years, CRM and other sales supporting tools have also developed notably. These tools facilitate to target marketing and offers to potential customers. One salesperson reminded, that due to these rapid developments, there are big differences in generations. Older generation can sometimes find it difficult to replace the traditional sales and marketing techniques and tools to the new ones, and younger generations have got more used to these new technologies. Salesperson continued, that it is important to follow and utilize these technologies, since the technology keeps on evolving within time.

Based on the interviewees, due to the growth of digitalization, many customers do not find it that necessary to meet face to face with the salesperson. The meetings are held in Skype as a videocalls, and as other methods. Therefore, the trust can still be built even without having to meet face to face. One salesperson added also, that more than ten years ago, it was easier to sell face to face, since it was the only option. Nowadays it does not feel as natural, due to the other communication possibilities.

## **6.5 Which are the main values in personal selling nowadays?**

When this question was asked from the interviewees, almost all of them noticed that the values have not changed in many years. They said, that even though the values are cli-

chés, they work. These values in personal selling were seen to be *trust building, openness, honesty, transparency, standing out, building long-term relationships, exceeding the expectations, well done preparations, and being own selves.*

Honesty was seen as the most important value. Everything in actions and business should be transparent and open for both sides in order to create trusting and long-term relationships. Keeping promises was seen important, as well as exceeding the expectations when making these promises. "Wise selling" was mentioned to be significant. It was explained, as offering suitable solutions for consumers without fooling them in any way.

One salesperson emphasized the importance of preparation of meetings. They reasoned the importance with the fact that well-done preparation shows respect towards the customer. One interviewee found it also significant to making customer feel better when leaving the stand, phone call or meeting, than when the person felt when starting the communication, regardless of making a deal or not.

Building long-term relationships was seen also as an important value these days. There is much competition, so if aiming to keep a new customer, it is better to take a good care of the communication and the service. According to the salespeople, customers tend to want the same service person repeatedly due to the comfortability and trust.

One of the participants reminded, that salesperson have to always remember own values as well as the values of the represented company. Keeping them in mind, have to decide with which type of companies and customers want to work with. For example, would you work with a company, which uses child labour? In additions to this, it was emphasized that everything is not always as black and white than it might seem.

One salesperson reminded, that thinking too complexly in sales process is unnecessary. The person reasoned it as follows:

"Sales is not a rocket science. Clear communication, getting along, building trust and being own selves is important."

## **6.6 Which are the top qualities of the salesperson?**

The top qualities salespeople brought up, were *perseverance, empathy, honesty, being a good listener, and being able to transform self as a chameleon.* The figure (figure 3) below presents also these characteristics. After the explanation of other significant qualities, the top characteristics are presented in more detail.



Figure 3. The top qualities of the salesperson

Other characteristics considered important, were *consistency*, which refers to the earlier mentioned “wise selling”, being a *good communicator*, being *open*, *keeping up with trends*, having *good presentation skills* as well as being *able to follow-up constantly and justify own points*. In addition, being a *good team player* was seen valuable, since nowadays teamwork is crucial in many companies, and “lonely wolfs” do not succeed as well in companies as they used to.

Other brought up qualities were *having a drive to sell* and *getting excited* of successful events. Also, *being energetic*, *outgoing*, *positive*, *technologically and linguistically talented*, *authentic* and *straightforward* were seen as characteristics which work as assistance in sales. The *eagerness towards trainings and self-development* was also seen noteworthy.

Being able to *bring something new to the solution*, was seen also a very important quality of a salesperson. One salesperson narrated this with the customer’s point of view: “Challenge me, tell me something new, teach me.” In addition to this, *exceeding customer’s expectations* was seen very valuable. One of the interviewees said, that salesperson must promise 100% and deliver 110%.

It was brought up few times, that salespeople must be able to sell themselves, be nice and polite persons as well as trust the offered solution themselves. It was reasoned, that if selling something which salesperson do not believe in themselves, can work only in short-

term, but in a longer period, the disbelief will most likely start to irritate the salesperson themselves, and the attitude will show to customers too. In addition to believing to the solution, it was seen critical for salespeople to believe in their selves, so that the customers see them credible also. One salesperson's quotation: "The great salespeople believe in their selves, their business, and their product."

One salesperson accentuated, that owning a mindset of seeing everyone as equals, is also crucial. According to the participant, there are many great salespeople, who unfortunately forget this value, and start to classify people depending on their looks and backgrounds. In addition to this, asking and receiving constructive feedback from customers at any point of the sales process was seen necessary, in order to develop these improvement-needed areas.

### **Perseverance**

Almost every interviewed salesperson thought, that perseverance is one of the top qualities of the salesperson. By being perseverant, interviewees meant that salesperson must be patient as well as and not be discouraged when sale is not happening.

One salesperson described that there are two ways to sell through phone calls or in stand: selling with volume and convincing everyone. The interviewee explained, that both methods can work well, and depending on the salesperson's character, one or the other is chosen. Selling with volume starts with stopping or calling consumer and asking if they were interested of the certain product or service. If the consumer says no, salesperson moves to next consumer without any more convincing. The other technique of selling was described the opposite way, as trying to convince each and every consumer. This salesperson reminded, that even if it is important to be persistent, have to notice when consumer starts to feel irritated. The salesperson gives an advice how to perform in this type of situation:

"If customer feels irritated, salesperson can joke about something in the end, such as 'okay, that was a good round, you won this time', and then wish a great day."

### **Empathy**

Empathy was seen also as one of the most important quality. The salespeople described empathy as understanding customers and being emotionally intelligent. Reading customers is a very crucial skill in truly understanding them. Many of salespeople said also, that using common sense in the whole sales process is something which have to remember.



## **Honesty and building trust**

Honesty and building trust are also seen as the most valued qualities of salespeople. The interviewees explained that being transparent, natural human being is important in building trust and creating honest relationships. The significance of providing a great first impression was seen crucial, since the first impression will influence to the development of the relationship and the sales process.

The interview participants brought up also, that when salesperson is actively contacting and communicating with customers, it makes them feel important. Therefore, reaching people in suitable channels, according to customers, is significant. Salespeople explained also, that knowing the offered products or services in detail, is valuable for creating trust. They narrated, that responsibility is a quality, which every salesperson should carry out proudly, since they are representing themselves as well as the company.

One salesperson found it very significant to get to know the customers' characteristics and interests well, so that can find some similar interests and bond through them. This is seen to improve the trust. Two of the interviewees mentioned also, that it is valuable to bring something personal to the meeting moment, so that the customer remembers the salesperson and the moment well. The importance of creating good feelings and a comfortable atmosphere was also seen from the interviews.

Salespeople reminded, that we are all human, and we make mistakes. So, admitting, handling and fixing these mistakes is also important for staying honest in business relationships.

## **Good listener**

All the salespeople found good listening skills also crucial. Even if speaking skills were seen important also, one salesperson justified the significance of listening skills simply as follows: "That is why people have two ears and one mouth."

Asking right questions was seen as an important part of the listening. Through sales experiences, salespeople improve their skills in handling with the sales process as efficiently as possible by asking the right questions from customer. When listening the customer, the ability to summarize customer's needs as well as summarize the offered solution, was seen also important. Summarizes create clarity and remove ambiguity.

## **Being a chameleon**

Being able to transform self, was found a very important quality of the salesperson. One interviewee compared the salesperson with a chameleon; as chameleon changes its colours depending on the environment, salespeople must similarly be able to transform themselves according to the way customer is. One salesperson described this skill also as "having the game eye".

Salespeople emphasized, that reading customer is necessary to be able to transform self. They explained, that for example, if customer is very detail-oriented, the salesperson has to also concentrate in details, or if customer is straightforward, the salesperson must be able to be that also, and so on. Also, consumers have different decision-making styles, so this should be taken into account especially when dealing with the objections.

Few interviewees suggested also, that salespeople must remember to dress properly, depending on where they go and who they meet. One salesperson said, that if dressing very differently than the customer or as the environment is, there is often a thick barrier between the people, and therefore the trust and comfortability might be harder to establish.

### **6.7 How would you see sales changing in the future?**

For the interviewees, this was seen as the hardest question, since predicting future is not easy. The mostly spoken change was the technological developments and digitalization, and their influence for sales.

One salesperson said:

"Due to the development of technology, everything will become more effective and faster. World has become a small place, and it will become even smaller."

All the salespeople agreed that the role of evolved technology will grow and grow and therefore in the future there will be less physical contact between salespeople and customers. The salespeople added, that digital channels will be used more and more, since they give a huge support in the whole sales process. Regardless of the increase of digitalization, many salespeople had the same opinion on the idea, that salespeople would always be needed, even if the need of them will decrease. One salesperson believed, that when everything gets so digitalized, people start to appreciate the rare moments, when having face to face meetings.

Salespeople predicted, that new sales tools will be established and developed, and the way of presenting own products and services will get more digitalized. The easiness of marketing was also brought up. Few salespersons discussed, that marketing has and will become easier and easier, due to the developing CRM tools and other similar aids.

Few salespersons brought up, that since the influence of references on consumers is strong, it will keep on having an important part in decision-making. As it can be seen in today's world, consumers are not easily fooled. Consequently, few salespeople believe, that due to the professionalism and knowledge of consumers, the fooling will decrease notably.

According to the interviewees, people will get more open towards new technologies and people will be braver in taking risks as well as more international. Interviewees predicted also, that the value of time will stay as high as it is or increase even more. Therefore, people want to get larger amount of information about the companies and their offerings before deciding to spend more time on them.

Salespeople predicted, that people will buy more products and services online, because it is easy and effortless, especially when knowing exactly own wants and needs. Many salespeople mentioned also, that due to the wide selection of various products and services, consumers want and will want even more to purchase customized solutions. One salesperson continued, that the products are already transformed and customized for consumers with the assistance of augmented reality tools, which' usage will increase significantly in the future.

One salesperson wished, that in the near future their company could provide more experiential service for consumers, as a form of livelier and more enjoyable stands. The salesperson continued, that if this could be made true, the threats about shopping centers not allowing stands and their workers to their property, would decrease. It was believed also, that telemarketing would decrease more as time passes, and maybe new laws on restricting cold calling would be put into effect.

In the end of the interview, one salesperson added, that the 80/20 rule has applied on business for a long time and will most likely keep on applying in the future. The 80/20 rule means, that 80% of the outcomes come from 20% of inputs.

## 6.8 Other comments

In addition to answering to the seven core interview questions, the participants gave some other comments regarding on sales work. The comments are presented here as quotations.

“Sales is an interesting subject due to the fact, that it happens in people’s everyday life.”

“Being a B2B salesperson is really cool, because can visit and see very different and large companies.”

“It is great that salespeople can influence to their own job and salary much, since they get commission salaries.”

“The sold product or service does not have to be interesting at all, but the other parts of the job, such as processes, travelling and meeting people, might be very fascinating.”

“I see my employer as my customer. I bring extra value to the company by always doing the job so well that can pay myself back. I make myself irreplaceable”

Two interviewees told also their “sales mottos”. They are as follows:

“Believe in yourself and everything will be fine.”

“With positive attitude you solve everything.”

## **7 Discussion**

This thesis' aim was to expand the understanding and knowledge of how sales have developed within time from 1870s to this day, as well as how the sales and personal selling are expected to evolve in the future. The theory part concentrated on sales globally and the implemented research focused on sales in Finland. In this section, the core findings of the theory and the research are presented, by answering to the two core questions of this thesis. In addition to this, further research suggestions and own learning reflections are expressed.

### **7.1 Conclusions**

When comparing the theory subjects' relevance to the development of the personal selling and the findings of the research, it can be seen, that there truly is a strong connection between the theory topics and the characteristics and development of personal selling.

Based on the theory and the interviews, personal selling was described as a personal process, where the salesperson is very self-imposed and independent when communicating with the customer. Personal selling is seen to consist mainly of face to face meetings and video-calls. The most valuable characteristics of personal selling was found out to be the rapport building, building long-term relationships, honesty, transparency, standing out, being own selves, exceeding the expectations and well-done preparations.

According to the researched data, two centuries ago, personal selling was already seen globally as door to door selling, and since then, the sales approaches have shaped and developed within the time, by the influence of changing consumer behaviour and trends, increased competition, and developed technology. Based on the theory research, nowadays the most used sales approaches are consultative, partnering and value-added selling approaches.

Well, what about the development of sales in Finland? It was found out from the carried-out research, that sales process does not seem to have changed that much over the years. According to the research participants, overall selling has increased in Finland within time and people have become busier and busier. Therefore, reaching people and arranging meetings with them have become harder.

Based on the findings, salespeople have become braver and more international, and sales approach has shaped to be more customer oriented. Therefore, customized products and services are sold more than before. The research shows also, that trainings of

salespeople have increased considerably. Consumers in Finland are seen to be more loyal to brands than before and to make decisions mostly based on references.

The research shows, that the biggest development of sales in Finland has been the influence of developed technology and the increased digitalization. Both, buying and selling, has got more digitalized. Now when buying is possible anywhere and anytime, competition has grown notably, and companies must stand out from the crowd.

According to the research, consumers have become also very professional buyers, since the technology provides access to any data online. Consumers read reviews and compare offerings online, and that was not possible even ten years ago. Consumers' knowledge has increased much, and that means that salespeople have to be more educated and professional than before.

Based on the findings, wider selection of channels is used nowadays in sales and marketing. In addition to calling, emails and meeting face to face, communicating with customers happen now also through Skype, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Facebook. Due to the wide selection of channels and the easy usage of them, face to face meetings have decreased. Also, influential marketing and commercial cooperation has increased. It has become important to market online, since it works as a sales support by creating credibility for consumers.

The research shows one more evolvement of sales in Finland. According to the research participants, CRM and other similar tools have developed notably within ten years. Nowadays it is easier to target marketing to potential customers. As seen from the research, the development of technology has a huge part in the evolvement of sales in Finland. And the technology is seen to continue to have the strongest influence in selling becoming even more digitalized.

## **7.2 Further research suggestions**

As the participants of this research were all salespeople, who explained their views about the issues of the questions regarding sales, it could be fascinating to hear the consumers' side of these issues. As a suggestion, the further research could be implemented by asking consumers very similar questions, such as how they see the appearance of consumer behaviour in Finland and which they see as the challenges in the behaviour and so on. Similarly, the influence of consumer behaviour to sales and its' development could be asked.

Another further research could be implemented regarding the influences of decision-making of the consumers. It could be very alluring to compare the reliability and preferred options of all these influences. Through this type of research could be found, if consumers make decisions based on the most reliable influences, and if these decisions are made more rationally or emotionally.

### **7.3 Learning reflections**

I decided the thesis subject on December 2018 and the thesis process started officially in the end of January in 2019. Since the beginning of the process, I was confident about the interest to write about personal selling and its' evolvement. Nevertheless, I felt a lot of confusion about the theory topics and the research. The confusion occurred, because I chose many irrelevant theory topics in the beginning.

I started writing the theory part right away on January. This two-month lasting writing phase went smoothly and quickly. After that, I started to plan the research, its' questions and possible interviewees. During this planning period, I was executing also one other school assignment, and therefore time went very fast. I started to contact the interviewee candidates in the middle-end of April. I learned, that it was quite late timing, since many of these interview participants were busy, and the suitable times for them were the very end of April and beginning of May.

The interviews were the best part of the thesis process. I learned a lot from the interviewees and their companies. I also got to give my CV to one of them, since the conversation felt so natural. The last interview was held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> of May, and due to that, the results and discussion had to be written in less than a week. The scheduling of the interviews and writing of the research results were my biggest challenges due to the limited amount of time.

The thesis process lasted around four months, and overall, I see that it went successfully. I learned a lot about personal selling and the topics surrounding it. I learned how sales approach has changed and developed from 1870s. I learned also much about the sales in Finland. I was educated the most through the challenges, which I faced during the thesis process. Through the challenges I found out, how the text should be organized in suitable order and how the writing and meetings should be planned and scheduled wisely. The thesis process was exciting, nerve-racking and educational experience.

## References

Ahamad, S. & Sekhar, N. 2014. Family Members Role in Purchase Decision Making. Abhinav Publication. India. URL: [https://abhinavjournal.com/journal/index.php/ISSN-2320-0073/article/download/370/pdf\\_97](https://abhinavjournal.com/journal/index.php/ISSN-2320-0073/article/download/370/pdf_97). Accessed: 21 April 2019.

Ahearne, M., Manning, G. & Reece, B. 2014. Selling Today – Partnering to Create Value. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson Education. London.

Aidla, A., Kõiv L. & Reinumägi, D. 2016. Improving Personal Sales Performance by Considering Customer Personality Traits. GSTF. URL: <file:///C:/Users/Isa/Downloads/872-25-2444-1-10-20180104.pdf>. Accessed: 13 Feb 2019.

Armstrong, G. & Kotler, P. 2010. Principles of Marketing. 13th ed. Pearson Education. Upper Saddle River. URL: [https://books.google.fi/books?id=ZW2u5LOmbs4C&pg=PA446&lpg=PA446&dq=personal+selling+also+calling&source=bl&ots=BZ-iz40cuj&sig=ACfU3U1qzx2n\\_sdbzEG1F4snk-Ts5co79A&hl=fi&sa=X&ved=2ahU-KEwjM46Hd9pzhAhXbxMQBHVYrDQU4ChDoATAJegQIBxAB#v=onepage&q=personal%20selling%20also%20calling&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?id=ZW2u5LOmbs4C&pg=PA446&lpg=PA446&dq=personal+selling+also+calling&source=bl&ots=BZ-iz40cuj&sig=ACfU3U1qzx2n_sdbzEG1F4snk-Ts5co79A&hl=fi&sa=X&ved=2ahU-KEwjM46Hd9pzhAhXbxMQBHVYrDQU4ChDoATAJegQIBxAB#v=onepage&q=personal%20selling%20also%20calling&f=false). Accessed: 25 March 2019.

Avila, R. & Inks, S. 2017. The Evolution of the Sales Process: Relationship Selling Versus the Challenger Sales. ResearchGate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319851576\\_The\\_Evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Sales\\_Process\\_Relationship\\_Selling\\_Versus\\_the\\_Challenger\\_Sales](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319851576_The_Evolution_of_the_Sales_Process_Relationship_Selling_Versus_the_Challenger_Sales). Accessed: 6 May 2019.

Avila, R., Ingram, T., LaForge, R., Schwegker, C. & Williams, M. 2008. Professional Selling: A Trust-Based Approach. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Thomson Learning. Ohio.

Awario. 2019. Social Selling. URL: <https://awario.com/files/learning-pdf-social-selling.pdf>. Accessed: 27 April 2019.

Bäckström, L. 2008. Personal Selling and Relationships. Luleå University of Technology. Luleå. URL: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:999559/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. Accessed: 25 March 2019.



Balle, L. 2019. The Effect of Price on Consumer Buying Behavior. Leaf Group Ltd. URL: <https://bizfluent.com/info-7905922-effect-price-consumer-buying-behavior.html>. Accessed: 21 April 2019.

Belonax, J., McCardle, M., Newell, S. & Plank, R. 2011. The Effect of Personal Relationship and Consultative Task Behaviors on Buyer Perceptions of Salesperson Trust, Expertise, and Loyalty. Taylor & Francis Ltd. Abingdon. URL: [https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-he-  
lia.fi/docview/875462377/fulltextPDF/5BA207341C3743BEPQ/4?accountid=27436](https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-he-<br/>lia.fi/docview/875462377/fulltextPDF/5BA207341C3743BEPQ/4?accountid=27436). Accessed: 15 March 2019.

Blythe, J. 2012. Essentials of Marketing. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson Education. London.

Borden, N. 1964. The Concept of the Marketing Mix. Journal of Advertising Research. UK. URL: [http://www.guillaumenicaise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Borden-1984\\_The-concept-of-marketing-mix.pdf](http://www.guillaumenicaise.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Borden-1984_The-concept-of-marketing-mix.pdf). Accessed: 10 March 2019.

Bova, T. 2018. 5 Emerging Trends That Will Shape the Future of Sales. Salesforce.com. URL: <https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2018/10/5-emerging-trends-that-will-shape-future-sales.html>. Accessed: 28 April 2019.

Bradford, K. & Weitz, B. 1999. Personal Selling and Sales Management: A Relationship Marketing Perspective. SAGE Publications. URL: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/aca-  
demia.edu.documents/30476796/chapter\\_9\\_-\\_13\\_weitz\\_and\\_bradford.pdf?AWSAccess-  
KeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1550046668&Signature=2UDfLE9ZXMzz-  
mpBbu8UBj0mKy9U%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPer-  
sonal\\_selling\\_and\\_sales\\_management\\_a.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/30476796/chapter_9_-_13_weitz_and_bradford.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1550046668&Signature=2UDfLE9ZXMzz-mpBbu8UBj0mKy9U%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DPersonal_selling_and_sales_management_a.pdf). Accessed: 13 Feb 2019.

Brandstetter, R., Bruijn, H., Byrne, M., Deslauriers, H., Förchner, M., Macháčová, J., Orologa, A. & Scoppetta, A. 2006. Successful partnerships – a guide. OECD LEED. Vienna. URL: <https://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/36279186.pdf>. Accessed: 18 March 2019.

Bubnjević, D. 2011. Position and role of personal selling in contemporary marketing management. EMC. Zrenjanin. URL: <http://www.tfzr.uns.ac.rs/emc/emc2011/Files/E%2007.pdf>. Accessed: 12 March 2019.

Business Finance Articles. 2019. Sales Approaches. URL: [https://businessfinancear-  
ticles.org/sales-approaches](https://businessfinancearticles.org/sales-approaches). Accessed: 28 April 2019.

- Cant, M. & Heerden, H. 2004. Personal Selling. Juta and Co Ltd. Lansdowne.
- Ching, H. 2007. Strategic selling. Progress-U Ltd. Hong Kong. URL: [http://archive.progressu.com/downloads/s-ezine\\_2007-8.pdf](http://archive.progressu.com/downloads/s-ezine_2007-8.pdf). Accessed: 24 March 2019.
- Cho, S. 2001. Influence of consumer age and clothing type of salesperson on consumer satisfaction with salesperson's performance. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. URL: [https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/32042/siwon\\_thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/bitstream/handle/10919/32042/siwon_thesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed: 4 March 2019.
- Chunawalla, S. 2008. Sales Management with Personal Selling – Salesmanship. Global Media. URL: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/haaga/reader.action?docID=3011404>. Accessed: 12 March 2019.
- Chuo, J. 1992. A Conceptual Framework for the Marketing of Tourism. University of Pretoria. URL: <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/29847/Complete.pdf?sequence=5>. Accessed: 21 Feb 2019.
- Crossman, A. 2019. An Overview of Qualitative Research Methods. ThoughtCo. URL: <https://www.thoughtco.com/qualitative-research-methods-3026555>. Accessed: 3 May 2019.
- Croston, R., Murray, J. & Schultz, M. 2016. The Future of Consultative Selling. RAIN Group. URL: [https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/123161/PDFs/The\\_Future\\_of\\_Consultative\\_Selling.pdf?t=1517543125550](https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/123161/PDFs/The_Future_of_Consultative_Selling.pdf?t=1517543125550). Accessed: 13 March 2019.
- Dictionary.com. Nd. Peddler. URL: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/peddler>. Accessed: 19 March 2019.
- Dominici, G. 2009. From Marketing Mix to E-Marketing Mix: a Literature Overview and Classification. Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41891479\\_From\\_Marketing\\_Mix\\_to\\_e-Marketing\\_Mix\\_a\\_literature\\_overview\\_and\\_classification](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41891479_From_Marketing_Mix_to_e-Marketing_Mix_a_literature_overview_and_classification). Accessed: 11 March 2019.
- Durmaz, Y. & Taşdemir, A. 2014. A Theoretical Approach to the Influence of Social Class on Consumer Behavior. Hasan Kalyoncu University. Turkey. URL: [http://www.aijssnet.com/journals/Vol\\_3\\_No\\_3\\_May\\_2014/18.pdf](http://www.aijssnet.com/journals/Vol_3_No_3_May_2014/18.pdf). Accessed: 22 April 2019.

Durmaz, Y. 2014. The Influence of Cultural Factors on Consumer Buying Behaviour and an Application in Turkey. Global Journals Inc. USA. URL: [https://globaljournals.org/GJMBR\\_Volume14/4-The-Influence-of-Cultural-Factors-on.pdf](https://globaljournals.org/GJMBR_Volume14/4-The-Influence-of-Cultural-Factors-on.pdf). Accessed: 21 April 2019.

Ellis, N., Fitchett, J., Higgins, M., Jack, G., Lim, M., Saran, M. & Tadajewski, M. 2011. Introducing the History of Marketing Theory and Practise. Sage. Thousand Oaks. URL: [http://www.handboekonlinemarketing.nl/HOM4materiaal/hom4\\_historyof\\_37775\\_02\\_Eliss\\_et\\_al\\_Ch\\_01.pdf](http://www.handboekonlinemarketing.nl/HOM4materiaal/hom4_historyof_37775_02_Eliss_et_al_Ch_01.pdf). Accessed: 12 March 2019.

Eriksson, P. 2010. Partnering: What is it, when should it be used, and how should it be implemented? Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227609855\\_Partnering\\_What\\_is\\_it\\_when\\_should\\_it\\_be\\_used\\_and\\_how\\_should\\_it\\_be\\_implemented](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/227609855_Partnering_What_is_it_when_should_it_be_used_and_how_should_it_be_implemented). Accessed: 17 March 2019.

Fatemi, F. 2019. Why Design Thinking Is The Future Of Sales. Forbes. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/falonfatemi/2019/01/15/why-design-thinking-is-the-future-of-sales/#631ef2454683>. Accessed: 28 April 2019.

Goi, C. 2009. A Review of Marketing Mix: 4Ps or More? CCSE. URL: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.656.1894&rep=rep1&type=pdf>. Accessed: 10 March 2019.

Haradhan, K. 2018. Qualitative Research Methodology in Social Sciences and Related Subjects. Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People. URL: [https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/85654/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_85654.pdf](https://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/85654/1/MPRA_paper_85654.pdf). Accessed: 3 May 2019.

Helinski, J. 2019. Competitor Objection? No Problem! Sales Fuel. URL: <http://salesfuel.com/competitor-objection-no-problem/>. Accessed: 22 April 2019.

Heuvel, D. 2012. Selling in the shadows: peddlers and hawkers in early modern Europe. Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271487043\\_Selling\\_in\\_the\\_shadows\\_peddlers\\_and\\_hawkers\\_in\\_early\\_modern\\_Europe](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271487043_Selling_in_the_shadows_peddlers_and_hawkers_in_early_modern_Europe). Accessed: 19 March 2019.

Hollman, W. & Kleiner, B. 1997. Establishing rapport: the secret business tool to success. Emerald Group Publishing Lt. Bedford. URL: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/docview/198172211/4A2D6FC918CF4ACEPQ/30?accountid=27436>. Accessed: 1 March 2019.

Hopkins, T. & Katt, B. 2014. When buyers say no: essential strategies for keeping a sale moving forward. Business Plus. New York.

Iryniuk, V. 2018. 25 Powerful Open-Ended Questions to Boost Sales. Business 2 Community. URL: <https://www.business2community.com/sales-management/25-powerful-open-ended-questions-boost-sales-02016506>. Accessed: 22 April 2019.

Jobber, D. & Lancaster, G. 2015. Selling and Sales Management. Pearson. URL: <https://www-dawsonera-com.ezproxy.haaga-helia.fi/readonline/9781292078038>. Accessed: 13 Feb 2019.

Kanuk, L. & Schiffman, L. 2007. Consumer Behavior. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. Pearson Education. Upper Saddle River.

Kaski, T., Niemi, J. & Pullins, E. 2017. Rapport building in authentic B2B sales interactions. URL: [https://hhmoodle.haaga-helia.fi/pluginfile.php/1019810/mod\\_resource/content/1/IMM\\_Kaski%20et%20al\\_Rapport%20building%20in%20B2B%20sales%20interaction\\_accepted%20and%20waiting%20for%20publication.pdf](https://hhmoodle.haaga-helia.fi/pluginfile.php/1019810/mod_resource/content/1/IMM_Kaski%20et%20al_Rapport%20building%20in%20B2B%20sales%20interaction_accepted%20and%20waiting%20for%20publication.pdf). Accessed: 13 Feb 2019.

Keelson, S. 2012. The Evolution of the Marketing Concepts: Theoretically Different Roads Leading to Practically Same Destination. Takoradi Polytechnic. Takoradi. URL: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c4fd/0cf9cdf5af0e9c8ce7574f7f095b67372c73.pdf>. Accessed: 19 March 2019.

Kupchik, K. 2018. The sales survival handbook: cold calls, commissions, and caffeine addiction – the real truth about life in sales. AMACOM. New York.

Laurila, V. 2016. Social Selling B2B Palvelumyynnissä – Myynnin uudet työkalut. The-seus. URL: [https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/113914/Laurila\\_Vesa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/113914/Laurila_Vesa.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed: 27 April 2019.

Macintosh, G. 2009. The role of rapport in professional services: antecedents and outcomes. Emerald Group Publishing Lt. Santa Barbara. URL: <https://search-proquest->

com.ezproxy.haaga-he-  
lia.fi/docview/212656247/fulltextPDF/B305D504073F40C3PQ/3?accountid=27436. Accessed: 1 March 2019.

Mahapatra, R., Padhy, S. & Sahu, A. 2008. Application of 4Ps to Marketing the Information Product & services in Academic Libraries. Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271967244\\_Application\\_of\\_4Ps\\_to\\_Marketing\\_the\\_Information\\_Product\\_services\\_in\\_Academic\\_Libraries](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271967244_Application_of_4Ps_to_Marketing_the_Information_Product_services_in_Academic_Libraries). Accessed: 11 March 2019.

McLeod, S. 2017. What's the difference between qualitative and quantitative research? Simply Psychology. URL: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/qualitative-quantitative.html>. Accessed: 3 May 2019.

McQuaid, R. 2000. The theory of partnership: Why have partnerships? Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291300642\\_The\\_theory\\_of\\_partnership\\_Why\\_have\\_partnerships](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291300642_The_theory_of_partnership_Why_have_partnerships). Accessed: 18 March 2019.

Meyer, D. 2013. Impact of location-based services on consumers' buying behaviour, illustrated by the German market. Grin. URL: <https://www.grin.com/document/299774>. Accessed: 22 April 2019.

Moore, E. & Wilkie, W. 2003. Scholarly Research in Marketing: Explore the "4 Eras" of Thought Development. Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235363409\\_Scholarly\\_Research\\_in\\_Marketing\\_Exploring\\_the\\_4\\_Eras\\_of\\_Thought\\_Development](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235363409_Scholarly_Research_in_Marketing_Exploring_the_4_Eras_of_Thought_Development). Accessed: 10 March 2019.

Nyström, J. 2007. Partnering: definition, theory and evaluation. Royal Institute of Technology. Stockholm. URL: <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:11936/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. Accessed: 17 March 2019.

Ollila, I., Parvinen, P., Rosendahl, N., Thomas, A. & Töytäri, P. 2011. Bridging the theory to application gap in value-based selling. The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing. Santa Barbara. URL: <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.haaga-he-lia.fi/docview/888252810/fulltextPDF/C417F584BA4E4187PQ/2?accountid=27436>. Accessed: 27 April 2019.

Pellicelli, A. 2003. Strategic Alliances. University of Piemonte Orientale. Novara. URL: <https://iris.unito.it/retrieve/handle/2318/1644638/350478/1231-5750-1-PB.pdf>. Accessed: 17 March 2019.

Pratap, A. 2019. Effect of Demographic Factors on Consumer Behavior: Age, sex, Income and Education. Notesmatic. URL: <https://notesmatic.com/2017/07/effect-of-demographic-factors-on-consumer-behavior-age-sex-income-and-education/>. Accessed: 18 April 2019.

Reilly, T. 2008. What is Value-Added Selling? AISC. URL: [https://www.aisc.org/globalassets/modern-steel/archives/2008/07/2008v07\\_what\\_is\\_value.pdf](https://www.aisc.org/globalassets/modern-steel/archives/2008/07/2008v07_what_is_value.pdf). Accessed: 27 April 2019.

Riaz, W. & Tanveer, M. 2017. Marketing Mix, Not Branding. Research Gate. URL: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267798158\\_Marketing\\_Mix\\_Not\\_Branding](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267798158_Marketing_Mix_Not_Branding). Accessed: 10 March 2019.

Sahaf, M. 2013. Strategic Marketing: Making Decisions for Strategic Advantage. PHI Learning Private Ltd. Delhi. URL: [https://books.google.fi/books?id=8DP4eGI4iNAC&pg=PT381&lpg=PT381&dq=partnering+era&source=bl&ots=luWP-PYGNLT&sig=ACfU3U3H1btOx1QfKaSbTrWC\\_\\_BDvWkgMw&hl=fi&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiToIXu2PLgAhWFilsKHS5Wai4Q6AEwCXoECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=partnering%20era&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?id=8DP4eGI4iNAC&pg=PT381&lpg=PT381&dq=partnering+era&source=bl&ots=luWP-PYGNLT&sig=ACfU3U3H1btOx1QfKaSbTrWC__BDvWkgMw&hl=fi&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiToIXu2PLgAhWFilsKHS5Wai4Q6AEwCXoECAMQAQ#v=onepage&q=partnering%20era&f=false). Accessed: 15 March 2019.

Serrat, O. 2010. Design Thinking. Asian Development Bank. Philippines. URL: [https://my-courses.aalto.fi/pluginfile.php/369021/mod\\_resource/content/1/design-thinking.pdf](https://my-courses.aalto.fi/pluginfile.php/369021/mod_resource/content/1/design-thinking.pdf). Accessed: 28 April 2019.

Signorelli, B. 2018. The Future of Sales: Predictions from the “Nostradamus’s” of Selling. HubSpot. URL: <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/future-of-sales-predictions>. Accessed: 28 April 2019.

Stevenson, R. 2005. Business Administration Principles of Marketing. 20<sup>th</sup> ed. Politeknik NSC Surabaya. Jawa. URL: [https://nscpolteksby.ac.id/ebook/files/Ebook/Business%20Administration/Principles%20of%20Marketing%204th%20edition%20\(2005\)/Chapter%20Nineteen%20-%20Personal%20selling%20and%20direct%20marketing.pdf](https://nscpolteksby.ac.id/ebook/files/Ebook/Business%20Administration/Principles%20of%20Marketing%204th%20edition%20(2005)/Chapter%20Nineteen%20-%20Personal%20selling%20and%20direct%20marketing.pdf). Accessed: 25 March 2019.

Tadajewski, M. 2011. Correspondence sales education in the early twentieth century: The case of The Sheldon School (1902-39). Taylor & Francis Group. URL: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/34658348/ContentServer.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1553030189&Signature=BlalO7Md6JYfCMQTwr092ufOoIU%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DCorrespondence\\_Sales\\_education\\_in\\_the\\_ea.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/34658348/ContentServer.pdf?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAIWOWYYGZ2Y53UL3A&Expires=1553030189&Signature=BlalO7Md6JYfCMQTwr092ufOoIU%3D&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3DCorrespondence_Sales_education_in_the_ea.pdf). Accessed: 19 March 2019.

Tharakan, K. Nd. Post Sale Reassurance. Strategy Peak. URL: <https://strategypeak.com/post-sale-reassurance/>. Accessed: 22 April 2019.

Tracy, B. 2007. The art of closing the sale: the key to making more money faster in the world of professional selling. Thomas Nelson. Tennessee.

Tunkkari, S. 2017. Cultural Similarities and Differences in Consumer Behaviour. Theseus. URL: [https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/125345/Tunkkari\\_Siobhan1.pdf?sequence=1](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/125345/Tunkkari_Siobhan1.pdf?sequence=1). Accessed: 21 April 2019.

Veirman, M. 2015. The effectiveness of Hard versus Soft Sell Appeals in Online Advertising. URL: <https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8124381/file/8133817.pdf>. Accessed: 20 March 2019.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1. Interview Questions**

1. How would you define personal selling?
2. What is special about sales in Finland?
3. What challenges exist on sales in Finland?
4. How sales have evolved in Finland?
5. Which are the main values in personal selling nowadays?
6. Which are the top qualities of the salesperson?
7. How would you see sales changing in the future?