



Impact of sales argumentation on value-added service activation

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The purpose of this MBA thesis is to study the correlation between a Nordic service providers outbound telesales operation, its sales persuasion and the end customer's take-into-use ratio and behaviour. The aim is to understand how sales speech content, and sales argumentation impact customer behaviour, and whether a service is taken into use. The service examined in the study is F-Secure's data protection product which is sold by multiple service providers globally.</p> <p>The study found support that the sales event itself and the used sales argumentation and its timing have impact on end user behaviour. As initially expected, sales speech timing and the quality of sales speech value-add argumentation were found to impact end user behaviour.</p> <p>The service provider requested to remain anonymous in the study. The thesis writer was permitted access to the service providers sales call recordings, which enabled a study of correlations between these topics.</p>	
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FOREWORD

I would like to thank my wife Päivi who supported me through my MBA degree studies and eventually during the thesis writing process. I also want to thank my daughter Meri for proofreading and commenting on not only my thesis, but many papers during this journey of the MBA studies at Arcada UAS.

Thank you, Arcada University of Applied Sciences, for giving me the possibility to study in the MBA program with magnificent colleagues during these three years.

There are many close friends of mine who have gotten MBA's, Masters, Ph.D.'s and other degrees earlier than me; and it has been a great pleasure to talk with all of you and to develop my thinking while studying in this MBA program.

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Abbreviations

API: Application program interface, a technical interface for automatic interactions of systems.

Bundle: A bundled service means a service whose cost is embedded typically to be sold along with the core product of a service provider.

B2B2C Business to Business to Consumer, a value chain from a company to another partnering company serving an end-customer also known as a consumer

Churn: The phenomenon of customers leaving a service provider also known as the turnover of customers of a company

HBR Harvard Business Review is a well-known business magazine

PKM Persuasion Knowledge Model, a high-level model that defines parties and subjects of persuasion episodes

NPS: Net promoter score is a typical method for service providers to measure customer satisfaction.

Service provider: An entity providing services to a business and/or a consumer, for example, a teleoperator.

VAS: Value Added Service, a service that is typically not a core product of the service provider and it typically has a price per month.

Active service: A customer has taken into use one or more installation of a security service.

Inactive service: A customer has **not** taken into use any number of installations of a security service.

1 INTRODUCTION

Cyber security is a worldwide problem for both consumers and for corporations. These days, there is a new story in the news every day about stolen user credentials, stolen personal identities or a hacked company that is either unable to produce their services or products, or they are under a ransom process due to their immaterial property being stolen or encrypted. Studies have reported for some years already that the costs of cybercrime are growing with double digit numbers every year according report by Morgan (2020) — not to mention the impact on individuals losing their digital identities and/or digital property. Cyber security has already been for years and remains a growing global challenge.

F-Secure has been selling white label security services via service providers for more than 20 years and it is a world leading security provider globally among service providers. The core idea of F-Secure is to provide technical APIs, actual security products and necessary reporting systems easily available to service providers. The security service can be co-branded using a service partner's colours and logos to support the service partner's business and branding image. This is a large business area for F-Secure and in the annual report in 2020 consumer business revenue was approximately 100 million euros, representing 45% of overall revenue of F-Secure in 2020 (F-Secure, 2020).

However, no business works perfectly in all possible areas, and this applies also to the F-Secure consumer business model. There is always a certain percentage of customers who do not take the bought value-add service into use. This in practise means that a service is bought, but not taken into use. The activation of the service typically requires some sort of installation of a software to a consumer's device. For NPS and customer satisfaction reasons, some service providers terminate the service automatically if a customer does not take a recently bought service into use. The author of this thesis works at F-Secure and based on the long-term experience of the author, these inactive customers are considered churn sensitive customers.

Over the years, another observation that has been made from analysing different metrics and areas of security services is that some customers do not even open the emails and/or SMS-messages that provide the take-into-use instructions. If customers do not open the emails or other messages, it is likely they will not take the actual service into use either. This problem is causing revenue losses as well as customer dissatisfaction in the long term, as customers do not like to pay for something they do not use.

The phenomenon of inactive customers described above typically accounts for a small to medium portion out of all sold security products depending on the country, culture, implementation, messaging and many other variables. When that portion is multiplied by the number of our customers, the total number is large. The main target of this thesis is to examine whether sales argumentation and sales behaviour have impact on the end customer take-into-use ratio. Lastly, rule number one when it comes to security services: a security service *not installed and not used does not provide support of any kind*.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to research whether sales arguments and sales behaviour have an impact on the take-into-use ratio of a security service. The aim is to research how the data protection product is sold by the service provider's telesales agents, and how this impacts customer behaviour and the customer journey towards an installed software to protect the customer's devices. More specifically, the target is to identify parameters from sales calls such as timing for sales arguments, and content and quality arguments of a sales persuasion. Content of sales argument is for example how well product is explained and argued to a consumer, and as well as how well a customer need is resolved. Resolving this overall sales argued for usage and impact would bring significant benefit to the F-Secure consumer business.

For privacy reasons the name of the service provider company is not mentioned, therefore it will be referred to as “the service provider” from now on in this thesis.

1.2 Research questions

The research questions for this thesis are the following:

RQ1: Is there correlation between the quality and other key parameters of the sales call and end customers VAS product activation?

RQ2: Are there identified patterns with-in sales calls that impact end customers VAS product activation?

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has six chapters: The introduction defines the purpose, research questions, definitions and limitations of this study. The literature review will review existing literature and other theses from this area of research. The methodology chapter defines the methods and used to address the research problems. The findings chapter will discuss results from multiple angles. The discussion chapter will discuss results in detail correlated to actual market and business function. The last chapter conclusions will present the final findings and recommend future research.

1.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework consists of theories from classical philosophy, in which explains the main themes of discourse analysis and were initially created by Aristotle. Aristotle defined themes such as timing, credibility and logic as the key components of persuasion and argumentation. Many modern sales persuasion theories are developed based on Aristotle’s persuasion theories, as an example from Sorri (2017). On the other hand, in general a customer seeks solutions for their problems, and they are after easy understandable and logical solutions. This in general is measured as perceived value-add experience of a customer. The European ECSI model provides (Haafte, 2017) and as well as a relationship model developed by Crosby et al (1990) acts as key pillars of value-add delivery subjects, that

helped developing theoretical model for this thesis. The model for internal measure - sales persuasion capability - were also supported by PKM model developed by Friestad et al (1994). The PKM model explained illustrated sales event parties and events taking place on persuasion episode hence it supported theory model development to this thesis.

1.5 Method

The method created for and used in this thesis is a correlation matrix that measures certain sales persuasion patterns and their correlation to each other. This required developing a list of a sales persuasion parameters that were examined from the service provider's sales calls, and further analysed to find out which parameters to impact a customer's take-into-use-ratio of a security service.

This developed method is supported by the theory of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the European ECSI model studied by both Martensen et al. (2000) and Haaften (2017). This work is also supported by the theory of persuasion, developed by the Ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC). The theory of persuasion defines key themes for successful persuasion, such as emotion, logic, timing and momentum. These are the corner stones of the theoretical framework that the developed method is based on. Research regarding sales agent listening skills by Castleberry et al. (1999) gave motivation for analytical model how to create items to measure and to further analyse them using the Pearson correlation model (Statistics Solutions, 2022).

Regarding the quantitative aspect of this study, data saturation theories by Guest et al. (2006) and Morse (1995) were used to identify the smallest, but still trustworthy amount of examined samples. All of the research and theories described above explained in detail in the literature review of this thesis.

1.6 Limitations

This thesis studies the phenomenon only in one sales channel known as outbound sales. Behaviour of customers is likely to be somewhat different in other channels, as outbound channel are telesales calls from teleoperator towards end customer, without prior notification of upcoming calls. Therefore, these are also called as cold calls.

Also, this study does not address the customer side. It mainly concentrates on the sales call and its results, which leaves a significant area of customer interpretation unaddressed. Service providers may run multiple different types of sales campaign models, in this study the product had a free trial, which is also known as a one free month approach.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review focuses on three main areas. Firstly, it explores existing research on the role of sales management for achieving quality goals with sales teams. Sales management is in the position to manage sales and sales channels and behaviour hence playing a key role in the actual implementation of a selected strategy. Therefore, this section also touches on sales process and sales methodology development and alternatives available, as they often give models and guidance to companies. As the writer of this thesis works at the F-Secure Ltd, their inhouse model is also represented here as an example of how service provider partner sales channels and operation can be analysed and managed in co-operational model.

Secondly, to create customer-centric communication this literature review discusses sales rhetoric models, their origins and how they still impact modern day sales processes. The focus is given to sales psychology and argumentation, but the impact of philosophical history to modern day implementations is also touched on.

Thirdly, the literature review looks into the customer satisfaction and loyalty model, how this qualitative aspect is researched and how it may impact the big picture of customer behaviour in relation to the research questions. Sheth et al. have researched customer-centric marketing and its means and methods, and they summarize this approach in the following way “Customer-centric marketing emphasizes understanding and satisfying the needs, wants and resources of individual consumers and customers rather than those of mass markets and mass segments” (Sheth 2000 p.2) They also state that this type of organization starts all planning processes from customer needs and wants, instead of the product aspect. Customer needs and wants are translated to customer satisfaction at the end of the day, when their needs and wants are listened to and fulfilled by the product and/or service in question. Customer satisfaction has also been researched by Athanassopoulos et al. (2001) and they concluded similar findings as others: more satisfied customers tend to stay with existing service providers and also tend to subdue possible minor dissatisfied moments. This supports the view that satisfied customers mean more long-term customers hence they are more profitable.

This thesis studies sales persuasion and its impact on customer behaviour and VAS product activation. Sales pitches are a part of sales rhetoric, which means how a customer is approached and what is argued while the sales is carried through. Sales rhetoric is a subcategory under sales process and sales methodology. Company strategy should guide sales methodology and all operational actions, and not vice versa to fulfil the company's strategy targets as stated by Kraaijenbrink (2019) "Strategy guides organizational action". Galbraith (2014, p.18) is also weighting that strategy must guide rest of company actions and implementations stating, "The lesson is that you start with the strategy and design the organization to implement the chosen direction." Through writer's own experience, this top-down approach and process is often used by companies, and some companies do it better, while some implement these processes in a less controlled and managed way. Metrics and business measures also play a key role to monitor and develop processes as explained by Mauboussin (2012). That discussion, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

The customer centric model is one of the most common approaches preached today in literature and company strategy guides. For example, author and USC-researcher Galbraith and his colleague Kates writes following about customer-centric organization "Customer-centric strategies do transform an organization. Put simply, a customer-centric organization brings together and integrates products, services, and experiences from within and beyond the firm to provide solutions to the complex and multifaceted needs of its customers." (Galbraith and Kates, 2007 p.29). Galbraith has written multiple books (Galbraith 2014, *Designing Organizations: Strategy, Structure, and Process at the Business Unit and Enterprise Levels* and for example Galbraith 2001 *Designing Dynamic Organizations : A Hands-On Guide for Leaders at All Levels*) and journals about customer-centric organizations, and he argues that companies should look into customers rather than products. While companies at the end of the day are unique, he discusses company strategy choices to manage and drive companies to be customer-centric instead of product centric which is the traditional way. To achieve this, he analyses companies, starting from the organizational model all the way to how and what kind of relationship the companies want to build with their customers. Galbraith and Kates are using the star model (Galbraith and

Kates, 2007 p.3) to emphasize five essential dimensions of a company to ensure focus on all correct areas, star model refers to following areas: strategy, people, structure, rewards and processes. Galbraith and Kates states that all five dimensions of star model must be implemented, in balance and the rest of the four must follow a strategy. As always, strategy must guide companies' ways of working and therefore guide the decision whether a company is customer or product centric, for example. Literature review shall discuss therefore areas and items as on figure 1 below.

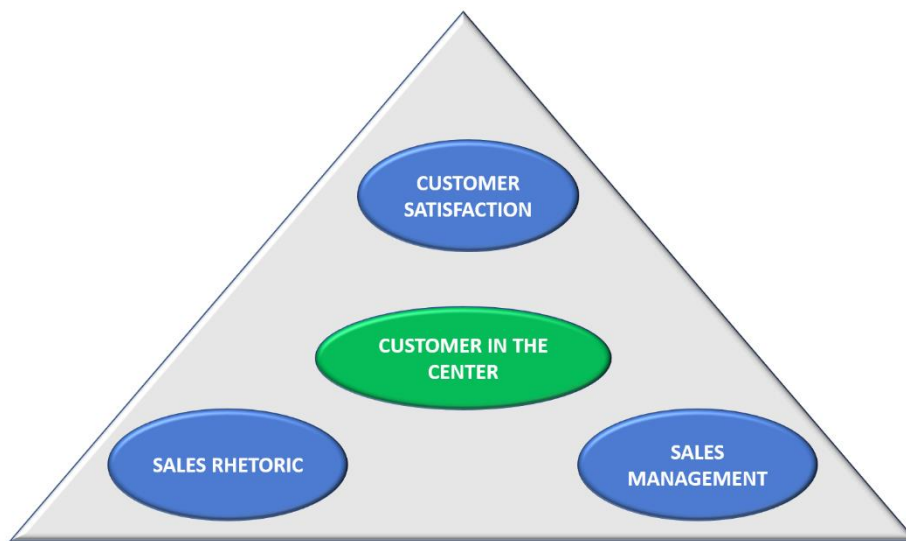


Figure 1. The customer centric model

As referred earlier, company strategy should guide what kinds of methodologies are taken into use to achieve the best possible customer relationship models. One company may appreciate fast, high-volume sales with-out caring about how many customers actually end up using and benefitting from the product or service and even though their churn of customers may be tremendous, the company target is elsewhere. Another company may launch a strategy targeting truly long-term loyal customers, and that is very different sales case and methodology. These two alternatives are sharp black and white ends on a hypothetical line of alternatives, and the reality most likely lies somewhere in between these alternatives.

2.1 Role of a sales management

As discussed, the purpose of sales management ideally is to guide and manage sales force towards company targets and it is based on company strategy according to Johnson and Crisp (1990, p.6). Sales management plays a definitive role in managing, following and corrective guidance and at the end of day the management is responsible for sales functions. The role of the sales agent, on the other hand, is to close deals, but also to ensure quality, deliver actual value to customers and to bring in revenue to the company. The former, known as value creation may sometimes stay behind revenue creation, as explained through value aspects that are widely discussed by S.S. Iyer (2009, p.9-11 and p.62-68). One of them is clearly an internal metric, and the other one is an external metric. Revenue as an internal metric is always easy to measure, and it is not entirely wrong. However, if a company forgets the external target of value creation to customer, this may become a problem to any company in the long term. End customers at the end of day are buying value, and if the value is not realized; customers may churn to another market, product and /or company to receive the value they were seeking.

2.1.1 The modern sales management model

Neil Rackham and John DeVincentis (1999) discuss multiple problems regarding sales management, and more specifically, sales channel management. In addition, they explore value creation aspects and problems. They talk about value trap when a company believes to deliver value but they actually only measure revenue; which is a misleading metric. Value creation should go hand in hand with revenue creation, otherwise the company strategy is misleading in the long term. How is value then created in a modern competing world? According to Rackham and DeVincentis a customer may receive more value by using their desired sales channel, which is again a very large subject. Also, through writer's own experience, the world with all its online options and old existing methods offers truly a lot of variations to use when serving customers. It is also interesting to note that some channels are much more controlled by companies, than others, where the company might have little control over how the product and

/or service is promoted, sold and delivered. For example, external wholesalers and other online stores usually have a lot of variety of products, which means their promotion can be far from the vendors wishes and plans. Channel strategy, therefore, plays a similarly important role as the core products.

There is no silver bullet for building sales models and sales channels. Every company selling and promoting their own products and services must have a clear strategy of long-term quality targets in addition to growth targets. It is preferable to measure channels on multiple aspects rather than only the internal target also known as revenue. Continuous reviews are also recommended by Rackham and DeVincentis (1999) to further develop processes to meet the value creation needs of customers.

A recent article in the Harvard Business Review by Zoltners et al. (2020) discusses sales channel disruption during the pandemic. Virtual sales channels have gained during the pandemic as going to shops, malls or similar has been restricted, and even blocked in the worst times of COVID-19. This has created enormous pressure on sales and sales channels. Some sales channels have literally gone away as access has been restricted by ruling and governments. On the other hand, some other channels have been struggling with an overload of customers. This has led to many situations that go under the responsibility of sales management and should be handled by them. The speed of virtual and online channel development changed in period of a few months to an enormous speed as COVID-19 made some channels extremely important for the survival of a companies. While some companies have made even new sales channels available, they have needed to adapt that to work so smoothly that it can please also the customers that never liked those channels before. Zoltners et al. have found the same phenomenon as Rackham and DeVincentis: instead of only measuring revenue, sales channels must adapt much more to customer empathy, needs and value creation. Zoltners also talks about incentive model changes, as old models lead to exactly what DeVincentis described, measuring only revenue, whereas new incentive models guide sales force to truly meet customer needs and to think about value creation. Last but not least, Zoltners et al. state that metrics

should be aligned to measure the new type of strategy instead of the old-fashioned revenue targets style.

The approach above is not only difficult to the sales force itself, with new possible incentive models, but it is also difficult on the sales management level. This all demands new thinking and a new way of working on all levels, and yet again; it is still a sales management task.

2.1.2 The HIGH-5 method for service providers' sales co-operation

F-Secure has done business and co-operation with service providers globally for more than twenty years. The HIGH-5 model has been created based on everything that has been learned from this co-operation over the years. In this study, the model acts as one example of a sales model and a methodology innovation. The model was created in 2015 to analyse and achieve even better quality in service provider co-operation. The model can be understood as a crystalized view of what has been learned over the years within security sales in different channels of the service providers. Source data for this model includes a nearly innumerable amount of company internal studies, research, trainings and tests on how to make better quality sales within a B2B2C sales model. The main aim of this methodology is to analyse and to make corrective guidance for value-add security sales in the service provider environment.

The quality of the value-add sales can be impacted by the following parameters;

1. Product.
 - a. A valid product must be in place and available, with a valid and market resonating price.
2. Incentives
 - a. Sales-people are typically encouraged with bonuses and salary awards of some kind, therefore incentives play an important role.
3. Training

- a. Salespeople tend to sell what is easy to sell, so if they are not trained well enough to feel comfortable with the product, they end up selling some other product.
4. Material
- a. Valid sales collaterals and materials must be in place, similarly to the previous example, if materials are not in place; the sales-person will sell something else.
5. Sales management buy-in
- a. As previously stated, it is obvious and supported by research, sales management manages sales channels and its people who typically do what the management asks them to do. Sales management commitment and buy-in has a key role to achieving high and quality results.

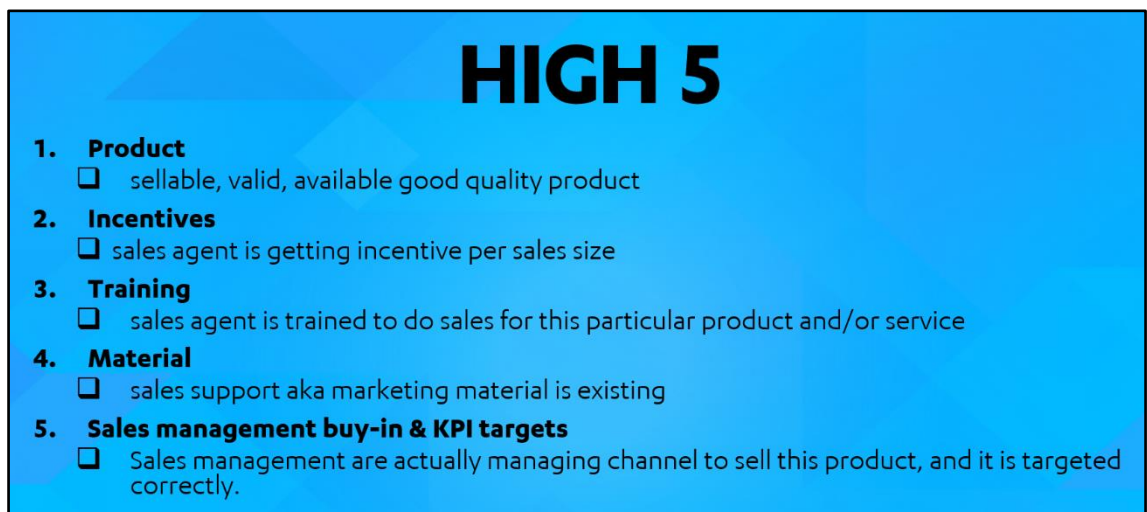


Figure 2. HIGH-5 model by F-Secure Ltd

The main finding of the HIGH-5 model is that if one or more of the HIGH-5 areas are missing or poorly implemented, sales results are usually much less than targeted. This is considered a management model that enables desired and planned success on sales operation.

2.1.3 Sales phases and customer's buying decisions

Sales call phasing was analysed using the Kotler & Keller sales model (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The five phases of the model are shown below in Figure 4. One target of the qualitative analysis was to find out how, but also in which phase of a sales call the security product is offered. The timing of the offering within a sales call has correlation, similarly as Aristotle's *kairos*, to customers thinking which is presented in the overall customer buying process below.

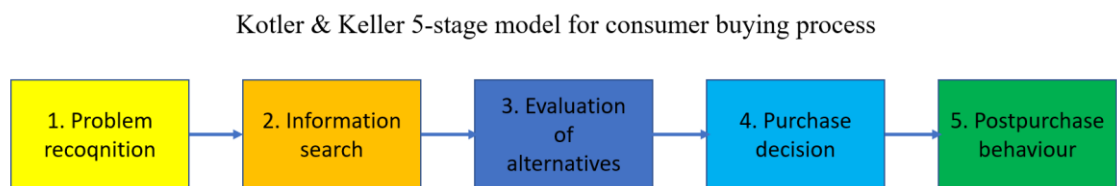


Figure 3. Kotler & Keller five-stage model of the consumer buying process

Another target of the qualitative analysis was to understand the customer's state of mind when they make a buying decision or had an intention of buying a service. Kotler and Keller have also defined steps to achieve a purchase decision, and there is a significant difference between the steps two and four, as step two is only an intention.

Kotler & Keller, steps between evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision

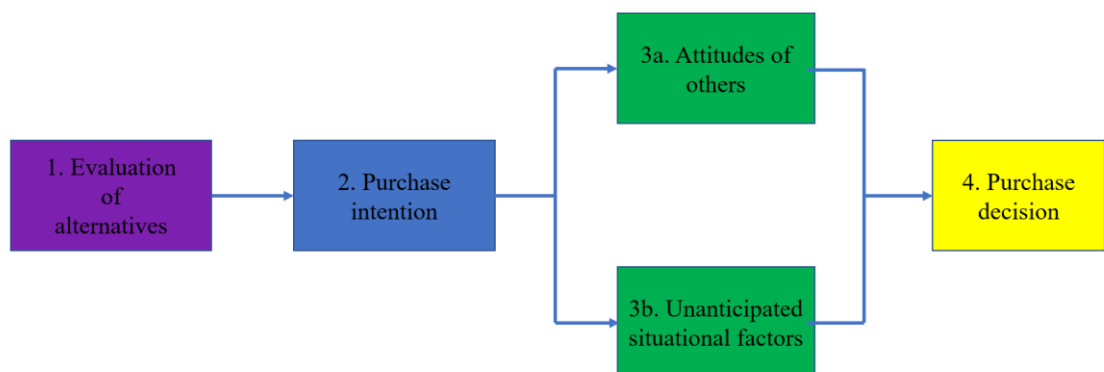


Figure 4. Kotler & Keller customer's steps of a buying process.

2.2 Sales rhetoric models

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “rhetoric” means:

"The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2021) In short, it is the capability of persuasion, the key element of a successful salesperson.

There are multiple sales rhetoric models to support salespeople, some even more than a hundred years old. The aim of sales rhetoric models is to guide, explain and help in the trainings of sales staff. The models typically define different stages, typically four to seven stages of sales flow. Some early models are very straightforward with the idea that commercial agreement lands nearly by itself as the last stage, which is obviously not the truth in real life.

One of the earliest models is called AIDA. It was invented and modelled in 1898 by St Elmo Lewis (Strong, 1925). The target at the time was primarily to analyse and develop insurance sales to support consumer sales staff to succeed in their daily work. The AIDA model has four stages, **a**ttention, **i**nterest, **d**esire, and **a**ction. Although these are certainly the main stages of sales flow, the AIDA model does not represent the whole discussion flow that takes place in a real sales event. The AIDA model, however, can give guidance to a very basic sales model and its phases, the model had its success in the early years of telesales as it was more or less the first and only modern model to train sales agents and carry through sales calls. Today, the world is full of models and guidance for sales.

2.2.1 Sales persuasion research and discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a science itself, and there is some research that can benefit this thesis. Generally, discourse analysis is a fairly old field of study, and there is plenty of material and research around general discourse. However, similar studies of discourse analysis of sales pitches was more difficult to find. One of the most relevant studies for this thesis was found from Castleberry et al. (1999) about

sales agent listening. Their study and relevance for this thesis will be discussed later in detail.

Sales environments, however, can be significantly different from other areas of discourse, they work under a different culture, and sales channels can vary a lot by their nature. Applicable research on sales pitches is far more difficult to find, but some studies have been made. Friestad and Wright (1994) have published an article about the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM). The article goes deep into persuasion philosophy and psychology, and how it both impacts the salesperson, and how it is perceived by the end customer. They even call salespeople “persuasion agents” which gives an idea of how the role of a salesperson can be thought of. Persuasion is important and this literature review will touch on that subject later on after discussing the early philosophers. Friestad and Wright also talk about mediators, meaning the emotions and methods that sales persuasion agents may use when presenting their products and/or service’s values. These mediators may include for example perceptions, beliefs, feelings, desires, intentions and resolutions. The model Friestad and Wright developed is a high-level framework that has two parties, the agent and the target. The agent is a sales persuasion agent and the target is a customer. Friestad and Wright recognized three main elements of knowledge for both parties, topic-, persuasion- and personal knowledge. Both parties – the agent and the target – develop their skills over time and implement persuasion tactics to fulfil their targets. Friestad and Wright are call the acts of persuasion *attempts* and commonly known negotiation is called a *persuasion episode*. Lastly, Friestad and Wright state that research among agents’ sales persuasion is a virgin territory, referring to poor availability of such research and they even state that this type of research is virtually non-existent. In summary, PKM is framework, that can act as the ground theory to identify parties and items in persuasion research. Detailed research will need more detailed models and analysis methods to dig into, for example, persuasion episodes.

The master’s thesis by Emmi Linnankivi (Linnankivi, 2020) is a linguistic study regarding usage of affect in sales discourse. Affect is usage of language (Karvinen, 2014) that is using one or many of following rhetorical devices; irony,

arrogance, emotionality, enthusiasm or suspicious attitude when doing sales persuasion. Rhetorical devices may also include swear words and exclamations within discourse by clients. Linnankivi concentrated on where and how affect is used and what kind of implications affect creates for interaction between a sales agent and a customer. Linnankivi concludes that a sales-person typically tries to achieve agreement with a customer, and disagreements can also take place more typically from customer side. Linnankivi found evidence that affect commonly used on sales situations, sales agent especially tries to build agreements in multiple levels with customer and usually common interests are promoted to illustrate win/win situation with a customer. Linnankivi's study is informative on the topic of how affect is used in sales persuasion, nevertheless, it does not offer a framework for this thesis to analyse the correlation between customer behaviour and take-into-use ratio

Another excellent example of a detailed discourse analysis and linguistic study is the master's thesis by Pilvi Drews (Drews, 2017). She has researched the institutional position of persuasion agents and how they have used singular or plural expressions, and especially how the first-person plural persuasion is used in a sales context. She has found that it is typical to use institutional expressions and especially the first-person plural expression when trying to gain an institutional presentation of a sales agent. She has also researched this phenomenon with different comparison groups, for example for the use of singular versus plural, and also how interaction in general is created between a sales agent and a consumer.

Crosby et al. (1990) studied interpersonal relationship skills and their impact on short- and long-term success of salespeople. They developed a relationship theory model that has multiple variables, the key variables being the sales-person's expertise and similarity (appearance, lifestyle and socioeconomic status) to the customer, and also relational selling behaviour in which are combination of contact intensity and co-operative intentions. The model also measures customer satisfaction and customers' trust in salespeople. Many of the variables are the same as in the ECSI model which also concentrates customer satisfaction and loyalty. Crosby

et al. found that customer relationship quality contributes to the probability and the customer's anticipation of future interaction.

However, perhaps surprisingly, relationship quality did not correlate significantly with the probability of future sales success. A stronger correlation was found between a salesperson's expertise and attractiveness and the probability of future trades with a customer. Their relationship quality model can be used similarly as the ECSI model later in this literature review. Crosby et al. promotes as final statement that successful salesperson must try to develop into a relationship manager, that typically enables continuous trustworthy dialog with customer. The Crosby et al. relationship model can be used to measure a sales-person skills and the probability that they succeed in their role, but it is not suitable for measuring the correlation between sales rhetoric and customer's' behavior with a bought service.

Lastly, Castleberry, Shepherd and Ridnour (1999) studied sales agent listening. Their aim was to develop a model in which help measuring and evaluating salesperson's listening skills. Eventually, they developed a model called ILPS that stands for Interpersonal Listening in the Personal Selling. They used the Pearson correlation formula to identify correlations between different personal measures of listening. They developed the model by multiple rounds of listening and dropped items that did not correlate to the ILPS scale which illustrates listening skills. Another interesting finding by Castleberry et al. (1999, pp. 35-36) was that they did not find correlation between listening skills and salesperson's age, gender or industry of work.

Both linguistics studies by Drews and Linnankivi, and the article by Friestad and Wright certainly go into detail about how persuasion is used, gained for the benefit of the sales agent and how emotions are expressed and perceived. While some findings and methods from this type of sales persuasion research will be used to support this thesis, they will not play the main role in the methodology. This thesis

concentrates on sales argumentation analysis, and it goes deeper into how a sales call flow goes through and how it impacts customer behaviour later.

None of represented models can be used in their own in this thesis to answer the research questions, but they may support the selected approach in different ways. The methodology chapter will introduce the method itself thoroughly, and the final target is to analyse used timing, wording, metaphors and other means of sales agents within sales calls.

2.2.2 Sales psychology and argumentation

Sales psychology research is referenced in this thesis to support this study. Sales psychology is a well-researched field and quality research is available both domestically and globally. Different countries have different cultures, therefore, this thesis uses Finnish sales culture and psychology research and knowledge as much as possible. The role of sales psychology within this research is to support the discourse analysis with an in-depth view on how timing, tones, words, metaphors and other discourse phenomena impact the sales flow.

Steve Martin has written multiple articles about sales persuasion and its tactics. In one of his HBR articles (Martin, 2012) he lists six phases of a successful sales call as follows: Softeners, Facts, Metaphors, Suggestions, Fallback position and Silence. Notable here are the last three phases, Suggestion is followed by possible Fallback position if things do not work out and Silence is a time and space for consumer to say yes or no.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC, b) defined the general domains of rhetoric more than 2000 years ago. His definition can be considered valid still today. He defined five main domains, ethos, pathos, logos, kairos and telos. Language, rhetoric and persuasion were considered the most esteemed skills at the time, and Aristotle was a philosopher who developed a theory of persuasion identifying and developing these domains. Ethos, pathos and logos make perfect sense still today and they are often referred to when talking about successful sales behaviour (Sorri, 2017 and Gallo, 2019).

2.2.3 Aristotle's ethos, pathos and logos

The English word *ethic* is derived and translated from the Greek word *ethos* (Aristotle 384–322 BC, b). In sales contexts *ethos* refers to a credible source and creditability in general, according to Aristotle. *Ethos* can also be translated as “character”, which can be understood as a credible person or source.

Pathos, on the other hand, means empathy, emotion and sense. In a sales context this means empathy that can be demonstrated in multiple ways, for example by being a good listener. *Pathos*, therefore, means ways to impact emotions in addition to logical thinking.

Aristotle's third domain is *logos* (Aristotle 384–322 BC, b). The English word *logic* is derived from this Greek word. Logic always plays the role in a sales transaction, and logical argumentation is the key area in any sales training or sales formula literature.

2.2.4 Aristotle's Kairos

Greek mythology and literature have a fourth important word that is relevant in sales call discourse analysis. This is also something that modern day sales, marketing professors and research literature all recognise. The word is *kairos* (Aristotle 384–322 BC, b) and it can be translated as “personified opportunity” or “correct moment” or with one word, it could be called “timing”. Most sales trainings and analyses talk about timing and the correct moment, as a side of logic, empathy and creditability.

Kairos will be discussed more later in this thesis work.

2.2.5 Aristotle's Telos

Telos (Aristotle 384–322 BC, b) can be translated as “purpose” or “goal”. This is also key item for a successful sales-person and sales operations. Without a goal there are typically no results either, at least not targeted results. This can be seen from the sales agent perspective so that he/she has a target and by means of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* he/she can actually deliver that.

2.2.6 Persuasion vs. sales persuasion

Aristotle defined seven causes in which one or many are acting as a motivation and trigger to do anything by a human. They are following; chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, anger, and desire, (Aristotle, 335–322 BC, a). This is basic human behaviour in which still today applies for sales and marketing according to the Courtney-Brown (2014).

Aristotle also defined corner stones of persuasion theory; ethos, pathos, logos, topos and kairos, as explained above (Aristotle 384–322 BC, b). This is often transferred for sales behaviour of modern day like explained by Gallo (2019).

In principle, Aristotle have defined all main themes for argumentation and persuasion, that are also referred today by sales and marketing authors as above examples. Aristotle also wrote main five areas of speeches used by politicians that are: “Ways and means, war and peace, national defence, imports and exports, and legislation.” (Aristotle 384–322 BC, c). Ways and means are discussing business, revenue and expenditures of a country. Writer of thesis therefore saying that Aristotle defined as close as possible sales persuasion, without connecting and using two exact words: *sales persuasion*.

2.2.7 Modern day interpretation of Aristotle

Petri Parvinen, Professor of Sales Management at Aalto University writes about similar ideas as Aristotle’ more than 2000 years before him (Parvinen, 2020). For instance, Parvinen writes about creditability, which was Aristotle’s domain called ethos. Creditability can have multiple different forms in a sales transaction. Creditability can simply be knowledge, but it can also be evidence of some type of successful history. According to Parvinen creditability should not be speaking over someone, rather it should be calm listening, argumentation and general knowledge of things that this particular service and solution may solve for the

target person. One word to describe this could also be professionalism. Carmine Gallo (2019) has also written about the present view and experience of Aristotle's themes, and he has similarly found that they are more than valid today and even states that they are possibly some of the most important skills to be able to persuade well.

Pathos, the second domain, means emotions, feelings and even wishes for a future of something. From the sales and sales psychology perspective this means listening is everything. Parvinen states that listening in its many forms plays a major role in sales transactions. Customers must have the possibility to tell their problems which a credible person may then solve. Logos, the third domain, as logic is obviously a given: when a customer feels that something is logical and their emotions support the decision, sales transaction is typically very close to being successful. Parvinen also uses the term "manipulation", which is a generally a word and there can be multiple opinions whether it is ethical or not, but according to Parvinen it is quite often implemented in sales transactions.

In summary, present-day Professor Parvinen, Professor Steve W. Martin and also Philosopher Aristotle, they have all identified and talked about the exact same elements and patterns and have used them in their research papers. Successful and unsuccessful sales persuasion events, therefore, can be analysed using these elements and they typically consist of certain timing, elements and patterns that cause either success or failure for a telesales-agent.

2.3 Customer satisfaction and loyalty

Customer satisfaction is a common goal among many companies. Comments about customer satisfaction from Martensen et al., "Customer satisfaction must not be a goal in itself, but only a means for improving company's performance." (2000 p.1). Hanken professors Medberg and Grönroos (2020) are discussing widely customer's value-in-use subject, how customer is perceiving delivered quality. According to Medberg and Grönroos, Karl Marx have stated already in 1859 that every commodity has two-fold aspects, use-value and exchange-value. Medberg and Grönroos

similarly to Martensen stating that customer's service quality experience impacts for negative or positive outcome of sold service. These studies and statements illustrate that customer satisfaction is one of the key measure and metrics for company strategy implementation and evaluation. The European ECSI model studied by Martensen et al. (2000) and explained by Haaften (2017) combines different variables perceived by customers and demonstrates, how customer loyalty is created from different components. Customer satisfaction can be investigated and translated multiple ways to measure performance of a company's achievements to fulfil its actual strategy goals. Team Martensen has collected data and reporting is referred to ECSI model and approach to represent customer satisfaction and loyalty correlations to delivered value-add and other consumer serving elements. Martensen et al. researched which drivers are most important in creating customer satisfaction and loyalty. In their study, they found that well known consumables like global soda drinks are primarily sold by global image; whereas complex services have different expectations in the eyes of a consumer. Complex internet services, for example, already back in the year 2000, made consumers think more about service quality in addition to product quality. Security as such has not been researched that way, but we may estimate that security is more difficult to understand than, for example, a streaming service music or video.

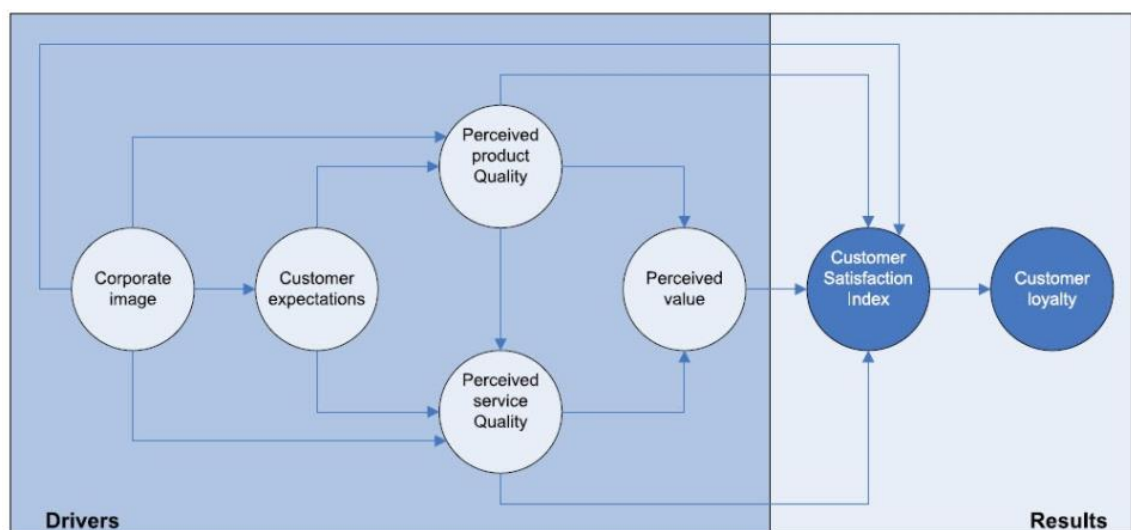


Figure 5. ECSI model representation.

The primary variables and drivers to customer loyalty by van Haaften (Haaften, 2017) are corporate image, customer expectations, perceived product quality and last but not least, perceived service quality. The core idea of the ECSI model is to establish a method to measure and eventually calculate the impact and estimates for created customer loyalty.

2.4 Summary for literature review

The three sections of this literature review, sales management, sales rhetoric and customer satisfaction do not present all the methods create a customer centric organization, but in the thesis writer's own experience they are significant parts of the process and therefore discussed above.

As learned on literature review from Parvinen (2020), Martensen (2000 p.1) and Hanken professors Medberg and Grönroos (2020) existing research of the quality of sales arguments has impact on the delivery of value-add services to the end customer. Theory about the issues has been available since Aristotle, and multiple other philosopher and scientists up until these days have supported the ideas about the value and impact of good persuasion and similarly poor sales arguments as perceived persuasion.

A company's strategy choices and its implementation all the way down to sales management choices and methods drive actual sales force behaviour. It is not only a question of how salespeople approach each sales event, it is also a question of how sales staff is managed, with what values and strategic choices, to achieve the goals setup by the top management.

Modern quality measure models like the previously discussed ECSI model measure perceived service, as well as perceived value from sales calls and sales arguments. Among other key variables, this ultimately results customer loyalty, and therefore, a long-term profitable customer base.

Customer-centric organization and behaviour is a large subject as learned in this literature review, and obviously by all business books. A customer driven

organization is impacted from different directions - both internally and externally - and it can be measured in multiple ways to be able to manage it as a process and a set of many processes.

3 METHODS

3.1 Overview

This thesis is a sales and marketing study and more specifically, this is a research analysis of sales arguments and sales call behaviour. Therefore, the study is largely qualitative research, but it has quantitative angle as well. This is a mixed method study as it is supported by certain quantitative behaviour analysis of customers.

The qualitative method is explained below in more detail. The aim was to analyse sales calls of a Finnish service provider to better understand the impact that the sales call content and patterns have on the take-into-use-ratio. In this study, all customers in the security service sales calls were already existing customers of some core-service of the service provider. Core-service is typically understood as an internally created mobile or fixed broadband subscription service of a teleoperator, also known as Service provider. Service providers do not sell security VAS-products alone on any telesales call, due to the cost levels. It is too expensive; thus, calls have scripts that aim to make the end customer purchase one or more new core service, and also one or more VAS product.

There are always different kinds of campaigns, and they may impact the choice of sold product.

3.2 Overview and context

Service providers typically have the following kinds of sales channels available:

1. Outbound channels, also known as Telesales, are typically sales calls that are made to the end customer on a not mutually agreed moment.
2. Inbound channels can be calls from the customer to the service provider to find a resolution to any of their problems with the service provider's offering.
3. Web sales is a self-service channel, where customers may buy and modify service providers offerings 24/7.

4. Technical support can also be regarded as a sales channel. It is rarely used for sales purposes, and if it is, it is typically only after a resolution for a technical problem has been found.
5. Shops, physical places, as opposed to online stores, are places where customers primarily buy new services and/or modify existing services. Some service providers provide some level of support in shops as well, but it is rare.
6. Email and SMS marketing, is another form of outbound sales. In these media channels, customer may agree or simply not reply to the offerings that they receive.

3.2.1 The service provider's sales campaign differences

Different kinds of sales campaigns may impact sales differently. Campaigns can be divided into two main categories, free trials and half price for x-number of months type of approaches.

A free trial means that a customer typically gets a free month to use the service and they can terminate it without a fee within the first month.

As the name itself states, a half price campaign is when a customer gets a service half price for a certain short timeframe. Therefore, it is important to realize that the, service is payable for the end customer from day one. If the customer terminates the service during the first month, they typically get a minimum of one month's fee.

3.3 Method vs. methodology

Two important terms – method and methodology – are commonly used in scientific context, but also commonly misunderstood and possibly misused as well. I became more familiar with the term methodology when I started to think about the best way to examine the sales calls. Eventually, I realised that I need to write my very own

methodology to be able to analyse the sales calls in a way to gain understanding on sales agent persuasion and behaviour, as well as perceived customer experience.

Methods in research usually mean the tools, processes and mechanisms used to research a problem. Bryman (2008) has written a research paper about methods and methodology, and he states that methods can be understood as an umbrella term under which a variety of different things can go: questionnaires, interviews, data collection and/or analysis. In this way, methods can generally be understood as a toolkit for research. Methodology is something larger, it is the study of the used methods. Bryman states “Methodology is the study of the methods that are employed. It is concerned with uncovering the practices and assumptions of those who use methods of different kinds” (2008. p.2). One may argue, whether the methodology I present later in the methods chapter is actually a group of methods rather than a methodology, and that may be true.

In this literature review I present and comment on generally known methodologies used in this type of study. In addition, I refer to some methodological techniques that in theory could have been employed in this study but which I decided not to use. Examples of these mainly concern my initial ideas about discourse analysis, which in the end did not suit my purposes for this study.

3.4 Research data

The research data used in this study are actual sales calls carried out by service providers’ outbound sales. The sales calls are so called “cold calls” that, outbound telesales operation makes to both existing customers as well as for new prospects of the service provider. A cold call, therefore, means an unexpected, unknown and unplanned call to an end-customer from the service provider.

Research data were collected in November 2021, and they are actual recordings from actual sales calls of this particular service provider. There are 15 successful and 15 unsuccessful sales events identified, listened to, evaluated and analysed. The analysis of the sales calls was done between December 25th and December 30th. The

results were put into an Excel matrix using the methodology that is explained in a later section of this document.

As explained, customers and calls were selected to form two comparison groups. There are 15 sales calls that resulted in inactive VAS products, and another group of equal size that had the opposite result, VAS product was activated i.e. taken into use. The calls for this study were selected from 4-6 weeks before the time of collection to ensure that the customers were already paying for the security service, and that their free trial period had ended.

The only difference between the comparison groups is that in one group the service has been taken into use, and in the other it has not. However, one criteria for the customer group that has taken the service into use is that; they have to have installed the service into three or more devices. This is for the purpose of the study, to ensure a true qualitative difference in the sales calls between the comparison groups.

The research data is in two forms: as recordings of the anonymous sales calls, and as transcriptions of the recordings. All the calls are in Finnish, as the target service provider operates in Finland. Due to privacy reasons the recordings are automatically destroyed in the service provider's system after three months of sales call event date.

The average length of a successful call is 15 minutes and 15 seconds. Overall, the length of all the successful calls is 3 hours and 47 minutes. The average length of unsuccessful calls is 14 minutes and 48 seconds. The total length of the unsuccessful calls is 3 hours and, 37 minutes.

3.5 Size of n and sampling data saturation

The question of sample size is significant in qualitative research. In this study, data from the calls started to repeat almost immediately and clearly showed patterns of behaviour in n=5 already. In other words, data saturation was easy to see already when sample size was smaller than ten. Therefore, n=15 per both comparison group was decided as a sufficient number for the sales calls in this study.

Data saturation and the proper size of n been researched in multiple studies. Guest et al. (2006) examined multiple studies done in this area of research (e.g. Morse 1995; Sandelowski 1995; Bluff 1997; Byrne 2001; Fossey et al. 2002) to understand sample size and usage of n in qualitative studies. The findings of their study were perhaps surprising, but also enlightening regarding to qualitative research. Firstly, they did not, nor had anybody before them, define an exact scientific number to use as the absolute minimum for such research; a single number that would always work as the minimum sample size in qualitative analysis cannot be defined according to Guest et al (2006). Defining n has to take into consideration cultural and other dimensions that should impact the decision. Another finding that they made was that previous studies have done poor work in defining the pragmatic approach and guidance for data saturation. Guest et al. concluded that sampling should continue until theoretical saturation is achieved that is something that a researcher should understand as well as be able to review when collecting and analysing data. In addition, Morse (1995) has studied the exact same issue and ended with similar results, researchers must know their data and analyse the number of samples at the same time that the data is analysed. When researcher cannot add any new information when studying more samples, have achieved data saturation. Morse reminds, however, that databases may be cohesive or less cohesive which gives different implications to this approach, and is something that researcher must think about when evaluating data saturation end point. Data saturation, in principle, means the point at which the researcher cannot gain any new data even if they continued researching more samples.

3.6 Quantitative data supporting research

F-Secure data systems are used to support this research. They provide numerical information to service providers about the end customers usage of products. This is simply used to identify whether the end customer has activated the VAS product or not. In the second phase, the service provider identified matching sales calls per F-Secure usage data for the analysis in this thesis. This enabled, in the analysis phase,

listening to only the calls that match the criteria of the research target and the comparison groups.

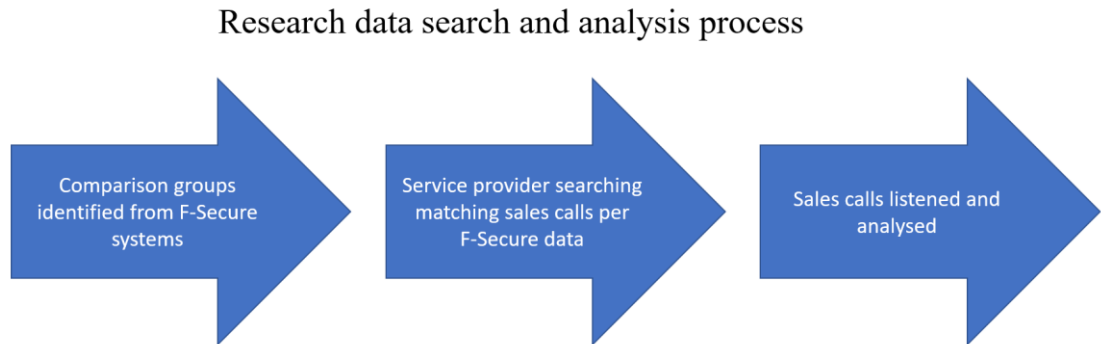


Figure 6. Research data collection and analysis process.

3.7 Research comparison groups

The study examined data from two comparison groups. Customers in both groups pay for the value-add security service, but one group use the service extremely well with three or more devices protected, and the other group has not installed a single device, and hence is paying but not protecting their devices at all.

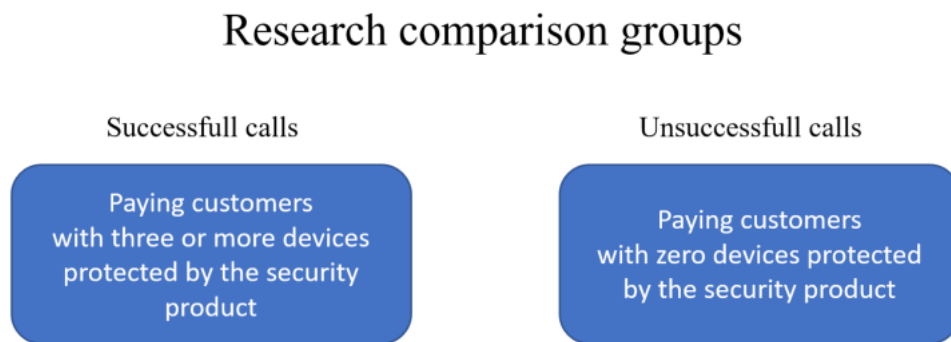


Figure 7. Comparison groups.

3.8 Qualitative approach

The research data was analysed using a model developed for this analysis. The model was developed based on previous learned knowledge of typical sales calls, but also based on the research data phone calls. The model is comprised of eleven

parameters which are given different values that, can be combined in the analysis of the quality of the sales call.:

Parameters of sales call in the qualitative analysis model:

1. Quality of argumentation of the sales call, metrics 1-5 (details below)
2. Presenting the security product before or after the core service is sold; metrics 1/0 in which “1” means security value add statements were presented before, and “0” means that security sales actions took place after the service providers core service was closed.
3. Customer asks for the security service him/herself, metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” is a positive criterion and the customer asked for security.
4. Customer has used a security service before; metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” is a positive criterion and meaning that the customer has used data security in some format before.
5. Customer understands the need for security before the call; metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” is a positive criterion. This is measured by analysing whether the customer can clearly make value-add statements by themselves.
6. Customer has active consumer security from another provider; metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” is a positive criterion and the customer is using security of some kind at the time the study was conducted.
7. Customer has children to protect against online behaviour; metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” means they have children.
8. Customer has multiple devices to protect; metrics 1/0 defined so that “1” is a positive criterion and the customer has multiple devices to protect.
9. Sales agent is male / female; metrics 1/0, male being “1” and female “0”.
10. Customer is male / female; metrics 1/0, male being “1” and female “0”.
11. Call length; metrics minutes and seconds.

3.8.1 Clarifications for the qualitative parameters of sales call quality

The developed analysis model for this study has the following key component: the quality of argumentation of a sales call. This quality analysis within the developed model enables evaluation of call content, therefore evaluating actual quality of argumentation. The table below describes quality parameters that were evaluated from each sales call:

Table 1. Grades for analysing sales call quality

Grade	Content analysis arguments of a sales call.
5	Excellent argumentation for security threats as well as an excellent level of customer needs evaluation.
4	Good level of evaluation of the customer needs and also quality argumentation represented.
3	Some argumentation for security product needs presented, but no customer needs evaluated.
2	Sales pitch is based on price and/or number of devices and very little value add argumentation.
1	No argumentation for the needs of security, and no customer needs evaluation. Instead, high pressure selling that at worst is security sold as "customer benefit that can be cancelled"

3.9 Research method

The research method with its inductive development method is described below. The analysis was done using a personal computer from the service provider that enables listening to the recorded calls in their systems. The service provider has a specific system that stores calls for three months to enable recording analysis per need. Access to the system and the calls was provided for as many times as was needed.

Calls were listened to multiple times due to the overall length of the calls, but also to finetune the research methodology model to better suit the research target. The final model was developed after multiple rounds of listening to the sales calls.

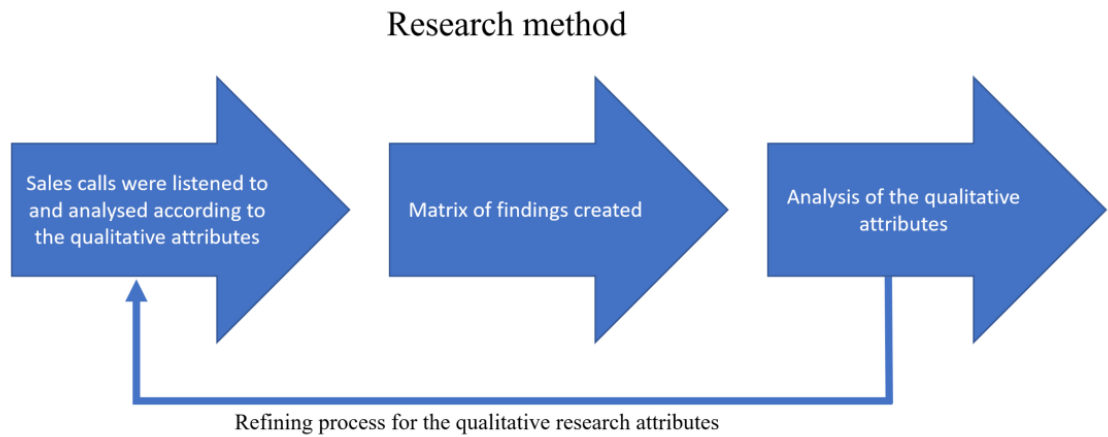


Figure 8. Research method illustrated.

3.10 Correlation matrix functionality

The correlation matrix function in Excel was used to find correlations between the eleven parameters of the developed analysis model. Two matrices were created, one for the successful calls and one for the unsuccessful calls. The comparison groups were then analysed using the matrices to find parameters that correlated the most for delivered quality within sales calls.

The CORREL function in Excel was used to analyse each quality parameter in relation to the other ones on the matrix. The CORREL function calculates weights and correlations between eleven studied questions and that then tells whether certain actions together impact more to the end result of a sales call, than some other. Heatmap is another function in Excel that can further visualize findings with colours, and therefore highlights the results for easier reading and final analysis.

There are multiple analytical models when it comes to interpretation of correlations. Science generally recognizes the following models: Pearson method, Kendall's rank

correlation, Spearman method, and the Point-Biserial correlation method (Statistics solutions, 2022). The most common method is the Pearson method for correlation, and Excel and this study use that method. The mathematical implementation of the Pearson method can be seen in Figure 9.

$$r = \frac{\sum(x - \bar{x})(y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Figure 9. Mathematical model for the Pearson correlation method.

3.11 Qualitative comments and research ethics

Samples of the sales calls were collected randomly, the only criteria being that they were from a suitable timeframe and VAS-product usage as previously explained. Defining the research questions was a continuous process and they were developed while the calls were analysed. The most significant finding that was made in the initial listening round was the importance of timing of a sales promotion for a security product, even though sales persuasion differences had been expected to play the most important role before starting this study. A collection of variables was created and redefined in the course of the analysis process. For example, one item (Customer has multiple devices to protect) was eventually dropped out of the collection as there was no significant correlation between it and the take-into-use level, also known as the activation level of the security product.

When looking at the results of this study and possibly reflecting these results to some other cases from somewhere else, one must remember that this analysis has been done on Finnish speakers, and some other cultures and/or languages are likely to behave differently.

General research ethics in this study follow statements and guidance from Bui, (2020) when it comes ethical do's and don'ts. Law must be and it is followed in

this study, and the ethical principle to not harm any entity with the study in question has been followed.

Due to GDPR reasons, customer's age, gender, location or other personal data was not available; which is something researcher has to accept when gained access to actual and valuable sales calls that were anonymously analysed. For the same reason, customer interviews were not used in this study.

4 FINDINGS

4.1 Matrix of successful and unsuccessful calls

Sales call parameters and findings were collected at the same time as the calls were listened. The table below was created by listening to the calls and analysing agent-customer speech to get insight into the customers' situation. Content of questions Q1-Q10 are explained in depth on chapter #3.8 *Qualitative approach* earlier.

Table 2. Identified findings from successful sales calls.

	CALLS															AVG
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Q1	4	4	3	3	5	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	3,2
Q2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0,9
Q3	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0,3
Q4	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0,8
Q5	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0,8
Q6	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0,3
Q7	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0,3
Q9	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0,9
Q10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0,3
T	0,09.30	0,07.45	0,28.30	0,04.15	0,28.30	0,11.15	0,09.20	0,25.20	0,14.38	0,14.30	0,24.20	0,28.30	0,07.45	0,08.30	0,04.25	3.47.03

Table 3. Identified findings from unsuccessful sales calls.

	CALLS															AVG
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
Q1	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1,7
Q2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0,2
Q3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0,1
Q4	1	0	0	0	0		0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0,4
Q5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0,3
Q6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0,3
Q7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0,1
Q9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1,0
Q10	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0,5
T	0,11.00	0,16.45	0,11.00	0,09.30	0,22.45	0,28.00	0,14.10	0,11.30	0,03.45	0,10.30	0,11.20	0,08.00	0,15.00	0,32.00	0,12.00	3.37.15

4.2 General findings

General findings and correlations can be made and commented on from Table 3 and Table 4 above even without the correlation matrix functionality, which is used later to go further into details. Correlation between take-into-use activation and sales

argument quality can be found and seen easily, and correlation between the timing of sales arguments and the take-into-use ratio is also clear.

Medium and high-quality sales arguments clearly proved their value, customers were discussing pros and cons of data security service in the sales call and argumentation was started typically by the sales agent, but sometimes also by the customer. As its best customer asked a solution to their problem, and sales agent was able to provide quality statements instead of only price statements. In reality however, mainly those customers that had a history of using security products took the issue into discussion proactively themselves.

Many customers explained that they do not understand the need for security services too well, therefore it is understandable that they would not open that kind of difficult and inconvenient discussion them-selves too easily either. This situation would not lead easily to a fruitful value add discussion.

A new finding was timing and its impact on the sales call result. Late timing and late promotion of the security service after other core services had been agreed on clearly resulted in poor take into use ratio. There is also a clear correlation with the campaign model that enabled sales agents to approach, the topic with a free month and therefore argument the service as “a gift”, “a free trial” or for example, “a test license that can be cancelled”.

4.2.1 Sales call content observations for successful calls

A few examples of key dialogue from sales calls are transcribed here to act as samples of typical content. The aim here is not, for practical reasons, to have all the analysed texts here as it would represent a truly large amount of data. The sales calls were analysed according to the question pattern on the sales call analysis matrix, as explained before, and that acts as the scientific data for this study.

Nevertheless, the small excerpts of sample dialogues were collected randomly from both comparison groups, and they are presented below to better understand

the nature of the call contents. All the excerpts are short clips taken from longer conversations, and therefore, are not meant to be examples of complete sales calls. The target is solely and only to extract and present value-add argumentation that was used and to research sales persuasion impact on the security product take-into-use ratio.

Sales calls of the successful comparison group typically have some level of detailed information given to the end customer about why security should be used, whereas the calls of the unsuccessful comparison group contained less value argumentation for the product.

The Finnish examples in Appendix 1 are transcriptions of recordings made by a machine learning system, and therefore, the language is not perfect Finnish, and the transcriptions may have some mistakes due to the imperfect functioning of the machine learning system itself. However, they act as examples of how sales calls are typically made.

4.2.2 Sales call content observations for unsuccessful calls

Sales calls from the unsuccessful comparison group typically had less detailed value-add information provided for the end customer. There was more likely a customer benefit and/or try-for-free type of approach. Examples of unsuccessful calls in Finnish are placed in Appendix 2.

4.3 Summary of Finnish phone call recording samples

In summary, most of the successful calls, nearly all of them, includes value-add statements. The statements are typically related to internet banking for multiple reasons, one of them being that the relation between internet banking and internet security is often the easiest example that the end customer can understand and appreciate, hence it is most commonly used in sales argumentation with good reason.

Unsuccessful calls on the other hand are more focused on pricing information, and more visible statements about free usage and/or a free month of use. Also, the customers are encouraged to clean their device or phone immediately, and they may or may not continue using internet security products later. Information about the continuous use of internet data protection is clearly more rare in unsuccessful call comparison group.

4.4 Correlation between sales call patterns

The mathematical and scientific analysis in this study for the sales call data was done using a correlation matrix to find actual correlations and their weights between identified and collected content variables of sales calls. The correlation function found some fairly strong correlations, as was expected. The correlations can be seen also by only observing results in the tables, but the correlation function also calculates weights for and between the findings.

To summarise the findings from the correlation matrix analysis that leads to high take-into-use ratio, there are six main findings identified; as numbered on Table 5. It can be stated that 2/6 case findings of high-quality argumentation (Q1) were related to successful sales call results. It can be also stated that as many times, 2/6 cases, sales argument timing before or with the core service (Q2) offering brought successful results. Similarly, if the customer asked for the security product themselves proactively (Q3), it typical lead to good results both with the sales and the take-into-use activation.

Findings from Table 5 of items to achieve high take-into-use ratio:

1. The strongest correlation with weight 0,61 was found between the quality of sales argumentation (Q1) and when the value-add security was presented earlier than or at least at the same time as the core offering of the service provider (Q2).
2. The second highest correlation with weight 0,60 was identified between timing of value-add argumentation (Q1) and if the customer understood the need for and value of security product (Q5).

3. The third highest correlation with weight 0,51 was identified between the customer’s pre-understanding of security product (Q5) and if they had used a security product of any kind before (Q4).
4. The fourth highest correlation with weight 0,48 was identified between timing of value-add argumentation (Q2) and customer pre-knowledge of the need for a security product (Q5).
5. The fifth highest correlation with weight 0,47 was identified between the customer themselves asking about security (Q2) and their previous knowledge of security threats and needs (Q3).
6. The same correlation value 0,47 as with the previous finding was found between the customer’s pre-knowledge of need for a security product (Q5) and their previous knowledge of security threats and needs (Q3).

Table 4. Sales call analysis results in the correlation matrix.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	T
Q1	1									
Q2	0,61	1								
Q3	0,20	0,47	1							
Q4	0,35	0,37	0,43	1						
Q5	0,48	0,60	0,47	0,51	1					
Q6	0,08	0,17	0,04	0,41	0,17	1				
Q7	0,03	0,13	0,17	-0,09	-0,03	-0,15	1			
Q9	-0,29	-0,17	0,09	-0,16	-0,17	-0,28	0,09	1		
Q10	-0,22	-0,27	0,03	-0,18	-0,05	-0,14	-0,24	0,14	1	
T	-0,07	0,19	0,38	0,17	0,19	0,29	0,36	0,04	-0,15	1

Note: the original Q8 “Customer had multiple devices to protect” was removed from Table 5 as it proved to give no correlation for successful, nor unsuccessful calls. The study showed that customers having multiple devices seems to be a common situation.

4.4.1 Impact of value-add argumentation on sales call results

Strong correlation was identified also regarding the content of value-add argumentation. The quality of argumentation was divided into five levels as follows:

Table 5. Grades for analysing sales call quality

Grade	Content analysis arguments of a sales call
5	Excellent argumentation for security threats as well as an excellent level of customer needs evaluation.
4	Good level of evaluation of the customer needs and also quality argumentation represented.
3	Some argumentation for security product needs presented, but no customer needs evaluated.
2	Sales pitch based on price and/or number of devices and very little value add argumentation.
1	No argumentation for the needs of security, and no customer needs evaluation. Instead, high pressure selling that at worst is security sold as "customer benefit that can be cancelled".

The study supports the approach that a well argued sales call results in high activation of value-add security services. Good sales arguments resulted, nearly without exception, in good dialogue of the end customer needs and also security threats, and the customers actually understood why they were buying security for their devices.

In addition, good sales arguments worked even better if and when – as previously explained – they were presented early in the calls and the end customer needed to make only one buying decision, and not add-on decisions later in the sales call. This finding is understandable considering end customer behaviour and reflecting in on the Kotler & Keller buying decision model (Kotler & Keller 2016).

It has been learned at F-Secure service provider sales through different business model implementations in the past that customers often do not make an actual

buying decision if they are left to do it by themselves at home and if the product is promoted with a free trial or a free gift of a security service. The findings of this study support this understanding of customer behaviour.

4.4.2 Timing of security offering in a sales call

One of the biggest findings of this study is the impact of a timing in a security sales event.

Typical flow of a sales call

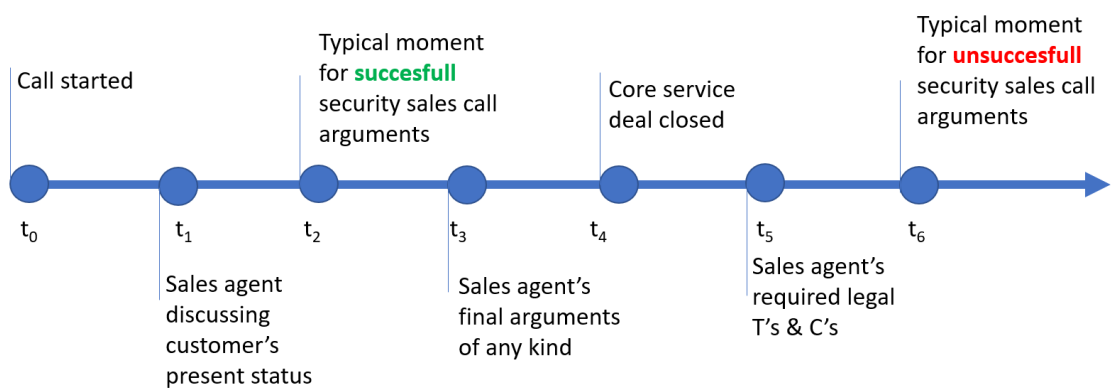


Figure 10. Timeline of a sales call.

There were two different moments in the researched material when value add security service was presented to the end customer, and there was a significant difference in the results between these two approaches. The two moments were either presenting the value-add security service **before** or **after** the core services were sold.

When a security service was presented early in the sales call and especially **before or at the same time** (t_4 in Figure 10) the other core services were sold, results regarding the take-into-use ratio were good. In contrast, when the security service was presented very late in the sales call and especially **after** (t_6 on Figure 10) other core services were sold, results were typically poor when it comes to taking the sold product into use.

There were clear correlations on argumentation within unsuccessful sales calls. Poor argumentation was most often combined to poor take-into-use ratio. However, as the sales campaign for all of the calls was the one month for free model which allows the sales agents to offer free trials, it can be argued that sales agents who sell and promote the service after having sold the core services use the possibility wrong and base their arguments only on price and not on proper value-add statements. Or perhaps they simply had poor argumentation in their sales behaviour, and it resulted in poor take-into-use ratio. This issue is difficult to evaluate with this research data and it is a possibility for another study; this shows that poor take-into-use ratio results from poor arguments of sales call combined with bad timing after other services have already been sold.

5 DISCUSSION

The literature review discussed targets of a modern company, it is aiming to customer satisfaction, loyalty and long-term customers. These values are achieved by multiple initiatives on every company, as discussed in detail the literature review chapter. One of the most important mechanism to achieve these targets is to get customer to use a sold service, as customer's do not like to pay for services they do not use. Similarly, if customer do not understand why they are using a service, it is a problem as well. These targets and problems are discussed below to better understand the implication and findings of this thesis.

5.1 Rhetoric – Were customers' concerns answered in sales calls?

In the literature review rhetoric was defined as the art of effective persuasion, and within this study it is the art of effective sales persuasion. It is important that a customer understands why they are buying something, but also why they are using a service. It is the task of a sales agent to review the needs of their customer, but also to elaborate why and how to use and benefit from the service. This study showed that in many cases the service was sold solely by price, and customers were not informed of the benefits of using it. These types of sales can even be called high-pressure sales. In some of the analyzed sales calls, customers may have agreed to buy the service based on the sales statement may been that they may terminate the service easily. The art and target of rhetoric did not work in many of the sales calls where customers were not briefed about the need and use of the service. This lack of rhetoric impacts in multiple ways. Firstly, customers are not motivated to buy the service and secondly, they are not motivated to install and use the service either. This creates churn sensitive customers, and customer satisfaction growth is not built either.

5.2 Aristotle's logos and pathos

Aristotle's logos meant logical understanding to something. Similar to rhetoric discussed above, customers did not receive logical reasoning to buy and use the service. According to Aristotle's theory a person part of a conversation must receive logical, but also emphatical reasoning to do something. Pathos meant emphatical reasoning to do a decision of some kind or to understand and to like something, due to emphatical reasoning. If and when a service is sold solely by the price angle, neither logos nor pathos is created for the customer. These findings correlates to Aristotle's theoretical framework, good persuasion has these elements and this study found that poor take-into-use ratio primarily came from sales calls that were missing these Aristotle's values.

Aalto professor Parvinen (2020) emphasized the same values, listening to the customer and solving actual customer problems. Sales agent should develop at its best engagement with a customer that is developed via listening to the customer, truly understanding the customer's problem and lastly acting as a professional to solve the problem. These are the very same skills defined by Aristotle already at (384–322 BC).

5.3 Aristoteles Kairos

Kairos meant timing and more specifically good timing. This study found as explained in the findings chapter that poor take-into-use ratio sales calls were connected to poor timing of sales persuasion. In contrast, good timing of sales persuasion seems to create high service take-into-use ratio. The findings of this study are supported by the early day philosophical theories: timing of persuasion is vitally important and has strong correlation with the quality of persuasion on both the logical but also on the emphatical side.

The sales campaign model that was used during the collection of data for this study was the one month for free model, which according to the Kotler & Keller buying decision model (Kotler & Keller 2016) has a clear impact on customer behaviour.

When customer agree to take a trial license or a free gift; they do not actually make a buying decision, they are still in the “purchase intention stage”; and not in the “Purchase decision stage”. Figure 11 below is illustrating this phenomenon. It is an important philosophical distinction to remember when evaluating any sales call results.

Kotler & Keller, steps between evaluation of alternatives and purchase decision

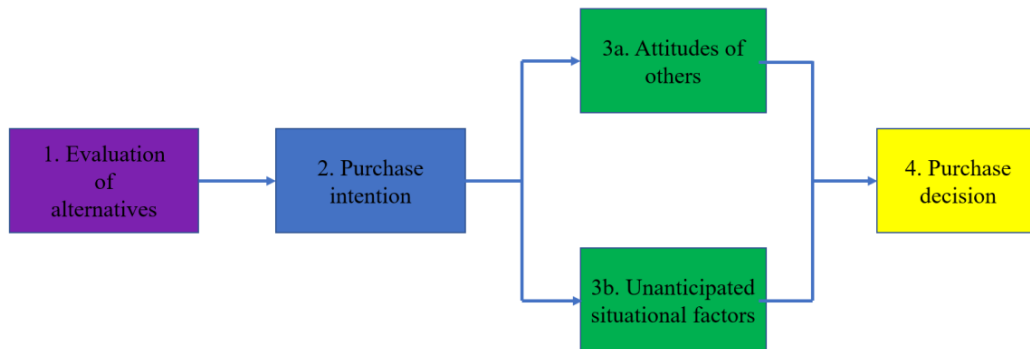


Figure 11. Kotler & Keller customer’s steps of a buying process.

5.4 The ECSI model

The ECSI model explained by Haaften (2019) has similar values as Aristotle’s theories. The ECSI model starts from the corporate image and a customer who may also have expectations. These drivers are already present before the sales call, and it may be difficult to affect those during the sales call. Perceived values within sales call; however, can be affected. Both product quality and perceived service quality are cumulating and together create the total value experienced by the customer. These variables are creating the overall experience based on the ECSI model and the findings of this study were consistent with the ECSI theory. The customer satisfaction index and ultimately customer loyalty are built of different variables, as explained above, and a customer not understanding nor using the service is a problem based on the ECSI model and based on the findings in this study.

5.5 Sales management role on customer loyalty

As explained in detail in the literature review, sales management has a key role in managing sales agents. Sales management at the end of the day, guides and manages sales agents based on target settings, but also by their behaviour they run and coach sales agents to work according to certain models. This study did not specifically measure nor study sales management, but it is known that management creates atmosphere, guidance and acts as a role model for sales agents; therefore, the theory of sales management process and the findings of this study is supported. Sales management eventually defines incentive models and this study found support that some campaign model may allow miss-usage of models in the format of high-pressure sales. Cause and effect regarding campaign model impact are easy to illustrate even though it was not proved in any way with this study. Hence, the writer wanted to lift this important sales management topic; even though the effect of sales management was not directly measured within this thesis, it certainly impacted indirectly in the format of a sales campaign models selections.

5.6 Classical linguistics discourse research

Initially the writer of this thesis thought that discourse analysis would be a good way to analyse sales call content, and to evaluate and measure their success. Later, a deeper study into these types theses proved that it was not a suitable method to study and solve these types of research questions. Discourse analysis can be used to evaluate, for example, the effect that used language and other rhetoric devices between a sales persuasion agent and a customer. Finally, it did not provide a framework to study the items in this thesis, hence it was not used, after all. This acts as a remark to future studies when developing new models or using existing models; one must carefully study and evaluate whether a selected model is suitable or not. This was certainly an additional lesson of this thesis.

5.7 Studies around interpersonal sales skills

The work by Friestad and Wright (1994) could not be used directly in this thesis, but it acted as an inspiration how to identify, test and purify a list of items that has impact and correlation with a customer's take-into-use ratio as studied. The PKM is, as stated in the literature review, the high-level theory to identify parties and subjects of persuasion attempts and episodes, and although the PKM could not be applied to this thesis on its own, it worked as a framework to identify key items. It gave motivation to this thesis by supporting the identification of the main persuasion themes and parties, and by implying that there is research in this field, although such research is young and hardly available.

The work of Castleberry et al. (1999) acted as high motivation for this thesis, in two ways. Firstly, they used the Pearson correlation model and formula to study correlations of listening skills of salespeople. Secondly, they created a set of items, or variables, that have a scale, and this enabled the use of the matrix approach and using the Pearson function. In addition, their development of the model included iterative rounds that made them drop items from the initial model that did not correlate to listening skills. This acted as a model for this thesis on how a new method can be developed with iterative rounds and how the Pearson correlation function can be used as a method to measure correlation of items between each other in this type of approach. Castleberry et al. studied listening, which is close, but not exactly what was studied in this thesis, as in this thesis the study focused on customer and sales agent interaction more likely. Both, Castleberry et al. and this thesis found support that age and gender did not impact end customer behaviour positively nor negatively.

This thesis used the Pearson correlation method to evaluate salesperson-customer interaction and its effect on customers' take-into-use ratio, and the method was developed in multiple rounds similarly to Castleberry et al. when they developed a model for listening analysis. The study by Castleberry et al. was the most similar study found and therefore acted as the main support and model for this thesis, both the working method, but also the theoretical framework.

5.8 Summary of findings

The study found correlations between certain sales call parameters and their impact on usage and activation levels for a value-add service such as a security service.

Both research questions were supported: there is a clear correlation for both the timing and quality of the sales argument with the take into use ratio, and when the best timing and quality of argument are implemented in the sales call, the best end customer's take into use ratio is achieved.

The study by Castleberry et al. (1999) supported this thesis in multiple ways, their study also used the Pearson correlation method and their framework model for examining sales agent listening acted as a sample model for this thesis.

5.9 Learnings and possibilities for future research items

It is likely that a sales campaign model with free months has a lot of impact on sales arguments. This is an issue for further research, where, for example, two different sales campaigns and their results could be compared.

There are multiple items that could be researched further and it would further elaborate sales call content and value add communication impact to customer adaptation of services.

- What is the impact of the sales campaign on sales agent behaviour?
- What is the impact on the end customer if and when the customer needs to make a buying decision immediately during the sales call, rather than testing free trials and making the buying decision alone later ?
- Examining the churn ratio for mid- and longer-term periods, on both comparison groups would give further insight into sales argument impact on customer behaviour.
- How to make customer more knowledgeable about security threats and needs?

5.10 Limitations

As explained earlier, this study only researched outbound sales activity due to the fact that sales call recordings are not available for, for example, sales events on stores, nor for web sales.

Another limitation was that all of the calls were done with the free trial sales campaign model. Sales agents as well as end customers are likely to behave differently with other type of campaign models where does customer the actual buying decision during the sales call and not at home later and alone. This is an interesting subject for another study.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis answered the research questions, they both were both valid estimations and sales agents and customers behaved within the sales calls as estimated prior to this study. A new finding that was not expected prior to this study was importance of timing when security is promoted.

For the research question 1 (RQ1: “Is there correlation between the quality and other key parameters of the sales call and end customers VAS product activation?”) a clear correlation was found between sales call quality and take-into-use ratio. A well argued service was taken into use clearly much more likely, as was presumed and estimated prior to this research.

For the research question 2 (RQ2: “Are there identified patterns with-in sales calls that impact end customers VAS product activation?”) a new finding was made that the timing during a sales call when data security is promoted has significant correlating with the take-into-use ratio.

If and when the value-add service promotion for internet security is presented to the end customer **after** presenting the service providers core service or even multiple core services are presented and sold, the end customer’s take-into-use activation ratio is typically poor. In contrast, the end customer’s service take into use ratio is typically good if the service is argued and sold before or at the same time than service providers core services, and they are all sold as one package rather than two different sales actions; one after the other.

Therefore, both research questions 1 and 2 are supported, and clear findings regarding sales call content and timing that impacts end customer behaviour were made.

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APPENDIX 1

Example 1 sales agent: "basic virus protection is one of the most important things and in addition there it also for example protection for internet banking"

"So yes, it is indeed good to have data security and this is something I have myself as well. Basically it can protect practically all the things you needed. Internet browsing can be used without harm and threat of internet malware, but important to remember banking protection as well."

Example 2, Sales agent: "niin se on silleen, että jos sä vaikka jotain netti-pankki, ostoksia tai muita tee ja sitten jos siinä jotain vahingossa käytiin jo sinulta virusturvaa oo, ni se on vähän vakuutusyhtiölle nono siinä koh-
taa"

Example 2 Sales agent: "It goes kind of like if you use internet banking or buy something online and something happens by accident and you don't have data protection, it is kind of 'no-no' for the insurance company also."

Example 3, Sales agent: "turvapaketti elikkä todella kattava suojan viruk-
sia roskapostia ja tietojen kalastelua vastaan"

Example 3 Sales agent: "data security package which gives a very com-
prehensive protection against all internet threats, malware and phishing"

Example 4, Sales agent: "Sen verran voisin kysyä tuosta ku huomasin, että ainakaan meiän kautta ja vielä mitään virusturvaa, että mitä kautta sulla on se virusturvaa, et onks sulla joku F-secure:sta suoraan vai mistä sulla?"

Customer: "Ei oo, ei oo mulla ei oikeastaan ollenkaan"

Sales agent: "Aa sä oot niin ku vielä ni rohkeasti menny tätä ollenkaan ottanu"

Example 4 Sales agent: "I noticed that you do not seem to have any data security from us at least, are you possibly running a version of F-secure product from elsewhere?.."

"Well, I really do not have any internet protection at all"

"Oh you been so bold that you been browsing and using internet with this at all"

APPENDIX 2

Example 1, Sales agent: ”samalla vielä ku puhelinliittymä meidän kautta päivitetään ni tarjoan sul kuukaudeks ilmatteeks ton F-securen turvapaketti”

Example 1 Sales agent: ”Now while we are updating your telephone subscription, I’ll offer you a free month of F-Secure data security package”

Example 2, Sales agent: ”nyt vielä yks juttu ennen ku lopetetaan meidän puhelun jälkeen sulle tulee tekstiviesti ja siinä lukee aktivoi tästä ni jos sulla nyt vaan viis minuuttia löytyy tähän aamu niin klikkaa sitä aktivointilinkkiä se asentaa sieltä f-securen tietoturvan sovellukset sulle ja se ajaa. Kato ilmasen Kannaksen läpi sun”

Example 2 sales agent: ”now one more thing before we end this call, after this you’ll get one other text message and it states ‘activate here’ and if you have just five minutes sometimes this morning, click the link and it will install F-Secure internet security application for you, and you know, it runs free scanning through your devices”

Example 3, Sales agent: ”Tulee sit yks toinen juttu. Missä lukee aktivoi tästä, niin tota käytä viis minuuttia siihen, että klikkaat sitä aktivointia nyt puhelun jälkeen, se asentaa sieltä F-securen tietoturva sovellukset sulle nimi tai ja pääset ajaa ilmaiset kannatukset läpi laitteista. Se puhdistaa kaikki mahdolliset virukset”

Example 3 sales agent: “And there is one more thing. Where it says ‘activate here’, use five minutes for it and click the activation now after this call and click and it will install F-Secure internet protection and you can run free scans through your devices. It cleans all the possible malware from your devices”

Example 4, Sales agent: ”meidän puhelun jälkeen sul tulee yks tekstiviesti ja siinä lukee, että aktivoi tästä nii, jos sulle viisi minuuttia vai löytyy tänään niin klikkaa sitä aktivointia. Se nimittäin asentaa sieltä F-securen

tietoturva sovellukset sulle puhelimeen. Ja se kato ajaa nytte ilmasen sitten puhdistuksen läpi sun puhelimesta.

Example 4 sales agent: "after our call you'll receive a text message and it'll say 'activate here', so if you have just five minutes click the link. It will install F-Secure internet protection applications for your phone, and then it will run free cleaning scan through your phone"