

The Impact of Salesperson's Information Overload on Relationship Selling Behaviours and Sales Performance

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A dissertation submitted to
Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Business (MBus)

2010

School of Business

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Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgments.

Dong Han

19 March 2010

Acknowledgements

My first and most profound gratitude is due to Professor Sanjaya S. Gaur, who accepted the responsibility of supervising my research and has provided guidance as well as encouragement throughout the research. In addition to being a guide, he has been a friend and philosopher. The confidence that he has given me has pushed me to deliver my best. He has supported me whenever things have seemed to be getting out of hand during this research work. My gratitude to him for all his support cannot be sufficiently expressed through words.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Elizabeth Ardley for the meticulous and timely editing of this thesis. I also would like to thank my friend, Halimin Herjanto for the consistent help he has provided me with during the completion of this work. Thanks also go to my friend Ryan Run for proof-reading the earlier drafts of this work, and Yuntao Dai for helping me with the data gathering in China.

Finally, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude and love to my fiancée Dingding Zhang for her encouragement, support and patience.

Dong Han

Ethical approval

Ethics approval from AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC) was granted on 21 September 2009, for a period of three years commencing 21 September 2009. The Ethics application reference number was 09/186.

Abstract

In order to achieve superior sales performance, salespeople need to be knowledgeable about customers' changing needs, increased market offerings, and various selling techniques. However, research has found that if a salesperson tries to process too much information within a limited time frame, he/she is likely to experience a phenomenon that is termed as Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO) and is detrimental to sales performance. As the term SIO has only recently been coined, it has not been well explored in personal selling and sales management fields, and no research has attempted to establish the linkages between SIO and the selling behaviours of salespeople. In addition, many studies show that to build and maintain strong buyer-seller relationships in order to achieve sustainable competitive advantage, salespeople need to adopt relationship selling behaviours which include Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB), Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB), and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB). Since the emphasis of ASB is on applying different selling procedures in different selling situations, it is very likely to affect the adoption of COSB and RSB. Although there has been a significant amount of research conducted on each type of relationship selling behaviour and their impacts on sales performance, the relationship between ASB, COSB and RSB has not been investigated.

Based on the above points, the present study examines the moderating role of SIO between different types of relationship selling behaviours, as well as between relationship selling behaviours and sales performance (behavioural and outcome performance). The study also attempts to establish linkages between ASB and the other two types of relationship selling behaviours (COSB and RSB). A framework is proposed to explain the relationships between SIO, relationship selling behaviours, and

sales performance.

The hypotheses were empirically tested in the present study by using appropriate statistical techniques. The results indicated that ASB has a positive effect on COSB and RSB. COSB is positively related to a salesperson's outcome performance, and RSB is positively related to behavioural performance. Surprisingly, the moderating effects of SIO were only found between ASB and RSB, as well as between the interaction intensity dimension of RSB and a salesperson's outcome performance. SIO did not show any significant effect on the other relationships between relationship selling behaviours and sales performance.

This study can be considered as an important step in establishing the linkage between different relationship selling behaviours, and their relationships with a salesperson's behavioural performance and outcome performance. It establishes that salespeople need to follow ASB for better relationship selling behaviour adoption and sales performance. Although the impact of SIO was not found between relationship selling behaviours and sales performance, further research for overcoming the limitations of this study is suggested.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Traditionally, personal selling has been interpreted as a sub-function of marketing, covering the tasks of pursuing exchange processes and order-taking in the exchange process (Wotruba, 1991). As the market becomes more and more competitive due to rising customer expectations and declining product differentiations, salespeople remain the bridge between customers and organizations. As a key area that allows interaction with customers, the sales department has evolved into a division coequal with marketing and management departments (Jones *et al.*, 2005; Wotruba, 1991). Sales function operations have risen to a strategic level and enhancing salespeople's performance is one of the most important tasks sales managers are facing in the current market environment (Boles *et al.*, 2000). This issue has also drawn great interest in academic research, with more than 400 studies conducted to examine related fields of salespeople's performance by 1985 (Churchill *et al.*, 1985).

Along with the rise in sales function's strategic operations, the role of the salesperson has infiltrated into every dimension of business practice (Leigh & Marshall, 2001; Wotruba, 1991). Salespeople not only need to gather information relating to competitors and customers that could be used in the selling process, but they also need to deliver information to the other departments of an organization to help it gain competitive advantage (Leigh & Marshall, 2001; Wotruba, 1991). Meanwhile, salespeople have to be knowledgeable about the increasing number of products and features on offer, as

well as sophisticated selling techniques.

A large amount of information is therefore required for sales force specialization. However, researchers in sales management are also aware of an upper limit to benefiting from a large amount of information (Hunter, 2004; Johnston & Marshall, 2003; Moon & Armstrong, 1994). There is a trade-off between increasing offerings to appeal to more customers and avoiding the amount of information getting too large (Hunter, 2004; Johnston & Marshall, 2003). When the level of information is too large to be processed by salespeople within a given time, there is a chance that Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO) can occur (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). An overload of information can be the cause of an increase in errors and result in serious negative effects such as confusion or frustration (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Keller & Staelin, 1987), as well as a loss in confidence, self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Hunter, 2004; Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Therefore, an overload of information in the selling process, that is, SIO, is detrimental to salespeople's performance (Hunter, 2004; Hunter & Goebel, 2008; Johnston & Marshall, 2003). Due to the critical role that information plays in selecting appropriate sales behaviours, SIO is very likely to have negative influences on the selling behaviours that focus on relationship building, thereby affecting sales performance.

In last two decades, customer focus has shifted from transactional buying toward relationship and partnership buying (Leigh & Marshall, 2001). An increasing number of buyers are willing to establish relationships with suppliers, believing that cooperatively managed solutions can offer more value and lower costs (Arndit, 1979; Kalwani & Narayandas, 1995). As a result, relationship selling has been widely adopted by firms and it has been shown to positively impact salespeople's performance (e.g. Boles *et al.*, 2000; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kelley, 1992; Keillor *et al.*, 2000; Macintosh *et al.*, 1992). Consequently, interest from academics and practitioners has focused on selling behaviours that can facilitate the selling process and improve the results for both sellers and buyers.

Past research on relationship selling behaviours falls into three streams: Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB), Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB), and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB) (Keillor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000). ASB focuses on adjusting and modifying sales tactics during the selling process based on perceived customer information (Spiro & Weitz, 1990); COSB emphasizes satisfying customer needs on a long-term basis rather than short-term financial gains (Saxe & Weitz, 1982); RSB aims at building a strong dyadic personal relationship between salesperson and customer that benefits both parties (Boles *et al.*, 2000). Each one of these behaviours have different centres of attention; however, ASB focuses on gathering customer information and learning from it and these two steps are essential to making the correct decision in adopting and implementing the other selling behaviours (Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar, 1994; Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986). Therefore, ASB is most likely to have positive influences when adopting COSB (Siguaw, 1991; Franke & Park, 2006) and RSB (Guenzi *et al.*, 2007; Goolsby *et al.*, 1992). Consequently, salespeople's performance can be improved with the right selling behaviours used in the right sales situations.

1.1 The aims of the study and research question

Today's academics and practitioners pay a great deal of attention to the high level of information management requirements that are necessary in order to be competent in the complex role of the salesperson (Weitz & Bradford, 1999; Hunter, 2004). Moreover, growth in customer sophistication, competition complexity, product variety, new technology adoption, regulation establishing, and department collaboration all require salespeople to gather, store, manage, process and communicate a continuously increasing amount of information (Hunter, 2004; Jones *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, the influence of SIO on sales performance and behaviours is more likely to happen, and it probably will only get greater in the coming days (Dixon, Gassenheimer & Barr, 2002; Hunter, 2004; Weitz, & Bradford, 1999), especially with the impact of the recent

economic crisis. Because SIO is a concept which has been only recently developed by Hunter and Goebel (2008), much more research is needed to uncover the latent correlations and facts that lie within it, in order to offer better guidance for sales managers. The first goal of this dissertation is to explore the impact of SIO on important sales outcomes which are influenced by relationship selling behaviours.

Many researchers have suggested that the issue of relationship selling is a research priority, and relationship selling behaviour is among the important topics for both academics and practitioners today (Ingram, LaForge & Leigh, 2002; Leigh & Marshall, 2001; Marshall & Michaels, 2000). However, in previous studies on personal selling and sales management, although a great number of these researches have investigated the determinants of salespeople's performance (e.g. Brown & Peterson, 1994; Churchill *et al.*, 1985; Cravens *et al.*, 1993), only a very few of them have covered the issue of salespeople's behaviour (Boles *et al.*, 2000). Limited research has been conducted on the topic of relationship selling behaviours, and even less research has focused on the subjects of the relationships between ASB on different types of relationship selling behaviours (COSB and RSB). Therefore, the other aim of this dissertation is to investigate the effects of ASB on COSB and RSB, and the influence of all three on sales performance.

In order to achieve the aims mentioned above, this dissertation is designed to answer the following two research questions:

How does SIO impact relationship selling behaviours and sales performance?

How does ASB influence the adoption of COSB and RSB?

1.2 Expected contributions of the study

Many researchers have suggested that there is a gap between what practitioners need and what academic researchers are doing in the field of personal selling and sales management (e.g. Jones *et al.*, 2005; Leigh & Marshall, 2001; Marshall & Michaels,

2001). Therefore, new research directions and ideas are needed (Jones *et al.*, 2005). This study is expected to explore a new path and have important significance to both academics and practitioners in the areas of personal selling and sales management.

For academics, this study contributes by providing a framework and empirical results integrating ASB, COSB and RSB along with SIO, as well as determining their influences on sales performance. The conceptual framework supplements existing relationship selling behaviour literature with the determinative role of ASB, and also examines the relationship of the newly developed SIO concepts with other important constructs in sales literature. As a study involving all these areas has not been reported in the literature so far, this research will add to the body of literature on personal selling, information management, and sales management.

For practitioners, the expected relationships among ASB, COSB and RSB should prompt firms to train salespeople towards adopting ASB as their primary selling behaviour, and therefore to choose appropriate strategies to achieve better sales performance. Additionally, the expected moderating effects of SIO when implementing different selling behaviours should encourage sales managers to keep monitoring when the detriments of a general selling strategy (the opposite of a specialized selling strategy) exceed its advantages, and help determine when to invest in better information controlling systems or technology so that sales forces can operate more effectively and efficiently.

1.3 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters.

- The first chapter provides an introduction to the research study, along with the research background and an overview of the studies conducted so far in the relevant field. This chapter also explains the aims and research questions of this research work, as well as the expected contribution of this study.

- The second chapter presents a review of the relevant literature on the topic of SIO and relationship selling behaviours including ASB, COSB and RSB. Concepts, theories and questions relating to each construct of the research proposal are also examined and illustrated.
- Chapter 3 builds on the gaps identified in the literature reviewed in the second chapter, and proposes a conceptual framework for explaining the effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance, as well as relationships between ASB, COSB and RSB. Based on the research questions and proposed framework, research hypotheses are also developed in this chapter, with explanations for relationships between constructs in the framework.
- Chapter 4 describes the research methodology used for testing the hypotheses proposed in chapter three. This chapter elaborates the design of the variables' measurements and the instruments used for the justifications of selected measurements, along with the details of data collection procedures.
- Chapter 5 details the techniques used for the data analysis, including the characteristics of the sample and the properties of the measurements. Hypotheses are also tested using regression analysis in this chapter, and results are presented.
- Chapter 6 is the last chapter. It discusses the summary and conclusions of the findings of this research. This chapter concludes the dissertation by providing theoretical and managerial implications, along with the limitations of this study and some directions for future research for extending this topic and making contributions to the literature of personal selling and sales management.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter explores the relevant literature on the topics of Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO) and relationship selling behaviours. In order to understand the impacts of SIO, it is important to fully comprehend the background of this newly developed concept. This chapter will explain the SIO phenomenon, the development process of SIO, and the antecedents causing SIO. The other section of this chapter presents the three research streams of relationship selling behaviours: Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB), Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB), and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB). The development of concepts and theories for each selling behaviour type will be examined in order to investigate the effects of ASB on COSB and RSB, and their influences on sales performance.

2.1 Research on Salesperson's Information Overload

2.1.1 Initiation of SIO

The importance of sales function has been increasingly recognized since the latter half of the 20th century (Wotruba, 1991), with accompanying attention to the factors influencing a salesperson's behaviours and performance. Therefore, many studies have been conducted to guide the changing role of personal selling and the development of sales strategy. An increase in the complication and sophistication of a salesperson's responsibilities has caused the initiation of SIO.

SIO is the inevitable outcome of the evolution of personal selling. The research of Wotruba (1991) is a longitudinal study of how the tasks of selling have changed and evolved over the last century. He presents five stages of the evolution of selling: provider, persuader, prospector, problem-solver, and procreator. At the provider stage, salespeople's activity was limited to taking orders; at the persuader stage, salespeople's main task was to convince market members to make a purchase; at the prospector stage salespeople focused on finding potential customers who had a need for their products and the ability to purchase them; then, at the problem solver stage, salespeople began selecting products from their offerings to solve potential customers' problems; and finally, in the procreator stage, salespeople started to work cooperatively with business partners to identify possible problems or latent needs, and create unique solutions for individual customers (Wotruba, 1991). The role of the salesperson therefore, is not only becoming more difficult, but also more complex. The stages of personal selling are cumulative: the tasks and jobs of the salesperson incorporate the requirements of all the preceding stages and continue to grow and enlarge (Dunn *et al.*, 1981; Wotruba, 1991). Each stage is more complex than its precursor, and the complexities are caused by the additional time needed and talents required to gather and process information related to selling behaviours and activities. Hence, there is an increasing requirement for information management (Weitz & Bradford, 1999). If salespeople fail to fulfil this requirement, they are likely to experience SIO, resulting in a diminishing of their sales performance (Hunter & Goebel, 2008).

2.1.2 Development of SIO

Although the theory of SIO was developed only recently (Hunter & Goebel, 2008), information overload is by no means new (Bawden, Holtham & Courtney, 1999; Klausegger, Sinkovics & Zou, 2007; Meyer, 1998). In general, the term 'information overload' is normally used to express the simple notion of receiving too much information (Klausegger, Sinkovics & Zou, 2007). Information overload has been

investigated across various research disciplines and the phenomenon has led to various constructs, synonyms, and related terms (Eppler & Mengis, 2004, Schick *et al.*, 1990). It is essential to review the studies on information overload conducted in different disciplines in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of SIO.

Information overload

The theoretical basis of information overload consists mainly of three streams, including psychology (e.g. Miller, 1956; Spence & Spence, 1968; Driver & Mock, 1975; Wiedenbeck, 1985; Ernst, 1998), organizational information management (e.g. Galbraith, 1974; Schneider, 1987; Simon, 1990; Wetherbe, 1991), and marketing (e.g. Jacoby, Speller, & Kohn, 1974; Klausegger, Sinkovics & Zou, 2007; Wilkie, 1974).

By the late 1950s, with the rapid expansion of publication and media technology, the problem of information overload had already arisen (Bawden, Holtham & Courtney, 1999). The information overload problem was first recognized and established in the field of psychology (Meyer, 1998). A hypothesis for information overload was first proposed by Miller who suggested that humans have a limited ability to process information, and different people have different levels of information processing capability and information capacity (Miller, 1956). The research of Miller (1956) found that people tend to relate tiny pieces of information together until a large piece is created. When people evoke one of these tiny pieces, the rest of the pieces within the chunk are easier to recall. Further psychology research has discovered that people can normally store five to nine large pieces of information in their brain (Foti & Lord, 1987; Miller, 1956; Rader, 1981; Spence & Spence, 1968; Wiedenbeck, 1985). When the information load has exceeded the capacity of a person, information overload occurs and a series of negative psychological reactions impact on decision making. Information overload reduces output capacity (Driver & Streufert, 1969; Driver & Mock, 1975), and increases physical and psychological ailments (Cook, 1988; Geyer, 1992), including depressive disorders (Ernst, 1998; Miller, 1960).

In most firms, about 60 percent of work time is spent in reading documents and processing information (Klausegger, Sinkovics & Zou, 2007, p. 692). Managers spend approximately 50 percent of their time trying to collect relevant and necessary information, whether this is through formal readings and organizational computer-based systems, or informal channels such as meetings and phone conversations (Wetherbe, 1991). While information plays a vital role in business practice, researchers of organizational information management have also realized the significance of information overload. The research of Galbraith (1974) found that information overload is detrimental to organizational structure unless information processing capacity is increased, a finding supported by the studies of Schneider (1987) and Schick *et al.* (1990). Human resource management is another area influenced by information overload (Hulbert *et al.*, 1972; Wetherbe, 1991), with an inversely-proportional relationship between the two, that is, an increase in the level of information overload reduces the effectiveness of HR management (Buchanan *et al.*, 1999). Lastly, the effect of information overload within the marketing discipline has also been investigated (Klausegger, Sinkovics, & Zou, 2007) with results showing that information overload causes errors, confusion, and frustration (Jacoby, Speller & Kohn, 1974; Keller & Staelin, 1987; Wilkie, 1974).

Definition of SIO

Based on the findings of previous studies on information overload, Hunter (2004) proposed that the negative manifestations of information overload are also applicable in the context of personal selling. Today's sales force is an inter-functional department that collaborates with the other sections of an organization (Jones *et al.*, 2005; Marshall *et al.*, 1999; Wotruba, 1991). An important aspect of a salesperson's role is to effectively communicate information within the organization, while contacting customers externally. Such a responsibility means an increased need for salespersons to gather and process information (Weitz & Bradford, 1999), thus making them potential victims of the information overload phenomena.

As mentioned previously, there are two perspectives on the definition of information overload: the psychological perspective and the marketing perspective (Klausegger, Sinkovics & Zou, 2007) – also recognized as the subjective dimension and the objective dimension (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). The psychological/objective perspective defines information overload as the actual amount of information that exceeds the individual's processing capability (Miller, 1956). In contrast, the marketing/subjective perspective describes information overload as a status perceived by the individual (Eppler & Mengis, 2004); there may not be any failure during information transmission, rather the information may not be used by the receiver (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Meyer, 1998).

Jacoby, Speller and Kohn (1974) define information overload as “a state induced by a level of information exceeding the ability of an individual to assimilate or process during a given unit of time” (cited in Hunter, 2004, p. 91). In defining the phenomenon of SIO, Hunter and Goebel (2008) adopt the marketing/subjective perspective and, based on the above definition of information overload, describe SIO as “a state evoked by salespeople's attempts to process an amount of information that exceeds their ability to assimilate or process during a given unit of time” (2008, p. 22).

Antecedents to SIO

According to their definition, Hunter and Goebel (2008) regard victims of SIO as those who attempt to process too great an amount of information during a very limited time frame. Additionally, as addressed previously, different people have different levels of information processing capability and information capacity (Miller, 1956), thus different salespersons may suffer different levels of SIO. Therefore, the antecedents of SIO are the factors that relate to the amount of information, the factors influencing time, and the information processing ability of the individual salesperson (Hunter, 2004; Hunter & Goebel, 2008).

Too much information can cause a state of role overload. Role overload is defined by Reilly (1982) as “conflict that occurs when the sheer volume of behaviour demanded by

roles in the role set exceeds available time and energy” (cf. Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Many scholars have researched the impacts of different role stressors, including role overload, on sales outcomes (Hunter & Goebel, 2008; Singh, 1998; Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994). The results show that role overload not only negatively influences salespeople’s job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Singh, Goolsby & Rhoads, 1994) but also directly leads to SIO (Hunter & Goebel, 2008).

Apart from the increased level of information required for salespeople to make decisions and complete tasks, a decline in the amount of time available to process information is another antecedent of SIO (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Family obligations, territory expansion, customer base growth, and time availability of customers help limit the time frame salespeople must work within (Boles, Johnston & Hair, 1997; Hunter & Goebel, 2008). In order to cope with the number of tasks and the need to process information within a restricted time, salespeople need to develop an attitude that allows them deal with ‘role overload’ by conducting multi-activities simultaneously; such an attitude is defined as a ‘poly-chronic attitude’ (Hunter & Geobel, 2008; Kaufman, Lane, & Lindquist, 1991).

The key concept that underpins role overload and a poly-chronic attitude is Need-For-Cognition (NFC). As the mediator of SIO, role overload and a poly-chronic attitude, NFC is defined as the propensity to engage in the process of thinking and enjoy the process (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Just as salespeople have different capabilities of storing and processing information, they also differ in their motivation to think. A salesperson who has a high level of NFC is more likely to suffer from SIO (Hunter & Goebel, 2008) because those who enjoy the thinking process tend to gather and process more information than those who are less motivated to think.

The research of Hunter and Goebel (2008) has identified the key antecedents of SIO, and offered a theoretical basis of SIO. They have provided preliminary evidence that information overload can be detrimental to a salesperson’s performance, as well as the

influential factors of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The authors have also suggested the need for further research on the relationship between SIO and important sales outcomes. As identified earlier, the recent focus of sales practice and research has been on developing valuable long-term buyer-seller relationships (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Keillor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000). Therefore, it would be of benefit to both academics and practitioners if a research investigating the relationship between SIO and relationship selling behaviours were conducted as this relationship significantly impacts sales performance. It is of particular importance to identify which relationship selling behaviour is influenced by SIO and in what manner.

2.2 Research on relationship selling behaviours

The importance and value of the seller-buyer relationship has been a broadly examined subject in sales and marketing studies (Callahan, 1992; Keillor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000). Ingram (1990) has suggested that salespeople can only handle upcoming challenges if they adopt “the perspective of a true professional” with the aim of using “truthful and non-manipulative” approaches to build mutually beneficial relationships between customer and supplier. These approaches and activities are considered as a vital tactic in the initial selling process by facilitating future seller-buyer communications (Leigh & McGraw, 1989), and top performing salespeople spend more time at this stage (Macintosh *et al.* 1992) with the result that strong relationships are built (Swan & Nolan, 1985). Therefore, relationship selling is also very important from the organizational strategic point of view. Research has suggested that building a customer-centric organization is one of the “best practices” of industry (Leigh & Marshall, 2001). This organizational culture requires development of customer relationship management (CRM) (Srivastava, Shervani & Fahey, 1999) and cooperation between marketing and sales functions (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Moorman & Rust, 1999), and salespeople who adopt relationship selling behaviours play the most crucial role throughout the whole process (Leigh & Marshall, 2001).

2.2.1 Research on Adaptive Selling Behaviour

By the time researchers began focusing attention on the determinants of successful customer relationship management, a significant amount of interest had already been devoted to understanding the adaptive nature of personal selling (Guenzi *et al.*, 2007; Park & Holloway, 2003; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). This interest is due to buyer-seller relationships in the business-to-business (B2B) context, relationships which are characteristically described as complex, interdependent and long-term orientated (Anderson & Narus, 1991; Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987; Heide & John, 1992). It is a salesperson's ability to initiate and adjust sales strategies during the selling process that is considered to have positive effects on overcoming the difficulties of relationship building (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986), an ability that is especially obvious in circumstances when buying tasks are complex and may result in large orders (Franke & Park, 2006).

Consequently, ASB (Adaptive Selling Behaviour) – a salesperson's ability and communication style that allows him/her to accommodate different selling situations – is regarded as constructive in enhancing sales performance. The study of Weitz (1978) was the first research to postulate the positive relationship between ASB and sales performance, and many scholars have conducted further research to provide evidences to support this relationship (e.g. Boorum, Goolsby, & Ramsey 1998; Goolsby, Lagace & Boorum, 1992; Predmore & Bonniece, 1996). In order to unravel which factors relate to ASB as the determinants of sales performance, sets of measurement scales have been developed. Spiro and Weitz (1990) introduced the very first and the most accepted measurement called the ADAPTS scale which examines 16 items and 2 factors – behaviour and belief. Based on this original scale, Robinson *et al.* (2002) developed a short version (5 items) of the ADAPTS scale as an easier and more efficient measure of the original form, and Chakrabarty *et al.* (2004) suggested a behavioural version (5 items) of the ADAPTS scale which is claimed to be the first choice for researchers requiring a behavioural-only scale. Both of these new versions of ADAPTS measure only the items relating to the behaviour factor, due to the belief factor being found as

not significantly related to sales performance (Marks, Vorhies & Badovick, 1996).

The behaviour factor measured by ADAPTS and its sub-scales include two main aspects of ASB: information gathering and the process of learning. These two aspects can be found in the definition of ASB: “the altering of sales behaviours during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation” (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan 1986, p. 175).

According the conceptual model of ASB first proposed by Weitz, Sujan and Sujan (1986), a salesperson has the opportunity to gather customer information throughout each step of the selling process, a process which includes prospecting, pre-approaching, approaching, presentation, overcoming objections, closing, and following-up (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). In the age of information overflow, firms faced with myriad information sources have continual difficulty in selecting and providing the right information to their salespeople (Park & Holloway, 2003). Therefore, a salesperson may or may not provide information in reply to the specifics of the selling situation (Eckert, 2006). Because not all buyers need the same product information, a salesperson needs to gather and select information to meet different customers’ preferences, and plan sales strategies and tactics accordingly before entering the selling interaction (Eckert, 2006; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994; Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986). Additionally, due to the existence of unexpected situations, it is impossible to anticipate all the possible odds during the selling process. Thus, a salesperson needs to monitor the customer’s reactions to the planned sales approach and adjust rapidly to better match the interactive requirements of the customer (Eckert, 2006; Keilor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000; Park & Holloway, 2003; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). Early research has proven that basic communication elements including talking, nodding, smiling, and gesturing, can all be used to predict interaction results during the selling process (Chapple & Donald, 1947). The more active the salesperson is, and the more attention he/she pays to the communication elements, the more likely he/she is to be successful in selling (Chapple & Donald, 1947). In addition, later research has suggested that even very easy

adaptations during the selling interaction have a positive influence on improving relationships and reducing rejections (Franke & Park, 2006). Therefore, a salesperson's adaptive communication style is one of the key aspects of ASB (Keilor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000).

The other key aspect of ASB is the salesperson's ability to adjust selling activities tailored to each customer (Keilor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000), and the ability to recognize ASB as a learning process (Eckert, 2006; Park & Holloway, 2003). Using the "right information" and using the "information right" to make correct decisions in selling activity adjustments are highlighted by the concepts of learning orientation and problem solving (Garvin, 1993; Hunt & Morgan, 1996; Park & Holloway, 2003; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). Park and Holloway (2003) suggest learning orientation is especially crucial for the sales force, because it operates as a "communication mediator" and is the main "interactive medium" between a firm and its customers. Research has also been conducted to identify and examine the impacts of different personality traits on the relationship between salespeople and customers, and the results show that a salesperson's ability to adapt to different selling situations, along with the ability to learn, has a significant influence on relationship selling (Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994; Weitz, 1981; Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986). Top-performing salespeople have shown a strong ability to plan and adapt, as well as great market knowledge and an intrinsic interest in learning (Park & Holloway, 2003; Silver, Dwyer & Alford, 2006; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). Learning oriented salespeople enjoy challenging work, are always curious, and constantly look for opportunities to utilize the information they have gathered (Silver, Dwyer & Alford, 2006; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). More importantly, they tend to "think more" in order to understand the particular selling situation, and enjoy the process of learning how to sell more effectively from information collected and even mistakes made, along with taking pleasure in accomplishing higher achievements (Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994; Van de Walle *et al.*, 1999). Therefore, learning orientation greatly increases salespeople's willingness to adopt ASB (Blackshear & Plank, 1994; Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994).

2.2.2 Research on Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour

Significant research has been devoted to examining inter-functional cooperation and collaboration within an organization, and these have been proven to be beneficial to improving business performance (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Leigh & Marshall, 2001). In particular, the inter-departmental relationship between marketing and sales function is especially important to a company (Kotler *et al.*, 2006). Research has found that improvements in this relationship lead to improved productivity and competitiveness (Tjosvold, 1988), enhanced strategy formulation, and reduced conflicts (Menon *et al.*, 1996). Adopting COSB (Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour) is an example of collaboration between marketing and sales function.

Customer orientation is a concept commonly used in the marketing discipline; it seeks to establish long-term relationships with customers by a constant focus on satisfying their needs (Perreault & McCarthy, 2002). Implementation of COSB requires an involvement of this marketing philosophy in selling activities (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Introducing COSB to salespeople is also a vital step in building long-term seller/buyer relationships as well as developing a customer-oriented marketing strategy right through the whole organization (Schwepker, 2003). The need to fully understand customer-oriented selling increases as an emphasis continues to be placed on the importance of salespeople in developing long-term profitable partnerships with customers (Anderson, 1996; Jolson, 1997); that is, salespeople should be customer-oriented value creators (Jolson, 1997; Wotruba, 1996).

Dubinsky and Staples (1981) were the first academics to propose customer orientation at the individual salesperson level. By conducting an empirical study examining salespeople's perceptions of the sales techniques used, the authors found that most industrial salespeople select selling techniques based on customer-oriented criteria. Salespeople tend to have a preference in terms of the techniques that help them to

identify and gratify the needs of their customers (Dubinsky & Staples, 1981). In addition, Dubinsky and Staples (1981) also found that the number of customer-oriented selling techniques adopted by salespeople is far more than sales-oriented techniques.

The research of Saxe and Weitz (1982) brought the concept of COSB to a systematic level. They defined customer-oriented selling as “the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs” (Saxe & Weitz, 1982, p. 344). This definition also provides evidence of the conclusion drawn in the above context: adopting COSB is an example of collaboration between marketing and sales function. A salesperson who is customer-oriented tends to act based on increasing long-term customer satisfaction, and generally tries to avoid behaviours that may create an instant sale but at the cost of sacrificing customer benefits (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Saxe and Weitz (1982) define COSB as salesperson behaviours that help customers identify their needs; describing products accurately can help satisfy those needs, thus helping customers to make satisfactory purchase decisions. It is important for a salesperson to avoid the use of high pressure, deceptive or manipulative influence tactics during the selling process.

In order to help sales managers assess whether a salesperson has the characteristics of COSB, Saxe and Weitz (1982) developed a measurement called the SOCO (sales orientation – customer orientation) scale which consists of 24 items, half of which assesses the salesperson’s degree of selling orientation, while the other half assesses customer orientation. The SOCO scale is the most broadly used measurement scale (Keilor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000; Schwepker, 2003), and its reliability and validity have been extensively tested and supported (Schwepker, 2003). Based on the SOCO scale, a number of replicated or modified versions have been developed by doing slight alterations in terms of wording or reduction in the number of items (e.g. Michaels & Day, 1985; Brown, Widing & Coulter, 1991; Tadepalli, 1995; Thomas, Soutar & Ryan, 2001). Among of these versions, the 10-item SOCO scale developed by Thomas, Soutar

and Ryan (2001) has shown sufficient reliability and validity to replace the old version without much information loss, as its properties cover sales managers, salespeople, and customers (Periatt, LeMay & Chakrabarty, 2004; Schwepker, 2003). By reducing response tiredness and acquiescence bias, the 10-item SOCO scale is claimed to be an easier to use and more efficient and accurate customer orientated measure than the original SOCO scale (Periatt, LeMay & Chakrabarty, 2004; Schwepker, 2003; Thomas, Soutar & Ryan, 2001).

2.2.3 Research on Relational Selling Behaviour

Compared with the other two types of relationship selling behaviours, RSB (Relational Selling Behaviour) is relatively under-researched. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, the concept of RSB was originally developed in the research of Crosby, Evans and Cowies (1990) and was designed in the service selling context. Weitz (1981) regarded the quality of the buyer/seller relationship, which is the emphasis of RSB, as one of the moderating variables in the salesperson-customer relationship dimension. Although this established the relationship between selling behaviours and effectiveness, Weitz did not specifically demonstrate this element; rather he incidentally made an allusion to this relationship along with some discussion about dyadic approach studies. The concepts of relationship quality and RSB were not validated until the study of Crosby *et al.* (1990). Secondly, unlike ASB and COSB which cover a wide range of the factors related to a salesperson's behaviour, RSB is aimed at managing the quality of the interpersonal relationship between salespeople and customers, and tends to build and maintain strong relationships (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). In other words, if ASB and COSB are considered as the strategic level of selling activities during buyer-seller interactions, then RSB is about the selling tactics used during the interpersonal interactions between salesperson and customer.

Crosby *et al.* (1990) defined RSB as “a behavioural tendency exhibited by some sales representatives to husband/cultivate the buyer-seller relationship and see to its

maintenance and growth” (p.71). RSB has a positive influence on the buyer-seller relationship if the salesperson plays the role that fits the customer’s expectations (Solomon *et al.*, 1985). In order to meet these expectations, salespeople need to adopt ritualistic relational communication behaviours based on the underlying relationship patterns of the specific buyer-seller interaction (Soldow & Thomas, 1985). More importantly, the keys to adopting the ritualistic pattern are the mutual coordination of appropriate behaviour with regard to the customer (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) and being consistent in the interactions with the customer all the way through the whole selling process (Bolton & Drew, 1991).

There are three key dimensions that influence the development and maintenance of the interpersonal relationship quality between salesperson and customer. These are: interaction intensity, mutual disclosure, and cooperative intention (Crosby *et al.*, 1990).

- Interaction intensity indicates the frequency of the communication made between the salesperson and the customer either for a formal business meeting with selling tasks or just for personal reasons (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). This dimension reflects the effort of the salesperson to keep all possible communication channels open to the customer and show a commitment to the relationship (Williamson, 1983). “Staying in touch” has been shown to be one of the key determinants of relationship maintenance (Williamson, 1983), as trust can be gained if the salesperson in a relational selling context can be reached at a critical moment experienced by the customer (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Swinnth, 1967).
- Mutual disclosure means the relationship between salesperson and customer necessitates a reciprocal sharing of information on both the personal and organizational level (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Derlega *et al.*, 1987). This contributes to problem solving for both parties, and also helps to develop trust and understanding (Boles *et al.*, 2000).
- Cooperative intention stands for the positive customer perceptions created by the salesperson who adopts a cooperative selling style, in contrast to any competitive behaviour during the interactions (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Positive customer

perceptions include trust and satisfactory problem resolution (Evans & Beltramini, 1987; Pruitt, 1981), as well as mutual respect (Crosby *et al.*, 1990).

The study of Boles *et al.* (2000) offers further evidence to support the findings on RSB in the study of Crosby *et al.* (1990). Boles *et al.* (2000) examined the internal dimensions of RSB, as well as whether or not RSB relates to salesperson's performance. The research findings confirmed the positive effects of RSB on sales performance. More importantly, interacting and sharing information with customers were shown to be extremely important in enhancing the buyer-seller relationship and improving sales performance. Consequently, the authors suggested RSB could be used as a short term behavioural measurement for long term performance (Boles *et al.*, 2000). The study also included suggestions regarding further research to identify which attributes of these activities affect performance, as well as to determine the relationship between RSB and other attitudinal concepts (Boles *et al.*, 2000).

2.3 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed the relevant literature on topics concerning SIO and relationship selling behaviours. In the SIO section, the chapter firstly explained how salespeople's role evolution has caused the SIO phenomenon; it then reviewed the theoretical background of information overload, along with the development process of SIO concepts and definition; lastly, the antecedents to SIO were demonstrated. The other section of this chapter presented the three research streams of relationship selling behaviours: ASB, COSB and RSB. The development of concepts and theories for each selling behaviour type were examined. Based on the understanding of these constructs, the next step is to present the proposed conceptual framework which has been designed to fill the gaps identified in the literature review, and to discuss the hypotheses that will be tested in this dissertation.

Chapter 3

Proposed Research Design

Based on the literature presented in Chapter 2, this chapter presents the conceptual framework of this dissertation. Firstly, Chapter 3 conceptualizes the linkage between Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB) and Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB), as well as ASB and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB). Then, the relationships between COSB, RSB and sales performance are discussed. Finally, the moderating role of SIO (Salesperson's Information Overload) in the relationship between different relationship selling behaviours, as well as between relationship selling behaviours and salespeople's performances, are conceptualized.

3.1. Conceptual framework and theoretical model

A good amount of literature has examined the effects of relationship selling behaviours on a salesperson's performance (e.g. Boles *et al.*, 2000; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kelley, 1992; Keillor *et al.*, 2000; Macintosh *et al.*, 1992). However, there is an evident absence of discussion on the roles that different relationship selling behaviours play and the degree of their effects on a salesperson's behavioural performance and outcome performance. As a result of this, the conceptual and empirical linkage among different relationship behaviours as well as their effects on both behavioural and outcome performance have not yet been established in the literature. As discussed in previous chapters, this gap in the literature needs to be addressed because relationship selling behaviours are crucial for creating sustainable long-term buyer-seller relationships and keeping them profitable. The integration of the different relationship selling behaviours in models of sales performance will significantly increase our understanding of a

salesperson's appropriate behaviours that will create satisfaction for industrial buyers and hence retain strong relationships with the salesperson's firm.

The focus therefore, is on understanding how ASB is related to the other two kinds of relationship selling behaviours and hence how they are related to a salesperson's behaviour and outcome performance, along with how SIO moderates these relationships. The model in Figure 3.1 presents the conceptual framework of this study. The middle part is titled as the deterministic effects of ASB on COSB and RSB, and the consequences are linked to the sales performance on the right hand side, which comprises behavioural performance and outcome performance. Additionally, these links are moderated by the appearance of SIO shown on the left hand side of the figure.

In the following sections, the relationships between each construct of the relationship selling behaviours are discussed first at the theoretical level. This is followed by a discussion on the consequences of relationship selling behaviours on sales performance. Finally, the moderating effects of SIO are discussed. Hypotheses on the relationships between various constructs are also described along with the discussion.

3.2 The influences of ASB on COSB and RSB

Due to the increasing sophistication of customers and the complexity of the product-lines companies are offering today, salespeople are facing situations that are full of choices. However, because the marketplace is flooded by both true and false information, as well as valuable and meaningless information, too many choices may not always lead to making good choices. Therefore, the notions of "use right information" and "use information right" are applicable to all selling behaviours. Since ASB is a relationship selling behaviour that requires information gathering and learning from the information gathered, it is therefore, likely to have positive influences on the other types of relationship selling behaviours.

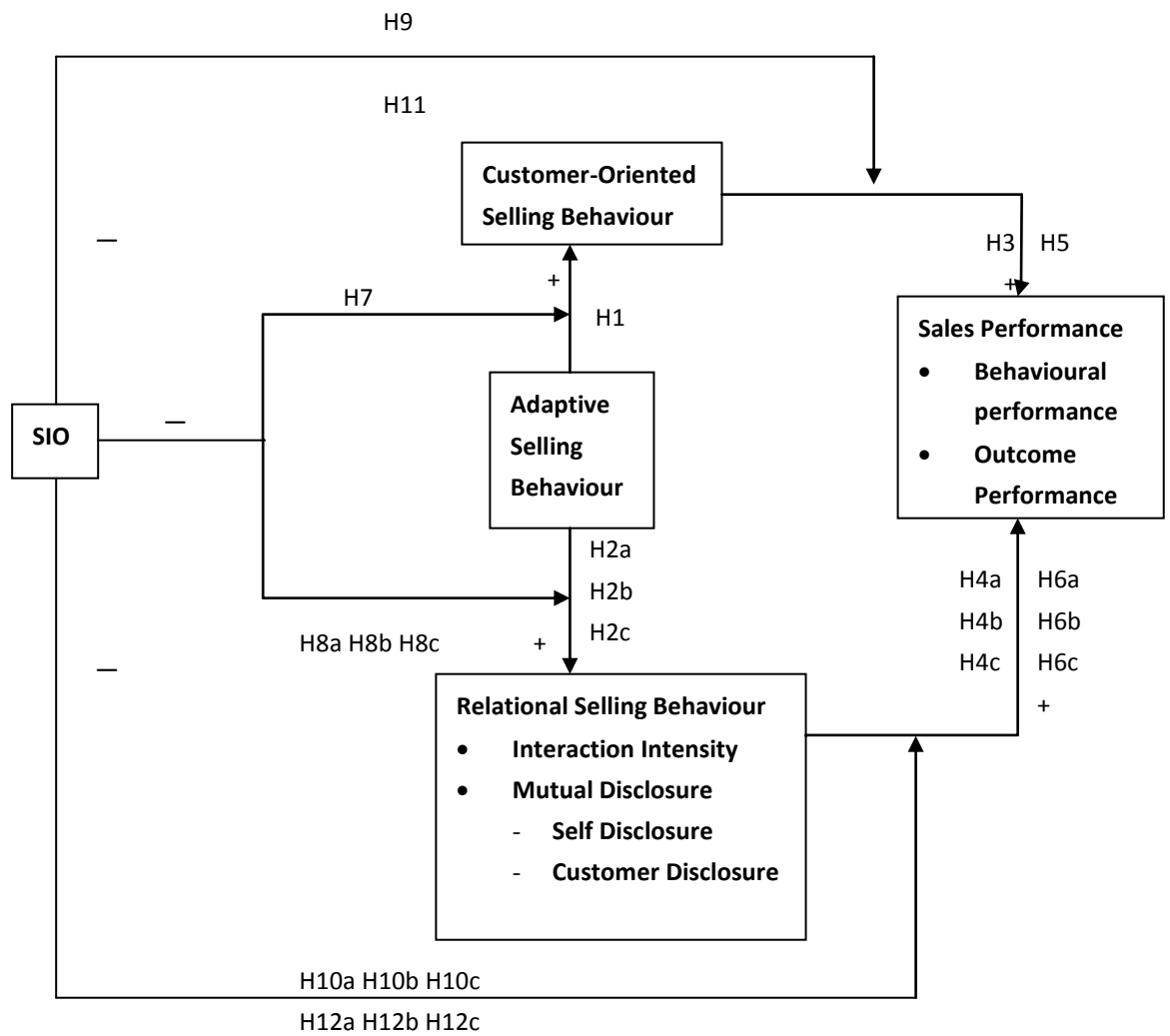


Figure 3.1 Hypothesized model of the impacts of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance

Sujan, Weitz and Kumar (1994) identified “working smart” in the selling process as “behaviours directed toward developing knowledge about sales situations and utilizing this knowledge in sales situation” (p.40). Therefore, “working smart” is conceptualized principally as ASB (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986). Salespeople who adopt ASB to work smartly and effectively need to engage in planning to determine the suitability of other relationship selling behaviours that will be undertaken; they must also have the capacity to not only engage in a range of selling behaviours and activities but also be able to alter them in keeping with situational considerations (Sujan, Weitz & Kumar, 1994). ASB then is likely to be involved in the selection process of whether to use COSB or RSB as the most appropriate relationship selling behaviour for the specific selling situation.

After selecting a suitable selling behaviour, ASB may also influence the selection of selling tactics. The model developed by Eckert (2004) proposes three stages to the Adaptive Selling Process. First, there are the inputs to a selling interaction that form the characteristics of that selling situation; second, there are the behaviours undertaken to process and understand those inputs; and third, there are the ranges of outputs possible as an adaptive response to the situation created by the inputs (Eckert, 2004). The first two steps of the model are related to traditional ASB dimensions which are information gathering and learning/understanding from information gathered. The third step is defined as the process of using ASB to create solutions for a specific selling situation, and the options can be generated from the selling activities related to either COSB or RSB (Eckert, 2004). Thus, ASB is able to influence the selecting selling tactics in COSB and RSB.

ASB therefore influences both COSB and RSB. Based on the characteristics Saxe and Weitz (1982) identified for the salespeople who adopt COSB, Keilor *et al.* (2000) further concluded that sales representatives may fail to engage in customer-oriented selling: when they do not expect future transactions with the buyer; when the size of the purchase is relatively small; when the customer will not be a source of future business;

when the salesperson does not know how to engage in customer-oriented selling; or when the salesperson does not feel that customer-oriented selling will provide benefits commensurate with the incremental effort required (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Therefore, salespeople are likely to engage in COSB when the benefits of developing a long-term relationship and the possible need to defer immediate sales in the interest of a larger payoff in the future outweigh the costs (Keilor *et al.*, 2000). Consequently, salespeople are more likely to adopt ASB to help them identify these different selling situations, and find other aspects that are suitable for COSB.

Brooksbank (1995) outlined a new model of personal selling based on the model developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982): customer-oriented selling. As opposed to the traditional sales-oriented model of personal selling, the new model emphasizes the identification of customer needs which are then matched to the firm's offering (Brooksbank, 1995). The author was suggesting then that customer-oriented salespeople must take the necessary time and effort to identify unique customer needs and wants, and then match them as closely as possible to the product/service benefits offered by the firm. As a result, the closing phase, which traditionally receives the most emphasis, becomes relatively straightforward. Brooksbank's interpretation of customer-oriented selling is consistent with Saxe and Weitz (1982), and the elements of ASB are integrated into the concepts of COSB. Although there was no theoretical justification provided, McIntype *et al.* (2000) also found that ASB leads to COSB. Hence:

Hypothesis 1: ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of COSB.

Long-term caring relationship building strategies require salespeople to be sensitive to the needs of customers and more intrinsically motivated than in traditional compensation models. Salespersons should also be able to modify their presentations to customers, and interact effectively with a diverse range of customers (Goolsby *et al.*, 1992). As such, adaptive salespeople are more suited to RSB tasks (Goolsby *et al.*, 1992). However, due to the high costs and risks involved, RSB may not always be the

best possible solution in managing all types of buyer-seller relationships (Guenzi *et al.*, 2007; Pillai & Sharma, 2003; Reinartz & Kumar, 2000; Sheth & Reeshma, 2003). In their research Guenzi *et al.* (2007) suggested that a relational approach should be applied mainly to key accounts, however they further suggested that the adoption of a RSB strategy is positively related to key account managers' ASB. In fact, in all customer dealings the information gathering and learning activities involved in ASB are necessary when adopting RSB and can positively enhance sales performance (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Goolsby *et al.*, 1992).

As discussed in Chapter 2, RSB has three key dimensions that influence the development and maintenance of the interpersonal relationship quality between salesperson and customer: interaction intensity, mutual disclosure, and cooperative intention (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). However, because the research objective of the present study is to investigate the adopted selling behaviours of salespeople but not their intended behaviours, the cooperative intention dimension is not suitable for this study. Thus, only the factors of interaction intensity and mutual disclosure (self disclosure and customer disclosure) are considered to be applicable for the proposed framework.

Increased competition in the market requires firms to have strong relationships with their customers. A good relationship with buyers enhances a firm's ability to understand customers' needs, customers' perceptions of the firm and more importantly, helps in anticipating customers' dissatisfaction. Interaction intensity indicates the frequency of the communication between the salesperson and the customer either in a formal business meeting involving selling tasks, or in an informal personal setting (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). One of the requirements of having a long-term faithful relationship with buyers is that a firm must have the right intensity of interaction (Bacerra & Gupta, 2003). Salesperson's practice of ASB is significantly correlated with communication competence (Bush *et al.*, 2001). Hence:

Hypothesis 2 a: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Interaction Intensity.*

The other dimension of RSB is mutual disclosure. Mutual disclosure indicates the relationship between salesperson and customer needs to be reciprocated in the sharing of information between buyer and seller on both the personal and organizational level (Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Derlega *et al.*, 1987). Mutual disclosure is conceived as being composed of two sub-dimensions: self disclosure and customer disclosure (Derlega *et al.*, 1987). Self disclosure measures a salesperson's effectiveness in creating a dyadic atmosphere characterized by openness and candor, which involves both leading and reciprocating the customer's disclosure. There are two types of self disclosures: exchange-specific self disclosure and social self disclosure (MacNeil, 1978; Hosman, 1987; Jacobs *et al.*, 2001), and each type plays a different role in buyer-seller interactions (Jacobs, 1991). The study of Jacobs (1991) found that the salesperson's reciprocation of consumers' transactional disclosure has a positive effect on customers' perceptions of the interaction's quality, and the customer's perceptions of the quality of the interactions has a strong direct effect on interpersonal attraction and relationship potential. Jacobs (1991) suggested that the salesperson needs to monitor his/her and the customer's disclosure and adjust his/her self-disclosure accordingly (Jacobs, 1991). Therefore, salespeople who adopt ASB are more easily able to modify their selling strategies and achieve better buyer-seller communication reciprocity. Hence:

Hypothesis 2 b: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Self Disclosure.*

Hypothesis 2 c: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Customer Disclosure.*

3.3 The effects of COSB and RSB on sales performance

The concept of market orientation is now a mainstream focus for organizations aiming at gaining competitive advantage. By collecting and sharing information about customers' requirements, a firm can gain insight into customers' needs and take action swiftly (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kulp *et al.*, 2004). The positive effects of market orientation and customer orientation are found not only on an organizational level but

also on an individual salesperson's level (Cross *et al.*, 2007). Salespeople are the only representatives of the firm that a customer meets, thus the individual salesperson's implementation of customer orientation is crucial to the execution of the organization's market orientation strategies (Crosby *et al.*, 1990).

In the study of Swenson and Herche (1994), COSB was found to be positively related to a salesperson's performance. Dunlap *et al.* (1988) found that within the real estate industry top salespeople are more customer oriented than lower performers. Similar results were also found in many other studies (e.g. Boles *et al.*, 2001; Brooksbank, 1995; Keillor, Parker & Pettijohn, 2000; Kelley, 1992; Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Most of these studies focused on sales objectives as the measurement for salespeople's performance. Hence:

Hypothesis 3: *COSB has a positive impact on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

The impetus of relationship marketing depends on an understanding of relationship quality management in the context of buyer-seller relationship development. As discussed in Chapter 2, RSB is the relationship selling behaviour that concentrates on building and maintaining strong and trustworthy relationships with customers. Weitz (1981) conceptualized buyer-seller relationship quality as a positive moderating variable in the relationship between sales behaviours and performance. This was validated by Crosby *et al.* (1990), who also found that RSB has a positive impact on relationship quality and hence on sales performance. The study of Guenzi *et al.* (2007) found RSB to be significantly related to the sales generated from key accounts. Interaction intensity and mutual disclosure (self disclosure and customer disclosure) help develop trust and strengthen buyer-seller relationships, and Boles *et al.* (2000) found these two factors both have positive impacts on a salesperson's performance in quantitative measures (in this case – the number of insurance policies sold). Accordingly:

Hypothesis 4a: *Interaction Intensity has a positive impact on a salesperson's outcome*

performance.

Hypothesis 4b: *Self Disclosure has a positive impact on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

Hypothesis 4c: *Customer Disclosure has a positive impact on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

Most of the studies mentioned above focused on sales objectives as the measurement for a salesperson's performance. By primarily focusing on outcome performance, many of the previous research was unlikely to discover distinct consequences, thereby contributing to inconsistent findings (Miao & Evans, 2007). It has been suggested that what the salesperson does in the selling process is in the salesperson's control, but the selling outcome is subject to other factors (e.g., company resources and support) which are beyond their direct control (Baldauf, Cravens & Piercy 2005). Therefore, it is appropriate to investigate outcome performance and behavioural performance separately (Miao & Evans, 2007).

Behavioural performance considers the activities in which salespeople are involved in when performing their job responsibilities. In order to produce outcomes, salespeople perform several behaviours, although there may not be immediate results, such as building effective relationships with customers, or making effective sales presentations (Behrman & Perreault 1984; Weitz 1981). However, the study of Piercy *et al.* (2006) found that behavioural performance is positively related to outcome performance. Miao and Evans (2007) also found behavioural performance has significant positive impact on outcome performance. In the study of Morris *et al.* (1991), sales managers even rated behaviour-based performance factors as more important than outcome factors.

The concept of COSB is based on the principle that salespeople must understand customers' needs and wants in order to create customer perceived value in the buyer-seller interactions (Cross, 2007). A salesperson who is customer-oriented tends to act based on increasing long-term customer satisfaction, and tries to avoid behaviours that

may create an instant sale but at the cost of sacrificing a customer's benefits (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Hence:

Hypothesis 5: *COSB has a positive impact on salesperson's behavioural performance.*

The core concept of RSB is to build and maintain strong and healthy relationships with customers through ritualistic relational communication behaviours (Soldow & Thomas, 1985). In order to achieve the goal of strengthening buyer-seller relationships, salespeople need to consistently open all the possible communication channels (Bolton & Drew, 1991), whether formal or personal, to enhance the interaction intensity with clients, and show their commitment to the relationships (Williamson, 1983). Salespeople who adopt RSB tend to mutually coordinate with customers (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), that is, if salespeople disclose exchange-specific information and intimate information about themselves to customers (Jacobs *et al.*, 2001), customers are likely to disclose their own information in return. Thus, trust and confidence can be gained from customers (Derlega *et al.*, 1987). Hence:

Hypothesis 6a: *Interaction Intensity has a positive impact on a salesperson's behavioural performance.*

Hypothesis 6b: *Self Disclosure has a positive impact on a salesperson's behavioural performance.*

Hypothesis 6c: *Customer Disclosure has a positive impact on a salesperson's behavioural performance.*

3.4 Moderating effect of SIO

Despite the fact that the information a salesperson processes can come from a variety of sources, past literature has suggested the main channels of information are sales situations, product lines, and sales techniques (Hunter, 2004). Because the market place is changing rapidly, information also needs to be updated frequently. In order to

successfully adopt relationship selling behaviours for better sales performance along with improved buyer-seller relationships, information from all sources needs to be efficiently processed by salespeople, and effectively communicated with customers. The huge amount of information means that information overload can be expected during relationship selling processes. However, to the best knowledge of the author, no literature has established the linkage between SIO and relationship selling behaviours. A brief overview of SIO's impacts on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance is given below.

3.4.1 SIO's impacts on relationship selling behaviours

Customers, the fundamental target of the selling process, have been identified as the most important stakeholders in both personal selling and sales management practices (Jones *et al.*, 2005). Although salespeople who adopt COSB try their best to satisfy customers' needs, it has been claimed that customers' expectations often change more quickly than salespeople can completely adapt to them (Colletti, & Chonko, 1997); and failure to respond and adapt can easily lead to under-performance of business. A key to success in the selling process is to utilize ASB, so that salespeople can watch (gather information) and predict (analyse information) the market trend (Heskett, Sasser & Schlesinger, 1997). However, errors can occur in the presence of SIO (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Hunter, 2004). Even though salespeople may gather enough information, they may also fail to correctly analyse this information and wrongly identify the interests of customers. Therefore:

Hypothesis 7: SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and COSB such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO is better able to adopt COSB.

Salespeople who adopt RSB to build and maintain relationships with customers require more communication technologies to increase interaction intensity; they also need assistant systems to help manage these relationships. The Customer Relationship

Management (CRM) system is one of the basic organizational tools for helping to achieve this task (Swift, 2001). In addition, along with the development of the CRM system and the introduction of new sales force automation, the salesperson's role has radically changed from being an information processor to also being an information collector and container of the CRM system (Leigh, & Marshall, 2001). Therefore, salespeople with RSB need to be more adaptive to fulfil these new roles.

Although new technologies and sales techniques were initially developed with the aim of increasing work efficiency, utilizing them has actually increased the workload of salespeople (Jones *et al.*, 2005). It has also increased the chances of SIO occurring as salespeople need to continually upload more information about how to use these new tools. The consequences of SIO may include increased errors during buyer-seller interactions and mutual disclosures, and serious negative effects such as confusion or frustration (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Keller & Staelin, 1987), as well as a loss in confidence, self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Hunter, 2004; Hunter & Goebel, 2008). All these negative effects can be expected to have a harmful impact on the adoption of RSB. Therefore:

Hypothesis 8a: *SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Interaction Intensity such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Interaction Intensity.*

Hypothesis 8b: *SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Self Disclosure such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Self Disclosure.*

Hypothesis 8c: *SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Customer Disclosure such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Customer Disclosure.*

3.4.2 SIO's impact on sales performance

Cognitive categorization is a system used to match different types of sales circumstances with different sales tactics and behaviours to develop different sales strategies. Research shows that the most effective salespeople possess more refined cognitive categorization schemes (Weitz, Sujan & Sujan, 1986; Hunter & Goebel, 2008), and these schemes help salespeople to achieve better behavioural performance. However, the categorization scheme must be put into practice correctly to be effective. An SIO situation could cause an incorrect categorization of sales situations, improper matching of the situations with strategies, and conducting strategies with inappropriate relationship selling behaviours, thus reducing the effectiveness of the sales procedure and decreasing the behavioural performance of the salesperson (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Therefore, SIO can be seen as moderating the relationship between relationship selling behaviours and a salesperson's behavioural performance.

An indicator of a salesperson's behavioural performance relating to COSB is the identification of customers' needs and interests, and the use of an elaborate and detailed classification system for customers based on their needs (Sharma *et al.*, 2000; Sujan *et al.*, 1994). Errors caused by SIO can reduce the effectiveness of such a classification system. An incorrect identification of customers' needs may lead to a series of inaccurate sales activities. Therefore:

Hypothesis 9: SIO moderates the relationship between COSB and a salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of COSB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.

In order to successfully utilize RSB to establish and maintain strong customer relationships, salespeople must have the right intensity of interaction with customers (Bacerra & Gupta, 2003), and share appropriate information to gain trust (Derlega *et al.*, 1987). The errors brought on by SIO can lead salespeople into making incorrect decisions and judgments about the relationship building activities and communication

approaches they implement. Consequently, salespeople's behavioural performance is likely to deteriorate.

In addition, salespeople need to cooperate with the other functions of an organization in order to deliver satisfying services in every step of the selling process (Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007; Leigh & Marshall, 2001). Therefore, salespeople have to share the information gathered from customer disclosure with managers and other departments such as the R&D department and the post-purchase service department, so that the buyer-seller relationship can be strengthened through the whole buying process. However, salespeople may deliver incorrect or inaccurate information to their colleagues if the information is overwhelming, and this is detrimental to the relationships with customers. Hence:

Hypothesis 10a: *SIO moderates the relationship between Interaction Intensity and a Salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.*

Hypothesis 10b: *SIO moderates the relationship between Self Disclosure and a salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.*

Hypothesis 10c: *SIO moderates the relationship between Customer Disclosure and a salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Customer Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.*

Mistakes on the part of the salesperson during the process of choosing a sales strategy from various relationship selling behaviours can lead customers to doubt the credibility of the salesperson if the errors caused by SIO are noticed by the customers (Hunter & Goebel, 2008; Liu & Leach 2001). Salesperson's credibility has been found to be an

important predictor of purchase intention and brand choice for customers (Grewal, Gotlieb & Marmorstein 1994; Liu & Leach 2001), and thus has a direct impact on the sales outcome. For these reasons SIO is expected to have moderating effects on selling behaviours and a salesperson's outcome performance.

In today's highly competitive market product life cycle is becoming shorter, leading firms to vie with each other over the launch of new products and the expansion of product lines aimed at keeping customers satisfied, meeting their changing needs, and maintaining the firm's market share and sales (Johnston, & Marshall, 2003), as well as their competitive advantage (Jones *et al.*, 2005). Customer oriented salespeople must continue to gather information about any new offerings in order to keep their market knowledge and product knowledge up to date (Johnston, & Marshall, 2003; Jones *et al.*, 2005), so that they can provide optimal recommendations to meet customers' specific needs and preferences among a large number of alternatives and attributes. However, an overload of product information can lead to SIO, and SIO can cause negative effects that manifest as confusion or frustration regarding the type or variety of solutions to present to customers (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). These negative effects may be likely to lower customers' perceptions of a salesperson's expertise, and expertise has been shown to be a direct predictor of a salesperson's outcome performance (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Busch & Wilson 1976). Hence:

Hypothesis 11: SIO moderates the relationship between COSB and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of COSB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better resulting in a better outcome.

By emphasizing the building of better relationships between customers and salespeople, RSB can lead to increased trust and customer loyalty (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). A higher level of trust and loyalty may have direct influences on re-purchase intention and order quantity. Therefore, it is very important for salespeople to maintain frequent interaction with customers and to disclose information about the organization and themselves. Increased levels of information exchange help salespeople to provide good, timely

advice to the customers based on their needs (Boles *et al.*, 2000). However, SIO will reduce the quality of buyer-seller communication due to increased errors in interactions with customers; for example, a salesperson may send a birthday greeting card to a customer on a wrong date, or miss a regular meeting with customer. All such errors are likely to lower a customer's opinion of a salesperson's proficiency, and may in turn result in less ordering and reduced re-purchase intention. Therefore:

Hypothesis 12a: *SIO moderates the relationship between Interaction Intensity and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better resulting in a better outcome.*

Hypothesis 12b: *SIO moderates the relationship between Self Disclosure and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better resulting in a better outcome.*

Hypothesis 12c: *SIO moderates the relationship between Customer Disclosure and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Customer Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better resulting in a better outcome.*

3.5 Chapter summary

Based on the previous research on SIO and relationship selling behaviours, a conceptual framework was developed and presented in this chapter. ASB as an approach involving information gathering and learning from gathered information was proposed as having positive influences on the adoption of the other two types of relationship selling behaviours, COSB and RSB. Past studies have suggested that it is not only salespeople who adopt ASB who need to adjust their selling behaviours and strategies according to different customer needs and selling situations, information gathering and learning is

required in all relationship selling interactions. As information requirements continue to increase, there is also an increasing need for salespeople to exercise relationship selling behaviours; however, an overload of information causes errors and has a negative effect on the process of exercising relationship selling behaviours. Hence, within this chapter, SIO was proposed as having a moderating effect on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance. By developing a conceptual framework explaining the relationships between these constructs, empirical examinations are needed to test the hypotheses proposed.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

Chapter 4 presents the methodology used in testing the proposed model of the impacts of SIO on relationship selling behaviours, along with the various hypotheses listed in Chapter 3. It comprises of a brief discussion on the measurements of the variables, the development of the survey instruments, preparation of the questionnaire, and the methods of sampling, data collection and statistical analysis.

4.1 Measurements of the variables

In this section, the measures used to test each construct of the framework are explained and detailed. All the measures were drawn from relevant published literature, and have been tested and validated by different studies and empirical examinations. The majority of the items (except demographic questions) in the present study were measured using multiple items, where the respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement on a 7-point Likert type scale in which 1 implies Strongly Disagree and 7 implies Strongly Agree. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the literature that has been used in the present study for the operationalisation and measurement of the variables.

4.1.1 Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO)

The items used to measure SIO in the present study were drawn from the study of Hunter and Goebel (2008). As discussed in Chapter 2, SIO has two dimensions: the

error dimension and the affective dimension. SIO was conceptualized as a second-order factor reflected by two first-order factors, with those two first-order factors tapping the dimensions of errors and affect (Hunter, 2004). However, due to concerns about statistical identification of a second-order factor reflected by only two dimensions (see Rindskopf & Rose (1988) for a discussion), SIO was modelled by allowing the two dimensions of errors and affect to correlate. The correlation between these two factors suggested that the same individuals who are affected by a large amount of information also tend to indicate errors (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Statistically, this is equivalent to the conceptual model (Tian, Bearden and Hunter 2001). Thus, SIO was introduced as a summed composite index designed to validate the overall SIO phenomena rather than the sub-dimensions that compose it (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). The internal consistency reliability reported for SIO was 0.82, with 0.85 and 0.85 for affective and error dimensions respectively. All the measures used in Hunter and Goebel's (2008) study were adopted in the present study without any change.

Table 4.1: Operationalisation and Measurement of the Variables

Variable	Reference	No of items	Crombach α reported
Salesperson's Information Overload	Hunter & Goebel (2008)	6	0.82
Adaptive Selling Behaviour	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2002)	5	0.84
Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour	Thomas <i>et al.</i> (2001)	10	0.77
Relational Selling Behaviour			
Interaction intensity	Crosby <i>et al.</i> (1990)	8	0.86
	Bole <i>et al.</i> (2000)	8	0.83
Self disclosure	Crosby <i>et al.</i> (1990)	6	0.95
Customer disclosure	Crosby <i>et al.</i> (1990)	8	0.93
Sales Performance			
Behavioural performance	Miao & Evans (2007)	4	0.74
Outcome performance	Miao & Evans (2007)	4	0.80

4.1.2 Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB)

The short version of the ADAPTS scale developed by Robinson *et al.* (2002) was adopted to measure the ASB of the respondents. The ADAPTS-SV scale was developed based on the original ADAPTS scale of Spiro and Weitz (1990), with the aim of refurbishing the original form into an easier and more efficient measurement. It consists of five items that relate to the behaviour factor of the original ADAPTS scale, and the Cronbach Alpha value was reported as 0.84. All these five items were used in the questionnaire of the present study without any change.

4.1.3 Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB)

The 10-item SOCO scale developed by Thomas *et al.* (2001) was the measurement used to examine COSB construct for the present study. This scale is an abbreviation of the original SOCO scale developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982), and it is claimed to be easier to use and a more efficient and accurate customer orientation measure of the original SOCO scale because it reduces response tiredness and acquiescence bias (Periatt, LeMay & Chakrabarty, 2004; Schwepker, 2003; Thomas, Soutar & Ryan, 2001). The ten-item SOCO scale has two sub-factors: customer orientation and sales orientation. They both had Cronbach Alpha values across groups of salespeople, managers, and customers ranging from 0.70 to 0.91. For this study's target group of salespeople, the total Cronbach Alpha value was 0.77, and 0.72 and 0.71 for the two sub-factors respectively. All ten items from the scale were used with a slight modification. Each item was altered to the first-person perspective; for example, the item, "Tries to figure out what a customer's needs are" was changed to, "I try to figure out what a customer's needs are". Some items were modified to make it easier for respondents to understand. The item, "Takes a problem solving approach in selling products or services to customers" was altered to, "I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product/service that helps him/her solve that problem". The item, "Makes recommendations based on what he/she thinks he/she can sell and not on customers' long-term satisfaction" was changed to, "I decide what products/services to offer on the

basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run”.

4.1.4 Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB)

As discussed in Chapter 2, Crosby *et al.* (1990) developed a 26-item scale in the context of the insurance industry to measure the development and maintenance of the interpersonal relationship quality between salesperson and customer. These items focus on four different dimensions: interaction intensity, self disclosure, customer disclosure and cooperative intentions. All the scales were developed on customer self-reporting. As already pointed out, because the research objective of the present study is to investigate the adopted selling behaviours of salespeople but not the intended behaviours, the cooperative intention dimension is not suitable for this study. Thus, only the items that relate to interaction intensity, self disclosure, and customer disclosure were used to compose measurements.

4.1.4.1 Interaction Intensity (II)

Crosby *et al.* (1990) developed an eight-item scale for the interaction intensity dimension with a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.86. This scale was tested for unidimensionality, and resulted in two factors. The first factor was a general reflection of the whole scale, and the second factor emphasized the social aspects of the interaction. All eight were retained in the study of Crosby *et al.* (1990), because the indicator was intended to represent the extent of the follow-up contact. However, the aim of the present research is to examine the purpose of the contact and adopted behaviours. Therefore, only the items that imply actual interaction between salesperson and clients were selected for this study. The following items were removed: “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to make changes in this policy to better serve my needs”, “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to restructure my insurance programme to better serve my needs”, “My agent explained why it is a good idea to keep this whole life

policy in force”, “Received something of a personal nature from my agent (e.g. birthday card, holiday gift, etc.)”, and “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to describe new types of policies that had become available”. The other items were modified to become more generalized than just insurance specific contents, and customer self-reporting became salesperson self-reporting. The item, “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to stay ‘in touch’ and make sure I was still satisfied” was altered to, “I contact all my customers to ‘stay in touch’ and make sure that they are satisfied”. The item, “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to keep abreast of changes in my family and insurance needs” was changed to, “I find ways to ‘stay in touch’ with my customers in addition to my regular visits to remain abreast of changes in their needs”. The item, “Was contacted by my agent who wanted to sell me more life insurance” was modified to, “I ‘stay in touch’ with my customers to get them to order more”.

4.1.4.2 Self Disclosure (SD)

The scales for measuring self disclosure had six items, and the Cronbach Alpha value was 0.93. All the six items were adopted from the study of Crosby *et al.* (1990) in the present study, and changes were made to reflect the differences in customer self-reporting and salesperson self-reporting. The item, “My agent has confided in me a lot of information about his/her financial situation and dealings” was altered to, “I confide a lot in my customers about my financial situation and dealings”. The item, “My agent has confided in me a lot of information about his/her financial goals and objectives, even hopes and dreams for the future” was modified to, “I confide a lot of information in my customers related to my professional goals and objectives, even my hopes and dreams for the future”. The item, “My agent has confided in me a lot of information about his/her background, personal life, and family situation” was changed to, “I confide a lot of information in my customers about my background, personal likes and family situation”. The item, “My agent has told me about financial mistakes he/she made in the past” is replaced by, “I confide a lot in my customers about the mistakes I have made in my job and career”. The item, “My agent has told me a lot about his/her

job (e.g. responsibilities, failures and accomplishments, likes and dislikes in their occupation)” was changed to, “I confide a lot in my customers about my failures, accomplishments, likes and dislikes in my occupation”. Lastly, the item, “My agent has confided in me a lot of information about his/her values, religious beliefs, and political beliefs” was modified to, “I confide a lot in my customers about my values, religious beliefs and political beliefs”.

4.1.4.3 Customer Disclosure (CD)

To reflect the dimension of mutual disclosure, the customer disclosure scales had eight items, with a good Cronbach Alpha value of 0.93 as reported in the research of Crosby *et al.* (1990). As with self disclosure, all eight-items of customer disclosure were used in the present study, but with modifications relating to industry differences and self-reporting. The item, “I have confided in the agent a lot of information about my current financial situation (e.g. income, assets, investments, and obligations)” was changed to, “My customers confide a lot in me about their financial situations and dealings”. The item, “I have confided in the agent a lot of information about my financial goals and objectives, even my hopes and dreams for the future” was altered to, “My customers confide a lot in me about their financial goals and objectives, even their hopes and aspirations for the future”. The item, “I have confided in the agent a lot of information about my background, personal life, and family situation” was modified to, “My customers confide a lot in me about their background, personal life and family situation”. The item, “I have told the agent about financial mistakes I have made in the past” was altered to, “My customers confide a lot in me about the professional mistakes they have made in the past”. The item, “I have told the agent a lot about my job (e.g. responsibilities, failures and accomplishments, likes and dislikes in my occupation)” was modified to, “My customers confide a lot in me about their work (e.g. responsibilities, failures and accomplishments, likes and dislikes in their occupation)”. The item, “I have expressed to my agent my liking and respect for him/her as a person” was changed to, “My customers express their like and respect for me as a person”. The

item, “I have confided in the agent a lot of information about my values, religious beliefs, and political beliefs” was altered to, “My customers confide a lot in me about their values, religious beliefs and political beliefs”. The item, “I have expressed to the agent my dissatisfaction with other financial advisors I have such as my lawyer, accountant, banker, stockbroker, or other insurance agents” was replaced by, “My key accounts express to me their dissatisfaction with other salespersons”.

4.1.5 Salesperson’s Performance (SP)

A salesperson’s performance measure is conceptualized as a two-dimensional construct consisting of behavioural and outcome performance. Behavioural performance refers to the activities and strategies salespeople conduct in the selling process, while outcome performance characterizes the quantitative results of salespeople’s efforts (Baldauf, Cravens & Piercy, 2005). The study of Miao and Evans (2007) measured these two dimensions by using a seven-point Likert scale. Each dimension had four items, and the Cronbach Alpha value was 0.74 and 0.80 for behavioural performance and outcome performance respectively. In order to gain more accurate information, the item, “I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my products, competitors’ products, and my customers’ needs” was converted into three items in the behavioural performance dimension: “I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my products”, “I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my competitors’ products”, and “I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my customers’ needs”. The other items of both behavioural and outcome performance were operationalized in the present study without any change.

4.2 Development of the survey instruments

A questionnaire was designed based on the above-mentioned measures and it is presented in Appendix 1. Along with the responses on the scale items, participants were also asked to provide basic organizational and personal demographic details such as the

number of years they had spent as a salesperson, the number of years they had worked in the current firm, the average annual turnover of the firm, the number of employees working in the firm, the number of clients the respondent had, the average dollar sales generated from each client, products, the respondent sales, gender, age, and education level.

4.3 Preparation of the questionnaire

Even though all the measures used in this research were adopted from the existing literature, a modification of the questionnaire was employed to refine the items to suit the specific context of this study.

Firstly, a questionnaire was established comprising all the measures along with the general information and the demographic stated in the previous section. Because the data collection was to be carried out in China, the questionnaire needed to be translated. This study adopted the double translation procedure, which is also called the back-translation procedure (McGorry, 2000). This procedure is effective because the instrument gets through a number of filters produced independently by researchers and translators, and it is a method which is considered to be one of the most adequate translation practices (Marin & Marin, 1991). The questionnaire was first translated to Chinese with the help of two English to Chinese language translators independently; then, both versions were back translated to English with the help of another two Chinese to English language translators independently. The original version of the English questionnaire was compared to the back-translated questionnaires, and the version with the least inconsistency and missing information was selected for further filtering. Lastly, any remaining inconsistencies in the selected back-translated questionnaire were removed and corrected according to the original questionnaire, and these corrections were also made to the Chinese version of the questionnaire. The original version of the questionnaire, the questionnaires in the Chinese language and the back-translated questionnaires are provided in Appendices 1, 2, 3.

4.4 Sample and data collection method

A survey was carried out to collect the data for testing the model and hypotheses of this study. Because this study seeks to understand the impact of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and salesperson's performance, and relationship selling behaviours are widely adopted by firms in the context of business-to-business (B2B) industries (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Crosby *et al.*, 1990; Kelley, 1992; Keillor *et al.*, 2000; Machintosh *et al.*, 1992), the target respondents of the survey were the salespeople who sell industrial products/services.

Considering the financial cost and time required for collecting data from B2B salespeople, and the fact that the purpose of this study is to test relationships between theoretical constructs but not to uncover propositions in the population displaying study behaviours, a snowball sampling method (one form of convenience sample) was adopted.

Taking into consideration the normal caveats regarding convenience sampling, the other two restrictions were added to the sample selection in order to retrieve more accurate information. Firstly, all the people who were younger than the age of 20 were excluded from the study population in order to ensure the respondents could fully understand the items in the questionnaire. Secondly, people who had less than one year B2B selling experience were also excluded since it is unlikely that new salespeople have gained sufficient experience to interact with different clients or developed any good understanding of relationship selling behaviour.

The survey was conducted in China. Several contacts of the researcher were requested to initialize the distribution of the questionnaire – contacts with many industrial business connections at a senior management level. The translated questionnaire was sent to managers and then the same questionnaire was forwarded to their salespeople and their contacts. The questionnaires were sent back to the researcher's contacts after completion, and the contacts then removed any identification marks from the

questionnaires. They were then consolidated and forwarded back to the researcher. Data collection occurred over a period of eight weeks, in seven provinces and two directly governed cities, Beijing and Shanghai. A total of 310 responses were collected, of which 52 had to be discarded due to failure in the sample selection criteria. An additional 13 responses had to be dropped due to incomplete responses to many questions. As a result, a total of 245 completed questionnaires were used for the purpose of statistical analysis in this study. Sample characteristics are detailed in the next chapter.

4.5 Statistical analysis

A brief description of the proposed statistical analyses for the testing of the survey instrument is given below.

4.5.1 Reliability

The test of reliability of a questionnaire concerns the extent to which the measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials. Although reliability is best assessed by the test-retest method (i.e., the same measurement is made of the same subjects at two different times), this method is not always practically feasible. Therefore, the internal consistency method (i.e., high inter-item correlations suggest that all items measure the same entity) is more commonly used. The internal consistency of the scales is generally tested by item to total correlation and coefficient alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Item to total correlations are the correlations between each item and the total score of the scale. In a reliable scale, all items should correlate with the total. The value of the correlation also depends on the sample size. In bigger samples, smaller correlation coefficients are acceptable. In general, a value of item to total correlation of less than 0.3 suggests that the particular item in question does not correlate very well with the overall scale. The Cronbach alpha coefficient is also used to test the reliability of various scales using a cut off of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978).

4.5.2 Validity

The test of validity concerns whether the items measure what they are meant to measure. The content or face validity is assessed by a group of experts, who read or look at a measuring instrument and decide whether the instrument measures what it is expected to measure. According to Kidder and Judd (1986), every instrument must pass the face validity test either formally or informally. Though all the measures used in this research have already been used in previous researches, a formal face validity test was used as the context and place of this study was different from other studies that have used the same scales. Further scale assessment was done using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Spector, 1992). EFA is a useful technique for identifying the underlying dimensions of a construct. It was expected that the various constructs would be found to have the same dimensions as all the measures of this research have already been developed and used in previous researches. EFA was carried out using SPSS 16.0.

4.6 Chapter summary

This chapter briefly discussed the measurement of each construct used in the proposed framework. The operationalisation and development of the survey instruments was also described. Pre-testing of the questionnaire including the face validity test and the translation process were explained, and the sampling and data collection methods were introduced. Lastly, this chapter provided an outline of the analytical processes which were involved in the development and testing of the survey instrument. The results of these tests will be reported in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Results

This chapter discusses the analyses and results of the study on “The impacts of SIO on relationship selling behaviours”. After preparing the questionnaire, the main study was carried out between 5 October 2009 and 25 November 2009. The results of the main study are presented in three parts. Firstly, there is a discussion on the sample characteristics. This is followed by a discussion on measurement properties (reliability and validity assessment). Finally, the results of regression analyses for hypotheses testing are presented.

5.1 Sample characteristics

As discussed in the previous chapter, a total of 310 responses were received but only 245 of them were usable. All the respondents were B2B salespeople selling industrial products/services in China. The respondents consisted of 51% males and 49% female. 69% of respondents were between 26 to 40 years of age, and 82% of respondents possessed a diploma or graduate degree or higher. 55.5% of the respondents had 4 years of personal selling experiences or more, 61.6% of the respondents had more than 20 clients, and 71% of the respondents came from a firm that has more than 100 employees. Various characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Sample Characteristics

		Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>	Male	125	51%
	Female	120	49%
<i>Age</i>	21-25 years	26	10.6%
	26-30 years	88	35.9%
	31-40 years	81	33.1%
	41-50 years	42	17.1%
	51-60 years	7	2.9%
	≥61 years	1	0.4%
<i>Education</i>	Junior high school	15	6.1%
	High school	29	11.8%
	Diploma degree	98	40%
	Bachelor degree	96	39.2%
	Master degree	7	2.9%
<i>Firm's approx annual turnover</i>	< Ys 500 thousands	47	19.2%
	≥ Ys 500 thousands to < Ys 1 million	19	7.8%
	≥ Ys 1 million to < Ys 5 million	48	19.6%
	≥ Ys 5 million to < Ys 10 million	55	22.4%
	≥ 10 million	43	17.6%
	Prefer not to say	33	13.5%
<i>\$Sales per client</i>	< Ys 5 million	105	42.9%
	≥ Ys 5 million to < Ys 10 million	35	14.3%
	≥ Ys 10 million to < Ys 50 million	47	19.2%
	≥ Ys 50 million to < Ys 100 million	17	6.9%
	≥ 100 million	15	6.1%
	Prefer not to say	26	10.6%

Y = Chinese Yuan;

1 Yuan = 0.205 New Zealand Dollar; 1 Yuan = 0.147 US Dollar

5.2 Measurement properties (validity and reliability assessment)

Churchill (1979) recommended the use of Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal consistency, followed by item-to-total correlation to eliminate the items that performed

poorly in capturing the construct. To support the reliability of measures for the 245 respondents in this study, the reliability of each scale was assessed via Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha and item to total correlation. The mean, standard deviation and the item to-total correlation were calculated for all the variables and the results are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Reliability Analysis Results for Measurement Scales in the Main Study

Scale	Items	Mean	Std Deviation	Item to total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Salesperson's Information Overload					0.82
<i>Affective dimension</i>	SIOAD1	4.11	1.91	0.48	
	SIOAD2	3.91	2.03	0.6	
	SIOAD3	3.79	1.86	0.6	0.81
<i>Error dimension</i>	SIOED1	3.16	1.94	0.6	
	SIOED2	3.49	2.05	0.6	
	SIOED3	2.95	1.91	0.62	0.85
Adaptive Selling Behaviour					0.79 0.80(after ASB5 is deleted)
	ASB1	5.34	1.66	0.65	
	ASB2	5.6	1.46	0.58	
	ASB3	5.32	1.44	0.65	
	ASB4	4.95	1.71	0.57	
	ASB5	5.59	1.49	0.42	
Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour					0.94
<i>Customer orientation</i>	COSBCO1	5.42	1.56	0.72	
	COSBCO2	5.86	1.44	0.78	
	COSBCO3	5.43	1.61	0.75	
	COSBCO4	5.47	1.6	0.82	
	COSBCO5	5.6	1.62	0.85	

<i>Sales orientation (reverse coded)</i>	COSBSO1	5.24	1.54	0.72	
	COSBSO2	5.07	1.61	0.75	
	COSBSO3	5.29	1.51	0.73	
	COSBSO4	5.27	1.49	0.67	
	COSBSO5	5.56	1.4	0.75	
Interaction intensity					0.81
	II1	5.5	1.65	0.77	
	II2	5.72	1.55	0.66	
	II3	5.31	1.51	0.56	
Self disclosure					0.83
	SD1	3.29	1.87	0.46	
	SD2	3.64	1.82	0.6	
	SD3	3.39	1.8	0.72	
	SD4	3.07	1.76	0.57	
	SD5	2.99	1.73	0.72	
	SD6	3.57	1.94	0.56	
Customer disclosure					0.76 0.83(after CD3is deleted)
	CD1	4.2	1.93	0.62	
	CD2	4.71	1.72	0.68	
	CD3	4.6	4.09	0.35	
	CD4	4.17	1.89	0.56	
	CD5	4.35	1.86	0.59	
	CD6	5.13	1.62	0.29	
	CD7	4.51	1.64	0.57	
	CD8	4.26	1.55	0.51	
Behavioural performance					0.72 0.75(after SPBP1 is deleted)
	SPBP1	5.68	1.49	0.26	
	SPBP2	5.32	1.39	0.42	
	SPBP3	5.43	1.5	0.52	
	SPBP4	5.65	1.28	0.54	
	SPBP5	5.26	1.47	0.41	
	SPBP6	5.42	1.42	0.64	
Outcome performance					0.83
	SPOP1	5.27	1.72	0.64	
	SPOP2	5.01	1.61	0.77	
	SPOP3	5.37	1.41	0.56	
	SPOP4	5.14	1.6	0.7	

The Cronbach coefficient alpha was found to be more than the cut off point of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978) and the item-to-total correlation values more than met the commonly accepted standard of 0.3 and above, indicating the item had good internal consistency (Spector, 1992). These tests were repeated for all the items of each measure until the Cronbach coefficient alpha did not improve if the item was deleted. As a result, the item ASB5 was deleted due to the Cronbach coefficient alpha for measuring ASB improving from 0.79 to 0.80; the item CD3 was deleted due to the Cronbach coefficient alpha for measure CD improving from 0.76 to 0.83; and the item SPBP1 was deleted due to the item-to-total correlation value being less than 0.3, and the Cronbach coefficient alpha for the measure SPBP improving from 0.72 to 0.75. The rest of the items of each measure were retained for further analysis.

5.3 Exploratory Factor Analysis

To examine the validity of each measure, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was employed using SPSS 16.0. All the items of all the measures within each aspect of the model were factor analyzed together respectively to test the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures. The items were subjected to principal component analysis using the maximum likelihood method with Promax rotation. The factor loading represents the correlation between the items with the construct (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Exploratory factor analysis helped in verifying if there were any items that were cross-loading and hence were causing lowering of scale reliability. The Eigen value represents the amount of variance accounted for by a factor (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Only the factors having Eigen values greater than 1 were considered significant (Hair *et al.*, 1992) and a minimum value of 0.40 was used to indicate the loading of a factor.

Exploratory factor analysis was repeated for all the items of all the measures until all the items satisfactorily loaded with their respective factors. As a result, the item ASB4 and the item CD6 were found to be cross-loading with other items of the relationship selling

behaviours measures; SPBP2 had insufficient loading and SPBP5 was found to be cross-loading with the items of the outcome performance factor. In order to obtain a good validity of each measure, ASB4, CD6, SPBP2 and SPBP5 were removed from the further analyses. The final results are presented in Table 5.3. The following section gives the details for each variable in the factor analysis.

Salesperson's Information Overload: EFA results show that SIO is explained by two factors. All the three items measuring the error dimension loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.70 to 0.88. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the error dimension scale was 0.81 and the variance explained by the factor was 46.15%. On the other hand, all the three items measuring the affective dimension loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.68 to 0.81. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the error dimension scale was 0.85 and the variance explained by the factor was 16.81%. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4, for reasons of statistical identification, error dimension and affective dimension were constrained to one factor. In total, SIO explained 62.96% of the variance with a Cronbach alpha value of 0.82.

Adaptive Selling Behaviour: EFA results show that ASB is explained by a single factor. After deleting ASB5 from the reliability test and ASB4 from the validity test, all the other three items loaded on this factor and the loading on these factors ranged from 0.50 to 0.84. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.797 and the variance explained by the factor was 55.63%.

Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour: EFA results show that COSB is explained by a single factor. All the ten items loaded on this factor and the loading on these factors ranged from 0.69 to 0.85. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for this scale was 0.94 and the variance explained by the factor was 60.81%.

Relational Selling Behaviour: EFA results show that RSB is explained by three factors. All the three items measuring the interaction intensity loaded on a single factor

and the loading ranged from 0.59 to 0.93. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the interaction intension scale was 0.81 and the variance explained by the factor was 62.05%. All the six items measuring the self disclosure loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.44 to 0.85. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the self disclosure scale was 0.83 and the variance explained by the factor was 45.00%. Lastly, after deleting CD3 from the reliability test and CD6 from the validity test, all the other six items measuring customer disclosure loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.49 to 0.81. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the customer disclosure scale was 0.828 and the variance explained by the factor was 46.94%.

Table 5.3: Factor Analysis Using the Maximum Likelihood Method with Promax Rotation

Factor Analysis for Salesperson's Information Overload

	Factor	
	1	2
SIOED3	0.88	
SIOED2	0.83	
SIOED1	0.70	
SIOAD1		0.81
SIOAD3		0.80
SIOAD2		0.68
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

Sales Performance: EFA results show that SP is explained by two factors. After deleting SPBP1 from the reliability test and SPBP2 and SPBP5 from the validity test, the other three items measuring the behavioural performance loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.45 to 1.05. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the behavioural performance scale was 0.75 and the variance explained by the factor was 42.56%. On the other hand, all the four items measuring the outcome performance loaded on a single factor and the loading ranged from 0.57 to 0.89. The reliability indicated by Cronbach alpha for the error dimension scale was 0.83 and the variance

explained by the factor was 18.07%.

Factor Analysis for Relationship Selling Behaviours

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
COSBCO3	0.85				
COSBCO4	0.82				
COSBCO5	0.82				
COSBSO5	0.81				
COSBCO1	0.77				
COSBCO2	0.77				
COSBSO4	0.76				
COSBSO3	0.75				
COSBSO2	0.75				
COSBSO1	0.69				
CD1		0.81			
CD2		0.79			
CD4		0.74			
CD5		0.66			
CD7		0.586			
CD8		0.47			
SD3			0.85		
SD5			0.80		
SD2			0.74		
SD4			0.69		
SD6			0.52		
SD1			0.44		
II1				0.93	
II2				0.76	
II3				0.59	
ASB1					0.84
ASB3					0.73
ASB2					0.50
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.					

Factor Analysis for Sales Performance

	Factor	
	1	2
SPOP4	0.89	
SPOP2	0.78	
SPOP3	0.61	
SPOP1	0.57	
SPBP3		1.05
SPBP4		0.57
SPBP6		0.45
Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization. a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.		

5.4 Hypotheses testing

Since many constructs of the model proposed in this study had multiple factors, relationships between constructs were tested using regression analysis using SPSS 16.0. In order to do this, the items were averaged for each of the scales to develop a composite measure for the dependent and independent variables. Averaging of items involves the assumption that all the items contribute equally to the construct. However, the assumption is reasonable only for established scales whose psychometric properties can be established in the given sample.

The hypotheses of the main effects for relationships between relationship selling behaviours as well as a salesperson's performance (H1, H2a, H2b, H2c, H3, H4, H5a, H5b, H5c, H6a, H6b, H6c) and the hypotheses of the moderating role of SIO (H7, H8a, H8b, H8c, H9, H10, H11a, H11b, H11c, H12a, H12b, H12c) were tested using multiple hierarchical regressions following the procedure suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The regression testing involved three steps. In the first step, dependent variables and independent variables relating to the main effect hypotheses (relationship between relationship selling behaviours and their effects on sales performance) were entered.

Next, the hypothesized moderating factor SIO was entered. Lastly, the interaction of the moderating variable SIO with each of the independent variables within the main effect hypotheses were entered one by one in different models. This procedure is appropriate as it easily enables the interpretation of the coefficient of interaction terms. If more than one interaction term involving a common variable is entered, it becomes difficult to construe the interaction term as the coefficient of interaction term is dependent on other variables entering the equation.

Because many of the hypotheses were tested via multiple hierarchical regressions, and also because the sensitivity of the OLS estimation to multicollinearity was known, the potential for multicollinearity among the predictor variables was assessed. Multicollinearity is problematic because it confounds the unique contribution of each independent variable on the dependent variable, making the interpretation of the results more difficult. With this problem, the standardized coefficients may be incorrectly estimated and/or possess the wrong signs (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Multicollinearity often inflates the standard error of the regression coefficients and causes instability in their values.

The first step in assessing multicollinearity is to examine the pair-wise correlations between independent variables. The presence of high correlations (generally those of 0.60 and above) is the first indication of substantial collinearity (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Lack of any high correlation values also does not ensure a lack of collinearity (Hair *et al.*, 1992). Table 5.4 provides the means, standard deviations and pair-wise correlations among the variables using SPSS 16.0. If these correlation exhibit high values then it necessitates an assessment of multicollinearity. A common measure of multicollinearity is the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Hair *et al.*, 1992). In case of a moderated regression, it is common to have the problem of multicollinearity as the multiplicative term is likely to be highly correlated with the variables, from which it has been obtained. Therefore, even though the correlations between the individual variables may not be high enough, there may exist the problem of multicollinearity. VIF indicates the

degree to which each independent variable is explained by other independent variables. The VIF cut off threshold level of 10 was used, as suggested by Hair *et al.* (1998), as an indicator of multicollinearity. None of the correlations except for commitment, as reported in Table 5.4, are greater than 0.60 and all the VIF values ranged from 1 to 1.304. Thus, multicollinearity was not a concern for this study.

5.5 Results

Tables 5.5.1, 5.5.2, and 5.5.3 present the results of the regression analysis for the relationship between relationship selling behaviours, and their effects on a salesperson's performance. These tables give the values of unstandardised coefficients and standard error along with the significance levels of the coefficients. It was hypothesized that ASB would have positive effects on COSB and RSB, while COSB and RSB would have positive effects on a salesperson's performance.

Table 5.5.1 Results of OLS Analysis (DV: COSB, INTINT, SelfDis, CusDis)

Models	Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Un-standardised Coefficient	Std. Error	R-squared	F
1	COSB	ASB	0.33***	0.059	0.115	31.554***
2	INTINT	ASB	0.502***	0.059	0.227	71.494***
3	SelfDis	ASB	0.011	0.068	0	0.025
4	CusDis	ASB	0.257***	0.073	0.048	12.291***

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; All two-tailed tests.

ASB = Adaptive Selling Behaviour, COSB = Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, SelfDis = Self disclosure, CusDis = Customer disclosure

Table 5.4 Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	SIO	ASB	COSB	INTINT	SelfDis	CusDis	SPBehaviour	SPOutcome
SIO	3.5687	1.41137	1							
ASB	5.4204	1.27311	-0.415**	1						
COSB	5.4196	1.23777	-0.178**	0.339**	1					
INTINT	5.5075	1.34102	-0.247**	0.477**	0.380**	1				
SelfDis	3.3252	1.33995	0.071	0.010	-0.083	.000	1			
CusDis	4.3582	1.49317	-0.026	0.219**	-0.047	0.050	0.220**	1		
SPBehaviour	5.5034	1.16944	-0.200**	0.524**	0.248**	0.507**	0.129*	0.161*	1	
SPOutcome	5.1969	1.29755	-0.317**	0.544**	0.431**	0.393**	0.090	0.113	0.582**	1
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level										
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level										

SIO = Salesperson's Information Overload, ASB = Adaptive Selling Behaviour, COSB = Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, SelfDis = Self disclosure, CusDis = Customer disclosure,

SPBehaviour = Behavioural performance, SPOutcome = Outcome performance

The values in Table 5.5.1 suggest that ASB is positively related to COSB ($\beta=0.339$, $p \leq 0.001$), interaction intensity ($\beta=0.477$, $p \leq 0.001$), and customer disclosure ($\beta=0.219$, $p \leq 0.001$). ASB also has a positive effect on self disclosure ($\beta=0.01$, p not significant), although the coefficient is not significant. The summary of these results is presented below:

H 1: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of COSB.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.339$, $p \leq 0.001$).

H 2a: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Interaction Intensity.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.477$, $p \leq 0.001$).

H 2b: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Self Disclosure.*

This hypotheses was not supported ($\beta=0.01$, p not significant).

H 2c: *ASB has a positive influence on the adoption of Customer Disclosure.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.219$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Table 5.5.2 Results of OLS Analysis (DV: Outcome Performance)

Independent Variables	Model 5	
	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error
COSB	0.363***	0.063
INTINT	0.248***	0.058
SelfDis	0.095	0.055
CusDis	0.082	0.049
R-squared	0.270	
F	22.168***	

** $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; All two-tailed tests.*

COSB = Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, SelfDis = Self disclosure, CusDis = Customer disclosure

The values in Table 5.5.3 suggest that COSB ($\beta=0.346$, $p \leq 0.001$) and RSB factor interaction intensity ($\beta=0.257$, $p \leq 0.001$) are all positively related to a salesperson's outcome performance. Although self disclosure ($\beta=1.727$, p not significant) and customer disclosure ($\beta=1.669$, p not significant) also have positive effects on a salesperson's outcome performance, the coefficient is not significant. The summary of these results is presented below:

H 3: *COSB has positive impacts on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.346$, $p \leq 0.001$).

H 4a: *Interaction Intensity has positive impacts on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.257$, $p \leq 0.001$).

H 4b: *Self Disclosure has positive impacts on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta=1.727$, p not significant).

H 4c: *Customer Disclosure has positive impacts on a salesperson's outcome performance.*

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta=1.669$, p not significant).

Table 5.5.3 Results of OLS Analysis (DV: Behavioural Performance)

Independent Variables	Model 6	
	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error
COSB	0.080	0.056
INTINT	0.409***	0.051
SelfDis	0.096*	0.049
CusDis	0.092	0.044
R-squared	0.292	
F	24.718***	

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$; All two-tailed tests.

COSB = Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, SelfDis = Self disclosure, CusDis = Customer disclosure

The values in Table 5.5.2 suggest that COSB ($\beta=0.084$, not significant) is positively related to a salesperson's behavioural performance, although the coefficient is not significant. Interaction intensity ($\beta=0.469$, $p \leq 0.001$), self disclosure ($\beta=0.110$, $p < 0.05$) and customer disclosure ($\beta=0.118$, $p < 0.05$) are all positively related to a salesperson's behavioural performance. The summary of these results is presented below:

H 5: *COSB has positive impacts on salesperson's behavioural performance.*

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta=0.084$, p not significant).

H 6a: *Interaction Intensity has positive impacts on salesperson's behavioural performance.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.469$, $p \leq 0.001$).

H 6b: *Self Disclosure has positive impacts on salesperson's behavioural performance.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.110$, $p < 0.05$).

H 6c: *Customer Disclosure has positive impacts on salesperson's behavioural performance.*

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta=0.118$, $p < 0.05$).

5.5.1 Moderating role of Salesperson's Information Overload

The regression models for testing the moderating role of Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO) were developed in a hierarchical manner. In the first model, the relationship selling behaviour variables, including ASB, COSB, RSB (interaction intensity, self disclosure, customer disclosure), and two sales performance variables (behavioural performance and outcome performance), along with SIO were entered. After this, the interactions of SIO with the relationship selling behaviour variables were entered one by one in different models. Moderating role of SIO was not examined for

the relationships between ASB & self disclosure (H8b), COSB & behavioural performance (H9), self disclosure & outcome performance (H12b), and customer disclosure & outcome performance (H12c) because these relationships were not found to be significant. In total, 13 models were estimated.

Table 5.6.1 presents the results of regression analysis for the moderating effect of SIO on the relationship between ASB and the other two kinds of relationship selling behaviours – COSB and RSB. From the values in Table 5.6.1, it is evident that there is a strong support for the moderating effect of SIO on the ASB and interaction intensity relationship ($\beta = 0.241$, $p \leq 0.001$), however the moderating effect is positive which is opposite to the effect hypothesized. SIO also has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between ASB and customer disclosure ($\beta = -0.189$, $p < 0.01$). Nevertheless, SIO does not moderate the relationship between ASB and COSB ($\beta = -0.082$, p not significant). The summary of the hypotheses are given below.

Hypothesis 7: SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and COSB such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO adopts COSB better.

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = -0.082$, p not significant).

Hypothesis 8a: SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Interaction Intensity such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Interaction Intensity.

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = 0.241$, $p \leq 0.001$). Significant and positive beta value confirms the relationship in the opposite way.

Hypothesis 8b: SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Self Disclosure such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Self Disclosure.

This hypothesis was not examined due to the previously mentioned reasons.

Hypothesis 8c: SIO moderates the relationship between ASB and Customer

Disclosure such that as the level of ASB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO has a higher level of Customer Disclosure.

This hypothesis was supported ($\beta = -0.189$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 5.6.2 presents the results of regression analysis for the moderating effect of SIO on the relationship between salesperson's behavioural performance and COSB as well as RSB. Model 6 in Table 5.6.2 shows the relationship between COSB, RSB, and behavioural performance. The interactions of SIO with each variable were entered one by one in model 6-1 to 6-3 except for COSB (H9), due to the relationship between COSB and behavioural performance being found insignificant in previous OLS analysis. Model 6-1 to 6-3 show that there are no moderating effects of SIO on the interaction intensity and behavioural performance relationship ($\beta = 0.023$, p not significant), the self disclosure and behavioural performance relationship ($\beta = -0.005$, p not significant), nor the customer disclosure and behavioural performance relationship ($\beta = 0.061$, p not significant). The summary of the hypotheses are given below.

Hypothesis 9: SIO moderates the relationship between COSB and salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of COSB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.

This hypothesis was not examined as the relationship between COSB and behavioural performance was found to be insignificant.

Hypothesis 10a: SIO moderates the relationship between Interaction Intensity and salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = 0.023$, p not significant).

Hypothesis 10b: SIO moderates the relationship between Self Disclosure and

salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Self Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = -0.005$, p not significant).

Hypothesis 10c: SIO moderates the relationship between Customer Disclosure and salesperson's behavioural performance such that as the level of Customer Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of behaviour.

This hypothesis was not supported ($\beta = 0.061$, p not significant).

Table 5.6.3 shows the regression analysis results of the moderating effects of SIO on the relationships between a salesperson's outcome performance and COSB plus the factors of RSB. Model 5 in Table 5.6.3 presents the main effects, and the interaction between SIO and other independent variables were entered one by one in model 5-1 and 5-2. As the results show, SIO only moderates the relationship between interaction intensity and outcome performance ($\beta = -0.225$, $p \leq 0.001$). There are no significant moderating effects of SIO on the other relationships, viz COSB and outcome performance ($\beta = -0.025$, p not significant), self disclosure and outcome performance ($\beta = 0.056$, p not significant), and customer disclosure and outcome performance ($\beta = -0.001$, p not significant). Hypotheses H12b and H12c regarding the moderating role of SIO were not examined for the relationships between self disclosure & outcome performance and customer disclosure & outcome performance because these relationships were found to be insignificant in previous OLS analyses. All the models show that there is a direct relationship between SIO and a salesperson's outcome performance. SIO is negatively related to a salesperson's outcome performance ($\beta = -0.212$, $p \leq 0.001$). This result indicates that a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in dollar sales. A summary of the hypotheses is provided below.

Hypothesis 11: *SIO moderates the relationship between COSB and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of COSB increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of outcome.*

This hypotheses was not supported ($\beta = -0.025$, p not significant).

Hypothesis 12a: *SIO moderates the relationship between Interaction Intensity and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Interaction Intensity increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of outcome.*

This hypotheses was supported ($\beta = -0.225$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Hypothesis 12b: *SIO moderates the relationship between Self Disclosure and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Self Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of outcome.*

This hypothesis was not examined due to the previously mentioned reasons.

Hypothesis 12c: *SIO moderates the relationship between Customer Disclosure and a salesperson's outcome performance such that as the level of Customer Disclosure increases, a salesperson with a lower level of SIO performs better in terms of outcome.*

This hypothesis was not examined due to the previously mentioned reasons.

Table 5.7 represents a brief summary of the findings of all the hypotheses testing results.

Table 5.6.1 Moderating effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviours

Dependent Variable: COSB					Dependent Variable: INTINT			
Variables	Model 1		Model 1-1		Model 2		Model 2-1	
	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error
ASB	0.330***	0.059	0.334***	0.067	0.502***	0.059	0.402***	0.066
SIO	-0.04	0.058	-0.047	0.058	-0.056	0.059	-0.034	0.057
SIO X ASB			-0.048	0.038			0.154***	0.037
F	15.977***		11.218***		36.186***		31.473***	
R ²	0.117		0.123		0.23		0.281	
ΔR ²			0.006				0.051	

Values are unstandardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. [P <0.05, ** P <0.01, *** P ≤0.001]*

SIO = Salesperson's information overload

ASB = Adaptive selling behaviour, COSB = Customer oriented selling behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, CusDis = Customer disclosure

Table 5.6.1 Moderating effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviours (contd.)

Dependent Variables: CusDis				
variables	model 3		model 3-1	
	Un- standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un- standardised coefficient	Std. Error
ASB	0.257***	0.073	0.360***	0.083
SIO	0.083	0.073	0.064	0.072
SIO X ASB			- 0.135*	0.047
F	6.808***		7.432***	
R ²	0.053		0.085	
ΔR ²	0.031			

Values are unstandardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. [P <0.05, ** P <0.01, *** P ≤0.001]*

SIO = Salesperson's information overload

ASB = Adaptive selling behaviour, COSB = Customer oriented selling behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, CusDis = Customer disclosure

Table 5.6.2 Moderating effect of SIO on the relationship between relationship selling behaviour and salesperson's behavioural performance

Variables	Model 6		Model 6-1		Model 6-2		Model 6-3	
	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error
COSB	0.073	0.056	0.077	0.057	0.073	0.056	0.068	0.056
INTINT	0.394***	0.052	0.386***	0.057	0.394***	0.053	0.402***	0.053
SelfDis	0.101*	0.049	0.103*	0.049	0.1*	0.049	0.105*	0.049
CusDis	0.09*	0.044	0.092*	0.044	0.09*	0.044	0.096*	0.044
SIO	-0.066	0.047	-0.063	0.047	-0.066	0.047	-0.069	0.047
SIO X INTINT			0.010	0.027				
SIO X SelfDis					-0.003	0.033		
SIO X CusDis							0.034	0.031
F	20.257***		16.844***		16.812***		17.098***	
R ²	0.298		0.298		0.298		0.301	
ΔR ²			0		0		0.003	

Values are unstandardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. [P <0.05, ** P <0.01, *** P ≤0.001]*

SIO = Salesperson's information overload, COSB = Customer oriented selling behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity, SelfDis = Self disclosure, CusDis = Customer disclosure

Table 5.6.3 Moderating effect of SIO on the relationship between relationship selling behaviour and salesperson's outcome performance

Variables	Model 5		Model 5-1		Model 5-2	
	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error	Un-standardised coefficient	Std. Error
COSB	0.342***	0.061	0.349***	0.064	0.297***	0.061
INTINT	0.205***	0.057	0.203***	0.058	0.294***	0.060
SelfDis	0.109*	0.054	0.108*	0.054	0.086	0.052
CusDis	0.076	0.048	0.077	0.048	0.056	0.047
SIO	- 0.195***	0.051	- 0.197***	0.052	- 0.228***	0.051
SIO X COSB			-0.018	0.041		
SIO X INTINT					- 0.110***	0.029
F	21.626***		17.996***		21.5***	
R ²	0.311		0.312		0.351	
ΔR ²			0.001		0.04	

Values are unstandardised regression coefficients, with standard errors in parenthesis. [** P <0.05, ** P <0.01, *** P ≤0.001*]

SIO = Salesperson's information overload, COSB = Customer oriented selling behaviour

INTINT = Interaction intensity

Table 5.7 Summary of the findings

Hypothesis	Standardised Beta Coefficient	Std. Error	Significant level	Supported/Not supported
H1	0.339	0.059	≤ 0.001	Supported
H2a	0.477	0.059	≤ 0.001	Supported
H2b	0.01	0.068	NS	Not Supported
H2c	0.219	0.073	≤ 0.001	Supported
H3	0.346	0.063	≤ 0.001	Supported
H4a	0.257	0.058	≤ 0.001	Supported
H4b	1.727	0.055	NS	Not Supported
H4c	1.669	0.049	NS	Not Supported
H5	0.084	0.056	NS	Not Supported
H6a	0.469	0.051	≤ 0.001	Supported
H6b	0.11	0.049	< 0.05	Supported
H6c	0.118	0.044	< 0.05	Supported
H7	-0.082	0.038	NS	Not Supported
H8a	0.241	0.037	≤ 0.001	Supported
H8b	~	~	~	Not Supported
H8c	-0.189	0.047	< 0.01	Supported
H9	~	~	~	Not Supported
H10a	0.023	0.033	NS	Not Supported
H10b	-0.005	0.031	NS	Not Supported
H10c	0.061	0.041	NS	Not Supported
H11	-0.025	0.027	NS	Not Supported
H12a	-0.225	0.029	≤ 0.001	Supported
H12b	~	~	~	Not Supported
H12c	~	~	~	Not Supported

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter provided details of the data analyses procedures and the results of data analyses including the sample characteristics, reliability and validity assessment, as well as the results of regression analyses for hypotheses testing. The results have indicated a very high level of support for many hypotheses with respect to core theory and have supported several moderation effects hypotheses. The next chapter discusses the interpretation of these results and their implications. The conclusion of this study will also be drawn in the next chapter.

Chapter 6

Summary and Conclusion

The primary goal of this study has been to establish the link within different relationship selling behaviours, and their relationship with salesperson's performance while controlling for the effect of Salesperson's Information Overload (SIO). Business-to-business (B2B) industries were selected for the present study on the basis that relationship selling behaviours are widely adopted by B2B salespeople. The sample for the empirical study was drawn from B2B salespersons in China, focusing on those who have sufficient B2B selling experience to enable them to exercise different relationship selling behaviours.

The extant literature of personal selling and sales management is very limited on the topic of the relationships between different relationship selling behaviours. In this study, an attempt has been made to contribute to this research need. In addition, there is almost no literature that has investigated the effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and salesperson's performance, thus control for the effect of SIO when investigating the main effects was explicitly recognized in the research design of this study.

Within this study, the relationship selling behaviours were categorised into three streams: Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB), Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB), and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB). RSB was further broken down into its three underlying dimensions: interaction intensity, self disclosure, and customer disclosure. The effects of ASB on the other dimensions of relationship selling behaviours were examined. In addition, the relationships between these dimensions with both behaviour and outcome performance of salespeople were also investigated. It was also suspected that the relationships mentioned above may be influenced by the role played by SIO. Therefore, the moderating effects of

SIO on the relationship of ASB with COSB and RSB, as well as its effect on the relationship between various types of selling behaviours and behavioural & outcome performance of salespeople, were hypothesized in this study.

With the above considerations in mind, a theoretical framework was developed based on an extensive review of the literature. This framework was presented in Figure 3.1. The research framework was operationalised through several, well researched measures and standard scales with modifications to suit the context of this research. Having established the theoretical framework, empirical data were collected to validate the hypotheses. Chapter 5 presented a detailed data collection and analysis process along with the results.

In the following section, major findings based on the data analysis results of this research are presented, followed by discussions on implications of the findings, limitations of the study and directions for future research.

6.1 Major research findings

6.1.1 Influences of ASB on COSB and RSB

As hypothesized, the research shows that ASB influences COSB and various dimensions of RSB differently. The results show that while COSB and the interaction intensity and customer disclosure dimensions of RSB are positively associated with ASB, ASB has no significant impact on the self disclosure dimension of RSB. These results were supported through regression analyses using the aggregate measures.

ASB accounted for 12% of the variance in COSB, giving relatively significant support to the model. The low value of the variance in COSB is probably due to the presence of other factors which also influence the adoption of COSB. As discussed in Chapter 2, the characteristic of COSB is that a salesperson chooses to offer products/services which can satisfy customers' needs rather than using high pressure, deceptive or manipulative selling tactics to generate one-off high dollar sales (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Hence, a customer-oriented belief and attitude would have a direct influence on the adoption of COSB. In addition, there are both organizational and personal antecedents of COSB, including sales manager leadership style, salesperson perceived empowerment, and the psychological climate, which all significantly influence the salesperson's utilization of COSB (Martin,

2001; Martin & Bush, 2003). Therefore, the results of this study suggest ASB is another factor which positively influences a salesperson's implementation of COSB besides the ones found in the extant literature. This finding may provide the necessary impetus to recognize the importance of ASB in supporting COSB. A high level of ASB enables a salesperson to gather more information related to customers' needs, and learn from it, then adjust to better sales strategies and tactics to satisfy customers' needs.

In the relationship with RSB, the results show that ASB accounted for 23% of the variance in interaction intensity, and 5% of the variance in customer disclosure. Interaction intensity indicates the frequency of the communication made between a salesperson and a customer in all possible communication channels (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). It aims at "staying in touch" with a customer to maintain a trustworthy relationship. The fact that ASB showed a positive influence on interaction intensity shows that a salesperson with a higher level of ASB retains a higher communication frequency with his/her customers. Also, ASB enables a salesperson to identify which customer is a key account and requires more attention, thereby managing limited time in a more efficient way by only increasing the interaction intensity with major clients to maximise productivity. Customer disclosure was also found to be positively influenced by ASB, however the relationship between ASB and customer disclosure was not very strong. One explanation may be that customer disclosure implies the sharing of information between a salesperson and a customer – information which is controlled by the customer (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). Although the information sharing process is likely to be initiated by the salesperson who adopts ASB and is willing to strengthen the seller-buyer relationship, the salesperson does not have much control of the information feedback from the customer. Therefore, ASB only influences customer disclosure to some degree.

In terms of self disclosure however, it was found that ASB has no effect. In other words, whether or not ASB is employed does not appear to have any effect on a salesperson's self disclosure. There are two possible explanations for this result. Firstly, there are two types of self disclosure: exchange-specific self disclosure and social self disclosure (Macneil, 1978; Hosman, 1987; Jacobs *et al.*, 2001). A salesperson naturally understands that exchange-specific self disclosure is a basic component of buyer-seller communication. A salesperson has to share exchange-specific information with customers no matter which kind of relationship selling behaviour he/she adopts; thus ASB does not influence exchange-specific self disclosure. Secondly, social self disclosure involves the sharing of increasingly intimate information as the relationship develops (Jacobs *et al.*, 2001), and it is influenced by the

social norms and cultural background of the two parties in the relationship. The data of this research was collected in China and compared to Western countries, Chinese culture is notably more 'humble' more observant of the proprieties in interpersonal relations, and more careful and conservative in both working attitude and business philosophy (Ying, 2000). Consequently, a salesperson from a Chinese cultural background may not feel very comfortable sharing personal information about him/her self. The analysis results also provide some evidence to support this explanation. The average mean for the measures of the self disclosure scale appear to be the lowest among all the items (average mean for 6 items of self disclosure = 3.325). This means that most of the respondents did not agree with the sales activities that related to self disclosure, even if they happened to employ ASB.

6.1.2 Effect of COSB and RSB on a salesperson's performance

The analysis of the research shows that both the behaviour and the outcome performance of salespeople are influenced by COSB and RSB differently. The results confirm the hypotheses that all the dimensions of RSB (interaction intensity, self disclosure, and customer disclosure) positively influence a salesperson's behavioural performance and COSB and interaction intensity positively influence outcome performance. However, it was found that COSB did not affect a salesperson's behavioural performance significantly, and both self disclosure and customer disclosure had no substantial effect on outcome performance. COSB, together with the three components of RSB, accounted for 29% of the variance in salesperson's behavioural performance, and 27% of the variance in a salesperson's outcome performance, giving a very strong support to the robustness of this part of the model.

Although COSB was found to have positive impacts on both behaviour and outcome performance, the relationship with behavioural performance did not appear to be significant. Behavioural performance refers to the activities of salespeople when carrying out their responsibilities, whereas outcome performance represents the quantitative results of salespeople's efforts (Baldauf, Cravens & Piercy, 2005). One of the respondents commented on the measurement scales for behavioural performance with the view that the activities mentioned in this part of the questionnaire were all very basic requirements of being a salesperson. This may provide a possible explanation for the insignificant relationship between COSB and behavioural performance. Salespeople who employ COSB are likely to conduct similar activities to other salespeople; thus, COSB may not have a considerable

impact on the improvement of salespeople's behavioural performance. However, the differences surface at the level of sales outcomes and quantitative results. A salesperson with COSB is more likely to achieve better outcome performance in terms of gaining more market share, generating high dollar sales, and exceeding targets and objectives. In other words, by adopting COSB, a salesperson tends to work more effectively and efficiently.

In contrast to COSB, the research results show that a salesperson's behavioural performance can be enhanced by adopting RSB. This is because RSB aims at managing the quality of interpersonal relationships between salesperson and customers, as well as building and maintaining these strong relationships (Boles *et al.*, 2000; Crosby *et al.*, 1990). In order to achieve these objectives, salespeople with RSB need to carry out more activities during the selling process, including the creating of additional contacts, regular visiting, sharing more information relating to him/her self and the firm, and continuously providing product education to customers. Therefore, the behavioural performance of a salesperson rises to a new level with RSB. Likewise, the outcome performance is also improved with RSB. Although the relationship between behavioural performance and outcome performance is not a research objective of this study, Miao and Evans (2007) found that behavioural performance has a positive effect on outcome performance.

Given that all the dimensions of RSB are shown to positively affect salesperson's behavioural performance, and interaction intensity is positively related to a salesperson's outcome performance, these results indicate that to achieve improved sales performance it is extremely important for a salesperson to maintain strong buyer-seller relationships by increasing interaction intensity and disclosure level. In addition to these findings, the results suggest that better buyer-seller relationships lead to increasing customer loyalty (Crosby *et al.*, 1990); thus RSB activities may also be short-term behavioural measures that help achieve improved long-term sales performance. This suggestion is confirmed by the research of Boles *et al.* (2000).

It is also shown however, that mutual disclosure (self disclosure and customer disclosure) does not affect a salesperson's outcome performance, although it does affect behavioural performance. Disclosure between a salesperson and a customer is a reciprocal activity (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). As the level of customer disclosure increases, a salesperson needs to respond to the information provided by the customer, hence more work and activity are required to gather and analyse this information. By completing these tasks, the behavioural

performance of the salesperson can be improved. In addition, a salesperson may need to reveal more personal and organizational information to the customer in order to gain more trust. However, gaining trust can be a long process, and the results may not be immediately apparent. So that, despite the fact that mutual disclosure has positive effects on a salesperson's outcome performance, the impact may not be significant in the short term.

6.1.3 Moderating the effect of salesperson's information overload on RSB

The research results support some of the hypotheses on the moderating effect of SIO on the relationships between relationship selling behaviours. SIO was shown to have a strong moderating effect on the relationship between ASB and interaction intensity, and the relationship between ASB and customer disclosure. On the other hand, SIO was not shown to be a significant moderating factor in the relationship between ASB and COSB, nor the relationship between ASB and self disclosure.

Interestingly, although SIO was found to be a moderating factor in the ASB and interaction intensity relationship, the moderating effect was opposite to the hypothesized negative effect. As hypothesized, SIO was expected to have a negative impact such as salesperson's propensity to commit mistake when ASB is employed to identify key accounts, resulting in decreased interaction intensity with important customers. However, the results show that when the level of SIO is high, ASB affects interaction intensity to a greater extent than when the level of SIO is low. There are two main aspects of ASB: information gathering and learning for this information (Weitz *et al.*, 1986). SIO occurs when the amount of information is too large to process in a limited timeframe (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Therefore, the more information a salesperson gathers during the adaptive selling process, the higher the chances he/she will be suffering from SIO. In order to clarify the doubts raised through the learning process of ASB, a salesperson has to communicate more with customers to solve the questions without adequate time, thus interaction intensity needs to be increased.

As hypothesized, SIO was found to be a negative moderating factor in the relationship between ASB and customer disclosure. It means that with a higher level of SIO, ASB has a less positive influence on customer disclosure. Customer disclosure is a key aspect of a trustworthy buyer-seller relationship (Bole *et al.*, 2000), and SIO is detrimental to long term buyer-seller relationship building. In terms of self disclosure, SIO was not found to be a significantly negative moderating factor in the ASB and self disclosure relationship, and this is probably due to the fact that the relationship between ASB and self disclosure was also

found to be insignificant.

The non significant finding of SIO involvement in the ASB and COSB relationship points to the fact that the SIO factor is probably not very important in the process of using ASB to influence the adoption of COSB. Customer orientation is the core concept in COSB (Dubinsky & Staples, 1981), and a fundamental practice to survive in a keenly competitive environment (Schwepker, 2003). Therefore, experienced salespeople may not need too much information to decide to embrace both the customer orientation concept and COSB. In other words, SIO is less likely to happen during the COSB adoption process, and has less impact on the ASB and COSB relationship.

6.1.4 Moderating effect of SIO on a salesperson's performance

Along with a direct effect, SIO also moderates the relationship between relationship selling behaviours and a salesperson's performance. The results suggest that SIO has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between COSB and salesperson's behavioural performance, as well as the relationship between the RSB dimension of interaction intensity and the outcome performance of the salesperson. SIO, however, does not moderate the effect of COSB on outcome performance, RSB's effect on behavioural performance, or mutual disclosure's (self disclosure and customer disclosure) effect on outcome performance.

Utilizing RSB requires implementing it to key accounts (Guenzi *et al.*, 2007), but with the negative effect of SIO, salespeople may misidentify key clients to increase interaction intensity, and even deliver wrong information during communication with customers. As a result, the buyer-seller relationship may be damaged, and therefore detrimental to sales performance (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). Hence, SIO negatively influences the relationship between interaction intensity and outcome performance.

The insignificant moderating effects of SIO have been found in the RSB and behavioural performance relationship, the COSB and outcome performance relationship, and the mutual disclosure and outcome performance relationship. Once again, SIO involves a salesperson being exposed to a large amount of information exceeding their ability to assimilate or process it during a given unit of time (Hunter & Goebel, 2008). In some selling situations, salespeople may not regard the amount of information as too large to process, or they may have ample time to sort out the information. As a respondent also commented during the questionnaire – being able to handle a large amount of information is a personal antecedent

to being competent in a salesperson's position. Therefore, SIO is less likely to have an influence for these salespeople. It must be stated however, that this result may be restricted to the Chinese B2B industry context to which this research study was confined.

6.2 Implications

Findings from the present study have important implications for both business practitioners and academics. For academics, the findings point towards the importance of investigating the complex relationship between different relationship selling behaviours in a more disaggregated manner and in different industrial contexts. This study highlights the importance of ASB as an influential factor for the adoption of other relationship selling behaviours. Depending on different customer types, customer level, and requirements, the need for different types of relationship selling behaviours, along with the performance outcome, may vary. In this regard, drawing a conclusion based on a research done in a particular setting and making inferences based on that to some different setting could be potentially unbeneficial.

In addition, this study also highlights the importance of contingency factors that affect relationship selling behaviours' performance relationship. Specifically, researchers need to not just incorporate SIO as a control before making inferences about other dimensions of relationship selling behaviour, but also hypothesize for the moderating effect of SIO.

For business practitioners in general and particularly sales managers and salespersons, the findings highlight the importance of employing ASB. Firms may want to train their salespeople towards adopting ASB as their primary selling behaviour, so that more appropriate selling strategies and tactics can be selected based on different customer requirements, and finally result in the superior behaviour and outcome performance of salespeople.

Additionally, this study is unique in terms of investigating the effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance, and particularly relevant for personnel involved in develop sales strategies and monitoring a salesperson's performance. The negative effects of SIO on relationship selling behaviour adoptions and a salesperson's performance suggest firms should keep monitoring the information flow within the sales department, and be aware of when the detriments of a general selling strategy exceed its advantages of lower managing

cost. The harmful consequences of SIO are particularly strong for the salespeople who use RSB to adjust the interaction intensity with key accounts. Therefore, firms also need to consider investing in a better information controlling system or technology if the impacts of SIO are becoming critical.

6.3 Limitations

Like any research project, the present study has several limitations. This research was carried out by collecting the data from B2B salespeople in few main cities and provinces of China only. The reasons for limiting the study to this region are time and financial constraints; without these, a much broader sample would have been collected. Because of the single geographic region, there are restrictions in generalizing the findings. Although it is possible to generalize the findings to other geographical contexts, cautious application is recommended.

Secondly, the survey respondents were all from a Chinese culture background. The findings may therefore relate only to the Chinese cultural perspective. Respondents from other ethnicities were under represented; a larger ethnic diversity among respondents may have provided multiple perspectives on the research hypotheses. As it stands, the results of this study may be biased toward the Chinese perspective.

Thirdly, it is also important to note that for strongly context specific constructs such as SIO, it may be highly misleading to present universally applicable findings. The variation in findings of other studies points to the difficulty of generalizing findings of such studies to a universal context.

In addition, the measurements for a salesperson's performance were rated based on individual perceptions. The results relating to performance measurements may therefore been overrated and may not reflect the reality totally. Once again, the reasons for this limitation are time and financial constraints. A comparison between a self rated scale and a manager rated would be helpful to overcome this bias.

6.4 Directions for further research

The results of this study suggest several interesting directions for future research. This study empirically tested the moderating effect of SIO on relationship selling behaviour and sales

performance. Further research can focus on the impacts of SIO on other important influential factors of a salesperson's performance; Krishnan, Netemeyer and Boles (2002) suggested self efficacy, competitiveness, and efforts all have effects on sales performance, and research has found some personal factors such as experience, creativity, and psychological factors also affect sales performance (e.g. Wang, 2000; Behrman & Perreault, 1984).

Although this study constrained SIO as a single factor construct due to statistical identification, according to the literature and the EFA loadings, there are two sub-dimensions in the SIO construct: the error dimension and the affective dimension (Jacoby *et al.*, 1974; Keller & Staelin, 1987; Hunter, 2004). Therefore, the SIO constructs of the proposed model can be broken into sub-dimensions for further research in order to gain more elaborate and comprehensive understandings of the impact of SIO.

Another possible future research direction is to use the findings of this research to identify effective strategies for reducing SIO. Sales managers could get more from their sales personnel by finding ways to help salespeople handle SIO or by reducing the information requirements of the sales position. Furthermore, research could determine if improvement in communication skills attenuates the occurrence of SIO.

An exploration of the impacts of SIO on relationship selling behaviours and sales performance in other countries beyond China would reveal some interesting results and findings which would also be helpful in offering important extensions to the current line of study.

6.5 Conclusion

This dissertation proposed a model for the deterministic effects of Adaptive Selling Behaviour (ASB) on Customer Oriented Selling Behaviour (COSB) and Relational Selling Behaviour (RSB), along with their consequences on sales performance. Sales performance was measured as a uni-dimensional construct comprising of behavioural performance and outcome performance. It was hypothesized that ASB would have positive effects on the adoption of COSB and RSB, and COSB and RSB would be positively related to both a salesperson's behavioural performance and outcome performance. These hypotheses were made after controlling for the effect of salesperson's information overload (SIO). Further, SIO was hypothesized to have a moderating impact on the relationship of ASB and COSB,

and ASB and RSB, as well as moderating the COSB and sales performance relationship, and the RSB and sales performance relationship.

The results support the positive link between ASB and COSB, as well as the relationship between ASB and the RSB dimensions of interaction intensity and customer disclosure. COSB was found to have a positive effect on a salesperson's outcome performance but not his/her behavioural performance. The three dimensions of RSB were all found to be positively related to salesperson's behavioural performance, and interaction intensity and self disclosure were positively related to outcome performance; however, customer disclosure appeared to be insignificant to outcome performance. SIO was found to have negative moderating effects on the inter-relationships among the three relationship selling behaviours and also on the link between COSB, RSB and sales performance. However, among these links, only the relationships of ASB and interaction intensity, ASB and customer disclosure, COSB and behavioural performance, and interaction intensity and outcome performance were found to be significant.

Together these results point towards the importance of ASB in determining the adoption of COSB and RSB. Results also suggest that COSB has more impact on outcome performance than behavioural performance, while RSB, in contrast, is better in managing key account relationships which leads to better behavioural performance and long term outcome performance. Additionally, the findings of this research also suggest sales managers should keep monitoring SIO as it is detrimental to the adoption of relationship selling behaviours as well as a salesperson's performance. The findings also call for further investigations of the negative impacts of SIO on other important antecedents of a salesperson's performance. Overall, this research extends previous research in the areas of relationship selling behaviours and sales performance, and integrates the newly developed concept of SIO with some popular research topics of personal selling and sales management. Consequently, some gaps in the literature of relationship selling behaviour and sales performance have been filled, and further research directions have been revealed. With increasing awareness among industrial firms about the importance of managing customer relationships, this study is expected to provide useful pointers to both researchers and managers in terms of encouraging salespeople to adopt appropriate selling behaviour and manage information better.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Original survey questionnaire



Questionnaire

The impacts of salesperson's information overload on relationship selling behaviours

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Dong Han. I am a research scholar at the AUT Business School pursuing Masters degree in Business. My research is concerned with understanding how sales people adopt relationship selling behaviours in the situation of information overload. Your participation in this study will be highly appreciated and information provided will be used for academic purposes only. Your participation is totally anonymous and voluntary. You are requested to give as far as possible a true representation of your feelings while completing this questionnaire. Please note there are no good or bad responses.

Completion of this questionnaire will be deemed to amount to consent to participate in this research.

Please consider the experiences of interacting with customers and selling products while completing the questionnaire by rating each of the following statements on a seven-point scale ranging from 1-7, where 1 indicates "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicates "Strongly agree." and 4 indicates that you neither agree nor disagree (you are neutral).

Section A: Salespeople Information Overloads

- I. Please consider your experiences of using your knowledge and information regarding to products and customers, and their influences on the selling process:

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1. I sometimes feel frustrated during a sales presentation because of the volume of information that I must present	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. The amount of product information that I have to know in order to sell effectively makes me feel overload.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. The volume of sales information that I must deal with is frustrating.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. I have presented the wrong product to the wrong customer because the amount of product information that I deal with is so large.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. The amount of information regarding sales techniques that I must know causes me to make mistakes in sales presentations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. The amount of information regarding sales techniques that I must know has caused me to present the wrong product to the wrong customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section B: Relationship Selling Behaviours

I. Please consider your experiences of changing sales strategies and presentations when interacting with different customers.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
7. When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
8. I like to experiment with different sales approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. I am very flexible in the selling approach I use.		
10. I can easily use a wide variety of selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. I try to understand how one customer differs from another.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

II. Please consider your experiences of planning your sales strategies and presentations:

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
12. I try to sell as much as I can rather satisfy a customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
13. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
14. A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interests in mind.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
15. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product/service that helps him/her solve that problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
16. I offer the product/service of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
17. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing my product/service to a customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
18. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him/her to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
19. I paint too rosy a picture of my products/services to make them sound as good as possible.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
20. I decide what products/services to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy,	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.

21. I try to find out what kind of product/service would be most helpful to a customer. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

III. Please consider your experiences of managing your interactions with customers:

- | | Strongly Disagree | | | | | | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| 22. I contact all my customers to "stay in touch" and make sure that they are satisfied. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 23. I find ways to "stay in touch" with my customers in addition to my regular visits to remain abreast of changes in their needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 24. I "stay in touch" with my customers to get them to order more. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 25. I "stay in touch" with most of my customers outside of my regular visits either telephonically or by email or through other meetings often to keep them updated on new information related to my products/services. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 26. I keep meeting my customers to explain them the benefits of using my products. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 27. I send something of a personal nature to each of my major customers (e.g. birthday or anniversary card or flowers etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 28. I make sure my seniors meet most of my major customers once a year. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 29. I confide a lot with my customers about my financial situation and dealings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 30. I confide a lot of information with my customers related to my professional goals and objectives, even my hopes and dreams for the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 31. I confide a lot of information with my customers about my background, personal likes and family situation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 32. I confide a lot in my customers about the mistakes I have made in my job and career. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 33. I confide a lot in my customers about my failures, accomplishments, likes and dislikes about my occupation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 34. I confide a lot in my customers about my values, religious beliefs and political beliefs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 35. My customers confide a lot in me about their financial situations and dealings. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 36. My customers confide a lot in me about their financial goals and objective even their hopes and aspirations for the future. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 37. My customers confide a lot in me about their background, personal life and family situation. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 38. My customers confide a lot in me about the professional mistakes they have made in the past. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 39. My customers confide a lot in me about their work (e.g. responsibilities, failures and accomplishments, likes and dislikes about their occupation) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 40. My customers express their liking and respect for me as a person. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 41. My customers confide a lot in me about their values, religious beliefs and political beliefs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 42. My key accounts express their dissatisfaction with other salespersons to me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 43. I am willing to help my customers with their information needs about products even if my organization or I do not get any benefit from this. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 44. I try to make sure that all of my key accounts continuing product-education needs are met. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 45. I help my customers prepare their presentations, papers, notes for important events. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 46. I treat my customers the same irrespective of the size of the purchase. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 47. I express a desire to my customers to develop a long-term relationship with them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

Section C: Sales Performance

I. Please think about how you would rate your sales performance regarding to selling behaviours and outcomes:

		Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree			
48.	I am very effective in maintaining good customer relations.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49.	I am very effective in providing accurate information to customers and other people in my company.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50.	I am very effective in providing accurate and complete paper work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51.	I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52.	I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my competitors' products.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53.	I am very effective in acquiring the necessary knowledge about my customers' needs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54.	I am very effective in contributing in my firm's market share.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55.	I am very effective in generating a high level of dollar sales.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56.	I am very effective in selling to major accounts.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57.	I am very effective in exceeding annual sales targets and objectives.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section D: Finally, we have some questions about yourself and your own firm. These are primarily to assess the cross-section of respondents and companies we have in our survey.

59. How long have you worked in sales? years

60. How long have you worked in your current firm? Years

61. Annual turnover of your firm - please tick one box:

Under ¥5 million	¥5 million to under ¥10 million
¥10 million to under ¥50 million	¥50 million to under ¥100 million
Over ¥100 million	Prefer not to say 0

62. Approximately how many employees does your firm have?

63. How many customers do you have?

64. How much annual dollar sales do you make per customer in average?

Under ¥500 thousands	¥500 thousands to under ¥1 million
¥1 million to under ¥5 million	¥5 million to under ¥10 million
Over ¥10 million0	Prefer not to say 0

65. What types of product/service do you sell?

66. How old are you?

21 to 25 years old	26 to 30 years old
31 to 40 years old	41 to 50 years old
51 to 60 years old	61 years old and above

67. What is your gender?

Male Female

68. What is your education level?

Junior high school	High school
Diploma degree	Bachelor degree
Master degree	PhD degree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND VALUABLE COOPERATION

Appendix 2: Chinese versions of survey questionnaire Version 1



调查问卷 销售人员的信息超载对关系性销售行为的影响

尊敬的先生/女士：

我叫韩冬，是一名在奥克兰理工大学商学院攻读商学硕士学位的研究生。我的研究是关于理解在信息超载下销售人员如何采用关系性销售行为。非常感谢您能参与本项研究，您提供的信息将仅用于学术研究。您的参与是完全匿名和自愿的。当您回答问卷时，请您尽可能地如实作答。请注意，问卷没有好或不好的答案。

完成本问卷将被视为同意参加本研究。

请在回答问卷时回忆您与客户互动和销售产品的经验，并采用 7 分制对跟着的说明加以作答，1 表示“强烈反对”，而 7 表示“强烈支持”，4 表示你既不支持也不反对（保持中立）。

This version of the questionnaire was used for data collection.

第一部分：销售人员信息超载

一、请回忆您在销售过程中运用产品和客户的信息的经验, 以及它们对销售流程的影响:

- | | 强烈反对 | | | | | | 强烈支持 |
|---|------|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1、 由于在销售过程中需要传达的信息量过大，我有时会感到有些郁闷。 | | | | | | | |
| 2、 为了有效地推销，必须掌握的产品信息量会使我感到信息过量。 | | | | | | | |
| 3、 我必须处理的销售信息量会让人觉得烦。 | | | | | | | |
| 4、 由于我必须处理的产品信息量太大，以致我曾经向错误的客户推荐了错误的产品。 | | | | | | | |
| 5、 我必须知道的有关销售技巧的信息量会使我在销售演说时犯下错误。 | | | | | | | |
| 6、 我必须知道的有关销售技巧的信息量会使我向错误的客户推荐错误的产品。 | | | | | | | |

第二部分：关系性销售行为

一、请回想您针对不同客户改变销售策略和销售演说的经验。

- | | 强烈反对 | | | | | | 强烈支持 |
|-----------------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7、 当我感觉我的销售方式无效时，我能容易地转换另外一种销售方式。 | | | | | | | |
| 8、 我喜欢尝试不同的销售方式。 | | | | | | | |
| 9、 我能非常灵活地使用销售方式。 | | | | | | | |
| 10、 我能很容易地使用多种销售方式。 | | | | | | | |
| 11、 我试图了解客户之间的差异。 | | | | | | | |

二、请回顾您提前计划销售策略和销售演说的经验。

	强烈反对	强烈支持
12、我尝试尽可能多地出售产品而不是尽可能多地满足客户要求。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
13、我会试着去弄清客户的需求是什么。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
14、一个好的销售人员应以客户利益至上。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
15、我试着为有问题的客户提供一系列不同的产品/服务，来解决她/他的问题	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
16、我会向客户提供最适合解决他/她的问题的产品/服务。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
17、没有必要在向客户描述产品/服务时完全附实。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
18、我试着尽可能地说服他/她购买，即使我认为这超过了一个明智的客户应该购买的产品量。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
19、我对我的产品/服务尽量润色，来使它们听起来尽可能地好。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
20、我以我能说服客户购买什么为依据来决定向客户提供什么产品/服务，而不是以长期满足客户为依据。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
21、您试着找出哪种产品/服务将最有利于客户。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

三、请回顾您处理与客户交流的经验

22、 我主动联系所有的客户以“保持联系”，并确保他们是否满意。

强烈反对

强烈支持

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23、除定期访问之外，我想办法与客户“保持联系”以及时了解他们需求的变化。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24、 我与客户“保持联系”以让他们下更多订单。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25、 除定期访问以外，我通过电话或电子邮件或其他会面方式与我大多数客户“保持联系”，以使他们及时了解我产品/服务的最新信息。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26、 我保持与客户会面，以向他们阐述使用我产品的好处。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27、 我向我的每个主要客户寄送私人性质的东西（例如，生日卡、周年卡或花等）。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

28、 我确保我的上司与我的大部分主要客户每年会面一次。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29、 我会向我的客户讲述很多有关我的财务状况和交易信息。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30、 我会向我的客户讲述很多有关我的职业理想和目标，甚至是我对未来的期望和梦想。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31、 我会向我的客户讲述很多有关我的背景、个人喜好以及家庭状况。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32、 我会向我的客户讲述有关我在工作中犯下的错误。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33、 我会向我的客户讲述很多有关我的失败、成功以及对职业的好恶。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34、 我会向我的客户讲述很多有关我的价值观、宗教信仰和政治信仰。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

35、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们的财务状况和交易信息。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

36、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们的职业理想和目标，甚至是对未来的期望和梦想。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

	强烈反对	强烈支持
37、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们的背景、私人生活和家庭情况。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
38、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们过去在工作中所犯的错误。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
39、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们的工作情况（例如，责任、失败和成功、对工作的 好恶）。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
40、 我的客户向我表示爱好和尊重。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
41、 我的客户向我讲述了很多有关他们的价值观、宗教信仰和政治信仰。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
42、 我的主要客户会向我表达对其他销售人员的不满。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
43、 我很乐意帮助满足我的客户对产品信息的需求，即使我的公司或卧自己并不能因此获得任何好处。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
44、 我试图确保满足我的所有主要客户的持续产品教育的需要。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
45、 我会帮助客户准备重要事件的发言、文件和说明。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
46、 不管购买金额的大小，我都平等对待我的客户。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
47、 我向我的客户表达了能发展长期关系的期望。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

第三部分：销售业绩

一、请想想您是如何根据销售行为和结果来评价销售业绩的：

	强烈反对	强烈支持
48、我能很有效地与客户维持良好的关系。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
49、我能很有效地向客户和公司其他人员提供准确的信息。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
50、我能很有效地提供准确和完整的书面工作。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
51、我能很有效地获得有关产品的必要信息。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
52、我能很有效地获得有关竞争对手产品的必要信息。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
53、我能很有效地获得有关客户需求的必要信息。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
54、我能很有效地为公司市场份额做出贡献。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
55、我能很有效地实现高水平的销售额。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
56、我能很有效地向主要客户进行销售。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
57、我能很有效地超过年度销售指标和目标。	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

第四部分：最后是关于您和您公司的一些问题。这些主要是为了交叉分析参与我们调查应答者和公司。

59. 您从事销售工作多长时间？ 年

60. 您在目前的公司工作了多长时间？ 年

61. 您公司的年营业额 - 请选择一个答案并打勾

500 万元人民币以下	500 万元至 1000 万元人民币
1000 万元至 5000 万元人民币	5000 万元至 10000 万元人民币
10000 万元人民币以上	不想说

62. 贵公司大约有多少员工？ ..

63. 您有多少客户？ ..

64. 您对每位客户的平均年销售额有多少？

50 万元人民币以下	50 万元至 100 万元人民币
100 万元至 500 万元人民币	500 万元至 1000 万元人民币
1000 万元人民币以上	不想说

65. 您销售什么类型的产品/服务？

66. 您多大了？

21 至 25 岁	26 至 30 岁
31 至 40 岁	41 至 50 岁
51 至 60 岁	61 岁以上

67. 您的性别？

男 女

68. 您的教育水平？

初中	高中
大专	学士
硕士	博士

感谢您的时间和宝贵的合作

Appendix 2: Chinese versions of survey questionnaire Version 2



调查问卷

销售人员的信息超载对关联性销售行为的影响

尊敬的先生/女士：

我叫 Dong Han，是一名在奥克兰理工大学商学院攻读商学硕士学位的研究学者。我的研究是关于信息超载下销售人员如何采取关联性销售行为。非常感谢您能参与本项研究，您提供的信息将仅用于学术研究。您的参与是完全匿名和自愿的。当您回答问卷时，要求您尽可能地如实作答。请注意，问卷没有标准答案。

完成本问卷将被视为同意参加本研究.

请采用 7 分制对下面每个说明加以作答，并在完成问卷时考虑与客户互动和销售产品的经验。“1”分表示“强烈反对”，而 7 分表示“强烈支持”，“4”分表示你既不支持也不反对（保持中立）。

第一部分：销售人员信息超载

一、请考虑您应用有关产品和客户以及他们对销售流程的影响的知识和信息的经验：

- | | 强烈反对 | | | | | | 强烈支持 |
|---------------------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 1、 由于必须列报的信息量大，您作销售简报有时会感到沮丧。 | | | | | | | |
| 2、 为了有效地推销，必须了解的产品信息量使您感到超载。 | .1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 3、 您必须处理的信息量让人沮丧。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4、 由于您必须处理的产品信息量太大，以致您向错误的客户推销了错误的产品。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 5、 您必须知道的有关销售技巧的信息量使您在推销时犯下错误。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 6、 您必须知道的有关销售技巧的信息量使您向错误的客户推荐了错误的产品。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

第二部分：关联性销售行为

一、请考虑针对不同客户改变销售策略和介绍的经验。

- | | 强烈反对 | | | | | | 强烈支持 |
|-----------------------------------|------|---|---|---|---|---|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 7、 当您感觉您的销售方式无效时，您能轻松地采用另外一种销售方式。 | .1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8、 您喜欢尝试不同的销售方式。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 9、 您能非常灵活地使用销售方式。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 10、 您能很容易地提出多种销售方式。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 11、 您试图了解客户之间的差异。 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

二、请考虑您的计划销售策略和介绍的经验。

强烈反对 强烈支持

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

12、您尝试尽可能多地销售而不是满足于一个客户。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

13、您试图找出客户的需求。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

14、一个好的销售人员应以客户利益至上。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

15、您试图为出现问题的客户提供一种可以帮助其解决问题的产品/服务。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

16、您向客户提供最适合解决问题的产品/服务。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

17、有必要在向客户描述产品/服务时扭曲事实。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

18、您试图尽可能地说服他/她购买，即使您认为这不是一个明智的客户应该购买的产品。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

19、您对您的产品/服务仅限过于乐观的描述，使它听起来尽可能地好。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

20、您以您说服客户购买什么为依据决定向客户提供什么产品/服务，而不是以最终使客户满意为依据。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

21、您试图找出哪种产品/服务将最有利于客户。

三、请考虑您与客户交流的经验：

强烈反对

强烈支持

22、您主动联系所有“保持联系”的客户，确保他们是否满意。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

23、除定期访问之外，您想办法与客户“保持联系”以及时了解他们需求的变化。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

24、您与客户“保持联系”以让他们购买更多。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

25、除定期访问以外，您通过电话或电子邮件或通过其他会面与大多数客户“保持联系”，以使他们了解您产品/服务的最新信息。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

26、您与客户不断会面，以向他们阐述使用您产品的好处。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

27、您向您的每个主要客户寄送私人性质的东西（例如，生日卡、周年卡或花等）。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

28、您确保您的上司每年一次与您的主要客户会面。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

29、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您的财务状况和交易信息。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

30、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您的职业理想和目标，甚至是您对未来的期望和梦想。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

31、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您的背景、个人喜好以及家庭状况。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

32、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您在工作中犯下的错误。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

33、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您的失败、成功以及对职业的好恶。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

34、您向您的客户讲述了很多有关您的价值观、宗教信仰和政治信仰。

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

- 35、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们的财务状况和交易信息。
- 36、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们的职业理想和目标，甚至是对未来的期望和梦想。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 37、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们的背景、私人生活和家庭情况。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 38、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们过去在工作中所犯的错误。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 39、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们的工作情况（例如，责任、失败和成功、对工作的善恶）。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 40、您的客户向您表示爱好和尊重。
。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 41、您的客户向您讲述了很多有关他们的价值观、宗教信仰和政治信仰。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 42、您的主要客户向您表达对其他销售人员的不满。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 43、您很乐意帮助满足您的客户对产品的需要，即使您的组织或您并不能因此获得任何好处。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 44、您试图确保满足您的所有主要客户的持续产品教育需要。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 45、您帮助客户准备重要事件的发言、文件和说明。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 46、不管购买金额大小，您都平等对待您的客户。1 2 3 4 5 6 7
- 47、您向您的客户表达了发展长期关系的期望。1 2 3 4 5 6 7

第三部分：销售业绩

一、请考虑您如何根据销售行为和结果来评价销售业绩：

		强烈反对							强烈支持						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7							
48、	您能很有效地与客户维持良好的关系。														
49、	您能很有效地向客户和公司其他人员提供准确的信息。														
50、	您能很有效地提供准确和完整的书面工作。														
51、	您能很有效地获得有关产品的必要信息。														
52、	您能很有效地获得有关竞争对手产品的必要信息。														
53、	您能很有效地获得有关客户需要的必要信息。														
54、	您能很有效地为公司市场份额做出贡献。														
55、	您能很有效地实现高水平的销售额。														
56、	您能很有效地向主要客户进行销售。														
57、	您能很有效地超过年度销售指标和目标。														

第四部分：最后是关于您和您公司的一些问题。这些主要是为了评估我们调查中应答者和公司的代表性内容。

59. 您从事销售工作多长时间？ 年
60. 您在目前的公司工作了多长时间？ 年
61. 您公司的年营业额 - 请选择一个答案并打勾
- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 500 万元人民币以下 | 500 万元至 1000 万元人民币 |
| 1000 万元至 5000 万元人民币 | 5000 万元至 10000 万元人民币 |
| 10000 万元人民币以上 | 不想说 |
62. 贵公司大约有多少员工？
63. 您有多少客户？
64. 您对每位客户的平均年销售额有多少？
- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 50 万元人民币以下 | 50 万元至 100 万元人民币 |
| 100 万元至 500 万元人民币 | 500 万元至 1000 万元人民币 |
| 1000 万元人民币以上 | 不想说 |
65. 您销售什么类型的产品/服务？
66. 您多大了？
- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 21 至 25 岁 | 26 至 30 岁 |
| 31 至 40 岁 | 41 至 50 岁 |
| 51 至 60 岁 | 61 岁以上 |
67. 您的性别？
- | | |
|---|---|
| 男 | 女 |
|---|---|
68. 您的教育水平？
- | | |
|----|----|
| 初中 | 高中 |
| 大专 | 学士 |
| 硕士 | 博士 |

感谢您的时间和宝贵的合作

Appendix 3: Back-translated questionnaire Version 1



Questionnaire

The impacts of salesperson's information overload on relationship selling behaviours

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Dong Han. I am a master student at the AUT Business School. My research is about to understand how sales people adopt relationship selling behaviours in the situation of information overload. I am very appreciated for your participation. All the information provided will only be used for academic purposes. Your participation is absolutely anonymous and voluntary. Please provide the answers only represent your true feelings when completing this questionnaire. Please note there are no good or bad answers.

Completion of this questionnaire will be deemed to agree in participation in this research.

Please recall your experiences of interacting with customers and selling products while completing the questionnaire, and please answer each question by rating them on a seven-point scale ranging from 1-7, where 1 indicates "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicates "Strongly agree." and 4 indicates that you neither agree nor disagree (neutral).

Section A: Salespeople Information Overloads

I. Please recall your experiences of using product and customer profiles during the selling process, and their influences on the selling process:

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1. Sometimes I feel frustrated when the amount of information is too much to deliver during my sales presentation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. In order to effectively sell my products, the amount of product information I must know makes me feel overload.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. The amount of sales information that I must deal with makes me feel frustrated.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. Due to the huge amount of product information that I must deal with, I have presented wrong product to wrong customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. The amount of information regarding selling techniques that I must know causes me to make mistakes during sales presentations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. Due to the huge amount of information regarding selling techniques that I must know, I have presented wrong product to wrong customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section B: Relationship Selling Behaviours

I. Please recall your experiences of changing sales strategy and sales presentation for different customers.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
7. When I feel my selling approach is ineffective, I could easily change to another one.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
8. I like to experiment different selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. I am very flexible in using different selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
10. I can easily use many selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. I try to understand the differences between my customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
II. Please recall your experiences of planning your sales strategies and presentations:		
12. I try to sell my products as much as I can rather than satisfying customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
13. I try to find out what are my customers' needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
14. A good salesperson should keep 'customer first' in mind.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
15. I try to offer different products/services to my customers to help with solving their problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
16. I try to provide most appropriate products/services to help with solving customers' problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
17. It is necessary to stretch the truth when describing my product/service to customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
18. I try to convince my customer to buy as much as they can, even it is more than a wise customer would buy.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
19. I try touch up my product/service to make them sound as good as they could.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
20. I try to sell my product/ service to customers on the basis of what I could persuade them to purchase, but not satisfying their long term needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
21. I will try to find out which service or product is most beneficial for my customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

III. Please recall your experience of managing customer communication:

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 22. I try to contact all my customers to “stay in touch” in order to make sure they are satisfied with my products/services. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 23. Besides regular customer visit, I try to keep in contact with customers and find out their changing needs in time. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 24. I try to stay in touch with my customers in order to make them to purchase more. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 25. Besides regular customer visit I try to contact with my customers via E-mails, telephone and other meeting ways, in order to keep customers updated on my new products/ services’ information. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 26. I try to keep meeting my customers to illustrate the benefits of using my products/services. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 27. I try to send personal greetings to every major customer (e.g. birthday card, anniversary card or flowers). | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 28. I try to make sure my senior manager meet most of my major customers once a year. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 29. I tell my customers a lot about my financial situation and transaction information. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 30. I tell my customers a lot about my career ambition and goals, as well as my future expectations and aspirations. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 31. I tell my customer a lot about my personal background, hobbies and family status. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 32. I tell my customers a lot about the mistakes I have made in my job. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 33. I tell my customers a lot about my failures, accomplishments, likes and dislikes of my occupation. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 34. I tell my customers a lot about my values, religious beliefs and political beliefs. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 35. My customers tell me a lot about their financial situations and businesses. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |
| 36. My customers tell me a lot about their career ambition and goals, as well as the future expectations and aspirations. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 |

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
37. My customers tell me a lot about their background, personal life and family status.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
38. My customers tell me a lot about the mistakes they have made in job in the past.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
39. My customers tell me a lot about their work (E.g. responsibilities, failures, accomplishments, like and dislikes of their occupations.)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
40. My customers are showing their respect and liking to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
41. My customers tell me a lot about their values, religious beliefs and political beliefs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
42. My major customers tell me their dissatisfaction with other salespeople.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
43. I would help my customers with the information of my products/services even my company or I do not benefit from this.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
44. I try to continuously satisfy my customers' needs on product education.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
45. I try to help customer to prepare his/her presentations, documents and notes for important events.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
46. I treat every customer fairly no matter what size of their purchase.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
47. I try to express my interest in developing long term relationship with my customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section C: Sales Performance

I. Please think about how you appraise sales performance based on sales behaviours and outcomes.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
48. I am very effective in retaining good relationship with my clients.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
49. I am very effective in providing precise information to my clients and workmates.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
50. I am very effective in providing precise and completed paper works.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
51. I am very effective in acquiring key information of my products/services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
52. I am very effective in acquiring the key information of my competitor's products/services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
53. I am very effective in acquiring key information of my customer needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
54. I am very effective in contributing my company's market share.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
55. I am very effective in generating high dollar sales.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
56. I am very effective in selling to the major clients.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
57. I am very effective in exceeding annual sales targets and goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section D: The last part is all about the details of you and your company. These questions will help us cross analyze respondents and companies we have in our survey.

59. How long have you been working as a salesperson? years

60. How long have you been working in your current company? years

61. Annual turnover of your company - please tick one box:

Under ¥ 5 million	¥ 5 million to under ¥ 10 million
¥ 10 million to under ¥ 50 million	¥ 50 million to under ¥ 100 million
Over ¥ 100 million	Prefer not to say

62. How many employees does your company approximately have?

63. How many customers do you have?

64. How much annual dollar sales do you make per customer in average?

Under ¥ 500 thousands	¥ 500 thousands to under ¥ 1 million
¥ 1 million to under ¥ 5 million	¥ 5 million to under ¥ 10 million
Over ¥ 10 million	Prefer not to say

65. What types of product/service do you sell?

66. How old are you?

21 to 25 years old	26 to 30 years old
31 to 40 years old	41 to 50 years old
51 to 60 years old	61 years old and above

67. What is your gender?

Male Female

68. What is your education level?

Junior high school	High school
Diploma degree	Bachelor degree
Master degree	PhD degree

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND VALUABLE COOPERATION

Appendix 3: Back-translated questionnaire Version 2



Questionnaire

The impacts of salesperson's information overload on relationship selling behaviours

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Dong Han. I am a scholar at the AUT Business School completing Master of Business degree. My research is about how salespeople adopt relationship selling behaviours in the situation of information overload. I am very appreciated for your participation. The information provided will only be used for academic purposes. Your participation is absolutely anonymous and voluntary. Please complete the questionnaire based on your true feelings, and please note there are no right or wrong answers.

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Please complete this questionnaire while recalling your experiences of interacting with customers and selling products, and please answer each item by rating them on a seven-point scale. 1 indicates "Strongly disagree" and 7 indicates "Strongly agree." and 4 indicates that you neither agree nor disagree (neutral).

Section A: Salespeople Information Overloads

I. Please consider your experiences of using product and customer information during the selling process, and their influences on the selling process:

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1. Sometimes I feel depressed due to the amount of information is too much to deliver in my sales presentation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
2. In order to sell effectively, the amount of product information I must know makes me feel overload.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
3. The amount of sales information that I must process makes me feel depressed.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
4. Due to the amount of product information that I must handle is too much, I have presented wrong product to wrong customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
5. The amount of information regarding the must known selling techniques have caused me to make mistakes during sales presentations.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
6. The amount of information regarding the must known selling techniques have caused me presented wrong product to wrong customer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section B: Relationship Selling Behaviours

I. Please consider your experiences of changing sales strategy and sales presentation for different customers.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
7. When I feel my selling approach is not working, I could easily adopt another one.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
8. I like to try different selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
9. I am very flexible in using selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
10. I can easily find many selling approaches.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
11. I try to find out the differences between customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

II. Please consider your experiences of planning your sales strategies and presentations:

- | | Strongly Disagree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------------|
| | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 12. I try to sell my products as much as I can rather than satisfying a customer. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 13. I try to find out the needs of customers. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 14. A good salesperson should try to satisfy the best interests of customers | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 15. I try to offer a product/service that can help with solving customers' problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 16. I try to provide most appropriate products/services for solving customers' problems. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 17. It is unnecessary to be completely true when describing my products/services to customers. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 18. I try to convince him/her to buy as much as he/she can, even I believe it is more than a wise customer would buy. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 19. I try to decorate my product/service to make them sound as good as possible. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 20. I try to recommend my product/ service to customers based on what I could persuade them to purchase, but not on satisfying their needs. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |
| 21. I try to find out which service or product is most beneficial for my customers. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | |

III. Please consider your experience of managing customer communication:

22. I try to contact all my “stay in touch” customers to make sure they are satisfied.	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
23. Besides periodic customer visit, I try to “stay in touch” with customers in order to find out their changing needs in time.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
24. I try to “stay in touch” with my customers in order to make them buy more.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
25. Besides periodic customer visit, I try to “stay in touch” with my most of my customers via E-mails, telephone and other meeting ways, in order to keep customers updated on my new products/ services’ information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
26. I try to keep meeting my customers in order to expound the benefits of using my products/services.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
27. I try to send something personal to every of my major customer (e.g. birthday card, anniversary card or flowers).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
28. I try to make sure my supervisor meet most of my important customers at least once a year.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
29. I tell my customers a lot about my financial situation and business information.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
30. I tell my customers a lot about my career ideals and goals, even my future expectations and dreams.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
31. I tell my customer a lot about my personal background, hobbies and family status.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
32. I tell my customers a lot about the mistakes I have made in work.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
33. I tell my customers a lot about my failure, success, likes and dislikes of my occupation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
34. I tell my customers a lot about my values, religious beliefs and political beliefs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

35. My customers tell me a lot about their financial situations and businesses information.	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
36. My customers tell me a lot about their career ideals and goals, as well as the future expectations and dreams.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
37. My customers tell me a lot about their background, personal life and family status.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
38. My customers tell me a lot about the mistakes they have made in work in the past.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
39. My customers tell me a lot about their working situation (E.g. responsibilities, failures, success, like and dislikes of their occupations.)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
40. My customers show their respect and adorer to me.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
41. My customers tell me a lot about their values, religious beliefs and political beliefs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
42. My major customers tell me about their discontent with other salespeople.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
43. I would love to help my customers with their needs on my products/services, even my company or I may not benefit from it.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
44. I try to satisfy my customers' needs on continuously product education.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
45. I try to help customer to prepare his/her presentations, documents and instructions for important events.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
46. I treat every customer the same no matter what size of their purchase.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
47. I try to express my expectations on establishing long term relationship with my cs.		

Section C: Sales Performance

I. Please consider how you would evaluate sales performance based on sales behaviours and outcomes.

	Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
48. I am very effective in maintaining good relationship with my customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
49. I am very effective in providing accurate information to my customers and other people in my company.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
50. I am very effective in providing accurate and completed paper works.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
51. I am very effective in obtaining information of my products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
52. I am very effective in obtaining information of my competitor's products.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
53. I am very effective in obtaining information of my customer needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
54. I am very effective in contributing my company's market share.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
55. I am very effective in achieving a high sales volume.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
56. I am very effective in selling to the important customers.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	
57. I am very effective in exceeding annul sales targets and goals.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	

Section D: The last part is all about the details of you and your company. These questions will help us understand respondents and companies we have in our survey.

59. How long have you been working as a salesperson? years

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¥ 10 million to under ¥ 50 million	¥ 50 million to under ¥ 100 million
Over ¥ 100 million	Prefer not to say

62. How many employees does your company approximately have?

63. How many customers do you have?

64. How much annual dollar sales do you make on each customer in average?

Under ¥ 500 thousands	¥ 500 thousands to under ¥ 1 million
¥ 1 million to under ¥ 5 million	¥ 5 million to under ¥ 10 million
Over ¥ 10 million	Prefer not to say

65. What types of product/service do you sell?

66. How old are you?

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67. What is your gender?

Male Female

68. What is your education level?

Junior high school	High school
Diploma degree	Bachelor degree
Master degree	PhD degree

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